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EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOLING WITHIN THE CARINTHIAN MINORITY SCHOOL SYSTEM*

The project has been arranged and organized by a group of committed teachers from the bilingual area and has been supervised by professors of education from the University of Klagenfurt.

The Austrian minority school system is a product of the reconstruction after the Second World War, based on the idea of reconciliation, appeasement and international understanding. The fact that this Austrian type of school with an underlying notion of social integration (that is, the opportunity for children belonging to different ethnic groups to share in school the experiences of living and learning) actually exists, has apparently been forgotten. For more than ten years educational reforms have been based on concepts other than those of socialization at school and "peace instruction". The concept of academic achievement has become all-important.

In Carinthia there have been for some time now many attempts to separate pupils according to their ethnic origin and native language in order to teach them in segregated classes. This demand, brought forward with vehemence by "German-Carinthians" (that is especially from people belonging to the political party FPÖ) in order to segregate Slovene-speaking children and to put them together in their own classes, is now often disguised as the educational reform (with relation to external differentiation and separated advancement). As a result of the intentional misrepresentation of the "parental right", a wave of propaganda has been started which provokes parents to insist that "German-Carinthian" children should be taught exclusively by "German-Carinthian" teachers. The fact that a dangerous form of apartheid is spreading and encouraging racist and hostile tendencies directed at ethnic minorities has induced a group of committed pedagogues of the bilingual educational system and the university to develop structural improvements both in the social climate and in the school for minorities. The provision for experimental schooling (according to Art. 7 of the Austrian Education Act) is the essential point of the proposed improvements. In addition, the following points are recommended:

- to reject all of the hitherto proposed educational measures which show a segregational quality, and to replace them by integrating measures. It is within this framework that the efforts at an intercultural education and a collective advancement of mixed ethnic groups has to be seen.

* Original: German

- to enlarge and improve all hitherto existing educational institutions of integrating quality to such an extent that intercultural education can actually be guaranteed. For this reason the reforms proposed here are to be extended to the domains of nursery schools, preparatory schools, *Hauptschulen* (modern secondary schools) and vocational-training establishments.

- together with the reform-accompanying measures in the form of intensified information, advice and scientific clarification shall be undertaken and made available to all ethnic groups. Only a sound basis of information and a broad public discussion can guarantee the effective utilization of the basic rights of self- and co-determination. In this connection "parental right" should carry more weight. Parents should be able to formulate and make the demand that:

- all relevant information about the learning process of their children be available to them; and that

- there be a multitude of concrete possibilities for them to observe the learning events taking place at school, to discuss them with the teacher, and to ameliorate them through a joint effort.

Educational reform and "parental right" must not be played off against one another nor shall they hinder each other. Therefore "parental right" can only be enlarged and established in a way that transforms it into an instrument of internal school democracy. The project initiators are at the moment working on an educational experiment based on these principles; they are discussing its programme on a broad basis at conferences, meetings and seminars. The experimental programme is composed of individual "projects," which will be more clearly outlined during this "phase of development." Classes, respectively individual teachers and teaching staffs will then be free to "apply for" projects and arrange them according to their own needs and local requirements. The sites of the educational experiment should be allocated in such a way that - as far as possible - eventually both communities with a German-speaking majority population and communities with a Slovene-speaking majority population are involved in the experiment.

The following project possibilities formed the basis for further considerations as to what the now aspired experiments could be:

- a trial run of a material-supported differentiation and individualization in bilingual classes;

- a trial run of language games - "bilingualism" as a principle of instruction (from the first grade onwards);

- a trial run using various optional and compulsory measures to improve the proficiency in the native language or in the second language;

- a trial run of new teaching-methods in teamwork (e.g. flexible differentiation in language-teaching using two teachers) and new forms of co-operation with pedagogues who are specialized in

other fields (e.g. nursery school teachers, play-group therapists, experts on language didactics, and so on);

- a trial run of more intensive forms of parental participation and the integration of the educational system into the public culture;

- a trial run of different methods aiming to improve the atmosphere within the educational system and the areas of social relations (by means of bilingual and multidisciplinary projects with the social network).

The priority of a collective education which excludes any form of segregated advancement (that is, not even in individual subjects) is the fundamental principle of all these project proposals.

All classes taking part in the project (and of course any others) may in addition take part in the so-called S7-experiments ("SCHOG", the Austrian Education Act, 1962). These experiments allow, among other things, the substitution of verbal reports for marks. With them the current practice of assessment, to use the same marks for linguistic performances in both German and Slovene (a fact which all teachers consider pedagogically senseless), could be improved in the course of a differentiated text-evaluation.

The scientific supervision of the educational experiments (by the centre for experimental schooling and the university) would not only cover their evaluation (trial and guidance of the didactic innovations), but also offer advice and assistance in connection with all related problems (such as parental participation, public relations, documentation).

At the present stage (April 1985) three different projects for possible educational experiments are being favoured. These projects have been formulated as "rough drafts" after various meetings and conferences and have been under discussion during numerous informative talks, with the participation of the Landesschulrat (The Carinthian Education Authority), the Department of Education, the school inspectors, the centre for experimental schooling and the teachers' organizations.

The three domains in which the experiments are to be put into use are as follows:

- team-teaching system for the collective language classes
- internal differentiation in heterogeneous small groups
- intercultural project-teaching and opening-up of the school to the community.

The educational experiments proposed here correspond with the previous international experience whereby "parental right" and educational reform could be brought into harmony in such a manner as to comply with the principle of integration (or the principle of non-segregation): in all the subjects the concept of collective learning and advancement is maintained so that the teacher's difficult didactic work is supported by the programme of educational experiment.