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Science linking with School
School linking with Science

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**(Un)Doing Gender as an integral principle of
education: Language – Politics – Performance**

LEADING INSTITUTIONS

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All Genders – for everyone

For one year pupils, German teachers and six researchers together studied the construction and formation of gender relations. One important goal of this project was to initiate a critical consciousness for gender stereotypes among the participating female and male youth. Furthermore, the project aimed at developing strategies to foster sensitivity for gender issues in the highly relevant social field of the school.

What does gender mean for the participating individuals and groups and how is it performed, negotiated and being talked about? How can gender roles be observed and challenged? How can gender competence be established and knowledge about the formation of gender relations be appropriated? Together with teachers and pupils from three schools, questions of this kind were worked out along the analytical axes of “Language – Politics – Performance”.

The applied strategies to work on these questions were diverse: Gender concepts were put into scene and discussed in a magnificent gender cook-show. Outcomes of the observation phase, in which the research team observed school life in the classes for six weeks, were analysed together with the young participants of the study. The dominant gender roles were “staged” and caricatured in scenic play. Relevant aspects of life in the classrooms, such as gender roles and hierarchical relations, were re-enacted in a playful manner by teachers and pupils. In a week-long study program at the Vienna University the young participants learned about approaches to gender from such different fields as cultural, social and literary studies. Within this program, the pupils had the chance to engage with diverse aspects of doing and undoing gender and study them in their own small research projects.

One feedback of the pupils of the International Business College Hetzendorf says, “It was enlightening to learn about so many different aspects. Working together with other schools brought us many new experiences and taught us to see gender issues differently.” Also teachers pointed at the diverse and enriching experiences that were made during the research project. Roman Jobstmann, German teacher at the Viennese high school Rahlgasse, said, “We have all made a step forward towards the vital reality of multiple identities of each person. Information could be appropriated on the one hand emotionally in the encounters with the researchers and later on individually when reflecting upon these (sometimes strange) experiences.”




Seductions on the UnDoing-Genderplanet

Working with the insights gained in the first period of the project was the main task in the later phases of the study. A book, to be published in 2010 at WUV-Verlag, will document the outcomes of this work in chapters written by the involved researchers, pupils and teachers. Within the realm of *language*, texts deal with questions of gendered power structures and hegemonic masculinities and femininities in school life. Texts relating to the aspect of *politics* deal with questions such as gendered strategies of learning and resistance or gendered constructs of Otherness. A third part of the texts in the book will finally deal with the *performative* aspect of gender constructs in the studied classes.

While this book mainly aims at a scientific audience, a second medium was established to reach pupils and teachers – the “Genderplanet”. This interactive web-tool builds on the experiences and interests of the participating youth: It spurs interest in scientific approaches and terms in the field of Gender Studies, it initiates interest in gender sensitive language and literature and calls for critical engagement with discrimination on the ground of gender, age and ethnicity.

The Genderplanet is made up of four navigation bars: In the “Universe of Terms” (*Begriffsuniversum*) the young audience gets acquainted with concepts such as “doing gender”, “queer”, “intersectionality” or “discourse”. This can also help teachers in formulating tasks and assignments. The “Genderfactory” contains texts and materials for exercises to be used by teachers. In the “Research Area” (*Forschungsstation*) studies, outcomes and scientific literature on relevant fields within Gender Studies is introduced. As is the case with the other domains of the Genderplanet, this aims at deepening the understanding of sometimes rather abstract knowledge and to show, how different scientific approaches lead to divergent research questions. The core of the Genderplanet is the “Gender-Logbook”, for which pupils have produced specific content: a photo-story on transgender, an animated movie called “Transschmelzlove09”, which was produced in cooperation with the Viennese Children’s Museum, as well as several podcasts on different questions regarding gender relations. “Interesting, stirring, informative”, with these words one pupil described her experiences with “(Un)Doing Gender” at the end of the project. One can get a picture of these experiences by going to www.genderplanet.at. More than that, at the Genderplanet, one can get incited by the pleasure of planetary gender games as well as Gender Studies.





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