

*Sylke Bartmann/Nicolle Pfaff*

## **Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Trust in Education – Case studies from South-Korea and Brazil**

### *1. Trust in education – current educational research*

The central theme of this lecture is to give insight into the understanding of education as a strategy to cope with educational inequality related to class and migration. For this goal we are using the term of trust in education. We understand trust in education as a generalized meaning of qualifications, processes, and institutions in school and job-related training in the biographic contexts. Thus our understanding relates to current diagnoses of society, such as the terms information age, knowledge society or lifelong learning indicate.

However, in our presentation we outline two biographic case studies from South Korea and Brazil to give inside in biographic and perhaps cultural conditions of social mobility via educational participation. Beforehand we firstly outline existing research in the field and secondly explain the institutional background, data origin and methodology of our investigation. The results we are presenting are based on preliminary interpretations of single interview data. Thereby the category of trust in education understood as an element of the construction of biographies emerged from empirical analysis.

In opposite to sociology and many other areas of social science in the field of educational research phenomena of trust are widely faded out. Even though there are applications of the term trust in the history of educational science connected with analyses of professional relations, only few current traditions of educational research refer to trust as a basic of educational processes. This is, on one hand, a debate called 'education trust' which investigates processes of school development in relation of local space in the U.S. and in developing countries. On the other hand the term trust is applied when educational research deals with the public meaning and understanding of certain institutions within the educational system.

In contrast to these research traditions we use the term trust in education in a more general way as basic orientation towards education or biographized meaning of education as a whole. However, in relation to this our study has to be placed in the context of investigations of educational attitudes, such as academic aspirations and academic attitudes, which is strongly connected to educational inequality research.

Understanding trust based on sociologic theories as a strategy of coping with insecurities, we want to propose the investigation of phenomenon of trust in education as a way to understand processes of social integration and advancement via education.

### **2. Data Origin, Background of the Study and Methodology**

The study belongs to a research network supported by the German Research Foundation on 'Trust in Education – Development of Trust' which is investigating processes of trust development in social and professional contexts. Our work is based on current sociological approaches on the importance of trust for the reduction of the complexity of social settings, and for social integration and community building (i.e. Giddens 1996; Luhmann 1989). Within the network we focus on the development of trust in education at the areas of socialization, biography and culture. From a sociological point of view trust in education has to be understood as generalized relation of the individual to institutions, processes, and qualifications of the educational system.

The empirical study combines two studies based on biographical research in a cross-cultural perspective and related to phenomenon of trust in education. Thus, the case studies from South Korea belong to an international research project on work-related migration. The research interest focuses at the reconstruction of the biography – that is developments, breaks and crisis and their coping, the production of identity and dealing with different live surroundings. From this study we present the case of Mrs T., who immigrated from South-Korea to Western Germany in the 1960's. The analysis of this interview shows, though, that by trust in education Mrs T. gains recognition and copes with the process of migration.

In opposite to this, the case studies from Brazil have been carried out in the framework of a study at the University of Brasília investigating a newly implemented law allotting access to state universities in Brazil for Afro-Brazilians. The study focuses at student's biographic conditions and experiences in educational settings as well as experiences of stigmatization. The study has been carried out at the Faculty of Educational Science of the University of Brasília and is initiated and managed by our colleague Wivian Weller, who made some of the narrative interviews with female students of diverse disciplines available to us. From this study we present the case of Diana, who's parents migrated in the 1980's from the Northeast of Brazil to the capital area of Brasília. Our analysis of the interview shows, that trust in education makes it possible for Diana to be able to create a moratorium for herself in order to develop a future perspective independently from family expectation.

However, the two cases we present differ in their biographic conditions of the development of trust in education. Nevertheless our presentation focuses on similarities in relation to trust in education. Thereby we do not apply the term trust in education to the popular concept of fostering an occupational career by education. Instead in the cases presented trust in education serves as a manner of constructing your biography.

In terms of methodology we are especially interested in the formulation of single case studies with the help of a methodology which is well-known in Germany under the name of 'narrative analyses' developed by Fritz Schütze. He formulated a speech-sociologically based narrative theory and an empirically based biography theory. The narrative interview is a technique to reconstruct subjective experiences and it should be an impromptu speech. A narrative presentation is closely connected to the narrator's real world. Because of this aim the interviewer has to confine her- or himself to the role of an active listener. The purpose of the narrative interview is to elicit a story of self-lived experiences that is not a sum of responses to questions and it is not interrupted by the researcher's interjections. The analyzing procedure is orientated on what people have to say and - and this is the important point - how they tell their stories.

### **3. Case studies from South Korea and Brazil**

Hereafter we are going to present briefly selected results from two case studies in a comparative manner. Thereby, we are focusing on the meaning of education and on the reconstruction of specific types of trust in education within both biographic narrations. Therefore we leave out a full description of life courses and biographic details of both individuals. Thus, the case studies highlight trust in education as a coping strategy for societal insecurities as well as personal relations.

#### **The intention to keep learning**

**Mrs. T** was born in Seoul in 1945, being the third daughter of a wealthy family. She experienced a first break because of the Korean War which lasted from 1950 to 1953 and because of the death of her father who died from typhus in 1953. The death of her father

led to a pauperization of the family. Even as a young girl Mrs. T. had the will to learn, that is to become well-educated.

*"I always wanted to learn and to learn, but how? I had no money?"*

Because of the family's poverty there were no financial means available in order to finance schooling. It is this situation that Mrs. T sketches in her narrative as a basic condition for her life. Based on this she comes up with a theory of her herself stating that she had to establish herself.

*"Well, I had to establish myself without having a father in this very hard, hard life".*

In principle, she accomplishes to establish herself without forgetting the efforts and the deprivations of the time she suffered. At the age of 15 she left school and took up a job at a factory saving the money she earned in order to go to an evening school. Then

*"I was able to go to an evening school. It was four miles, five miles, I mean four to five miles from my home; every day **back and forth**, and always walking (...) I didn't mind the weather; I always had only one goal (.) I have to learn".*

After two years she completed successfully the evening school (secondary level) she went on working in order to go to high school which she completed successfully, too.

A very similar biographic presentation can be found in the narrations from **the Brazilian student Diana**, who was born in a poor satellite town near Brasília in 1983 as fourth of seven children. Diana tells her biography as series of educational processes starting with her school carrier:

*"well until the sixth grade I had accompaniment then after this I went by foot on my own I carried out the matriculation and everything . There was the mother of a friend of mine in the grade I asked her to sign the certificate for me this kind of thing . Then from the sixth grade my mother never had to come to school again and to do these things for me . Then in the second grade of secondary it was the same I learned because I wanted it"*

In this opening of her biographic narrations Diana describes a process of growth of autonomy related to the arrangement of her school career. Learning is presented as an intentional process. Diana continues her school career after primary school based on own decisions and own registration at school. She further describes a teacher who appears as significant other in terms of being used as excitation of her continued educational participation:

*"after that with all these things he said to me I told myself that I would not stop"*

The words of the teacher become intentional for Diana, even though if it is not said what exactly she does not want to stop, the whole thematic frame of her presentation relate to education.

Analogue to the narrations of Mrs. T. the ongoing educational participation is presented as an intentional process, which is not related to future plans.

### **Trust in education as biographic resource**

Another analogy between both cases exists in the use of education to cope with risks and uncertainties.

Based on family relations after school Mrs. T. works in different jobs. At a time in which there is high unemployment in Korea they provide her with social security and recognition.

*"Let me say, these were hard times, really hard times, well, I had my job and, all in all, I was well off, and I made my way".*

During her time at high school she already gets to know her boyfriend who goes to Germany in 1965 as a miner. Even though having a secure job she wants to follow him. Because she knows that only nurses are being accepted for the German working force she quits her job and starts training as a nurse. In 1969, which is after four years, she finishes her training and goes to Germany, only to learn that her friend is married.

Having lost her original intention

*"Well, my main goal was to meet my friend again"*

and with the duty to fulfil a three years contract – her employer had, among other things, paid for the trip, she reorientates.

*"In Germany I immediately assimilated (.) I did say, I am in Germany now (.) that is pointless, in the beginning I have to speak German (in order to) integrate and to live here".*

Based on narrative analysis we are looking at biographical resources, we are able to get an insight in biographical pattern of interpretation. Mrs T. has the habit to walk her way determinedly, her central biographical resource thus could be described as teleological recognition. In doing so the intended course of action implies a long-ranging orientation and, related herewith, a high preparedness to endurance (resilience). The aspired aim is less bound on the own personality in the sense of challenge or bringing to light talents/abilities, but rather means being armed against the existing challenges of life; i.e. it is rather a survival (live-out) than a fulfilled life. This is a task one has to fulfil.

Underlying this habit there shows a goal-oriented course of action that is related with the attitude to be faced with a difficult task. The learning of the German language corresponds to the course of action of being equipped for the tasks to come – this learning has to contribute to the task of survival. Here it can be seen that trust in education for her serves as a strategy to deal with difficulties.

Mrs. T. harks back to the familiar and up to now successful strategies that are related with the biographical resource of teleological recognition:

*"Well, I have wholeheartedly integrated myself ... into the German way of life, and I have..., I wanted, ... that is my opportunity, I did see no other opportunity".*

Mrs. T. succeeds in building up a – in some sense – normal life. Two years after her arrival in Germany (in 1969) she met the man who was going to become her husband. They got married in 1972, having two kids; her husband was self-employed and she stayed at home for 13 years, which is until 1988.

The Brazilian student Diana after school starts a job and at the same time continues school in a preparatory course for the entrance exam for university. Because of her extensive working times and family problems overall she stays four years in the preparatory course trying to access the state university of Brasília which would offer her a academic education free of charge. Up to now, Diana didn't yet develop a clear job aim:

*"Then I made my first two exams for law and the second year for Spanish, even though I did never want this, but I said to me Diana try something more simple then you will*

*succeed. That's why I tried this detour. Then after the fourth semester I wanted political science and did never change this afterwards"*

In the fourth year of her preparatory course she finally passes the entrance exam to the state university via a newly introduced quotation system for Afro-Brazilians. Later during the interview, however, she tells: *"Ehm, its one of my struggles to learn as many languages as possible."* And *"another big wish of mine is to study law as well, let's see if I manage"*

Rather it seems that her intention is to keep in education as long as possible, assuming that this is a way of success without making any decision related to her occupational future. Thereby she tolerates family rejection of her educational participation without losing sight of her personal aim to study:

*"Well I quasi did not help out at home and they only think about survival about survival now they don't think about future [...] well we suffer all this difficulties and I do not work I do not help out at home and that's why they critized me very much they said I behave like rich men's daughter that I do only want to study and so on. Today I'm their pride and joy you know my father is full of that too but at this time that was the problem"*

To leave the conflict laden family situation she moves to a student home and breaks up the contact with her mother for a certain time.

Diana attends formal education to gain individuality and independence – on the first hand in relation to her family who remains in working class jobs and miseria. Thus, the aim to be different and to leave this context without having developed a clear idea of her future occupational life is achieved via continued participation in education, which provides her with a moratorium to develop this perspective. Trust in education therefore serves as a strategy to the right thing without knowing what to do.

#### **4. Discussion and Prospects**

Our presentation focused on the biographical meaning of education. Based on a comparative analysis of two cases we showed that trust in education serves as a biographic resource and provides individuals with strategies to cope with social or biographic insecurities.

Both cases report from nations in transformation processes and are connected to processes of migration. At the same time they present processes of social advancement and integration. Thus, based on these preliminary results, it could be assumed that trust in education can be understood as a strategy of social integration and mobilization. Beside its individual importance we outlined exemplarily in this presentation one can imagine a social importance of trust in education. This can be assumed in the field of structuring of biographies on the one hand, and in the process of social integration and generation of social standing on the other. However, in relation to this for educational research the question emerges, what are the biographic and cultural conditions of trust in education. The category of trust in education may improve educational research at the intersection of biographical, migration and inequality research. Knowledge about the individual conditions in courses of life and personal experiences can help to foster individual educational careers.