

Report

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(by Monika Wernz, Educator, Pioniere of Education, School founder)

Sudbury School Ammersee – A free democratic school in Bavaria was closed by the authorities after two years of successful operation.

No further democratic schools will be approved in Bavaria since that time. That have to be changed.



Introduction

This report deals with Sudbury School Ammersee, a free democratic school in the Ammersee region of Bavaria. The school opened in 2014 after nine years of founding efforts and was not granted further approval by the authorities in 2016. The school was based on the concept of the Sudbury Valley School in Massachusetts, was a member of an international democratic education movement (EUDEC), and had numerous positive testimonials from students, parents, expert statements, and scientific reports. For the rights of young people and the right to education, it is important and valuable to take a look here.

Democratic education movement worldwide

There is a growing educational movement worldwide that focuses on the rights to free personal development and participation.

Understanding of education: Democratic education with independent learning without a mandatory curriculum; learning decisions are primarily made by the learners. The basic principle is that everyone has the right to educate themselves freely, supported by teachers in an egalitarian, Students and teachers each have one vote in school matters; decisions are made according to the principles of democratic participation.

International classification: The Sudbury movement comprises around 70 schools worldwide that are based on the Sudbury Valley School concept. Science Reports and graduate study is available. ([Link](#)) [Link](#)

In addition, there are well over 200 schools that are based on the above principles and describe themselves as democratic schools.

Source and overview: www.eudec.org, [List of schools](#)

Chronology of the Sudbury School Ammersee

2005–2014: Preparation, further training, and international networking (IDEC, EUDEC, Sudbury International) with the establishment of an international scientific advisory board.

2012: Round table at the Ministry of Education with the support of important pioneers of democratic education (including Yaacov Hecht) to highlight the international roots of democratic schools. Publicity

2013: Approval of the educational concept under two conditions: 1. Scientific monitoring, 2. Documentation of learning progress.

2014: Opening of the Sudbury School Ammersee with around 35 students; several families move to Bavaria.

2015–2016: High public profile and increasing demand; new founding initiatives in Bavaria. Change of inspectors; new demands for documentation and examination of learning progress; unannounced inspections; demand for conceptual changes.

2016: Renewal of license denied; the border filed an urgent appeal, which was rejected; operations had to be discontinued.

2016-2023 Courtcases, Démonstrations, Parents, Students, Founder where engaged for a reopening

Reason for closure

Reason (summary): According to Art. 7 Abs. 4 GG/Privatschulgesetz of the German Constitution/Private School Act, the Sudbury School Ammersee could not guarantee that the school would not lag behind regular schools in the performance of grades 4 and 9.

Why does this school project highlight the disregard for the right to education for many families?

1). Many students did not do well in regular schools before, diagnoses, learning difficulties, depression, experienced bullying... In the two years of the Sudbury School Ammersee, many things improved: well-being, independent projects, joy of learning and social skills increased – Students who wanted to graduate have passed their exams. Reports from parents and students are available.

2) Article 1 of the Bavarian School and Education Plan/(Law) stipulates that knowledge and skills should be imparted and that the mind, body, heart, and character should be developed. The Sudbury School fulfilled this holistically, even though the focus was not purely on imparting knowledge.

In terms of knowledge acquisition, equivalence can be assumed. Even in regular schools, the achievement of educational standards cannot be guaranteed, and the system increasingly produces many learning difficulties and stress.

3) The scientific monitoring of the two years of practice (Prof. Dr. Ulrich Klemm, Prof. Dr. Gregor Lang-Wojtasik) was ignored, and their assessment that the educational standards achieved at the Sudbury School Ammersee are not inferior to those of public schools was disregarded.

4) Statements by experts on the scientific advisory board who wanted to highlight new perspectives on democratic education were disregarded.

Members of the scientific advisory board: Ph.D. Peter Gray (Boston) Prof. Dr. Phil, Ulrich Klemm, Dr. Lang-Wojtasik, Dr. Alan Thomas, Derry Hannam (rapporteur Democratic Citizenship (EDC) Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Hans Ulrich Grunder (Switzerland)

Zitat. Explanation ([Link](#))

"We, the members of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Sudbury School Ammersee, are dismayed that the government of Upper Bavaria has refused to renew the Sudbury School Ammersee's license ... The success of Sudbury schools is independent of the culture of the respective country, whether in the USA, Israel, Belgium, Holland, France, or Germany.

Education as practiced at Sudbury School Ammersee is therefore not an experiment, but a mature, well-thought-out, and repeatedly tested and proven concept. ... „

5) A petition for the reopening of the Education Policy Forum (signed by 45 member organizations) was rejected by the Education Committee. [Link](#)

6) In the second instance, an expert from the Ministry of Education was commissioned, who gave a negative assessment of the Sudbury School concept. This expert had no expertise in democratic schools.

A request by the Sudbury School for a counter-assessment by Prof. Dr. Gloe (LMU Munich) was rejected. Prof. Dr. Gloe has spent many years studying democratic schools, co-authored the Handbook for Democracy Education, and would have been able to take a realistic view of the success of democratic schools. [Link](#)

7) Applications for approval of other democratic schools that enshrine freedom of learning or make adjustments were rejected in Bavaria, although this is possible in other federal states in Germany. The Luana Augsburg initiative is currently taking legal action to defend its concept: [Link](#)

Final remark

The Sudbury School Ammersee represented an innovative model of democratic education that focused on young people's rights to education, participation, and humane learning conditions.

Although the school could not be continued, the experiences and the question of democratic education in Bavaria remain relevant and need to be pursued further and its important that all new Project about Democratic Schools and democratic learning should be allowed to establish themselves

Forum Bildungspolitik Petition Genehmigung Demokratischer Schulen: <https://forum-bildungspolitik.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/FB-Petition-Demokratischer-Schulen.pdf>

Eudec (European Democratic Education Community) <https://eudec.org/>

Schools Eudec: <https://eudec.org/network/schools-and-start-ups/>

Handbuch Demokratie Pädagogik , Prof. Wolfgang Beutel, Prof. Dr. Gloe ...
Herausgeber (2022)

Demokratische Schule Luana: Augsburg in Gründung : [Linkhttps://luana-augsburg.de/](https://luana-augsburg.de/)

Ph.D Peter Gray. <https://www.petergray.org/s-projects-basic>

Zusammenfassung aller Studien zu demokratischen Schulen weltweit: [Link https://luana-augsburg.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Alumni_Demokratischer_Schulen_Studien_GellerKarl2020.pdf](https://luana-augsburg.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Alumni_Demokratischer_Schulen_Studien_GellerKarl2020.pdf)

Yaccov Hecht, <https://www.education-cities.com/en/>

Yaccov Hecht, Democratic Education – A beginning of a story, 2010



Mit der Schultüte zur Demo – statt zur (geschlossenen) Schule: die Demonstranten vor dem Ministerium. © Oliver Bodmer

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AUS FÜR SUDBURY-SCHULE

Regierung verbietet Sudbury-Schule: Protest vor Ministerium

Statements des wissenschaftlichen Beirats



"Wir, die Mitglieder des Wissenschaftlichen Beirats der Sudbury Schule Ammersee, sind bestürzt darüber, dass die Regierung von Oberbayern der Sudbury Schule Ammersee die Weitergenehmigung verweigern möchte. Hiermit möchten wir uns ausdrücklich für den Erhalt der Schule aussprechen!" [...]

Die ausführliche Stellungnahme können Sie sich hier herunterladen:

- [Statement Wissenschaftlicher Beirat \(Deutsch\).pdf](#)
- [Statement wissenschaftlicher Beirat \(Englisch\).pdf](#)

