

Education on (Anti-)Corruption for High School Students – Austrian Project

The Austrian school system entails, inter alia, the provision to train the youth in independent judgment and social understanding. Young students should be encouraged to participate in economic and cultural life in Austria, Europe and the world.

Knowledge of corruption phenomena, legal and ethical aspects of corruption prevention and compliance as well as combating corruption are increasingly needed and demanded for. Real working life, however, fails to form part in the education and business interests are initially abstract. Therefore, education of corruption prevention and awareness-raising of the youth in this area play an important role in the fight against corruption. Since corruption is a complex social phenomenon, it also requires complex approaches to prevent corruption, the Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAK) of the Austrian Ministry of the Interior believes. It is the responsibility of the BAK to reduce corruption through systematic prevention.

Therefore, the BAK has developed a project on “Anti- Corruption Training” for students of 14 to 18 years.

A pilot project was set up in summer 2012 as the need to educate the youth and to raise awareness about the dangers of corruption came about. The Department of Prevention of the BAK developed an initial concept which was presented in a secondary school. The inclusion of a feedback to be filled in by the students was very constructive. Consequently, the decision to build a project group was taken. The project team exists of experts in psychology, sociology, law, criminology, investigation, education (teacher in secondary schools) and political education.

Goal and Contents of the Anti-Corruption Training

The goal of the project is to create a training against corruption that can be carried out in schools. The target group would be students of 14 to 18 years in high schools and vocational training schools. The training should, inter alia, guarantee security in daily professional life as well as recognition and prevention of corrupt situations.

Several skills should be acquired in this context. First, expertise about corruption is sought to be enhanced. Students are familiarized with terms like corruption, prevention of corruption, economic crime, compliance, principles of the corruption phenomenon and legal bases of the fight against corruption. Second, expertise in values, decisions and actions will be gained. Not only will students be able to assess the relation between economic activity and moral values but they will also be able to establish the role of a citizen regarding prevention of and fight against corruption. Finally, linguistic and social skills will be developed.

Teaching contents include the definition of the term “corruption”, forms of corruption (situational, structural), reasons and consequences of corruption, models to explain the corruption phenomena, corruption prevention and finally, institutions and instruments in the fight against corruption.

Duration of the training

The training is divided in 8 units of 45 minutes each and is held by the Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption, Department of Prevention. There are no requirements necessary on the part of the students. The programme is evaluated by feedback of the students (feedback form to be filled in) which guarantees the permanent update of the training.

Implementation of the training

The actual training is organized in power point presentations, using a flip-chart and a questionnaire to gather ideas about corruption and to test previous knowledge and furthermore, a film about corruption is shown. Discussions are held in plenum and in groups. An investigator answers questions of the students and shows an interrogation room. Finally, a hand-out on corruption ("Information on Corruption") is handed over to the students.

Two interactions in the classroom which should raise the awareness are presented, the "Corruption Barometer" and role-plays. For the exercise "Corruption Barometer", students are requested to assess corrupt situations on the bases of case studies. Two sheets inscribed with "Corruption" and "No Corruption" are placed on the floor, leaving some distance between them. The trainer reads out some (possible) corruption cases. Students move between the two sheets according to what level of corruption they perceive for each case. The trainer asks about their reasons for believing that corruption is involved or not. At the end of the exercise the cases will be reflected and discussed in more detail. Cases range from situations in school to public administration and politics. One case, for example, deals with school: a student has learned a lot for an exam. On the day of the exam, however, she fails due to nervousness. The teacher lets her pass anyway.

Another exercise that is widely used is role-plays. Cases of situational and structural corruption are presented in role-plays. For each case, each student is given a "role-card" where his/her role is explained. One case deals with the acceptance of gifts in a school. Susi S. is a bad student and might fail in mathematics. Her mother arranges to meet Susi's teacher at school. During the conversation, the mother gives the school teacher a precious pen. The director and a teacher of philosophy are present. After playing out the role-play, three questions are posed to the students. First, evaluate the behaviour of each person. Second, in your opinion, can this already be considered as corruption? Third, how should these people behave properly?

At the end of the training, the students receive a hand-out on "Information on Corruption" which includes a test. The hand-out lays out the essentials of the training such as the answer to the question "What is corruption?", causes and forms of corruption, where corruption starts, consequences of the offences, what will be punished by the legislator, corruption prevention and finally, a short introduction of the Federal Bureau of Anti-Corruption.

For implementing this project, the links between the disciplines taught and the issue of corruption is essential because the "Anti-Corruption Training" should raise the awareness of the youth by giving practical examples with a view to promoting personal integrity, understanding of human rights, civic responsibility and duties to society.

Expansion of the “Anti-Corruption Training”

The next step is the creation of a training concept for students of 10-14 years who are about to enter professional life.

It is also planned to enter into cooperation with the Ministry of Education to train teachers-to-be at university since teachers should be willing and able to teach corruption phenomena in different school subjects. The most appropriate disciplines in that respect are history, civic education, ethics and economics.

As the topic of corruption should be effectively incorporated in education, it is necessary to be in contact with experts, schools and universities.