

“Didaktik Meets Curriculum” Revisited: Historical Encounters, Systematic Experience, and Empirical Limits

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Abstract: From a personal perspective, the article focuses on the points of contact between Didaktik and curriculum theory within a continental European perspective, where Didaktik is more commonly used than curriculum for describing the issues under scrutiny. By highlighting these points of contact between a continental European description of Didaktik and an Anglo-American description in curriculum, it also looks into the future, discussing some probable developments within education.

A little over 20 years ago, I had an encounter that, as so often happens in academic careers, proved to be critical. At an international conference dinner in Oslo, I found myself in conversation with an Australian-American colleague, Ian Westbury. After a long discussion on Australian crime fiction, he suddenly asked me a question I found very difficult to answer. He had read a fascinating text by a German author on the teaching of mathematics and had frequently come across the German term “Didaktik.” He asked me what the word meant, and so I made a humble attempt to explain the term and its origin in a nutshell. After a short time, we were joined by our Norwegian host, Bjørg Gundem, who had the advantage of having been exposed to discussions on Didaktik as well as to various American curriculum theories and was thus accustomed to switching from one discourse to the other. This conversation led to the idea of a “dialogue project,” which came to be called “Didaktik meets Curriculum,” in which notable representatives of both discourses would be invited to come together and explain the discourses in which they worked.

In retrospect, our little idea from that soiree has been very effective. From Wolfgang Klafki to Lee Shulman, nearly everyone took up our invitation to attend the dialogue conferences, which for almost all the participants

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enabled the first personal contacts. These conferences led to countless exchange visits and guest lectures, several dozen monographs and journal issues, and altogether more than 1000 scientific articles, which in some way continue to pull on the threads we picked up. Some found agreement, while others were more adversarial, almost attacking the manner and content of the dialogue, a matter that we shall return to in due course. This success, and the criticism, of course, also had something to do with the timing and context of the dialogues. At the time, it was already clear, at least to me, what would ultimately happen: namely, that each side, as a result of a chronic crisis in each of their respective traditions, would be open to adopting the tools and methods of the other. More specifically, the continental European education systems would seek their salvation in copying US reform strategies, not least in the adoption of the test culture, while conversely, elements of European quality control strategies, particularly state-based curricular formats, would spread in the United States and most of the Commonwealth (cf. Hopmann, 2001). Looking at earlier meetings, I suspected that each would serve as a kind of “toolbox” for the other, even while the adopters largely ignored the experiences and empirical limits of the sources. This prognosis, at the time only shared by few has since been confirmed on a scale that, for me, is quite alarming, and so we continue to work at limiting the collateral damage.

It was certainly not the intention of the dialogue project to bring all conceivable variants of *Didaktik* and curriculum theory into play, and it was not primarily a theory comparison, even if it was often misunderstood as such. For me, at least, it was primarily an opportunity to investigate *Didaktik* and curriculum theory as historically evolved forms of reflection within the social system and so identify the nature of the tasks performed within the separate contexts of these two traditions and discover how such tasks were performed. Questions raised included what distinguished each of the prevailing modes of describing the relationship between teaching and schools, or the “inner workings of schooling,” as my colleague Ian Westbury liked to call it. Or, as Brian Simons asked in 1981, ‘Why no pedagogy in England?’ Connected questions probed why, for instance, *Didaktik*, despite a fleeting popularity, had not been able to establish itself in Anglo-Saxon cultures, or why, conversely, the curriculum wave of the 1960s and 1970s had ebbed so quickly

in the German-speaking space. With this in mind, it is understandable that at conferences at the time, discussions such as those on a comparison of the background justifications of lesson plans (Christine Keitel, Peter Pereira) or interpretations of the pedagogical “tact” (Peter Metz, Max von Manen) brought a discourse to the table that was more dynamic than the monologic arguments that usually acknowledged the “opposing side” with little more than incomprehension (such as was the case with respect to Hilbert Meyer, Erling Lars Dale, or Bill Pinar; cf. Gundem & Hopmann, 1998; Hopmann & Riquarts, 1995).

In this context, I shall summarize encounters, experiences, and limits in the mutual influencing of these two traditions. My concern is not to make an epistemological evaluation of the two theoretical traditions or an observation of teaching practices, but to examine how these dominant modes of the understanding of schooling have established themselves as practices of social regulation and how they have interacted when they have come into contact with one another. Methodologically, such an analysis “questions [...] structural design problems in sociocultural spheres right through to each respective available (positive) design resource or (restrictive) limiting decision scope” (Schriewer, 1999, p. 99; my translation). It can neither be disputed nor denied that there were many other modes of comparison and countless different attempts to understand schooling. As Anatoli Rakhkotchkin (2012) demonstrated in a clever survey, the object of a comparative study of Didaktik could be anything from teaching sequence to a “world society.” This may be the case, for example, with the TIMSS video studies (e.g., Givvin, Hiebert, Jacobs, Hollingsworth, & Gallimore, 2005) or with an analysis of global curriculum alignment (e.g., in Meyer, Kamens, & Benavot, 1992). Conversely, any Didaktik positioning or any “reconceptualization” of curriculum (Pinar, 1978ff.) is always necessarily comparative. Moreover, this history must also be seen in the context not only of the history of schooling but also in terms of “historical process” (Leschinsky & Roeder, 1976), and not least as a history of the transformation of mechanisms of social self-control (cf. Hopmann, 2008). In the current context, however, it is only possible to outline by way of example some developmental threads in the history of encounters that could undoubtedly be further differentiated and discussed at every juncture.

Encounters

From the point of view of the history of ideas, Didaktik and curriculum, in this sense, can be traced at least to Antiquity, while the concepts themselves can be traced back to the early modern period. As clearly distinguishable traditions of understanding schooling, they have developed, of course, only since the implementation of public mass schooling in the late 18th century.

For Didaktik, the pietistic understanding of schooling, on the one hand, and the implementation of a national curriculum regime, on the other, were key elements (for the following history of Didaktik, cf. Hopmann, 1988, 2007). Since August Herman Francke, the former has led to a realization that teaching is more than mere knowledge but is rather an enactment of teaching and learning that touches on all the senses and powers; this in turn has led to the development and spread of teacher seminars where teaching was studied as an independent form of action. The latter then established a framework in which these profession-creating characteristics were able to develop. Organizationally, Didaktik nestled in a niche between the compacted state regulations for the provision of schooling and the various local schooling practices. Anyone who has studied the explosive growth of teaching textbooks in the late 18th and early 19th centuries will have been confronted with a huge mass of examples of how to bridge the gap between these regulations and local teaching.

The curricula of the early 19th century already assume this niche to be a kind of “freedom of method” or “pedagogical freedom” among teachers. Only in this way could “what is valid in teaching” (Weniger, 1932/1952) be satisfactorily defined. Each element of curricular matter (content: *Inhalte*) first had to be transformed into local teaching (meaning: *Gebalte*; cf. Hopmann, 2007). How to interpret this educational transformation, to bring it to bear, was essentially left to the teachers themselves. This includes the specific instructional design as well as the process of performance assessment. Didaktik teaches us precisely how to do this.

In the second half of the 19th century, Didaktik, especially in the wake of Herbartianism, was consolidated as academic knowledge, reaching into higher schools. It was not accidental that the primary starting point of this trend was the transformation of Herbart’s levels of articulation (describing the logic of learning) into stages of teaching, which thus led to the methodical organization of lessons by curricular content. There were even attempts to

generate complete curricula genetically, according to Herbartian principles, although these had significantly less impact. In contrast, Herbartian instructional schemes were able to be reconciled with any state curriculum as long as they met the bureaucratic requirements (Rein, 1893) and particularities of the lesson design. During the 19th century, the sum of these efforts led to an increasingly self-confident teaching profession that was able to assert priority over other social forces in determining what would occur in schools (cf. Rein, 1893). It is no wonder, then, that foreign visitors, especially, soon noticed that at any time these teachers were able to explain didactically what they had just done and why (cf. Tilden Prince, 1891).

With hindsight, it is easy to overlook that this line of development was not without an alternative. At the close of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century (from Felbiger to Pestalozzi), there were numerous other attempts, not only to regulate educational content but also to regulate the detailed methodological implementation of that content. The most successful attempt was the one that came to be called, "monitorial instruction" (translated into German as "wechselseitiger Unterricht") (cf. Hopmann, 1990). This approach was championed by Bell, Lancaster, and their followers "on all five continents" (Zschokke, 1822). If one is to believe contemporary sources, this was probably the first global reform movement in the history of schooling.

The main thrust of monitorial instruction is the meticulous categorization of teaching materials in conjunction with a rigid discipline, which is intended to allow for the provision of one single teacher for thousands of students. Its task is then limited to the technical implementation of these rules, which can be easily learned in a single course limited to a few weeks' standardized training at a model school. On the one hand, monitorial instruction provided teachers with high-quality teaching materials and an independent technical language with which to describe school teaching, which was somewhat demarcated from ecclesiastical teaching. On the other hand, teachers already had a much broader arsenal of established methods, compared to which the rigid processes of monitorial instruction would surely act as a drastic reduction of their pedagogical freedom. Here, as we saw in Sweden and Schleswig-Holstein, where the monitorial-instruction method was proscribed, teachers responded with the same didactical skill that they continue today to bring to any form of programmatic learning. They used the material offered as a

quarry from which they carved out the elements that suited their didactical self-will (Hopmann, 1990).

However, in places where these methods were exposed to as yet unexplored didactical terrain (such as in England and the United States), they might have nipped in the bud the emergence of a broadly understood pedagogical freedom or, at least, postponed its development for some time. This can be discerned in these systems in the history of “pedagogy,” the functional equivalent of *Didaktik*. In elementary schools, a differentiated understanding of method based on local decisions had no place in a program limited to the technical mastery of reading, writing, and arithmetic (three Rs). In secondary schools, which are primarily focused on the building of character and not on imparting specific knowledge, this braking power was more evident (cf. Alexander, 2004; Simon, 1981, 1994). There was a lack of the intermediate and thus freedom-constituting aspects of a state curriculum system, in which a didactical sense of self-understanding as an empowered profession would have been able to develop.

One should, of course, be wary of painting an excessively one-sided picture. On the one hand, in the then well-established, state-supporting *Didaktik* of the late 19th century, little could be felt of the aspirations for autonomy of a Herbart or even a Diesterweg. On the other hand, in the 19th century, there were also quite successful pedagogical exports across the channel and overseas. Traces of Pestalozzi and Froebel can be found everywhere, albeit in methodology rather than as *Didaktik* (cf. Dunkel, 1970). The most successful export of *Didaktik* was the Herbartian doctrine of formal stages or levels, whose traces can be found in Russia, China, and Japan to the Americas, and which today are still apparent in the DNA of local teaching practice almost everywhere, right through to the current globally successful lesson-study movement founded in Japan. In the United States, toward the end of the 19th century, there was a veritable boom in Herbartianism, as shown in the history of the still active National Society for the Study of Education, originally established, under Dewey’s influence, as a Herbart society (cf. Cruikshank, 1993). Without a curriculum regime and corresponding teacher education, however, it was unable to maintain a lasting foothold.

From the “Great War,” the first World War, until the end of the second World War, there were no other epoch-making encounters. Beyond isolated, often misunderstood approaches (such as the reform-pedagogical

appropriation of Dewey), there were, to my knowledge, no system-relevant appropriations from the other tradition. While, in continental Europe, the twin forces of “Lehrplan” and “Didaktik” remained the predominant modes for describing teaching, “curriculum,” developed under independent premises, became the central variable in the Anglo-Saxon context. Works that could be mentioned here as groundbreaking were especially Dewey’s *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902) and Bobbitt’s *The Curriculum* (1918) and *How to Make a Curriculum* (1924). This led fairly directly from Ralph Tyler’s *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (1949) through to Joseph J. Schwab’s *Practicals* (1970). What unites these approaches, despite their many dissimilarities, is a different locating of the curriculum compared to the curriculum guidelines (Lehrplan). In curriculum, there is no systematic distinction between curricular “matter” (Inhalte) and lesson “meaning” (Gehalte) or between teaching and lesson planning; instead, both are seen as a unity. Accordingly, during the 20th century, increasingly supervening state control was not connected to the fixing of content but instead extended to the requirements of the leading universities (Committee of the Ten, 1892) and the criteria pupils in transition to subsequent higher education were expected to have met. Since the starting point was not teaching itself, but rather learning results, it is hardly surprising that the related academic fields developed more toward the psychology of learning than Didaktik or a more comprehensive education science: in the words of Ellen C. Lagemann (1989), “Edward L. Thorndike won and John Dewey lost” (p. 185).

It was all the more astounding to see how this curriculum movement was then exported during the 1960s into the continental European context, neither as a strategy of local school development nor as the business of the psychology of learning, but as a “better” form of education planning. A paradigm for this was Saul B. Robinsohn’s (1967) *Education Reform as Revision of the Curriculum*. This form of education planning promised to identify, codify, and implement on a scientific basis efforts for which there were social learning requirements. It was never implemented so literally, but it gave the state teaching planning effort a new language and an extended mandate that allowed teaching planners to introduce the loose specification of teaching content into the particularities of individual lessons. This then culminated in somewhat complex, learning-goal-oriented “Curricular lesson plans (Lehrpläne)” as in Bavaria in 1980 (Westphalen, 1985). In this context,

then, the profession-creating semantics of the modern private and public school improvement industry still in place today established itself through evaluation paradigms and competence metaphors as distinct from traditional general Didaktik.

However, the first attempt to eliminate the twin pairing of “Lehrplan” and “Didaktik” failed so comprehensively that up until the early 1990s it was possible to speak of a Renaissance of Didaktik (Hopmann & Künzli, 1992). Once again, the old routines and rules of state “teaching work as an administrative action” were reinforced (Hopmann, 1988). With hindsight, this was presumably because while the semantics had been replaced, the approach to the regulation of teaching had remained the same. In the teaching profession, it was not until a new attempt at a PISA-inspired shift to perceived learning outcomes of pupils that it was possible to marginalize traditional generalized Didaktik and replace it with a concoction of subject Didaktik (Fachdidaktik) and educational psychology. So-called “empirical educational research” (“Unterrichtsforschung”) was then able to almost effortlessly conquer terrain that hitherto had been the heartland of the didactic autonomy of teachers: the concrete structure of the lesson.

The irony of this story is that curriculum research was now being used to solve local educational crises at a time when the first wave of reception in the late 1960s, at home in the United States, was “terminally ill” (Schwab, 1969), while the still on-going second wave of reception at home faced massive criticism, threatening to destroy the American education system at its core (Hopmann, 2013; Ravitch, 2010, 2013). Between them lay the double reconstruction process of “curriculum studies.” On the one hand, a combined movement developed after Schwab, soon labelled “re-conceptualization” (Pinar, 1978), provoked sustained questioning of the conceptual and methodological premises of curriculum theories. On the other hand, the public declaration of the bankruptcy of American education (*A Nation At Risk*, 1983) led to an accelerated introduction of more standards and testing to measure student performance, culminating in the No Child Left Behind Act and the introduction of a national control regime (2002). Of course, after this massive intervention also failed to produce the desired results, one saw the entry of something that has been apparent since the early nineties: the first introduction of national curricula in the form of so-called “core curricula” (Common Core standards; see <www.corestandards.org>). Today, in the United States,

we see the emergence of all the problems to which such curriculum regimes lead and with which continental Europe has been familiar for 200 years. Moreover, similar stories are emerging from England, Australia, and many other “Curriculum countries” (see e.g., Fensham, 2013; Jenkins, 2013).

Experiences

Thus far, we have “fast forwarded” through several important stages of the encounter between both traditions insofar as they have influenced the respective paths of school development. One can easily extend and deepen this framework. For example, China provides an instructive example of how the advent of curriculum theory has been perceived as a breath of fresh air wafting through a rigid Herbartianism and a stale Didaktik (cf. Deng, 2009). One could also take the education-biographical perspective, which has been dominant in recent years, as a litmus test, as addressed by the respective reference systems with educational programs [Bildungsgänge] (Meyer, 2005) or educational biographies (Pinar, 2011). Is it possible, however, to glean something systematic from this and similar experiences? Not much, it would seem, in terms of a theory-systematic comparison: Didaktik and curriculum theories come in so many colors and shapes that any comparison would necessarily be limited to a few more or less random examples if one is not to succumb to the danger of working with untenable summary stereotypes. Indeed, we might find here both critical and affirmative voices of almost every possible persuasion imaginable: post-structuralist, post-feminist, post-conceptualist, constructivist, phenomenological, empirical, etc.

For me, it did not and does not come down to an epistemological systematization of the respective traditions’ stocks or to the necessity for praising one at the expense of the other. What fascinates me in the perspectives of comparative Didaktik in these encounters is rather how little either succeed in changing what I have elsewhere referred to as “constitutional mindsets” (Hopmann, 2008), that is, the well-established, basic social patterns of the understanding of schooling that have sedimented in the respective traditions. When both approaches get connected, this leads to serious problems.

The implementation of Didaktik as a profession creating semantics was closely linked to the implementation of the state monopoly on school inspection and administration as well as its curriculum (Lehrplan) regime.

As mentioned earlier, Didaktik established itself within the gap between teaching and lesson planning, in the difference between disciplinarily combined curricular matter (Inhalt) and the situational meaning (Gehalt) to be acquired. So, too, “didactical analysis” became “the core of lesson preparation” (Klafki, 1958). Thus, in the Didaktik triangle (of content, teacher, and pupil), the teacher-content axis was said to be the central gateway. With some didactical dexterity, a teacher in this context could explain almost everything that was relevant to teaching, as long as they did not manifestly transgress the rather weak framing of the content requirements. Accordingly, until a few years ago, that which was ultimately learned in the classroom as the curriculum was implemented was not a subject of systematic control (cf. Hopmann, 2003).

Nevertheless, Dewey’s *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902) is not alone in constructing the curriculum historically in terms of the student-content axis with regard to questions concerning mainly locally determined learning arrangements and their more or less measurable consequences. Dewey aims explicitly to revoke the separation assumed in Didaktik of “subject matter,” that is, the given lesson content, and the child’s learning “experience,” which can only succeed if the educational content is not imposed from the outside but rather anchored in the child’s experience. From Dewey to Tyler and beyond, these plausible, school-internal experiences should be representations of socially relevant experiences. This bridging is achieved by the elementarization of social patterns of experience in school-based tasks. The dispute that has occurred since then within the field of curriculum has been about which of these tasks are considered relevant and why, and not about the basic assumption of the bridging itself. This in turn eventually allowed for the measurement of lesson quality in terms of the way tasks were handled, and from this, the evaluation of teachers.

But what happens if one wants to do both without neglecting either? This is precisely the question that arises when an encounter of the two traditions is used as a means for school development. The teachers from the tradition of monitorial instruction quickly learned that such blending negates the situatedness of teaching, amounting to prejudice against implementing each as a given “best practice” routine of local circumstances and individual needs. Otherwise, they would run the risk of being held liable for any differences between established expectations and actual results. As Diesterweg (1836) claimed, in considering an appropriate model of monitorial instruction,

teaching becomes a “soul-destroying mechanism” (p. 173). The teachers involved set this against the added value that they aimed to achieve through their respective instructional design above and beyond the basically set mechanical instruction (cf. Hopmann, 1990). Then, as now, this was difficult to prove.

The situation with today’s teachers is no different if they are still under the delusion that they can exercise substantial autonomy when all is handed down by the curriculum, from lesson planning and teaching through to a system of performance assessment based on identical competence catalogs. Teachers, it is said, would still possess the freedom to select content where the situation requires the respective competences to be. However, since the competence-based curricula are nevertheless still curricula and so dictate even more precisely than before the disciplinary sequence of lesson content, the autonomy of teachers is ultimately limited to their accountability for any gaps in the competence chain or unwanted side effects. Seen from the Didaktik point of view, this competence attribution is nothing more than an attempt to suspend the contingent connection of curricular matter to instructional meaning. This is nothing more than an attempt to nail jelly to the wall. All that gets stuck is the nail, the test, which in this case represents the yardstick, which then unabashedly becomes the actual goal of teaching. At its core, it becomes no different from the monitorial instruction of its time: requirements regulate “cognitive” competence development as it is called today, that is, the sequence of tasks. Teachers are made accountable for both the fulfillment of such tasks as well as all other educational expectations, which might be assigned to schooling.

In analogy, the new core curricula (Common Core Standards), in the United States and elsewhere, exacerbate the accountability problems of local teachers. They threaten to force what was not possible under the pure test regime, namely continuous ‘teaching to the test’ using predetermined lesson plans. Seen from the point of view of curriculum theory, the aforementioned bridge between intra- and extracurricular tasks is suspended, deprived of that very local freedom that was, for Dewey, constitutive of a successful teaching experience (see e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2009; Ravitch, 2013). There is already an extensive, partly private and partly public industry that prepares appropriate lesson plans for each standard. Here again, everything that cannot be seamlessly integrated into the value chain is marginalized, or more

precisely, passed off as a residual problem of the accountability of teachers, threatening them with the loss of employment if they cannot keep up with this production process. It is no wonder, then, that the average duration of activity in the teaching profession is rapidly falling (cf. Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014).

Limits/Borders

The one and the other strategy would at least be more comprehensible if there were any empirical evidence to demonstrate that these dual strategies were in some way successful, even if only in relation to their own objectives. As far as I know, this has yet to be sustainably demonstrated. On the contrary, rich contemporary empirical educational research shows that temporary gains can more likely be attributed to a Lake Wobegon effect, or superiority bias, than to any actual learning gains (see Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Berliner, 2009; Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2012, etc.). In contrast, there is considerable evidence from countries such as England or Norway, which have lengthy experience with such dual strategies, that such an approach leads to increasing segregation, decreasing inclusion, growing power differences, and social inequality, indicating the opposite effect to that for which they were supposed to be created (cf. summary Hopmann, 2013). Quite the opposite is indicated by countries such as Finland, which, immediately after the introduction of the new standards, stubbornly held to existing traditions, in this case a rather loose-knit national curriculum system without mandatory time controls (cf. e.g., Sahlberg, 2012).

Even more interesting in the context discussed here are the long-term structural effects of the encounter. General Didaktik is in danger of being lost to its constituencies, as Gerd Biesta (2012) has recently shown in a brilliant article on the “disappearance of the teacher” (“Giving teaching back to education: Responding to the disappearance of the teacher”). Squeezed by the double regime of standards and tests, the gap that was constitutive for the development of one’s professionalism vanishes. General Didaktik then remains at best the task of holding Sunday sermons on “forgotten contexts.” The situation is no better for curriculum research, which played no significant role in the development of the new core curriculum. And so, standards and tests are being implemented from England to the United States and Australia

through the interaction of bureaucracies and the curriculum industries (see Fensham, 2013; Jenkins, 2013; Tienken & Zhao, 2013).

From the perspective of a comparative Didaktik, I wonder what the limits of this development might be, even though I can already hear objections that a coarse mesh problem description such as this one is unable to detect the slumbering potential of the dual strategies described. Admittedly, it is also true that suspicions developed on a similar basis led to the outbreak of the test culture in “Lehrplan” countries, and the transition to the ‘Lehrplan’ regime in curriculum systems has certainly proven to be viable. In this sense, I would like to suggest three possible scenarios:

1. When I look at the flood of publications lamenting the still insufficient development of competence strategies as well as the new core curricula, I fear that it will be many years before the situation improves and it becomes generally accepted that these strategies, judged also on their own claims, are unable to achieve what they intended. The toolbox of the court of accountability is far from exhausted. One only needs to read the annual report of the German Education Commission (Aktionsrat Bildung) to see that there is more in store (<<https://www.aktionsrat-bildung.de>>). It is most likely that the implementation will be well supported by national institutes, education research circles, and other milieux of the institutionalized competence industry, if only to avoid having to answer for their own lack of success. If we take as our benchmark the history of the similarly functioning model of monitorial instruction, we can expect at least one or, more likely, two decades of massive and increasing interventions.
2. Under these conditions, the pressure on schools, teachers, and pupils is mounting to such an extent that cracks in the public-school systems are beginning to show. When I look at developments in Sweden, through to England and the US West Coast, and even China or Japan, I fear that the public school as a common good will, through programs and lobbies, become increasingly fragmented to such an extent that the traditionally structured school system will one day appear as a mild form of social segregation (cf. Hopmann, 2013).
3. It seems rather unlikely that there will be a return to the past much hoped for by some colleagues (cf. Labaree, 2012). The pressure of conflicting social interests currently being exerted on the school system is too great. I also cannot see any effective coalition of democratic forces that might be able to stop the train in its tracks (as Apple, 2013, hoped).

Whether and how all this will happen, of course, depends not only on developments within the education system but also on how globalized society deals with the growing problems of self-control and power distribution as a whole (cf. for a summary Hopmann, 2008). However, all in all, I assume that the double game of curricula and testing is far from over and will keep us busy for years, no matter how often comparative Didaktik is able to show that we are racing full steam ahead into a dead end. This places general Didaktik as well as independent curriculum research before an almost insoluble dilemma. If they involve themselves, they will have legitimized and perpetuated a process whose collateral damage is foreseeable. If they refuse involvement, they will be marginalized and will let down those to whom they were accountable in the first place, the teachers and their pupils. So, they must try painstakingly to operate between two extremes, searching continuously within the framework of the double game for gaps and counter-movements through which it is still possible to act in a manner that is didactically responsible. This leads us, perhaps surprisingly, to the conclusion that it is not less, but much more Didaktik and curriculum theoretical efforts and even more dialogue and the international exchange of experiences that are needed in order not to lose our orientation on this rocky path.

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