

Mobility classes in schools combined with driver training

The purpose of a Berlin's local Agenda 21 leading project

Contribution to the CIECA Congress 2008 in Zagreb, Croatia

The Agenda 21, a comprehensive plan of action, which has been agreed upon by 170 countries at the conference in Rio, is not only addressing environmental problems and environment protection. It also comprises goals, measures and instruments for sustainable development. If deficits are identified in a generally positive system they should be solved in a sustainable way.

One of those deficits which can be solved in a sustainable way is the general manner of how cars and automobiles are used. Most of the time people drive too often, too fast, too risky and generally not environmentally friendly enough – but worse the driving could even be uncivilised, barbaric, without any respect and inhuman.

More than just a deficit but a real problem which urgently needs to be tackled has been known for a long time. This is the high accident rate of young novice drivers shown over the last decades. A problem, which could not be solved by the introduction of the probationary license neither by additional training. It is an expression of not knowing how to deal with this situation if these accidents are only referred back to the risky driving or similar dangerous attitudes of the novice drivers. However, such explanations do not solve the problem itself.

Even trained driving instructors do not know how young people and teenagers need to be treated in order to strongly influence their behaviour and attitudes. This requires professional pedagogic competences and in depth study of education and training on a high level.

The above mentioned problem results from the so called „permission system“ which has been introduced by the state to prepare and control the admission of (back then) adults as drivers of automobiles. Traffic and the increasing number of cars was understood and treated by the administration as a technical system – similar to the railway. This is still reflected in the German road traffic act.

In the law automobiles are per definition described as „land vehicles which are moved by mechanical power without being bound to tracks“. The preparation for the driving test was and is still oriented towards the preparation for traffic as a system where people move along fixed rules as if moving on tracks. This means that people should act and function like machines and feel as parts of a technical system. Thereby the rules for traffic interaction replace the „missing tracks“ in the heads of the people. The streets as people's living space are thereby reinterpreted as technical systems.

Even today it is still the same public authority that is in charge for the admission of automobiles on the streets and at the same time for the issuing of driving licences which means basically the admission of people to traffic. (The approach of the public authority and at the same time it's failure when trying to convince new drivers to adapt an economic and energy saving driving behaviour can be illustrated with a convincing example).

In reality road traffic is a social System which requests a certain behaviour that is more complex than what can be tested at the driving test. Participants in road traffic need more complex skills than the knowledge of how to drive a vehicle and traffic regulations. What is really needed but not taught in driving schools is „mobility competence“. This includes necessary changes in the attitude of the driver and more than currently foreseen in the test and the preparation classes. What is needed are mobility classes under pedagogic direction.. But even thorough preparation and the application of well tested curricula for the re-training of driving instructors cannot address this problem.

The preparation course for applicants in order to become driving instructors (the so-called education) was subject to an elaborate research project. It showed clearly which skills had been acquired by the driving instructors during the only five-month lasting education and their performance in the driving schools later on. They mainly focus on preparing their clients (and especially learner drivers) on passing the test within the commercial framework.

Those deficits in the driving instructor training were addressed but not completely solved in **1998** through the introduction of a complimentary practical training of 4.5 months in the driving school in addition to the five months basic training following a research report published already in **1983**. The pedagogical training knowledge which is now taught can of course not be compared to the professional pedagogical training of universities. It can be estimated from which point of time on an extension of the education of the potential driving instructors (which still takes less then a year) would actually be reflected in their work in the driving schools.

Albeit the insights we have gained the Technical University of Berlin through our direct work with driving instructors showing what driving instructors can achieve in the best case, we are working step by step on a concept on „pro-social driving and ecological behaviour“ which aims at providing a better preparation for driving for young learner drivers.

During the thematic „Year of the young driver“ in 1995 the Technical University of Berlin introduced this concept as a cooperation project. The most important elements of this concept are: group driving training, preparatory training before the driving school education, new concepts for theory classes, the use of driving trainers, training on special areas and finally accompanied driving. During those driving lessons, which are carried out towards the end of the training, the learner driver is driving alone on routes which have been agreed beforehand and is connected by radio to the driving instructor who is following the learner driver in a second car. This is already standard in training courses for motorcycle licences.

However, it is now clear for us that a training resulting in pro-social and ecological traffic attitude cannot be expected from or achieved by driving schools alone. For this reason we carried out a test trying to include schools in the preparation of young drivers. (These measure are recognised by law in Germany since **1997** „a training, that combines traffic education in schools with the training according to regulations of driving instructor law as a pre-requisite for driving licences”)

This concept, developed at the Technical University of Berlin combining mobility training in school and driver training was introduced during the 6. International Workshop „Driver Improvement“ in Berlin in **1997**. The corresponding report „Driver training together with schools — basic principles of the concept of sustainable driver training for young novice drivers to encourage socially-competent and environmentally friendly driving“ was published by the Federal Highway Research Institute in the series „Man and security“. The report is also available online in pdf-format at www.besser-fahren-lernen.de for teachers who would like to moderate a mobility course.

The reasons given for the introduction of the law and the original aims of this combined education show a lack of expert knowledge in the responsible administration but at least recognise the importance of the extended driver training together with schools.

So far traffic education in schools was left to the „friendly police officer“ educating children or the test for bikes for children between ten and twelve years. The sometimes offered training for mopeds at schools was not successful. In some cities so many disadvantages are linked to mopeds that courses trying to encourage the use of the bike and public transport instead of mopeds are held. Mobility education including concepts like Hans Monderman’s „concept of „shared space“ requires extensive knowledge acquired mobility courses under the title of „classes on human locomotion“.

After having made some experiences with traffic education when they were children the teenagers are not keen on being lectured on behaviour in traffic again. It is much more interesting for them to obtain the driving licence very quickly and so far schools cannot help them in achieving this goal. They would like to pass the driving test instead of learning how to drive. The high costs for the driver training preparing them for the tests are accepted due to the lack of alternatives and pupils as well as their teachers first have to be convinced of the mobility training in schools by emphasising its advantages.

The introduction of mobility courses is mentioned in the following based on the Rio Agenda 21. Chapter 2.8.3 of Agenda 21 published in 1992 states: Each local government should enter into a dialogue process with its citizens, the local organisations and the private companies and agree upon a local Agenda 21. The difficulties of this process could be foreseen and it is not easy to master them in Germany as well. Special open council sessions with the citizens on the draft of Agenda 21 Berlin, which took a long time to prepare, have been organised in 2003 to increase participation of the citizens. One of those events on the topic „Mobility“ was especially successful and attracted many participants.

My presentation at this event proposing the introduction of „**mobility courses combined with driver training**“ at first only at few schools and reward the participating pupils with a „**mobility pass**“ was surprisingly well appreciated. This mobility pass should enable pupils to use public transport at reduced prices for several years after obtaining their driving licence. Which on the one hand rewards them for their commitment and on the other hand encourages social responsible and ecological mobility instead of using the car all the time after obtaining their driving licence.

Amongst several other proposals the project „mobility classes in schools“ was chosen as one of only two leading projects in the expert’s forum „education» in the progress of developing the local Berlin Agenda 21. All leading projects were formulated together with representatives of the senate office.

The finalised version of the Agenda 21 Berlin was agreed by the House of Representatives, the Berlin Parliament, on the 8 June 2006 thereby integrating the lead projects in the annex of the proposal. The decision was the following: The House of Representatives declares Agenda 21 Berlin to be the main idea of the future country policy. The senate is encouraged to integrate Agenda 21 Berlin as the main idea of his future policy and to fulfil the listed quality and action goals as soon as possible.

Information on the current status of the implementation of the lead project „mobility courses“ provided by the Institute for Traffic Education and the school administration before making available the first officially planned 100 mobility passes can be found in the internet at www.besser-fahren-lernen.de.

The publication of the first information magazine of „Berlin 21“, an association which has in the meantime been founded to promote all Agenda activities was carried out in **December 2007**. Beginning of this year the second edition will be published. Those expecting a faster progress should not underestimate the hurdles which have to be overcome for Agenda 21 projects in Berlin like in all other places. The realisation of this programme can only be carried out slowly and step by step and will probably still take the next decades.

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