

Education at school  
by Rainer and Thomas

There is a lot of talk about an education crisis in Germany at the moment - especially in the area of general education schools. There are reports of staff shortages, or of schools in socially deprived areas documenting their excessive demands, but as loud as the criticism of the situation in schools is, it is without goal or consequence.

### **Content**

The demand for more subjects such as physical education, economics, health, media education, artistic subjects, computer science, addiction prevention, etc. expresses the fact that the traditional subject structure is no longer sufficient to enable young people to lead a self-determined life in the 21st century. the old canon of subjects cannot simply be expanded to meet the demands of the times; there is not enough time for this alone.

### **Form of teaching**

there is still a widespread belief that frontal teaching and the division of lessons into 45 or 90 minutes is the central form of teaching. however, learners with the same prior knowledge, abilities and interests do not come together in any class. classes were and are heterogeneous, in all types of schools. in this respect, forms of teaching are needed that allow learning to take place at different levels and at different speeds; frontal teaching can only be a small part of this.

There are certainly schools that have taken on the task of making the necessary changes to learning and teaching: self-directed learning, individual support, late decisions about the educational qualification to be achieved, e.g. the Allemannenschule in Wutöschingen. Any other school would also be able to muster up the courage to get out of complaining about the situation.

### **Teamwork**

The diversity of the pupils demands a high degree of flexibility from the teachers in terms of content and pedagogy. "This is my class, this is my lesson" can no longer be an attitude. the demands placed on teachers can only be successfully met through consistently anchored teamwork. however, the ability to work in a team does not come automatically, it must be acquired. one way to achieve this is through compulsory, joint in-school training, for which a sufficient budget must be available.

### **Resources**

the current debate about the education crisis highlights the fact that the education infrastructure has been cut to the bone in recent decades. in germany alone, 50 billion euros are needed to renovate school buildings. at the same time, there is a serious shortage of staff in all federal states, which is set to worsen in the coming years. According to the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK), there is currently a shortage of around 15,000 teachers, and this figure is expected to rise to 68,000 by 2035. Therefore, the number of study places must be increased and the working conditions must be created so that teachers can carry out their socially necessary work.

### **Three/fourth form entry**

the demands on teachers also depend on the type of student body. a grammar school with students with a predominantly academic background has different demands than a school with students from a wide range of educational backgrounds, with different languages and with many students needing support at different levels. the federal government's Startchancen programme is now intended to support the latter schools. however, the expected amounts are very modest - (4000 schools → 50,000 €/year/school each).

The approach of the Startchancen programme must also be criticised in principle. so-called hotspot schools are only created because pupils can be expelled within the three- or four-member school system. as a result, these schools have a high number of pupils.

### **Selectivity of the education system**

in a democratic society, all people must have equal access to education. the ability to shape society depends on it, as do life chances, health and, ultimately, the life expectancy of the individual. as all Pisa Studies have shown, social background and family income are decisive for educational success in Germany. this situation can only be achieved through a form of community school in which teachers also find a new role as learning guides and initiators for all pupils. as long as pupils can be shunted off to other schools, the school system will largely reproduce social structures with too many school drop-outs.

a major change in school conditions is possible from within the schools and can be tackled now.

however, structural changes that require political discussion and material resources for school construction, equipment and staff are also clearly necessary.

### **The AFD and education?**

- what does the AFD say about education in its european election manifesto? only incoherent individual demands, but with a clear objective: the creation of old structures to maintain the power of the privileged.
- universities should be able to choose their applicants. as a result, academics choose applicants from academic circles.
- Germany is once again pursuing a national education policy and moving away from a european education area. the consequence: students from wealthy parents can continue to study abroad, the others simply cannot.
- topics such as sustainability, climate research, etc. are to be kept out of schools, resulting in a society that will not be able to cope with the tasks of the future.
- denial of disadvantages of social groups and therefore abolition of quotas for these groups. consequence: all those who have not benefited from education in the past should not do so in the future, and women back to the stove.
- no increase in the academic quota. consequence: if your parents are academics, you can study too. if your parents are not academics, you can forget it.

### **• The demands in brief:**

- Education policy must be standardised throughout the country and geared towards Europe.
- Framework guidelines and core curricula for schools must be revised, shortened and made the responsibility of the schools.
- Teaching must be based on interdisciplinary perspectives.
- Schools must offer pupils a wide range of open and activity-based forms of learning.
- Schools must be given sufficient resources to implement the necessary teamwork.
- The reorganisation of schools must ensure that the classroom provides the basis for learning in different ways.
- the shortage of staff cannot be solved by "supply teachers". such measures are detrimental to the teachers recruited in this way and, above all, to the pupils. teacher training must be expanded in line with demand. Precisely because the staff shortage cannot be solved in the short term, teachers and schools must be given far more support in the areas of school construction, administration and cooperation.
- The goal is the community school as a regular school, a school in which pupils can develop together in different forms appropriate to them and in which teachers are qualified initiators and facilitators of learning.

- the introduction of the common primary school in 1920 in Germany also met with considerable resistance. today, no one questions the community school. it needs the courage to set new goals against supposedly unchangeable ones.