



What is IDEC?

IDEC stands for International Democratic Education Conference, that is to say the world conference of democratic schools. But how do democratic schools differ from other schools? Does it mean that other schools are undemocratic? There is no official definition of democratic schools.

However, they do share some basic characteristics:

- Freedom: children make their own decisions about their learning. There are no compulsory lessons, no binding timetable and no division by age; exams are voluntary.
- Equal rights between learners and teachers: No one is superior to anyone else or can prescribe what anyone else has to do.
- Democratic voting: the school community itself decides how the school is organised: the rules are made communally, and every student and every teacher has one vote.
- Links between the school and its environment: learning doesn't only take place in the form of instruction; the opportunities offered by the local town or village are also used.

A challenge

In the German context that sounds rather Utopian. The children decide for themselves what they will do? Without a timetable and without marks...? But more than thirty years of international experience have

proved that such schools do work, that is to say that they fulfil their purpose, which is to produce educated students. What is more, children in democratic schools nearly always like going to school, are happier with their lives and gain greater social skills. The IDEC in Berlin presents an opportunity for exchanges between these schools. The encounter helps to further develop the ideas and the practice of democratic schools, light is thrown on their opportunities and weaknesses, and outsiders who are interested can also find out about them. For anyone who is interested and not least for German education in general this is stimulating and challenging.

How long have there been IDECs?

IDECs have taken place every year since 1993. They began in Israel, where there are now more than twenty democratic schools. Their way around the world has taken them to England, Austria, Ukraine, Japan, New Zealand and the USA. The 2004 IDEC will take place in India.

The Organisers of IDEC 2005

Having the 2005 IDEC in Berlin, once again in Europe after a long gap, is the idea of two Berlin associations, K.R.Ä.T.Z.Ä, which is the children's rights programme of the Prenzlauer Berg SPIEL/KULTUR network, and the Schule für Erwachsenenbildung e.V. (Adult Education School) in Kreuzberg. For years K.R.Ä.T.Z.Ä. has been demanding equal rights between children and adults

and changes in the education system, and both associations support self-managed learning and self-government of schools.

The Programme

The most up-to-date version of the programme is on the internet at www.idec2005.org. Lectures followed by discussions, poster sessions, presentations, workshops and films are planned – and at the same time the principle of the »open schedule« will be followed. This means that during the conference the participants will be able to add their own subjects for discussion or proposals for activities or talks to the official timetable at any time. In this way current needs will be met and the skills and knowledge of those present will be used in a flexible way. Children and young people will be able to take part in everything. Alongside the arrangements to do with the conference itself, we are planning excursions and a programme of cultural tours.

The General Public

In order to introduce the idea of democratic schools to society at large for two days the conference will be public. Teachers, children and young people, politicians, academics and journalists will be able to attend lectures and enter a dialogue with representatives of democratic schools.



When? – Where? – How?

The 2005 IDEC in Berlin has been in preparation with the co-operation of young people who are still at school since spring 2004. We are expecting 300 - 400 participants from all continents. The principal language of the conference will be English. For particular events we are planning to have translation, and if possible simultaneous translation.

Cost:

We are hoping to manage with a conference fee of between 200 and 300 Euros.

Place:

Berlin (FEZ Wuhlheide and Humboldt University)

Dates:

July 30 – August 7, 2005

IDEC 2005 BERLIN

Berlin
July 30 – August 7, 2005

International Democratic Education Conference Committee

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