

Berlin, February 2021

Fact Sheet —

Antisemitism in the context of school – Berlin school teachers' interpretations and attitudes

The first research project in a series of studies, „Antisemitism in the context of school – Berlin school teachers' interpretations and attitudes“ was realised from 2018 to 2020.

The qualitative study was conducted by the Kompetenzzentrum's research department in cooperation with the department of social pedagogy at Freie Universität Berlin. It was lead by Marina Chernivsky and Dr. Friederike Lorenz and coordinated by Johanna Schweitzer and accompanied by an advisory council. The realisation of the study and its publication were sponsored by the federal program „Demokratie leben!“. The research report was published in November 2020.

The study deals with the question of how antisemitism currently occurs at schools in Berlin and how teachers and principals perceive, categorize and handle it. The study aims to understand the biographically shaped definitions of antisemitism by teachers and principals and accounts of situations and needs in regard of antisemitism at schools.

The following research questions provided guidance:

- What do teachers and principals associate with antisemitism?
- Which connections to their (teaching) biographies were made?
- How do teachers and principals perceive antisemitic situations, attacks and structures and how do they recount their way of dealing with them?
- Which understanding of antisemitism is at the base of their actions?
- Which needs to teachers explicitly mention, which can be deduced from their accounts?
- Which practices and methods of intervention are established in schools and which expectations and actions become clear?

Main results —

Central to our findings from the group discussions and narrative interviews with teachers from different Berlin neighborhoods was that teachers can clearly recognize antisemitic situations. Their accounts of intervening, however, are stained with ambivalences and insecurities. On the one hand, a clear knowledge of the history of antisemitism becomes clear; on the other hand, antisemitism is externalised and portrayed as enigmatic. In some group discussions, teachers use many metaphors with the one common feature of antisemitism apparently being something „intangible“ and hard to detect. Historical antisemitism often is not connected to current antisemitism by the teachers and seems out of context. What also becomes clear is a tendency to relativize or reinterpret antisemitic (speech) acts and assaults.

The caution and indecisiveness we can observe is understandable from the (collective) biographies of these teachers: it mirrors their own educational biography and their socialisation into routine forms of the conveyance of history. From this point of view, they move in the area of conflict between moral expectations and the need for distance from all the questions and topics that can accompany antisemitism.

In sum, these results show the need of understanding and prioritising the need of understanding antisemitic manifestations in schools in regard to their modern historical relevance, all while considering and prioritising the individual impacts on the affected. This can't succeed without the implementation of training concepts to strengthen pedagogically responsible teachers and involving the prevention of antisemitism into quality control and the development of schools at large, not simply concerning single subjects.

The research report is available as a download (in German):

https://zwst-kompetenzzentrum.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Forschungsbericht_2020.pdf

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Das Kompetenzzentrum ist Mitglied im Kompetenznetzwerk Antisemitismus



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