

Discussion Input Paper for the Alternatives Summit

Ideas for a different education and society

Society

The current state of the national and global world is marked by inequality and a massive destruction of our environment. The most important role in this plays the neo-liberal form of capitalism. It lead to the co-operation of politicians and the market instead of putting the interest of the people and the health of the environment first, not only in dictatorships but also in democracies.

Without a change in the power relations of this world, there will be no real change. Education can either reproduce and stabilize the current power relations or it can foster critical thinking. This might not automatically produce change, since the relations are strong and the oppressive state frightening – but education free from capitalistic dogma can create the required atmosphere needed for change.

Education

Education in this sense needs self-determination, self-determined space and the possibility to find own ways instead of functioning after standards imposed on us by others.

The economisation of education follows different guidelines, though: more effectiveness, which means to make people usable, to make people exploitable for society and the work force, while all the while forcing ideals such as educating autonomous, independent, confident people far back.

This forming of children and teenagers into exploitable adults needs to be driven back to make room and foster the ability to look beyond the boundaries of the current political system.

All structural mechanisms which give unequal chances to children in the educational system have to be abolished. Changes in the internal and external structure of the educational system and a stronger orientation on educational theory during teacher's training are therefore needed.

The orientation towards economical principles of the educational system needs to be abolished as well. Instead, solidary forms of learning, which allow critical thinking, need to be cultivated.

Bologna Process

Bologna was used to re-structure the tertiary levels of education. The official declaration could have allowed to go a different path. However, it was mostly interpreted in a neoliberal sense.

The introduction of Bologna-compliant curricula was accompanied with the idea of a 40-hour work week for students. This has to be rejected. Curricula need to give enough space for self-determined setting of priorities and autonomous planning of time.

Especially education on university level should not aim toward usability for the economy, but needs to foster the ability to critically analysing the current status quo of society,

politics, technology and economy.

To make university into a training field for critical and self-responsible thinking, structures are needed to give all working and learning in the university the ability to engage in democratic decision making. Therefore the destruction of of democratic structures, which accompanied the Bologna process, has to be reversed.

Outlook

The self-organized student protests at the universities, which were supported by unions and many other people, showed that there is a potential for change not only between students but also in the society as a whole.

Now it is our job to form those spontaneous networks into a strong movement. The challenge for the next years and decades will be to change the educational system step by small step. For the good of all people, all other beings and our world.