

**Final report of the investigation at the
Georg Christoph Lichtenberg
school to the topic**

**„The concept of table groups and its
contribution to the overcoming
of discrimination and to the promotion of
equal chances“**

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1. Introduction and methodology

The investigation accomplished at the George Christoph Lichtenberg school refers contrary to other in the context of the project CREE accomplished investigations not to a singular activity, but to an elementary basic module of the school concept, the so-called "Tischgruppenansatz" (concept of table groups see explanation in chapter 3). This approach is practised daily in all classes of the class stages five to ten.

The investigation was realised similarly to the investigation design agreed upon in the project CREE with the partners. Due to the participation of the school in the questionnaire survey of the CREE project the school was selected as one of the four schools being in the focus of a more detailed investigation of their activities. The first contact during the last school year was established with the working group against bullying and violence. Subsequently the request of an investigation of the table groups approach under the question, which contribution of the concept can be carried out to the promotion of equal chances and for the fight against discrimination, was presented to a educational-didactical conference and approved by it. The investigation should concentrate, beside the interviews with the school management (as the first step of the investigation) and the social pedagogues (as group interview with all four social pedagogues in the end of the investigation) on two different classes of the school. For this the sixth and the ninth classes were selected. The pupils of the sixth classes have a bit more than one year of experience with the table groups approach, stand thus still relatively at the beginning of their experiences. The pupils of the ninth classes have already more than four years of experience. With the selection it should be ensured that not only a snapshot of the attitudes towards the table groups approach of the different actors is taken, but a consistent picture can be drawn for the estimate of table groups approach. Beyond that it should be asked for differences in the attitude of the pupils whether for example in the course of the time rather a higher or lower acceptance on sides of the pupils is to be registered.

Pupils, teachers and parents representative of these class stages were asked then. For this purpose two group interviews with - in each interview three – teachers, who teach in the respective classes, six group interviews with in each case three by lot determined table groups in the sixth and ninth classes and a group interview with parents representative of the two class stages were realised. Additionally three table groups of the ninth class were drawn by lot, of which the parents should be asked. From this table groups however only one mother made herself available for an interview. All pupils of the two classes were asked beyond that by a questionnaire. All interviews were realised as manual-based semi-standardized interviews, which were noted, documented and evaluated.

It can be stated that the CREE team was accepted with a remarkable openness. Either the school management and all other involved actors showed a large interest to let the table groups approach examine in order to receive explanations for own practice. All arrangements were kept, for the contact to the school and the organizational arrangements for the execution of the investigation the didactical leader as part of the school management was available reliably at any time.

2. Description of the school

2.1 The school and its environment

The Georg Christoph Lichtenberg comprehensive school¹ (integrated comprehensive school, IGS) is located in the range between the Goettingen suburbs Geismar and Südstadt. The surrounding field is petit bourgeois to middle-class, toward the north there is an older quarter of homes, in the south a newer construction site is located, in the east and the south larger buildings of social housing construction border directly on the IGS. In the west is an allotment settlement. Except the closer environment the entire city and also the county district belong to the catchment area of the school.

The integrated comprehensive school (IGS) is an all day school². The afternoon program is extensive and reaches from work and practice hours, work on projects up to the most diverse working groups, and is attended by social pedagogues.

At present about 140 teachers work at the school. The total number of the pupils amounts to approximately 1350, whereby the number of the girls and boys is approximately alike. Additionally 85 pupils with migration background visit the IGS. Besides there are approx. 15 disabled pupils, who visit integration classes. Pupils, who want to visit the IGS after the primary school have to apply. The IGS uses therefore a certain distributor, which refers to the proportional pupil portion on the "normal" schools in Goettingen. Similarly to this percentage groups are formed according to the note average in the primary school. According to this percentage the school beginners are selected. So 1997 65.3% of the beginners had a average of marks of 1,0-2,3, 26.6% of 2,7-3,0 and 8,1% of 3,3 and worse (1996: 51,6%: 32,5%: 15,9%; 1995: 47,0%: 30,3%: 22,7%)³.

In the context of the school reform movement since end of the sixties the idea developed to introduce a uniform educational system up to the tenth class which should replace the conventional system of three strands. More equal chances and more individual promotion possibilities, as well as the initiation of social learning processes were the goals of these efforts.

In the year 1971 a IGS planning group under line of its later head teacher began the work. The planning group, which covered occasionally 100 members, consisted of teachers, parents, local politicians, architects and scientists of the educational seminar of the university Göttingen. They had the task to develop the contentwise and structural concept of the IGS.

After a planning period of four years 1975 the school could began it's work.

Nowadays the IGS is in a phase of change, since in the teaching staff a generation change lines up. Many of those, who created the IGS, stand briefly before retirement or are not any longer in the school service. In former times new teachers were problem-free integrated, nowadays it is more difficult due to the higher number of new teachers. The new colleagues are only gradually firm with the IGS concept. They are knowing it rather theoretically from their study. Because of the smaller financial framework in the last years,

¹ <http://www.igs.goe.ni.schule.de>. Comprehensive school means that all three strands of the normal German school system (secondary modern, secondary and grammar school) are integrated in one school and all pupils are taught together.

² In Germany all day schools are still not common.

³ 1=best mark; 6= worst mark:

the personnel-intensive care program had to be distributed to the IGS on fewer shoulders, which leads to an additional charge of the involved staff. Some of the new colleagues do not know the "good, old time" of the better personnel equipment of the school and doubt the feasibility of the IGS concept in its present form.

2.2 School concept

Basic lines of the school concept are the idea of equal chances, the stabilization of the responsibility for one's own and independence of pupils and teachers. The work was embedded at the beginning into the reform discussions of its time and oriented itself at the already existing comprehensive schools. But the planning group wanted to disassociate itself from already existing concepts.

An external achievement differentiation in A -, B and C-courses was omitted and replaced by a so called team-small's group model (TKM), in which high performance and low-achiever pupils learn together in mix-sexual table groups. For each class in the "Sekundarstufe I"⁴ there is teacher team and its own teaching section. At least twelve teachers work in such a team, which cares for six classes with 28 pupils in each class. Each class has two mentors. The teachers are responsible both for the professional advancement of the children and also for their social development.

Each team has a team area ("teacher room"), which is in direct proximity to the classrooms of the respective classes. The teams are composed in a way that they are able to cover all subjects and will accompany the pupils from fifth to tenth classes. They work independently and can make the instruction and hour distribution by their own. Determined subjects, like German, English, mathematics, natural sciences and AWT (work-economics-technology), are taught sometimes by two teachers together. This permits a more intensive support for single pupils. The teachers are supported by four social pedagogues being employed at the school.

The pupils can choose special priority subjects according to individual interests and competences in the beginning of the 7th and the 9th class.

At the IGS only from the beginning of the second semester of the 8th class marks are given. Before that detailed learning development reports (LEB) are replacing the notes. Those LEB have the purpose to deal more individually with the respective performance level of the pupils and to show them ways how they can improve still further. A LEB consists of three parts:

In the first, general part instruction contents of all subjects are described. The second part is the report of the mentors, which contains the respective teacher feedback in form of a letter to the pupils. In the third part the pupils describe their experiences with the teachers, with the subjects and with their schoolmates⁵.

⁴ „Sekundarstufe I“ means the classes 5-10, „Sekundarstufe II“ the classes 11-13.

⁵ Cf. H. Brandt und J. Schlömerkemper, Kommunikative Lerndiagnose. Konzept und Wirklichkeit des Lernentwicklungsberichts im Team-Kleingruppen-Modell. In: Zeitschrift für Pädagogik 31, 1985, 2, S. 205.

➤ **School Policy**

The most important rules of behaviour and goals, which concern a common life at the IGS, are laid down in school regulations. The school policy, which summarizes the most important points, is signed by all persons involved, school management, teachers, pupils and parents. The pupils commit themselves to respect the others regardless of possible differences, to insult and to threaten nobody mentally or with force. Also the table groups approach and the table groups evenings are part of the agreement.

➤ **Integration classes**

The integration classes represent an extension of the promotion of equal chances since 1990. They were first of their kind in the "Sekundarstufe I" in Lower Saxony (the federal state Göttingen belongs to). They shall help to integrate mentally, physically disabled and learn-handicapped children. At present there are four of such classes in the years 5, 6, 8 and 9, in which three to four pupils with multiple handicaps are integrated and being instructed together with the other pupils.

The desire for introduction of the integration classes was expressed both from institutional side, and on the part of the pupils and parents, who could already make experiences in the primary school with integration classes.

2.3 Reasons for the establishment of activities for the promotion of equal chances and for the combating of discrimination

The entire school concept is planned as a preventive and long-term one. During a long period the pupils have to learn to deal with conflicts by continuous co-operation in mixed groups to help themselves to diminish mutual reservations peacefully and to establish teamwork.

There are however also reactive components in the concept. So anti-violence and anti-bullying programmes are to be introduced in the future. In the context of the different activities also an enhancement of the support for children from civil war areas are advised. The three years ago started mediator project is a first starting point for this. In this project pupils acquire consulting authority in conflict situations and are available for schoolmates having a conflict in their own "office".

The school concept as a whole and the accomplished activities are to produce equal chances in the broadest sense. Altogether the school is directed against disadvantage and discrimination due to sex, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability/illness, socio-economic background and age. This anti-discriminatory strategy has therefore a horizontal approach and no special focus on determined forms of discrimination.

3. The concept of table groups

The concept of table groups being investigated by the CREE-project has already a longer history. In the course of the, already mentioned, reform debates of the 70's it was

developed under the term team-small-group concept. The term points already out that the construct of table groups is based not only on the table groups as such, but also on elementary accompanying components like the support of the pupils by teachers, mentors and social pedagogues.

- Goals of the table groups approach⁶

On the basis of the thesis that a uniform “Sekundarstufe I” until the end of the 10th classes makes possible more equal chances, better individual support possibilities and more favourable conditions for social learning, the concept was seen as an alternative school concept. The approach as an educational concept tries to contribute to an optimal personal development and to a learning of solidarity with one another. A superordinate goal is to reach equal chances for the purposes that all pupils will be able to reach the highest qualification possible according to their abilities.

The goal pursued with the concept of table groups is to create a social integrative unit, in which the pupils with different abilities, strengths and talents learn together successfully.

The goals mentioned had to be revised hardly until today. Only the way, on which goals can be achieved, changes with the time. While in former times the pupils also had to be e.g. rather encouraged to contradict once the authority teacher today rather social competences, e.g. respect for others, listening to others etc. must be developed. Not the goals, but resources of personnel to support the pupils became smaller due to economic reasons, so that the conditions for reaching the straight described goals became worse.

After the description of the goals now it shall be described, how the concept is converted in practice.

- Table groups in practice
 - allocation in table groups

First the outstanding feature of table groups seems to be the seat order of the pupils in the classroom. One do not see any rows or tables in U-form, but in each classroom are usually five table squares, at which 4 – 6 pupils sit. Normally it should be always six pupils, due to class sizes or due to special situations within the table groups, it happens occasionally in addition, that there are table groups with four or five pupils. The pupils sit from the class stage 5 to 10 in table groups, afterwards it is no longer possible because of the course system in the “Sekundarstufe II”. The seat order is of course not the crucial characteristic of the concept of table groups.

⁶ To all information in the following chapter compare.: J. Schlömerkemper and Klaus Winkel, Lernen im Team-Kleingruppen-Modell. Biographische und empirische Untersuchungen zum Sozialen Lernen in der Integrierten Gesamtschule Göttingen-Geismar, Frankfurt a. M. 1987 (= Studien zur Bildungsreform 14) 20ff.

- o formation of the table groups

The question, how the table groups are formed, represents a more substantial characteristic. There are four basic rules for the composition of table groups⁷:

Rule 1: In each table group boys and girls learn together.

Rule 2: Everyone should find at least one desired partner in the group.

Rule 3: In each table group are pupils with different strengths and talents.

Rule 4: In each group pupils, who learn easily work together with pupils having learning difficulties.

At the beginning of the school attendance in the class stage 5 the composition of the table groups takes a very long time. In the first weeks the table groups are mixed again and again, so that all pupils have the opportunity to get to know mutually. Only after approximately half a year the final composition is found. To each new school year the table groups are again built up, but it takes not as much time as in the 5th classes. Usually they are to be constituted at the latest until or during the one week trip the class is doing before the autumn holidays. The teachers have different methods, how the table groups are formed, but all methods should have in common that the composition process is done together with the pupils and that problems occurring during this process are openly discussed. A phenomenon frequent arising is that three to four table groups can be formed relatively fast, but some pupils are remaining, with whom the majority would not like to be so gladly together in a table group. In this case one continues to work as long on the composition, until all are assigned to table groups according to the rules specified above. Especially during the process of discussing the composition the pupils are confronted with the situation of exclusion of individual pupils and have to learn a constructional handling of these situations from the beginning. The goal with the highest priority is, to form a group with a ability for a teamwork, as the table groups are not alone a group for social interaction but also a working group, which have to work on special tasks together. In the first two school years it is still harder for the pupils to accept that the ability to teamwork is more important than to sit together with friends. With the time the pupils internalise this principle however, so that they themselves pay attention to a composition according to this criterion. As different teachers in the interviews stress, the pupils pay attention with the time not only to the composition of their own table groups, but also to the others, so that these are as able to work, like the own table group. The table groups normally should work together during the whole school year. Their composition is changed only after detailed consultation in the class and in special mentoring lessons and according to the agreement of the pupils concerned. Usually the table groups remain together for one school year, sometimes longer.

⁷ cf.. <http://www.igs.goe.ni.schule.de/Lernen/LernenFR1.html> „Konzept und Struktur Sek 1“

- tasks of the table groups

What are the tasks of the table groups? The pupils have to solve some of their tasks together, pupils shall explain themselves mutually, what someone has not understand and concerning possible activities the table groups are considered as an organizational unit, which must prepare something. As one of the highest principles of the school it is considered to place not the success of the particulars into the foreground but common learning. Therefore it is important to use the abilities of the particulars as a group. In the processes of group works it does not depend on the qualities of one particular, but on the fact that all can work together well, and/or that the pupils, who understand it faster explain it to the other ones, so that these are likewise able to understand it.

The results of the teamwork are presented occasionally to the parents on so called table groups evenings, which constitute a further substantial characteristic of the concept of table groups. In other schools the atmosphere or potential conflicts in the classes are only reflected in the entire class or by regular parent-teacher meetings for the entire class. At the IGS regularly (at least once half a year) table groups evenings are accomplished. Usually two teachers participate in them, the pupils themselves and the parents of the pupils. Here on the one hand pupils speaking about their work and their results, on the other hand the way, how the teamwork is realised in the group, is discussed, successes and problems in interaction between the members of the table groups are discussed and if necessary possible solution strategies are worked out. For the parents these table group evening have the advantage that they receive information about what happens in the school, and do not get the information only from the perspective of their own children. If possible the table group evenings shall take place at the pupils homes, so that also a view of the family background of the pupils becomes possible.

- support of the groups of tables by teachers and social pedagogues

A further substantial characteristic of the concept of table groups is the intensive support by teachers and by social pedagogues. To all classes from the fifth to the tenth a team of teachers (usually 12 to 6 classes) is assigned, per class 2 teachers are available as mentors. The instruction at the IGS is – as above mentioned – done in certain core subjects by two teachers at the same time. It is ensured by this double occupation that both conflicts and problems of learn-weaker pupils can be treated better.

In regular intervals the mentors are sitting together with single table groups (in so called mentoring lessons), in order to discuss the current situation in the table group, successes and problems the pupils have and to get more knowledge, in how far the individual pupils or the group must be better promoted. Additionally the continuation of a group work is discussed within this framework.

If individual pupils or the table group as a whole have a problem, which could not be discussed with the other pupils or the teachers, four social pedagogues are available, who can work with individual pupils or the table group on the solution of the problems. By the partitioning of the class in table groups a firm framework exists, within which problems can be discussed, without the entire class group.

- Inclusion of parents

Again and again at other schools it is complained that the inclusion of parents in the matters of daily school life cannot be solved sufficiently. The concept of table groups tries to meet this likewise. As a result of the table group evenings already mentioned the possibility for the parents arises, to reflect the school life in substantially smaller units than in other schools. By the participation of the pupils in the evenings they can also learn to know the schoolmates of their children. In this way they are enabled in a more comprehensive way, to discuss possible problems with their children and to support them by finding solutions. A more intensive knowledge about either the other pupils or their parents is created not only on the level of the pupils, but also on the level of parents a possibility of including the perspective of others into the own considerations, too.

4. Which are the successes of the table groups concept?

In the following chapter the successes of the table groups approach shall be presented. In the beginning the high agreement in the understanding of what the table group concept shall be and achieve between all different actors, school management, teachers, pupils, parents and social pedagogues, can be mentioned as a first success. All in the context of the investigation asked persons referred to the above mentioned goals of the concept. Only the successes are differently weighted. That shows the fact that the concept is not only a theoretical concept set by the school management but an accepted and supported approach by all groups represented by the asked persons. The factors, which favour or however prevent success, will be presented in the next chapter.

It has to be sent on ahead before introducing the different successes, seen by the actors, all levels of success are linked very close to each other. So e.g. the ability of a table groups to solve conflicts, mentioned by the pupils as an important criterion for the assessment of success of a table groups, depends on the ability to do teamwork and the degree of the integration of individual pupils into the table groups, which are also successes seen either by pupils or by teachers.

4.1 Successes in learning

Sense and purpose of table groups is to improve the learning conditions for everybody. In the opinion of the teachers it can be observed that most of the pupils are able to improve their successes in learning by getting support from the group. The teachers of the ninth classes and the school management refer on examples, where individual pupils are motivated only by the group to attain the secondary modern school graduation (CSE) or the junior high school graduation. This estimation is supported by the answers of the pupils in the questionnaire. 46.8% of the girls and 56.7% of the boys of the sixth classes are assessing the statement "thereby that there are table groups, I am able to learn better" with completely or rather correctly. In the ninth classes there are 50% of the girls and 47% of the boys assessing this statement as correctly. The better conditions for learning are explained partly with the open atmosphere to bring in the own opinion or the own

knowledge. 58.3% of the boys and 71.4% of the girls of the sixth classes and 82.9% of the boys and 70.6% of the girls of the ninth classes, indicate that it is completely or rather correct that they can say their opinion in the table groups.

These figures correspond with the negative answers to the statement "I would prefer to learn alone". In the sixth classes agree only 9.5% of the girls and 16.7% of the boys, in the ninth class are 11.8% of the girls and 20.6% of the boys, who say that they prefer to learn alone.

A set of conditions must be given, so that a success in learning can occur, successes concerning the ability to work together, integration, learning social competences and the ability for verbal and peaceful conflict resolution.

4.2 Ability to work

On the part of the school management and the teachers the ability to work of the table groups is seen as principal purpose and thus, if this is reached, also as main success. Ability to work of table groups means functioning co-operation, i.e. to be able to work together in a result-orientated way on a given task in a certain period.

Also by the pupils of the ninth classes the ability to work in the table groups is seen as a success.

4.3 Integration: The table groups as a shelter

The integration of low achievers (and also of migrants, contact-shy pupils etc.) in the table groups shall enhance their chances in the school and hereby naturally in the working life later. The table groups offer the possibility of diminishing existing prejudices against low achieving pupils by a permanent co-operation, which make visible their strengths and not only their weaknesses so that the other pupils get a more comprehensive picture of their personalities. This leads to a better treatment and higher self-esteem of the before more isolated pupils, which help them to concentrate on the learning processes.

The table groups are called shelter by parents representatives. The pupils get the time and the space they need for their personal development. "The large one had a lot of fears when he started at school. He spent the largest part of the lessons in the fifth class under the table. That would have meant for every other school, 'with such a pupil we cannot work.' The IGS said: 'that is o.k., he needs it.' He was absolutely speechless that it could be o.k. Additionally the consulting teacher talked a lot with him. At the end of the 5th class he sat at the table and co-operated normally. He left the school with the highest graduation and as a very self-confident human being. He is very convinced of his abilities. The pupils learn that they are valued and that they are able to reach something."(Mother).

Not only for pupils but for all people, suffering discrimination or unequal chances, it is important that they have such shelters, which could be groups or organizations, where they do not suffer discrimination. In these shelter they can feel saved, recover and develop new energy and power ⁸.

⁸ vgl. A. Cizmesija, I. Gavrilchenko und N. Pagels in: Stadt Göttingen (Hrsg.), Arbeitsmarkt und Diskriminierung – eine Untersuchung in Deutschland, Dänemark, Österreich und Schweden, Göttingen 2000, 79f.

The questionnaire evaluation makes clear that the table groups take over such a protective function for the pupils. The agreement to the statement "I find assistance in the table group, if I have problems" in the 6th class with 66,6% of the girls and 48.3% of the boys (in the 9th class: 60.0% with the boys and 61.8% with the girls) as well as the high rejection of the statement "I felt already sometimes left alone " in the 6th classes with 69.8% of the girls and 70.0% of the boys (in the 9th class: 65.7% of the boys and 70.6% of the girls) are success indicators for the integration achievement of the table groups. In the course of the years even those, who were alone in the beginning at school, found somebody as a friend. "Everyone has somebody, he likes and with whom he is doing something..." (Pupil).

The teachers see the successes also for shy pupils being encouraged to talk in front of the entire class. They get more possibilities to make contributions in the smaller group and thus, they develop more self-esteem.

4.4 Social Competences

For parents and parents representatives the success of the model of table groups is completely generally linked with the priority of the achievement of social competence, as well as at the ability to work team-oriented. It is regarded as crucial by them how something is learned, not so much what. The children learn to learn together in a team on their own responsibility. That means for the parents also that weak and more capable pupils learn together and mutually profit from it. "There are no losers " (parents representatives).

"In table groups a permanent training of social learning is carried out. Here co-operation, mutual assistance, assistance to require and obtaining common results is practiced "(school line). In particular positive handling of heterogeneity is seen as a success of the model of table groups: "They are not all the same. But they have the same rights. And it is not a taboo to say that." (school line). This behaviour is judged as a basis for the ability to work with table groups. This estimate is supported by the results of the questionnaire evaluation, which points a high agreement of the pupils to the heterogeneous composition of the table groups. Thus 52.4% of the girls and 48.3% of the boys of the 6th class answered that they considered the heterogeneous table groups as completely or rather correct, in the 9th class even 73.6% of the girls and 68.6% of the boys answered in this way. The development, which is to be read off here from the sixth to the ninth class, makes clear that positive experiencing of heterogeneity is to be rated actually as a success.

In opinion of parents the pupils learn to feel responsibility for each other. "I found completely madly e.g. the 6th class drives to Wangerooge and a boy from the class, who is coloured, was verbally accosted. There the others from the table group surrounded him and then the others could do nothing to him "(parents representatives). They are in the course of time able to work up frustration experiences and to recognize, where their own strengths, and in addition to that, their limits are. They are capable to meet statements on themselves.

By the parents the possibility of becoming acquainted with other social environments and of diminishing existing prejudices or do not let them develop at all (among other things by the evenings of table groups) is stressed. Social competences in this connection means the ability for the differentiated self and foreign perception. "I would say that discrimination is diminished at this kind of school. My son would never have to do with skaters, break-

dancers, this scenery, but he knows all about them, because he has someone in the class, who is active there. He on the other hand is a nobody in mathematics or physics. But in history or GR (society/religion) he is very well and contributes his knowledge to the table group and the others take it in them" (parents representatives).

The pupils of the sixth class regard a good climate within the table groups and a good co-operation as successes. "It is important that one is together with people in a table group, with which one gets on well, since otherwise there would be stress only, what makes the learning effect worse." Regarding the general social behaviour it is to be surely evaluated as success, if in the sixth classes 71.4% of the girls and 58.3% of the boys indicate that they can express their opinion (in the ninth classes there is 82.9% of the boys and 70.6% of the girls). Also the satisfaction with the composition of the table groups is a positive indicator, because in the sixth classes 53.3% of the boys and only 47.6% of the girls agree to that completely or rather, in the ninth class already 62.9% of the boys and 64.7% of the girls. From the sixth classes 58.7% of the girls and 46.7% of the boys agree to the statement "my desires during the composition of the table groups were considered" completely or rather, too. In the ninth classes there are 75.8% of the girls and 58.8% of the boys who agree. Success here also exists in an increase of positive answers in the course of the school time.

In addition to the learning of social competences it is also important to have the courage to place questions, but also to help others, to explain things and to accept contributions from others. To this complex the pupils were likewise asked by questionnaires. The answers support the estimates of the pedagogues and parents.

In the sixth class 59.7% of the girls and 45.0% of the boys say that it is completely or rather easy for them to ask for assistance in the table group, in the ninth class there are it 73.6% of the boys and 79.5% of the girls. The straight strong rise shows the success, which adjusts itself with the time. A similar development appears regarding the acceptance of its contributions to the table group work. In the sixth classes 50.0% of the boys and 72.6% of the girls designate this as completely and/or rather correct, in the ninth classes there are 61.8% of the boys and 76.4% of the girls.

In the interviews constructive co-operation, despite all heterogeneity of the group, is called a success.

Pupils, teachers, didactical line as well as parents representatives agree to the fact that despite of all measures, which serve the stabilization of a process of integration, also situations remain, in which the goal of an integrated table group is not to achieve. At first in this connection an existing individual incompatibility is called by pupils, e. g. if someone prefers to learn alone or if some pupils have a serious behavioural disorder. In such cases, whose existence is all-side openly admitted, only a school change remains as last solution. Such cases are an absolute exception however, so it can be said that the task to have to communicate continually with the table group on a common procedure across the time leads to the development of empathy and of consideration in balance with own points of view and self-assertion and thus to the development of social competence. As a proof for that teachers mention observations over pupil's considerate handling toward each other in the instruction, whereas parents representatives above all state observations outside the school environment.

4.5 Conflict resolution

Social pedagogues, teachers and school line see a success in the fact that by continuous working team ability and accepting others are learned with one another. Table groups represent a possibility of articulating annoyance without canalising this lastingly against a certain person.

If conflicts develop, is practiced, to solve them before they escalate. This does not fold always. In general however the teachers judge those relatively few cases from force, destruction and fights at the IGS as a success of the model of table groups regarding its potential for conflict resolution. The results of the questionnaire support the teachers in their opinions also. 54% of the girls of the sixth class and 48.4% of the boys call the statement "if there are conflicts, then they are solved" completely and/or rather correct. In the ninth classes there is 50% of the girls and 54.3% of the boys.

The pupils asked are to a considerable high degree aware of the goals pursued with the concept of table groups and the process of the identification of table groups which is connected with it. "Mutual helping", "group work" and "not to be alone" are those characteristics, with which the concept of table groups is described by pupils from the sixth and ninth class concisely and appropriate.

5. Factors, which promote resp. obstruct success

In the following chapter the factors are to be lit up, which make successes described in the preceding chapter possible resp. also obstructed them in some places. Describing these factors the entire interview material is used again. The questioning by questionnaires furnished more results within the range of successes and was therefore only in some cases consulted clearly.

5.1 Factors, which promote a success

Some factors can be worked out, which promote the success of the approach of table groups:

- everyday experiencing of heterogeneity
- table groups accompanied by supporting measures
- the allocation of the pupils into a small group as starting point for purposeful working with the pupils
- the group composition
- methodical aspects
- the convincing of opinion leaders
- assistance from schoolmates makes better learning possible
- the organization of the school

5.1.1 Everyday experiencing of heterogeneity

In particular it is stressed by the school management and the teachers that an elementary contribution to the model of table groups for the promotion of equal chances and to the fight against discrimination is the fact that from the beginning of their school career the pupils have by the heterogeneous composition of the table groups the possibility, resp. are forced, to set apart with other persons, who are strange to them and who have other preferences and other strengths and weaknesses.

This requirement becomes normality and makes it easier to learn to accept other humans, because this argument becomes an everyday experience. A teacher from the ninth class says: "If it's about diminishing discrimination the other schoolmate has to be recognized in his strengths and weaknesses in order to accept him." Exactly this possibility is offered by the table group. One is not forced to develop friendships to the other members of the table group, but the everyday gathering, linked with the obligation to work things out with each other so far that the group becomes able to work, forces the pupils to get involved with these strengths and weaknesses. Because from the beginning the framework and the rules concomitantly are set for the formation of the table groups, in the starting time these are hardly analysed and more easily accepted, so the words of the representative of the school management. Since the pupils themselves recognize advantages of the system of the table groups quickly, these rules are practiced and accepted until to the tenth class.⁹

⁹ Thus about 75% of the pupils of the ninth classes agree to the statement it is positive that the table groups are generally heterogeneous.

Apart from learning acceptance towards others by the "forced" argument of the other pupils also the ability to manage conflict is promoted. This represents an important condition for discrimination-free handling with one another. Among other things the social pedagogues stress, how important it is that annoyance can be expressed in a constructive way, so that this is not realized in a form, which leads to an exclusion of individual pupils. By the argument of other pupils additionally the ability grows to notice and to estimate themselves, what is not only important for the differentiation of how others perceive oneself and the self-perception, but also, in order to recognize, what own weaknesses are resp. where a special promotion need exists.

5.1.2 Table groups accompanied by supporting measures

A further extraordinarily important factor - if not the most important - for the success of the table groups concept, represents the company of the table groups by supporting measures. Nearly unanimously it is represented that the gathering in the table groups is actually still no value. Only by the purposeful guidance of the tutors, the social pedagogues and the partial teaching in which two teachers at the same time work permanent with the pupils it is made possible, to realize the evenly described effects of learning, the acceptance of others and the ability of working together as well as the purposeful individual promotion. The social pedagogues describe that in classes five and six an intensive training of table groups is necessary, in order to start a constructive dialogue with the pupils and to enable them for co-operation. "Only if one works permanently with them, a success can be reached!" In addition to that, the teachers stress the necessity to argue on the one hand in lessons given by two teachers at the same time apart with individual table groups, to speak in the tutorial with the individual table groups purposefully about successes in learning and existing problems and also otherwise to pay attention to group-dynamic processes, to use conflict mediation. Apart from these supporting measures, which are carried out by the teachers resp. the social pedagogues, it must be referred to the institution of the table groups evenings. All interviewed persons stress the importance of table group evenings. Here the possibility to analyse the results of the last months is given. Thus, parents are intensively integrated into the school work, so that they are able to participate in a support of their children, both in the school promotion, and in the argument with other pupils. The evenings increase their knowledge about the other pupils. The parents no longer refer one-sided to their own children, but they also accept the others.

Besides that, the pupils also have a forum at these evenings, on which they can present themselves as a group, which strengthens the group co-operation. A further supporting component to the concept of table groups is the learning development reports. In the learning development reports the learning success of a pupil is described and precise references are given.

5.1.3 The allocation of the pupils into a small's group as a starting point for purposeful working with the pupils

The just described supporting measures can seize so well, because the instructors and the social pedagogues can fall back to the table groups as an organizational unit. Here a

purposeful working is substantially easier possible, as in conventional classes. The representative of the school line states as an example that "a solution (...) to stop annoying a classmate has not to be discussed with the whole class, but with a single table group." In particular the teachers can speak with individual table groups directly during the tutorials mentioned above or also during the breaks, in order to discuss with them their problems concerning co-operation, the learning success or also the way to deal with one another and to compile solution strategies.

Concerning the question, which group size the table groups should have to unfold an optimal effect, we received no clear answers. In the concept it is put on that if possible six pupils shall sit together in a table group. Sometimes due to class sizes and possible compromise settlements it comes to other group sizes of occasionally only four or five pupils. During the interviews with the table groups we had to cope with all group sizes. The pupils in the sixth class, who sat only in groups of four tables, assessed this size as optimal, because more pupils could mean a higher co-ordination and communication expenditure. The teachers interviewed stress that they would actually consider a group size of six more meaningful, because then a larger heterogeneity is guaranteed. This results in a better learning surrounding field for co-operation and peaceful coexistence. However, they also granted that there are necessities, which cause smaller sizes and that this could also work successfully. Parents representatives of the particular classes vehemently argued for a group size of six pupils for similar reason as the teachers. Most persons said however that it was best to have a straight number of pupils in order to minimize the possibility that pupils remain alone.

The parents representatives referred to a further aspect, why the allocation in small groups is a factor for more equal chances and less discrimination. In their opinion table groups mean a shelter for weaker pupils. Here they are more accepted, here it is easier for achievement-weaker pupils to ask for assistance than in the large classes and here it is easier for less self-confident children to speak and with that their self esteem is strengthened.¹⁰

5.1.4 Group composition

As a further important factor for a success of the concept of table groups in connection with a promotion of the equal chances and the fight against discrimination it must be referred to the group composition. All participants together stress that not every composition of table groups can be successful. This applies both to the ability to teamwork in the table groups and to the learning of mutual acceptance. For this reason with the formation of the table groups much importance is already attached to the thorough treatment of the question, who fits to whom. This grouping process is to furnish optimal results in the composition of the individual table groups on the one hand, but it is seen already as value. The question of the formation of a table group causes discussion about outsiders. These problems lead to solution-oriented discussions for the purpose that nobody remains alone at the end. The rules described above, which must be kept with the formation of the table groups, are effective here. A teacher of the ninth class says that the

¹⁰ Shelter mean an important environment, where people are able to work up discrimination experiences.. For the value of such shelter for discriminated people see: City of Göttingen, Arbeitsmarkt und Diskriminierung, S. 79f und 223ff, Göttingen 2000.

process of the table group composition results in a "self-experience" for the pupils concerning their self perception and the perception of others. The criterion for a successful group composition is "to be able intellectually and emotionally" to teamwork, as the representative of the school management stresses. The pupils also stress, how important the composition of the table groups is. In a very clear way they also say that the composition must ensure the ability of the table groups to work. In the beginning of the school attendance it seems more important for the pupils to sit together with friends. In the course of time the predominant majority recognised that friends are not necessarily the best partner for a successful teamwork. By the heterogeneous composition of the table groups different talents can meet, what makes common learning possible, whereas good friends in a table group led rather to the fact that one was disturbed by side discussions. If, however, a person does not cooperate and all efforts are unsuccessful for the solution of conflicts, as a result of this lack of co-operation, the addressed ability to work and also all other aspects of social learning cannot be ensured any longer. A pupil summarizes it concisely: "with some classmates it's just impossible." The fact that the table group composition must be seen independently from friendship and sympathy becomes evident with one interview with an table group of the sixth class. In this table group in particular the girls expressed very clearly that they do not like the boys. "they are stupid, they simply live in another world, we have absolutely nothing in common." After some questioning however all had to admit that despite of all in spite of personal reservations a co-operation and if necessary also a mutual assistance is quite possible. Another proof are the results of the questionnaire, in which only approx. a third of the pupils indicated, to spend the spare time with the members of the table group.

5.1.5 Methodical aspects

Apart from the factors specified so far there are naturally also methodical aspects which observance promotes a success of the of table groups concept. The representative of the school management refers here among other things to the early setting of rules, which leads to the fact that the rules are internalised by the pupils easily. "Starting from the fifth class the pupils sit in table groups and starting from this time the dominant principles of the school are imparted as given. These principles are not questioned by the pupils and it is easy for them to accept them."

Due to the requirement of learning together and the competitive character under the table groups in each class pupils are forced to use the competences of each member in order to quickly come to good results. This, so the interviewed teachers of the sixth class, leads to the fact that the pupils accept that it is better for them to work with one another than against each other! For a better recognition of strengths and weaknesses long-term exercises with creative and practical elements are very suitable, as the teachers emphasize. This statement agrees with the information of the pupils in the questionnaire. In order to better promote the mutual recognizing of strengths and weaknesses, long-term exercises are more suitable, as likewise the teachers of the sixth class emphasize, and creative as well as practical levels, as it is expressed by the answers of the pupils to the open questions in the questionnaire. A very important component during the methodical guidance of working in the table groups is paying attention to changing roles, which the pupils have to take up during the work in the table groups. The pupils shall not be reduced to one competence and no role-stereotypes should be learned. It must be paid attention e.g. to

the fact that not always only one responsible for the external representation, the other one for bringing in knowledge and again a third one for the organization of the work. This is stressed both by the teachers of the ninth class, and by the school management.

In order to cope with the fact that one has determined strengths and weaknesses, and that one is perhaps a weaker achiever than other schoolmates in the table group, the instruction also has to be arranged partly learn-differentiated, so that all pupils can have success experiences. "Achievement-differentiated instruction is necessary, in order to be able to experience heterogeneity in a positive way ", so an teacher from the ninth class. This estimation is put in concrete terms by another teacher:

"Differentiated instruction: There are work and practice hours. In these hours the individual pupils are busy with different activities. These activities are directly connected with the respective performance level of the pupils. In integration classes pupils without learning difficulties see that their schoolmates with learning difficulties or - disabilities work on subjects from lower class stages and in reverse. It is seen that each pupil comes in its way more near to his goal and everyone concerns in his individual way, because the groups are built up heterogeneously."

All aspects have in common that the teachers have to meet the requirement to be able to deal with group-dynamic processes, to recognize the individual promotion need of the individual pupils and to have the ability to solve resp to arbitrate conflicts in conflict situations. Particularly the social pedagogues referred to this aspect.

5.1.6 To win opinion leaders

A further factor, which improves the chances of success of the process of table groups, is the role of models. This can be the teachers themselves, but also schoolmates recognized by the pupils. Thus the representative of the school management says:

"a further factor in a group are 'outstanding' persons. They form the style of a group. If these persons profess themselves to a rule, this rule is taken over by the rest of the group. To that extent these 'agents of the intention' are evenly distributed in all table groups, like 'the outsiders' too. These as multipliers acknowledged pupils then affect the rest of the group."

In addition to that, the teachers are in a positive as well as in a negative sense models. "Sometimes we expect more from the children, than we can fulfil as teachers ", says a teacher from the sixth class. The other way round, however, those teachers, who give a living example for the demanded principles, both in handling the pupils, and in the work in the teacher team - which can be along-pursued partly by the pupils by the spatial proximity -, are more accepted by the pupils. It is more easy for them to assume things from these teachers. Some pupils stress, how important it is, that the equal treatment, which one expects from them towards their schoolmates, is to be expected also from the teachers. "If one sees, how those good achievers are treated and how we are treated, that's not ok.", said a pupil from the ninth class.

5.1.7 Better learning by assistance from schoolmates

One factor, why the concept of table groups contributes to better learning, is designated explicitly only by the pupils. Many of the interviewed pupils stress that they are able to learn better by explanations of schoolmates, or by receiving explanations from them: "If someone from the table group explains something to me, I understand it much better, while the teachers often do not understand at all, why we do not understand anything. Then they can explain it three times and still one does not understand it. " On the other hand the pupils giving assistance also say, that they learn clearly better, if they are forced to explain something to others, because only when a learning content can be explained it is understood.

5.1.8 Organization of the school

A last factor, which strengthens the success of the table groups and which was stressed primarily by the interviewed parents, is the organization of the school as a whole,. Both is emphasized positively: a collegial school management, which feels responsible for the pupils and for a good contact to the parents, and teachers who are working as teams whereby it is shown to the children that co-operation can work. This is also expressed by the teachers' self-organized work. Experiencing a team, which is able to arrange the instruction and the basic conditions in such a way that all are optimally promoted, is regarded as a good condition for the pupils' acceptance of the worth of co-operation in table groups.

5.2 Factors, which obstruct a success

Of course there are not only success-strengthening factors, but also such, which potentially limit a success of the concept of table groups. Here is to be dealt with five different factors:

- composition of the table groups
- methodical aspects
- lacking cooperation of parents
- disturbances, unrest etc. and
- basic conditions

5.2.1 Composition of the table groups

It is obvious that, if a good composition of the table groups is a success factor a bad composition produces problems during the attainment of the concept. Since already by the success factors one wrote in detail about the meaning of the composition, not all aspects of this problem will be described in detail again. It is to be reminded briefly of the fact that there are group constellations, which do not function. In such constellations no effects for the purposes of equal chances and the fight against discrimination are possible.

5.2.2 Methodical aspects

The same that was said for the composition of the table groups, applies to the methodical aspects. Where the consideration of certain methodical aspects leads to larger success, the opposite is to be observed, if these aspects are not considered. With the methodical aspects resp. the methodical competence can be referred here in particular to non-keeping resp. non-holding the own principles. Here it may concern among other things, not to pay sufficiently attention to role-stereotypes, not to keep the own rules concerning the heterogeneity during the formation of the table groups and to permit rather homogeneous table groups or therefore that the teachers impose different norms to different pupils. In particular to the last two aspects the are findings of the interviews with one table group refers to a relevance. Thus, a table group of the ninth class stresses that it is set together only of moderate achievers. This is seen quite critical, because so an optimal learning from each other is not possible. Concerning the different and thus unfair treatment of individual pupils, pupils from the ninth class hint to the good achievers, " who want to reach their school-leaving exam" and who are be treated in a better way. Pupils from the sixth class hint to individual pupils, who are more pleasant to the teachers and therefore put more trust in them. Considering all material it seems to concern individual cases, which should be taken however quite seriously, since they unfold a certain symbol effect. It is made very much easier for the pupils not to keep certain requirements if they can state individual teachers as apology, who do not keep the principles either. The social pedagogues also point very seriously to the lacking method competence of the teachers. "Concerning group dynamics and conflict resolutions, some have a training need!", estimates one of the social pedagogues. The social pedagogues also refer to the grouping process, which is taken very seriously by some teachers. It costs a lot of time to lead the necessary discussions when pupils cannot join their favourite table groups. By other teachers the process however is not taken so seriously, they want to save time for technical instruction resp. also want to avoid conflicts among the pupils, because these teachers have not the competence to deal with them.

5.2.3 Lacking cooperation of the parents

Although there is an approach by regular holding of the evenings of table groups, which enables parents substantially better than at other schools to participate to school life, there are very often parents, who give a minimum contribution few to the support of the pupils. This can have completely different causes. On the one hand there are parents, who have little interest, to be involved in school activities and for them school is rather a "black box", in which one delivers in the morning and again fetches the children in the afternoon. Beyond that they wish no activities. Another reason for the fear of economically weak families is, that their modest norm is exposed to others, especially when the table groups evenings shall take place in their homes. Both causes lead to an irregular participation in the table group evenings and concomitantly to a less effective support of parents. Thus, it does not lead to the effect desired, i.e. to receive a view of different life circumstances by an alternating sequence, in which in parents' houses the table group evenings have to take place, and to get to know by this more about the individuals, with

whom one learns and works during the day at school. A beautiful example of how effective it can be, if these fears are overcome, tells a teacher of the sixth class:

„An example: A boy who is silent and shy, living with his father in an environment, which is different, a little simply, his father decides that the table group evening shall take place in his home and he drives spontaneously with the pupils on the old tractor. On the next day the boy was different at school. I cannot describe it, but something happened.“

5.2.4 Disturbances, unrest etc..

A further factor, which limits the effects of the table groups concept, is the feeling of being disturbed by other pupils that obviously is facilitated by the organization into small groups. Especially in the questionnaires many pupils agree to the statement that there are pupils, who disturb others during the lessons. Thus 55.3% of the pupils (and 65.1% of the girls) in the sixth class say that this statement is completely or rather correct, only 24.4% that it is rather or completely wrong. In the ninth class there are still 44.9%, who agree to the statement completely or rather and likewise only 27.5%, who consider it completely or rather wrong. Also in the interviews with the table groups it is pointed out that there are always some pupils, who disturb the instruction very much without consequences. This situation is seen as very negative. No clear statements can be made about the effects these disturbances have on the table groups for the purpose of acceptance and of better learning. But as an indication that at least the desire of some of the pupils for common learning and for coping with others is reduced, can be seen, that 90% of those who say that they prefer to learn alone certify that the statement "there are pupils who disturb others when learning" is right.

5.2.5 Basic conditions

A further factor, which obstructs the effectiveness of the table groups model, has to be mentioned: the worsening basic conditions. In the opinion of the school, the parents and the social pedagogues this is probably the most serious factor. Contrary to the founder years of the school substantial cuts had to be made into the teacher supply, so that there are ever less possibilities, to arrange instruction with two teachers and also the separated work with the table groups became less. All asked persons point out that with a further - at present planned - shortening of the teacher hours many of the accompanying measures would have to be omitted either completely, resp. would have to be further limited, so, what the social pedagogues had called as one of the success prescriptions that "one (...) always has to stay on", becomes still more difficult. It was described above, how the table groups must be accompanied, so that from a pure seat constellation a measure for the promotion of equal chances and the fight against discrimination develops. If there is a lack of possibilities for the teachers and social pedagogues "to stay on" the pupils as described, one must realize that there is not only less money, but there are also less effects promoting equal chances and fighting discrimination.

An additional aspect of the basic conditions is the generation change with the teachers staff. This leads to the fact that not all instructors are acquainted with the concept of table groups in all details. The IGS was founded 1975 with many young teachers as a pilot school. These teachers became older and since a few years more new teachers have to be adjusted. They know the school concept only from the theory, often however not even that, because today the reform debate is not the same as in the seventies. That leads to the fact that new, young teachers are confronted with the fact that they must use the concept of table groups, without being prepared for it in their study. Because this concept, as one may have seen, means for the teachers additional work, it costs a lot of perseverance to intensively train and convince the new colleagues of the advantages.

6. Summary

To summarize, it can be said that there are several factors, which affect the success of the concept of table groups. Positively seen this means that, if a factor is not sufficiently considered, the whole concept is not completely posed in question, the other way around it means high requirements for the teachers, not only to pay attention on the switching of the learning contents but also to group-dynamic processes, like the individual promotion and the guidance of the teamwork. This makes a great difference compared to other German schools.

Here again all factors are not to be summarized again, it is rather to be formulated a quintessence why especially the model of table groups leads to so many successes, and which possibilities are included in this approach, that indicated for the success of other activities in an effective fight against discrimination and for the promotion of equal chances.

In an analysis, which contribution the horizontal approach in the anti-discrimination work can give, CIZMESIJA and PAGELS referred to one of the central mechanisms of discrimination. An indispensable condition for the exclusion and discrimination of persons is the falling back on norms and the constitution of groups on the basis of these norms. The disregard of these norms potentially leads to an exclusion from the pertinent groups and to discrimination. Also in the daily school life these norms can be perceived permanently. Thereby it is completely unimportant whether it is about norms like wearing certain clothes, sex, high-performances in instruction resp. in sporty disciplines, being thick or thin or other norms. The deviation from the norm is always reason enough, to be excluded, to be discriminated and to be humiliated. This exclusion is not a law of nature, but it requires a conscious or unconscious motivation, but the reason is the deviation from the norm.

The concept of table groups intervenes actively into the process of the formation of norms and the grouping due to the different norms. Because usually six pupils are assigned quasi obligatorily to a group, an artificial norm is created, which is different from the other norms specified above. This newly defined norm consists in the mere affiliation to one's table group. Pupils have to live within this heterogeneity. This artificial grouping alone would be probably not enough, in order to be able to work against the everyday life norms and the exclusion resulting from it. Due to the fact that the members of an artificially formed group are trained to successful each member is trained to work with one another and to learn to know oneself and the others concerning their strengths and the

weaknesses. Knowing each other is the soil, onto which discrimination can badly prosper. A further mechanism of discrimination consists of simplification. If a simple perception of someone, who is actually different than I am, is no longer possible because I have to work together with him in the table group, then it is more difficult for me to exclude him or her and the conditions are facilitated to accept the other person, because of the need of his/her competence.

Of course not all norms, which apply to daily life, are suspended by the concept of table groups. There are norms nearly everybody could agree with even if they are heterogeneous, e.g. the disgust against extremely dirty or unhygienic appearance, which unites members of a table group against an individual member. In addition to that there is a life besides the table groups - not only private -, in which other group affiliations and also different mechanisms of exclusion are practiced. But the chances to intervene the school possesses in the described norm education process and thus in the foundation of discrimination mechanisms is used by the concept of table groups in an almost exemplary way. One does not only work cognitively, in order to tackle discrimination, but by setting experience areas to the pupils. The possibility is given to experience the differing schoolmates not only in their deviation from the norm but with all their strengths and their positive characteristics. Thus at the Georg Christoph Lichtenberg school an important contribution is made for the fight against discrimination.