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## The Heidelberg International Comprehensive School as a Peace School and UNESCO Project School<sup>1</sup>

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### *Abstract*

The essay provides a comprehensive account of the Heidelberg International Comprehensive School as Peace School and UNESCO Project School. First of all there is an outline of the main factors influencing the establishment of the school in 1974, these being certain approaches within the framework of education reforms, as well as the resulting Peace Education aspects. Following this there are some insights into the planning phase, which involved amongst others the Ministry of Education, The Lord Mayor, the Planning Group made up of academics, representatives of the teaching staff and parents. Examples of practice within the school are discussed; the practice is typified by its international character, e.g. links with schools in other countries, above all the high proportion of foreign children who have been integrated, through other forms of international cooperation, and finally through various topic areas pertaining to Peace Education (for instance, English lessons as a means of integrating foreign pupils, co-operation with an old people's home, environmental projects, mediation incorporating active involvement by pupils). Because of the pioneering efforts of the school in the field of Peace Education and extensive public recognition, the school was granted the status of UNESCO Project School in 2001. Overall, the article gives a differentiated overview of the basic concepts of Peace Education and of opportunities for putting these into practice within a school context. In so doing the essay once again raises our awareness of the fundamental and vital significance of Peace Education for our times, despite efforts towards globalisation.

### 1. The founding of the school and its official acceptance by the UNESCO

The establishment of model schools is a fundamentally important procedure in educational politics because it permits the critical testing of new educational content and types of school. In the conviction that peace studies and international understanding present prominent objectives of educational policy at a time of intensive armament and constant belligerent dispute, it was determined that the Heidelberg International Com-

prehensive School (HICS) would be a peace school of the Baden-Württemberg region. The founding report was provided by the author of this article under direction of the then Education minister, Wilhelm Hahn (Röhrs, 1971).<sup>2</sup>

The foundation stone was laid in 1974 by the Mayor of Heidelberg, Reinhold Zundel, who materially supported the further expansion of the school. This tradition was continued after Beate Weber – a former teacher at the HICS and a stroke of good fortune for the school, lending responsibility and application matured by experience – took over the office of Heidelberg's Mayor in 1993; she is. The HICS was from the start conceived as a peace school. In its development phase the International Comprehensive School became an example in educational politics of effective co-operation between the town as the schools authority, the Education Ministry, and the planning group. The members of the planning group selected by the Minister of Education are members of the university, the Heidelberg teacher training college for Primary Schools and the Heidelberg teacher training seminary for Secondary Schools.

After a 25-year waiting period<sup>3</sup> (occasioned by differences of view in the Education Ministry and the school) the International Comprehensive School was officially accepted into the circle of UNESCO project schools in 2001. As a peace school it is no elitist institution which demotes other schools to 'war schools', as was to be heard at the beginning in the community debate about this school in Heidelberg, but rather a model attempt to clarify for all schools hitherto largely overlooked possibilities of peace education. It thereby embodied a new type of school, grown from a broad school tradition yet representing more than the sum of reform concepts in its historical development. Hence the school concept is to be understood as a new presentation of the comprehensive school idea attentive to international aspects. It is astonishing that this area of concern should so far have been overlooked or at least greatly neglected. Thereby in the modern world where international co-operation belongs to everyday life, education will have to more emphatically and consciously assimilate the other students and teachers in the diversity of their national ways. The HICS as a peace school however feels itself obligated to Progressive Education as an international movement (Röhrs, 2001) that influenced school forms into the 1940s. It is, after all, from the spirit of this reform movement that school reform in England, Sweden, France and the USA proceeded, and to which all its initiators – John Dewey, Torsten Husen, Henri Wallon, Paul Langevin, and Alexander S. Neill – were decisively obligated.

### 1.1 The impact of the Progressive Education Movement

Schools are historical products and they should derive their understanding of themselves from reflection on this historical interplay. This means that the school concerns itself with a contemporaneous response to its educational mandate. A historically orientated self-consciousness as a school excludes, in the meantime, that the educational

mandate undervalues, against the historical specifics, the relevant and the binding in the service of human upbringing. There are only a few schools which adopt into their concept the insights and information growing from this development and then, pedagogically enlightened and aware, begin the daily work beyond the routine school mechanism. To these belong the Dalton and Winnetkaplan schools in the USA, a part of the comprehensive schools and the secondary schools in England – insofar as they consciously connect to this tradition – the Hermann-Lietz, Jenaplan and Waldorf schools in Germany and Holland, to name but a few models.

Slowly becoming more transparent, a dialectical dispute has led in the USA, as one of the countries in which reform pedagogics originated, to vehement critique and radical rejection of progressive education. The reality, however, is as follows: In the praxis of the Open, New, and Free schools, one appeals largely to the English models and, recently, to Montessori pedagogics, rather than studying the rich early history of progressive education in one's own country. Thereby, it is overlooked that behind the English models the Parkhurst method is often influential, albeit in the still largely unknown tradition in England of A. J. Lynch. Actually the ideas of Dewey, Kilpatrick and Parkhurst, the pupils of Montessori, underlie many new foundations in the USA without being further developed in their concepts. These roots seem to have been largely forgotten or displaced in US pedagogics (cf. Röhrs 1977, 1996c; Cohen, 1995; Oelkers, 1995). Only a positive analysis of progressive education will expose multidimensional standards of school design once again.

Anyone with an overview of international school development at its decisive stages knows how powerfully pedagogical orientation emanated from these reform schools, and still does. As school models they set a standard in the school programme for the educationally possible, and hence desirable, only to be undercut with a bad conscience by those who knew of this development. Thus since the founding of the International Bureau of New Schools by Ferriere in 1925, the notion of international co-operation between the reform schools is an objective which has been consciously revitalized by the International Plan of Kees Boeke against the background of his school Werkplaats in Bilthoven, near Utrecht. A further goal of some reform schools is international understanding and peace education as binding and comprehensive aspects of the school, which seeks to materially understand the notion of human education.

The HICS as a peace school locates itself in this tradition, without losing sight of its own pedagogical force and character. These place *international understanding and peace education at the centre of school activities*. Wherever conflicts and problems occur, solutions should be sought in a spirit of co-operation and partnership.

## 2. The school's characterisation from three perspectives

The HICS is to be characterised under three headings: Firstly, all experiences from the development phase, which could be instructive for further growth and subsequent pro-

jects, are to be discussed. Secondly, peace instruction should be presented in the daily life of the school, and thirdly, this is to be elucidated from the point of view of the participants.

## 2.1 The development phase

Initial difficulties began after the opening of the school. While internationalism was accepted on all sides as a principal objective, the task of peace education to materialise internationalism was soon disputed. Many parents feared that the school would indeed bring up peaceable people who could, however, become socially and politically problematic in a competitive society. For the parents were perhaps afraid that their oversensitive children might avoid any situations involving serious challenge, thus jeopardising their capacity for self-assertion in our competitive society.

The planning group took up these anxieties and tried in a number of parent meetings to limit them – to the effect that the majority of parents came to agree. As, however, a number of teachers, particularly those from the grammar school approach, also were cautious or sceptical in their attitude, the resistance was so substantial that one could hardly discuss at all that a functioning model of a peace school could be established. What hindered the work most protractedly however, was the fact that the Ministry of Education itself only rarely contributed proactively or to motivate the work of peace education, which could not be concealed from the teachers.

The apprehension that through peace education school work could be burdened by permanent unrest did not become noticeable at HICS even at the outset, – and not even in those phases when the school was completely inspired by the spirit of peace education and became involved in the sphere of interest of the student movement during the 1968s. Thus the HICS as a peace school can be discussed as a school concept that has an educational validity independent of its realization here and now. This conclusion is all the more necessary, as the original conditions of need for the development of such a school have not diminished. The goal of the model is at the same time a preparatory function for further peace schools and also as an exemplary confirmation *that, and how*, peace education is fundamentally possible in all schools.

In an internally and externally threatened world international understanding and *peace education* become central tasks, not only because they are necessary in service of the common good, but because an upbringing which takes itself seriously must orientate itself towards these goals and issues. Peace education is not a process parallel to education; it is much more an education based on its own unconditional pre-requisites and objectives. If man is to become a being really capable and willing for peace in an epoch of world peace still to be assured, then he must be readied for this condition through peace education. The three following stages are to be correlated with each other.

*Readiness for peace* embraces the general openness to recognise conflicts as such and to contribute to their solution, so consolidating the basis of co-operation. Capability for peace correspondingly describes the human competence to shape peace as a social process in the possibilities of one's own life and – by foresight – to limit threats to it arising from human inadequacies. *The capability for peace* is a mark of human prudence and political maturity. *Willingness for peace* is, in consequence, the productive sum of readiness for peace and capability for peace; it contains the important ability to apply readiness for peace and capability for peace through appropriate action.

It follows that willingness for peace is to be critically trained and tested: it is not a natural gift, but the result of a planned pacific upbringing. It can only succeed on the basis of a proven state of knowledge and experience in peace education. A peace school must create sufficient opportunity for this. The central task of the HICS is the exemplary testing of the possibilities of peace education at all school levels. For this it needs a number of starting points: for one the sympathetic integration of the parent body. Thus the objectives and tasks of peace education were explained, where possible with examples, during many parent evenings. The HICS proves itself again and again to be an *open school*, which takes up community issues and tries to develop a contribution to the solution of specific community tasks, be it an environmental problem or a problem of the elderly population.

On the other hand the HICS is concerned to *constitute a school life* in which the goals and duties related to peace education can be realised through the practice of tolerance and helpfulness. Finally, the third step is the *didactic preparation of the school subjects* with reference to peace education goal-setting. All three procedures are to complement each other, to lead to establishing a *special school style* and *atmosphere*.

A school model needs scientifically based planning and control by a scientific project group, which should participate if possible already in constituting the model. The project group was thus called together early by the Ministry of Education; Egon Röhmisch was chairman until his death and Mrs Meyer-Kramer thereafter, Albrecht Abele, Horst Hörner, Heinrich Kratzmeyer, Ernst Meyer, Hermann Röhrs, Hans Stadler were also members, and later Gerhard Schnaitmann as representative of the school.

The tasks began with extensive discussions with the architect to ensure a pedagogically conceived school building. This co-operative procedure may be regarded as exemplary in educational politics, as in this way the architecture was placed at the service of pedagogical requirements. Equally, no stone was laid without conception of its educational function (cf. Perlick, 1969; Deutscher Bildungsrat, 1969; *Mit Architektur Schule machen?*, 1997). However, that many of the resulting teaching niches and free spaces did not achieve that meaning in the reality of school life which could have been expected on the basis of reformist educational experience to date, shows that each school develops its own conduct, and that the learning process, in regard to the fulfilment of the architecturally provided possibilities and the application of the pedagogi-

cal concept, must be one responsible to itself in its proceedings. The HICS offers an instructive example of this.

In the context of the establishment phase the project group planned *sequences of peace education* with the teachers, which were critically analysed together after their training presentation. Thus the initial *modelling of a school for peace education* succeeded, in which the goal-setting of peace education led to an attitude to life that was marked by forbearance and readiness for co-operation. Powerful impulses emanated from the repeated 'Peace Weeks' that, as didactic exercises, demonstrated to the wider educational public the possibility of moulding school life by peace education. A school motivated by peace education will not allow dissension, conflict and dispute to be suppressed, but will have to train procedures for their age-specific resolution. How fundamentally important this process is, is revealed by the increasingly brutal acts of violence in our schools.

However, the limits of the modelling process soon showed themselves and had to be addressed. An elementary pre-requisite for a model experiment is the instruction of teachers who are informed of the goals and content of the model and can thus assent to it. Complementary to this belongs an administration, which strives together with the school management and the teachers for the success of the project. There is no question that a model should not be improperly favoured in its ways just on the basis of special conditions, but optimal conditions should be sanctioned. To these in any case belong agreement on its necessity by educational politics, and the pedagogical will to form it.

Already a single teacher who opposes the model on the grounds that he was not made aware of the specific goal-setting for the school by the Ministry, and therefore is only limitedly ready to work with it, can burden the model and its development. Appeal to school subject training (free of peace education) even provides a pseudo-pedagogical legitimation of this.

## 2.2 Features of Peace Education as part of the day-to-day life of the school

Peace and peace education are themes which vitally concern everyone; they have, however, often been stamped by politically radicalising forces and have thus proved, at times, to be causes of unrest. Yet a one-sided politically directed unrest has never occurred in the Heidelberg International Comprehensive School, although certainly there has been a restlessness during the most fruitful times of peace education in the search for the correct contents and procedures. Altogether the work of peace education by the teachers involved in the project – although unfortunately not all – has always progressed openly and objectively, influencing in this way the entire life of the school.

Thus an opportunity in educational policy was indeed not missed in the initial development phase, but was only partially used, so that conclusions about its transferability are limited. The intended co-operation with other schools to clarify their possi-

ble transformation did not proceed beyond the first promising phases. The formal administrative difficulties appeared all too early. But this is precisely the reason why the school became an instructive model in educational policy.

Yet in the HICS the development of school life for peace education succeeded optimally. It is complemented by several well-structured twinning arrangements with foreign schools which lead to the exchange of ideas and encounters, and above all through the variously structured work with so-called preparatory classes. The pupils of these preparatory classes are exiles or exile-seekers (amongst others from Iran), and the children of former German emigrants (amongst others from the Soviet Union, Poland and Rumania) as well as foreign children from other backgrounds. This work posed a welcomely difficult test for peace education and international understanding. That the school is particularly successful in this area may be explained by the experience gained from the praxis of peace education and international education.

In order to avoid misunderstandings the following conclusion is important: peace education and international understanding favour no abstract internationalism deriving its principal support from the homeland without making new meaningful obligations, but can relativise this where it functions as a barrier against outsiders and foreigners. Transnational encounters can, however, only be fruitfully structured if supported by knowledge and love for one's native connections, which undergo enrichment in this meeting, and in no sense a diminution. Precisely the experience of people of other nations, who in their cosmopolitan attitude feel profoundly connected with their home circles because they owe these their way of life, can throw a new light on one's own situation and its roots in one's own history, which is always part of human history.

Peace education can only succeed if it is comprehensive and begins as early as possible. It is a public duty that is to be considered in schoolwork. To reach wider elements of the public, the author evolved the complementary concept of a peace museum, and with the support of the town referred this to the Ministry. With reference to the existence of a peace museum in a suburb of Lindau, the plan was rejected, although (according to its themes) the historically, politically and pedagogically differentiated Heidelberg concept promised a more thorough treatment, and the location gave reason to expect a greater public resonance. For the evolution of a national consciousness of peace politics, it is of decisive significance that peace education is a constitutive element of upbringing from early infancy to adulthood, and the peace museum was to resolve a part of this complex range of tasks. The collected objects of the museum could be used as audio-visual material in the school, too.

The co-operation with an elderly people's home in the immediate vicinity of the school had established a tradition.<sup>4</sup> After initial misunderstandings a relationship of mutual concern arose. Musical performances and readings, and the resultant conversations, in which the question of war, peace and the meaning of life repeatedly played a part, offered both sides important stimuli which can by all means be judged helpful in



life. Some parts of the conversations seemed like philosophising at the level of children and teenagers.

As the meetings were interrupted for school reasons, a letter was written on behalf of the home, which emphasised the importance of the relationships achieved up to that point. Since then both sides have reflected, and this should facilitate the recommencement of the important exchange of experience between young and old with new means.

Taken together, another characteristic becomes clear here: The HICS seeks to develop space for life in which the young person feels comfortable and is naturally motivated to learn. A school of this sort will necessarily conduct a conscious and continual dialogue with the parents as partners in the upbringing. The contribution of the parents is thus an important complementary component of the educational mandate. The International Comprehensive School is, however, at the same time a community school, which reflectively involves the events and the wider circumstances of the children's lives in school life.

The HICS is international in that it consciously involves others in their diverse national ways of life in school life. From the primary school to the A-level upper school it strives to have representatives of other peoples – be it as pupil or teacher – present in the school.

However, the vital objective of the International Comprehensive School as a peace school is not to be realised either by the mere presence of foreigners or through the transmission of knowledge constituted from peace pedagogy; it will much more have to prove itself in shaping the daily life of the school. An important measure of the success of this work is what position is accorded to the weaker children – be it in intellectual power, social role or national identity.

Next to peace education the further (complementary) specifics of the International Comprehensive School are: early English tuition beginning in the primary school, environmental instruction and all-day structure. Under these basic didactic conditions, projects can be designed which have practical complementary effects on the educational life of the school. Thus, in connection with environmental pollution, a project was structured which pursued the causes of the pollution of the waters of the River Neckar and its possible improvement. Thus a weir on the Neckar which trapped detritus in a mesh grill and facilitated its loading into open vehicles was visited. The causal relations were explained by the employees responsible. The children asked questions, reported on their own experiences, and made notes. In conclusion a sample of water from the Neckar was taken. It was tested in the school by various analytical distillation processes for pollution. For further information discussions were held with representatives of the State Institution for Hygiene, as well as the River Police. Finally a text was composed together, which explained the dangers of environmental pollution exemplified by the Neckar and directed as an appeal to the pupil body and the parents. The

analogy to the Typhus Project of Dewey and Kilpatrick is clear, although this parallel was not sought. It results much more from the consequential design of an educational project.<sup>5</sup>

The fundamental principle of the school is communication with all fellow persons in all walks of life. As the natural consequence of this the requirement arises for the broadening of the basis of communication through English as the world language. According to this pedagogical intention, speaking in the changing circumstances of school life forms the didactic foundation.

The concept of the HICS in relation to early English instruction in the primary school is pioneering, for the attempts in Kassel, Berlin, and Karlsruhe had only gone shortly before. The fact that in an International School with a 25 % proportion of foreigners English can perform a genuine function (next to German) as a means of communication is a favourable indication for the experiment. In Heidelberg these particular conditions are consciously exploited with reference to the psychological argument that foreign languages are most favourably learned in the development stages of mid-childhood (especially 6–10). Given a natural will to learn the urge to imitate is also fully developed in the learning process, and language puts itself naturally at the service of the growing need of the child to communicate.

In this, forms of dialogue and play are preferred. Hence it has been said:

The visitor to the primary school of the International Comprehensive School is offered a surprising picture when he goes along the corridors during the break or looks in on one of the third or fourth forms. It isn't the activity of the children which startles him, they play as one would normally expect, it is much more the fact that the children communicate with each other in English while they are deep in play (Bach & Käpernick, 1985, p. 4).

An 'aural-oral' approach is sought, which assures the dominance of listening and speaking over reading and writing. The pupil, so to speak, is to experience the communicative character of the language directly, through a 'language bath', i.e. through a complete immersion in the language world (Fay & Hellwig, 1971, p. 19). This experience is reinforced through the already mentioned multicultural school situation.

With the first English lesson this situation fundamentally changes: here all pupils are suddenly equal, the dominant culture and its language retreats, the children meet on neutral ground (ibid., p. 8).

The resulting learning process can appropriately be called 'playing with language' (Stern, 1967). It is realised in spontaneous dialogues in simulated situations, and also in verbal reflection on sayings, pictures and songs.

For the integration of these manifold activities the Heidelberg Peace School is an *all-day school*. Only in this way can the school day be so structured to create an optimum of realistic demands. That includes, however, a pedagogical accentuation of school life so that the mornings' teaching work is relieved by the free activities and work in the auditorium in the afternoons. While the free activities include individual

work (largely as a substitute for homework), creative art and sport, work in the auditorium comprehends the practising of amateur dramatics, forms of self-management, and music, particularly orchestral rehearsal.

Only the all-day school permits a natural pause based on *meditative supports* (Meditative Haltepunkte), i.e. opportunities to pause for reflection, which call for correct preparation and which must also be allowed to run their full course. The educational situation, which can accordingly be specially structured, counts in this, when a problem arising in school life demands it. Thus violations of the self-prescribed class and school rules, a conflict, an incident, belong in front of the class forum, in order, reflecting on the actual situation, to find together the criteria for a more insightful future structuring of school life.

The potentially damaging effects of all-day school on the family must be moderated by active involvement of the parents in school life, so that dialogue between parents and child experiences a new impulse in reference to the difficulties of learning and teaching as an anthropological problem.

Through meetings of the week-end group and the week-beginning group on Friday, or Monday respectively, each of which has the transfer function from daily work into / out of the weekend, and of critically viewing the respective experiences, criteria for the free time are negotiated which can also stimulate the parents to reflection. Finally, the work in the auditorium is to be so exemplarily conceived that it functions to motivate in other areas of life.

The International Comprehensive School conceives of itself as a *heuristic model* (Röhrs, 2000) that, against the background of the basic concept, makes the differentiated structuring of the transitions dependent on the critical processing of previous experiences. This requirement applies principally in terms of the structure of the comprehensive school, whether additive, co-operative, or integrative. Independently of politically prejudiced forms, the comprehensive school is chosen on account of its more complex social field, whereby the special structure represents a consequence of the critically interpreted experiences. In this respect, two things are to be noted very seriously: firstly the protective and orientating power of the class as an age group must be maintained. The increased dynamic and flexibility of our social life should certainly be rehearsed through pedagogical translation in varying groups – so far as humane basic structures thereby receive support; but secondly it is also relevant to counterbalance one-sided social developments by stronger accentuation of reflexive and meditative values. The school is not only an annexe of society and as such its means to perfect educational policies, but is also as an educational institution subject to the law of pedagogical responsibility.

Education for self-reliance and independent judgement furthermore demands an initial training in appropriately age-related independent work methods and co-operative exercise forms. Important orientation aids in the didactic structuring of this

procedure can be offered by assignments (assignments are written instructions for pupils, which allow the free work (Einzelarbeit) as it is called within the surroundings of abundantly equipped working rooms). Developed in the Parkhurst method and adapted in England by A. J. Lynch in the West Green School model in Tottenham, London, they are often used these days in English comprehensive schools (Klafki, Rang & Röhrs, 1972; Röhrs, 1995a). In their exemplary form assignments are used, as a didactic aid to support individual work, as a limited pre-completion of study in the Dalton-plan and Montessori schools in Holland. These freer work methods should not be developed as objectives in themselves, but repeatedly and critically tested for their educational value in regard to personal advancement and suitability for the school subject, which after all belong fundamentally together. This supposes that these ways of working become fully developed, for badly exercised procedures afford no information about their possible efficacy.

In this way the International Comprehensive School offers a *social living space* which seeks to be appropriate to every child in that it assures her / him an optimum in motivation and opportunities for development. This basic principle of social education is reflected in the architecture, which, next to classrooms, provides multiple work-spaces for individual and group work as well as for extra-curricular activities. This harmony between pedagogical concept and architectural form is a particularly good pre-condition for a school which not only seeks to advance inter-personal co-operation but consciously raises this to be the object of reflection.

Thus peace education is in particular understood as setting goals orientated to subject content and discussion. Precisely the daily conflicts and aggressions offer more, in reflection on experience for a revision of values and attitudes, than is to be expected from theoretical discussions of conflict strategy or the development of the peace ideal. Peace education – in so far as it seeks to influence the actions of the individual – must begin with observing and revising the respective behaviour according to collectively defined criteria. The more concrete the reflexion on peace education is, applied to possible reform of behaviour, the greater the prospect of a revision in attitudes as a consequence of the insights gained. Continuing and informative theoretical discussion is then still possible. With the pre-condition of personal openness and engagement it proceeds, however, under incomparably more favourable circumstances. Against this background of the individually matured attitude to peace education, they can ensure that even theory becomes a constitutive element of a committed attitude when it secures a perspective for future action.

Fundamentally the entire educational work is to be directed to making insight into the senselessness of war an obligatory directive of human life, that is, not only to cognitively process it, but also to adopt it to orientate the structuring of existence. To this also belongs discussion of possible international security measures against war. Securing peace through a system of mutually complementary measures, like deterrence, in-

ternational control through permanent readiness for negotiation, as well as through international organizations sanctioned by international law, must become apparent to the children in intellectually comprehensible simulations.

Apart from the fact that peace education must be addressed in all subjects and in all school situations, a particular emphasis lies in foreign language instruction, in civics and in history (Röhrs, 1994a). Complementarily, *peace education as a teaching principle and a principle of life* is to be recognised, and will be adopted, everywhere where concrete points of contact exist. As far as peace education is addressed by examples, it should thus begin with those problems that every child can directly realise.

### 2.3 The school as seen by the pupils

The characterization of the *school in the view of the participants* is hence so important because it emerges against the background of years-long experience. Thus Beate Weber, Mayor of Heidelberg, who before her election and appointment was a teacher at the International Comprehensive School, writes in her contribution to the (highly readable) publication for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school:

This school is no educational institution of the old order, but a modern facility in which not only teaching material is transferred. Equality of opportunity is practiced here; children have time and possibilities to develop and are not under pressure at too early an age to show maturity only to be attained later. This aspect distinguishes the school, and even more the abundance of choices far exceeding the traditional school subject's canon allowing the whole person to grow. Learning is understood as a child's individual maturation process (Weber, 1996, p. 2).

As in the pioneering comprehensive schools in England, the school library forms in the International Comprehensive School the centre of school life. It is certainly impressive to see how at all times of day pupils study in the library, to work for their projects, or to prepare a short presentation to the class. Thus it is understandable that in conversations with pupils or teachers the library – nicknamed almost affectionately by everyone – is called the 'Bibi'.

The comments of a former pupil, returning after completing his A-levels at the school and following his studies as a trainee teacher, are worth fully appending here in their special interest:

The International Comprehensive School had two objectives from the beginning: to be international and to provide peace education. Both are still evident today in the school's seal. It achieved these objectives during my school days too. It was able to hold pupils from many various nations together in a class and this already long before the fall of the Berlin wall or the liberalization of East-West relations. An American boy sat next to a Russian girl, and she sat next to a girl from Laos, and so on, and right up to my A-levels in 1984 I know of no problems which arose with a nationalistic background (Höfler, 1996, p. 6).

The International Comprehensive School was never seriously jeopardised by the stigma of being a 'chaotic school', as so many other comprehensive schools were. This resulted in the reputation of comprehensive schools being variously burdened, and in

Baden-Württemberg only few comprehensive schools apart from the International Comprehensive School still exist. School headmaster, Gerd Hammer, who took over this position in 2001, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, after many years as deputy, comments on this as follows:

I knew very quickly at the time of changing from the highly reputable classical language Elector Frederick Grammar School in Heidelberg to the Heidelberg International Comprehensive School, and I know it even more exactly today, that the HICS never was a ‘chaotic school’, is not now, and will not be in the future. Quite to the contrary, it is a school that does not permit chaos. It educates its pupils in such a way that they respect each other regardless of their origins, they respect their school as a living space, and above all they respect the environment. And that makes me proud of this, my school (Hammer, 2001, p. 4).

He adds to this the educational wish, linked with a solemn vow:

I wish for the HICS that it experiences more and more respect, justified on the grounds of its achievements. In the years in which I am school headmaster of the HICS I want to contribute to this school with all my heart (ibid.).

An important educational success of this school, with a total population of 1650 pupils and a 25 % proportion of foreign children, consists in there being no ‘outsiders’ in it in their daily self-awareness and awareness of life. In 2001 an English girl was head girl.

This change of heart is decisively assisted by meditative supports that are always only apparent when disorderly factors threaten school life or, (in a positive sense) to the extent that these are possibilities for this, strengthen the school spirit through spontaneous action. The meditative supports are most effective when they are perceived in a particular situation, connect with real events and are as much as possible suggested and structured by the pupils. Thus the 2001 A-level pupils decided instead of light-hearted celebration to formulate, and make known to everyone, a peace appeal for the pupils of the International Comprehensive School. The circumstances and the text were described as follows:

In the fourth lesson all classes were led into the school yard where a large peace sign was marked out with cordons. When the chain of pupils had formed up into the peace sign an A-level pupil read aloud a short text on the obligations of the International Comprehensive School as a peace and UNESCO project school and called upon the school body to support tolerance, peace, human rights and the conservation of nature. After a minute’s silence the human chain dissolved and the younger pupils were given sweets by the school-leavers and entertained with songs until the long break. In conclusion, the spokesperson of the A-level year presented the school management with a substantial sum of money, consisting of the surplus from the A-level ball and a donation collection. The money will benefit an aid project of the HICS for a school in Tuzla, Bosnia, destroyed in the civil war (Pressebericht des Schulleiters, 2001, p. 86).

### 3. The principle of co-operation as a means towards international understanding

The stance of the Heidelberg Peace School is characterised by a co-operative attitude resulting from a practically evolved peace education. It determines the daily school life with its self-regulating forces that permit conflicts and aggression, in the absence of targets, only rarely to arise. On this basis the partner schools of the International Comprehensive School build a wide network of international co-operation. It stretches in Europe from the Crimea, Montpellier / France, Budapest / Hungary, Tuzla / Bosnia, Dunblane / Scotland, Upper Hutt / New Zealand as far as Central America, hence the partner school in Nicaragua has even adopted the name of an international comprehensive school as a peace school. This international mixture is also manifest in the pupil body.

About 50 nationalities form the pupil community of the International Comprehensive School, so that the notion of a foreigner cannot really arise at all, while the sense of belonging together dominates. The parents of these pupils are employees in international companies, research centres and at the university, but also immigrant workers, war refugees and asylum seekers. Together they form an optimal image of the much-discussed globalization. The objective is educationally managed integration. This process is fulfilled in the International Comprehensive School every day quite naturally. It is described in the honorary publication on the school's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the following way:

The variety of nationalities in our house leads to the position where anxieties about contacts between strangers are reduced, or don't even arise. The phenomenon of underlying or overt racism is generally not discernible amongst the young people in our school. On the contrary: they live out for us how one can co-exist peacefully and work and play with another despite external differences and diverse origins and culture (Internationale Gesamtschule, 2001, p. 85).

A fundamentally important process along this path is learning the German language and culture. The honorary publication on the school's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary comments on this:

If the children don't yet master the German language sufficiently to be able to follow the classes, they are led to the German language and the required performance level of important tuition subjects in one of our three remedial classes. According to their work and performance level they are allocated to a normal German class as a supplementary class next to the remedial class. Moreover, they participate in the extra-curricular activities of their supplementary class. Through this procedure the children and adolescents are assigned to the class level and type appropriate to their capabilities. Thereby the International Comprehensive School counts amongst the few schools where all school courses are open also to children without initial knowledge of German (ibid.).

The HICS is, as a peace school, a relatively open institution in which instruction, administration and organization unambiguously function as pedagogical measures in the

service of maturing young people – without mere regulatory and disciplinary intentions. Thereby the presence of children of other nationalities in the group proves itself to be exceptionally fruitful for peace education, as the meeting of various points of view demands immediate response.

The application of the concept of the International Comprehensive School is, however, not dependent on the presence of a specific percentage of foreign children. The international character of the work is much more a curricular matter of the alignment of the entire course of instruction to international problems and duties. That means in the meantime less a giving up of former subject contents than their sharper accentuation relative to the questions of international understanding and peace education. To secure these optimal pre-requisites there are many possibilities which can be used more consciously than so far: the inviting of guests from the local community, interchange of views with pupils in other countries, pupil and teacher exchanges as planned didactic measures. Precisely the pupil and teacher exchanges offer, against the background of well-maintained twinning arrangements with foreign schools, real opportunities that can be supported without difficulties if they are included as didactic means in the curricular planning.

The result of this work shows itself less in a consistently examinable knowledge of peace processes, and arbitration procedures for conflicts in changing social situations and historical constellations, but much more (on the firm foundation of the insights resulting from it) in the behaviour of the participants in every day life, on the way to school, in the readiness for co-operation in class and in the group, as well as in social and creative contributions to the school's process of peace education; precisely because these insights mature organically in the internal space of the school, they function prophylactically against the emergence of conflict and aggression.

#### 4. Peace and disposition towards peace as foundations of our way of living

The basic features of peace are not, as is widely assumed, static by nature; peace is, rather, an extremely dynamic process that is reliant on the continuous collaboration of those who uphold it. In this respect it is as rooted and also as variable as are those who avow themselves to it and who advocate it.

Peace is a cultural asset like many others. What makes it significantly unique is that it represents a basic requirement for the development of human life. Without the embodiment of peace and the corresponding disposition of the individual towards peace – lending it durability and vitality, as they do – an organic development of human life is impossible. It is peace alone, which allows for a life of human dignity in this world.

This finds expression in a particularly instructive way in a post-war period and in the tentative yet optimistic rebirth of an era of peace. The author still has vivid memories of the end of World War Two, 1945, and of the hesitant though expectant steps



towards a new peaceful beginning in that world which still lay in ruins, in a completely-destroyed Hamburg. The university had just been re-opened and the penologist, Rudolf Laun held his inaugural lecture as Vice Chancellor on the subject of 'Kant's Idea of Eternal Peace' – a topic to engross the minds of all who heard it. The dichotomy, but also the capacity to learn and to reform could be seen on the one hand in the fact that a large part of the male participants were wearing military uniforms which had been altered in a makeshift fashion, and on the other in the unusual alertness with which the remarks – as well as the announcement of this new path through life – were received. Rarely have a Vice-Chancellor's words enjoyed such wide-reaching and profound resonance. It was as if the original sin of an errant humanity had been newly defined under the forgiving codex of 'Eternal Peace'. Following the lecture it was clear that there was an exceptionally high readiness to engage in conversation; a problem had been addressed which was of immediate concern to all those present.

Peace is, indeed, a task calling for the collaboration of all. At the very least an awareness of it must be awoken and ways towards solutions presented. However, this is a central task of schools in co-operation with discerning parents.

## 5. Two further developments of the school's features: mediation and environmental education

### 5.1 Mediation – involving those affected – as a means of solving conflicts

Disputes and conflicts can place considerable strain on our lives, particularly when they are manifested in a strategically intended way. It is therefore important to rehearse – from an early age – procedures aimed at mediation and setting aside of conflict. Since 1998 the IGH has run working groups where mediation techniques are introduced. In order to create the most effective footing, these groups comprise not only pupils of classes 8 to 13, but also parents and teachers who may be involved in the clarification discussion. Conflicts can only be resolved or avoided if as many as possible of those involved are familiarised with the issue.

The win-win attitude – as it is commonly referred to – puts into effect, as it were, the principle of equality, since with an attitude of awareness there can only be winners in conflict resolution; arbitration with a common sense of purpose, that is, sharing a common vision of conflict resolution is everyone's aim. Nonetheless, it must be recognised that the chances of success are reduced, if not lost, if a spirit of co-operation and goodwill cannot be assumed. In such a case it is necessary to hold additional, trust-building discussions with the aim of promoting an attitude of co-operation. The atmosphere at these discussions should be judicious and at the same time, open yet conducive so as to ensure that neither party can pull out. It can also be clearly seen that this form of animation advances the general climate of discussion.

Since February 17th 1999 – in co-operation with the Institute for Mediation, Munich – a group of pupils and a group of adults have been trained as mediators. Interest in this work has increased as a result of statements issued via the mediation programme, which is now establishing itself. Soon a special room had to be made available where mediation could take place without disturbance. Thus, collaboration within the framework of mediation became a natural part of the school programme – not entirely free of conflict, but nevertheless unburdened by unresolved and unmonitored problems. This led to a comparatively relaxed working atmosphere.

## 5.2 Collective responsibility for the shaping of the environment

One central plank of the peace-education work of the HICS is Environmental Awareness. Man's environment constitutes a significant proportion of his habitat, which he has to shape responsibly and where he may find his self-fulfilment; both are mutually dependent on each other. Good conditions for this are to be found in the school garden, which is cared for in an exemplary fashion. Here an awareness of environment, and a sense of responsibility towards it as the most important part of man's habitat, may consciously be put into practice. As each class is allocated the care of a manageable section, it is assumed that the individual has a mature sense of responsibility.

The aim of the IGH, as peace school, is to make a significant contribution towards the consolidation of the basic life principles of man and the animal and plant worlds. 'Ecological learning in an ecologically-run school' is the slogan of the staff at the IGH as they educate their charges to think and act with a sense of ecological awareness. Thus teaching units dealing with educational themes such as 'Land, Water, Energy, Waste, Materials, Transport, Nutrition and Health' form part of the educational policy discussions. These teaching units are meant "to integrate empirical investigations into interdisciplinary, project-based teaching of environmental learning objectives and into the application of up-to-date methods of instruction" (Knapp-Meimberg, 2002, p. 11).

With its Environment Declaration of 2003, the IGH issued its fourth account, documenting the latest position concerning its endeavours towards becoming an ecologically founded school. On the one hand the purpose is to serve as a visible example which can have an effect on the world around the school; on the other, to initiate co-operation with other institutions; so to speak, an 'invitation' to active co-operation. In order to secure openness towards this at administrative level a management system was established that has at its core the principle of co-operation, which is illustrated in a management handbook. Further motivation for this work in the furtherance of peace education comes from the close collaboration at city and ministry level; in addition, from regular participation in conferences at which the IGH scheme is brought forward for discussion.

Through this type of environment work one perceives that a tried and tested team is at work, having at its disposal not only an extensive range of specialised knowledge,

but which is also underpinned by solid preparation within a tried and tested framework. This reassuring sense of continuity is the product of a sense of measured self-confidence, which has been acclaimed by many and various sources, leading to the establishment of a certain tradition. In this way environmental policy at the IGH has become a core of the school's structure, which ultimately pupils and staff feel jointly committed to.

A school is an extremely dynamic entity (cf. Schnaitmann, 2002; Glasl, 2002; Harris & Morrison, 2003; Lenhart, 2003; Ergen & Lenhart, 2004), continually developing. An important precondition for the appreciation of this development is unreserved engagement with that which manifests itself and demands interpretation. Thus approaches to solutions may occur which are either transitory or permanent in nature. An example of the latter is the Class Council, which was first introduced to the school community in 1999. Since that date the Class Council has undergone a continuous process of development and of clarification of its basic structures and has now become one of the basic bodies of the IGH; it seeks to establish a foothold with a relatively small complement.

The task of the Class Council includes the resolving through general discussion of any social issues occurring within the class. In order to accomplish this a formal set of procedures is required, which is strictly adhered to. Fellow pupils make an application to have a particular problem discussed, one that has already been occupying the minds of a group for some time without a solution. A decision as to the acceptance of the application is made, which – if positive – is accompanied by the submission of a schedule of procedure and timing.

I have taken part as a guest in several meetings and have always left them in a contemplative and stimulated frame of mind. It is a provision which could benefit many schools and which bears some resemblance to the pedagogy of Berhold Otto.

Resulting from this raft of provisions for peace education – each complementing the other – the IGH has become a habitat where peaceful co-operation is the natural consequence of deliberately conducting the day-to-day life of the school along such lines. Again and again I have been asked by foreign visiting lecturers at the University, as well as by fellow German nationals, whether it would be possible to transfer their children to the IGH, many having experienced difficulties in traditional schools and having heard numerous good reports about it. After a thorough examination of the reasons and the individual's circumstances, this indeed proved possible in several cases and was viewed as a success by all concerned. It is therefore easy to understand how the IGH Comprehensive School has come to be seen as an institution of good standing – both in terms of academic performance and in terms of its being an educational environment.

## Notes

1. The article refers to earlier studies in revised form: Röhrs, 1994b, 1995b, 1996a, b.
2. On account of its fundamental significance, the text was enclosed in the foundations at the laying of the foundation stone of the school.
3. The issue of the membership was already addressed in the founding document (cf. Röhrs, 1971, 1995).
4. The initiator of this project was Ernst Meyer, who knew how to motivate the group teaching activities so important for peace education (Meyer, 1975).
5. Horst Hörner was initiator and designer of the environmental project (cf. in this regard Hörner, 2000).

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