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Book review: LAURA KAJETZKE. Wissen im Diskurs: Ein Theorienvergleich von Bourdieu und Foucault [Knowledge in Discourse: A comparison of Bourdieu's and Foucault's Theories].

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KAJETZKE, LAURA. Wissen im Diskurs. Ein Theorienvergleich von Bourdieu und Foucault [Knowledge in Discourse. A comparison of Bourdieu's and Foucault's theories]. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008. 200. Paperback EUR 29,90.

Through the definition of evaluation parameters of high quality and equitable learning outcomes, the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) sets homogeneous international education as standards in a heterogeneous education landscape. Kajetzke analyses this process as the construction of knowledge from two different critical points of view: Leaning on Michel Foucault's reflections, she focuses the collective aspects of this kind of knowledge, power and subject construction in discourse, and departing from Pierre Bourdieu's theories, she analyses the individual dealing with this kind of knowledge and the resulting reproduction of social inequality.

After a foreword stressing the importance of this kind of comparative but complementary approach to discourse, the introductory chapter legitimates the research focus and initiates the readers into the sociological concept of discourse. In chapter 1, Kajetzke gives an overview of different historical origins, concepts and research fields of the sociology of knowledge. She then dedicates a whole chapter (chapter 2) to the interrelations between knowledge and power as well as between knowledge and discourse in each of the two focussed theoretical frameworks, Michel Foucault's (chapter 3) and Pierre Bourdieu's (chapter 4). Both approaches are compared in chapter 5 with regard to the PISA discourse. In Foucault's perspective, Kajetzke concentrates on the homogenizing and disciplinary effects of the PISA discourse as power-dispositive, particularly in view of the constructed knowledge regarding students or pupils (Schüler)). Through the definition of key competencies as evaluation criteria, the PISA process adjusts pupils to a homogenized knowledge basis; they become objects of and are pushed in order to succeed according to the logic of this power-dispositive. Kajetzke chooses Bourdieu's theory to conceptualize the PISA process as a heterogeneous field of individual, heretic struggle in view of what counts as legitimate knowledge or truth in society. In this perspective, she is interested in the consequences of education (Bildung) regarding power distribution through the market for symbolic goods (cf. Bourdieu 1982), through the setting of offer and demand, the definition of the currency and the respective value of these 'merchandises'.

After discussing the discourse analytical methodology of the Grounded Theory (chapter 6), Kajetzke dedicates the seventh chapter to the analysis of the corpus, that consists of 126 collected newspaper articles from two different German editors (Die Tageszeitung (taz) and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)) in a period of three years (2001- 2004), this connecting conclusions in view of the two adopted theoretical perspectives. She first gives a detailed presentation of the collected data as discourse strand consisting of different discourse fragments, and then organizes them regarding the inherent discourse order in view of her research question. Analytically concentrating on the two categories knowledge and actors and particularly the subcategory pupils in the focused data, Kajetzke reconstructs a constant discursive struggle between a more narrow interpretation as applicable key competencies and a broader definition as education in the humanistic sense, implying the whole person, as the taz stresses. The discursive aim of both interpretations of knowledge nevertheless is the same: setting standards, benchmarks and evaluation criteria. Diachronically comparing the articles from 2001 and 2004, Kajetzke discovers a rising sceptical and reflective attitude mainly in the article of the FAZ regarding the homogenizing and normalising consequences of the PISA process.

Being geared to leading concepts of achievement (Leistung) and learning (Lernen), the discursive construction of the category pupils is much more homogenous, distinguishing generally between high- and low-performant groups and education systems. Considering the pupils' social environments as decisive for their lack of motivation and orientation, it demands efficient mechanisms of mentoring, supervision and control from schools, in order to exploit the whole potential pupils dispose of. Only the data from 2001 also mentions individual responsibility of pupils, considering learning a lifelong activity of autonomous acquisition of knowledge, and arguing against the disciplinary mechanisms of education systems. This critical element disappears completely throughout the years, whereas the stress of improvement of performance gets more and more hegemonic.

In the concluding chapter (chapter 8), Kajetzke discusses the merits of a combination of Bourdieu's and Foucault's theoretical frameworks for the analysis of the process and effects of knowledge production in society, and argues for a closer connection between theory and methods as well as between social/cultural sciences and sociology of knowledge.

This book is of a threefold interest for the field of discourse studies and the study of discourse and society in particular:

It compares and combines the different but - regarding basic epistemological assumptions - compatible approaches of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault only few publications deal with (Simons 2004, Honneth/Kocyba/Schwibs 1986, Bourdieu 1996). Although Kajetzke's presentation of both theories could be criticised for simplifying some of their dimensions, it succeeds in showing the merits of their combination in terms of the posed research question.

Secondly she gives a rich example of the importance of overcoming the gap between theory and practice - research practice or methodology in particular as well as social practice for example in media and politics. Through the analysed fragments of the PISA discourse, she succeeds in answering her leading questions about the definition of knowledge and pupils as subjects, and her theoretical and methodological reflections as well as her argumentations are impressively systematic and consistent. The presentation of the analyses seems brief, but gives a compact, profound and systematic overview of its results, that the author resumes at the end of each subchapter.

Thirdly, Kajetzke also contributes to a border crossing of different academic fields within social and cultural sciences, advocating for a general consideration of discourse and knowledge related aspects. She demonstrates this focussing the interdisciplinary field of sociology and educational sciences from a critical perspective - the last one up to now rarely dealing with Bourdieu's and particularly Foucault's theories (for example Dantier 2005, Yurén 2008).

Her book offers new and fructiferous research questions regarding the comparative theoretical framework as well as the PISA discourse and the field of education in general.

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