

(Not to) Care about the future? How pedagogical authority is established within hegemony

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“There is no such thing as 'from the beginning ', especially if you, as the subject of a critical tradition, want to rethink and practice this very tradition; or if one wants to reinvent criticism because so much barbarism persists despite all the criticism articulated in the past.”
(Ruth Sonderegger 2019, p.13)

"There is no male figure who has the definitive answer to everything or the power to enforce his answer in every case." (Paul Verhaeghe 2014, p. 53)

(Educational) authority has a bad reputation, and largely rightly so. There is a whole range of legitimate points of attack for criticism of personal authorities among those in government and companies, of teachers, parents, or professors. In addition to this obvious possibility of criticism of visible authorities, there are other elements, too. One way of making authority a problem (of and for others) is to refrain from reflecting on one's own references to authority relationships and to raise oneself above those who follow. Some people or groups who see themselves as emancipatory or progressive find it easier to criticize power structures in general than their entanglement with their own or other authority habits, like the will to power or the gendered, racialized, and class-biased assumptions of leadership skills or political capacities. In egalitarian groups and milieus in which there is a claim to equal rights, authority is criticized as outdated and romantic view backwards, while "stars" and idols of critique and reason continue to exist. They see themselves committed to "ideals" such as freedom, transformative justice, or radical criticism itself.

Conservative to reactionary positions claim to see authority and hierarchies as necessary, natural, and unavoidable facts that spread from the natural

superiority of men. In the absence of (male imagined) authority or charismatic leaders, or in the deviation from what is seen as the natural order, these notions constitute one of the main causes of pedagogical or social problems: people do not obey or follow well, are headstrong or busy with "unimportant things" like language or their feelings. Simple causes and their desired effects are retrospectively attributed to the correct action of authorities, justified by their inheritance of tradition. In this way, complex relationships are simplified and reduced to cause-and-effect schemes. What is ignored is that simple solutions can only develop their supposedly immediate effect based on complex mediated social processes, that they must ignore to claim, that it is a simple relation.

As fragmented as the examples remain here, we see that the question of authority is about the interaction of structural conditions and personal habits, and that we should be careful about choosing either side alone. The framework of what is conceivable and possible is already given within the problem formulated: either structural criticism or a focus on personal aspects. I am interested in the tension between the two, because in this outline of the problem it is still unclear how the "people" or "groups" relate to each other socially and in terms of authority. They are differently involved in the process of hegemony formation. They form what is specific to hegemony, namely combining leadership with teaching, governing with pedagogy, and aligning both towards a promise for the future to become something better, if not desirable. Do only "the simple" subordinate themselves? And do people "simply" subordinate themselves? If that were true, then the problem of authority relations would be relatively easy to deal with. As simple as it should be, it just isn't that simple.

(Pedagogical) authority keeps hegemony dynamic

In dealing with Niccolo Machiavelli and Benedetto Croce, the Italian communist and intellectual Antonio Gramsci defined political leadership and social leadership relationships in a double sense: firstly, as an interpersonal relationship between teachers and learners and secondly as an overall and grounding social structural relationship between groups, who are seen as carriers of and actors within ideologies. These leadership relations influence the groups, both within them and emanating from them. Consequently, for Gramsci, the "solution to the »authority« problem" consists in "the consensual restoration of political leadership" (Gramsci 1991, p. 1266). The imminent dissolution of authority relationships or circumstances can be prevented by a newly negotiated consensus with the managed groups, by, for example, ascribing more value to the interests of these groups. The debate on authority

thus raises more than the question of scholastic authority: it is about the future and the problem of a legitimate perpetuation and transformation of political leadership, which sets out to shape this future. The legitimacy of hegemony and the recognition of leaders as political leaders become an explicit problem when their pedagogical authority dwindles because of political-strategic mistakes, within crises or transformation processes, or because of wrong policies. In comprehensive organic crises, which Gramsci conceptually opposes to the governable economic crises, a social group loses its authority if it can only manage the most severe aspects of a crisis, but cannot become a force of transformation, of renewal in and out of this crisis. Gramsci did not speak explicitly of pedagogical authority. In his critique of progressive pedagogy, or protractivism, and civil societal processes of negotiating culture in work and life, however, “public pedagogies” (Giroux 2003) become fundamentally relevant. People work, negotiate, coordinate, and learn about the dissemination and proliferation of leadership in the future by way of informal processes throughout state and civil society. In these negotiations of hegemony, pedagogical authority designates the pedagogical dimension of socialization. Only this practical orientation of the political dimensions of leadership and the pedagogical orientation of learning hegemonic premises together ensures the dissemination and adoption of certain theories and views as practically relevant orientations. Pedagogical authority can thus be more precisely defined and practically worked out as an educational mode, as the educational dimension of political leadership. It invents, conceives, and coordinates forms of guidance, of following and of acting as role models for the groups it specifically addresses, friends or foes. In doing so, it coordinates the interests of the groups with the political projects of the leading groups in such a way that consensual, practical involvement can arise, and a lasting relationship of succession is formed and maintained without calling into question the social hierarchy between leaders and led, governors and governed.

Hegemony is dynamic because it uses pedagogical authority by learning to assimilate criticism and resistance into its political projects. Projects are partially absorbed or weakened in their critique to use them for the renewal of a political program in a weakened form. Characteristic of hegemonic rule is not only the access to the state monopoly for the use of force, but also political leadership. Leadership constantly re-learns to lead by becoming a pedagogical authority and realizes an internal ability to reform by articulating the groups excluded, marginalized, or otherwise excluded through protests, criticism, and resistance. In other words: it transforms criticism into a source for the renewal of its own projects. It learned to use criticism to renew their own tradition, as assimilation to demonstrate its democratic character and at the same time strip them of their sharp edges and radical demands. Authority within the

framework of hegemonic rule is therefore much more than the charisma of a person. Authority can arise or be supported by reference to tradition as well as in relation to ideas and projects such as "enlightenment", "liberty" or "justice" that are yet to become real. However, the hegemonic consensus is not voluntary assent. It is "armoured with coercion" (Gramsci 1991, p. 783), which is exercised economically and through law, justice systems and institutions or the pressure to conform to shared norms. Consent includes prior or anticipated obedience out of fear, shame, and dread. State coercion is supplemented by civil society's forms of political exclusion of groups based on attributions of certain characteristics through racism, sexism, class apartheid and other ideologies of social inequality. To become a hegemonic leader, the dominant social groups must change and perpetuate themselves at the same time. Hegemony is a process of hierarchical consensus-forming. Each transformation of this consensus requires constant action, tactics and learning to combine the forces of different groups, play them off against one another or give orientation in the medium and long term without completely remodeling the arrangement itself. The resulting political-social hierarchies are regulated with the help of pedagogical authority, by establishing and transforming the structure of social relationships through teaching and learning. Political leadership repeatedly declares social hierarchies to be eternal, just and justified, while pedagogical authority teaches how to live within these hierarchies. The justifications and the limits of the livable options look different for each group, as they are differently embedded in or benefit from the hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion. Hegemony acquires a pedagogical quality by transferring pedagogical conditions to political possibilities and vice versa. In such a perspective, pedagogy and pedagogical practice cannot be understood as neutral. They are political, especially where they insist on their neutrality and independence from politics. They constitute groups that learn to distinguish themselves from others and to exploit or cooperatively transcend arbitrary boundaries in the struggle for the group's position, opportunities, and resources. Authority and the political regulation of authority relationships are a central mode and medium for this process which is essentially based on a combination of leadership and inequality. Thus, hegemony presupposes pedagogically guided action and the learning of the rulers to make ideologically, morally, ethically, and culturally specific ways of life binding for everyone. The relationships between the dominant and the dominated are thus transformed into "hegemonic relationships between the rulers and the ruled, between the leaders and the led" (Merkens 2006, p. 8). Where it is politically about persuasion, creating acceptance and working on a consensus for the projects to be implemented, leadership mainly takes place as a pedagogical practice from a political perspective or an anticipated direction. The authority of the circumstances is not given per se, but rather the result and starting point

of hegemony as an internal pedagogical relationship in which social hierarchies are negotiated as positions and worked on between leaders and followers constantly (Giroux 2004, p.60). These are the areas where practical negotiations take place. This entails political-pedagogical struggles over meaning, perspective, values, and directions along the questions of them to be considered true, reasonable, and legitimate.

Authority as Authorization

Authority is realized through authorization i.e. through the delegation of leadership by those who submit to it, as the successor to a law, a person, a political project, or a shared perspective on the future. The bestowal of authority can be based on tradition, ability, ascribed gender, level of education, and so forth. It is the case that recognition itself is the result of hierarchical attributions of strength, power, wisdom, and superiority within social hierarchies. These attributions are based only to a certain extent on a conscious decision. They are also dependent on habit and heritage, not to mention the important argument of the unconscious. Are they treated as facts or as something that people produce cooperatively in social relationships and that should be considered analytically? The standards of strength, ability, etc. are neither neutral, nor is there a coherent picture without the compulsion to follow one's ideals and the horror that can accompany it. Hegemony as the leadership of those who are addressed or seen as authority is based to a considerable extent on the belief of the ruled and led, that social hierarchies are traditionally natural, justified and just. In the background of authorization processes, there are hierarchical social structures that consist of habitual practices of recognition and of addressing issues that are constantly being transformed back into "nature". Pedagogical authority contributes to this, because it is a mode of disseminating and stabilizing hegemonic premises and frameworks. It can be handed down through the bureaucratization of procedures or the formalization of law, i.e. through the containment of social disputes, through the development of negotiation structures, of formalized rules and processes that make people forget the conditions in which they came into being.

In it, pedagogical authority becomes the central mode with which domination and leadership are connected and in which the voluntary consent is also based on the tradition of an education in the belief in the "power of facts", not only on charisma, violence, and prohibition. The social hierarchies do not only structure thinking, acting, and feeling, but also fragment people's bodies and souls and thus also their bodily and unconscious perceptions of hegemonic conditions and the standards for evaluating, assessing, and classifying them. For the pedagogical reorganization and reworking of hegemony, it is relevant

whether and how people cling (consciously or unconsciously) to past or incorporated experiences, standards, and perspectives. Accordingly, within the concept of hegemony, authority can be described both as a pedagogical dimension of leading and as the practice of authorizing hegemonic leadership (cf. Niggemann 2021). Only the complex interaction of political leadership and pedagogical authority with the real bodies and (un-)consciousnesses of people is productive in this sense: as a translation of the structural economic and state-legalized compulsion into normalized premises for daily action. It is in the smaller and greater practices of everyday routines where hegemony is rooted and contested. Hegemony as a dynamic power structure produces forms of economic necessities, identity assignments or epistemic ignorance by hierarchically integrating, dividing, and excluding groups daily. At the same time, the possibilities of groups are limited along what is considered legal and normal for them and who enjoys the privilege of being left alone, not being addressed, and not being persecuted or murdered. The pedagogical-political means for this range from organizing ideologies and symbolic violence to the transmission of techniques and the production of contingent perspectives through theories, aesthetics, images, stories, fantasies, and narratives.

In educational research, pedagogical authority is understood as a co-production in which the power to authorize is only brought about performatively in an interaction of social structures, historical habits, and the act of authorizing through authorizing persons themselves. Authority is lent, not owned as a property or through demanding it. In this sense it is co-produced. Authorization is understood to ground all those processes in which professionals are granted legitimate (pedagogical) authority for something based on ascribed characteristics. The variables include those of gender, identity, affiliation, norms governing bodies, language, or skills. Authority is a result of authorization processes, i.e. the articulation of social position and positive or negative assessments with attributions of competence. It is not a personal quality or specific competence, but a multiple structured relationship in a net of social hierarchies. The tricky thing is that there are conscious and unconscious authorizations, so we first must get to know the workings of both dimensions. For example, people believe in the ability of a teacher to be able to process important knowledge from unimportant knowledge in such a way that it advances students' studies and later helps or is useful to them in their occupation. At the same time, what is believed, considered legitimate or taken seriously can vary. Authorizations do not happen by chance, but according to notions of normality, because they produce "arbitrary boundaries" (Bourdieu, quoted in Jurt 2003, p.159), for example through educational qualifications. Authorizations are not limited to personal relationships but are socially structured hierarchies that are practically used to classify, evaluate, and

exclude. For example, by exercising a monopoly over titles of educational qualifications, the state controls boundaries between professionals and addressees, between professors and laypersons, etc. Pedagogical authority is potentially ascribed to all those who have acquired a recognized title who can rely on the authenticity of their experience to teach, demonstrate, and train. In social pedagogy, for example, it is common to use the status of a “proven expert” to build trust and get closer to a socially distant clientele. These kinds of authorizations, based on experience and authenticity, are also particularly popular and significant in pop culture. They illustrate the success of an intervention in the near or distant future. Here the proximity to pedagogy becomes clear, which must build on a promise for the future to legitimize its function as educators and teachers in the present.

Forming futures

Authority becomes evident when its self-evident effect begins to dwindle or to transform itself, for example, when it turns back into coercion and loses its legitimacy. Authority consequently functions “naturally”, i.e. discreetly and invisibly, if it is considered “natural” and does not require any explicit legitimation. It initially includes everything that “corresponds to the facts” and is perceived as “natural”. The naturalness is created performatively by asserting and claiming that a social context is something objective, thing-like, for example an unchangeable schema "as thought or given" by nature such as "gender". In this imagination gender only exists in two complementary, hierarchical opposites, to which properties are ascribed. It is only in this way that a certain idea of “gender” is authorised, i.e. a social process is transformed into a property and a hierarchy of gendered wealth distribution. Like power, authority only appears when it is questioned, problematized, or dissolved. Naming it or describing its mechanisms influences their social function: if something "natural" becomes visible as something socially made, there can no longer be any talk of an impeccable nature. Authority and power are relations and relationships between people and groups that become visible where they are interrupted, disrupted, or sabotaged. The personal authority of the father in the family corresponds to the cross-group para-state men's association in the bourgeois state, which declares itself to be universal and at the same time remains. This traditional patriarchal version of authority is being questioned from many positions. Thus, it becomes visible as a process in which a particular group claims to make, determine and defend the rules and laws for all and to define habits for all. The fact that there is protest this enables a democratization of social practice, in which more groups have a say and claim a say in decision-making. But only if they succeed in extending the frame of the think- and sayable.

Why is it so important in this context to understand the connections between social hierarchies and the legitimation for personal-related pedagogical action? On the one hand, because there cannot be a one-dimensional conception of pedagogy if the effective context of pedagogical action is socially created and changed. On the other hand, there remains an unanswered question how education legitimizes itself when its reference to the future becomes uncertain because it becomes problematic or less desirable for ever larger groups. A serious desire for self-reflection avoids the illusion that there could be a self-"transparent" state in which one's own motives, wishes, desires and intentions would be fully or finally revealed. They are construed, interpreted, and negotiated, with oneself and with others, and in this respect are genuine social processes in which the various positions, situations and perspectives become relevant. Interests, desires, emotions, or habits of thought are necessarily multidimensional and partly unconscious. Education theory and psychoanalysis have this insight in common: Without the purposeless association of the object with affects, thoughts and fragments, no alternative interpretations can arise. What is prevented in school, namely overinterpretation, becomes a tactic in the search for possible courses of action outside the known. Excessive or literal interpretation that are practiced, re-learned, and seem inappropriate may enable a changed perspective that is able to withstand the pull of habit in thinking and acting. The shifted perspective, the pause, the gap, the slip, the void, and the emptiness are suitable for countering the closedness of a technological or dominance-based future perspective with something else that Donna Haraway (2003) proposes to grasp with the term "cohabitat/cohabitation". A life in a need-based coexistence rather than in a relationship of robbing, consuming, and dominating nature, the self, and living beings.

So, it remains to be asked how pedagogical action can be legitimized if there are no longer any future promises that justify current interventions and concepts. The finite nature of resources contrasts with the socio-technological dissolution of boundaries in future designs. If education wants to contribute to sustainable learning processes by means of temporarily limited pedagogical authority, then it can actively intervene. And that means exploring new ways that pick up on an old promise: being able to change without having to become something specific at the expense of others. A temporally limited and democratically legitimized pedagogical authority takes on responsibility for teaching and learning for a future that is still unwritten, but in which there are spaces and rights for everyone to grow and learn.

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(Not to) Care about the future? How pedagogical authority is established within hegemony

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Abstract

The text explores the complex interplay between authority, hegemony, and pedagogy, drawing on various philosophical and educational perspectives. It argues that authority, often associated with hierarchical structures, is both socially constructed and contested. Pedagogical authority, particularly in shaping futures, is crucial in legitimizing social hierarchies and maintaining power dynamics. Hegemony utilizes pedagogical authority to assimilate criticism and perpetuate its dominance, transforming resistance into a source of renewal. The narrative delves into the multifaceted nature of authority, emphasizing its performative aspect and its reliance on social recognition and legitimization processes. It discusses the importance of understanding the connections between social hierarchies and pedagogical actions, especially in uncertain future contexts. The concept of pedagogical authority is reimagined as a temporally limited and democratically legitimized force that takes responsibility for fostering inclusive learning environments conducive to sustainable growth. Ultimately, the text calls for a reevaluation of pedagogical practices considering changing socio-political landscapes, advocating for a more nuanced understanding of authority and its role in shaping collective futures.

Key words

Hegemony, Authority, Care, Education, Future

(Ne pas) se soucier de l'avenir ? Comment l'autorité pédagogique est établie au sein de l'hégémonie

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Résumé

Ce texte explore l'interaction complexe entre l'autorité, l'hégémonie et la pédagogie, en s'appuyant sur diverses perspectives philosophiques et éducatives. Il soutient que l'autorité, souvent associée à des structures hiérarchiques, est à la fois socialement construite et contestée. L'autorité pédagogique, en particulier celle qui consiste à façonner l'avenir, est cruciale pour légitimer les hiérarchies sociales et maintenir la dynamique du pouvoir. L'hégémonie utilise l'autorité pédagogique pour assimiler les critiques et perpétuer sa domination, transformant la résistance en source de renouveau. Le récit explore les multiples facettes de l'autorité, en soulignant son aspect performatif et sa dépendance à l'égard de la reconnaissance sociale et des processus de légitimation. Il souligne l'importance de comprendre les liens entre les hiérarchies sociales et les actions pédagogiques, en particulier dans des contextes futurs incertains. Le concept d'autorité pédagogique est réimaginé comme une force limitée dans le temps et légitimée démocratiquement qui prend la responsabilité de favoriser des environnements d'apprentissage inclusifs propices à une croissance durable. En fin de compte, le texte appelle à une réévaluation des pratiques pédagogiques en tenant compte des paysages sociopolitiques changeants, en plaidant pour une compréhension plus nuancée de l'autorité et de son rôle dans le façonnement de l'avenir collectif.

Mots clés

Hégémonie, Autorité, Soins, Éducation, Avenir

¿(No) preocuparse por el futuro? Cómo se establece la autoridad pedagógica dentro de la hegemonía

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Resumen

El texto explora la compleja interacción entre autoridad, hegemonía y pedagogía, basándose en diversas perspectivas filosóficas y educativas. Sostiene que la autoridad, a menudo asociada con estructuras jerárquicas, se construye socialmente y se cuestiona. La autoridad pedagógica, especialmente en la configuración del futuro, es crucial para legitimar las jerarquías sociales y mantener las dinámicas de poder. La hegemonía utiliza la autoridad pedagógica para asimilar las críticas y perpetuar su dominio, transformando la resistencia en fuente de renovación. La narrativa profundiza en la naturaleza polifacética de la autoridad, haciendo hincapié en su aspecto performativo y en su dependencia de los procesos de reconocimiento y legitimación social. Analiza la importancia de comprender las conexiones entre las jerarquías sociales y las acciones pedagógicas, especialmente en contextos de futuro incierto. El concepto de autoridad pedagógica se reimagina como una fuerza

temporalmente limitada y democráticamente legitimada que asume la responsabilidad de fomentar entornos de aprendizaje inclusivos que conduzcan a un crecimiento sostenible. En última instancia, el texto hace un llamado a la reevaluación de las prácticas pedagógicas teniendo en cuenta los cambiantes paisajes sociopolíticos, abogando por una comprensión más matizada de la autoridad y de su papel en la configuración de futuros colectivos.

Palabras clave

Hegemonía, Autoridad, Cuidado, Educación, Futuro