

Ten theses for a modern educational system

Preamble

As a country with few reserves of raw materials, we can only maintain our prosperity as a knowledge society. At the same time, we must cope with demographic change, which is causing a significant aging of our society. We can only do both if we regard diversity and difference in our country as normality and an opportunity. Education is the key that will allow fair participation in society. However, as international studies have shown, our current educational system is only insufficiently prepared for these challenges. Therefore, Bertelsmann Stiftung is advocating reforms in the educational system. Its actions are guided by the following theses:

1) A modern educational system must satisfy the claim of raising the level of achievement and balancing out disadvantages as a result of social and ethnic origins. **Achievement and fairness are not a contradiction in the educational system.** We need fair schools and strong pupils, for our educational system must secure the competitive ability of our society as well as fair participation in good education.

2) The greatest challenge for the German educational system is the increasing diversity of the population. Today, heterogeneity is normal in Germany, which is a country of immigration. However, the right **way to handle diversity may not cause arbitrariness** of the level of quality that the pupils should achieve: in fact, we need reliable (minimum) standards and appropriate educational qualifications.

3) **A modern educational system encourages the potential of every child and supports individual learning**, for each pupil learns differently and has different prerequisites. Only through individualized learning can all pupils succeed in achieving a clearly-defined holistic educational goal. However, individual learning requires a changed understanding of what it means to be a teacher. Teachers must take on the role of the individual learning tutor. Education and training must be adapted to these requirements, for the teachers play a key role in the educational success of children and young people.

4) Precisely in deprived areas, in current times education means successfully communicating social competencies as well as knowledge. Therefore, there may be no more boundaries between places of formal and informal learning. A modern educational system needs **reliable cooperative relationships between educational institutions and partners outside the schools**. The existing competencies in a community must be bundled in order to guarantee fair educational opportunities from early childhood on.

5) Educational reform in Germany has been hindered for decades by an ideologically-driven structural debate. However **structural questions must be subordinated to content questions** if we want to address the upcoming challenges even-handedly. Individualized learning is more important than the school form in which it takes place.

6) **Additional money must be invested in the educational system where the challenges are the greatest.** This view also reflects that of the population. A survey by Bertelsmann Stiftung showed that 75 percent of the people surveyed support an unequal distribution of funds for the benefit of comparable educational opportunities. Fair educational opportunities require fair resource distribution and no distribution of funds with the watering can.

7) Worldwide, there are outstanding examples of high-performance and fair educational systems. In our country too, there are already many good examples of modern, future-oriented

educational institutions and schools. ***The good examples must now prevail.*** The barriers that prevent a widespread implementation must be revealed and removed.

8) The bases for successful learning are laid even before school. Therefore, society must provide all children with early participation in good education and ***invest more purposefully in early childhood education.*** Here, the concern above all is higher quality child-care facilities and not just more available spaces.

9) ***Schools are social places today and they strengthen social coherence.*** Especially in deprived areas, it is the task of the schools to include pupils' families in the learning process and especially to provide help for the integration of migrant and socially-weak families. For this reason, in addition to individualized learning, the expansion of whole-day offerings is an absolute necessity -- with a focus on the quality of the afternoon offerings.

10) In order to open up new perspectives for young people, we must ***guarantee them future-oriented professional training.*** Everybody is needed, no talent may be allowed to atrophy. Therefore, we must make it easier to transition from school to a profession. Today, approximately 500,000 young people are stuck in a holding pattern waiting for their training. We have to change this.