

The Problems of New Work and New Poverty from the Perspective of School – Symptoms of a Crisis Politico-Educationally Ignored

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The following is an attempt to put symptoms and structures of the far reaching crisis of the education system of the Federal Republik of Germany in concrete terms from the viewpoint of school.

Introduction

Though the complexion of new poverty as the drawback of new work is developing into a key problem for a democratic coexistence in the Federal Republik for some time now, there are hardly any statistical studies about the temporary extent of this crisis. In particular the function of the school in socio-political discussions is very often left out. But also in the politico educational discussion there is little willingness to make a serious examination.

The public educational system moves toward the greatest crisis since 1945 from the view of many teaching staffs who work in schools in so called ‘social focuses’. These teachers are lamenting because they are facing the increasing problems helplessly. They observe and experience with resignation a proceeding devaluation of the standards in practice and although laws, regulations, guidelines and teaching curriculums constantly dictate updates, the question of realization remains unanswered. As a consequence of an ‘old’ school system which often seems hardly reform able enough and whose possibilities are restricted by the pressure to lower the expenses leading to the decline of the education in schools in ‘social focuses’ as the public education system moves forward to a crisis of meaning. School is already today overtaxed as an instrument of prevention against poverty in ‘social

focuses'. Educational offers which help to ensure future chances can hardly be provided. There are structural deficits in the social reproduction of the living in a democratic, in all are as technologised and by science influenced world. Schools in 'social focuses' could not effectively break of the reproduction of social dissimilarity and will be even less able to have an interfering effect if there is a continuation of a politico-educational line of a 'lean technological education'. The young people who did not find a way into the job market because of their bad performance in school at the end of the 70's and the beginning of the 80's, passed on their poverty and outsider position in society on to their children. In the discussion about the so-called new poverty the keyword of a two-thirds society is used. (Graphic: service parcel education)

To the Dimensions of the Crisis

The social threats in the sphere of the so-called new work have been politico-educationally known for years (and a future bound refurbishing was established in guidelines and curricula) but the practice in school lacks conceptions that can be realised with the available teachers and resources in lessons of today's school. The so-called new poverty as drawback of new work has in the meantime assumed an extent which also threatens school and confronts her with new tasks. Statistically one out of eight Germans is unemployed, one out of six German children works illegally, because child labor is cheap, in 1994 one out of seven children in the Federal Republic was directly affected by poverty. Splitting processes and erosions run through the society and are mirrored in the behavior of the children in schools (Graphic: vicious circle of disadvantage).

The current school cannot cope with the tasks assigned to her. However another school isn't available. This leads to the cardinal question if and to what extent the Federal Republic can be successful to offer a relevant general education which stands up to the need in the field of work and technology for all adolescents, because without any help at the lead-into employment there can be no democratic, well-ordered, social reproduction. If this offer is missing at the present, meaning today, the links to future developments will cease. However, just this ceasing already seems to be common in a whole lot of schools, without being considerate in the development of curricula and in the current politico educational discussion in a way that other teachers in practice of schools in the 'social focuses' would estimate it sufficient and achievable.

In the meanwhile more than thirty years of a more fundamental discussion about technological education discursive settlements and conceptions have been worked out, but the practice in schools has been only marginally reached by these efforts.

Trained teachers were not employed. The older colleagues had no other choice but to improvise with traditional conceptions. This substitute could be bared because of the energy and engagement of the colleagues in schools for over more than two decades. Even at that time it was not sufficient. The energy is now exhausted, the challenges have grown and the financial contribution for education still continues to lose attractiveness. That is why the question about credible perspectives of realization has become even more urgent, but remained without effective resonance in the education policy up to now.

The Question of Strategies – More Problems Than Answers

This dilemma is particularly voiced by teaching staffs, who have to take care of pupils in so-called social focuses (focus on social conflicts) in the big cities. Teaching curriculums don't have any real validity any more because giving a regular lesson to the pupils is hardly possible any more. It lacks staff to such an extent, that subject lessons often cannot be taught. The schools are miserably equipped (with resources). The consequence is a crisis of motivation in many of these teaching staffs. This crisis is reinforced by further politico-educationally dictated cuts in connection with new programs for which however only rarely training and further education is offered.

The place of a school as a guarantee for general education for all adolescents and for standards, that secure future chances at the social acquisition of position, seems more and more taken up by the image of a school, which children and teachers regard as a strain. Colleagues reproach the education policy and colleges for having developed logical compelling models that were prescribed to the schools without suitable instruments of realization and without leaving sufficient possibilities of correction to the schools. Teachers who are in a state of speechless isolation will hardly be able to carry out a structural school reform with commitment.

On the opposite side there are the schools in better-posed residential areas. The tendency towards privatization enters the educational system. Parental commitment compensates deficiencies by the state, private funds take a place in the organization of the school system. As staff and material lacks are covered by expenditure of the parents and by sponsoring. These schools are also attractive for industry and commerce and therefore sponsoring investment objects. The consequence is a continuous diverging of the social gap.

For some years offensive strategies have been observed in the social focuses. Because it is impossible to realize the official curriculum with the available funds, it is tried to work close to the needs. More current outlining guidelines for more

self-determination (Autonomie) but with less resource- and personnel funds and an extension of the educational and care tasks of school can be named as a legitimation of this offensive line. A few schools draw this line (poster with examples can be send by airmail at interest!).

This form of education remains insufficient and also widens the social gap, but is the only sensible perspective left as long as politico-educational intervening does not take place and the line of a “lean technological education“ in connection with the privatization of payable educational contents leads to a proceeding devaluation of the public school. So while education policy and dominating representatives of the discussion in educational studies hold tight on the model of equal chances in education, the reality of the everyday school life increasingly raises doubt about this dogma.