



CALL FOR ABSTRACTS: CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH NORMATIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULA

University of Tübingen (Germany), 10-12 Feb 2021

Organized by the Special Interest Group “Critical Thinking and Beyond” of the Tübingen School of Education

Ever since the Enlightenment, critical thinking has had the task of questioning, among others, the foundations of moral systems, power relations and traditional authorities. It is thus pursuing a pronouncedly emancipatory goal, beginning with Kant’s Enlightenment work to, among others, language criticism, the Frankfurt School, and several approaches of discourse analysis and cultural studies. Meanwhile, under conditions of diverse and pluralist societies, critical thinking has also fostered the idea that it is no longer possible to reach binding normative and evaluative judgements. This has provided space for all sorts of epistemic and ethical particularism or relativism. This brings with it issues in facing major challenges in current societies that require normative orientation (populism, climate crisis, racism, sustainability transformation...).

The challenge of normative orientation also affects educational institutions. If one insists on critical thinking as an achievement and at the same time acknowledges that its critics have a point, how can scholars in higher education – not least in teacher education – face these challenges? The conference will address them in the following respects:

1. Normativity in educational theory: How does educational theory address various claims to deconstruct or dismantle educational goals as unwarranted? How can educational theory approach the quest for good education or for good educational goals without deconstructing them in the first place? How does educational thinking position itself with respect to more naturalistic or more culturist conceptualizations of the learning mind and what are the normative implications for educational curricula? What normative conceptions do educational theories have of the societies for which learners are being educated or of the agency of learners as prospective members of these societies? How exactly can educational thinking address normative concepts that exist in our society?
2. Normative reflection to a large extent is related to questions of judgement: How does education promote the ability to recognise, examine and balance different moral arguments? How is it possible to distinguish between ‘good and bad’ arguments discursively in teaching?
3. Critical thinking and normative reflection take place not only in theory, but are strongly related to social contexts of action: How can educational institutions address ethical issues in the contexts in which they arise? This might be in (subject) teaching, curriculum development, lesson planning or school management. How can systematic engagement with ethical issues lead to better practice in educational institutions and teaching?
4. Provided that learners may both become capable of critical thinking and act according to well-founded norms and values – what kind of knowledge must they acquire, what kinds of skills and competencies must be promoted? How can teachers and students deal with normative issues without students being overwhelmed by certain opinions? These tasks include knowledge of ethical concepts and theories, but also the ability to observe and listen closely, as well as competence in ethical judgement.

The conference organizers are interested in conceptual and practical contributions that focus on these themes from multiple perspectives including social theory and applied ethics, educational theory or practical areas like school teaching and teacher education/ training.

Dates:

Time: Feb 10-12, 2021

Location: This conference will take place online.

Organizers: Special Interest Group (SIG): Critical Thinking and Beyond

People wishing to make a presentation at the conference are invited to send an Abstract of 400 words maximum to criticalthinking2021@izew.uni-tuebingen.de specifying their desired presentation format (single presentation or panel with several participants) and technological equipment. Conference language will be German and English.

Deadline: October 1st, 2020

Acceptance date: October 31st, 2020

Invited speakers will be asked to provide the organizers with their presentation in video format by January 15th, 2021. Thus, the conference participants can engage with it in advance. The conference sessions are mainly intended for joint discussion.

Conference organizers are currently considering producing a conference volume. Any person presenting at the conference may indicate their interest in having their contribution considered for publication.

The conference is organized by the *Special Interest Group: Critical Thinking and Beyond* and supported by the Tübingen School of Education. Organizers are (in alphabetical order):

PD Dr. Martin Harant (Institute of Education)

Prof. Dr. Uwe Küchler (Institute of English Languages and Literatures)

Dr. Simon Meisch (International Centre for Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities, IZEW)

Dr. Uta Müller (IZEW)

Dr. Wolfgang Polleichtner (Department of Classics)

Prof Dr. Thomas Potthast (IZEW and Chair for Ethics, Theory, and History of the Life Sciences)

PD Dr. Gabi Schlag (Institute of Political Science)

Prof. Dr. Fahimah Ulfat (Center for Islamic Theology)

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