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Debatte

Post-Truth and the End of What?
Philosophical and Historiographical Reflections
Postfaktisch oder das Ende wovon?
Philosophische und historiographische
Überlegungen

Um die expertokratische Allianz von empirisch-psychologischer Bildungsforschung und Politik steht es nicht gut. Das ist kein Grund zur Schadenfreude, sondern zum Nachdenken. Deswegen hat die Zeitschrift *Bildungsforschung. International Journal for the Historiography of Education* die gegenwärtige Situation zu beschreiben versucht und zehn Kolleginnen und Kollegen eingeladen, ihre Gedanken mit der Leserschaft zu teilen. Die Diskussion bringt damit eine wissenschaftliche Tugend wieder ein, die dem „cult of facts“ erlegen war (Edward Hallett Carr 1961), der dem Credo folgte: „Without data you're just another person with an opinion“. Argumente sind gar nicht so schändlich, wenn man wissenschaftlich nicht die Frage der Methode in den Vordergrund rückt, sondern die Bedeutung der reflexiven Qualität bei der Formulierung von Forschungsfragen. Man merkt dann schnell, dass alles radikal historisch und damit kulturellen Deutungsmustern verpflichtet ist, die Institutionen und die Ideen, aber auch die Forschenden und ihre Vorlieben.

Die Redaktion

Editorial

The final realization of the concept of the “nation-state” in the last third of the 19th century was possible only because with the extended and differentiated school system two seemingly contradictory principles could be implemented, namely, national integration and social differentiation. Primary education imparted national literacy to the younger generation in history, geography, singing, and all other school subjects and promoted, through out-of-school activities like school trips and excursions, a feeling of belonging. The transition regimes to the differentiated (tracked) secondary education pathways ensured that social differences were preserved or even reinforced. Sociology and thus also bureaucratic statistics helped to capture these differences conceptually (“working-class child,” “country girl”) and to bestow permanence on them, and medicine and the emerging field of psychiatry were in place for those children for whom it was questionable whether they were “normal” enough to attend elementary school. The idea of normality in connection with national integration thus had costs, as becomes clear in this issue’s *Articles* section, *Education and Psychopathologization 1870-1940*, which was put together by guest editors Patrick Bühler and Michèle Hofmann.

Trust in the usefulness, or at least the purpose, of science subsequently grew and, after the war experiences of the 20th century, led to the belief that problems are only there to be solved with scientific methods and corresponding maxims or technologies. Policy debates had become unnecessary thanks to science, according to Daniel Bell in 1960 in his bestseller, *The End of Ideology* and Francis Fukuyama in 1992 in *The End of History* in connection with the end of the Cold War, for example. Also in 1992 the OECD published the first *Education at a Glance* report, with its culturally indifferent comparative statistics, and it was followed just 10 years later and in the same way by the first PISA report, which made clear that empirical, problem-centered, and policy-oriented psychology with comparative statistics methods had conquered the field of education. Education policy makers want to make their decisions based on crystal clear facts, “evidence-based,” was the legitimization for the transformation of traditional academic field of education, which hardly knew what was happening.

And then this: At first there was no evidence of evidence-based policy at all. Instead, it was found that most of the empirical research studies in psychology are not reliable, and then it became clear that policy makers could not care less about facts – if there were in fact any. Irrationality, lusty striving for power, and arbitrary interpretation dominate policy, not datasets and statistics.

The expertocratic alliance between policy and empirical psychology research on education is going badly. That is not a reason to gloat but to think. To this purpose, the *Bildungsforschung. International Journal for the Historiography of Education* attempted to describe the current situation and invited 10 colleagues to share their thoughts with

the readers. The *Discussion* section thus brings in afresh a scientific virtue that had succumbed to the “cult of facts” (Edward Hallett Carr 1961) that followed the credo, “Without data you’re just another person with an opinion.” Arguments are not at all so disgraceful, if instead of focusing scientifically on the question of methods we emphasize the importance of the reflective quality when formulating research questions. We then notice very quickly that everything is radically historical and thus bound to patterns of cultural interpretation – the institutions and the ideas, but also the researchers and their preferences.

The editors