

**Final report of the investigation at the
Otto-Hahn-Gymnasium
to the topic**

**„A World of Difference and its contribution
for the overcoming of
discrimination and for the production of e-
qual chances“**

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1. Course of investigation and methodical approach

Shortly after the summer holidays in 2003 the team took up first contact with the Otto-Hahn-Gymnasium (OHG), a grammar school in Göttingen. The first contact was the teacher, who had been identified as the person responsible for the project mentioned in the project's questionnaire for the survey of school activities for the promotion of equal opportunities and for the combating of discrimination at 200 schools in the Göttingen region. At this point it should be remarked, that the project's questionnaire had been filled in by this teacher very detailed and that all activities carried out at the school had been described carefully. The teacher was very interested in the intention of the project to study the implementation of the program "A World of Difference" (AWOD) at the Otto Hahn grammar school. For this purpose with an appointment was agreed with the headmaster in order to introduce the project more detailed to the school. For a final assent to be allowed to realize the survey, the approval of the headmasters conference was required. After getting the permission for the survey's implementation the teacher who had filled in the questionnaire became the contact person for the project. This teacher is an instructed AWOD trainer. The realization of the survey was carried out in a constructive, open-minded and interested atmosphere.

The proceeding of the project team during the survey based on semi-standardized interviews with the headmaster and the AWOD trainer as well as a participating three-week observation in the lessons, which was followed by a questioning of pupils of two classes. An interview of further teachers was abandoned, because AWOD units were carried out only by the teacher mentioned above and other colleagues were not involved in the program and they did not ask for it. The CREE team also refrained from the participation of the parents. The reason for this is, that the participation of the parents neither was given during the decision-making process of introducing AWOD at the school nor during the implementation of this program.

Regarding the course of the survey it be must said, that the order of the individual steps of the investigation compared to the course intended changed due to prior commitments. Originally it was planned to interview the headmaster at the beginning, afterwards to interview the teacher and at last the pupils. But the headmaster could not be interviewed until the end of the phase of survey.

2. Description of the School

2.1 The School and its Environment

The Otto Hahn grammar school¹ is located in the "Leineau" (water meadows) near the railway station and the city centre of Göttingen in an area in which some schools, the city gymnasium and the fairground are located. Adjacent to the school there is no housing area so that the grounds on which the school is located gives a functional impression to the viewer. The buildings of the Otto Hahn grammar school as well as that of the neighbouring vocational school were built in the late sixties and the early seventies. The strictly modern architecture looks more cold and functional from outside. The buildings

¹ <http://www.ohg.goe.ni.schule.de/> (08.01.04)

and the school area present two large break time halls and some schoolyards with the possibility of sporting activities during the breaks to the pupils.

The commuter belt comprises besides the immediate vicinity the entire municipal area of Göttingen und the adjacent districts. Because of the good rail link many pupils from outside are attending the Otto Hahn grammar school.

At present 80 teachers are teaching at the school. 907 pupils are attending the grammar school, 521 of them are girls and 386 boys. The number of foreign pupils is quoted with 33, the number of pupils with a migration background is unknown. One handicapped pupil is attending the school.

In the scientific field the Otto Hahn grammar school above all is very well endowed with chemical, physical and biological specialist rooms. The school places computer rooms at informatics' disposal. For film performances, stage performances, concerts or larger tests the school is equipped with three large assembly halls. In addition to that the supply with media (e.g. video, overhead projector) compared to other schools is very well.

Since this school year the OHG offers the pupils three days a week an all-day schooling meanwhile they are able to attend study groups with a wide-ranging offer of activities in the afternoon.

Starting with the seventh year pupils can choose classes which focus on mathematics and sciences. Initially these pupils are promoted in study groups, from the ninth year their choice finds expression in increased numbers of lessons in their main area.

Parallel to it pupils who got a talent for music have the opportunity to attend music lessons from the seventh up to the tenth year four hours a week. Half of the instruction is practically orientated. It is possible to take part in the choir, the orchestra or the band.

The school has good connections to partner schools in six different countries on three continents. It offers the pupils exchange programs with each of them.

A prepared whole school agreement, which formulates guidelines concerning equal and discrimination-free handling at the school, exists at the OHG neither for pupils nor for teachers.

2.2 Reasons for the implementation of the scholarly activities against discrimination and for equal opportunities

As by many of the schools that have filled in the questionnaire at the end of 2002 it is noticeable while looking through the answers of the OHG that the problems of equal opportunities and discrimination are seen at first in connection with problems of integration of pupils from foreign countries. Thus school activities have been led through in this range of problems.

According to the headmaster of the OHG there is no actual problem of discrimination or integration. The reason is that the share of foreign pupils at the OHG is only 3.6%. Further reason why the school is not confronted with problems of integration is that the overwhelming part of foreign pupils comes from families with an academic background. This general set-up helps educational success and integration. In this connection the headmaster of the OHG mentioned that "at first sight integration work as it is done at some focal points hasn't to be done here." This statement should not to be misunderstood in the way that active efforts towards the avoidance of discrimination are unnecessary.

that active efforts towards the avoidance of discrimination are unnecessary. Such measures serve to a better learning atmosphere for the pupils in which educational success appears easier and this creates more equal opportunities. "Someone who is excluded from his class (or where at least tendencies for such a behaviour are existing) will be more busy with solving this problem than he will be able to concentrate upon the subject matter."

Besides this basic suggestions arising from daily school life the awareness for necessity of measures preventing from or fighting discrimination arises from the development of society. This development is realized by the pupils as well as by the staff of the school. This has led to an increased sensitivity towards discrimination and equal opportunities.

From the perception that activities and efforts against discrimination both due to social developments and due to the necessity to create a discrimination-free learning environment for all pupils at the school are necessary, the school pursues the goal of achieving effects both inside and outside school towards less discrimination and more equal opportunities. As far as private efforts are concerned it is first of all pointed out that the school is supporting in working groups and in conferences of the ministry of education and cultural affairs and of the "Landesinstitut für Lehrerfortbildung" (Institute for Teacher's vocational Training) for the recognition of more native languages of pupils with a migration background as foreign languages in the instructions, for the recognition of native languages as a replacement for the second foreign language as well as for the complete implementation of the decree "Teaching for pupils of foreign origin"². According to the teacher cooperating with the project it is necessary to implement the decree completely in order to reach further improvement for foreign pupils' situation.

For the area of activities inside the school a large number of activities were mentioned by the OHG compared to other schools questioned. Regarding pupils with a migration background it is the objective "to strengthen this group in it's self-confidence without stigmatising them as an emphasized group". The aim of the cultural work at the OHG is to stress the worth of different cultures by giving positive examples. In this connection a large range of activities is realized.

Invitation of high-ranking representatives of other cultures

Especially high-ranking representatives of foreign cultures are able to make a contribution to the lasting transfer of the value of other cultures as well as to the understanding of discrimination. That's why the school regularly invites groups or single persons in order to give a lecture or to contribute to the teachings. Thus the OHG was visited by the brother of the Dalai Lama, a representative of the Aborigines from Australia and by a delegation of the organisation of "Fair Trade".

School celebrations

For school celebrations, school concerts or other occasions pupils with a migration background are asked to present music from their countries. For pupils and the audience this provides an appropriate setting and by their performances they get a sense of achievement and are motivated to concern themselves with their culture in detail.

² <http://www.nibis.de/nli1/ikb/erlasse/erlassauslaendischeschueeler.pdf> (09.01.04)

Discussion circles

At the OHG pupils with a migration background are supported by an authorized representative. This position is carried out by the teacher who co-operated with the CREE project and who himself has a migration background. He initiates regular discussion groups for pupils with migration background and if necessary for parents. Central concern of these groups is to recognize problems within the educational and social range promptly and to offer assistance and consultation.

Panel discussion

There is a possibility to realize panel discussions dealing with actual social topics. During these events topics are discussed which are connected to discrimination and equal opportunities. Gabriele Erpenbeck, the representative for foreigners of Lower Saxony took part in such a discussion. The discussions take place irregularly and have current topics.

Co-operation with external organizations and projects

For a long time the OHG uses materials of the "Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker" (GfbV, an organization for threatened peoples). These materials are used and tested in teaching subjects such as religion and "Werte und Normen" (ethics). Projects of the GfbV are supported by the OHG regularly.

There is also a co-operation of the OHG with the Tilonia project in India. This is a development project which aims at sustainability. Since more than two years pupils are visiting the project which was initiated by a teacher who had been working for a long time in Delhi. Besides the Tilonia project, the OHG has two partner schools in India, one in Delhi and the other one in the Himalayan region.

The headmaster of the OHG sorts the activities into "a concept of an in a wider sense liberal and open-minded school which tries to offer pupils of different regional and social origin an open house. A liberal self-image in this sense commits to a tolerant contact with each other, where all according to their abilities seize their opportunity and do not face exclusion and intolerance." All activities mentioned above have to contribute to this aim. In addition to that the school is aware of its duty to arrange advisory services and help in that cases in which the school is not able to act or to help directly. This intention arises from the conviction that "school isn't anymore a facilitator of pure specialist knowledge, but increasingly a provider of educational and pedagogical services." In order to guarantee this a social pedagogue was assigned to the school. On the one hand she is the reliable person for the pupils on the other hand she establishes the connections to other organizations and their offer of help and advisory services.

The reasons for the realization of the investigated activity as well as of all other measures do not arise from an actual or a past problem. Moreover they express the awareness of increasing demands on the school at different levels. Besides the above described modules the realisation of the program "A World of Difference" is an activity. This program was

surveyed by the CREE project. The program seemed to be interesting for the project because of its reputation and its varied fields of application.

3. "A World of Difference" at the OHG

3.1 Description of the program

The program "A World of Difference" was developed in the USA and goes back to an incident in 1913. In an anti-Semitic atmosphere in Chicago an innocent Jew was lynched by a mob. As a reaction to this incident members of the organization B'nai B'rith (hebr. Sons of the Covenant) founded the "Anti-Defamation-League". This civil rights organization aimed at combating anti-Semitism.

In the course of time and under the impression of ethnic conflicts in the USA the ADL realised that anti-Semitism only could be combated successfully by gaining acceptance for human rights as a whole. In 1985 the ADL developed the training program "A World of Difference". In the year of 1992 the "A World of Difference – Institute " was founded in New York. This institute aims at the provision of teachers with an instrument that helps to spread the idea of tolerance. Besides that the training program is suitable too for making people sensitive at their working places to consequences of prejudices, discrimination and racism.

Impressed by the increasing attacks of the extreme right on migrants at the beginning of the 90ies the program was adapted for Germany within the scope of the tolerance initiative of the Bertelsmann Foundation. The Bertelsmann Foundation and the "Forschungsgruppe Jugend und Europa" (research group "Youth and Europe") of the „Centrum für angewandte Politikforschung" (centre for applied political sciences) at the University of Munich developed a program conception fitting to the German situation and a gathering of information with a practice handbook³.

The following basic assumptions apply to the program:

- Tolerance can be learned. Intolerance can be forgotten.
- The experience to be an outsider is universal – everyone knows personally what it means to be excluded.
- Prejudice and discrimination are often based in resp. legitimised by institutions.
- Each form of oppression is different in both the amount of institutional discrimination and persecution as well as in the many varied ways in which discrimination and persecution works.
- We are not responsible for how we have been socialized but we are responsible for what we do about it today⁴.

³ Bertelsmann Stiftung, Forschungsgruppe Jugend und Europa (ed.), Eine Welt der Vielfalt. Ein Trainingshandbuch des A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE®-Institute der Anti-Defamation League, New York, in der Adaption für den Schulunterricht. Praxishandbuch für Lehrerinnen und Lehrer. (Internationale Programme zur Demokratie- und Toleranzerziehung 2) 2. rev. ed. Gütersloh 2001.

⁴ <http://www.ewdv-berlin.de/seiten/ewdv/ansatz.html> (13.01.04)

There is a collection of practices in the handbook which forces the participants to argue with themselves, their values and their opinions as well as with those of the other participants. The practices collected are divided into five chapters. In the first chapter pupils have to realize themselves as individuals and members of different groups and hold themselves in high esteem. The second chapter is bringing about the recognition of differences and similarities. The third chapter deals with meeting of cultural diversity of different peoples as well as their languages and their traditions. In the fourth chapter pupils should learn about prejudices, discrimination and their consequences for individuals and for groups. The last chapter confronts the pupils with the task to develop strategies in order to fight prejudices and discrimination.

3.2 The realisation of the program at the OHG

In 1998 the teacher responsible for children with a migration background gained his certification as a trainer of the program "A World of Difference". The training was funded by the state of Lower Saxony, which took over the education of 30 trainers. They had to be requested by other schools in order to enable them to lead across the AWOD program. In reality the trainer was required by some other schools, but this is connected with the precondition of release. This causes a cancellation of lessons for the school that employs the teacher. That's why for technical reasons the spreading of the program at schools without trainer is very difficult.

After his successful certificating the teacher told his colleagues that as an AWOD trainer he is available at everyone's disposal. But in the past the interest in was so poor, so that the program was used only in the classes of his own. The program is used in the ethics courses especially at the beginning of the ethics lessons because the pupils do not know each other so very well, yet. Beyond the lessons the program is used at project days because within the scope of these days the exercises of the program could be practised with more time than it is possible in normal lessons.

3.3 Participating observation of the lessons

During the investigation of the CREE Project the realisation of the program "A World of Difference" could be observed in the ethics lessons of a class of year 11. After this participating observation followed an interview first with the class being observed and then with a class that had just finished their AWOD unit.

Altogether during the observation five units were realised aiming at individual self-images as well as affiliation to a group. The lessons arguing with individual characteristics of the pupils forces them to describe their characteristics, their strengths and their weaknesses and to think about themselves. After writing down a description of their own pupils had to compare notes among themselves. The objective of this form of evaluation is to promote mutual acquaintance.

Other variants of the evaluation of the exercises consisted of introducing themselves with the notes of their own or the notes were given to the teacher and he read them to the class asking them which person had written the description.

Two exercises dealt with group affiliation. Here as a starting point the question about a self description was likewise asked, but pupils were tested on the results on the basis of group

categories like sports, music etc. while after completing the personal description those pupils should rise who have described themselves on the basis of the category sport (e.g. "I love riding a bicycle very often") etc..

In the second exercise the pupils at first had to describe lemons. Then they had to form groups consisting of two children taking one lemon each from a mass in the middle of the room in order to write an invented curriculum vitae for the lemon. After that all groups had to give back their lemons into the middle of the room and then – after all lemons lay again on the mass – had to find them again.

The exercises observed were carried out in an relaxed atmosphere characterised by curiosity. Partly the class was astonished for what a purpose the exercises pursued but the degree of openness to reveal personal things was large enough to be able to accomplish the exercises.

3.4 Connection between the realisation of "A World of Difference" and the situation at the school

According to the statements of the headmaster and the teacher there are no problems between German and foreign pupils known at the school since a long time. Nevertheless according to the headmaster the program is judged as an element that makes a contribution to the development of the school into "an open house of learning" sensitising the pupils for prejudices and stereotypes in order to avoid discrimination.

The AWOD trainer also stresses that the program is not a reactive concept but more a preventive concept. The program cannot solve conflicts resulting from xenophobia and discrimination, but it develops a preventive effect when it is used periodically. Therefore, in other European countries "A World of Difference" belongs to the regular training of the staff of public and administrative authorities.

3.5 Success of the application of the program "A World of Difference"

The headmaster is of the opinion that it is very difficult to measure the success of the program concerning sensitisation of pupils for prejudices und discrimination. The reason is that changes in pupil's awareness and code of conduct cannot be proved by the influence of individual steps. Changes like this are a question of processes which come to pass in longer periods and may have an effect when the pupils have left the school. Thus, an exact determination of the influence the realization of "A World of Difference" might have is not possible so that "it is in principle the hope that the school provokes anything". The rare conflicts at school, especially between German and foreign pupils, could be seen as an indicator for the positive situation concerning the connection with the problems of discrimination and exclusion and for the fact that AWOD is a measure that aims at this and makes its contributions to it.

The statement of the teacher heads for the same and is supported by the observation of the classes having realized the program. Initially the interest of the pupils in the exercises is rather large because with their personality stands more in the centre of interest than it is the case in other lessons. As a consequence from that the willingness of the major part of the pupils arises to open and to tell about themselves. Thus, "even youths of the extreme right became thoughtfully" and opened, says the teacher.

The pupils' opinions of "A World of Difference"-lessons are very positive concerning the exercises carried out. Altogether two classes were questioned, one of them had realised the units several weeks before the date of the interview. Despite of the interval the form and the subject matter were fully present and the pupils were able to describe them. The exercises were regarded as a change in daily school life. Therefore the readiness to put a lot of time into it was very high. In the remarks of the pupils of both classes those exercises were judged as positive, in the way that they demanded self-description and the description of individual characteristics. On the occasion it was pointed out that it was not always easy to describe one's own positive characteristics and abilities: "I found the personality games to be rather difficult, because there are many characteristics one has and could describe. It isn't that easy when you can't remember them and it isn't as easy to express them. In addition to that, one has a different look at oneself than other people have." "Especially those questions were very hard where you had to describe the abilities of your own. It's easier to say, 'I can't draw a picture' than to say 'I can do this and that very good'." These quotations stress that the exercises initiate a reflection upon the characteristics and abilities of one's own. In the end some of the pupils questioned agreed to that through the exercises they got an increase of knowledge and consciousness concerning their own. Other pupils rejected this opinion: "I don't know what to think about the "diamond"⁵ and my "personality molecule"⁶, because I do not know more than before. Since it concerned us, I knew what I had written down already before."

A factor, which affects the depth of the remarks over oneself, is the partner, with whom one interchanges afterwards: "If I would have made the exercises with a person who knows me a bit longer, then it would have been easier for me to tell something about myself. The second exercise I did with a person which I don't know so very well. So, it was harder for me to tell about me. If it's about more profound things then there is some kind of shyness." Concerning the exercises according to group affiliation pupils said that they were inspired to think about their own description of members of certain groups. In the centre of interest should not be the characteristics attributed, but the individuality of a group member. In this connection particularly the "lemon game"⁷ was mentioned: "Especially during the lemon game one has seen that it was possible to find one's lemon very fast again although all lemons look alike when you don't have your lemon in mind. Also during the personality exercises one has realized how different the descriptions and the individuals are." The aim of the game is to look more closely at a single person than at the group. Thereby it becomes possible observing a single person compared with the group that he represents to reconsider the ascriptions of one's own towards a group: "To my mind, talking about groups one shouldn't generalize that much. You shouldn't think 'they are so and so and the others are so', but you should treat people individually and not because of their membership in a group because they are supposed to be equal. That's not right."

These statements makes clear that by some pupils success appears in terms of sensitisation for stereotypes and prejudices and it encourages reflection on the handling of that matter: "I think that I also peg someone as something. One assesses a person because of his/her appearance, which is quite normal. But to identify from the outer appearance the attitude of someone, that has not to be overstated." But the pupils doubt whether the exercises by all people cause reflections upon their attitudes and prejudices: "Some people insist on their opinion and they don't change their attitudes by the exercises."

⁵ AWOD-exercise

⁶ AWOD-exercise

⁷ AWOD-exercise

3.6 Criteria of success

On the basis of the results of the pupils' questioning about the exercises carried out in the lessons it can be said that the aims of the school of sensitisation for prejudices with the help of the program "A World of Difference" tends to result in a success by the major part of the pupils. In this context especially the cause for thought as a criteria, mentioned by most of the pupils, is to be quoted. The question is, how lasting these exercises are concerning their impact on pupils. It is a matter of fact that with the sensitisation the look at prevailing prejudices has become keener. This means, related to the school as an organization, that it has effects only in places, because not all pupils come into contact with the program but only those who are taught by the trainer.

3.7 Success factors and failure factors

One success factor for the program at the level of a single pupil is, according to the teacher, in how far pupils are ready to open themselves in the lessons and to express individual information. But also the openness on principle of pupils to think about their opinions affects the success of the program directly. It is hardly conceivable that the teacher has an influencing control on that. One factor mentioned especially by pupils concerns the post-processing of the lessons. In this connection pupils said that the purpose of the exercises would have become more clearly when there would have been a post-processing afterwards talking about the idea and the intention of this exercise. In addition to that, pupils pleaded for dealing with themes connected with prejudices and discrimination following the exercises carried out. Especially the question about activities against discrimination would be of interest. By such a deepening and continuation of the subject matter directed to social relevance, the goals of the exercises would have a more lasting effect. This proposal is addressed to the teacher and is an encouragement to combine the AWOD exercises with subject matters and problems that followed.

In addition to didactical advices relating to lessons for the enhancement and the thematic continuation of the exercises, in order to reach pupils better and for a long time on the basis of the class and of the single pupil, the teacher points to possible improvements at school level.

Still, the trainer is the only qualified teacher who accomplishes the exercises. Just as the colleagues do not ask the program although the offer was made to accomplish the program in other classes. Within the scope of the survey of the project this point has been recalled and the AWOD trainer decided to make the offer to use the program in other classes at the school more public in order to reach more children. This intention corresponds with the statement of the headmaster that only few teachers know about the abilities of the program.

Besides more publicity for the program at the school the teacher also remembered an idea fallen into oblivion to introduce it to elder pupils and to make them multipliers at the school. By this step it could be opened up to more pupils, too.

4. Conclusion

In the USA and in some European countries "A World of Difference" is an accepted training program for the sensitisation for difference, prejudices and discrimination. It does not offer opportunities of direct intervention in conflict situations, but is primarily orientated to the prevention of discriminative thinking. The program is connected with the commercial interests of its developers who offer thorough trainings and a modification of the program under licence for various areas. This has not to be taken as criticism, but it hints to the fact that the training of 30 teachers means an investment with the idea of spreading the program at other schools. The idea to make trained teachers to multipliers being available at request of other schools seems not to be an adequate way to spread the program against the background of the prerequisite of an preceding exemption and a compensation of cancelling lessons. From that point of view it is to remark that the program's potential under this aspect cannot be exhausted completely with the one reservation that the teachers would totally concentrate on being trainers.

The use at the OHG is limited to the lessons of the one teacher or it is offered during project days or weeks so that the use of the program could be enlarged by making the knowledge about it more public at the school.

The opinions of the pupils about "A World of Difference" - and they are the addressees of this program - are for the most part to be judged positively. The aims (encouraging the thinking about oneself and discovering own prejudices and stereotypes) according to the pupils are achieved, however, but a thorough effect for the heightening of their awareness of discrimination could be achieved by taking up realizations and impressions given by the program and by continuing the work towards social problems in context with discrimination. It is expected that considering this criticism the use of the program as well as the use for more discrimination-free thinking at the school could be strengthened lastingly.

It is remarkable to point out at the end of the report that the results of it in the area of acceptance, use and pupil's assessment of the impact of the program "A World of Difference" correspond very much with results which have been gained on the basis of a former evaluation of the program for the Bertelsmann Foundation⁸. In this evaluation the high acceptance on the part of the pupils who carried out the exercises has been recorded, too. This acceptance was caused particularly by the centring to the pupil's own person as well as by the encouragement to think about oneself. In addition to that, the desire to treat resuming topics of discrimination problems and of prejudices supports the assumption that hereby the goals pursued by the program can be achieved more lastingly.

⁸ Download of the evaluation report: http://www.cap.uni-muenchen.de/aktuell/news/2003/2003_04_toleranz.htm#dl (16.01.03)