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**BIG IDEAS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD OF DISABILITIES
2023**

WORKSHOP 10. Information Pack

Power in school – Theory of Michel Foucault „School as disciplinary institution”

Tom Hoffmann, Saskia Schuppener & Nico Leonhardt

Wednesday 13th September

10.00 – 12.00 (UK & Ireland)

11.00 – 13.00 Uhr (Germany & Netherlands)

- 1. About the Workshop**
- 2. About Tom, Saskia & Nico**
- 3. Difficult Words**
- 4. Background to Foucault's theory**
- 5. Game: „Disciplinary techniques”**

1. About the Workshop

The workshop will be on Zoom. We will send a link.

1. Introductions
2. NICO gives a short insight into difficult words
3. TOM talks about Michel Foucault and his thoughts on power
4. SASKIA explains what a „panopticon“ is and what „school as a disciplinary institution“ means
5. *We will have a short break*
6. We play a GAME to understand Foucault's theory
7. We discuss about power in our own school time
8. NICO gives an outlook on how to deal with power in school
9. We make a short feedback round

We would like to play a game with you. For this you need a dice. You can bring your own dice. If you don't have one, you can use a digital dice or we can roll for you.

The workshop will be held in German. But it will be translated to English (translation: Wiebke Bergjürgen).

The workshop will be evaluated.

So notes will be taken.

You can let us know if you do not want your ideas recorded or want to remain anonymous.

For any questions please contact Nicola Grove:

drnicolagrove@fastmail.net

or Saskia: schupp@uni-leipzig.de

2. About Tom, Saskia & Nico

Tom, Saskia and Nico are from Germany. They have been working together in formats of participatory teaching and research since 2019. At Leipzig University they have been colleagues for 4 years. They reflect on critical theories together with students and people with learning difficulties.



Tom Hoffmann works as a self-advocate at Leipzig University. Since 2019 Tom Hoffmann was qualified there as an "Expert for Inclusion and Education". At the university he holds workshops, seminars and lectures on socially critical topics such as normality, power, relationships, manipulation and discrimination.



Saskia Schuppener is the Professor for inclusive education and participation in the context of learning difficulties at Leipzig University. For her teaching and research, she works together with children, adolescents and adults with learning difficulties. She is interested in the empowerment of people experiencing oppression and discrimination..



Nico Leonhardt is a research assistant at Leipzig University. He teaches and researches together with people with learning difficulties. He is interested in topics that critically analyze discrimination.

3. Difficult Words

We want to explain some words that can be useful to understand our workshop.

- **Institution:** An institution is an organization. It usually has a purpose. This purpose can be religious, educational, professional or social. An example for an institution is a school.
- **Disciplinary institution:** Disciplinary institutions are institutions which wield power over people. They can control their behavior. Examples for disciplinary institutions are schools, hospitals and military institutions.
- **Panopticon:** A panopticon is a building that allows to observe the people inside. The building is made of many rooms that form a circle. In the middle of the building is a watchtower. From the watchtower, you can see into every room of the building. Panopticons were meant to be used as prisons, allowing one watchman to observe all prisoner cells at once.
- **Total surveillance:** Total surveillance means to be constantly watched by someone else. Under total surveillance everything you do is being observed.
- **Structure:** Structures describe the relations between things or people. Power structures for example describe who has power in a relationship and how this power is expressed.
- **Hierarchy:** A ranking of members of a system. They can for example be ranked after the amount of power they hold in the system.

4. Background to Foucault's theory

Michel Foucault was a French philosopher. He lived from 1926 to 1984. Among other things he looked into the types and effects of power.

Foucault understood power as something movable. According to Foucault, power is not possessed by a person or a group of people. He writes: „Power is not something that is acquired, taken away, shared, retained, or lost.”

Foucault looked at power structures in relationships. Power expresses itself in unequal relationships. This means, that one part in the relationship has more power than the other. This can change.

If the power structure no longer changes one part is constantly more powerful than the other. When this happens you can speak of „domination”. Domination forces others into submission. That power relation is negative.

But power can also be productive. It can, for example, release energy.

Foucault wanted to know how power is expressed. He understood power as an action.

He looked at structures and institutions. He questioned how they use actions to exercise power.

Power relations can also be produced through buildings and spaces. The way buildings or spaces are designed can exercise power over a person or a group of people. It can also help a person or a group of people to exercise power over others.

Foucault describes this with the example of a „panopticon”. A panopticon is a building with many rooms. All the rooms can be observed from one single point. From

that point, a single person can watch and control all the people in the rooms. It is a state of „total surveillance”.

This can be the case in a prison: from the watchtower the guard can see into all prison cells. The prisoners are being observed all the time. All their actions can be seen from the watchtower.

This is a way to wield power over the prisoners and keep them under control.

Thus a watchtower is a way to exercise power through the design of the building.

We want to look at power using the example of SCHOOL:

Foucault says, a school is a disciplinary institution.

In school, power is exercised through „techniques of disciplining”.

„Techniques of disciplining” are actions to produce desired behavior. These actions include: rules, control and coercion.

In school this happens through drills, repetition and exams.

- This can be productive. It can help the students to develop skills.
- It can also be negative. It can cause the oppression and submission of students.

In the workshop we want to look at how power and discipline look like in school.

We also want to talk about how we experienced power during our schooldays. Of course, this is voluntary: no one has to talk about their school experiences. Only if they want to.

5. Game: „Disciplinary techniques”

We will play a game together. It will be a digital board game. We want to use it to learn about examples of discipline at school.

You will need a dice for this game. If you do not have a dice or can't roll a dice, we will send you a link to a website. On the website you can roll a digital dice. Alternatively, we can roll a dice for you. After the game, we will discuss it together.

