

**Fritz Oser/Christine Riegel/Sabine Tanner**

### **Changing Devils into Angels?**

#### **Prevention of Racism and Right-Wing Extremism at School as a Sensitising Activity**

Prevention of right-wing extremism and racism as an attempt to root out the problem as early as possible is usually targeted at changing opinions and attitudes of individuals – especially of those young individuals who have already displayed or seem prone to right-wing behaviour such as right-wing slogans, actions of exclusion, gang building or violence motivated by racism. The provocative question – “Changing Devils into Angels?” – hints at the corresponding wish or idea to rid of the problem by directly influencing someone on a personal level through pedagogical measures – to educate “the evil” towards “the good”. It also suggests that racism is a moral phenomenon and not only a political one.

However, reality and the phenomenon of racism and right-wing extremism as well as the possibilities of prevention and counteracting prove to be less clear and unambiguous than a simple change. On the one hand, the problem cannot be reduced to attitudes or actions of individuals who are part of or closely linked to the right-wing scene. It is rather an intricate social phenomenon deeply rooted in the core of society. Racism is also inherent in cultural and social order. As a process it is routinely created and reinforced through everyday practices (Essed 1991, Leiprecht 2001, Rommelspacher 2002), for example in politics, the media and also in the area of education<sup>1</sup>. It is a structuring factor of social reality, in which every one of us is caught up to some extent. On the other hand, there is the risk of overrating the educational possibility of change, the risk of falling for the highly attractive idea of being able to simply “deeducate” the problem by appropriate prevention measures, forgetting the subjective motivations of students as well as the social circumstances.<sup>2</sup> The idea of systematic and linear change through pedagogical intervention is not only naive but also dangerous as it turns a social problem into a one-sided personal and partly pedagogical one and, thus, fosters its reproduction. Despite these difficulties and ambivalences, though, we regard it as important to include educational programs dealing with racism, racist exclusion and violence in projects at and outside of school. This, however, demands to work with young people on a subject-related and reflexive way taking up their ideas and perspectives without overlooking the social complexity of the phenomenon of racism. This leads to the question of how such programs can be structured.

It is precisely this question that our project “Preventing Right-Wing Extremism and Ethnic Violence at School” concerns itself with. In an intervention and evaluation study we developed a preventing

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<sup>1</sup>cf. the international comparative work of institutional discrimination at school by Gomolla 2005 or the studies of social inequality in school (Häberlin/ Imdorf/ Kronig 2004)

<sup>2</sup> Not least bear pedagogical conditions hierarchies and structures of inequality and even pedagogues – despite their very best intentions – are involved in ethicised and stereotyping thinking and acting with excluding consequences (Lea/Helfland 2004, Walter 1999, Weber 2003).

program for (secondary) schools, involving students and teachers.<sup>3</sup> This program was carried out in 37 school classes in ordinary lessons in combination with workshops for teachers (mediator concept). It is particularly noteworthy that both, students and teachers were included in the process and that both groups, despite their different roles, were encouraged to learn and to reflect. The entire process – the implementation of the program in classes as well as the workshops for teachers – was scientifically evaluated. Its effectiveness and the entailed ambivalences and difficulties were evaluated by qualitative and quantitative methods.

In this paper we outline the theoretical basics and the approach for preventing racism and exclusion at schools. With respect to the main results of the quantitative and qualitative examination we discuss critically its drawbacks and opportunities (detailed cf. Oser/Riegel/Tanner 2007).

### **The theoretical approach**

Theoretically this project is based upon three substantial concepts:

- a) the concept of Everyday-Racism and the approach of Diversity-Education
- b) the Narrative Approach, which necessitates the analysis of collective images and discourses
- c) the concept of Reversed Experience

Due to the omnipresence of racist and discriminating mindsets, conduct and social structures, it seemed imperative for prevention work at schools to focus specifically on the phenomenon of everyday-racism (cf. Essed 1991, Leiprecht 2001): The marking-off construction of “We” and “the Others”<sup>4</sup> as well as socially influential images of exclusion and discriminatory narratives of “the Others”, as they are relevant to the school environment, to society, and to the students’ way of thinking and acting. It also proved rewarding to examine other forms of discrimination (such as sexism, ethnocentrism, homophobia, bodyism etc.) and their concurrence with racism.

Apart from the issue of exclusion it is also necessary to broach the issue of living in a heterogeneous society – with all its possibilities and difficulties. This implies not only the examination of social, cultural and language diversity as well as the encouragement to acknowledge and respect others but also the introduction of a deconstructive and non-stereotyping perspective on others (Allemann-Ghionda 1999). The reflection of one’s own identity within a heterogeneous society can help students experience multiple belonging (Mecheril 2003) and multiple positioning (Riegel 2007) beyond ethnical or cultural belonging and, thus, encourage them to reflect upon their own position within the context of power and social inequality. This approach aiming at multi-referentiality as well as at the constructive nature of belonging and the entailed processes of stereotyping and discrimination is called Diversity-Education (cf. Hormel/Scherr 2004: 15).

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<sup>3</sup> The students were between 14 and 19 years old and we chose ethnically homogeneous as well as ethnically heterogeneous classes. We also included different levels of secondary schooling (Sek 1, Real- und Kleinklassen). Altogether there were 570 students and 34 teachers involved. The intervention took place from January to June 2005.

<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, We-groups can give identity and can be a positive societal proficiency, but it can also have the roots of discrimination in it

Regarding its content the project, therefore, is characterised by an anti-racism and diversity-conscious perspective while pursuing a deconstructive approach. It focuses on the one hand on metaphors of inclusion and rejects consciously excluding social representations of “We” and “the Others ” – social constructions which are typical for everyday-racism and exclusion (cf. Leiprecht 2001) and which are part of the students’ way of thinking and acting, (cf. Oser/Riegel/Tanner 2007: 44ff<sup>5</sup>, Studer 2005, Heini 2007).

A core aspect of the intervention program, therefore, was the “Narrative Approach” established by Gavriel Salomon as part of the Peace Education in Israel (cf. Salomon 2002). Salomon holds that „Collective narratives [...] appear to play a central role in conflicts [...]. Thus it stands to reason that collective narratives should be the targets of coexistence programs.” (Salomon 2003, 15). For the design of the intervention it was key to concentrate on the Swiss context and more latent forms of differentiation as the constellations of conflict here are less polarised and violence ridden as in the Middle East. The intervention dealt with and deconstructed current stereotypes, enemy images, and images and discourses which contribute to the construction and devaluation of “the Others” and which were relevant and known to the students in their everyday life.<sup>6</sup> The aim was to expose the constructive nature of demarcation and labelling as well as of negative images of “Others” and to point out to the consequences of such images and discourses.

A further element is the pedagogical concept of “constructive disequilibrium” and “reversed experience”. It is an appendix to the deconstructive approach and aims at the reflection of personal emotions and experiences as well as of opinions and actions which – often unreflected and unintentionally – lead to exclusion, discrimination and “othering” (Oser & Baeriswyl 2001). The (discriminating) consequences and ambivalences of apparently clear opinions and unreflected actions are unmasked in staged situations (simulations, discourse conflicts, dilemma discussions) and conversations about personal experiences. Thus it is possible to reflect one’s own involvement in discrimination and devaluation without being accused or publically displayed as racist. The aim of this method is rather to point out and overcome deep-seated beliefs – first by means of unsettlement and then by collectively developing alternative ways of thinking and acting. Thus, the constructive disequilibrium can lead to a conceptual change in the long run.

### **The Concept of Mediators – Prevention Work with Students and Teachers**

A special feature of this project is the belief that it is imperative for the prevention of racism, exclusion and violence at schools not only to work with students but also to include the teachers in the

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<sup>5</sup> Core arguments of multicultural coexistence as well as images of the self and others were collected in a qualitative preliminary study in group discussions.

<sup>6</sup> For example generalising and demeaning terms such as „the foreigners“ or “the un-employed”, the ridiculing or demeaning of young muslima wearing a head-scarf, the referring to refugees as “scoundgers” as well as enemy images and “we group constructions” which are influenced by a specific region or youth culture.

interventional process and to enable them to take responsibility. After all, they as well are involved in structures which create exclusion and ethnicisation and, by acting as educators, engaging with the students and transferring knowledge, they play an important role in the constitution and arrangement of the of social circumstances. Thus, the so called concept of mediators is one of the essential characteristics of this intervention (cf. Perrez 1983, Oser 1988): the teachers and not the team of scientists implemented the intervention program in their classes. To prepare them for this task they were introduced to the material in three day-long workshops. Those professional development seminars also offered an opportunity to reflect upon experiences made during the intervention and to analyse critically one's own educational thinking and acting. Methodically this concept of mediators goes back to an approach which has already proved itself in earlier intervention studies on moral development and education (cf. Oser/Schläfli 1986). This method not only offers the opportunity to examine the intervention program context-relatedly, but also to include the teachers in the process of self-reflection and learning. This is something which is of great importance to the anti-racist and intercultural work, but which, nonetheless, is rarely employed in this combination.

### **The Design of the Intervention Study**

The prevention program for school classes – developed especially for this study – was based on the considerations described above. This program consisted in ten units filling two to six sessions each. The key topics were 1) subjective positioning and multiple belonging in pluralistic circumstances 2) narratives and enemy images 3) gender roles, cultural stereotyping and constructions of normality 4) positions of inequality in heterogeneous societies 5) experiences of discrimination and racism 6) concepts and demands of integration 7) the situation of refugees 8) multi-perspectives in conflicts 9) alternatives of acting in situations of conflict 10) Exploring “living together and exclusion” in one's own surroundings. A wide range of methods was employed: exercises in sensitising, methods of self-reflection, discussions of dilemma (cf. Oser/Althof 1997), transfer of knowledge, media work and media depiction, interactive methods, such as role plays and autonomous research. Goals of the intervention were:

- to challenge exclusionary narratives and concepts of others as enemy
- to sensitize for different forms of discrimination and ostracism
- to promote empathy for the situation of others
- to promote the recognition of cultural and social diversity and multiple belonging
- to encourage students to develop alternatives to violence and exclusion in conflict situations.

The aim of the evaluation study was to examine how those goals were realised and whether the underlying theories and pedagogical considerations proved relevant to the prevention work at Swiss schools. Therefore, the entire process was documented and evaluated. On the one hand, this evaluation was based on a quantitative pre-post-questioning/interviewing of the students (with a repeated measure

design<sup>7</sup> with questionings at 4 different times) and a pre-post follow-up design with cross-over elements<sup>8</sup>. On the other hand it was based on a qualitative analysis of systematic class room observations, reports from teachers, class room material (papers, photos, video clips, posters) as well as interviews with teachers and students.

The following paragraph will describe the key results of this study, positive changes and learning processes as well as resistances and counter-developments.

### **What was incited by the intervention?**

First, let's look at the quantitative pre-post-interviews of students. In order to examine the effectivity of the intervention, the key goals and contents of the intervention were operationalised in items, thus constructing different scales by means of factor analysis.

- Scale „Diversity at School”: Items concerning the coexistence of people of different social and cultural background in one school.
- Scale “Adaption of Negative Narratives”: Items representing an uncritical attitude towards negative images of Others.
- Scale „Critical View on Negative Narratives“: Items showing an understanding of the constructive nature of images and narratives about Others as well as a critical view towards them.
- Scale „Narratives of Refugees“: Items containing negative (and positive) associations with refugees
- Scale “Equality of Immigrants”: Items showing an orientation towards the rights of immigrants and coexistence according to equal rights in Switzerland
- Scale “Excluding Attitudes towards Immigrants”: Items showing a tendency to exclude immigrants and refugees and a tendency towards separation in coexistence.

The following two tables show the changes which had taken place at the three different times of evaluation: The results of the questioning prior to the intervention (t0) are shown in comparison to the results of the questioning directly subsequent to the intervention (t2)<sup>9</sup> in table 1. The results of the questioning directly subsequent to the intervention (t2) are shown in comparison to the results of the follow-up questioning six months after the end of the intervention phase (t3) in table 2.

**Table 1: Changes from t0 to t2 (pre and post intervention)**

Scale	t0	t2	Significance
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<sup>7</sup> The pre-post-follow-up questionings/interviews took place right before, right after and six months after the end of the intervention phase.

<sup>8</sup> To this end the group was divided in two and the intervention was performed subsequently in both groups. Thus, the group starting later with the intervention process was able to serve as a control group. The results of the comparison of the control group show no changes in the key variables of the control group, thus proving that the changes noticed in the intervention groups can be linked to the intervention.

<sup>9</sup> t1 is only necessary and significant for the control-group-comparison, but not for this pre-post-comparison.

	<b>M</b> <sup>10</sup>	<b>s</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>s</b>	
Diversity at School (4/14) <sup>11</sup>	16.45	4.0	17.13	4.3	F(1,468)= 14.196;p<.01
Adaption of Negative Narratives (3/10)	12.02	3.4	12.07	3.5	F(1, 480)=0.112; n.s
Critical View on Negative Narratives (4/14)	16.76	3.9	17.41	4.3	F(1, 468)=12.095; p<.01
Narratives of Refugees (5/17,5)	17.42	5.1	17.81	5.5	F(1, 196)= 4.528; p<.05
Equality of Immigrants (6/21)	26.62	6.6	25.95	7.3	F(1, 457)=7.421; p<.05
Excluding Attitudes towards Immigrants (5/17,5)	16.86	6.1	16.68	6.5	F(1, 453)=0.571; n.s

Looking at the changes in the pre-post-comparison one notices a couple of significant developments. The results of “Diversity at School”, “Critical View on Negative Narratives” and “Negative Narratives about Refugees” have changed as intended by the intervention. At the same time, no significant changes have taken place in the “Adaption of Negative Images” and the “Excluding Tendencies” while the agreement with “Equality of Refugees” shows a decreasing tendency.

**Table 2: Changes from t1 to t2 (post intervention and follow-up)**

Scale	t2		t3		Significance
	M <sup>12</sup>	s	M	s	
Diversity at School (4/14)	16.92	4.1	16.47	4.3	F(1, 333)= 4.357; p<.05
Adaption of Negative Narratives (3/10)	12.09	3.4	11.62		F(1, 336)=6.793; p<.05
Critical View on Negative Narratives (4/14)	17.44	4.2	17.00	4.3	F(1, 330)=4.655; p<.05
Narratives of Refugees (5/17,5)	17.44	5.2	17.38	5.5	F(1, 332)=0.098; n.s.
Equality of Immigrants (6/21)	25.57	7.1	25.13	7.3	F(1, 328)=2.761; n.s.
Excluding Attributes towards Immigrants (5/17,5)	16.93	6.5	16.23	6.1	F(1, 323)=7.313; p<.01

The phase in between the end of the intervention (t2) and the follow-up interview (t3) shows a relativisation of parts of the prior results: The positive changes concerning the agreement with “Diversity at School” as well as “Critical view on narratives” have decreased again – although not strongly. But within this period the agreement with “Excluding attitudes towards Immigrants” and the “Adaption of Negative Narratives”, on the other hand, have decreased now – as a “delayed” positive effect.

Concerning the three scales on “Negative Narratives of Refugees and Immigrants”, the comparison of the results of t0 (before the intervention) and the follow-up-test (t3), all three scales shows that despite

<sup>10</sup> Mean of sumscores, depending on number of items (Likert-Scale: strongly disagree (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) strongly agree)

<sup>11</sup> Numbers in brackets: Number of Items belonging to a scale as well as theoretical average value.

<sup>12</sup> The different t2 means in tab 1 and tab 2 result from different valid data (number of cases) in the comparative calculations.

a slight positive tendency, although the positive trend measured throughout the entire time is not significant. That's a different story with those two scales concerning political attitudes towards immigrants and refugees. Concerning the excluding tendencies towards immigrants and refugees, the changes took a longer time to become evident: The agreement with the scale "Excluding Attitudes" has significantly decreased in time, although this effect only started showing after the end of the intervention phase. Yet another story is the question of "Equality of Immigrants": The overall strong agreement with this scale has decreased significantly during the intervention, even though the students' agreement is still extraordinarily high. We'll come back to that later.

### **Effects of the sensitising**

The non-linear and time wise removed developments as shown by the quantitative examination – especially regarding the attitudes towards "Negative Narratives about Immigrants" – suggest that changes in the judgment of negative images of immigrants have, in fact, taken place and that the sensitising process has at least resulted in disequilibrium and confusion towards predominant narratives and discourses. This is to be perceived as a positive effect regarding the deconstruction of negative images and narratives about immigrants and refugees and holds promises of a long-term conceptual change. However, concerning the question of "Equality of Immigrants" the confusion induced by the intervention may have led to the rather negative effect of a decrease in agreement and openness. The results of the systematic classroom observation, of the teachers' reports and of the interviews with the students point to further aspects of change incited by the intervention. There are numerous manifestations of the fact that students became more alert to the different forms of exclusion and their consequences and that they started to challenge over-generalisations, enemy images, and concepts of normality. Especially the deconstructive questioning of predominant images, which was to be observed during the lessons, showed momentaneous as well as long term learning effects. On the one hand, there were to be observed shock-like effects and "aha"-experiences, as for example the reaction of one student suddenly realising the normative effect of traditional discourse: "Well, you can hardly call that *normal*." On the other hand, there was to be noticed an increasing ability to deconstruct images and narratives and analyse their intentionality. At the same time the students acquired a new, formerly often missing, awareness of the consequences for the people involved. This had the effect that they showed themselves increasingly sensitised towards the topic trying to avoid generalisations and ethnical stereotyping. A teacher reports:

*„Conflicts between two groups, for example between right wing youngsters and Albanians, aren't argued out on such a general level anymore. They no longer say that they have a problem with THE Albanians, but name the persons and look at the whole thing in a more sophisticated way."*

Furthermore, there was to be noted a significant success regarding the raised awareness towards various forms of exclusion and discrimination. The quantitative interview also shows that the students

were more alert towards social inequality after the intervention than before. They were significantly more aware of inequality due to social differences such as colour of skin, religion, poverty and gender. By engaging in the topic of “Living together and exclusion” students became more aware of social and cultural diversity and due to a deconstructive attitude started developing more empathy and understanding for different ways of living and belonging. A statement by a student of a vocational school who prior to the intervention had been very depreciative towards certain groups of immigrants documents this development. After the intervention she says:

*“I am a socially conscious person, although I have had a period when I hated foreigners because I read so many bad things about them in the media. But that’s not true. By living together with two or more nations you can learn much more about foreigners and others and that can be very interesting.”*

This young woman notices herself a change in her image of immigrants and explicitly addresses media discourses and images that she is now able to read more critically thanks to the intervention.- All in all on a qualitative level we are elaborated three types of respondents to our intervention: The changers, the resistant non-changers and the ones between who developed a higher sensitivity toward exclusion processes and rightwing concepts without a complete change (cf Oser/Riegel/Tanner 2007, 248ff).

### **Who was the intervention helpful to? A comparison of right-wing and left-wing students**

In the context of the prevention of right-wing extremism it is of great interest to compare how the beliefs of students of different political orientation have changed during the intervention. In the questionnaire the students were given to politically positioning themselves as “left-wing”, “more left than right-wing”, “neither left nor right-wing”, “more right than left-wing”, “right-wing”. In order to find out how the results of the key dimensions would change in relation to the political self-positioning of the students, the first two options were summarised as “left-wing”, the last two as “right-wing” and the option in the middle “neither left nor right-wing” was named “centre ground”. Beneath please find the pre-post-comparison taking the political self-positioning of the students into account:

**Table 3: pre-post-comparison according to a Mixed Anova taking into account the political self-positioning of the students**

Factors		t0	t2	Within	Interaction	Between
Diversity at School (4/14)	left	17.57	17.99	F(1,365)=11.729; p<.01	n.s.	F(1,365)=40.1 32; p<.01
	centre	16.81	18.10			
	right	13.74	14.15			
Adaption of Negative Narratives (3/10)	left	11.15	11.15	n.s.	n.s.	F(1,380)=35.7 24 p<.01
	centre	11.93	11.95			
	right	14.03	14.25			
Critical View on Neg.Narratives (4/14)	left	18.35	18.46	F(1,371)=7.121; p<.01	n.s.	F(1,371)=41.2 19; p<.01.
	centre	17.3	18.34			
	right	14.36	14.84			

Narratives of Refugees (5/17,5)	left centre right	14.88 14.11 17.61 17.03 21.54 21.21	F(1,377)=4.406; p<.05	n.s.	n.s.
Equality of Immigrants (6/21)	left centre right	30.06 28.52 27.32 26.89 20.12 20.52	n.s.	F(1,368)=4.07 2; p<.05	F(1,368)=72.8 24; p<.01
Excluding Attitudes towards Immigrants (5/17,5)	left centre right	13.54 13.12 16.52 16.32 21.65 21.37	n.s.	n.s.	F(1,362)=68.0 51; p<.01

As to be expected the direct comparison shows at first a significant difference regarding the results of those who positioned themselves as politically “right-wing”, “neither left nor right-wing”(centre) and “left-wing”.: Those who positioned themselves as “right-wing” have without exception higher results in “Excluding tendencies”, “Adaption of negative Narratives” and “Negative Narratives about Refugees” and the lowest results in “Diversity”, “Critical View” and “Equality”.

However, it is interesting to compare the changes that took place within these three groups during the intervention: The strongest positive developments are to be noticed within the group of those who positioned themselves “neither left nor right-wing. This shows that the deconstructive engagement with the topic and the raising of awareness was particularly fruitful for those students who were yet unsure about their political orientation. It has to be said though, that this group is also very prone to be influenced by the omnipresent right-wing discourses and generalising images. For this reason it was even more important to motivate and direct those students towards deconstruction and more openness by means of the intervention. It is likely that those students of the “middle” were less stubborn in the dealing with the topic at hand and thus more open to dissociate of their previous beliefs and opinions than both the “left-wing” and the “right-wing” students.

Those students who had positioned themselves “right-wing” partly showed themselves sceptical towards teachers and members of the project group and in post-interviews often rejected the idea of having experienced a change in their beliefs due to the project: *“I have not changed my opinion of other people. I still have the same beliefs. This project didn’t change anything for me.”* However, their results show positive changes nonetheless: in four of the five factors their results improved in the pre-post-comparison. Possibly they could also be incited to rethink their opinions and beliefs about others, even though they claim that that is not the case at all. Another positive sidenote is that the “right-wing” students never succeeded in dominating the discourse in class. Even though the changes within the “left-wing” group are the slightest, those students who showed themselves already open towards others (people of different backgrounds or way of living) prior to the intervention could also profit from the project. Those students were strengthened in their arguments against right-wing slogans and learned how to deal with conflict or mobbing situations.

Of interest is here again the comparison of the results of the “Equality” scale: Considering the outset, the development goes in the opposite direction: While the results of the “right-wing” students improve, those of the “centre ground” students and even more substantially those of the “left-wing”

students decrease. This is also an explanation for the overall decreasing results in this scale as mentioned above. It is possible that the critical examination of the topic has led to a more sophisticated judgment of the coexistence of people with different background. Maybe they see now more difficulties and problems and are with a “general openness” against immigrants more cautious. It has to be pointed out though that the students still strongly agree with those statements concerning the equality of natives and immigrants and that the overall result is very decidedly on the agreement side. Especially the increase of agreement amongst “right-wing” students in this context, though, is to be noted as a very positive effect.

### **Chances and limits of the prevention project**

A comparison of the above noted effects of the intervention with its previously stated goals shows that the different approaches on which the intervention was based were both fruitful and effective. Especially the Narrative Approach, which focuses on the deconstruction of everyday-racist and excluding images and narratives, was very successful. Considering the results of the topic “Equality of Swiss nationals and immigrants” it might be helpful to put more emphasis on a critical engagement with the topic in future interventions.

However, the described learning effects were also linked to ambivalences. The acceptance of others does not necessarily lead to the dissolving of excluding tendencies of “We-groups”- against other social groups or cliques. In some classes the conflicts and disagreements grew even more acute during the intervention and called for further intervention. Teachers as well as students showed themselves sometimes at a loss when dealing with specific conflict situations; overall it became evident that the insights gained could not be transferred into action all that easily. Despite a growing ability to deconstruct stereotypes the discussions and arguments between teachers and students remained tainted by them. This refers back to the initially mentioned ambivalences which underlie the engagement with the topic under circumstances in which racist and excluding structures are omnipresent – to the difficulty of not being racist (cf. Kalpaka/Räthzel 1990). Additionally it became evident that actually a more long term and continuous engagement with the topic is necessary, than it was possible in this intervention study (with duration of three month). This necessity is emphasised by the decreasing results of the follow-up-questioning. Especially the question of how to solve conflicts could only be glanced at.

The analysis also showed that prevention work at schools has to deal with limits and difficulties specific to the institution, too. On the one hand, there is a large number of young people to be reached at the institution school but on the other hand there is a certain obligation to learn involved in it and an imbalance of power between teachers and students. Both aspects are not necessarily helpful when discussing questions of democratic and equal forms of coexistence and both aspects do not foster the development of empathy, tolerance and acknowledgement of the Other. Especially in the case of “right-wing” students but also in the case of those students with antipathy towards school this lead to

an resistance to learn. The lack of time resources, the pressure to perform well at school as well as the lack of recognition present further limits for this kind of pedagogical work. One teacher phrased it like this: “It’s all not part of the grades later on”.

However, the concept of mediators, the approach to have teachers and students equally involved in the prevention work, which so far had been scientifically neglected, proved to be extremely successful as the teachers were able to professionally develop by engaging in the topic in their classes. They state that they have gained more awareness of the omnipresent issues of exclusion and racism and, thus, are able to deal with problems related to those issues better. They also felt strengthened in their ability to take a stand and to act in everyday-racist situations – both at school and in their private lives. Generally, they also esteemed the experience important for their own reflection of generalising images and stereotypes.

A central result of this study is therefore the insight that prevention work can not only target students but also teachers. Furthermore, it seems important that entire schools (including the headmaster and all teachers) get engaged in prevention work, that prevention work, anti-racist and diversity-conscious pedagogy becomes an integral part of the curriculum. And what’s more, the preparation for those future challenges has to also become part of the teachers’ training.

Teachers are the ones who are able to challenge excluding or predominant attitudes and to care about the setting of new norms. Even if students do react negatively or (ostensible) resistant towards the intervention, the setting of developing new orientations and the possibility to deal with them allow to change or not to change. These processes have to be evaluated. And these processes were substantially critical and successful in the sense of leading to a more sophisticated judgment towards Others and to sensitise to excluding narratives, attitudes and practices.

The problem of social discrimination and inequality as well as the social phenomenon of right-wing extremism and racism can not be solved by prevention work at schools. And – of course – a total change of “devils” into “angels” will hardly take place, but however those involved can be inticed to question dominant patterns of interpretation and can be motivated to develop an antagonistic way of thinking and acting. This is what the project was clearly able to accomplish. The following quotation of one of the involved teachers might summon up the success of the intervention most pointedly:

*„Even if there are still some students with politically right tendencies, where sensitization to over-simplifications and also to exclusion and its consequences are concerned, the project was brilliant!”*

The sensitivity towards hidden and structural exclusion processes as well as the ability to critically question excluding narratives and images is of great importance at a time at which right-wing propaganda and latent racist discourses are omnipresent and extremely influential.

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**Authors:**

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Fritz Oser, Emeritus: head of the NFP-Project "Preventing Right-Wing Extremism and Ethnic Violence at School", former professor of education and educational psychology at the Department of Education, University of Fribourg/Switzerland, [fritz.oser@unifr.ch](mailto:fritz.oser@unifr.ch)

Dr.soc Christine Riegel: scientific officer of the NFP-Project "Preventing Right-Wing Extremism and Ethnic Violence at School" at University of Fribourg/Switzerland, now: Akademische Rätin at University of Tübingen/Germany, [christine.riegel@uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:christine.riegel@uni-tuebingen.de)

Lic.phil Sabine Tanner: scientific assistant of the NFP-Project "Preventing Right-Wing Extremism and Ethnic Violence at School" at University of Fribourg/Switzerland, now: scientific assistant at PHZ Luzern. [sabine.tanner@unifr.ch](mailto:sabine.tanner@unifr.ch)