# PRACTICES AND PARTICIPATION OF MARGINALISED YOUTH IN NON-FORMAL AND DIGITALISED EDUCATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Eva Bosse
University of Cologne, Germany

Amelie Wiese
University of Cologne, Germany

Prof. Dr. Nadia Kutscher
University of Cologne, Germany

**Research Subject**

Educational inequality in Germany is prevalent: Research on a national scale shows that educational opportunities in Germany are highly unequal (Autor:innengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung 2022). Existing structures of inequality depend on different levels of social, economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1987), further reproducing educational disadvantages among youth (Jünger 2008; Lareau 2011). While formal education is often prioritised in the discussion, non-formal (e.g. voluntary after school youth clubs) and informal education are considered essential in the acquisition of relevant skills in a digitalised society (Jeong et al. 2018; Spanhel 2020). If, in accordance with the German tradition of "Bildung", *education* is understood as a transformation of self-world-relations (Jörissen/Marotzki 2009), the relevance of non-formal and informal contexts is specifically emphasized. Digital media have become essential for self-world-relations, as they have created new options for participation as well as new requirements and obstacles for orientation (Jörissen/Martozki 2009).

In informal and non-formal educational arrangements, children and youth mostly depend on resources already available to them, especially if there is no provision of compensatory guidance and support. Therefore, structures of inequality may be reproduced (Dawson 2014). In research, this issue has been linked to digital inequality (Iske et al. 2008; Kutscher 2009; Kutscher/Otto 2005), as young people increasingly grow up in digitalised societies (Spanhel 2020), in which analogue and digital spheres

overlap (Tillmann/Weßel 2021). Empirical findings on digital inequality point to the relevance of social and cultural capital for practices of media use that enable educational participation (Iske/Kutscher 2020; Welling 2008; Zillien 2009).

Non-formal educational institutions often aim at targeting marginalised youth as participants, for example by residing in 'deprived' urban areas, potentially creating opportunities to reduce educational inequalities among youth. In programmes that recognize their disadvantaged target groups' realities and enable participation, trust and respect are considered important factors in reducing inequality in participation (Fujii et al. 2021; Streicher et al. 2014; Walther 2014). However, it remains to be examined whether and under which constitutions those institutions are actually successful in the inclusion of marginalised youth (Dawson 2014).

Some non-formal educational arrangements revolve around the usage of digital media, such as coding, robotics, 3D-printing or photography ("non-formal digitalised educational arrangements"). On the one hand, this potentially decreases educational and digital inequalities among youth by enabling transformations of self-world-relations through learning and the experience of self-efficacy in relation to digital media. On the other hand, inequalities may be reproduced within these settings, if e.g. specific media practices are delegitimised. In this case, structures of the educational arrangement may (unintentionally) exclude marginalised youth (Fujii et al. 2021; Kutscher/Farrenberg 2017; Schäfer/Lojewski 2007).

**Research Questions**

The question emerges, whether non-formal digitalised educational arrangements actually succeed in enabling educational participation of marginalised youth, therefore reducing social and digital inequalities.

In an ethnographic and reconstructive approach, a) different conditions in non-formal educational arrangements, b) learning and educational processes, specifically regarding digital media use as well as c) the accessibility of participation within those arrangements from a marginalised youths' perspective are investigated in two institutions, aiming at identifying conditions under which these arrangements enable resp. limit meaningful participation, thus facilitating the transformation of self-world-relations.

**Methodological Framework**

"DILABoration", a joint research project, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) aims at identifying conditions under which non-formal educational programmes create opportunities for participation and transformation of self-world-relations specifically for marginalised youth. Field access is ensured via two institutions that offer a variety of digitalised non-formal educational arrangements involving activities such as coding, 3D-printing, gaming and streaming. The arrangements are offered free of charge and mostly take place after school. They do not aim at any formal qualification. Thus, we consider them to be "non-formal". The

researched institutions differ regarding their institutional conditions, resources and location, allowing us to compare how these conditions prevent or enable participation.

Considering different conditions and arrangements, the pedagogical daily routines in both non-formal educational institutions are examined through focused ethnographies (Knoblauch 2001). In order to empirically reconstruct the mechanisms of educational participation, the participants' and employees' practices within those arrangements are examined through participatory observation and videography. The data is analysed through Grounded Theory Methodology (Corbin/Strauss 2015) as well as Artefact Analysis (Lueger/Froschauer 2018). Situational Analysis (Clarke/Washburn/Friese 2018) is applied in order to visualise constellations and relations between different human and non-human entities that participate in the observed situations.

Additionally, the preconditions for the participation of youth are investigated through group discussions with participants as well as youth who belong to potential target groups of the institutions but do not participate ('non-participants'). The group discussions are analysed using the Documentary Method, which allows for the reconstruction of patterns of orientations that influence everyday practice (Bohnsack 2010)[1]. The analysis of group discussions with participants examines conditions and orientations that enable participation, while the analysis of group discussions of non-participants identifies conditions and orientations that constrain participation. Through the analysis of group discussions, subjective levels of social bonds, which may include bonds beyond the neighbourhood as well as heterogenous levels of social capital (Bourdieu 1987) and other resources within the respective communities are considered. By doing so, the research avoids the application of a homogenizing perspective on territorial social spaces (Landhäußer et al. 2005) which may lead to the reproduction of educational disadvantage.

The praxeological approach, implemented both through focused ethnographies and the Documentary Method, enables the identification of practices and conditions of participation. We relate these to the facilitation of transformations of self-world-relations for participants. However, as this approach does not include psychological or biographical data, it is limited in terms of reconstructing actual processes of "Bildung" within the subjects' minds. Instead, it focuses on the reconstruction of conditions for marginalised groups' educational participation in practice. Findings of this research project are regularly transferred and discussed with the institutions. Moreover, one of the participating institutions implements the research findings into their conception and develops a model for transfer to similar institutions.

**Findings Presented at AoIR 2023**

The research project "DILABoration" fits in with the AoIR's 2023 theme "Revolution" as digitalisation and its effects on education are often described as a revolution (e.g. Spanhel 2020). Preliminary findings to be presented are based on the broad empirical data collected: So far, 19 different programmes have been examined in 43 different

[1] The term "orientations" signifies the implicit knowledge underlying practical action, from which a groups' habitus can by identified (Bohnsack 2010).

participant observations. 8 programmes have additionally been filmed, allowing for in-depth analysis. Moreover, 13 group discussions have been conducted. In the research process, structures and practices involving artefacts such as digital hardware and software as well as non-digital artefacts are considered.

In comparing the programmes of two non-formal educational institutions, "DILABoration" identifies conditions that enable the participation of marginalised youth in heterogenous urban districts and reconstructs them on a subjective level. After giving an insight into the research process and methodological approach, a data extract will be presented in order to reconstruct analytical stances and discuss preliminary findings.

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