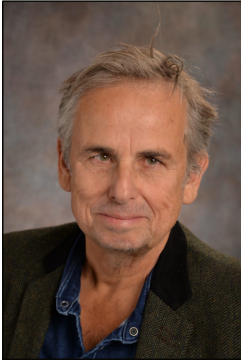


From strategy paper to flop in daily school life

“The opposite of good is not bad, but well-intentioned” (Karl Kraus)

by Alain Pichard,* Switzerland



Alain Pichard
(Photo ma)

(Edit.) Cantonal governments and authorities draft strategy papers that practitioners in schools have to implement. Often, the planners have no idea about the lives of the schoolchildren they want to delight with their educational programmes. This is the case throughout the German-speaking world. Alain Pichard describes such a

process using the example of a nutrition education programme in the city of Biel.

About 10 years ago, a member of parliament in the city of Bern was rattled by media reports of horrific sexual abuse in a family. Her emotions resulted in a parliamentary motion demanding an awareness programme to be carried out in all schools. Children should be reminded that their bodies belong to themselves and that they should not allow themselves to be touched indecently by adults or even by their parents. Condorcet author Alain Pichard takes a look at hyperactive female parliamentarians, their motions and implementation.

Biel's organic food plan has reached its limits

In the red-green parliament of Biel, a city with a population of 55,000, these kinds of motions tend to go through smoothly since lucrative employment offers always beckon for institutions that constantly must underline their importance. The script of such rescue programmes is always the same: a working group drafts a strategy paper, then an institution is commissioned to design a nationwide teaching pro-

gramme. Finally, experts are trained, and mornings for further education are fixed. Now a moderator leads the sensitivity programme with the teachers sitting at the back.

Of course, there are always some recalcitrant teachers who grumble about this kind of governmental “benefit”. Three schools decided they didn't want this. However, their attention was immediately drawn to the fact that this was not a programme to choose but a parliamentary mandate. After all, it was about the welfare of the children and the prevention of sexual assault.

Interference in profound ways of life

Now, it may be said that such a morning is not exactly the end of the world and that a lot of other nonsense is happening at school. It becomes more difficult when well-intentioned ideas of women parliamentarians – sorry, but it is mostly women parliamentarians who come up with such ideas – interfere with profound ways of life.

Rescue programmes against all sorts of harmful things in schools are booming

A few years ago, the Biel city parliament demanded that the food at school lunches be organic, sustainable, and healthy. There is really nothing wrong with that and the motion was passed by a large majority. Now there are also these mendicant monks of dystopia in the Biel administration who want to protect the world and the children from themselves. Nutrition, so the idea goes, is far too important to be left to the cooks. A nutritionist is now responsible for the children's diet.

This nutrition expert calculates the menus according to the latest scientific findings, meticulously issues the daily order for calories, sugar, protein, and minerals, and then designs the menus according to which the meals are prepared centrally in a large kitchen in a retirement home and then distributed throughout the city to schools and nursing homes. Of course, the fight against global warming is also considered:

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one day meat, one day fish and two days vegetarian. Now I know from my own experience of numerous skiing camps that you can cook delicious vegetarian dishes.

Costly and the kids don't like the food

However, Biel's happy meal plan with bulgur, quinoa porridge, whole meal spaghetti, Buddha Bowl with pomegranate seeds or whole meal pancakes has two problems: it is costly and kids don't like the food. The eating habits of our underprivileged children – and there are a lot of them in Biel – are somewhat different from those of the cargo-bike-riding upper-middle class. It is the longing of a comfortable, economically well-secured middle class to educate people whose lifestyles they have no idea of. However, the wrong self-centered ideas of this milieu determines the point of view of the classes.

The result of the nutritional concept, this minimum of complexity is breathtaking: food waste, hungry children and, once again, excessive budgets, because organic food is not among the cheapest. One lunchtime supervisor quickly

bought some chocolate bars in town on her own expense to at least give the kids a sugar boost for the afternoon. The few older pupils, who usually also have some money in their pockets, skip lunch and have a pizza delivered to school and eat it with relish in my classroom.

The measuring of all kinds of governmental "benefits" always produces strange blossoms

However, one must not accuse the administration of not being creative or capable of learning. Thus, the numerous complaints were taken up and a working group was formed. Certain plans have already leaked out. The vast quantities of leftover food are to be distributed in the teachers' rooms, the teachers will pay for them, and the money can then be used to finance chocolate bars.

The opposite of good is not bad, but well-intentioned.

*<https://condorcet.ch/2023/04/das-gegenteil-von-gut-ist-nicht-schlecht-sondern-gut-gemeint-karl-kraus/>,
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