

Children’s literature mirrored by scholarly educational journals

Monika Knaupp

Abstract – *The paper is a quantitative and qualitative analysis of German literary production for young readers in educational review in the period 2000-2010. The Author has used German data-base FIS-Bildung, the first access to academic news in the field of “Bildungsforschung”, obviously also for Literature for children. Thanks to specific passwords – as “Kinderliteratur”, “Jugendliteratur” and “Zeitschriftenartikel” – researchers can obtain a list of articles. The results analyze shows that literature for children’s not an important aspect in the field of educational research, because, generally, the attention to this topic is related to school practice.*

Riassunto – *L’articolo presenta un’analisi quantitativa e qualitativa della produzione letteraria tedesca per giovani lettori nelle riviste pedagogiche dal 2000 al 2010. A tal fine è stata usata la banca dati tedesca FIS-Bildung, il primo accesso all’informazione accademica nel settore della ricerca educativa, anche per quanto attiene l’oggetto di questo approfondimento. Con l’ausilio di specifiche parole chiave – in questo caso “Kinderliteratur”, “Jugendliteratur” e “Zeitschriftenartikel” – è possibile ottenere un elenco degli articoli. L’analisi dei risultati mostra che la letteratura per l’infanzia non è un aspetto importante nel settore della ricerca educativa, perché, generalmente, l’attenzione a questo tema è connessa alla pratica scolastica.*

Keywords – literature for children, childhood, education, school, educational journals

Parole chiave – letteratura per l’infanzia, infanzia, educazione, scuola, riviste pedagogiche

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1. Theory and Methods

This article concentrates on children’s literature and how it is mirrored by scholarly educational journals and it takes a closer look on educational research on children’s literature¹.

According to Weinkauff and Glasenapp² there are two different ways doing research on children’s literature. The first one is an aesthetic approach. It is based solely on the text itself.

¹ This paper was published ahead of time, in a more succinct version, in “Ricerche Pedagogiche”, 192-193, 2014, pp. 48-53. The Author sincerely thanks Angelika Yolo Dassow for her support while collecting the data.

² G. Weinkauff, G. von Glasenapp, *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, Paderborn, Schönigh, 2010, p. 12.

Therefore it is part of literary studies like German or English studies. Here the objects of research are the different genres of children's literature, its history, its motives and symbols, its language, its narrator and so on. The second one is a pedagogical approach. In the German-speaking countries you can find first examples of children's literature in medieval times. Like poems for religious, moral and rhetoric education. During the Enlightenment the production of children's literature exploded. Famous thinkers of this movement, like Campe, wrote books for children with a strong educational impetus. Therefore children's books were used at school and theoretical educational discussions on children's literature have a long tradition in German-speaking countries. The focus of these discussions were laid on the nature and character of literature appropriate for children and they took place already in the late 18th and early 19th century³.

Nonetheless in Germany, especially in German studies, the research on children's literature had – as Ewers states – for a long time not much reputation among scholars. The reason for this neglect was the “fact that children's literature has, for more than a hundred years, been considered unworthy”⁴. So research on children's literature was left to the former colleges of education and to the departments of the didactic of literature and pedagogy of reading. But due to the “growing use of children's literature as school reading material”⁵ during the second half of the 20th century children's literature became object of academic research at the universities. “At the beginning of the 1970s [...] there was a growing interest in children's literature on the part of the German studies departments of the West German universities. This academic discovery of children's literature was due to an extension of the concept of literature, which resulted in an enlargement of the subject matter”⁶. The first dissertations in German studies about children's literature by German scholars were written in the 80ies, for example the works of Erhard Dahl (1986), Rüdiger Steinlein (1987) and Hans-Heino Ewers (1989). Since then the interest in children's literature as a field of research has been growing in German studies.

Also during the 1970ies, due to new theories about the cultural construction of childhood the traditional discussion on children's literature at the former colleges of education found its way into Education Studies at universities as Velthaus stated in 2003⁷.

This paper does not concentrate on the conflict between aesthetic and educational evaluation of children's literature. It leaves German studies and literature theory aside and speaks

³ For a detailed analysis and description of the history and development of German children's literature see R. Wild, *Geschichte der deutschen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, 3., vollständig überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage, Stuttgart, Metzler, 2008, G. Velthaus, *Die Pädagogik der Kinderliteratur. Szenen einer narrativen Erziehungsgeschichte oder Partituren des Umgangs mit Kindern*, Baltmannsweiler, Schneider, 2003, G. Weinkauff, G. von Glasenapp, *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 2010.

⁴ H.-H. Ewers, *Children's Literature Research in Germany. A Report*, in “Children's Literature Association Quaterly”, (2002-2003), vol. 27, no. 3, p. 3.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

⁷ See G. Velthaus, *Die Pädagogik der Kinderliteratur. Szenen einer narrativen Erziehungsgeschichte oder Partituren des Umgangs mit Kindern*, Baltmannsweiler, Schneider, 2003, p. 26.

not about the pedagogical intentions or impact of children's literature on its readers. Instead it presents a short survey of the most recent on-goings in educational research on children's literature in the years 2000 to 2010 and tries to find answers to the following questions:

How many articles about children's literature are published in German scholarly educational journals? In which scholarly journals are these articles published? What are the topics of the published articles? And what does this mean for children's literature as an object of educational research?

Before answering these questions it is necessary to explain why this paper concentrates on scholarly journals and how the needed data was found and which data was actually used for this short study.

The present system of sciences is based in large part on scientific communication which takes place and depends on the primary journal literature. Today basic research is published in huge numbers as scientific articles in academic journals, because this is the best way to get this research known to the scientific community⁸. Or as Ertl puts it: "Publications in academic journals are in many ways the currency that regulates and drives the academic market of institutions and researchers"⁹. They are the medium for academic discussion, show the latest tendencies in research and demonstrate the productivity in the academic sector. For example the majority of outputs submitted in education studies were journal articles. For individual scholars, publications in leading peer-reviewed journals have an important and often direct impact on research careers, because of their high level of esteem. Furthermore many rankings of universities are based on systems like the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI)¹⁰.

These reasons – actuality, quality and importance for the research community – turn scholarly journals themselves into an interesting object for research.

In order to get the needed data for this short study the German database *FIS-Bildung*, which is the first access to academic information in the fields of "*Bildungsforschung*", pedagogy and pedagogical practice, was used. In the center are databases of literature and sources of research data. Most of the relevant educational academic publications are listed there. With the help of specific keywords – in this case "*Kinderliteratur*" (children's literature) and "*Jugendliteratur*" (literature for young people) and "*Zeitschriftenartikel*" (journal article) – it is possible to get a list of journal articles, that were published for example in the year 2000.

Not all articles from these lists got used for this paper. In the database *FIS-Bildung* the given keywords show strikes like portraits or interviews of the authors of children's books, re-

⁸ T. Braun, *Keeping the gates of science journals. Gatekeeping Indicators of National Performance in the Sciences*, in H. F. Moed (Ed.) *Handbook of Quantitative Science and Technology Research*, Dodrecht, Springer, 2005, p. 95.

⁹ This statement is taken from the abstract of a Symposium held at the ECER 2012 by Hubert Ertl. The title of the Symposium was: Educational Research at the Crossroads? What journals of education can tell us about the development of the discipline (Session 23 SES 14 C).

¹⁰ K. Zierer, H. Ertl, D. Phillips, R. Tippelt, *Das Publikationsaufkommen der Zeitschrift für Pädagogik im deutsch-englischen Vergleich*, in: "Zeitschrift für Pädagogik", 59, 3 (2013), p. 400. Also: J. Wellington, C. J. Torgerson, *Writing for publication: what counts as a 'high status, eminent academic journal'?*, in "Journal of Further and Higher Education", 29, 1 (2005), p. 36.

views of new published children's books, or short texts about literature awards for children's books. Due to their shortness and their exclusive informative character these kind of articles were not counted as „scientific ones” and so they do not appear in this presentation. Articles about mere creative writing for children without regard to children's literature were also excluded from the counting. Articles which provide materials for classes and instructions for teachers are included.

There was also further data used: Often and in the case of journal articles almost always the strikes of the database *FIS-Bildung* give the abstracts of the articles. This is a very useful instrument to get further information about the topics of the listed articles. To categorise these topics this paper relies solely on these abstracts. This means the articles have not been read as a whole.

The information about the later mentioned journals from their specific homepages and originate from the database *Deutscher Bildungsserver* (German education server).

2. Outcomings

In total there are 278 articles published in fifty eight different journals in the years 2000 until 2010. This is an average of twenty-five articles per year. Most articles, namely 66, were published in the year 2000, least articles, namely six, were published in 2006.

2000	66
2001	34
2002	37
2003	28
2004	17
2005	16
2006	9
2007	24
2008	23
2009	14
2010	10

Amount of published articles in total 278 articles

There is a remarkable decline starting in 2004 that ends with the lowest point in 2006.

Particularly noteworthy is the great amount of fifty-eight different educational journals. It would be most distressing to mention and describe each one of them so only the journals with more than ten articles about children's literature published in the given period will be presented. Almost half of all articles, namely one hundred and thirty five, are published in these journals and they are taken them as representatives. The information on the educational journals

are from the respective websites of the publishers.

Most articles, namely thirty-three, were found in the journal *Beiträge Jugendliteratur und Medien*. This scholarly journal according to the editors centers around research on children's literature. It also contains studies on the new media and to a smaller amount studies on pedagogy of literature and the use of children's literature in classes or in libraries. Since 2007 the journal is called *kjl&m – forschung.schule.bibliothek*¹¹.

On the second rank with 30 articles is the journal *Grundschule*. This is according to the editors a journal for everybody who works at the German "Grundschule" (elementary school) and also for teaching-students and for scholars at University. The articles in this journal focus on current forms of teaching and learning, they discuss pedagogical and methodological questions and show current research results¹².

On the third rank with twenty six articles each we find the journals "Grundschulunterricht" and "Praxis Deutsch". The first one "Grundschulunterricht"¹³ has the same objects and readers like the journal "Grundschule" which was mentioned above. The second one "Praxis Deutsch" is the leading journal for German lessons at school and it offers many texts and materials for teachers. It also informs about current issues of research in the field of pedagogy of literature¹⁴.

The journals "Die Grundschulzeitschrift" and "Praxis Fremdsprachenunterricht" share the fourth rank with ten articles each. Again the first one "Die Grundschulzeitschrift" concentrates on teaching at primary school. The second one "Praxis Fremdsprachenunterricht" includes suggestions for teachers of English, French and Russian. It offers materials for classes. Main topics are foreign language acquisition and pedagogy of literature and foreign languages¹⁵.

Beiträge Jugendliteratur und Medien (since 2007: kjl&m–forschung.schule.bibliothek)	33
Grundschule	30
Grundschulunterricht	26
Praxis Deutsch	26
Die Grundschulzeitschrift	10
Praxis Fremdsprachenunterricht	10

Distribution of the published articles to the journals

Except for the journal "Beiträge Jugendliteratur und Medien" the other five journals are ad-

¹¹ See www.kopaed.de/kopaedshop/?pg03_29 (last access: 04.10.2013).

¹² See www.die-grundschule.de/info/konzept (last access: 04.10.2013).

¹³ See <http://www.oldenbourg-klick.de/zeitschriften/grundschulunterricht/home> (last access: 28.04.2014).

¹⁴ See <http://www.friedrich.verlag.de/go/Sekundarstufe/Deutsch/Zeitschriften/Praxis+Deutsch/Konzept> (last access: 28.04.2014).

¹⁵ See <http://www.oldenbourg-klick.de/zeitschriften/praxis-fremdsprachenunterricht/home> (last access: 28.04.2014).

dressed primarily to teachers and teaching-students. This result is reinforced by a quick look on the journals with less than ten articles. There are four journals with eight articles about children's literature. Two of them ("Deutschunterricht"¹⁶ and "Informationen zur Deutschdidaktik"¹⁷) are journals on pedagogy of German literature. The third one *Lehren und lernen* addresses teachers¹⁸ and the fourth one *Bulletin Jugend und Literatur*¹⁹ is a journal addressing booksellers and librarians. One journal with seven articles is called *Religion heute* and contains materials and instructions for teachers of religious education.

More remarkable is the fact that there was no article found in the two most highly esteemed German scholarly educational journals, the "Zeitschrift für Pädagogik" and the "Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft". At least one article was found in the "Jahrbuch of historische Bildungsforschung".

This leads to the first assumption that educational research on children's literature focuses mainly on the question how children's literature could be used as material for classes in school.

To confirm this assumption a closer look on the abstracts of the articles in *FIS-Bildung* is necessary, which leads to the third question: What are the topics of the published articles?

Therefore two categories were made up to classify the topics of the articles.

The first category which could be called "Education in children's literature" summarizes articles dealing with topics like education of values, presentation of society and family, social problems like poverty, foreignness, bullying and addiction to drugs in children's literature. It also contains articles focusing on children's literature as a medium of *Bildung*. As this category is highly differentiated and therefore very confusing the table will not present the each numbers to the respective topics.

All articles gathered in this category do not have any connection to school or teaching issues. The total number of articles in the category "Education in children's literature" is: 86. The second category could be named „children's literature as material for teaching at school". Here it was easier to take a closer look on the different school subjects and how children's literature is relevant for school. The total number of articles in the category "children's literature as material for teaching at school" is: 192. 34 of them concentrate on reading motivation and encouragement. 79 articles treat children's literature as material for German classes and pedagogy of literature. 46 articles show the use of children's literature in English, French and Russian classes and how children's literature might help learning a foreign language. 24 articles discuss religious topics in children's literature and the relevance of children's literature in pedagogy of religion and in religious education at school. The rest of 9 articles focus on children's literature in history and music classes.

¹⁶ See <http://www.d-unterricht.de/info/konzept> (last access: 28.04.2014)

¹⁷ See <http://www.goethe.de/wis/med/prj/dzz/spr/izd/deindex.htm> (last access: 28.04.2014).

¹⁸ <http://www.lernenundlehren.de/> (last access: 28.04.2014).

¹⁹ <http://www.eselsohr-leseabenteuer.de/index.php?id=105> (last access: 28.04.2014).

Education in children's literature	86
Children's literature as material for teaching at school	192
Reading motivation	34
German classes	79
Foreign language acquisition	46
Religious education	24
History and music classes	9

Topics of the published articles

3. Conclusion and perspectives

Before I started working on this paper I was convinced that the amount of articles about children's literature in scholarly educational journals must be tremendous in the given period. The years 2000 to 2010 are the years of the Harry Potter phenomena and the PISA-shock. Just to mention: the study of the OECD showed the small reading competencies of German pupils. Sure, there are articles about Harry Potter and, as shown above, about reading motivation but the numbers are not impressive. And only one article out of 278 dealt with children's literature as an object of *Bildung*. Furthermore, it is very surprising that none of the high esteemed educational scholarly journals in Germany, the "Zeitschrift für Pädagogik" and the "Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft", published anything about children's literature. Here a look at the journals itself would be very worthwhile to prove if my source, the database *FIS-Bildung* might be incomplete here.

It would be also worthwhile to do the same kind of database search, again with the years 1990 to 2000. It would be interesting to compare the results and to get a clue if the amount of articles about children's literature increased during the years 2000-2010, if it stayed the same or if it even declined.

Even if the small amount of articles about children's literature is surprising, it is not surprising that most of them deal with the question how children's literature could be used in school. As stated in the beginning children's literature was from its very beginnings connected with school and teaching. Therefore there is – as Weinkauff and Glasenapp state²⁰ – a long tradition in using children's books at school. Not only in German classes, but also in History, English and French, Biology and Religion lessons. The high amount of journals like "Grundschule" or "Praxis Deutsch" addressing teachers and teaching-students as readers and the high amount of articles about the topic "children's literature as material for teaching at school" prove this statement right.

So it is possible to state that: Firstly, children's literature is a research topic in Education

²⁰ G. Weinkauff, G. von Glasenapp, *Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 2010, pp. 230-244.

studies. But it seems that it is not one of the main research fields.

Secondly, most research in Education studies about children's literature is done in the field of school, for example: reading motivation, German lessons and acquisition of a foreign language.

But – as this paper is just a brief and sometimes not very detailed survey – more research has to be done to make a definitive statement. Therefore it would be worthwhile to collect the data for at least the years 1990-2000 and take a closer look at them. To take a look at the journals themselves, to include books and essay collections of Education studies on children's literature and to compare the collected data with equal publications in German studies.

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