



The mission of vocational education in democracy
Between the ability to act flexibly at the workplace and to act
as a critical professional employee
In honor of the hundredth birthday of H.-J. Heydorn

V. International Conference & Research Workshop
Stockholm, May 2016

Overview

- Objectives of VET in official documents
- Critical Theory and its historical context
- Heydorn`s theory of Bildung
- Consequences for VET in democracy

Dominant determining factors of VET



Objectives of vocational education and training

1. Ensuring sufficient qualification to sustain the economy and its dynamics
2. Employability and integration of the coming generation into the economic system
3. Development of human and social competences of the working population
4. Enabling to create one`s own work and living environment

Objectives of VET in the German Vocational Training Act

„Vocational training has to convey the **vocational** knowledge, skills and competences (vocational proficiency) required for pursuing **qualified vocational activities** in a **transforming work environment** in a classified vocational training course.“

Objectives of VET in the framework of VET schools

Obtaining vocational proficiency is the key objective of schools in the dual training system. It is understood as the willingness and ability of a person **to act with appropriate reasoning and individual and social responsibility in vocational, social and private situations.** Vocational competence subdivides into the dimensions technical, social and self-competence. (KMK 2011)

Historical context of Critical Theory in Frankfurt

- 1930s: Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin, Fromm, Marcuse established Critical Theory in the tradition of Marx and Freud
- Escape to the USA and reflection of the reasons of the Nazis' seizure of power – study about the authoritarian personality in USA
- „Theory has to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them“ (Horkheimer)
- One main enslaving factor is capitalism and the culturally embedded ideology



Heinz-Joachim Heydorn

- * 19.06.1916 in Hamburg † 1974 in Frankfurt
- Studied Philosophy, Sinology and English
- Engaged in resistance during the NS, military service, deserted in France
- Member of the SPD, chairman of the Socialist Students` Organisation (SDS), exclusion of the Socialdemocratic Party
- Professor for education and philosophy in Frankfurt
- Main publications: „About the contradiction of Bildung and domination“ „Revised version of the concept of Bildung“



Central messages

- Bildung needs a performance of abstraction to recognise the wealth of the society that is *locked behind bars*.
- It is achievable only with the walk through the *prison of history*.
- Bildung has to empower a person to a resistance that endures disappointment. It is about the *counterstrike of consciousness*.

Current messages

„The cities of abundance will put soldiers onto their defence walls in front of which lie the graveyards but behind the walls there will be willingness to open the gates.“ (1970)

Bildung in his tradition is indivisible.
Everybody has the right to learn how to create one`s life without living in the fog of ideology.

Consequences for VET

What does that mean for VET?

- It has to enable people to reflect the history of their branches, technology, social conventions and of domination on the one hand and empower for resistance on the other.
- Learning content should be how domination is organised in the context of ownership structures, alienated work and exploitation in everyday work.
- **What should we suggest to do?**

Strategies of implementation in VET-Curricula

- Biographical, historical and aesthetically oriented learning – utopical approach
- Integration of extensive sustainability
- Learning fields of self-organisation and solidarity in contrast to team spirit
- Strengthen the resilience to convenience and comfort
- Learning about the rights of employees and the implications of ownership

Implementation in the concept of learning arenas (Ragutt 2016)

Learning arena „Bildung and domination, work and society“

- Analysis of ideological political interpretations
- Increasing the ability to social judgement
- Reflection of antagonistic structures in society
- Exercise in political thinking and action as an alternative

Let us encourage VET to support democracy

- It's irresponsible to ignore this mission of VET
- Encourage young people not to be only a functional gearwheel in the rat race of work
- Enable them to know why it is sometimes necessary to follow the sentence of the German Poet Günter Eich (1907-1972):

Be awkward, be sand, not oil in the gear of the world!

- Because the incinerators in Buchenwald and Dachau where products of VET as well as the torture cells in the GDR

Literature

Heydorn: Über den Widerspruch von Bildung und Herrschaft. Frankfurt 1970

Ragutt / Kaiser (ed.): Menschlichkeit der Bildung.
(Humanity of Bildung)
Paderborn 2016

