GENDER EQUALITY

Group members:
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Target Group:
Grundschule Kirchzarten, Class 4a, 27 children (ages 10/11)

Date:
10th May 2017

Duration:
CONCEPT:
When our group first found together, we found out quickly that we wanted to do our project about gender differences and stereotypes. Even though only one group member had visited this workshop, we were all very interested in learning about this topic. We exchanged experiences, thoughts and opinions on this topic and talked about how to show people what we had learned. We saw young children as an ideal target group, mainly because of their stereotypical mindsets that are given to them by adults in our society at a very young age. We thought it was best to teach young children because they are still at an early stage of their life where this project can influence their way of acting towards each other. So we decided to go to the Elementary School of Kirchzarten and after contacting the principal, Mr. Graesslin, he quickly agreed to letting us do our project together with his class, 27 students aged 10-11.

ACTION:
On Wednesday, the 10th of May, we visited the class 4a from 8:25 to 9:25. We were all very excited and nervous because we had prepared a lot for our action, but we weren’t sure if everything would go as planned. First, we entered the classroom and introduced ourselves. Then, we started off with a story read by Joelle. The first task was to listen carefully. When Joelle was finished with reading the story out loud, we asked the children to draw what had happened. The story was about a strong and smart child that had helped a dog out of a well by building a mechanism to pull it out. What we expected the children to draw was a well, a dog and a boy. In our society, strength, mechanical knowledge and bravery are character traits that are usually connected with boys. We wanted to see if these children would also connect our child in the story with a boy.
The results were definitely not what we had expected: 16 children had drawn a girl, and only 11 had drawn a boy. Since we had been convinced of an opposite result, we were forced to improvise.

Then we asked the children why they had drawn a girl or a boy and collected character traits and hobbies they thought were typical for girls or boys. Astonishingly, the children were very open and had only few character traits that they thought belonged “only to girls” and “only to boys”. Even with a sport like soccer, most children agreed that girls and boys could play equally well. Next, we showed them the “Genderbread man”, something we had learned in the gender group. The children participated very well and we could progress quickly. Most children agreed that the way they dressed showed if they were a girl or a boy, but that it wouldn’t be bad if a girl would be dressed like a boy either. They understood quickly that there was not only one aspect that shows others your gender. Apart from your dress code, you can also express your gender through your biological sex, whether you feel yourself as a girl or a boy and whom you feel attracted to.

Last, we asked the children what they had learned today. The results were very positive: we wrote several conclusions on the board such as:
- Girls/Boys can love who they want to.
- Everyone is free to decide what job he/she wants to have.
- Girls/Boys can wear whatever they want to.
- Hobbies and character traits aren’t supposed to be limited to a specific gender.
Then, we said goodbye and thanked them for participating so well. We had definitely enjoyed this hour with children described as very open and tolerant. We were pleased with how our action had gone and so was Mr. Graesslin, the principal and class teacher.

CONCLUSION:
Our feelings after the day of action are very positive. We are all very pleased with how our action went and we were happy that we had the possibility to bring some of the spirit and a lot of valuable information and lessons to the children. In our opinion, everything went very well, even though the results of a few games and tasks such as the drawing didn't go as we had expected. Nevertheless, the children learned a lot and had a lot of fun talking about what they think is a stereotypical character trait or profession. We think that we definitely achieved what we had wanted to: we had given young children a chance to think about gender roles in our society, a rare and uncommon thing in German elementary schools.

I think we would all like to participate in something like this again. The EYFT was a unique and unforgettable experience and we are all very grateful that we had the chance to participate and to spread the spirit and message of these different workshops in our own country.