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Cultural Education and Digitisation

Experiences and Perspectives in German-Chinese Dialogue

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Many actors in the field of cultural education work and cooperate internationally. This international context repeatedly provides illustration that the concept of cultural education is not based on a universal understanding. Thus, international dialogue forums are even more important – in particular, when societies are facing similar structural challenges, which also affect cultural education. Digitisation, which is transforming each area of life, is such a challenge. As it constitutes a significant aspect of a fundamental global and local cultural shift, the question of how the challenges of digitisation can be handled is of utmost importance for the extent, form and content of cultural education. It is not only about developing new ways of mediation, but also about understanding digitisation itself as a cultural transformation in order to shape and handle it in the best possible manner. “Cultural Education and Digitisation” was the subject of the German-Chinese expert forum which took place in Berlin from 27 to 30 November 2017. The Mercator Foundation and the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation initiated and funded the event as the second in the German-Chinese forum “Cultural Education Across Cultural Borders”, and carried it out in cooperation with ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen).

This Input summarises the core findings of the expert forum and shows perspectives for connecting digitisation and cultural education in Germany and China. Which discourses determine the debates on cultural education in both countries? Which hopes and concerns are connected to digitisation in general, but also to cultural education in specific? Which perspectives can be shown for future development, and which significance will be attributed to the international dialogue between Germany and China?

Discourses on Cultural Education in Germany and China

The discourse on cultural education in Germany is diverse (Bockhorst et al. 2012). In Germany, the term “cultural education” had developed, in particular, from a more socio-cultural, social-pedagogical and andragogic orientated variant, and simultaneously from a more aesthetic-artistic, education-theoretical variant; these approaches have maintained their substantial importance (Liebau 2018). The aesthetic-artistic position of the discourse emphasises that, at its core, cultural education aims at

shaping the personality through, and with the help of, the arts with regard to reception and production. On the one hand, it is about the development of aesthetic perception and creation competences of the individual; on the other hand, it is about the artistic processes, projects and results that come into existence in these contexts. This applies to the various artistic forms and genres, to music, the fine arts, literature, theatre, dance, film etc. The intrinsic value of the arts is thus central for personality formation. This position is represented by the Council of Cultural Education (*Rat für Kulturelle Bildung*; www.rat-kulturelle-bildung.de), which is funded by seven im-

portant foundations and was initiated largely by the Mercator Foundation. The following is based on this position.

However, in the Chinese discourse the emphasis is placed significantly more strongly on the dissemination and appropriation of the cultural tradition, the education in values conducive to the cultural, moral and also emotional integration into the Chinese nation and on a patriotic political education as part of personality formation, on which Lu Shizhen, the former permanent Vice Director of the China Youth University of Political Studies elaborated on in her presentation. In this context, the focus is not only on individual personality formation, but also on the usability and applicability of cultural education for the human as a member of society, and thus for society itself.

As different as the starting positions may be, addressing the shared challenge of digitisation is productive. In both cases, the processes of digitisation are of extraordinary consequence for cultural education, because not only do they significantly modify and extend the forms of aesthetic reception and production, they also have the same effect on the pedagogical forms of dissemination. The exchange about the development in Germany and China is thus particularly interesting because convergence and divergence only becomes visible through inter-cultural comparison.

What the processes of digitisation will lead to in detail will only eventually become apparent. Innumerable development questions are still open. However, it is already discernible that digitisation also has consequences for the arts; some of the traditional arts are being transformed, and radical new artistic forms of expression and genres are developing. This will also give rise to new challenges for the pedagogical communication of formal and informal contexts.

Can the tiger be tamed? Challenges and potentials of digitisation

Digitisation causes fundamental changes to all areas of life. However, on the political, social or individual level, not the acknowledgement of these facts is decisive, but the reaction and response. How is this development to be understood? And what are the associated political, social and individual options for action and control? In the German and also in the international discourse, three particular models are in competition, which can be divided into ideal-types: a more optimistic, a more pessimistic and an ambivalent model.

In the optimistic model, digitisation is above all an extraordinary opportunity for political, social and individual development. At its core, and on all of the three levels, it is a model of progress that ultimately, and in spite of all incalculable factors, believes in the controllability and manageability of digitisation, and regards it as the decisive option for the future – with the corresponding consequences for education and culture.

In the pessimistic model, digitisation potentially constitutes an uncontrollable threat (sometimes to a downright apocalyptic extent) to politics, society and the individual. It is to be countered, if at all possible, with analogue means – politically, this means with perspectives of containment; socially, with analogue practices of the social (in the most direct form of communication possible); and individually, with systematic digital abstinence and also an analogue practice in education and culture.

In the ambivalent model, there are opportunities as well as risks. The fundamental structural change is accepted, but the necessity for system-

atic limitations and counter measures is also acknowledged.

In the German-Chinese dialogue, the Chinese side almost consistently advocated the optimistic side, occasionally including ambivalent aspects. On the German side, there were no proponents of pessimistic views either, but the ambivalent aspects were emphasised more strongly. It is apparent that the respective groups have a different basic understanding. Digital techniques and technologies are apparently viewed as fully controllable positive future technologies in China; as the modern digital machine technology facilitating a pleasant future that follows the industrial mechanical machine age and the electrification of communication. This also applies to the area of education through the possible individualisation of learning and learning supervision and through the extended opportunities in perception, creation and communication to all relevant levels of culture overall. The hope is that digital technology – corresponding with the basic understanding of cultural education – can be used comprehensively for the political aims of social integration and nation-building and also as an instrument for development, education and supervision. The corresponding canon of values is based on the concept of a harmonious society: From this perspective, it is also possible to tame and control the digital tiger.

Indeed, the German contributions articulated high hopes for the future, but also expressed clear doubts towards such an exclusively positive view defined by faith in progress and the controllability of digitisation. Thus, the image of digital machine technology is also widespread (and politically prevalent) in Germany; this concept is projected onto the image of a digital mycelia; i.e. a grid of complex, progressive networking processes, which is comparable to subterranean, all-permeating and quasi-autonomous fungal cultures, which can no longer be controlled by hu-

mans, only materialise superficially in the form of machines and devices, and are connected with highly contingent processes and emerging results – this view was presented by Lisa Unterberg, summarising the position of the chair Benjamin Jörissen (Jörissen/Unterberg 2017). She is a research assistant at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg chair of pedagogy, focusing on culture, aesthetic and education. If this is the way you view the state of affairs, a strategy that aims at completely reason-based control appears to be an illusory notion or hope. Thus, the expectations for the future, and also the conclusions, are more tentative. We really do not know exactly what will follow, and we also do not know exactly to which extent it can be controlled and managed. Digital technology is not only viewed as a welcome tool that serves the optimisation of the arts, culture and cultural education, but also as a challenge with regard to its content. It is to be met with a certain degree of scepticism and not only with “more of the same”, i.e. the mere intensification of everything digital. Thus, quite on the contrary, the analogue gains a new meaning with regard to education and culture, especially under the circumstances of digitisation.

Pestalozzi's formula of “learning by head, heart and hands” is therefore more topical than ever. On the side of the individuals, it is in particular aesthetic answers extending beyond the rational attempts of management and control that stand to reason and are necessary. The arts offer particular opportunities for education because they are systematically linked to the experience of contingency and emergence (*Rat für Kulturelle Bildung* 2014). With them, we can gain particularly good experiences with the unexpected and the coincidental. We can also experience that unplanned and unexpected events and experiences are quite often the most important result of unplanned processes. It is obvious that such a concept necessarily goes hand in hand with an open, plural concept of culture.

Human images in the dialogue

It is well-known that images of humanity are a decisive foundation, not only for political, but also pedagogical objectives. It is precisely in this respect that there are large inter-cultural differences. In particular, this applies when not only different traditions are to be considered, but also when the political systems and fundamental aspects of the respective world views are significantly different. But the following is also undisputed: Inter-cultural exchange with the aim of achieving understanding and peaceful coexistence constitutes an absolute necessity under the conditions of globalisation and digitisation of the world culture(s); and in this context, cultural education plays a decisive role.

However, in order to find answers it is helpful to put the different normative images of humanity aside and to proceed on the premise of digitisation's challenges for cultural education. In order to be able to forecast the opportunities and limits of this development, one should ascertain the anthropological foundations of all educational processes, but not in the normative sense of positive images of humanity, but with the help of an empiric, descriptive approach.

These aspects were hardly addressed explicitly in the German-Chinese dialogue; but implicitly they played an important role. Although there were no disputes about normative images of humanity and the different fundamental starting points concerning the world view, political and cultural differences became apparent in this matter against the backdrop of different traditions and systems of society. Thus, for the further development of such dialogues, it could be very helpful to not only implicitly, but also explicitly and systematically, take anthropological dimensions as a basis and to address them.

It is not about a positive determination of what humanity is or should be as such, but only about the insight into the empirical dimensions that cannot be excluded by any means. Such an approach offers good foundations for rapprochement because it makes visible what we share. Corporeality, sociality, culturality, subjectivity and historicity of humans (Bilstein et al. 2003) can, for example, be named as dimensions, which should be considered in this context.

- **Corporeality** denotes the double constitution of humans as biological and cultural beings and places the focus not only on the life cycle from conception and birth to death, but also on the perceptive ability of humans and the limits of their creative actions.
- **Sociality** points to the fact that humans are, as individuals, also social beings in all phases of their lives and fundamentally depend on each other.
- **Culturality** shows humans as communicative beings that express themselves and communicate with linguistic, visual, sonic and gestural symbols, and are reliant on these symbols for their communication.
- **Subjectivity** not only belongs to the adult, but to each human from the very beginning, regardless of the individual empiric status. All human sentiments, thinking, acting is performed by the individual person and disappears with the person's death unless it has been objectified.
- **Historicity**, among other things, points out the difference between the finiteness of individual life and the endlessness of history, which constitutes the basis of all culture and pedagogics, because it not only makes the passing on and further development of the cultural heritage necessary but also possible.

Digitisation processes have immediate significance for the dimensions of corporeality, sociality, culturality and subjectivity: Digital media and techniques can significantly expand humans'

perceptive and creative abilities. In this regard, digital media and techniques are to be seen as tools of physical extension. Apparently, the primacy of eyes and ears is further supported. As media of the social they can enable and support new forms of relationship. As media of the cultural they fundamentally open up new symbolic forms of communication. Thus, all in all, they can provide a new framework for the development of subjectivity. Digitisation is fundamentally and rapidly changing interactions and cultural techniques. As far as it can currently be evaluated, a quantum leap seems to be occurring. This is what their central global-historical significance consists of. However, these developments always occur against the backdrop of particular historical processes and situations, which correspondingly give rise to different starting situations and contexts for the various societies and cultures, and thus also for the persons and their biographies.

The purpose of cultural education in the context of digitisation

All participants of the German-Chinese dialogue agreed that the significance of cultural education is increasing in the context of digitisation, even though the reasons stated and the perspectives differ individually. Many contributions clearly emphasised how important the perspective on the individual's perceptiveness and the ability to create is.

Perceptiveness and formative capacity are the basis for all cognitive performance and operations. If you cannot perceive and do not have formative capacity, it is not possible to think. It is not possible to live well if you cannot use your senses in a differentiated way. You can learn how to listen in a differentiated way by listening to and playing music; you can learn how to see in a differentiated way by viewing and making pic-

tures; you can learn how to move in a differentiated way by dancing and observing dance. In theatre and in film you can discover how the world can be and what it can mean. And literature brings people into contact with the world's past and contemporary culture and with themselves. Education of the senses, education of taste, education of interest, education of the skills and abilities specific for the respective domain, education of the ability to reflect, or in other words the capacity to think: unlike nature, the arts are never "simply there", but exist as a human challenge; therefore, they always demand reflection, distance or, in other words, thinking. At the same time, they also particularly make visible the experience of the opportunity and the necessity of actively shaping the world.

The arts are not superfluous luxury. Since their inception, they have been the foundation and background of sensual and reflective learning. One can learn from the artists and their works what was actually possible to implement and where the boundaries were. The individual human discovers his or her possibilities through fantasy, practice and experience, which requires time and leisure. Because in cultural education – i.e. outside of the commercial space – the arts only unfold their full potential if they are there for their own sake: for joy and for the creation of the producers and recipients. Only then can the politically, socially and personally desired side effects (promotion of creativity, communication and cooperation ability) occur. Thus, the capacity for purposeful rendering also has limits, which is a view for which the *Rat für Kulturelle Bildung* extensively gives reasons in its position papers (2013 et seq.) and which is presented here. It is based on the perspective that if you recognise the particularity and the inherent value of the arts, they also become useful in an expanded sense; in particular as the foundation of communication across all borders.

We live in an age where the unknown and alienation is increasing. Precisely because the familiar is losing its self-evidence in the age of globalisation, mediatisation and migration. Also, rapid processes of change create ever new challenges caused by unknown situations, and thus it is crucial to engage in exercises of handling the unknown on all relevant levels at the outset. The non-verbal arts offer special opportunities. But for the arts to realise their potential, one has to be able to get to know them first, for which you need cultural education. It has favourable anthropological prerequisites insofar as every child carries in itself the hundred languages of the arts as development opportunities. Children sing, children laugh, children paint, children play roles, children perform etc. They are corporeal, cultural, social, historical subjects from the beginning. This is a starting point for further development.

In this context, one of the decisive anthropological insights refers to the question concerning the humans' perception of the world, given that the world not only exists objectively and is perceivable objectively, it must always be understood through the filter of subjectivity. Humans do not only live in the world in its "objective" form of existence, but they also live in the world as they perceive it, which thus differs from all other worlds. With their worlds of sound, movement, images, languages etc., the arts offer the richest and most demanding repertoire for subjective perception. At the same time, they are always good for a surprise. If you want to achieve that humans live in rich worlds, and are thus able to perceive and be creative in a differentiated manner, the arts necessarily come into play. They demand (together with the sciences) the most complex forms of human perception and creative facility. Therefore, the arts have a central significance for cultural education.

Digitisation does not change anything with regard to the meaning of the arts and cultural education; it only makes numerous and complex new opportunities for production and reception available. The German and Chinese participants also agreed on this point.

Perspectives

Increasingly, the insight into the significance of cultural education for the individual and for society has prevailed in China and in Germany in the last decades. It has since become part of the political consensus in Germany and in China that cultural education, when understood as general education in the arts, through the arts and towards the arts, is increasing in importance under conditions of globalisation and with regard to intercultural and transcultural communication. This applies to school and extracurricular life; it applies to life as such. While more decentralised developments are occurring in Germany, the development in China is to follow a comprehensive systematic strategy.

In Germany, several initiatives contributed in a particular way to increasing the relevance of cultural education. Since 2004, the *Kulturstiftung der Länder* (Culture Foundation of the States) annually organises the funding contest "Children to Olympus", in which cooperation projects between schools and artists and/or cultural institutions are granted awards and are documented. From 2007 until 2017/18 the extensive funding programme "An Instrument for Each Child" ran in the Ruhr Area. It was replicated in several other states and has been extended and continued with the North-Rhine-Westphalia-wide programme "JeKits – Instruments, Dancing and Singing for each Child" since 2015/16.

Since 2009, the annual BKM (*Beauftragte(r) der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien*; Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media) award “cultural education” has been awarded by the federal cultural minister. In 2010, the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg established the second UNESCO chair for cultural education worldwide, which was particularly engaged in international discourse, not least in addressing the issue of the “Seoul-Agenda”, which formed the central result of the second world conference on cultural education in Seoul (UNESCO 2010). The “Handbook cultural education” (Bockhorst et al. 2012) and its associated and frequently-used internet platform www.kubi-online.de are funded by the BKM (Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media). Some states have been working on a programme for a “culture school” for several years. The Foundation Mercator in conjunction with the Culture Foundation of the Federation initiated the programme “Cultural Agents for Creative Schools”, which has been implemented in five states. In 2012, a consortium of seven large German foundations implemented a “Council of Cultural Education” (“*Rat für Kulturelle Bildung*”) as an independent expert council, which in its memorandums, studies and public contributions addresses, in particular, the quality of cultural education. In 2012, the federal government started the large funding programme “Education makes you strong”, with which extra-curricular cultural education has been extended and is supported with substantial financial means. In the pertinent political, scientific and public discourses, it is seen as one of the most important pedagogic and educational-political tasks to support the artistic space and practical opportunities in formal, non-formal and also in informal education as intensively as possible.

The new interest in cultural education also becomes apparent in the reporting on education

and in research on education. On a municipal, federal and national level “cultural education” was treated as a focal subject (e.g. the City of Nuremberg 2001, the State of Bavaria 2012, the Federal Republic of Germany 2012). Not least, cultural education is eventually receiving increasing attention as a research area in the pertinent academic disciplines and in research funding. In 2015, the Foundation Mercator implemented the research funds “cultural education” for the funding of basic research, which started its second round with a new focus on funding research on practice and development in 2018. In 2015, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research published a diverse funding guideline to research cultural education. Also, in 2017, it released an additional funding guideline on the significance of digitisation in and for cultural education, on the basis of which many projects are funded. Since 2010, the “Network Research Cultural Education” (“*Netzwerk Forschung Kulturelle Bildung*”) has organised annual interdisciplinary conferences attracting large participation.

Overall, there is a decentralised, plural development in Germany, which is based on several political and civil-society initiatives. If and how central research, development and support structures, which are certainly desirable as additional resources for cultural education, can be developed, is still an open question. In this context, the question of further development of digitisation and the relationship of cultural education and digitisation plays an important role.

According to Lu Shizhen, the development in China is taking a different course: Since 2012, the Chinese government has included digitisation (informatisation) of education into the national development strategy, which is connected to the aim of cultural education in the sense of harmonious development of society and personality. The aim is the “implementation of a networked,

digitised, life-long education system, the creation of a society in which everyone learns and can learn everywhere, and the nurturing of a multitude of innovative talents". For this, the various decentralised systems are to be synchronised and integrated, also with the aim of offering to the actors on all levels, the schools, teachers, pupils, families and the public a comprehensive and accommodating service through public administration. "In September 2012, the government hosted the first state-wide conference on the informatisation of education and determined the most important task in the context of the informatisation of education, namely the implementation of 'three connections, two platforms'".

- "Three connections": Connection of schools with broadband internet, connection of classes with high-quality resources, connection of humans in learning spaces.
- "Two platforms": Platform for public service of education administration and platform for public service of education resources (the core task of the platform for public service of education resources consists of the implementation of the state information system for the administration of education).

On this basis, "unified planning" is to be incrementally implemented under the leadership of the government and with simultaneous participation of as many actors as possible on the different levels in order to achieve a "shared use of resources" and the integration of innovation. The central pedagogical aim consists of instructing youths to "maintain the adequate tension between the virtual world and the real world; they have to learn to adapt and develop a consciousness for self-discipline and responsibility".

Lu Shizhen summarised the maxim of this approach in an impressive formula: "One has to combine the soft power of culture (content and

form) and the hard power of the internet (network and technical facilities). The dissemination of Chinese culture must support modern science and technology." (Shizhen 2017)

One can be very curious what will develop from this approach and which significance it will gain, in particular, in the area of cultural education.

To compare these diverse strategies of Germany and China with regard to processes and results would, in any case, be a rewarding task for further research and inter-cultural dialogue.

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Professor Dr Eckart Liebau holds the UNESCO-Chair in Arts and Culture in Education as well as the Chairman of the Foundation of Cultural Education (Rat für Kulturelle Bildung). From 1992 to 2014, Eckart Liebau was the holder of the chair of Pedagogics II of the Friedrich-Alexander-University at Erlangen-Nuremberg and the speaker of the Interdisciplinary Centre of Aesthetic Education at the FAU (2005-2014). The focus of his work is on cultural and aesthetic education.

About ifa

ifa is committed to peaceful and enriching coexistence between people and cultures worldwide. It promotes art and cultural exchange in exhibitions, dialogue and conference programmes. As a competence centre for international cultural relations, ifa connects civil societies, cultural practices, art, media and science. It initiates moderates and documents discussions on international cultural relations.

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