Globalisation in Action: Summer School 2010 – »Textbooks and Beyond Educational Media in Global Contexts«

Katalin Morgan

It’s one thing talking about globalization and quite another to experience it first-hand. Eleven PhD students representing ten countries and five continents gathered for a week to present their work on educational media and to get feedback from their peers and from invited experts. When I was offered the opportunity to write a short article about the summer school, I leapt at it and was rather relieved to find out that I was not to record the content of the sessions in protocol style, but was free to express my impressions in a more personal way. What follows is thus just that; informed also by an informal questioning process that I conducted with fellow participants during our meal times.

Arriving at the Mövenpick hotel set the tone for the sense of a feeling of importance I felt throughout this time – and this feeling was shared by the others to be sure. Added to this was that the staff at the GEI was fully engaged with the programme and gave their utmost to make this not only a relevant but also a pleasant time for us. This was confirmed when we gathered for our first session and we saw our posters in larger-than-life full colour format adorning the walls.

The most cherished part of this summer school was the impressive list of experts who would give us much-valued input and professional comments on the presentations, starting with well-known and much-respected (or should I say feared?) Michael Apple. It became immediately clear why this renowned academic and activist has such influence – he spoke with passion and conviction and highlighted the main arguments of his latest work on the production of textbooks. Similarly, Prof Bodo von Borries impressed the participants with survey data about the reception of textbooks. On the fourth conference day Prof Hanna Schissler rattled our cages by pointing out that concepts such as human rights and tolerance need to be deconstructed and historicized; while the last expert, Dr Susanne Kröhnert-Othman, problematised the notion of diversity in educational media. From a student perspective it is noteworthy how varied these experts were in their work, their conduct and their style and thus how great is the road ahead with its myriad of branching possibilities and destinations. Moreover, as a student it fascinates me to find out what keeps the experts in their fields on their toes in terms of their own reading – so when Prof Hanna Schissler recommended a few key literature items, I took careful notes. I also picked up some valuable terminology such as »community cohesion« or »rights revolution« – terms that are most useful in the »becoming expert’s« toolkit.

One of the other highlights for me was meeting the other participants and listening to their stories of discovery and personal – often passionate – convictions. We shared ideas, talked at length at dinners, made connections, discovered common ways of thinking about problems and detected unofficial narratives about the various countries represented. By having such a narrowly-defined focus, the summer school attracted like-minded people, which was exciting and inspiring because one person’s study became relevant for the next and we could see how our individu-
What really impressed me and also one of the Australian participants, was that only three of us were English native-speakers, and that therefore all the others, including the GEI team and most of the experts, exerted a fair amount of effort to converse and present in English that the three of us would normally take for granted. But no, we recognised and greatly appreciated this effort and were duly impressed with the level of English used by everybody.

By the end of the week participants were very familiar with each other, and this was cemented by the farewell party held at the institute itself, which was a great idea since it meant that the GEI staff, including the student assistants, could also take part. I have never seen a board room with a glass ceiling be transformed into a party venue, much less an interactive smart board becoming a type of juke-box, but it somehow worked and we had great fun. It also impressed upon me how popular Turkish food is in Germany.

Another highlight for me personally was the mid-week trip to Berlin. As a scholar with explicit interest in the Holocaust and Nazism, the visit to the Topography of Terror, which was a great idea since it meant that the GEI staff, including the student assistants, could also take part. I have never seen a board room with a glass ceiling be transformed into a party venue, much less an interactive smart board becoming a type of juke-box, but it somehow worked and we had great fun. It also impressed upon me how popular Turkish food is in Germany.

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cubicles in the museum where one could just sob and dry the tears without interference. It was a reminder that pain is not necessarily negative – it was a kind of sobering pain – a realization that cruelty and hope go hand in hand – that one cannot appreciate the triumph of the human spirit without knowing also the extent of cruelty it is capable of.

At the end of the summer school I again was reminded of how fortunate I am to have been invited to partake in this event, to have met the experts and to have exchanged scholarly ideas with fellow students. The GEI is indeed a city on a hill and people who are involved with educational media studies are the coolest by far. In my short career in academia I have not yet come across a place that I would call home, nor a people whom I would consider a scholarly family. This trip has changed this. I have visions of future projects with some of the GEI staff and possibly some of the summer school participants to work towards innovative and groundbreaking research projects that will somehow move the frontiers of this scientific community to envision the design of educational media that children and teachers alike would find stimulating, fun and educational at the same time. Thank you GEI team for this unforgettable experience.

Über das Politische in der Schulbuchforschung
Sarah Lüdecke (Universität Heidelberg)

»Über Bildung kann nicht geforscht werden, wenn nicht auch der soziale und politische Kontext einbezogen wird« – so eröffnete Professor Dr. Michael W. Apple’ seinen anregenden Vortrag »Questioning official knowledge«, den er im Rahmen der Summer School »Textbooks and Beyond« (s. Bericht in diesem Heft) hielt.


Schulbücher als ideologische Kompromise


Der Schulbuchmarkt in den USA