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Main research: Empirical research of early childhood and elementary education, Quality of processes and programmes of early childhood facilities; development of professional instruments (rating scales; tests); professional development; professional competence (language diagnosis/assessment and support).

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There is nothing so practical as good theory? - Preliminary consideration of historical and recent "basics", exemplified by environmental education.

Currently the great significance of early childhood education for the individual's life and for the further development of society has been internationally acknowledged. Accordingly, there is considerable demand for scientifically generated insights which may be used as guidelines for parents, early childhood professionals, politicians, and the public.

As shown by more recent accounts, there is a lack of scientifically well-reasoned insights to be able to correctly understand the common practice and – if necessary – to reform it effectively. This is due to several reasons. Firstly, not seldomly existent insights are not connected to each other. Also, relevant insights – according to their respective framing – allow for different interpretations. And finally we are lacking insights on important aspects of early childhood education.

In this situation scientists increasingly look for possibilities to understand existent insights by way of theoretical means in a way which will make the complex constitution of early childhood education clearer, so that in the future it can be researched and taken into consideration for practical work in a more authentic way. First gains of this way of proceeding are becoming obvious. But there is also pointing out to previously neglected possibilities. For example, the question is raised if reaching back to historical "basics" in the form of fundamental scientific concepts will be helpful with this matter. This will be analyzed by the example of the German concept of "Bildung (education)". The latter may serve as a kind of burning glass, showing the variety of relevant aspects and relations of early childhood education. Starting out from this overall picture, single constituents can be explained by help of current theories and research without the overall context getting lost.

This will be run through by the example of environment education for small children. Starting out from an integrative concept of education, relevant insights from developmental psychology, social psychology, psychology of learning, elementary didactics, pedagogical quality research, research on professions etc. will be linked to each other and relativized. The resulting overall picture will show scientists where there are insight gaps, and it will provide professionals with hints of in how far the needs of society and the possibilities of children can be made congruent or are conflicting.