

## **New Education – Historical Aspects and Recent Significance**

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### **Introduction**

This article provides some historical background to the formation of the ‘New Education’ movement and the ‘New Era’, the predecessors of the World Education Fellowship and the *New Era in Education* journal respectively—Editors.

### **Unity and multieity**

“Reformpädagogik” – “New Education” – “Progressive Education” – “Education nouvelle” – “Zenjin Education”: the denominations of the different contexts of reform that were discussed in the public discourse about education at the beginning of the 20th century differ from each other. On the one hand, this already becomes obvious at the semantic level. So, the question arises whether one can transcend the boundaries of language and if the different terms can at least explain similar or even comparable contexts. It seems to become clear already at this point that reform-element is about the connecting aspects of different issues. However, it is more than clear that different contexts of reform vary to a large degree. In the first instance, this becomes visible in the idiosyncrasy of the involved actors, the acting persons. In addition, the differences result from the banal actual situation, that pedagogy and ideas of education are always part and result of a long-standing cultural tradition. The alterity, even the alienness, does not stop at the boundaries of language, but becomes manifest mostly in language. Cultural irritations, such as manners, gestures, interpretations of being or the way people consume goods and services, question the common ground. The guarantee of security the empirical studies of the present try to offer prove as a superficial false friend. This shallowness of reality transformed into numerical indicators however allows us to communicate in a pragmatic way. Nevertheless, this impudent form of communication results in the unease, that the recognition of the alienness of the alien is buried by the oversimplification of empirical results taken as clear depiction of reality. The pretended orientation reveals to be hollow, besides the glamorous chitchat of the present it lacks the orienting power of guidance. In the encounter with the cultural other it is *especially the history of the cultural matters of course and the individual moulding*, that allow the recognition of the other as another in a different quality, thereby opening up the common search for connections. Without the history of cultural moulding in the field of pedagogy and education the question about the connecting and differencing aspects cannot be answered in a meaningful way.

Since the founding of the global organization New Education Fellowship in 1921 (cf. Chapter 4) a way to compare different approaches to reform was developed, based upon this perspective: The human being as a learner is entwined in the history of culture. Both universality and particularity have to be taken into account when action is aimed at reform. This point leads to the next question: How is the learning process of the human being interpreted? How can – assuming a specific view on learning – the different contexts of the world and the different patterns of cultural development be

valued? Those questions form the foundation, from which common criteria are generated to assess theory and practice of education. During the conferences of the 1920s it became clear, that mutual understanding crossing cultural differences was only possible when personal exchange of ideas and a personal encounter were possible. The systematic discussion about the question were such common aspects and common criteria might be found to interpret the learner and also the culture is one of the most central questions of progressive education. Besides all historical evidence and examples this is a systematic-philosophical task to be tackled (cf. Koerrenz 2014, 15ff. and 43ff.).

The question about common criteria, about the common ground of “Reformpädagogik”, “New Education”, “Progressive Education”, “Education nouvelle” or “Zenjin Education” is of fundamental meaning for an intercultural-comparative perspective. In addition, the question is also tied to a historical-comparative view, aimed at pointing out the relationship between the past and the present of Reformpädagogik. The examination of history therefore is guided by the assumption that the historical approach is not maxed out by talking about and perpetuating the classics in a blindfolded way without further critique. The classical about the classics becomes visible when they are perceived not only as mere historical documents. Their meaning for present times becomes evident when you look at their systematic potential and information given about education in general. The “classics” become important for today because they imply impulses for understanding pedagogy in a systematic way. They might offer answers to urgent questions such as What is pedagogy? or the question about the task of pedagogy in general. In addition, they raise the question who should be in favor of pedagogic action. Those questions can be answered by referring to the “Classics”. Without those questions in mind they would not be interesting anymore and could be forgotten without hesitation.

Conjoining those questions, the intersecting elements of intercultural and historical pedagogy become evident. Both perspectives of comparison are derived from philosophy of education, focusing on anthropology and cultural theory. The discussion about systematic criteria, about the optic for a deeper analysis of pedagogic thinking and seeing is closely linked to the direct confrontation with the history of pedagogy and interculturality. If we want to put this in the context of this talk, one can say that the question about criteria of “Reformpädagogik” on the one hand links the reform-oriented ambitions of pedagogy with its historical embeddedness and models of understanding the current issues, one the other hand with its own cultural embeddedness.

The explication of at the same time integrating (intercultural and temporarily) and differentiating (in respect to Not-Reform) criteria is a question of understanding. In this sense “Reformpädagogik” or “World Education” can be understood as a hermeneutical project on a very basic level. This project on the one hand is a project of reflexive self-assurance but on the other hand a project of intercultural understanding.

### **The two criteria of Reformpädagogik**

In the following context, “Reformpädagogik” is understood as a global project, thereby following the not always self-evident premises as stated by Hermann Röhrs and Volker Lenhart. (c.f. Röhrs 1982, Röhrs/Lenhardt 1994). Reformpädagogik is not an issue limited to the national context, even though there are strong cultural specifics visible. Furthermore – also derived from the premise of internationality – the assumption of this perspective is that a binary difference of “Reformpädagogik” and every other kind of pedagogy can be identified (C.f. Koerrenz 2014: Chapter 1). In this sense, Reformpädagogik inscribes elements of world culture (cf. Meyer 2005: 179ff.)

into pedagogic thinking and acting. Therefore, New Education can be understood as a specific project of modernity that is closely linked to a certain perspective on the human being and culture. To define this perspective in more detail, New Education is understood as the combination of two criteria:

➤ ***Firstly: the anthropological criteria.***

Reformpädagogik is about the whole person. In a first instance, this means that Reformpädagogik is about the balance of body and mind of each individual. However, in a second instance Reformpädagogik is about the whole human being attributed with a variety of rights – as already mentioned and emphasized by Pestalozzi (cf. Stanser Letter in Pestalozzi 1968) – which each individual can claim from culture, other human beings and society. Of course, the human being needs a certain elementary amount of nourishment, accommodation and appreciation. This is especially important for children and vulnerable people (cf. Korczak 1928/1970). The guiding principle of the whole person therefore aims at both balance of body and mind and the proclamation of elementary human rights, which claim universal and worldwide validity. This approach is valid for all different stages of life and all possible different kinds a human life. One of the main ideas of Reformpädagogik – carried by the assumption of the human beings' dignity irrespective of gender, heritage or cultural background – is that all stages of life have their own quality and value. Each stage of life is a specific expression of the whole, complete humanity. Each stage of life is an expression whole, qualified personhood. That implies that children and youth cannot be seen as unfinished or premature adults. Children are qualified persons that have to be respected and minded. Reformpädagogik is about understanding pedagogy in a normative way, thereby focusing on the learner. The aim of all kinds of learning processes is that the human being achieves an inner balance, which proves itself to be relevant for the active building of a culture oriented towards peace and justice.

➤ ***Secondly: the criteria based on cultural theory***

If the human being is understood as a holistic entity, culture always seems to be imperfect. There is no such thing as a perfect society, no matter where on earth we have a closer look at the society. There might have been times of harmony and peace; but those have to be understood as an exception. Generally, the life of human beings on this earth always was and still is dominated by tentativeness and imperfection. For the human being, earth is a place of alienation and not heaven on earth (Cf. Rousseau 1750/1955). From this point, New Education's idea of the human being as a whole person gains a new function. The idea of the whole person is at the same time the foundation for a mode of criticism that can be aimed at all kinds of culture. To put it in a different way: New Education always is a mode of cultural criticism. This kind of cultural criticism always includes the analysis of contemporary society. For example, totalitarian societies that enforce methods of collective education cannot be aligned with the main ideas of Reformpädagogik. However, aporias between freedom and equality are evident. It would be too easy to totally identify the ambitions of Reformpädagogik with one specific political horizon of ideas. The conflict between freedom and quality, between individualization and the emphasis on difference (not to mention the differences in

income and wealth) on one hand and socialization and a large variety of measures to mediate different levels of participatory rights or different ownership structures on the other hand cannot be solved. New Education does well, if it always understands itself as cultural criticism, thereby recognizing the own rights of learners and looking for deficiencies of freedom and equality in all kind of society.

The two main motifs can be summarized as this:

- New Education addresses the human being as a holistic entity. For that matter, the different ages – especially childhood and youth – have their own quality and sense. The singularity of age becomes the norm of pedagogic thinking and acting.
- New Education – viewed from the perspective of cultural theory – always is a way of cultural criticism. To put it in different words: “New Education in its essential core is the pedagogic aspect of cultural criticism. Vice versa: New Education is the aspect of pedagogy that criticizes culture.” (Koerrenz 2014, 95)

Those two main ideas connect the different initiatives that are described as New Education across boundaries, especially boundaries erected by time. Past, present and future are connected by the systematic orientation on the whole person and by cultural criticism. In addition, spatial boundaries are also torn apart. Reformpädagogik connects people from all around the world in one specific mode of pedagogic thinking and action, that is sceptical when confronted with reduced and limited ideas of man (such as the consumer, the measurable learner or the will-less collective-men). Additionally, the idea of cultural criticism shows that no political situation can be understood as the perfect political situation, even though Reformpädagogik is always oriented towards Peace and Justice. This basic principle is now going to be explained elaborating three different lines of thought.

- In a first step, a basic dichotomy inherent to Reformpädagogik is going to be shown: The difference between economical and utopist criticism.
- In a second step, the foundation process of the World Education Fellowship in the 20s of the 20th century is going to be retraced. In doing so, the pedagogic perspectives developed in this context are illustrated. The illustrations leading question is, what is the specifically “classic” about the concepts and how those concepts can be used to inspire current challenges.
- In a third step, again the question is going to be asked what “Reformpädagogik” means nowadays and what challenges Reformpädagogik is confronted with, while taking the whole person as the idea of mean and applying cultural criticism.

### **The Logic of reform as the foundation of the two criteria of Reformpädagogik**

Reformpädagogik is characterized by a logic, which is inherent to the “Reform” motif in general. As a consequence of this logic, Reformpädagogik can be characterized by the foundational tension between economical adaption and utopist criticism (cf. Koerrenz 2014: 50ff). The idea of „Reformpädagogik“ “includes a difference all the time. This difference can be best described as the difference between an “Already-Now” and

a “Not-Yet”. The premise of all concepts of Reformpädagogik is a claim of a deficit. The current situation is claimed to be not good, or at least not good enough. The situation can get better, it is ought to get better, it must get better. The deficit can be corrected – if not completely, at least approximately. The question arises how a deficit can be located? To locate such a deficit and to determine it as a deficit, a point of reference is needed. To assess something as a deficit, a scale is needed. However, the modalities of this scale differ. The deviation in modalities leads to two typical patterns of the understanding of “Reformpädagogik”, because the difference between “Already-Now” and “Not-Yet” can be constructed in different ways.

The background of the first type can be characterized as this: The present status needs a different kind of pedagogy, to enhance the efficiency of leading the younger generations to the general development of culture. Culture itself is integrated into a steadily process of change. The task of pedagogy should be to prepare the learners with well conceived learning-programs as good as possible for the omnipresent changes in culture. In this conception, pedagogy is always behind. The cultural development is moving fast, pedagogy has to keep up with it. The central task of a reform of pedagogy in this case is to present a better or even optimal way of adaption for the recent generation, so that they can face the challenges of culture, the economical and social processes of change. The normative scale behind this idea proclaims that pedagogy and the reform have to be aimed at a better usability of learning and teaching. It is all about the efficiency.

The impulse for the question about a different kind of pedagogy is derived from the critical questioning of the economical efficiency of the institutions of education and Bildung. This line of thought can be found very often in the historical interpretation of Reformpädagogik. Following this argument, Reformpädagogik would – as a consequence – not be more than a servant of the economic system, in which everything is about modernization and the more effective usage of working power. Today, if we take a closer look at the suggestions for reforms in pedagogy, there are several aspects that can make us wary. It may be that promises such as equality of opportunity, freedom and flexibility in schools are nothing else than the shadowed interests of the market, following a logic aimed at the most efficient usage of work power. Especially when it comes to equality of opportunity, the whole person is not necessary in the focus of attention. Quite the contrary is the case. A closer look shows that primarily the activation of persons for the workforce and the usability for different market processes is aimed at. Competencies such as flexibility and individual motivation are often in conflict with concepts of rights or justice.

It becomes evident, that on the one hand we have to pay attention to the different interests that are involved in the calls for a reform. On the other hand, Reformpädagogik must not neglect questions of efficiency. The central point in this context is to figure out what’s the aim of “efficiency”. The aim of best adaption has to be measured using a scale that draws on the open and hidden images of the kind of person that is going to be supported with this kind of pedagogy. The idea of a whole person with a balance between mind and body, attributed with rights however, does not work out when the idea of economical usability of the work power is focused. It has to be critically discussed what “efficiency” can mean in the sense of a better and up to date pedagogy.

The second type can be characterized as a contrary approach that constitutes the difference of “Already-Now” and “Not-Yet” in a different way. The possibility of a second way to constitute the difference emphasizes the critical discussion of tropes such as “efficiency”, as there is a completely different mode of thought available to

think the difference. The second type does not address the material conditions of a contemporary culture. Rather, it imagines a hypothetical ideal condition of culture (therefore also pedagogy) and asks, how the present society and the human being have to be interpreted using this ideal starting point. Again, a structure of deficiency inevitably emerges. The given situation cannot correspond with the ideal situation because the point of reference for the better situation is always set outside of the mundane conditions. Besides the romanticizing of earlier – better – times, this line of argument channels the attention to a fictive initial point or terminal of history. Those points are connected to the interpretation of the person, which are closely linked to religion, no matter whether Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism or Islam. It is always about a different, a better world, because only in a perfect world – according to the motif – the human being could live in peace and harmony as a whole person with its fellow human beings and its environment.

Obviously, this is not our earthly reality. So, the question arises which function and which significance such references have. Are they an empty promise of something which cannot be realized by human beings? Is it possible to derive a reference frame for our inner worldly acting and thinking from them? The latter aspect is integrated into the reform-motive to form a point of reference, using the not-earthly elements. The European cultural tradition offers a more detailed picture of this figure of thought, respectively Judaism and Christendom. On the one hand a paradisiac original state is available. On the other hand, an eschatological outlook for a later salvation. (E.g. kingdom of god, judgement day) Reformpädagogik – following this line of thought – is moving on a time scale between those two poles: the orientation with regards to the bygone, lost paradise and the orientation towards a future kingdom of god.

One thing is especially important for the understanding of Reformpädagogik: Both scales can be used as a reference for the staging of intergenerational learning processes, even though one has to keep in mind, that the starting point and terminal point cannot be realized inner worldly. Both the idea of paradise as well as the idea of a future kingdom of God shed a certain light at the present materialization of education and Bildung. Both varieties of the reform perspective focus on the malleable change of human life. To put it in a different way: Human existence can be changed, when actions refer to the norm specifications of paradise or the kingdom of god and construct the possibilities of human action in that manner.

Thereby, the reform engages itself with reality in a specific manner. The requirement for this always is a critical alienation from the contemporary state. However; this process is always interested in a change, which happens step by step. Thus, “Reform” takes up a position between two extrema. “Reform” is situated between world negation and revolution as an alternative consequence of a criticism of the present. Reform cannot be reconciled with a complete denial of existence and an escape from the world. A positive feature is always inherent to Reform, with all its criticism. Additionally, reform is based on change via a gradually and malleable process. Reform is not aimed at a revolutionary disruption with reality, e.g. the structure of society. Reform is neither world negation nor revolution. Reform rather constitutes an understanding of pedagogic processes, in which learning leads to a partial suspension of mankind’s inner worldly alienation.

### **The “Classic” aspects of Reformpädagogik**

The two criteria of Reformpädagogik mainly include aspects of the utopist logic of Reformpädagogik. The primary interest of Reformpädagogik is the well-being of the

single individual and mankind as a whole and not the functionality of some kind of economic system, a long-term perspective based on technological progress or anything similar. The orientation on the learner and the idea that the rights of man are realized especially in the pedagogic support of a person (cf. Lenhart 2006) on the one hand, and the critical discussion with political developments on the other hand constitute a relation, which can be used to describe the “classical” aspects of Reformpädagogik. Socio-political that means that Reformpädagogik does not go together with pedagogic provincialism (c.f. Röhrs 1994, 20) and needs the critical integration of international experiences and insights to come to its own. (C.f. Röhrs 1994, 19). The struggle for an effective pedagogic understanding of human rights and a contribution of pedagogy to the process of international understanding, plus the ideas of education for peace, were and still are essential elements that enforced and helped to formalize the process – which started after the 1<sup>st</sup> World War in the 1920s – of global networking by reform-oriented pedagogues (c.f. Flitner 1931/1987)

The network was institutionalized in 1921 with the foundation of the “New Education Fellowship” (NEF) at an international conference in the French city Calais (c.f. Röhrs 1995, 15ff.). The conference topic in 1921 was “Der schöpferische Selbstausdruck des Kindes” and it was decided to form a world-wide organization, divided into three different sections (in German, French and English language). The guiding perspective of this international alliance was the “holistic education of man with regards to its social, emotional and intellectual forces in an open-minded form.” (Röhrs 1995: 16). The world-wide network for the exchange and discussion about pedagogic reform was organized using mainly two forms of communication: The regular organization of international conferences and the founding of a community-forming official gazette.

The journal “The New Era” henceforth worked as a platform for discourse (c.f. Koslowski 2013). Additionally, large conferences were established which focused on the intellectual exchange crossing cultural and spatial borders. During these conferences the actors met which are known as “the” faces of Reformpädagogik in a narrower sense. Adolphe Ferrière, Maria Montessori, Ovide Decroly, Alfred Adler, John Dewey – those persons and a lot more prominent but also not that prominent practitioner and theoreticians met at the conferences. In 1923, the second conference took place in Montreux. The topic discussed was “Education for Creative Service”.

In 1925, 450 persons took part in a conference in Heidelberg. Amongst others, Martin Buber gave a talk about the “creative force in the child”. Two years later in 1927 Peter Petersen presented a model for schools that is nowadays known under the umbrella-term “Jena-Plan” at a conference in Locarno. In 1927, the conference in Helsingør with a focus on the topic “The New Psychology and the Curriculum” was visited by 2000 active participants, the highest mark of participants to reach. The conference in Nizzi, which took place in 1927 and thematized “Education in a Changing Society”, can be seen as sort of a point of culmination and conclusion before the irruption of totalitarianism (c.f. Röhrs 1995: 23)

Special national sections developed later. When the first national section was founded in 1930 in Japan, the New Education Fellowship was already almost 10 years in existence. The formal establishment of a German section followed in 1931 at a conference in Dortmund. The pedagogue Erich Weniger became the official chairman (c.f. Röhrs 1995: 22).

In a systematic perspective we have to ask how the criteria of Reformpädagogik which were already explained can be seen as a reflection of the debates that emerged around 1900 (c. f. Flitner/Kudritzki 1961; Flitner/Kudritzki 1962). What

were the topics that were discussed by those persons? What was important for them? What have they thought of as “new”? To put it in a typology: Firstly, it was about a new understanding of education, secondly about institutions of learning and thirdly, it was about the way teaching and learning happened.

The understanding of education was coined by a new evaluation of the different stages of life. Childhood and youth were not seen as a mere pre-stage of adulthood anymore. A search for the things that are suitable for children and things that are suitable for youth began. The child and the youth with all their peculiarities were put in the center of attention in a pedagogy focused on the learner. They became the norm and point of reference (c.f. Gläser 1920; Jöde 1920). Neither the point of view of the adults – e.g. as a teacher – nor the traditional and taught cultural assets – e.g. the curriculum – ought to be the starting point of learning. Likewise, this concept was applied to pedagogic thinking and acting. The foundational motifs for this development were already present in Jean Jacques Rousseau’s Bildungsroman “Emile” (1762). By pedagogic basic considerations and psychological research, a new view on the peculiarity of the life stages was developed, which was confronted with societal development. The cultural critical alienation from the societal development was mainly motivated by the observation that human beings are functionalized in a cost-benefit analysis. Especially for the earlier stages of life this seems to be problematic, because children and youth cannot be perceived as adults in deficit. In fact, the different stages of life should have their own dignity and their own right and education – especially schools – should consider this. (C.f. Koerrenz 2014, 136ff.).

The institutional frameworks of learning were theoretically discussed and practically changed on many different levels. On the state level, the organizational structure of schools was evaluated, both with a close look at the different kinds of schools as well as on methods and content. Schools as institutions were confronted with the call for a different conceptualization that should account for the different stages of life. In the German context it was the elementary school, which became a visible expression of the changes on the institutional level after the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. Furthermore, the support of children and youth outside of the school context was understood as a task of the state.

The passage of a youth’s welfare law and the development of an institution such as the youth welfare service are the most visible signs for the changes. Besides the actions of the state, a broad variety of private – also economical – initiatives – has to be mentioned, which tried to participate in the reform movement by founding their own reform-schools. The diversity of these alternative schools is partially forgotten. The most known of them are probably the boarding schools (Hermann Lietz, Paul Geheeb, Gustav Wyneken, Kurz Hahn), the Waldorf pedagogics and the democratic school Summerhill, imagined by Alexander Neill. However, the boundaries between the actions of the state and the actions of private initiatives were often fluid. The concepts that were mostly aimed at the state-run school system are probably the pedagogy of Maria Montessori (c.f. Böhm 2010) and the Jena-Plan by Peter Petersen. (C.f. Koerrenz 2012)

The aspects that address the organization of schools were accompanied by the search for a new understanding of instruction. The capability of expression and the potential of children and youth became the focus of those concepts. Examples for this idea are the debates about art as a subject in schools in general. In this discussion age-appropriate tasks and the creative potential of the learning individual was emphasized. The “free” essay and the “free” children’s drawing is document for the change in perspective – a change from the input of the teachers to the potentiality of expression of



the learners. It was all about expression and creativity. One of the central challenges of Reformpädagogik became the necessity to open up a room in which the potential of children and youth could flower.

### **Reformpädagogik – Challenges**

Which is the role of Reformpädagogik in recent debates about education and schools? Is Reformpädagogik still important today? The answer to these questions does not wear out by transferring the concepts that were developed after 1900 into the present. Nevertheless, this is also important and useful; however, Reformpädagogik in a systematic way exceeds this approach. Tying in with the pedagogic culture of debate established at the conferences of the New Education Fellowship, Reformpädagogik is about the question for the specifics and characteristics of Reformpädagogik today. Such a perspective needs criteria that connect the concerns of 1900 with the challenges of today. Criteria for this can be the advocacy for the learners and the absolute criticism of every culture. To put it in a nutshell and to formulate a modern approach for Reformpädagogik: Reformpädagogik nowadays is confronted with the challenge to implement human rights for all stages of life with an unconditional criticism and active construction of learning environments.

The most radical form of cultural decay became evident in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in form of the disrespect for human dignity to an unimagined extent: Wars, racism, exploitation. Europe and especially Germany turned up at the center of this aberration. For an understanding of the human being this is firstly connected with the fact that it seems to be escapist, to think the human being without the possibility of its radical and abhorrent depths.

Rousseau opened up his education novel “Emile” with the famous sentence: “Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man” (Rousseau 1762/1971, 11). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the good of man was not to be seen. Two World wars, a lot of other conflicts and war, poverty in large parts of the earth’s population, forms of environmental destruction undreamt of. The list of things that could be named is very long. Rousseaus ideas that influenced the Reformpädagogik with its orientation on the whole person, revealed itself to be utopian, without a real spatial relation. The alienation of mankind and the totality of culture seem to be powerful. The expression of cruelty lies heavy on our heart.

In contrast, the protest of Reformpädagogik against the mentioned aberrations seems to be small and fainthearted. However, there are aspects that are opposed to the history of war, exploitation and suppression. A term such as the “Pädagogik vom Kinde aus” became a norm, that centered the own quality of the life stages childhood and youth. This norm offers us a solid foundation to think and organize everything which can be called “pedagogic”. Finally, this norm provides a way to transfer human rights to children and youth. The single individuals are perceived during their whole life-span not only as primarily receiving, passive and indoctrinated objects, but rather learning, active subjects with specific rights. Those learners should be enabled to construct their life-course in a responsible way. The most remarkable document – with all its problems with regards to the practical implementation in daily life of different cultures – for this development is the UN-Convention on the Rights of the Child. In a certain manner, the conception can be understood as an implementation of the ideas of Reformpädagogik, to look at learning and teaching from the perspective of the learner. It would be an own task to identify the concrete impulses that the document received from the tradition of the New Education Fellowship. (C.f. Röhrs 1995, Lenhart 2006)

The document was passed at the general assembly of the United Nations in 1989. A summary of the essential motifs can be found in the preamble. The preamble states the goal that “the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity.” This identification ties the normative orientation of an own right by birth with a “spirit”, which includes the elementary intentions of enlightenment such as tolerance, freedom and equality.

For the national context, the convention works as an instance of appeal, which compels to justify and correct actions that are not in consistence with the convention. The perspective with a focus on the child is transformed into a diversified idea of the well-being of the child. The well-being of the child is characterized by certain safety precautions, which the state has to realize by “appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.” (Art. 19). Connected to this aspect is the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services. (Art. 24) The requirement for all of these is the general right for “life” (Art. 6) and a right for an own, individual identity. (Art. 8)

The aim of the convention is to foster the opportunities for personal development of the children. In article 28 and 29, the function of public educational institutions is described that way. The free visit of an elementary school (Art. 28a) and the organization of various forms of secondary schools (Art. 28b) offer the regulatory framework, which can potentially help to foster the development of each child as an individual. Noteworthy and very important for the pedagogic practice is the idea that “Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child’s human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention” (Art. 28e). The overall goal is formulated again, recurring to the statement of the preamble when the document says that the child has to be prepared “for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin” (Art. 29). Concluding those statements, we can say that Reformpädagogik and especially the New Education Fellowship supported the formation and the step by step realization of children’s rights to a great extent.

The point of change from the advocacy for the learner into cultural criticism can be seen in the way institutions are handled: It is not by accident that Reformpädagogik always searched for alternative school concepts. The insight is both simple and basic: In an institution such as school, not only content and people control and navigate learning processes. Primarily the rules and guidelines, which are represented by the institution as the institution itself, have a massive influence on the learning processes of children. Modern culture is packed with institutions, which mainly support collectivization and uniformity – even though they claim to do the opposite. The whole person is never in focus. So, the question arises whether there are certain kinds of institutions that could help to perceive the human being in a more holistic way. The boarding schools by Hermann Lietz, Paul Geheeb or Kurt Hahn or the community school model Jena-Plan with its special idea of community by Peter Petersen are two sustainable models for schools still today (Cf. Koerrenz et. al. 2018). The hope con-

nected to this model was to establish an alternative learning and living space, which would help to abolish the alienation of the human being – at least for a timespan (childhood and youth) and spatially limited (in the framework of a specific institution). Hermann Lietz tried to realize this intention by placing his boarding school in rural areas. In this remoteness in rural areas, far away from all kind of cities, he wanted to promote a certain way of life and work, which should further generate personalities that at the end of their education could have a positive impact on society. Peter Petersen tried to constitute an alternative space in society. He conceptualized a form of community in a spatial-communicative secludedness, which was based on a difference between the manners of the community “inside” and the society “outside” and by that criticized culture.

If we ask for the importance of Reformpädagogik today, the question arises in front of the backdrop of the human rights and asks for the intrinsic logic of institutions. (C.f. Coleman 1968). That means that besides the reflection on the content of learning, the controlling appellations of the institution have to be broached and reflected. Besides the curriculum in the institution, it is about the curriculum of the institution per se. (C.f. Parsons 1968, Dreeben 1980). In addition, besides the content, which is communicated in the institution, it is about the content, which the institution represents as an institution – rules of communication, the structuring of daily life in the family or the ten commandment of the class room, but also the image of an youth association or the structure of advertisements aimed at children on television. This critical view is valid for the pedagogic system school, but also for foster homes, youth camps, adult education institutions or dimensions of media and the world of consumption. In the first instance, this means that the rules of institutions have to be addressed openly and kept in mind.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The criteria of Reformpädagogik leads to the question to what extent the institutions the appeals – that are presented as institutions – of control of learning promote the whole person or reduce him to a future consumer and participant of the economic system. The learners have to be informed about the structural learning appeals which they are subjected to in pedagogic institutions. In that respect, Reformpädagogik would prove itself as more as the reception of cultural criticism ideas from 1900, but rather as a reception of a self-reflective competency in the sense of an enlightenment which is enlightened about it. (C.f. Gadamer 1957) So, the relationship between historical aspects and the current importance of Reformpädagogik can be concluded as this: The orientation on the whole person and cultural criticism in the sense of a criticism on the pedagogic institutions are mutually dependent on each other. To balance those two variables is the permanent challenge for Reformpädagogik.

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