

Dr. Christoph Griebhaber

.Emailadresse: Chris Griesshaber

Justus-Von-Liebig-Schule  
Göppingen

.Homepage: www.jvl-gp.de

# School and Education



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EURO-SEMINAR "FOUR-MOTORS-CONNECTION"  
WALES - BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG  
PAPER ON THE "JUSTUS-VON-LIEBIG-SCHULE" (October the 19th, 1994)

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## I. General Introduction: Educational Principles

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

my paper has two parts. First I would like to introduce you generally to our vocational training centre, and talk in a second part about the Justus-von Liebig-Schule, in particular about three special school types our schools offers.

In Willy Russel's play "Educating Rita", Rita a 27 years old hairdresser on being asked by Frank, her new tutor, why she has come to take Open Univerity lessons, ansers : *"Because I wanna know"*. At the beginning she rhetorically asks Frank referring to educated people, "God, what's like to be free?. Later on, when her husband wants her to stop taking lessons, she says about learning: *"I've begun to find me - and it's great y'know, it is, Frank. It might sound selfish but all I want for the time bein' is what I'm findin' inside me."* At the end of the play, just having passed the final exam she thanks Frank for what he has given her. She says: *"Because of what you have given me I had a choice."* At the end of the play he has now achieved her personal freedom by being able to choose. Education for her was a dynamic process of emancipation, of having the opportunity to make decisions and from judgments.

This, of course, is fiction and has the touch of being rather utopian and most of the time far off the real situation we are confronted with everyday. Our school centre is so huge, having about 300 staff members and some 5300 Students altogether, many of them of foreign origin. It is therefore almost impossible to create an atmoshere in the whole centre, where students feel at home and welcome. According to Peter Struck in his new book *"Neue Lehrer braucht das Land"* (Struck, P., 1994, Darmstadt, 49f) such centres lead to Reibungsverlust, Anonymität, Schulstreß as well as to resigned, frustrated demotivated and discouraged teacher and behavioural disturbances, learning failures and psychosomatic illnesses among students. A Lot of problems and conflicts we have to face - destruction, violence, drugs etc. stem from this difficult and highly complex situation. It is quite revealing that students call this place "Lernfabrik Öde" (translated into The learning factory Wasteland), but added to it in a graffiti, "Help me - I love you", expressing thus their need for acceptance, understanding and love. Many students feel lonely, neglected and often not being taken seriously. This, of course, refers only to the whole centre, and not so much to the individual schools.

Yet according to the famous American philosopher John Dewey, schools are primarily social institutions which *"must represent present life - life as real and vital to the child as that that which he carries on in the home, in the neighbourhood, or on the playground."* (The Philosophy of John Dewey, ed. by John J. McDermott, Chicago, 1981, 445f) and he goes on that *"present education fails because it neglects this fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life. It conceives the school largely as a place where certain information are given, where lessons are to be learned, or where habits are to be formed. The value of these is conceived as lying largely in the remote future; the child must do things for the sake of something else he is to do...As a result they do not become a part of the life experience of the child and so are not truly educative."* (ebd., 445f. The quotations are from My Pedagogic Creed, School Journal, LIV (January) 1897, 777-80). Or the quote Hartmut von Hentig: *"Schule muß den*

*Lebensprobleme der Schüler stattgeben und sie ernstnehmen, sonst könnten sie nicht lernen."*  
(Hertmut v. Hentig, in: Die Zeit Nr 39, v. 20.9.85)

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## II. Consequences for our school

From what was said above the following conclusions seem to be logical:

1. Schools are for students, they belong to them.
2. The teacher especially the class teacher, should put himself/herself in the service of the student. He/she must love him/her, to quote our headmaster Mr. Langer, because students need the security in classes as well as continuity, control and certain habits through the class teacher (Struck, a.a.O., 11), a principle our schools follows, even in the Berufl. Gymnasium.
3. Teaching information is not enough, we should educate and teach knowledge, knowledge not for a remote aim in the future but for the sake of the individual and his/her personality, which is *"Erziehung zur Mündigkeit"* (Adorno, Th., Frankfurt, 1981, 145) because, as John Henry Newman once said, *"such is the constitution of the human mind, that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward"* (John Henry Newman, The Idea of University, Notre Dame 1960, 77).

An important institution within our schoolsystem is therefore the "SMV - Schülermitverantwortung" (our Student's Council), established at each school and functioning as the representative body of the student's interest endowed with certain rights and duties. The student's council must be supported by all participants of the schools (§ 62.3 Schol Law). All three student's councils (SMVs) of the three individual schools cooperate in a number of ways trying to create an atmosphere of friendliness, harmony and mutual understanding between the three schools by involving students in questions and problems of political and social concern. Again Peter Struck: *"Schulen benötigen dringend über ihren Unterrichtsstundenbetrieb hinaus eine Weiterentwicklung zu...einem intensiven Schulleben"* (Struck, a.a.O., 174). These aspects can be summarized under the heading "Lebensraum Schule". Let me mention only some of our recent and future activities and actions:

1. The long fight for our excellent library, which is an important centre for social activity as well as learning, thanks mainly to the effort of the SMV of The Technical School (Gewerbeschule).
2. Two years ago we held a panel discussion with politicians from all major parties as well as teachers and students about the problem of racism in Germany.
3. This year we have for the first time organized some sort of "open-air festival" at the beginning of term to welcome our newcomers and providing them with both information and entertainment and giving them the opportunity to communicate with senior students and staff members on an informal level.
4. Also we are intending to organize a Volley-ball tournament for all three schools this autumn.

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## III. The Justus-von-Liebig-Schule Goeppingen

Having now talked about the whole centre, I should like to introduce to you the Justus-von-Liebig-Schule, the smallest of the three vocational schools.

We have about 1300 Students and roughly 90 teachers. Our school is divided in two major departments a) Department of Agriculture, a vocational part-time school on block release; and b) Department of Home Economy and Nutritional Sciences, providing both partime - (day release) and full-time education, divided in 5 sub-departments or sections.

1. Berufsschule (Vocational school): Vocational schools continues general education as well as more theoretical vocational training, while practical knowledge is managed by individual firms.
  1. Vocational one-year course in agriculture
  2. Vocational school for domestic science/home economics
  3. Agricultural special vocational school for horticulture
  4. Agricultural vocational school for farmers, gardeners, florists
  5. One-year pre-vocational school (for students without apprenticeships)
2. Berufsfachschule: Fulltime education at the same level as the vocational schools.
  1. Berufsfachschule for domestic sciences (2 years), leads to intermediate certificate

level;

2. Berufsfachschule for domestic sciences (1 years);
3. Berufsfachschule for children's nursery (Kindergarden)
4. Berufsfachschule for Ecology
5. Berufsfachschule for further qualifications (Education)
3. Fachschule: Only for those who have completed a vocational training in a state recognized profession and have several years of work experiences  
Fachschule for home economics (leads to mastercraftswoman qualification)
4. Berufskolleg: not offered at the moment, Fachschule for Social Education;
5. Berufl. Gymnasium for home economics and nutritional sciences: (3 years)

I should like to talk about more specifically about three particular schools:

1. Fachschule for Social Education. This school does not participate in the dual system, but rather provides students with a complete 4-year professional training starting with a one year pre-practical training at a nursery school, 2 year full-time education and an additional one year professional training leading to the qualification of state approved educator.
2. Berufsfachschule for children's nursery. Like the Fachschule for Social Education it offers a complete professional training with 2 years full-time school and 1 year professional training leading to the qualification as state approved children's nurse. Requirements are Hauptschulabschluß and an average qualification of "3" (C), with a "3" in German as minimum.
3. Fachschule for domestic sciences (2 years): Requirements are Hauptschulabschluß with an average of "4" (D) in the major subjects German, English and Maths. This school leads to the intermediate certificate providing the opportunity to attend either Fachschule for Social Education or Berufliche Gymnasium.

Apart from lessons in the classrooms, our school offers a variety of extra-curricular activities, such as excursions, outings, visits to theatre performances (ex.: my advance course in English went to Richard III, the German advanced course is going to see Faust in Ulm), study or educational trips to Prague, or Exeter and London (next year) etc..

In conclusion I can say that being the smallest of the three schools the atmosphere here is friendly and cooperative and can be characterized as having good and constructive relationship between staff and students on a personal level as well as between staff and both Principal and assistant department directors. Besides some of the problems it is quite a challenge and I very much enjoy teaching here. Thank you!

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