

Strengthening Democracy at Schools

Measures of the Ministry for education, youth and sports

Initial conditions:

Brandenburg is a country with great spread of land with low population which is moreover asymmetrically distributed: In the area near Berlin there is a high density of population with increase in population, in areas far from Berlin there is an extreme low density of population. The population decrease, especially in the rural area, coupled with a tight budget position causes incisions in education- and social infrastructure. From 2010 there must be saved up 300 Mio € per year additionally in the country's household.

Due to the drop of birth rate at the beginning of the 90's, in the school year 2010/2011 there will be thought only 240.000 pupils instead of today the 360.000 in Brandenburg schools. In 2007 began the considerable decline of the number of school graduates of the 10th grade. Already in 2009 there will leave merely half as many pupils school after their 10th grade as 2006. Besides the declining birth rate the high number of young people leaving Brandenburg is a big problem. These are especially young women with qualified school- leaving and professional qualifications. The movement of a part of young professionals also causes social structured deferrals especially in the rural area.

Due to the decline of population the number of school locations and youth leisure facilities decreases. Ways get longer, educational and cultural offers must be concentrated related to crucial points to be financeable and of high quality. At the end of this decade the relation of supply and demand will inverse in Brandenburg like in the other newly- formed German states. In the space of 2- 3 years also the number of graduates with higher education entrance qualification will decrease in the same measure.

Besides demographic and socio- structural frame conditions in Brandenburg there is the problem of right- wing- extremism and xenophobia which is still virulent. In spite of the slightly decreasing numbers Brandenburg, as measured by its population, belongs to the countries with most acts of violence due to right- wing extremist and xenophobic motivations.

Right- wing- extremism and Xenophobia

We had to experience that democratic, open societies are vulnerable. The spread of right- extremist violence in the 90's pointed out this. Against this the state had to defend the society. With repressive and preventive measures at the same time. The Brandenburg state's government realised that the increasing violence against foreigners, which especially sprang from young people, was only the tip of an iceberg and not the iceberg itself. Right- wing extremist and xenophobic attitudes had reached a not ignorable dimension among the whole population. As a reaction to this the Brandenburg government developed the concept of action "Tolerant Brandenburg". By this government confessed politically to realise the increasing xenophobic and right- wing extremist violence not as a partly problem of youth but as a problem of whole society. The attitudes of a part of the adult generation are the background in front of which young people act. Because of this it's regarded as imperative to react with the whole community. This tries the concept "Tolerant Brandenburg". Government action this way is interlocked with society's action.

Scholar Corporation

Democratic education requires democratic experience. The corporative rights of pupils are an important part of participation of young people in society. Because of this it is a educational- political goal to include pupils in diverse ways in school's arrangement. This pertains the corporation by corporative gremials as well as the inclusion in scholar approaches and projects.

In Brandenburg's education act there are principals rooted, like freedom of conscience, candour and tolerance towards different cultural, religious, ideological moral concepts, the strengthening of creativity and individual initiative and the mutual respect for the humans. Also the co- responsibility of parents, teachers and pupils at the configuration of school is constitutionally rooted. The legal basic of corporation in Brandenburg is already held on in the constitution of the state: In **Art. 30** the co- responsibility at school's constitution is delegated pupils, teachers, parents and their organisations and representatives.

Especially in the school conference pupils decide together with teachers and parents about important concerns of their institution. Furthermore there are the county- and country councils of pupils as well as the county school counsellors and the country- school- counsellor, that are important for a for pedagogic and educational political discussions.

For the MBS it's an important concern, that the gremials' participants assume their democratic rights and obligations. Due to this, there is an office for country's gremials that supports their work content-related and organisationally and helps with the qualification of participants. Furthermore parents' - teachers' - and pupils' representatives are qualified by the country's institute for school and media as further trainee teachers, who offer further educations in the areas to gremials' participants on school- and county- level. About 140 advanced training courses with over 2000 attendees are offered by them per year on the spot.

Cooperation Parents- School

Good school need parents' support and corporation. The cooperation between school and parents was intensified. An educational alliance on country's level with the country's council of parents has the goal to strengthen the common upbringing- responsibility in school and parental home. Parents and teachers shall be motivated by the educational alliance to attend more to questions referring the common direct debiting of parental home and school. In the amendment to school law of 2006 the legal possibility of confederation in educational alliances between pupils, teachers and parents is explicitly scheduled. In § 44 of the concept a new passage about educational agreements was included, which offers legal space for the purpose that upbringing- and educational work of schools can be more obligatory and more verifiable by individual agreements and documentations. In the frame of school visitation one evaluation criterion is the inclusion of parents in scholar concerns. The MBS takes part in the EU- project "Cooperation parents- school (COPASCH)", whose goal is the building of a Europe- wide network for the improvement of this cooperation.

Country- Pupils' Council

This year the country- pupils' council has appealed together with MBS to the competition "Pupils with effort!" to which pupils could apply with projects and initiatives in frame of pupils' representatives, class, school, local youth parliament etc. This shall motivate to more engagement in the living environment of pupils. Also this is a form of value- educations in the sense of motivate humans to put oneself out for one's own concerns and to be active. The country- pupils' council also runs two professional congresses a year for pupils that have different focuses (i.e. pupils' companies, civil courage, public work). Pupils get suggestions to contribute more in their school.

Advancement of Schools

One of educational politics' focuses is the content wise advancement of school program work, self- evaluation and school visitation. More self- reliance of schools, like it is intended, requires clear educational goals and frame conditions. Especially the mechanism of self- reflection in work must be developed stronger. Due to this the MBS has, based on the BLK- program "Learning & Living Democracy", supported exemplary the run of feedback- processes at a few schools. They are the basic for further developments especially for more pupils- and parent participation. To school's advancement also belongs its opening for local community and towards extracurricular partners. Thereby full- time schools have the role of pioneers.

Full- Time Schools

Full- time schools shall work together intensively with extracurricular partners and shall especially integrate youth- cultural and other leisure- time offers, which can't be sustained in the sparsely inhabited rural areas. Brandenburg wants to offer 25% of pupils from primary schools and 33% of pupils from higher schools a space at a full- time school until 2007/08. Only concepts that work together with extracurricular partners are accepted as full- time schools. At primary school to these partners absolutely must belong the after school care centre. By now there are frame agreements between the MBS and country organisations like the fishing- and the music organisation or the country- sports confederation, which save the inclusion of such offers in the full- time school work. In the face of increasing distance of school ways and the decreasing number of young people this is an important possibility to facilitate the meeting of demands for leisure- time and community experiences. School's opening towards local community strengthens the population's identification with the local school.

More Independence of Schools

In the school year 2003/2004 the project "Strengthening school's independence" MoSeS started. The goal of this model approach is the improvement of Quality in scholar work by advanced powers in decision of schools. Thereby instruments for a more efficient use of funding shall be proved. Special relevance have the co operations at school and with extracurricular partners.

Conduct of Life- Ethics- Religion

In Brandenburg the subject “Conduct of Life- Ethics- Religion” was developed. It’s a reaction to a society where is not any more conclusive religious embossment. Conveyance of values belongs to every subject. But we also need a subject in which pupils, no matter how they are characterized religiously and ideologically, communicate ethic basics of living- together.

Strengthening Grammar Schools (Oberschulen)

The initiation of grammar schools in the school year 2005/ 2006 foremost took the demographic changes into account. This way in each sparsely inhabited rural area the provision of all pupils with basic supplies is guaranteed. A relevant part of pupils at grammar- and individual full- time schools (which will change into grammar schools anytime soon) comes from social and familiar situations with significant burdens. Not only a few parents aren’t able to support their children in a measure expected from school. In front of this background school’s tasks change. In time pupils need support by school in secondary education I as well as tangible and available motivation offers, to advance or re- develop their commitment at school. In the new EU- period of funding 2007- 2013 several million Euros are placed at the disposal for the support of grammar- and full- time schools (which will change into grammar schools anytime soon) in their process of change. With these funding schools shall be developed and constituted as attractive learning places for pupils who intend the secondary school certificate. It’s regarded as imperative to reach more and better school diplomas at grammar schools and to improve pupils’ facilities for apprenticeship.

The grammar school shall be supported by adviser for social learning, who are trained at present.

Also for grammar school cooperation with extracurricular partners will be an important feature of quality for the improvement of lesson and education. This shall be strengthened by the help of EU- advancement.



Socrates

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