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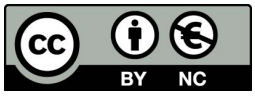
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6.9 Cameroon: Non-Violent Education and Education for Peace

Frederick Fondzenyuy Njobati is Coordinator of the In-Service Training Programme of two Protestant churches in Cameroon. He says: "Education without violence is possible – even in Cameroon."

The In-Service Training Programme Cameroon (ISTP) has been a partner of the Protestant development service "Brot für die Welt" (Bread for the World) for a long time. Nationwide this program qualifies about 3,000 teachers from 33 secondary schools and 300 nursery and primary schools.

Frederick Fondzenyuy Njobati reports:



Frederick Fondzenyuy Njobati

"I myself have very negative memories of my own time at school. Often, my sad experiences go back to teachers using physical violence against their students consciously or unconsciously believing this would improve and enforce learning.

Fortunately my parents did not believe in the use of violence. This made it possible for me to perceive rather quickly the negative consequences of corporal punishment almost on daily basis to me and my schoolmates. Today, I am glad that the crusade for a peaceful and non-violent education characterized by positive school climate, constructive feedback, self-esteem and effective communication is succeeding.

Violence at School in Cameroon – a Historical Review

Violence at school had long been manifested by the use of corporal punishment by teachers and other staff members on learners. Beating on hands, jaws and buttocks were daily routine at schools since the colonial era. These schools, most of which were founded and led by missionaries from the end of the 19th century all over colonized Cameroon, were very teacher-centered. Corporal punishment was most often used as the method for education and discipline of students. Later the parents, who had experienced violence in their childhood, continued to apply this on their own children and students as a means of education. So there had been a hand down from one generation to the next, making violence part of daily routine at school even after the colonial era. This is of course an explanation by those who manifest that behaviour, not an apology. Nevertheless, this cannot be a justification to continue using violence.

In the strife to improve education and enhance a peaceful learning environment, the Cameroon parliament passed a law in 1998 officially banning the use of corporal punishment and other forms of violence in school.



Cameroon

In spite of this, the daily use of violence can be seen even outside of schools, homes and everywhere, e. g. by the brutality of Boko Haram, violent conflict resolution by ethnic groups, sexual assaults on girls and women, and even mob actions.

Methods Used by the ISTP Training Programme

To bring about conceptual change towards a non-violent education, the program offers a lot of workshops for teachers, headmasters, parents and students wherein they discuss possibilities and work out concrete methods on how to enhance a peaceful learning environment, during the lessons and out of classrooms. The focus lies on a participative, activating and learner-oriented education in order that learners positively adapt to the fast changing globalized society.

Analyses at our schools have shown that, by practicing in our program during the last three years, the use of physical violence by our teachers – direct corporal punishment – has decreased significantly. However, the use of violent or abusive language or threats like "If you go on talking I will beat you" – is still relatively high up to about 35% among the teachers. On the other hand, the use of violent language, physical and other forms of psychological violence amongst students is still high. That is why at all school levels, starting with the nursery schools, workshops are offered and a lot of discussions take place with kids, students, teachers and parents to develop skills and competences in peaceful communication or conflict management as central subjects.

I am convinced that by the continuous implementation of this program, the situation at schools will change for the better in the long term."

More Information:

Pedagogic In-Service Training Programme, ISTP Cameroon
www.gpenreformation.net/members/pedagogic-in-service-training-programme-istp-cameroon-of-pcc-and-cbc