

Sozial Studies: How Travel Abroad Empowers a Global Perspective

Mark Percy, Ph.D

Rider University, Lawrenceville, NJ.

Abstract: The personal experiences and values of individual teachers can tend to restrict the ability to promote a “global perspective” in the social studies, the subject area most suited to that concept. One antidote to this instructional myopia is the prospect of overseas travel, in the form of study tours, the type of which have been shown to have a great impact in this area (Wilson, 1982, 1983, 1993a, 1993b; Germain, 1998; Kirkwood, 2002). This article is a reflection on the findings of a two-week study tour of Germany in 2013, sponsored by the Transatlantic Outreach Program and the Goethe-Institut. During this tour, I was able to visit German schools, corporations, museums, , and to meet German educators. In this article, the value of such experiences to promote a global perspective, essential to global education, is examined—additionally, I analyze the impact that the German *sozial* approach might have on American educational decisions.

Key words: global perspectives, global education, social studies, overseas travel studies

Introduction

Given the manner in which technology has shrunk the world and broadened the scope of our reach, it is no wonder that the process of globalization is often greeted with overt hostility for its impact on indigenous cultures (Barber, 1996; Chua, 2004) or the possibility that new trends may disrupt the traditional “American way of life” (Legrain, 2002). Social studies teachers, however, have a different reaction—many take it as an article of faith that globalization is not only a fact of life in the modern era, but also an endorsement of the subject area we teach. Notwithstanding the particular content of a globally-infused curriculum, the value of promoting a “global perspective” is evident in its power to expand the passive, obedient form of citizenship that is, regrettably, a regular feature in most U.S. schools (Knight-Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). This citizenship, in which students are “merely spectators in the democratic process,” delimits one’s ability to “cross cultural boundaries or understand diverse perspectives” (Castro, 2013, p. 220). Focusing on our students’ capacity to navigate these boundaries in a globally conscious and effective manner is no longer a luxury in our pedagogy—it is fast becoming a necessity, especially in light of the social studies’ goal of educating citizens who are members of “an ethnically diverse and just community” (Dilworth, 2004, p. 56-57).

This creates a problematic situation—how can teachers help engender this form of global consciousness if they have limited exposure, in their own lives and experiences, to distinct cultures and the issues embedded in them? One answer is the opportunity to travel abroad. It is clear that a teacher’s global perspective (as well as the instructional decisions made in light of that perspective) is directly impacted by travel (Wilson, 1982, 1983, 1993a, 1993b; Kirkwood, 2002). There is also considerable research indicating that teachers who had overseas teaching experiences made

positive and lasting changes in their pedagogy, empathy with students, and continuing professional development (Germain, 1998; Kirkwood, 2002; Willard-Holt, 2001; Rodriguez, 2011).

In 2013, I was able to travel to Germany under the auspices of the Transatlantic Outreach Program (TOP), a venture formed in 2002 as a partnership of the German Federal Foreign Office, the Goethe-Institut, and German corporations like Deutsche Bank and the Siemens Corporation. Its mission is “to promote education about Germany, to encourage intercultural dialogue, and to provide the opportunity for North American social studies educators to experience Germany in person” (Transatlantic Outreach Program, 2014). In furtherance of this goal, TOP offers study tours of “modern” Germany to social studies educators from both the secondary level and higher education.

Germany, when featured in the standard social studies curriculum, typically appears in the context of historical events that are unrelentingly negative—most notably, the two World Wars, the rise of National Socialism, and the Holocaust. These are vitally important events, of course, but the modern reality of a nation of 81 million people, with Europe’s largest economy and the fifth largest in the world, often goes unrepresented in American classrooms (“What Germany Offers the World,” 2012, April 14). The issues faced by Germany today—climate change and environmental policy, the use of renewable energy, educational policy and immigration—are not so different from contemporary debates in the U.S. In Germany, however, the policies adopted in light of these issues—often the subject of much political acrimony and partisanship in the U.S.—are greeted with almost unanimity among the population (with the notable exception of immigration policy). For instance, the German commitment to renewable energy is practically universal, and the German educational system—though administered by the sixteen *Länder*, or federal states—is virtually identical from state to state, built around the common “tripartite” framework (Hyslop, 2012).

How does a modern state achieve this degree of unanimity over sociocultural issues? This is an especially vexing question for an American, given the paralytic nature of our contemporary national politics. The chance to travel to Germany gave me the opportunity to explore this question and to experience and evaluate the roots of that nation’s national character. Such an experience is vital towards the larger goal of developing a global perspective, though it is understandably difficult for many teachers to travel overseas, given the financial burdens. The assistance of the Transatlantic Outreach Program, therefore, is especially noteworthy, as is the comprehensive nature of the trip’s design. The wide spectrum of experiences—in schools, in museums and historical landmarks, in corporations and private homes—provided me with a unique view of the German commitment to a collective sense of obligation, one that is representative of their national and historical identity. The German concept of *sozial*—a national sense of collective responsibility and individual dignity—is situated at the center of the country’s sense of self, and provides a positive example for what American educators can hope to achieve here at home. This article describes my experiences in Germany in three specific spheres of public life—in schools, in corporate life, and in the growing and dynamic immigrant community—and the theme of *sozial* that is present across all three.

Education in Germany

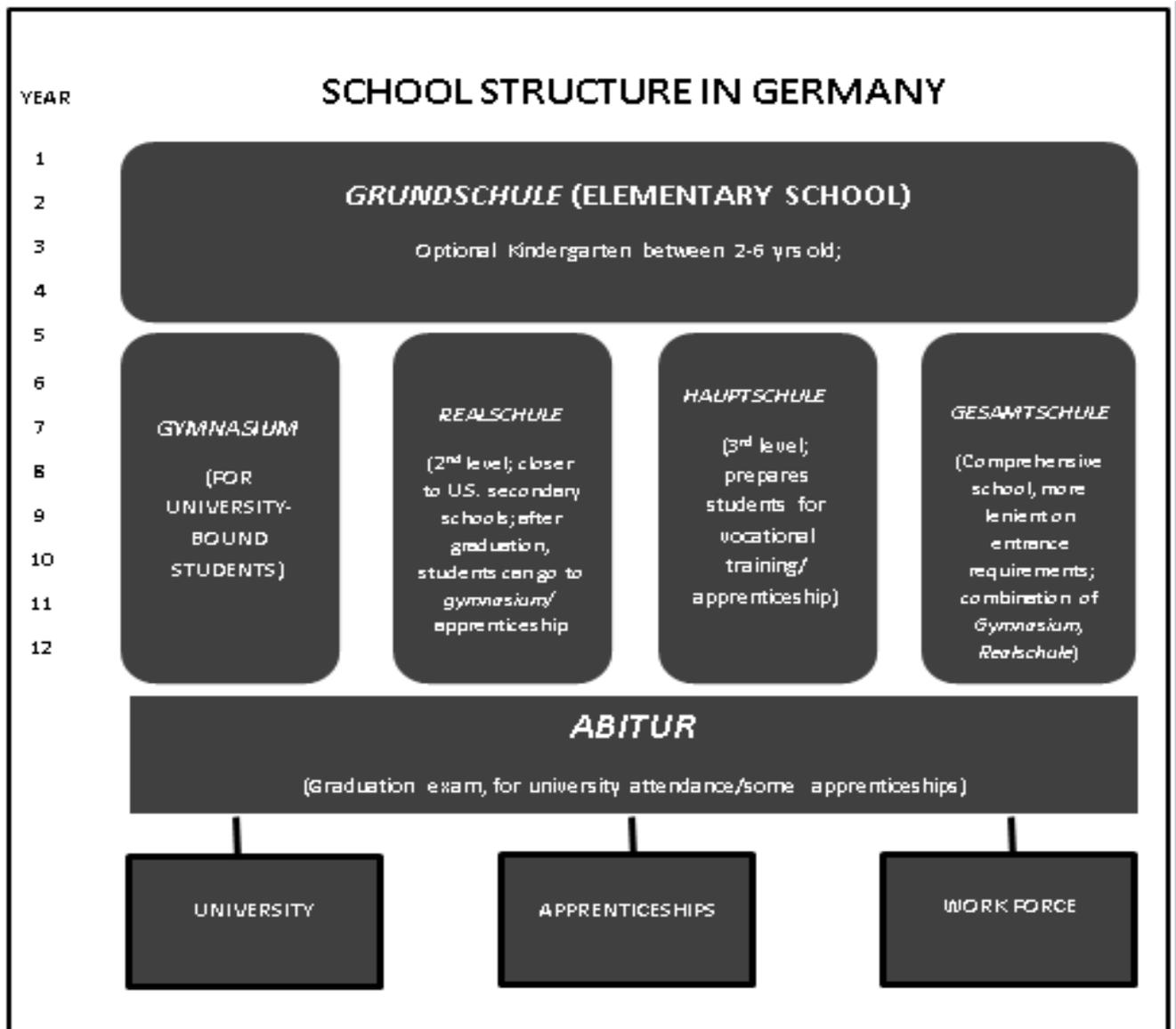
Upon arrival in Berlin, I quickly became aware of the level of commitment Germany had made to the concept of renewable energy. We were fortunate enough to have a hotel with air conditioning, since we were told that it was a rarity in most buildings across the nation. The same is true of ice—“ice is *not* German,” we were told by one of our guides. Our initial experience was a lecture from a journalist, Paul Hockenos, who has lived and worked in Berlin for some years—the event was held in a conference room that was stifling, and upon exiting the room I noticed that the door was lined with corrugated cardboard, which was serving as insulation. Many of the Germans I spoke to were quite proud of the national policy of *Energiewende*, the “energy transition” from fossil fuels to renewable energy. The goal of the German government is to achieve an 80% shift to renewable resources by 2050 (Hockenos, 2012b, p. 29). The major push came after the reactor disaster in Fukushima, Japan, in 2011—Germany, a nation already hostile towards nuclear energy, quickly closed 8 of the 17 nuclear reactors within the nation (Hockenos, 2012b, p. 29). The policy was led towards the new “greening” policy by the Prime Minister, Angela Merkel, whose party, the Christian Democratic Union, was traditionally friendlier towards the fossil fuel and nuclear energy industries. However, the roots of this policy were largely already in place, built over time into a stable, enduring national consensus over policy (so stable that the rest of the European continent has reacted to the German policy initiatives with skepticism—Mr. Hockenos told me in an aside that the rest of Western Europe thinks that Germany might just be “off their rockers”). This phenomenon—a large national agreement over a policy that, in other nations, would generally result in partisan debate or acrimony—is surprisingly common in Germany. The national educational system is a good example.

Modern German history begins at the end of World War II, the devastation of which is hard to grasp or overstate. In a strange way, the best measure of the war’s disastrous effects is not in descriptions of the human or physical cost, but the political impact. Germany’s first postwar leader, Konrad Adenauer (a former Nazi), aimed at two national goals which were incongruous with both Germany’s immediate past and its relationship with former adversaries—the installation of a market-based economy and the establishment of deep diplomatic and commercial ties to the West, the *Westbindung* (Hockenos, 2008, p. 1; Hockenos, 2012a, 2013). Ironically, it took a wholesale disaster like World War II could cause the German nation to contemplate a total reversal of national policy and a binding commitment to their former enemies.

Entire social structures had to be rebuilt, including the educational system. Education under Nazism was marked by both the fascist tendency to promote the singular authority of the Nazi Party and Adolf Hitler, as well as the use of curricula to disseminate racial propaganda. Mills (2002) illustrates how educational materials could be subverted towards this agenda, citing math problems like the following: “the Jews are aliens in Germany—in 1933 there were 66,060,000 inhabitants in the German Reich, of whom 499,682 were Jews. What is the percent of aliens?” (Mills, 2002, p. 228). Children’s books, like *Trau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heid und keinem Jud bei seinem Eid* (“Don’t Trust a Fox in a Green Meadow or the Oath of a Jew”) were used to promote a racial ideology that formed the philosophical underpinning of the state.

The modern German educational system is far removed from this approach, both philosophically and structurally. Because Germany is a federal republic, most educational policy is controlled by the *Länder*, the 16 separate states (Erk, 2003; Hyslop, 2012, p. 41). Despite this localized control, most of

the German states have roughly the same structure (Erk, 2003, p. 312). The German “tripartite” system consists roughly of three levels: the *Gymnasium*, the *Realschule* and the *Hauptschule* (see Figure 1: School Structure in Germany).



The *Gymnasium* offers an advanced general education for students who aim at university attendance; in the 13th year, they take a comprehensive national examination, the *Abitur* (Andell, 2008, p. 17). The *Realschule* is an intermediate level, which offers an extended general and vocational education, while the *Hauptschule* is the strictly vocational track—following graduation, students typically begin an apprenticeship with businesses and corporations across Germany.

Students are directed through the tripartite system in a process that American educators would instinctively label “tracking.” The process—omnipresent throughout Germany—is derived from a long-standing emphasis on the use of “norms” to determine best outcomes (Sliwka, 2010, p. 209; Tillman, 2006). What is most interesting is the manner in which these decisions are made. Students, their families, and teachers confer in detail (typically around the fourth or fifth year) and make a

collaborative decision about the route each student should take. The student has the option of choosing a different route, but generally, the teacher's recommendation is followed. Coming from a nation that has distinguished itself in recent years by pointedly *not* listening to teachers, I found this refreshing.

In 2000, Germans were shocked to see their national standing on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) evaluation of that year—they ranked 21st in reading and mathematics, out of 31 total nations participating, which put them near the bottom of the list of industrialized nations (Andell, 2008, p. 17). When PISA rankings are released in the U.S., it traditionally provokes cries for reform, for accountability, for standardization (“Are America’s Students Falling behind the World?” 2013, December 9). There were similar calls in Germany; but Angela Merkel, the current Prime Minister of Germany and then-leader of the CDU, insisted there was nothing wrong with the tripartite system. She pointed instead to oversized classrooms and a general lack of instructional time, both of which could be addressed by increased funding (Andell, 2008, p. 18). This reaction—so contrary to the standard reaction of the U.S. government in recent years—is striking.

Another feature of German schooling that is unusual for Americans is the emphasis on apprenticeship. For many U.S. families, the idea of their children being consigned to vocational training is distasteful at best, a violation of the traditional goal of college (“Too Narrow, Too Soon?” 2010, June 7). In Germany, however, the dual education system of academics and job training has been called the “secret” to the system, providing “‘just in time’ training and ‘just in time’” skilled employees for companies (Hyslop, 2012, p. 40). German students hold no disdain for the prospects of apprenticeship over college; they are aware that the jobs waiting for them (often with corporations like Mercedes and Siemens) require highly-skilled applicants who are well-paid and respected in German society. Similarly, German corporations are assured new generations of skilled workers, and thus feel particularly invested in educational policy, a sentiment not as deeply felt in the American business community (Hyslop, 2012, p. 44).

During our time in Germany, we were able to visit several schools of varying types and sizes. For instance, we were welcomed to a *gymnasium* in Neukloster, where bilingualism was the standard approach in every classroom—I watched teachers and students switch effortlessly between English and German (most students begin to learn English as early as age 6 or 7), with a heavy emphasis on project-based learning. Teachers have great autonomy in what they teach and how; for the most part, the curricula were generated by the teachers themselves. When I asked one teacher whether or not he had to file lesson plans with his administration—a standard feature for most U.S. educators—he showed me a slim spiral notebook. “This is my whole planner,” he told me. He found my surprised reaction very amusing; though the teachers I met were not similarly amused by conditions facing teachers in the U.S. When asked about reform movements currently underway in America—merit pay, tenure restrictions, standardized testing, accountability models, “value-added” data—the German educators I spoke to were bewildered and skeptical. “It doesn’t sound like they treat you like professionals,” one told me, a comment that elicited rueful nods from the Americans present.

An intriguing moment occurred at the Helene Lange Schule, a comprehensive high school in Wiesbaden. This school is comparatively unique in the German system—students range from age 10 to 16 (corresponding to years 5 through 10), and travel through their time at the school with the same teacher for all five grades. In 2002 it was hailed by some media members as the “Best School in Germany,” based on released PISA results, a pronouncement that the school and the state’s educational agency immediately distanced themselves from—both because they didn’t want to appear to endorse the comprehensive school model as superior to others, and also, as one teacher told me, it would be “vulgar” to appear boastful (Kraus, 2002).

I was speaking to a social studies teacher, and I asked him how he would deal with a student who held controversial views. What would you do, I asked, if a student expressed sympathy or agreement with Nazi ideology?

The teacher shook his head emphatically. “I wouldn’t let him leave the room,” he said earnestly, “until I talked him out of it. We can’t allow children to believe anything like that.”

He showed me a book that is widely read by German students—*Jugend Ohne Gott*, “Youth Without God,” by Odon von Horvath (2005). Written originally in 1937, the novel is set in Germany during the rise of National Socialism, and the protagonist is a teacher, confronted with the regime’s militarism and racism. Students are never referred to by name, but instead as letters (“T” and “N”), to illustrate the dehumanization of Nazi propaganda and their own loss of individuality. The teacher I spoke with was using the book as the basis for an ongoing series of lessons about Nazism, a standing feature of the school’s curriculum.

In the U.S., most teachers would find analogous views—for instance, white supremacy—to be abhorrent, and most would certainly try to dissuade their students from holding them; but ultimately, in a culture that esteems freedom of speech as a fundamental principle, that student would be allowed to believe what he/she believed. The commitment, among German educators, to confront such views and the historical events that perpetuated them—as well as their commitment to *change* such views—was impressive. The principle of responsibility extends to both the materials used in the classroom and the philosophies behind their use.

Corporate Culture in Germany

Given the unique relationship of the German educational system and the corporate world, it was especially useful to be able to explore the latter. We were able to visit a thriving industry in northern Germany as well as one of the largest financial institutions in the world, Deutsche Bank. In Bremen, in the northern part of the country, we went to the factory of a unique company, Werkstatt Martinshof, just outside the city limit. The company ostensibly makes rear window assemblies for auto manufacturers, but has also branched off into the production of such unusual goods as bicycles, ceramics, nursery furniture, honey, wine, and ceramics. What is even more surprising, however, is that the company employs, almost in its entirety, adults with developmental disabilities. Currently, Werkstatt Bremen employs over 2200 people (“Werkstatt Martinshof,” 2013).

We met the company's chief executive officer, Wilfried Hautop, and I asked him why he chose to employ, almost exclusively, the disabled, especially in an enterprise of such a varied nature. He looked at me a little skeptically, and then said, "I just felt the need." He explained that, when employing the disabled, many people conceive of the work being done as primarily rehabilitative, not with great commercial value. But Hautop made clear to us that his employees took great pride in the products they created, a fact that was borne out when I watched a worker complete a window assembly for a Mercedes sedan—he operated a complex piece of machinery with great dexterity and speed, and when he was done, he broke out into a huge smile and laughed.

Our next corporate experience came near the end of the study tour. One of the chief sponsors of the trip was Deutsche Bank, so we were invited to their corporate headquarters in Frankfurt. We had thought the visit would be a great relief, on a sweltering summer day; until we entered the gleaming steel-and-glass building to find that the German commitment to environmentalism extended to the corporate world as well, as we were told (with great pride) that Deutsche Bank had removed the air conditioning, out of commitment to *Energiewende*.

During our meeting at Deutsche Bank, we met Dr. Ottmar Kayser, the deputy head of the sustainability initiative at DB (whom we jokingly blamed for the lack of cool air in the building). Dr. Kayser talked about Deutsche Bank's concept of "corporate social responsibility," which they define as "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society" (Kayser, 2013). I thought, at first, this was a reference to the renewable energy push of which DB was so proud, and so it was—but "CSR" means much more, at least in theory. Deutsche Bank has committed to three aspects of corporate social responsibility—environmental elements, economic elements (including a pledge to avoid "controversial financing"), and social elements, including "socially responsible investing" and "corporate citizenship" (Kayser, 2013). In all honesty, my first reaction to this was rather cynical—it sounded like a vague and showy endorsement of intrinsically attractive concepts, without any real effort required. But I was surprised when Dr. Kayser detailed the very concrete limitations on investments that Deutsche Bank had set for itself: defense equipment ("we will not consider any involvement in transactions with specific types of weapons, in particular antipersonnel landmines, cluster bombs, or ABC weapons..."); pornography or "red light" districts, even in a nation where prostitution is fully legalized; betting and gambling, industries that "are prone to serve as the basis for illegal activities" (Kayser, 2013). And Dr. Kayser was emphatic in his insistence that this commitment was not "a fad," and not simply meant to appease critics of large corporations. Moreover, he said, the concept of "corporate social responsibility" was not about philanthropy, or public relations—it was "the way of doing business."

This concept of corporate social responsibility is relatively new in Germany, though its practice—the expectation of "doing well by doing good"—was common throughout the business community (Antal, Oppen, & Sobczak, 2010, p. 285). And it is important to note that not all German corporations have practiced what they preached—Deutsche Bank, in fact, was at the center of a financial scandal in 2012, the public humiliation of which was "unprecedented" for a German multinational corporation ("A Reputation in Ruin," 2012; Atkins, 2014). Still, it seems that the CSR approach is ingrained in the German business community, to a sufficient extent that the German government

has developed a National CSR Strategy to “foster civic engagement,” following the “principle of responsible conduct and above and beyond the individual company’s actual business operations for the good of civil society and in societal, environmental, and cultural causes” (*National Strategy for Corporate Social Responsibility—Action Plan for CSR—of the German Federal Government*, 2010, p. 8). It is even developing a plan to link the motto “CSR—Made In Germany” with trade and product quality (“*Unternehmens Werte, CSR—Made in Germany*,” 2014). What is compelling is the degree to which the principles espoused by giant financial corporations like Deutsche Bank are practiced by smaller entities like Werkstatt Martinshof. It is a guiding principle evident through the elements of German corporate culture I was able to observe, and seems to represent the broader part of German society.

Immigration in Germany

Unlike CSR, there is an issue in Germany that does not enjoy unanimous public support on a national scale. When asked about the issue of immigration, German citizens display a bewildering and often contradictory array of opinions. According to a survey commissioned by the Bertelsmann Foundation in 2012, 70% of respondents felt that immigration made it easier for international investment in Germany, and 62% felt it could alleviate the impact of an aging population; while at the same time, two-thirds of those surveyed felt that immigration was an “extra burden” on the social security system, as well as a source of conflict both with “native” Germans and in public schools (“Immigrants Cause Problems,’ say Germans,” 2012, 17 December). According to a study by the Migration Policy Institute, this contradictory attitude extends even further—62% of respondents believed that “immigrants are not well-integrated,” but at the same time, integration was ranked as a “low-priority” issue by surveyed Germans, especially as compared to concerns about unemployment or the economy (Abali, 2009, p. 1).

There is a sense of cultural familiarity at work in parts of Germany, especially Berlin—the prevalence of English, the presence of identifiable institutions (e.g., Starbucks), all can make an American feel, if not exactly at home, at least more comfortable with the foreign character of the nation as a whole. This familiarity was also present in our group’s exploration of a major issue facing modern Germany, one which Americans have struggled with for decades, even centuries—immigration, or more specifically, “people with migration backgrounds.”

We travelled to a district in Berlin called Kreuzberg, which has been the traditional destination for Germany’s largest ethnic group of non-German origin—Turkish immigrants. We were to visit the FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum, dedicated to the history of the district and its role as a unique home for immigrants and their descendants. There we spoke to Alpaslan Iaden Schulklassen, a second-generation Turkish-German, who explained the history of immigration in the modern era and the issues that still linger.

Figure 2: Percy, M. (2013). The Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum, Kreuzberg, Berlin



When the Berlin Wall went up in 1961, the continuance of the postwar “economic miracle” was in peril, due mainly to a lack of workers. Around half of Berlin’s labor force was now on the eastern side of the Wall—at one point, in October 1964, there were 20,000 available jobs in Berlin with only 9,000 workers (Schulklassen, 2013). The West German government put out a call for immigrant workers, offering one-year contracts and high pay. The majority of those that answered were from Turkey, mostly skilled tradesmen, trained in textiles, electronics, and other trades—and many were women (at one point, 67% of the workers at the Siemens corporation were female). Many settled in West Berlin, for which they received bonuses from their employers, who were themselves subsidized by the West German government to encourage such relocation (Schulklassen, 2013). Most of these Turkish workers had a singular expectation of their time in Germany—they would work a year, maybe two, and then return to Turkey.

The problem, it seems, was that the arrangement was *too* successful. At the conclusion of their contractual period, many workers found it difficult to leave; they were paid well, and had built lives and families in Germany. At the same time, corporations were reluctant to let go of the workers who had become so essential to economic growth and prosperity. So the result was a sort of mass “blind eye” turned to the issue; Turkish workers stayed, longer than they had imagined, and their children, born in Germany, began to think of themselves as German. The result was a “parallel world of immigrant communities outside mainstream German society” (Sliwka, 2010, p. 206).

This was a real complication. German law regarding citizenship Germany traditionally was a *jus sanguinis* state, in which citizenship was conferred by parentage and not location. What this meant was that people like Alpaslan, who were born in Germany, could not be German citizens, since their parents were born in Turkey. It wasn’t until 2000, during the period of the Red-Green coalition, that the law was amended—but not until an ugly, public rift occurred over the law itself, a surprising occurrence in a nation where most social views were broadly held. Once the law was proposed, anti-

immigrant sentiment coalesced around a petition campaign to halt the initiative; begun in January 1999, within six weeks it had gathered over five million signatures (Howard, 2008, p. 52). The resulting compromise version of the law was watered down from its original position, but still represented a major shift from the *jus sanguinis* tradition—now, children born to non-German parents are extended *jus soli*, citizenship based on location of birth, as long as at least one parent has a permanent residence permit and had resided in Germany for at least eight years (Howard, 2008, p. 53).

The law has not solved all (or maybe even most) problems regarding immigration in Germany. Immigrant students and students with migration backgrounds are heavily overrepresented in the lower tracks of the tripartite system, even when allowing for cognitive abilities and grade averages (Sliwka, 2010, p. 211). A United Nations human rights commission concluded in 2008 that the German school system “excludes children from poor families and immigrant backgrounds” (Andell, 2008, p. 19). Perhaps more pervasive are the stereotypes that are still present—Alpaslan told us about the standard view of the Kreuzberg district among many of Berlin’s citizens, who see it as a crime-ridden slum, when in fact it is a remarkably clean and well-maintained neighborhood.

While we were in Kreuzberg, we saw a group of men emanate from a makeshift tent camp in a nearby park and proceed towards the main avenue of the district, holding signs and shouting. Alpaslan told us these were immigrant workers, mostly from Africa on temporary visas, whose residence permits had expired, and were now refusing to leave (see Figure 3):

Figure 3: Percy, M. (2013). A worker march in Kreuzberg



The problem is recognizable to Americans, who have argued ferociously about the role and presence of immigrants practically since the founding of the republic. Alpaslan illustrated the problem for Germans, and with all nations trying to establish a balance between integration and assimilation: “do you have to lose your own identity? That’s ‘assimilation,’ when you lose your identity, and become ‘equal.’”

Sozial Studies

The ramifications of this study tour, and similar trips, are especially notable in how they may change teacher perceptions of global education and the promotion of a global perspective among our students. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) distinguishes between global and international education, asserting that the former “focuses on the interrelated nature of condition, issues, trends, processes, and events while international education emphasizes specific world regions, problems, and cultures” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2014). The NCSS’ position is that “viewing human experience only in relation to a North American or European frame of reference is unrealistic given the globalized nature of American society today.” This is contrast to the traditional world history course in U.S. schools, which implicitly adopts an ethnocentric focus on “the role of the U.S. in the world and its political interests” (Myers, 2006, p. 372), often derided as “the West versus the Rest” (Saldaña, 2012, p. 14).

In accepting the value of a global perspective in our teaching, we should also recognize the importance of travel abroad as well as the immersive quality of such experiences, including their ability to foster “global mindedness” with our teachers and by extension, our students. There is considerable research indicating the influence of teachers’ personal and professional experiences on their instructional decisions (Cornett, 1990; Cornett, et al., 1992; Shaver, Davis & Helburn, 1980; Wilson, 1982, 1993b; Kirkwood, 2002). This kind of travel—and the intercultural experiences that attend it—also impacts both the instructional choices made by teachers after the fact and the perspective brought by teachers in making such choices (Germain, 1998). More than that, an “open minded” stance towards the world—“the willingness to consider experiences, beliefs, values, perspectives...that differ from one’s own” (Merryfield, 2012, p. 18)—is implicit in the practice of travel abroad. Encouraging teachers (and, in the case of the Transatlantic Outreach Program, enabling them) to experience the world about which they teach is vital to passing on this open-minded perspective to our students.

Where, then, does the German commitment to excellence, equity, and community come from? In its energy policy, educational system, corporate culture, and policy decisions, Germany has taken choices that are consistent with a national world view. It would be foolish to consider a two-week trip across Germany a definitive basis from which to draw conclusions about a national characteristic; but there are certainly elements of German life and culture that shed some light on the nature of this belief system.

One aspect of this is evident in Germany's modern history. The conservative nature of the Adenauer administration, the "Bonn Republic," combined in the early 1960s with a nascent student movement, similar in some respects to the organizations that developed in the U.S. (largely in response to the Vietnam conflict). The German students, however, determined a course of action that was in many ways divergent from their U.S. analogues—most notably in their commitment to work *within* existing institutions, rather than in opposition to them. Student leaders like Joschka Fischer and Rudi Dutschke promoted a strategy they termed the "Long March," a generational approach to change (Hockenos, 2008). As students graduated, and entered professional life, they would build consensus for change through local politics, aiming to develop unanimity over their goals before enacting them into law through political structures. This process moved from the local to the national stage in 1983, with the election of the first representative to the German *Bundestag* (Parliament); it culminated in 1998, with the declaration of the "Red/Green Coalition," under Gerhard Schroder of the Social Democratic Party and the former student leader, Joschka Fischer.

What followed was a period of seven years in which many of the initiatives the student leaders had advocated during the "Long March" were passed into law, with remarkable consensus among the German people. Marriage equality, the abolition of nuclear energy, the national commitment to *Energiewende* (now reflected both in German private and corporate life) the reformation of Germany's immigration law—all these policies were adopted between 1998 and 2005, a remarkable string of legislative victories by any standard.

The German approach to national policy didn't begin with the "Long March," though, any more than it ended in 2005 (the national debate over immigration, at a minimum, proves that). Built into the German constitution—itsself written in the shadow of World War II—are concepts which both signal and foster a national character. The "Basic Law," or *Grundgesetz*, declares the role of the state in defending the humanity of its citizens: "*Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar. Sie zu achten und zu schützen ist Verpflichtung aller staatlichen Gewalt*"—"The dignity of man shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority" (cited in Eberle, 2008, p. 3). This approach was termed *sozial* by one of our guides—he was quick to point out that the word connotes, in German, a deeper sense of collective responsibility than its English equivalent. In Germany, *sozial* thinking means acknowledging the freedom of the individual—a very American perspective—but, at the same time, the duty owed by the individual to the community.

Cultivating a global perspective means examining the deeper principles at work in defining a given nation's character. There are two features of German law that are uniquely derived from a sense of historical identity. The *Rechtsstaat* is a state dedicated to rationality and equality, one which "constrains and directs authority along a pre-established path of ideas" (Eberle, 2008, p. 5). For most Americans, this is both the purpose of the Constitution and the primary role of government. For Germans, though, there is a second purpose to the state—the *Sozialstaat*, the "social state," which is required to provide a minimal level of security for the lives of its citizens. The phrase "general welfare," in the American political consciousness, is a much looser and vaguely-defined concept than it is in Germany, where it is correlated with each individual's moral obligation to each other—"individual choice is bounded by community, civility norms, and a sense of responsibility" (Eberle,

2008, p. 16). The civic choices facing Americans—whether or not to vote, or to volunteer one’s time for charitable causes—are largely determined by personal choice and values. For Germans, the concept of freedom is deeply invested with a sense of duty, both to each other and to the history that forms the connective tissue of the national character.

There is great value in the experiences offered by groups like the Transatlantic Outreach Program, in both fostering teachers’ own sense of global-mindedness and in helping those teachers develop a global perspective with their students. The German concept of *sozial*, central to their policy choices and the aims of their sociocultural institutions, is difficult for non-Germans to appreciate until they are able to see it applied and practiced. The truism that the “world is growing smaller” does not mean that the barriers to understanding are less daunting; but, by providing tools with which to surmount them, we can equip our students with a global perspective which helps bring different cultures closer.

References:

- Abali, O.S. (2009). *German public opinion on immigration and integration*. Transatlantic Council on Migration, Migration Policy Institute: Allensbach, Germany.
- Andell, K. (2008). A country divided: A study of the German education system. *The Monitor*, 14 (1), p. 16-28.
- Antal, A.B., Oppen, M., and Sobczak, A. (2010). (Re)discovering the social responsibility of business in Germany. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 89, p. 285-301.
- Are America’s students falling behind the world? (2013, December 9). *The Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-pisa-test-results-20131209,0,2182373.story#axzz2pvqRrv5l>
- A Reputation in ruin: Deutsche Bank slides into a swamp of scandal. (2012). *Spiegel*. Retrieved from <http://www.spiegel.de/international/business/deutsche-bank-reputation-at-stake-amid-a-multitude-of-scandals-a-873544.html>
- Atkins, T. (2014). Deutsche Bank posts surprise Q4 loss as scandals weigh. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/19/us-deutschebank-warning-idUSBREA0I0HY20140119>
- Barber, B. (1996). *Jihad vs. McWorld: How globalism and tribalism are reshaping the world*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.
- Castro, A.J. (2013). What makes a citizen? Critical and multicultural citizenship and preservice teachers’ understanding of citizenship skills. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 41 (2), 219-246
- Chua, A. (2004). *World on fire: How exporting free market democracy breeds ethnic hatred and global instability*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Cornett, J. W. (1990). Teacher thinking about curriculum and instruction: A case study of a secondary social studies teacher. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 18 (3), 248-273.

- Cornett, J.W., Chase, K.S., Miller, P., Schrock, D., Bennett, B.J. Goins, A., & Hammond, C. (1992). Insights from the analysis of our own theorizing: The viewpoints of seven teachers In E.W. Ross, J.W. Cornett, & G. Cutcheon (Eds.), *Teacher personal theorizing* (p. 137-157). Albany: State University of New York.
- Dilworth, P. P. (2004). Multicultural citizenship education: Case studies from social studies classrooms. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 32 (2), 153–186.
- Eberle, E.J. (2008). The German idea of freedom. *Oregon Review of International Law*, 10, 1-76.
- Erk, J. (2003). Federal Germany and its non-federal society: Emergence of an all-German educational policy in a system of exclusive provincial jurisdiction. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 36 (2), 295-317.
- National Strategy for Corporate Social Responsibility–Action Plan for CSR–of the German Federal Government*. (2010). Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs: Germany, Bonn.
- Germain, M. H. (1998). *Worldly teachers: cultural learning and pedagogy*. Westport, CN: Bergin & Garvey.
- Harhoff, D., & Kane, T.J. (1995). Is the German apprenticeship system a panacea for the U.S. labour market? *ZEW Discussion Papers*, 95-19. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/29419>
- Hockenos, P. (2008). *Joschka Fischer and the making of the Berlin Republic*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hockenos, P. (2012a). Can Germany help central Europe confront its dark past? *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 58 (27), B6-B9.
- Hockenos, P. (2012b). Germany's renewable energy gamble. *E: The Environmental Magazine*, September/October 2012, 28-33.
- Hockenos, P. (2013). Long march to the Berlin Republic. *Transatlantic Outreach Program Summer 2013*. Lecture conducted from Goethe-Institut, Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, Berlin.
- Howard, M.M. (2008). The causes and consequences of Germany's new citizenship law. *German Politics*, 17 (1), 41-62.
- Hyslop, A. (2012). Lessons from the German dual system. *Techniques*, Nov/Dec. 2012, p. 40-45. "Immigrants cause problems,' say Germans." (2012, 17 December). *The Local*. Retrieved from <http://www.thelocal.de/20121217/46815>
- Kayser, O. (2013). *Sustainability: More than financials*. Lecture conducted from Deutsche Bank, Frankfurt.
- Knight-Abowitz, K., & Harnish, J. (2006). Contemporary discourses on citizenship. *Review of Educational Research*, 76, 653–690.
- Kirkwood, T.F. (2002). Teaching about Japan: Global perspectives in teacher decision-making, context, and practice. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 30 (1), 88-115.
- Kraus, J. (2002). *Informationen und Anmerkungen zu den PISA-Ergebnissen der Laborschule Bielefeld und der Helene-Lange-Schule Wiesbaden*. Retrieved from <http://www.lehrerverband.de/mpib1.htm>
- Legrain, P. 2002. *Open world: The truth about globalisation*. London: Abacus.

- Lockwood, A. (1993). A letter to character educators. *Educational Leadership* 51(3), 72-75.
- Lockwood, A. (2001). Blending civic decency and civic literacy. *International Journal of Social Education*, 16 (1), 55-61.
- Merryfield, M.M. (2012). Four strategies for teaching open-mindedness. *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, 25 (2), 18-22.
- Mills, M. (2002). Poisoning young minds in Nazi Germany: Children and propaganda in the Third Reich. *Social Education*, 66, 4, 228-230.
- National Council for the Social Studies (2014). What are global and international education? Retrieved from <http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/global/whatisglobaled>.
- Rodriguez, E. (2011). What pre-service teachers bring home when they travel abroad: Rethinking teaching through a short international experience. *Scholar-Practitioner Quarterly*, 5 (3), 289-305.
- Saldaña, C.T. (2012). The challenge of world history. *Social Education*, 76 (1), 14-16.
- Schulklassen , A.L. (2013). Lecture conducted from FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum, Kreuzberg, Berlin.
- [Shaver, J. P.](#), [Davis, O. L.](#) and [Helburn, S. W.](#) (1980). "An interpretive report on the status of precollege social studies education based on three NSF-funded studies." In *What are the needs in precollege science, mathematics, and social science education? View from the field*. Washington, DC: National Science Foundation
- Sheen, M. (2013). German election: Spot the Berlin Wall. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from <http://blogs.ft.com/the-world/2013/09/german-election-spot-the-berlin-wall/?Authorised=false>
- Sliwka A. (2010). From homogeneity to diversity in German education. *Educating Teachers for Diversity: Meeting the Challenge* [e-book]. Paris and Washington, D.C.: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; 2010: 205-217. Available from: EconLit, Ipswich, MA.
- Sheen, M. (2013). German election: Spot the Berlin Wall. *Financial Times*. Retrieved from <http://blogs.ft.com/the-world/2013/09/german-election-spot-the-berlin-wall/?Authorised=false>
- Sliwka A. (2010). From homogeneity to diversity in German education. *Educating Teachers for Diversity: Meeting the Challenge* [e-book]. Paris and Washington, D.C.: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; 2010: 205-217. EconLit, Ipswich, MA.
- Steen, M. (2013). German election—Spot the Berlin Wall. *The World, Financial Times*. Retrieved from <http://blogs.ft.com/the-world/2013/09/german-election-spot-the-berlin-wall/?Authorised=false>
- The Economist*. (2012). What Germany Offers the World. (, April 14). Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/21552567>
- Tillman, K. (2006). *Lehren und Lernen in heterogenen schulgruppen: Forschungsstand und perspektiven*. Retrieved from http://www.reformzeit.de/fileadmin/reformzeit/dokumente/pdf/heterogenitaet_tillman.pdf.

- Too narrow, too soon? (2010, June 17). *The Economist*. Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/16380980>
- Transatlantic Outreach Program (2014). "About TOP." Retrieved from <http://www.goethe.de/ins/us/lp/prj/top/abt/enindex.htm>
- Unternehmens Werte, CSR—Made in Germany* (2014). Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Republic of Germany. Retrieved from <https://www.csr-in-deutschland.de/en/home.html>
- von Horvath, O. (2005). *Jugend ohne Gott*. (2005). Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/acref/9780198158967.013.2694
- Werkstatt Martinshof (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.werkstatt-bremen.de/sixcms/detail.php?gsid=bremen02.c.730.de>
- Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41, p. 237–269.
- Willard-Holt, C. (2001). The impact of a short-term international experience for preservice teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17 (4), 505-517.
- Wilson, A. H. (1982). Cross-cultural experiential learning for teachers. *Theory into Practice*, 21 (3), 184–192.
- Wilson, A. H. (1983). A case study of two teachers with cross-cultural experience: They know more. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 8, 78–85.
- Wilson, A. H. (1993a). Conversation partners: Helping gaining students a global perspective through cross-cultural experiences. *Theory into Practice*, 32 (1), 21–26.
- Wilson, A. H. (1993b). *The meaning of international experiences for schools*. Westport, CT: Praeger.