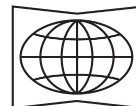
THEORY OF THE HISTORY CLASSROOM

Manuel Köster, Holger Thünemann,
Meik Zülsdorf-Kersting (eds.)



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Foreword to the English edition

Manuel Köster, Holger Thünemann and Meik Zülsdorf-Kersting

Der Geist einer Sprache offenbart sich am deutlichsten in ihren unübersetzbaren Worten.

Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, 1893

This book is a translation of a volume originally published in German (Bracke et al. 2018). As such, it was written by history education researchers rooted in the German tradition of history didactics. In the last decade, considerable efforts have been made to initiate international dialogue in the field (Erdmann/Hasberg 2011; Carretero/Berger/Grever 2017; Metzger/McArthur Harris 2018; Köster/Thünemann/Zülsdorf-Kersting 2019). What these volumes demonstrate is that despite our often similar research interests, the terms, concepts and categories we use to describe the process and the goals of history education can be very idiosyncratic and tied to a nationally specific discourse. Therefore, there is a risk that connotations and associations of certain concepts get lost in translation. In many cases, simply translating a term therefore does not suffice. As Peter Seixas (2017a) and Andreas Körber (2017) demonstrate, even fundamental and seemingly clear-cut terms such as "historical source" can mean quite different things in English and German. Instead, terms may need to be explained instead of translated. We try to provide these explanations for the most central concepts in this book, but we are also aware of the fact that we argue from a German point of view and use terms that may be specific to the German discourse.

That is the case with the central concept of this book, *Geschichtsunterricht*. While different forms of *Unterricht* exist, the term mostly refers to education in an institutional classroom setting. *Geschichtsunterricht* is usually translated as history education. However, that term has a broader spectrum of meaning. History education can occur at museums and monuments, in youth groups and at home. It can, in other words, be formal, non-formal or informal. *Geschichtsunterricht*, on the other hand, means formal history education. Even though history teachers might take their class on an excursion, *Geschichtsunterricht* usually takes place in a classroom.[1] Because of the differences between *Geschichtsunterricht* and history

1 At least in Germany, where home schooling by parents is not regarded as an acceptable replacement. However, the current COVID pandemic has forced exceptions to this rule.

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education, we chose to use the somewhat unwieldy terms "history in schools" and "history in the classroom" throughout this volume. The main aim of this book is to propose a theory of how this specific setting interacts with domain-specific processes of historical thinking. Our theory rests on the notion that formal school education is a social system, while historical thinking occurs in the psychological system of historical consciousness.

The idea that such a theory is necessary and useful might be regarded as indicative of a specifically German perspective. British history education researcher Peter Lee tells the story of a well-regarded American colleague who, following a presentation by Lee, chided him for "'all this German theory'" instead of reports on empirical results, and another colleague "insisted 'we don't need this Rüsen stuff'" (Lee/Chapman 2019, 219). We do believe, however, that any empirical research on formal history education uses theoretical assumptions about the history classroom. More often than not, they might only be implicit theories, based on common-sense notions of seemingly self-explanatory phenomena such as history classes. We aim to make these explicit, so that they can be evaluated and debated. Explicit theories, on the other hand, so far tend to focus only on either the domain-specific or on the structural aspects of the history classroom.

In our attempt to combine these two perspectives on history classes, we draw upon German theories of *Unterricht* as well as on theories of historical thinking, among others. We thus hope to further promote a theoretical dialogue across linguistic boundaries, similar to the one this volume initiated in Germany (Günther-Arndt 2018; Dietrich 2019; Hanke 2019; Grewe 2020; Memminger/von Reeken 2020, 455 f.). Many of the key texts we used have not been translated into English yet. If English editions exist, we reference these in the book. In all other cases, citations were translated from German.

We would like to thank Delphine Lettau for the first draft of the translation. Also, we would like to thank Kate Sotejeff-Wilson for the final translation and for her willingness to discuss the minutiae of "all this German theory". Finally, we would like to thank Agnes Effland, Pia Giesler, Stefanie Urich and Felix Westhoff for editing the manuscript.

The theory presented in the book is the product of many meetings, workshops and discussions among the research group. Therefore, the German edition of this book was published as a monograph by ten authors: Sebastian Bracke, Colin Flaving, Johannes Jansen, Manuel Köster, Jennifer Lahmer-Gebauer, Simone Lankes, Christian Spieß, Holger Thünemann, Christoph Wilfert, and Meik Zülsdorf-Kersting. The English translation was edited by three of the authors. We would like to thank the main authors of the chapters in this volume for revising and commenting on the translation.

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1. Introduction to the German edition

Holger Thünemann and Meik Zülsdorf-Kersting

Besides about a decade of intense debate about competencies in history (cf. most recently Handro/Schönemann 2016), both German and international research into history in the classroom has recently gained momentum (cf. e.g. Köster/Thünemann/Zülsdorf-Kersting 2017; Chapman/Wilschut 2015; Carretero/Berger/Grever 2017; Daumüller/Seidenfuß 2017). The research to date has yet to yield a theory of history in the classroom that is equally relevant for empirical and pragmatic approaches. This book aims to fill that gap.

The chapters are arranged to reflect the systematic considerations that arose as our theory took shape. In the first chapter, "The history classroom as a social system", Meik Zülsdorf-Kersting lays the foundations and introduces the basic features of our theory. He develops the theory of history in the classroom by integrating specifics of institutionalised communication in a classroom setting (how does this setting differ from, e.g. a museum?), with specifics of historical thinking and didactics (how is history different from, say, physics?). The history classroom is modelled here as a social system, mainly characterised by communication that is couched in language and supported by media. Teachers and students enter into a communication context which is geared towards the students generating, developing and evaluating historical thinking and/or learning. The history classroom, conceived of as a social system, attempts to influence the students' historical consciousness. The psychological system of historical consciousness (cognition and emotion) and the social system of classroom education exist in a context that can be described in theoretical terms. Knowledge of this context is needed to explain many phenomena in the history classroom (processes and effects).

The five subsequent chapters deal with these discipline-specific and broader aspects. The two chapters "Learning to think historically" (Holger Thünemann/Johannes Jansen) and "Emotions in the history classroom" (Sebastian Bracke/Colin Flaving) deal mainly with the psychological system of "historical consciousness". First, Thünemann and Jansen develop the theoretical principles governing thinking about history as a subject. Then, Bracke and Flaving examine the role of emotions. The following chapters are devoted to the theoretical specifics of the social system of history in the classroom. In the fifth chapter, "Communication in the history classroom", Christoph Wilfert and Simone Lankes draw our

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attention to how social systems work. They characterise communication as the key feature of history in the classroom as a social event by integrating connections drawn from communication theory and systems theory. In the sixth chapter, “Media in the history classroom”, Jennifer Lahmer-Gebauer follows on logically by discussing the status of media within the context of communication processes in history in schools. This deserves detailed attention because media play a key role, both in communicatively framed social systems and in the discourse on the theory of history. In the seventh chapter, “Language in the history classroom”, Manuel Köster and Christian Spieß develop the understanding of history in the classroom as communication that is expressed linguistically and supported by media. Language is an important means of communication and is central to how history is constituted as a subject (through narratives based on sources and accounts).

The chapters outlined here, which may be read separately, are designed as building blocks of a systematic theoretical nexus. Taken together – we hope – they constitute a theory that makes it possible to explain phenomena related to history in the classroom. Theories are helpful when they explain and help us to understand phenomena at an abstract level (i.e. above and beyond the individual case). In our conclusions, we indicate how this might work. One particular benefit of our theory, in our view, is that it allows the empirical results of different studies that initially appear disparate to be correlated consistently.

This book is the fruit of several years of research. Our work was characterised by large numbers of empirical “trials”. It would not be wrong to describe the process as integrating theoretical considerations with practical checks. Faced with the double challenge of devising a consistent theory and validating it in accordance with current methodological standards, we decided to begin by presenting a theory of history in schools. Our aim is to describe and explain phenomena that occur in the classroom. Additional empirical endeavours are required and planned.

The present volume was conceived as a monograph because, systematically and by subject, the individual chapters are part of a common train of thought and argument. The authors are identified merely to indicate who was primarily responsible for each individual chapter. The whole research group worked on the theory together.

The theory of history in the classroom developed here is the result of an in-depth process of deliberation. Several chapters were discussed in detail with colleagues. The HISTOGRAPH Group would like to thank Professor Saskia Handro, Professor Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, Professor Andreas Körber, Professor

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Matthias Proske, Professor Jörn Rüsen, Dr Julia Sacher and Professor Michael Sauer for their extremely instructive input and suggestions, as well as for their interest in our considerations. We would further like to thank Andreas Wergen, who worked on forming the theory during the early stages of the project and has since returned to teaching. Last, but not least, we thank Ruth Künzel and Merve Magat (Cologne University) and Jan Trützschler (Wochenschau Verlag) for editing the manuscript.

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2. The history classroom as a social system

Meik Zülsdorf-Kersting

2.1 Introduction

Developing a theory of history in the classroom is a major challenge. Many history methodologies exist (Weniger 1949; Wilmanns 1949; Ebeling 1953; Donath 1960; Marienfeld/Osterwald 1966; Münter 1967; Döhn 1967; Stohr 1968; Mielitz 1969; Metzger 1970; Filser 1974; Fina 1981; Gies 2004; Gautschi 2005; Sauer 2015; Peters 2013; Günther-Arndt/Handro 2015). Pertinent publications on history didactics include chapters on history in the classroom (Rohlfes 1971, 62–100 & 1997, 217–378; Pandel 2013, 107–122; Baumgärtner 2015, 231–241; Brauch 2015, 119–133). A glance at handbooks of history didactics demonstrates that there are plenty of contributions on specific phenomena of the history classroom, but none on the theory of history in the classroom (cf. Bergmann et al. 1997; Barricelli/Lücke 2012; Günther-Arndt/Zülsdorf-Kersting 2014; Günther-Arndt/Handro 2015). Pandel (1997, 379–385) at least includes brief theoretical statements about the history classroom. There are also a few empirical studies of history in the classroom (Gautschi 2009/2015; Meyer-Hamme 2009; Martens 2010; Köster 2013; Meyer-Hamme/Thünemann/Zülsdorf-Kersting 2012; Spieß 2014; Mathis 2015, Bertram 2017). As a rule, these studies examine specific phenomena associated with the history classroom (including text comprehension, dealing with accounts or sources and students' ideas). While very ambitious in terms of theory, they fail to provide comprehensive modelling of the history classroom.

As an academic discipline, history didactics has published extensively on the history classroom in recent years; recognising, however, that a "fully worked out *theory*[1] *of history in the classroom*" is still needed (italics in original; Hasberg 2001, vol. 1, 97). This statement is no less valid today. In Hasberg's view, the focus on "historical consciousness" was one reason for the failure to develop a comprehen-

1 Theory in this context is understood as a system of descriptive and explanatory (causal) statements about a segment of reality. Epistemologically, it links "theoretical features" *(theoretische Merkmale)*, "empirical dispositions" *(empirische Dispositionen)* and "mapping rules" *(Zuordnungsgesetze)* (Schurz 2011, 167).

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sive theory.[2] The history classroom was not the discipline's "primary object of study" (ibid. 97), but was instead regarded as a factor influencing historical consciousness, and consequently dealt with it as one factor among many. To achieve an insight into the complex web of factors involved, a theory of history in the classroom needs to distinguish the history classroom as a specific learning area from other sites of historical learning ("external differentiation" or *Außendifferenzierung*, Hasberg 2001, vol. 1, 115), and to describe historical learning processes within the history classroom ("internal differentiation" or *Binnendifferenzierung*, ibid., 115). Pandel had previously expressed a clear wish for such a theory:

To date, there is no specific theory of history in the classroom that is anchored in history didactics. In relation to history as a subject, a subject-specific didactical theory of classroom education would need to carry out a structural analytical examination of the scope of conditions and opportunities offered by the history classroom. Starting out from the history classroom as a communication process, one needs to analyse the type and nature of the structural aspects that constitute the internal structure of classroom education (Pandel 1997a, 382).

Pandel and Hasberg lament the absence of a theory of history in the classroom and have themselves taken steps towards formulating such a theory.

In keeping with general didactical theories of classroom education (Lüders 2012), a theory of history in the classroom can be expected to place relevant features of lessons, classroom processes and products (learning outcomes) that are specific to history as a subject into a systematic relationship. The aim is to make empirically reliable statements about the reciprocal effects of preconditions, features, processes and results of the history classroom. On the one hand, classroom education is characterised by features and processes that are not subject-specific; on the other hand, the distinctive features of teaching and learning history as a subject must become apparent. A theory of history in the classroom should help explain – and perhaps also anticipate – its effects. To explain and predict the impact of classes is generally considered to be the goal of a theory of classroom

2 Studies of historical consciousness and the history classroom are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, any study of the origins of historical consciousness would do well to take the history classroom into account as an important agent of socialisation. Hasberg believes that the focus on historical thought processes and the concomitant decision in favour of particular survey methods (questionnaires, interviews, group discussions), is the reason for the lack of research into the history classroom.

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education (cf. Günther-Arndt 2015a, 9). Rather than to predict, the main aim of our theory of history in the classroom is to explain.

A theory of history in the classroom is required for two more reasons. Firstly, it is hard to imagine empirical research into the history classroom without a theoretical framework; after all, research questions are derived from theoretical assumptions. This may apply less to descriptive phenomenological research, but is especially true of impact and intervention research, which involve many preconditions.[3] Secondly, such a theory allows research findings to be placed into a wider context and related to one another. This would counter "diffusion" (Hasberg 2007, 9) of empirical research findings and foster cohesion. Furthermore, a theory of history in the classroom can help researchers to reveal and reflect on latent, pre-theoretical assumptions about the history classroom.

Classroom education and school effectiveness researchers distinguish between the premises that guide such research: the personality paradigm, expert paradigm and process-product-paradigm (cf. Eickhorst 2011, 56–59). Most recently, the Utilisation of Learning Opportunities (ULO) paradigm has dominated. ULO models take account of numerous variables to explain how classroom education works in practice. They view learning as the result of utilising, or taking, particular opportunities. Due to their integral character, these models are well suited to locating widely differing theoretical approaches and research findings. However, as they integrate structural, process and product variables, ULO models are overly complex and virtually impossible to validate empirically (cf. Seidel 2014, 862). In terms of history didactics, reflections on ULO models are compatible to the extent that the history classroom may be seen as the "provision of supply and opportunity structures" students can use "based on their individual qualifications" (Seidel 2011, 607) to learn historical thinking. The following remarks focus on a structural model of the history classroom that identifies relevant features and processes to explain learning outcomes in terms of ULO. The ability to model the history classroom in terms of learning opportunities is a basic premise of our theory. At the same time, when using ULO models, the choice of process and structure variables needs to be justified.

Our theory of history in the classroom departs from the usual ULO models (described below; for their application to the history classroom, cf. section 2.4) in one important way. ULO models follow a fairly binary pattern in that they assume a correlation between certain processes and products (effects). We take

3 The absence of a theory of history in the classroom may be one reason why there are hardly any impact and intervention studies of the history classroom.

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the view that classes do not progress so logically and predictably. Fend's criticism is similar to ours: "In a pedagogical context, the 'production of school achievements' is no industrial manufacturing process, but rather the result of two people or groups of people facing each other, with one offering or providing something […], and the other responding" (Fend 2002, 4). While we retain the concept of opportunities and their utilisation, we wish to adopt a moderately constructivist basic configuration of ULO modelling. We want each input into the history classroom to be viewed as an opportunity – from defining the subject of the class, via choosing the sources and formulating the work assignments, all the way down to individual speech acts. Only when students and teachers receive (i.e. utilise) these opportunities do they enable historical learning – and that reception is personal in the highest degree. With this approach, opportunities are not confined to the "major" decisions made by the teacher. Instead, each stimulus, each statement, quite simply all behaviour is seen as a communicational act to which all the other participants may or must respond. In the following, we take the reciprocal relationship between opportunities and their utilisation to be constitutive of classroom education.

Modelling the history classroom requires naming its individual features and explaining how they relate to each other. Ideally, this process is an interplay of theory and empirical research, otherwise statements about the relationship between features of the process and structure would remain arbitrary. Features and their interrelationships may be deduced and established by following relevant macro-theories, or explored empirically (e.g. via correlation analyses). In this book, we ground these relationships in theories of historical thinking, emotions, communication, media and language. Specific empirical surveys on the configuration of individual processes and structures, their features and products (learning effects), are urgently needed to validate the plausibility of what has been posited theoretically. As a contribution to this process, we draw on existing empirical studies to propose our theory of history in the classroom.

Sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 of this chapter present a review of the state of research on the theory of classroom education in the fields of education sciences (including educational psychology) and history didactics. These lay the foundations for an outline of our systems theoretical approach to history in the classroom. Section 2.5 starts by introducing the concept of the history classroom as it is used here (2.5.1), and then moves on to develop a structural model of the history classroom (2.5.2), in which the themes of the subsequent chapters are introduced.

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2.2 Theory of classroom education – remarks from a theory of science perspective

The following is a basic epistemological clarification of theories in general and theories of classroom education in particular. This includes three aspects: the function of classroom education theories in general and in research; the research gap in education sciences (on school education); justification for why and how empirical pedagogical research nevertheless involves research in the classroom. Finally, we give an epistemological outline of the requirements for any theory.

In epistemological terms, theories of classroom education are required to make it possible to explain phenomena related to classroom teaching and learning. In the natural sciences, predictive statements can be used to answer to subject-specific questions about the reasons for phenomena, that is, determining the cause means being able to make predictive statements about the effects of certain phenomena (cf. Poser 2012, 46–67, here esp. 54–59). In the humanities and social sciences, however, the predictive potential of theories is limited due to the specific concept of causality.[4] In this context, effects are contingent rather than the result of laws of nature, and hence hard to foresee. Due to a large number of variables, this holds true for history in the classroom. That is why Meseth and his colleagues speak of "contingency-aware *[kontingenzgewärtig]* classroom education research" (Meseth/Proske/Radtke 2012, 224).

Epistemologically speaking, an important methodological dividing line needs to be drawn between description and evaluation. It is unacceptable to extrapolate from descriptive statements to normative statements (naturalistic fallacy) because observational distinctions are not on the same level as evaluative distinctions. Evaluations require the explicit identification of a measure of value. The issue of whether evaluations even fall within the purview of science is controversial (cf. Schurz/Carrier 2013). Nevertheless, classroom education researchers aim to provide statements about quality (for the history classroom, e.g. Gautschi 2015). In any case, describing classroom education (including outcome and impact research) is clearly different both theoretically and methodologically from evaluating the quality of its processes or products.

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4 In contrast to deterministic concepts of causality, "counterfactual causality" is understood epistemologically as a contingent connection between cause and consequence. A is a sufficient condition for the occurrence of B. Without the prior existence of A, B would not have occurred, or would have occurred in a substantially different way. On "counter-factual causality", cf. Schurz 2011, 240. For an application of this notion in the context of an inherently problematic concept of historical realism, see Gerber 2012, 117–125.

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The aim of our theory of history in the classroom is to describe and explain phenomena in classroom education. Although we do not aspire to evaluate the history classroom, our definitions do occasionally come close to being normative statements. If the history classroom is defined as classroom education in which historical learning is intended, whether something can be considered history in the classroom or not depends on the concept of learning. Against this background, it does not seem problematic to state that a physics lesson on the concept of mass is not a history lesson.[5] In contrast, stating that a lesson on the Cold War is not a history class because reading an account by the author of the textbook only activates reading competency without initiating historical thinking might be seen as strongly normative.

Therefore, we explicitly apply a concept of graduated rather than absolute learning. Without further defining the graduated nature of historical learning processes, we posit a range of thinking abilities running from very deficient to very sophisticated. Recognising the normative substance of defining statements, we focus on the descriptive and analytical potential of a theory of history in the classroom. Epistemologically, we apply the following principles: primacy of the retrospective description of a documented phenomenon (phenomenology research), the description of its effects (outcomes research) and analysis of its causes (impact research). Prospective statements about the effects of classroom education or of individual measures in class (cf. Proske 2011, 15), and normative statements about the quality of individual measures, the lesson as a whole or its effects do not fall within the scope of this theory of classroom education.

Researching classroom education necessarily means to single out certain aspects of a complex, multifactorial system. As soon as statements about classroom education as a whole are made based on research data, they need to be located within a systematic context of statements (i.e. a theory) on classroom education. For example, data about teachers' actions during class need to be related to other important features of classroom events (student responses, socioultural conditions, etc.). So the relevance of empirical findings for the history classroom can only be assessed on the basis of "adequately elaborated ideas about the theoretical conditions and possibilities of the same" (Hasberg 2001, vol. 1, 97). Petersen and Priesemann make the same point: "Both classroom observations and lesson notes or records need to find their proper place […] within the

5 Conversely, a physics lesson dealing with epistemological issues surrounding the history of quantum theory may well be classified as a history lesson under this definition.

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framework of a theory of classroom education if they are to have or gain value" (Petersen/Priesemann 1992, vol. 1, 137).

Education researchers broadly agree that, despite the large number of theoretical approaches, no systematic joined-up work has been done on theory (cf. Eickhorst 2011; Geier/Pollmanns 2016; Lüders 2012; Protz 2004; Scholl 2011; Schramm 1975). Scholl sees the reasons for this in the low level of references to existing approaches in proposed theories. Each theory aspired to provide a comprehensive explanation of classroom education as a phenomenon (Scholl 2011, 37–39). For the period from 1904 to 1973, Schramm identified fifty different definitions of the concept of classroom education (Schramm 1975, 18–100). He condensed these concepts into 25 umbrella terms which he then grouped into the three categories: *activity*, *process* and *other* (Schramm 1975, 115–120).[6] Lüders (2012) confirmed Schramm's findings and further differentiated them. His analysis of 40 texts in pedagogical reference books written between 1949 and 2007 was sobering: the authors rarely referred to each other's concepts, and although the concept of classroom education was central, it was not utilised in any systematic way (Lüders 2012, 123). That was why Scholl argued that integrative work was much more important than additional theories: As a "framework for such a theory of didactics" (Scholl 2011, 39), he proposes Luhmann's systems theory, failing to acknowledge that this introduces yet another theoretical posit, albeit on a more abstract level (Scholl 2011, 40–42).

Here, we take up Scholl's proposal and concede that decisions on theory at the most abstract level take on the character of posits. Evidently, classroom education is too complex a phenomenon to justify the demand for consistency and consensus in theory work. In relation to classroom education as a research subject, a basic epistemological principle applies: academic disciplines are not determined by the subject itself, but by perspectives on it and theoretical premises about it. This assessment is convincingly substantiated by recent reviews of classroom education theories (e.g. Meseth/Proske/Radtke 2011; Geier/Pollmanns 2016), and the special issue of the German pedagogics journal *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* (No. 6, 2014). It is unrealistic, and presumably not desirable, to formulate an overarching consensus theory of classroom education; rather, philosophical

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6 Schramm draws a firm distinction between "activity" and "process", but acknowledges that "some [terms recorded in the survey] neither directly nor indirectly relate to action or activity. […] In these cases, classroom education is not defined as an activity either terminologically or by its nature, but as a process of a certain kind, as a phenomenon of a certain kind, as an objectively existing facility or institution, as an event taking place within the student" (Schramm 1975, 116).

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(Giesinger 2014), educational and learning theory-based (Lüders 2014), psychological (Seidel 2014) and sociological (Meseth et al. 2012; Scholl 2011) theories of classroom education each operate with their own terminology.

While scholars of education acknowledge the gap in the theory, clearly a wide range of research into classroom education is being done in practice. Empirical education research (TIMSS, IPN Physik et al.) takes the opposite approach to the research problem, without a full-blown theory of classroom education. The aim is to be able to make theory-type statements about classroom education based on empirical findings. Doubtless even the video study of physics lessons conducted by a natural sciences education research institute, the *Leibniz-Institut für die Pädagogik der Naturwissenschaften und Mathematik* (IPN) are based on theoretical assumptions – how else could the study design be explained? For instance, the IPN used a student questionnaire including items designed to gather data on the participants' knowledge of physics and their motivation (cf. Seidel et al. 2006a, 317–388). The authors assume, in some instances by reference to other empirical studies, that prior knowledge or interest is related to learning success. In principle, empirical education researchers may call for theories of classroom education, but view their own key task in practice as gathering data to describe the nature and effectiveness of classes. To simplify, the purpose of research into lesson effectiveness is to establish correlations and measure the probability of two distinct features correlating (e.g. classroom management and students' knowledge). Although the two features, or constructs, are themselves modelled based on theoretical assumptions, the link between them rarely relies on a global theory of classroom education.

The meta-analyses by Seidel and Shavelson (2007) and Hattie (2009) may serve as examples. Seidel concedes the lack of theoretical consistency in current ULO models and, with qualifications, acknowledges that empirical researchers should seek to test and examine "partial aspects of the model" (Seidel 2014, 862). The results can then be checked in the meta-analyses as the effect size of individual variables. Helmke (2011, 633) identifies the following features of a class as relevant to quality: "efficient classroom management", "the degree to which the lesson is clear, comprehensible and structured" and "a climate that promotes learning". These features can easily be incorporated into a ULO model as features of the "process quality of the class". However, correlative statements about a higher probability of the joint occurrence of two features – e.g. a climate that promotes learning and learning success – are mathematically generated statements. The question of why one feature may cause or be a precondition for another remains unanswered. Theories are needed to provide an answer. Empir-

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ical research into lesson effectiveness aims to establish correlations and, in the case of intervention research, statements of causality (ibid.). Empirical education researchers recognise the need for and lack of theories of classroom education, but this does not deter them from carrying out empirical research; in fact, they see their studies as contributing to theory formation (cf. Clausen/Klieme/Reusser 2003, 139). They leave the (explicit) theory work to other disciplines such as education.

Meta-analyses on the theory of classroom education (Lüders 2012; Protz 2004; Schramm 1975) conclude that even the education sciences have not made a particular effort to model classroom education. Lüders' criticism of pedagogy on this point is particularly severe, because he views theory formation as the main task of an academic discipline and sees concepts as important indicators of theory formation. The discipline needs to regulate its use of concepts by providing definitions. A definition should state which family *(genus proximum)* the concept belongs to and indicate which specific features *(differentia specifica)* differentiate this concept from other concepts in the same family (Lüders 2012, 112).

The pertinent ULO models do not meet these criteria for a definition of classroom education, so we assume a split between theory formation and empirical research. But theory and empiricism should not be pitted against each other; they must be viewed as complementary. To model classroom education in a way that enables the desired learning processes and outcomes – contingency notwithstanding – we need both theoretically consistent assumptions about classroom education and empirical validation of those assumptions. Empirically backed statements about correlation are useful in analysing past lessons, but not when planning a future class. Lesson planning simply cannot be restricted to two features of classroom education and their relationship, but must always consider all the variables. Conversely, deductively generated statements about the relationship between individual features of classroom education have be specific empirically validated before they can be used to explain existing phenomena and shape future models of classroom education.

Developing a theory of classroom education is one of the core tasks of education as an academic discipline. A theory of classroom education is no less necessary for analysing lessons and classifying empirical findings than it is for "purposefully bringing about effects in class" (Proske 2011, 15). Despite this, there is a general consensus that a consistent theory of classroom education is lacking. Research into the effectiveness of lessons shows that the relationship between individual features of classes can be studied empirically without a comprehensive and consistent theory. Nevertheless, the history of theories in education as an

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academic discipline shows what can be demanded of a theory of classroom education. Research into lesson effectiveness and theory development are mutually dependent processes. Theorists produce intermediate results by repeatedly designing process and structural models of classroom education, and then pass these on for empirical validation and consistency testing. It is against this background that we propose our theory of history in the classroom. Our goal is to develop the concept of the history classroom, to standardise its use via a definition and organise its structural features via modelling. Our structural model of the history classroom is shaped by the paradigm of ULO models used in education sciences. We introduce these models first, to show how our model differs from them by emphasising the chaining of communication events.

2.3 Classroom education as a social system

In the following, we demonstrate that ULO models can be seen as the state of the art of empirical research into classroom education. Once the theoretical shortcomings of these models have been established, we discuss the potential of using systems theory to eliminate these shortcomings. With Luhmann's theory of social systems, and references to the use of systems theory in education, we develop a concept of classroom education as a construction designed to limit contingency. We then discuss the functional value of this theoretical grounding, and its consequences.

2.3.1 Models of classroom education

Institutionalisation and professionalisation make the classroom a specific learning environment. Even a fleeting glance at the many possible factors impacting on school performance shows that classroom education is a decidedly complex event. It therefore seems natural to draw on process and/or structural models to select and correlate relevant features of classroom education. Models of this type can be used to specify what classroom education is and how it differs from other educational contexts.

Specifically for classroom education, Petersen and Priesemann have developed the concept of context. In studying educational processes in the classroom, the more precise term is "inner context of classroom education" (1992, vol. 1, 40). Because of its processuality, classroom education can only ever be studied in part. Ideally, each analysis of classroom education must take in the entire duration of a unit, including any interruptions. The "exterior context of classroom education", according to Petersen and Priesemann, consists of the sum of all outside influences that affect it as a form (the social conditions of classroom education). These

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might be material conditions (school building, classrooms, etc.) or non-material constraints (compulsory education, requirements re. content, etc.). This concept of context is compatible with systems theory, because it is reminiscent of the latter's constitutive differentiation between system and environment (→ 33–35). In systems theory, "context" would be designated as "environment". The binary differentiation between system ("inner context") and environment ("exterior context") is a central premise of systems theory. However, system and environment are interrelated. In terms of our theory, "environment" may be understood as the diverse framework of conditions pertinent to classroom education. The Berlin model (Heimann/Otto/Schulz 1975), which was inspired by learning theory, may be viewed as a structural model that distinguishes between a system, modelled here as so-called decision fields (goals, subject, methods and media), and its environment, called condition fields (psychological and sociological conditions) and impact fields (psychological and social consequences) (cf. Lüders 2014, 837–839). In other words, this model differentiates between inner and exterior context.

One can identify factors that influence the inner context and determine how teachers and learners act in the classroom. Petersen and Priesemann call these factors "rules" *(Regel)*. "In classroom education, actions are governed by rules! To find out something about classroom education, one needs to know the rules that govern how people act!" (1992, vol. 1, 44). The authors identify rules for people concerned, the content of classroom education, teaching methods and forms of review; and the time required for classroom education. They distinguish five levels of rules (from "general pedagogical rules" to "rules of the moment"). Their fourth level is "rules of the trade for specialised classroom education"; what is important on this level is the characteristics of the subject in the educational process.

Process and structural models of classroom education aspire to systematise the concepts relevant to this phenomenon (exterior and inner context, rules, actions, communication, etc.) by creating networks of terms, so they can be harnessed heuristically. In pedagogy (e.g. Helmke 2011) and educational psychology (e.g. Seidel 2011), ULO models have become the main paradigm for empirical research in the classroom (cf. Klieme 2006, 768; Pauli/Reusser 2006, 788–789; Proske 2009, 798–800). ULO models are situated in the tradition of the process-product paradigm (cf. Seidel 2014; Pauli/Reusser 2006, 788) and focus on the contingent context of opportunity (incl. teaching processes in class) and utilisation (incl. individual learning activities in class). The first drafts were produced by Fend (1980 & 1998 & 2002) and Helmke and Weinert (1997a &

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