

Rede Projekt Lilie 29.9.2007

Excuse Ambassador Thanks for invitation to Projekt Lilie.

A language is more than just books and words. Every language in the world is something to treasure because it has developed over the years and reflects the evolution of a people, the interaction with other people, in one words its culture. As a language grows, it diversifies, builds on itself and borrows from its neighbours and its friends.

The German spoken here in Namibia illustrates this in particular. It is always amazing for German tourist and diplomats alike how much German you still find spoken and used in everyday Namibia: the Allgemeine Zeitung, the German NBC, the Churches, shop vendors adress you in German, in Tourism you find many German speakers and of course in many families and several schools all over the country German is taught either as a mother tongue or as a foreign language. (Namibian words such as “Braai”, “Pad” or “Rivier” are by the way very close to be recognized by an official German dictionary according to the work of our German Academic Exchange lecturer, Dr. Klinner.)

The multitude of German speaking institutions and activities has been illustrated in this years two supplements about “Deutsch in Namibia” by the AZ. Apparantly there was so much material that the second supplement was quickly filled.

But one doesn't easily learn a language by oneself. An encouraging environment is not enough. One needs to be taught by parents, friends the so called peers and most importantly by teachers.

Several novels in German - deal with the fate of growing up, of becoming an adult member of society. In many books teachers play an important role and rightly so in my view! I think everybody in this room still has memories of one or several teachers that were important to him or her during the school life.

Even 28 years after leaving school in 1979 I still recall several of my teachers, the favourite ones and the ones I disliked. I am sure that also our main speaker tonight Claude Moeller recalls some of his teachers.

Time spent in school is a vital part of learning and of growing up. Therefore it is natural that people we meet on our way shape our views and influence us.

Teaching is an extremely challenging and a very responsible profession; one that requires a degree of excellence that needs to be recognized and rewarded.

With this aim in mind Projekt Lilie came into being. Founded only three years ago it aims to do just this: acknowledge and award the foremost outstanding professionals in this field in this yearly ceremony. The image of a profession is vital for promoting it.

The Projekt Lilie has contributed immensely to draw public attention in Namibia to the important part teachers play in conveying a true understanding of the German language and more important: triggering a joy in learning German.

It is the aim of the Projekt Lilie to improve the reputation of the profession of a teacher.

Teaching is a very noble and important task. Recent studies, the international PISA study in particular, have shown how important it is to have the best people working in the field of education for our children.

It is no coincidence that Finland has not only reached the highest results in this study but that in Finland the profession of a teacher also has the best reputation compared to other countries.

High School Graduates are eager in Finland to become teachers. Only 10 % of the applicants can be accepted by universities, even

though teacher's income is below European average. But let me stop praising Finland.

Why is learning German important worldwide?

Apart from German being the second most popular language among scientific publications and the internet's web pages, studying German gives you direct access to literature classics as from Goethe, Schiller, Grass or even Peter Weiss and to the philosophical basis of our modern times as it has been formulated by Kant, Nietzsche or by Schopenhauer.

But speaking personally I agree with last years award winner Prof. Dr. Gretschel: I think that teaching any language means offering the pupils the invaluable chance of sharing the words of another culture and giving them the opportunity to establish profound friendships and a sense of mutual understanding. Something we all need in this increasingly interactive and interdependent world.

In Namibia the different cultures are even protected in the constitution, in Art. 19.

Still there are new challenges for the preservation of German in Namibia: families with German heritage tend to have less children than in the past, many children nowadays grow up bilingually. Teachers are reaching retirement age and not many successors are in sight.

This has caused problems in the past for many smaller German speaking schools. Some do heavily rely on assistance by German teaching training students who ease the burden for their teacher colleagues.

Everywhere in the world one looks for new ways of making teaching attractive to young students.

This is why I welcome the new motivation award for young teachers introduced in this year for the first time in particular. Besides honouring those enthusiastic teachers who have been

dedicating themselves to this task successfully already for a long time, Projekt Lilie also wants to recognize young pedagogues who are able to excite students about learning with new approaches and fresh ideas. This new award wants to encourage these new talents to stick to their profession and their

Progress in pupil figures can be observed in the field of teaching German as a foreign language where we observe rising figures.

This example shows us where another role of the German language in Namibia lies: German has to be promoted not only in the German speaking communities but also among those Namibians without German heritage. This is done through the Goethe Centre in Windhuk.

I am very grateful for the strong support we receive here from the Namibian government for German in state and private schools. The fact that German is being taught and promoted also in public schools can not be taken for granted.

It is not enough to have an interesting fulfilling and stimulating profession but you also need to look at you paycheque when you decide about a career. To make the teaching profession more attractive the Kulturrat and the AGDS have set up a new special fund called Deutsch in Namibia for donations to this noble aim so that additional money might be paid to attract the right people for this profession.

Let me assure you that the Embassy highly welcomes and appreciates this local Namibian initiative and does wish that many will assist the new fund with their contributions so that German taught as a mother tongue can have a bright future in Namibian school life in the years to come.

Ende Zitat Feuerzangenbowle

I thank you for your attention.