

How to do effective anti-racism education

LILIAN SCHMITT

Student at the Cologne School of Journalism

In May 2020, the murder of the African American George Floyd sparked global outrage. In response, Black Lives Matter movements sprung up in countries around the world, including Germany, raising public awareness of racism. Hopefully, everyone now understands that our thinking is still structured by racist ideas. Previously, many people who aren't directly affected by racism thought it was no longer a problem in Germany. But discrimination on the basis of skin colour, religion or origin is still a day-to-day reality for many people in Germany.

SCHOOL IS THE IDEAL PLACE TO TACKLE RACISM

How and where should future generations learn how to respond to racism and develop an anti-racist mentality? They should be learning it in the same place they're supposed to learn everything they need to prepare them for their later life: at school. Until now, schools haven't done enough in terms of anti-racism education. Our society is changing, but educational authorities seem to be sleeping on the job when it comes to reflecting this change in school curriculums. We can't keep going like this. Schools need to prepare children and young people to defend anti-racist principles. Developing an anti-racist mindset takes education, and so school is the ideal place to tackle this issue. Around one in ten German schools have joined the national network *Schule ohne Rassismus – Schule*

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mit Courage (School without Racism – School with Courage). Members of the network pledge to actively oppose all forms of discrimination, bullying and violence. But we can't leave the responsibility for tackling racism solely to schools. Why haven't any

federal states yet introduced standardised guidance on how to address the issue in schools? To achieve tangible results, all schools need to be brought on board. If we want to combat racism, then racism education needs to have an equal place in all the different curriculums. But that would require at least one state to make the first move by introducing standardised guidance, or at least pilot projects at individual schools where solutions could be trialled.

IT'S NOT ENOUGH JUST TO IMPART FACTS

Schools still present children with a Eurocentric picture of the world. Germany's colonial history is often only touched on in passing. And that's not the only area where our history books need to be expanded. Because although all schools in Germany teach about the events of the Third Reich (in varying levels of detail, depending on the state and the type of school), it's not enough just to impart facts. Far more important is that children and young people learn in class about how to deal with antisemitism in the present day.

We need to regularly talk about anti-racism in schools. And not just in history lessons: philosophy and RE teachers should also be talking about the ideas and values of thinkers with roots in Asia or Africa. In art, students should learn about works from diverse artists. And in subjects like geography and languages, they should be talking about racism in other countries. It would also be helpful for them to read some suitable books. How about Alice Hasters' *What White People Don't Want to Hear about Racism, But Should Know Anyway?* Books like these should be compulsory reading just like Goethe's *Faust* is for most advanced secondary students. Shortly before graduating, students should complete a diversity management course where they learn through roleplay how diverse teams can work together efficiently and harness their diversity.

WE NEED TO RAISE AWARENESS OF THE ISSUE AMONG STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Annual anti-racism weeks should be used to regularly raise awareness of the issue among students and teachers. In German lessons during these weeks, students could learn how to write and think in a way free of discrimination. For instance, they could talk about why the term 'Black' is regarded as appropriate for people. It is a self-description based not on skin colour but on shared experiences of racism, as Amnesty International's German branch explains in its inclusive language glossary. That's why the term is capitalised. During anti-racism weeks, schools should also invite racism experts to talk with students, answer their questions and coach them on how to respond to racism.

The Black Lives Matter movements from summer 2020 are fading into forgetfulness. A year ago, many people posted a black square on social media to show that they were opposing racism. Until now, not much has changed in Germany. The vast majority of people still only sympathise with anti-racist movements from other countries. But racist-motivated crimes have been on the rise in Germany in recent years. The attack in Hanau on 19 February 2020, when a shooter killed nine young people in a shisha bar, is just one of many examples.

EDUCATION PROVIDES THE FOUNDATION FOR OUR THINKING AND OUR DEVELOPMENT

Racism urgently needs to be recognised as a problem that still exists in Germany too. Education provides the foundation for our thinking and our development, so that's where anti-racism education needs to start. It would allow schools to reach even those who haven't experienced racism themselves or come from conservative backgrounds. If children and young people know how racism manifests and how to detect it, they'll also know how to properly respond to it in their day-to-day lives.



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Alfred Herrhausen Gesellschaft

Members of management: Dr. Anna Herrhausen and Daniela Kaiser

Unter den Linden 13-15

10117 Berlin

Tel. +49 (0)30 3407 5559

Fax. +49 (0)30 3407 4209

E-Mail: info.ahg@db.com

Commercial Register: Local Court of Charlottenburg, 116881B