D 1.3 Anti-bias education

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At a very early age, children develop "prejudice-like attitudes", in other words "[...] eigensinnige Schlussfolgerungen [...], die sie je nach ihrem kognitiven Entwicklungsstand aus Erfahrungen mit ihrem Körper und aus Beobachtungen ihrer sozialen und materiellen Umgebung ziehen.“ ["their very own conclusions, which they draw from physical experiences and observations of their social and material environment in line with their state of cognitive development"] (Wagner 2009). They differentiate on the basis of skin colour, gender, physical characteristics and socioeconomic status.

The aim of anti-bias education is to examine your own education practice for prejudices and their implications. It is not about being a "role model" free of prejudice, for that is impossible.

*Niemand ist frei von Vorurteilen. Jeder und jede denkt in Verallgemeinerungen, bewertet eine ganze Gruppe auf der Grundlage einer einzelnen Erfahrung oder auch ohne jegliche persönliche Erfahrung. Häufig wird die Meinung vertreten, dass Vorurteile „positiv“ seien in dem Sinne, dass sie die vielen Eindrücke sortieren helfen, denen man täglich ausgesetzt sei. Dass Kategorisierungen helfen, Erfahrungen und Sinnesreize zu ordnen, ist nicht zu bestreiten. Sie sind notwendige kognitive Strategien zur Regulation von Wahrnehmung: Man kann nicht nicht kategorisieren. Doch damit können Vorurteile nicht legitimiert werden. Sie müssen in ihren Auswirkungen reflektiert werden.
[No one is free from prejudice. Each and every one of us thinks in generalisations, evaluates whole groups on the basis of single experiences or indeed without any personal experience at all. We often hear the claim that prejudices are "positive" in that they help us to sort and make sense of the many impressions to which we are exposed every day. There is no denying that categorisations help us to structure experiences and sensory stimuli. They are necessary cognitive strategies for regulating perception: you cannot not categorise. However, this does not legitimise prejudices. We need to critically reflect on their impact.]* (Wagner 2009)

For children who do not comply with the norm, the effect is usually to disadvantage them in their academic careers. Anti-bias education seeks to counteract this by giving these children too an opportunity for identification and belonging whilst also reflecting on prejudices and their impact.

The objectives of anti-bias education:[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. To strengthen children in their identity by ensuring their experiences, their situation and their affiliations are recognised.
2. To give all children the opportunity to actively and consciously experience diversity.
3. To stimulate and encourage critical thinking about prejudice, bias and discrimination.
4. To help children defend themselves against prejudice and discrimination.

The *Fachstelle Kinderwelten für Vorurteilsbewusste Bildung und Erziehung* supports the achievement of these objectives in practice. The institution has developed its own Persona Dolls© – dolls that help to promote children's empathic abilities – for working with children in nurseries, produces recommendations for anti-bias children's books and materials, and offers training and professional development courses for education staff in Berlin.

# Bibliography and suggested reading

Wagner, Petra (2009), *Vorurteilsbewusste Bildung und Erziehung in Kindertageseinrichtungen*
<https://kindergartenpaedagogik.de/fachartikel/bildungsbereiche-erziehungsfelder/soziale-und-emotionale-erziehung-persoenlichkeitsbildung/1989>

Petra Wagner on anti-bias education: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MEbNJtbTvU>

Video about anti-bias education:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GOH4mFlkU0o>

Institut für den Situationsansatz/Fachstelle Kinderwelten für vorurteilsbewusste Erziehung und Bildung:<https://situationsansatz.de/fachstelle-kinderwelten.html>

1. Following the approach of the *Fachstelle Kinderwelten für vorurteilsbewusste Erziehung und Bildung* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)