The message of the method. Design principles for sustainable ideological communication in the digital classroom.

Christian Swertz [1]

[CC-BY-SA]

1   Introduction

The sustainable establishment of digital bildung makes an important contribution to the development of the digital world. A key argument that can be used to justify the contribution of digital education is the proof of the quality of digital education. Proving that education can be taught with digital media as well as with traditional media is therefore an important goal for current research in the field of digital education.

It is quite funny that this goal cannot be achieved. Clark's (1983) argument "that media are delivery vehicles for instruction and do not directly influence learning" (p. 453) and Russell's (2001) review paper published under the apt title "The no Significant Difference Phenomenon" provide prominent evidence for the fact that so far neither an influence of media on learning processes nor an improvement of learning processes through the use of media could be sustainably proven.

The fact that the goal cannot be achieved, but is nevertheless formulated, makes the goal a sustainable one. This is because a goal that cannot be achieved remains permanently. The disadvantage, however, is that the goal assumes that digital media are just as suitable for learning processes as digital media, which suggests that it is more effective and efficient to avoid the costs of changing media and stick with traditional media. Therefore, there may well be wit in seeing the goal not as a goal but as a problem.

One approach to the problem is to clarify the conceptual confusion. In the first paragraph, education and upbringing are confused, culture is falsely identified with the market, good and more are confused in a nonsensical way, and the distinction between teaching methods and teaching media is ignored. The fact that education cannot be digital at all and that talk of digital education is therefore meaningless is almost irrelevant.

However, the aim here is not to take the path of conceptual clarification. Instead, the problem is understood as a phenomenon. If the problem is understood as a phenomenon

---

[1] University of Vienna, Department of Educatin, Sensengasse 3a, 1090 Vienna, christian.swertz@univie.ac.at, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5050-1722

in the sense of a relevant empirical observation, the investigation of the goal becomes a goal of research. The question then becomes: how can the observation that a research goal is formulated that is known not to be achievable be explained?

A well-established method for investigating such phenomena is the procedure of ideology critique. An ideology-critical analysis shows that the intention to sustainably establish digital media in professional pedagogical intention is based on several ideologies. The intention of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of learning processes goes back to the capitalist ideology in the versions of Smith (1776) and Hayek (2005). The intention to control learning processes with digital technologies is based on Wiener's (1965) cybernetic ideology. This was combined with the esoteric ideology of the New Age movement (Capra 1982) and the capitalist ideology to form the Californian ideology (Kurzweil 1992). This can explain the phenomenon.

It is not possible to deduce what to do from the analysis. In order to determine what is to be done, there are two possibilities: The first possibility assumes that human beings are beings determined by history and the culture into which people are born. People are made what they are by circumstances in the course of subjectification processes. All the ideologies mentioned use this point of view. For example, in capitalist ideology, it is the market that determines how people should act. Whether a person's actions are good is not decided by the person, but by the market.

With the second possibility it is assumed that people are beings who can shape the history and culture into which they are born. As subjects, people can make themselves what they are. An example of this approach is human rights, according to which the dignity of every human being is inviolable. Whether a person's actions are good is a person's own decision, whereby it is clear that people who claim this freedom for themselves must also grant this freedom to other people.

Since these two alternatives have been discussed for at least 3000 years, it is plausible to assume that no systematic decision can be made between the alternatives. In this respect, choosing one of the alternatives is an inevitable ideological decision. I prefer the second alternative because the first alternative rejects the possibility of choice, which amounts to denying oneself freedom. But because this is an expression of the possibility of choice, the first alternative implies a self-contradiction and is to be rejected (Swertz 2021b).

This puts the focus on people's ability to determine themselves. People are educated when they can determine themselves, they educate themselves when they work on determining themselves, and they are educated when they are offered opportunities for this work. The goal of digital education and the task of designing digital media for education should therefore be to offer people opportunities for self-determination (Swertz 2021a).

Digital technologies are certainly suitable for this purpose (Meder 1985). Reasons for this include the fact that digital technologies are suitable for playing with language

(Meder 2004) or can be used to observe oneself (Swertz et al. 2017). It is clear that it must be possible for people to determine for themselves how they want to play and what they want to observe. Another reason is that digital technology is well suited for creating diverse media realities. This offers people the possibility to move between media realities and to create media realities themselves. It is precisely this productive movement between media realities that is an expression of the formation of the self and therefore a sustainable principle for the design of digital educational media.

2   Bibliography

Capra, Fritjof. 1982. *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture*. London: Bantam.

Clark, Richard E. 1983. „Reconsidering Research on Learning from Media". *Review of Educational Research* 53 (4): 445–59. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543053004445.

Hayek, Friedrich August von. 2005. *Die Verfassung der Freiheit*. 4. Aufl (1. Aufl 1971, engl. 1960). Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Kurzweil, Raymond. 1992. *The Age of Intelligent Machines*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Meder, Norbert. 1985. „Bildung im Zeitalter der neuen Technologien oder der Sprachspieler als Selbstkonzept des postmodernen Menschen". *Vierteljahresschrift für wissenschaftliche Pädagogik*, Nr. 3: 325–39.

———. 2004. *Der Sprachspieler. Der postmoderne Mensch oder das Bildungsideal im Zeitalter der neuen Technologien.* 2. wesentlich erweiterte Auflage. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann.

Russell, Thomas L. 2001. *The No Significant Difference Phenomenon: A Comparative Research Annotated Bibliography on Technology for Distance Education: As Reported in 355 Research Reports, Summaries and Papers*. Fishers: IDECC. http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/50199612.html.

Smith, Adam. 1776. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. London: Strahan & Cadell.

Swertz, Christian. 2021a. „Bildung, Verantwortung und digitale Daten". *Medienimpulse* 59 (3): 1–40. https://doi.org/10.21243/MI-03-21-12.

———. 2021b. „Korrelationale und retorsive Grundlagen der Realdialektik. Eine Erörterung des Ansatzes der relationalen Medienpädagogik." *Aufklärung und Kritik* 28 (3): 57–72.

Swertz, Christian, Alexsander Schmölz, Alessandro Barberi, und Alexandra Forstner. 2017. „Pedagogical Ontology and Reasoning". In *Computer-Driven Instructional Design with INTUITEL.*, herausgegeben von Kevin Fuchs und Peter Henning, 15–22. Delft: River Publishers.

Wiener, Norbert. 1965. *Cybernetics: or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. 2. Aufl. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press.