
**ISCHE 38, Education and the Body
17.-20.08.2016, Loyola University Chicago**

Panel: Body at Risk II: creating the social collective through education

(Research Library for the History of Education, Berlin & Zurich University of Teacher Education)

Abstract

[Paper II] Constructing the 'efficient body'. Body politics and the formation of "empirische Bildungsforschung" (empirical education research) in Western Germany, 1954-1964

Britta Behm, Research Library for the History of Education (BBF, Berlin)/ Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU)

To this day, Georg Picht's diagnose of a major crisis of German education in 1964 (he stated a „deutsche Bildungskatastrophe“) is seen as a beacon for the subsequent massive reforms in the education sector. Using several statistics in his analysis he linked the state of emergency in education with the prediction of economic decline („Bildungsnotstand heißt wirtschaftlicher Notstand“). In the course of his argument the pupil's body subtly became a cipher of potential achievement and efficiency (der Abiturient als „Kapital“ und „geistige[s] Potential“). Just ten years earlier, this kind of linking educational items to economic categories seemed not only to be marginal but more or less banned far beyond the educational discourse. At that time, e.g. Hellmut Becker, a close friend of Picht's and since 1963 director of the newly founded Max Planck-Institute for Human Development in Berlin, which should bring forward the so called "empirische Bildungsforschung" (empirical education research), had interpreted the perceived crisis of the school system as a result of a bureaucratic world („verwaltete Welt“) and had propagated the educational goal of the 'free human' („freie[r] Mensch“) (1954).

So, what happened between 1954 and 1964? How can the hinted change in the politics of knowledge be explained and how was it linked with body images (individual and collective ones)? This talk explores those questions focusing historically on the formation of "empirische Bildungsforschung" in Western Germany since 1945. Furthermore, it pursues to some extent the relation between "knowledge" and "body" as historiographical categories.

[bibliography]

Becker, Hellmut, Die verwaltete Schule. In: Merkur (1954) 8/12, 1155-1177.

Picht, Georg, Die deutsche Bildungskatastrophe (1964). München 1965.