



GD Bildung und Kultur
Programm für lebenslanges Lernen



EU Study Visit: Innovative leadership and teacher training in autonomous schools

‘Think globally – act locally’ – relevance and
realisation of international projects at locally bound
schools (Friday, 16th May 2014, 9 am)

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen,

I hope you have had a pleasant and stimulating visit so far. Let me briefly introduce myself. My name is Kai Kämmerer. I have been teaching German and English at Goetheschule for 13 years. I am Head of the English Department at this school and have organized and taken part in one of your exchange programmes since 2004.

When I was still a student in the 1980s, I took part in an exchange programme and visited Poole in the south of England. It was a memorable visit for many reasons. Let me ask you: How many of you have taken part in any kind of exchange when you were at school? Where did you go? [audience participation]

In the following presentation I would like to tell you about international projects at Goetheschule. Firstly, I would like to give you an overview of the international activities of Goetheschule. Secondly, I am going to tell you about the relevance of international projects to our students. Finally, I am going to outline what is needed on the school’s side to realize such projects.

If you have got any questions during the presentation, please feel free to ask them at any time.

So let us start by having a look at different kinds of projects a student at Goetheschule can take part in.

1 International activities of Goetheschule (overview and examples)

1.1 Student exchange programmes

Goetheschule fosters relations with a number of schools in Europe and the world in order to run student exchange programmes. Have a look at the table to get an overview.

destination	year(s)	duration of stay (ca.)
<i>France,</i> Gérardmer	8/9	7 days
<i>England,</i> Bristol	8/9	10 days
<i>Poland,</i> Wrocław	9/10/11	7 days
<i>USA,</i> Fort Smith	10/11	4 weeks
<i>China,</i> Shanghai	10/11	3 weeks

You can see that from year 8 (when they are about 14 to 15 years old) our students can go abroad and experience foreign cultures in a school context. Some students even decide to take part in the French *and* the English exchange within one year and might later decide to go to the USA or China. These exchange programmes are all group trips. In addition, students can also do individual long-term exchange visits to sister schools in France and Australia for 6 months.

Let us have a closer look at the English exchange with Cotham School in Bristol, which is the longest standing school partnership at Goetheschule. Back in 1995 a Hanovarian rugby coach took his rugby team on a trip to Bristol. The city of Bristol had been twinned with Hanover since 1947 in order to build strong links and friendships between England and Germany after the Second World War. This rugby coach knew of a school in Bristol that was interested in starting an exchange programme with a German school. So the rugby coach invited a teacher he knew to come along on a trip to Bristol and meet the head

teacher of that Bristolian grammar school. That same year both schools made an agreement that they would henceforth let their students do visits and return visits once a year. Today, this exchange is the oldest consistently successful exchange programme at Goetheschule.

The way this exchange is organized is fairly typical of most exchange programmes at our school. Exchange visits and return visits are prepared in after school clubs because participation in these programmes is voluntary and therefore participants usually come from different classes or even from different years. Each visit includes a mix of days at school and day trips, during which the guests explore the city and its surrounding area. Guest students stay with host families and take part in family life and free time activities. Bed and board is provided mutually by the host families. The costs of travel, sight-seeing and additional spending money must be provided by each student's parents. Basically, the school does not have any special budget to sponsor any exchange activity.

Let us have a quick look at a typical programme to get an impression of what a visit looks like.

[→programme 2012/PPP]

1.2 International projects

Just like our student exchange programmes, other international projects are often extracurricular activities. Having said that, there are also projects which are done by individual classes and which are closely connected to the syllabus.

Let me give you three examples. Two of these projects were carried out within the framework of the Comenius Programme. In the past, Comenius Programmes have enabled our school to do projects together with partners in a variety of countries, for example Poland, Latvia, Denmark, Finland and Sweden to name but a few.

1.2.1 Comenius Project example 1: Maths: a universal language and a passport to the surrounding world

In 2011 students and teachers from six European countries met in the Czech Republic. They came from France, Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland, Germany and the Czech Republic. The objective of their Comenius project is to explore

mathematics as “a universal language and a passport to the surrounding world”, as its title says.

By the end of the project in 2013 most participating schools had hosted the other groups once. During these stays there were cultural and touristic programmes and English was the lingua franca.

However, the centre of the visits were special lessons which were prepared by teachers and students of the hosting group. In these lessons students and teachers explored mathematics as a non-verbal language and experienced similarities and differences in an international comparison. Mathematical knowledge was then applied to the surrounding world in special field trips.

Students stayed with host families and teachers were accommodated in hotels.

Have a look at some photos from the trip to the Czech Republic [<http://goetheschule.de/web-schulleben/veranstaltungen/comenius-projekt-2011.html>]

1.2.2 Comenius Project example 2: Kinema

The other project I would like to present is a so-called “Comenius Regio Partnership”. It is a bilateral partnership between schools and school authorities in Haute-Normandie in France and in Lower Saxony, which is the federal state that Hanover is the capital of.

For six years students of Goetheschule took part in annual projects with the title “Kinema”, which is a combination of the German word “Kino” and the French “cinéma”. Every year an entire class of Goetheschule took part in this project whose aim it was to introduce young people to the cinematic art of the partner country. So a German class would analyse a French film and a French class would analyse a German film. Often the films were chosen on the basis of curricular requirements. During the weeks that the classes spent working on the assignments, they kept in contact with their counterparts by exchanging e-mails. Parallel to the project, the participating teachers attended training courses to get fit in film analysis themselves. At the end of the project the results were evaluated and each project was rounded off with a meeting of all participating schools.

1.2.3 Project example 3: Shang-over

The third example is a project that is “home-grown”, so to speak. This project was a by-product of the exchange with our Chinese partner school in Shanghai.

In 2010, ten years after the World Exposition was held in Hanover, students of Goetheschule and Wu Ai Senior High School presented an interactive multimedia desk about the cities of Hanover and Shanghai on the Expo in Shanghai. The project was presented in the German pavilion and its funding was provided by the government of Lower Saxony.

2 Relevance of international projects to our students

When I went to Poole in England to visit my exchange partner Richard almost 30 years ago, I kept a diary. Every once in a while, I like to read that diary to remind me of the wonderful time I had and of what it meant to me to go abroad and live in a totally strange environment for a fortnight.

Let me mention some obvious benefits that students derive from international projects. In general, getting in contact with people on an international level and going abroad broadens our students' cultural and intellectual horizons. It helps our students (and our teachers!) better understand the range of European and non-European cultures and values. International projects help students practise and improve their language skills. Last not least, international projects very often give them striking examples of the significance of English as the lingua franca in a globalised world.

Let us now consider some not so obvious advantages of “going global” in a school context. The title of my presentation includes the catchphrase “Think globally – act locally!” and it also refers to “the locally bound school”. Well, what does that mean?

We (teachers) think globally and are aware of the necessity to prepare our students for a world of work in times of globalisation, where intercultural capability is a prerequisite of success. But we also think locally by being aware of *who* our students are. At Goetheschule a high percentage of all students are first and second generation immigrants from a great number of countries. Most students, or their parents respectively, have come from Turkey, Poland, the Balkan States, Russia and other succession states of the USSR to live in Germany. Cultural diversity is part of our everyday life at Goetheschule. Integration is our daily challenge. Many students with a non-German ethnic background find it hard to develop their identity. Ali, who has lived in Germany

all his life but whose parents have not assimilated into German society, Ali might wonder whether he should feel Turkish or German. Kseniya, who has only arrived in Germany three years ago, might be confused by speaking Russian at home and German at school.

International projects enable these students to see both the significance and the relativity of nationality. Suddenly they find themselves in the role of representatives of a multi-cultural Germany. Then again they realize that when it comes to face-to-face contact, the individual is so much more important than a person's nationality or ethnicity. Realizing that there are millions of other people in other countries who are also immigrants and part of a minority can give a student new stimulus in the development of his identity.

3 Requirements for international projects

What is needed on the school's side to realize international projects? What does it take to "go global"?

3.1 The teacher's role

As we could see earlier on, when I told you about the beginnings of our exchange programme with Cotham School in Bristol, international projects often (or always?) depend on an individual teacher's initiative, his willingness and commitment.

- Teachers engaging in international projects need to be willing to spend time on extracurricular activities even though that part of their job might not be as well-paid or as respected as teaching in the classroom.
- Some exchange visits are partly done in times of school holidays, so the accompanying teacher needs to be willing to give up some days of his well-deserved holidays.
- Moreover, international projects often require the willingness of the participating staff *and* their families to accommodate guests in their homes. Teachers who are fathers or mothers of small children must find ways to keep their families working during their absence when it comes to the return visit.

- Teachers need to inform themselves about government and non-government organisations that support international projects financially and/or provide a framework for them.
- Teachers organising an exchange depend on their colleagues being lenient. This is because guests in school or exchange trips nearly always disturb the school routine. For example, there will be foreign guests sitting in classes or there will be students absent because of day trips or return visits.

3.2 The role of the school's management

Generally, school management should hold international projects in high regard and encourage the individual teacher's commitment. Because the education system will usually not reward the individual teacher's extra effort to get or keep an international project going, the school management should show its appreciation as often as possible. It should do so openly because the teacher who is "going global" needs the tolerance and support of the whole staff whenever the school's routine is strained through international projects. The school's management needs to offer organizational help wherever necessary and should be flexible when an international project turns out to be an additional difficulty in the school's routine. Obviously, the international orientation of the school should be established in the school's policies. Finally, practice has taught me that sometimes the teacher who is doing an international project just needs to be given that little extra bit of freedom that the management of the autonomous school can give him.

All in all, the school management should create an atmosphere in which international contacts are highly esteemed and supported by teachers, students and parents alike.