



Position Paper of the Humboldt-Gesellschaft Regarding Present and Future of Schools in Germany

Abstract

Regarding individual life as well as modern societies' development, the school system contributes substantially for the individual personal development as well as for the introduction of students to society, and therefore essentially determines their social quality and welfare. In the recent past, dramatic changes in society also exhibited serious effects on school. Questions about prosperity and migration gave rise to debates about "Equal Opportunity" and „Educational Equality“ as well as about "Interculturalism" and "Inclusion" of students with special needs.

With respect to "Educational Equality" this position paper discusses how school can contribute to reduce origin dependent inequalities. In this respect it is often disregarded that school has to strive for equal opportunity as well as for selective differentiation. Although it is beyond controversy that all students be given every appropriate educational opportunity, it remains undecided how to achieve it. However, it is often ignored that in this respect vocational education offers outstanding opportunities because of its manifold educational facilities that contribute much more for educational equality than massive expansion of academic education accompanied by eroded and devaluated certificates. Likewise offers for upgrades of verbal skills in preschool and school education already can contribute to the achievement of this goal as well as concepts for further developments of fulltime schools.

Due to migration, school is challenged to come up with the needs of young migrants in manifold ways. Even though early education at school plays a central role, migration policy is an issue in the long run because many problems are only solvable in the succession of generations and on basis of deliberate fundamental decisions in migration policy. Apparently, "Migration" is not the risk factor of social integration and success in education, but lacking „cultural capital“ like an adequate command of the German language as the key core of every success at school. For this reason school is not only charged with a cognitive but simultaneously with a socializing and an enculturating mission.

The issue of including special needs student in regular schools is a delicate question although because traditionally these students are educated in special establishments. However, in this regard the double claim of inclusion concepts, enhancement of individual equal opportunities and of a more comprehensive promotion of special needs students, requires a differentiated examination. The main reason is that promotional effects or enhancements of equal opportunity in education or in life could barely be attributed to inclusive conditions, not by scientific research and nor by practical experience at school. In consequence, the right to optimal individual education and training offers no basis for a fundamental claim for inclusive education. On that account, optimal individual promotional effects might rather be achieved by adequate measures of differentiation at school and in class instruction.

However, the complex of problems described above is not unique for Germany. Despite of existing differences in policy, society and culture, in analogous modes it becomes apparent in many West-European countries, peculiarly in the German speaking countries and regions.

Notwithstanding our conviction, that the current school system in Germany forms a stable foundation for a sustainable further development, we would like to contribute for its improvement with the following six suggestions:

The Humboldt-Gesellschaft recommends

- (1) That an increase of the contingents of high-school graduates and university students should not damage the sustainability of a manifold, pluralistic and highly productive school system with a wide spectrum of opportunities in education and training;*
- (2) That the permeability of the school system with its variety of offers in basic and further education should be updated in a way that guarantees significance and independence of the schools in general education as well as of the schools in vocational and in special education;*
- (3) That the special promotion of children disadvantaged by insufficient education or by migration should be enlarged in preschools and schools with special focus on suitable instruction of the German language at which fulltime schools could provide serious assistance;*
- (4) That the support of highly gifted student should not be missed out, in particular for the subjects in mathematics, natural sciences, technology and information technology;*
- (5) That the inclusion of children with special needs in the regular school system should be implemented with care and sense of proportion as well as with special attention to the circumstances of the individual case, the opportunities of the regular schools, and the respect of the intentions of the parents;*

That planning and realization of education and qualification for the teaching staff and further qualified tutors should draw special attention on the constantly mutating and growing professional demands.

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