

Civil defence pedagogies and narratives of democracy: disaster education in Germany

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Abstract

‘Disaster education’ is a fledgling area of study in lifelong education. Many countries educate their populations for disasters, to mitigate potential damage and loss of life, as well as contribute to national security. In this paper, which draws on interview data from the German Federal Office for Civil Defence and Disaster Assistance and the Federal Agency for Technical Relief, archival research, analysis of websites and promotional materials as well as relevant academic literature, I examine disaster education and preparedness for national emergencies in Germany. I argue that it is not generally extended to the general public, rather confined to trained experts, decentralised, localised and exclusive. Theorising disaster education as a ‘civil defence pedagogy’ (Preston, 2008), a type of public pedagogy, which contributes to shaping narratives of national identity, I argue that it is unlikely that Germany will develop a more inclusive, universal, formalised, nor high-profile campaign in disaster education in the foreseeable future. This, I suggest, is due to narratives of the German democratic nation state as secure, federal, peaceful and unified, which originated at the founding of West Germany in 1949, and continue to shape contemporary political narratives.

Key words

Disaster education; civil defence pedagogies; security narratives; democracy; Germany

Introduction

Lifelong education has a long history, and has taken on shifting meanings according to different historical, political and economic contexts. It generally refers to education and learning over the life course, encompassing formal, non-formal and informal education. Particularly since the 1990’s, in the guise of lifelong learning, it has been used to refer to systems of (mostly formal, but also non-formal and informal) education which train populations to respond to change and risk, including a continually shifting labour market, increasingly marketised economies, changing technologies and the retreat of the welfare state. Populations are expected to become more flexible and adaptable, becoming ‘upskilled’ as technologies and sectors change, and taking individual responsibility for their learning (see e.g. Okumoto, 2010). ‘Disaster education’, a fledgling area of study in the field of education, can be regarded as a type of lifelong education of the public for both natural and man-made disasters, such as earthquakes and tsunamis, catastrophic flooding and terrorist attacks. It can be defined as ‘public education for emergencies’ (Preston, 2012), and encompasses a wide range of lifelong education for and around disasters and emergencies for the general public, including both formal schooling and public information campaigns, preparedness for potential disasters, the training of volunteer forces, disaster mitigation, and learning for future resilience after the actual experience of a disaster. It can encompass any or all aspects of the disaster management cycle: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

Many countries educate their populations for disasters, in the hopes of mitigating potential damage and loss of life, as well as contributing to national security, although they do this in very different ways. In Japan, for example, disaster education is integral both to the formal

school curriculum and there is an extensive programme of public information (Kitagawa, 2014). In the UK, disaster education takes the form of ‘surge education’, sudden flurries of curriculum interventions and public information campaigns in response to increased threats and recent disasters (Preston, 2008). The US has long included the general population in issues of national emergency and defence, with interventions in both formal schooling and widespread public information campaigns, from the Cold War to the War on Terror, as well as educating for preparedness against natural disasters (Davis, 2007; Preston, 2010). Germany, however, has virtually no programme of disaster education or preparedness for national emergencies for the general public at all, neither in the form of formal curriculum interventions, nor high-profile public information campaigns (Karutz, 2013). In this article, I examine disaster education and preparedness for national emergencies in Germany and suggest that disaster education is confined to trained experts, and not generally extended to the general public at all. It is also decentralised, localised and exclusive. Theorising disaster education as a ‘civil defence pedagogy’ (Preston, 2008), which contributes to shaping narratives of national identity, I suggest that this is due to narratives of the West German democratic nation state as secure, federal, peaceful and unified, which originated at the time of the founding of the new West Germany in 1949, and continue to shape contemporary political narratives. It is therefore unlikely that Germany will develop either a more inclusive, universal, formalised, nor especially high-profile campaign in disaster education in the foreseeable future. It is worth mentioning that although East Germany had an extensive programme of civil defence, this was heavily dominated by the Soviet Union. When the two Germanies reunified, most institutions in the former East were (sometimes controversially) closed or subsumed by the West, rather than the other way around. This paper therefore focuses on democratic narratives which shaped West Germany, rather the East.

In this paper, I begin by reflecting upon some of the current issues in disaster preparedness and response in Germany, I then outline my analytical framework, and explain that I analyse disaster education on two interconnected levels, as both a type of lifelong education for the public to mitigate disaster damage, and as a public pedagogy, referred to as a ‘civil defence pedagogy’, to educate the public in narratives of German democracy. I move on to describe the methodology of this study, and then identify some key dominant narratives of German nationhood and democracy. Finally, I connect these narratives to the key features of disaster education, showing how they reinforce each other.

Disaster preparedness and response in contemporary Germany

It is often argued that post-Cold War Germany is a relatively safe country. This argument is sometimes used by those who want to emphasise that Germans therefore do not need a programme of lifelong education for disasters, because in comparison to countries such as Japan, New Zealand or the US, it is not at risk of catastrophic natural disasters (as reported by e.g. Geier, 2012). However, recent disasters which threatened Germany’s population and critical infrastructure include widespread and destructive floods in both 2002 and 2013, an extensive power black-out in the area of Muensterland in 2005, and numerous terror threats, which also threaten the both the short-term and long-term security of the German state. The floods in 2002 were regarded as a particular wake-up call. Regarded at the time as the floods of the century, the catastrophic flooding along the River Elbe was caused by excessive rainfall. On 12 August a record total of 352.7 mm of rainfall was measured in a period of 24 hours at the meteorological station Zinnwald-Georgenfeld. Large numbers of people had to be evacuated from Dresden and Prague and surrounding towns and villages. The total economic damages as a result (the Czech Republic: € 3 billion; Austria: € 3 billion; Germany:

€ 9.2 billion) broke a new European record for flood damages (Rudolf & Rapp, 2003). The floods of May and early June 2013 along the Rivers Danube, Elbe, Inn, and Ilz, also caused by intensely heavy rainfall, resulted in flooding which in fact exceeded the ‘once in a century’ levels of 2002. These rivers experienced their highest water levels in 500 years. A state of emergency was declared in Magdeburg and the area around Stendal, and there were widespread evacuations in Magdeburg, Leipzig, as well as smaller towns and villages. The German army experienced its largest ever humanitarian deployment within its own borders, involving approximately 19,000 soldiers. However, ultimately less damage was caused by the 2013 floods than in 2002, in the main because investment post 2002 had meant much improved defences (see e.g. Author unknown, 2013; Hengst et al, 2013). Surveys however show that Germans generally feel unprepared for disasters. For example, a survey conducted by the insurance company, Allianz, found that 63% of those questioned had nothing in place in case of disaster, 28% had no idea what they would do or were supposed to do in case of a disaster, and 66% are relying on warning systems which simply would not be working in a power cut (Allianz, 2008, cited in Goersch & Werner, 2011). As far as First Aid is concerned, Germans are also under-trained. Geier (2012) reports that only 15% of Germans feel they would be able to perform the resuscitation technique, compared with approximately 60% in Sweden and Norway.

Evidence from the 2013 floods suggests that the German public have been very prepared to assist others in need, even without specialist training. The public organised themselves using social media, on both facebook and twitter using the hashtag, Sandsack-Flash-Mobs (Sandbag flashmobs) (Werner, 2013; Wuensch, 2013). However, this also caused problems for the emergency and rescue services, as there were reports of the public getting in the way of disaster response teams. There were complaints of a lack of coordination, too many potential helpers turning up in one place rather than spreading themselves out, and a lack of expertise hindering the rescue effort (e.g. Werner, 2013). There are thus strong arguments for an inclusive and universal programme of disaster education for the general public, both in preparing for, averting, and dealing with them when they occur.

There are now increased calls, among experts at least, for the inclusion of the general population in disaster preparedness in Germany (Geier, 2013). The notion of ‘resilience’ in organisations and communities is receiving increased attention, and there are calls for the introduction of first aid courses in schools, compulsory first aid certificates for all drivers, closer networking of individuals with civil defence and disaster assistance skills across boroughs and regions, the establishment of a database of these (Geier, 2013). Indeed, the Federal Office for Civil Defence and Disaster Assistance has recently produced some new materials in disaster education for children. However West Germany’s only high-profile public preparedness campaign, ‘Everybody has a Chance’ (FOCP, 1961) was so badly received it was never attempted again, as I discuss in more detail below. Unlike the UK, the US and Japan, in Germany there have been no national campaigns in formal education.

‘Civil defence pedagogies’ and the formation of national identity

‘Disaster education exists to save “lives” and allow for the continuation of “society”’ (Preston, 2012, p. 12). It has an explicit function to mitigate damages in the case of actual disaster. However, security discourses are not neutral, although they are presented as such, and like all discourses, they constitute rather than describe subjects (Wibben, 2011). Besides their explicit function of educating the public around security, threat and risk, discourses around disaster and security have been used to educate and mobilise the population for

different ends, particularly shaping narratives of national identity (e.g. Davis, 2007; Wibben, 2011). Scholars have argued that ‘civil defence pedagogies’ (Preston, 2008) function like any other form of public, cultural or state pedagogy, and are one way that the state transmits certain norms to wider society. In this way, they can be seen to have a double function for lifelong education, one explicit, and another more implicit. Such ‘civil defence pedagogies’ communicate through disaster education a message about who or what is a threat to the nation, which lives are to be saved, what kind of society will be allowed to continue, survivor and victim-types and what roles should be adopted in preparing for, or responding to a national emergency.

Throughout the Cold War, countries such as the UK and US engaged with the public in preparedness activities (Preston, 2008): ‘Protect and Survive’ (HMSO, 1980) in the UK and the oft-quoted ‘Duck and Cover’ (FCDA, 1952) in the US. More recently, as part of its response to the ‘War on Terror’ in the UK for example, the Department for Children Schools and Families (2008) introduced an ‘extremism toolkit’ for schools, ‘Learning together to be safe: a toolkit to help schools contribute to the prevention of violent extremism’. The US and the UK have used ‘civil defence pedagogies’ to promote classed and racialised discourses of the nation, where the survival of middle class whiteness has been prioritised above the survival of people of colour (Preston, 2008; 2010).

Methodological approach

This study is part of a wider project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council UK, which compares approaches to the protection of the critical infrastructure across five countries, the US, the UK, Japan, New Zealand and Germany, with a focus on the involvement of the population, ‘Critical Infrastructure Failure and Mass Population Response’. This paper reports on the part of the project which explored how education for potential national disasters, referred to as ‘disaster education’, takes place in Germany. Although the wider project is of a comparative nature, the focus of this paper is Germany, and other countries will only be mentioned in order to strengthen my arguments; it is therefore not a comparative paper.

Interviews were conducted with four civil servants at the FOCPDA and two at the German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW), focussing on the role of these agencies in educating the public about disasters and the materials they produce for the public. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed at a later date. These interviews have been anonymised. The interview data was then supplemented with data was collected at the archive housed at the FOCPDA, including leaflets and reports with a focus on different forms of disaster education since 1945, legal documents, and an analysis of relevant websites. This data was then contextualised with reference to relevant academic literature.

The data was initially analysed following Yin’s (2013) strategy of working the data from the ‘ground-up’. A thematic analysis was employed initially to identify the main themes occurring (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). These included, in relation to disaster education in Germany: the emphasising of security over risk; disaster management as expert; disaster management as federal and localized; disaster education as exclusive. The data was then analysed a second time and interpreted as a ‘civil defence pedagogy’, a public pedagogy communicating norms around the nature of the nation. As such, connections were made between dominant narratives around the nature of the German state and democracy and the nature and status of disaster education.

Narratives of German democracy

The study found that some of the main themes occurring in disaster education matched some of the main narratives around the German nation, confirming that security discourses and civil defence pedagogies shape narratives of national identity, and vice versa. In this section, I consider what these narratives are, and in the following sections I explain how these narratives reoccur in disaster education, forming civil defence pedagogies.

Firstly, Germany emphasises security over risk. Unlike the UK, the US and Canada, for example, countries which have involved their general public much more directly in civil defence (Davis, 2007), after the Second World War, post-war West Germany needed to emphasise the notion of security rather than risk and defence (Biess, 2011; Hanshew, 2012). West Germany was a new nation with a new, democratic government and a traumatised population. At the end of the war, unlike in the UK and the US, there was a widespread distrust of the state and a sense of ‘injured citizenship’, (Geyer, 2001), thus the new West German government, directed of course by the Allies, needed to show it could offer security to the population (Hanshew, 2012). The failure of the democratic Weimar Republic and then the Third Reich to provide stability for the population, and a devastating war, as well as the experience of defeat and loss of national sovereignty established the direction of political life for future decades. Article 48 in the democratic Weimar Constitution had allowed Hitler, as President of the Reich, to suspend fundamental rights including freedom of expression of opinion and freedom of the press in response to a national emergency as violence reached extreme levels in 1933. This in turn allowed him to pass an Enabling Act, which empowered him to set up a one-party dictatorship without the agreement of parliament (Hanshew, 2012). The new West German democratic regime thus had to prove itself to the population and both explicitly sever ties with the Third Reich, as well as proving that the new democratic Republic would not lead to violence as had happened in the Weimar Republic.

This is closely linked to a second dominant narrative around the German nation, which is the representation of Germany as providing technical expertise. After the war, Germany needed to reassure both domestic and foreign audiences that after the violence and destruction of the Third Reich, the modern German state could provide stability, security in the face of emergency (Berger, 1999, p. 473-4). One way it has done this is by building up a reputation as a nation with a population highly trained in technical expertise. Of course Germany’s manufacturing base and training system were developed long before this, in the nineteenth century (Thelen 2004), however, this is one aspect which has been emphasised as a key characteristic of modern Germany.

Thirdly, Germany is a federal state, so local government is stronger than national government. This is enshrined in Germany’s constitution and seen by many as key to the preservation of democracy (West et al., 2010; Capano et al., 2012). The country is made up of sixteen *Laender*, or federal states. Central government is referred to as the *Bund*, the Federation of the *Laender*. Germany as a nation was formed comparatively late, in 1871, of a collection of federal states. The federal system therefore has a long tradition in Germany, although when West Germany was formed in 1949, retaining the federalist system was not a foregone conclusion. Politicians debated whether democracy would function better led by a strong, centralised government, or in a federalist system. The political right in general believed that a strong, centralised government could potentially pose a threat to democracy, and in fact, that democracy could not exist in Germany without federalism. It was argued that a federalist system would involve the population in decision-making, contribute to social

cohesion, and provide a bulwark against political extremism including Communism, preventing West Germans from leaving the country in favour of the Soviet East. The political left, however, argued that democracy could only be successful when led by a central government, and that federalism itself would lead to fragmentation, conservative reactionism and potentially, extremism (Hanshew, 2012). In this case, the political right won out, and federalism has been retained. Thus the circumstances of the founding of the new democratic Germany has, in a way, served to consolidate the importance of federalism for German politics, despite the political debate around the role of federalism as a system to safeguard democracy.

Fourthly, dominant narratives of German democracy emphasise sameness and universality rather than plurality. Germany as a nation was not formed for the first time until 1871, much later than its neighbours, France and Britain. There was a need to emphasise unifying factors in order to create an imagined community of the nation. At that time, the notion of ethnic unity was employed to create a German unity the populations of these separate princedoms could identify with (Beckenbach, 2005). When modern-day West Germany was founded in 1949, there was again a need to create the imagined community of the nation, as well as redefining German identity as a modern, democratic nation. This was partially achieved by investing in technology and industry and the creation of wealth. But it was also achieved by an emphasis on sameness rather than plurality. One way in which this sameness was manifest was by emphasising the traditional image from the 19th century of Germans as white (Beckenbach, 2005; Linke, 1999). The result of this emphasis on sameness and universality is the exclusion of population groups who are not ethnically German from notions of Germanness. Like other western states, German society continues to be structured along racial lines, and indeed, the German state defines itself in raced ways. For example, despite recent changes, racial notions are explicitly tied to national identity through ‘jus sanguinis’ (the principle of descent), which is used to determine citizenship rights as opposed to territorial principle of ‘jus soli’ (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2011; Honohan, 2012). Linke (1999) argues ‘...the formation of German national identity [is] closely linked to [...] white privilege’ (p.49). As in other western nations, Germanness is perceived as white.

I now move one to consider how these narratives play out in disaster education.

Security over risk

A main feature of disaster education in Germany is that security is emphasised above risk. This is a post-war legacy, which continues to the present day. As others have argued, much of the German public in the late 1940’s and 1950’s felt that political elites had disregarded the safety of the population in their pursuit of war and had sacrificed innocent and good German soldiers (and as such to a certain extent denying their collective responsibility for the horrors of war and destruction of Germany [Beckenbach, 2005]). Hitler had only provided bunkers for 1-2% of the population, despite promises to provide them for everyone (Biess 2011). In a survey conducted in the mid-1950’s in a part of the city of Cologne that had suffered significant wartime damage, 60% opposed a civil defence programme and 40% were indifferent (Biess, 2011, p. 222). There was also a belief that any government who made a public issue out of civil defence would make itself unelectable (ibid).

On their side, the Allies and West German authorities regarded the German public as unreliable politically and emotionally, drawn to political extremes and traumatised by war (Hanshew, 2012). Part of their strategy to create political stability and to prove that a

democratic state could provide this was to 'cast themselves as cool and rational actors who needed to enlighten the population in essential matters of national security' (Biess, 2011, p. 222). In addition, the West German government needed to prove to its citizens that it was a better alternative than the socialist German Democratic Republic, the Eastern part of Germany under Russian occupation (Beckenbach, 2005; Hanshew, 2012).

However, a civil defence programme was necessary for Germany, which became clearer as Cold War tensions heightened throughout the 1950's and the threat of nuclear war became very real. Still though, most important for the West German government was to prove to the population that ties had been broken with the past, particularly with the Third Reich. The Federal Agency for Civil Defence was founded in 1957. This agency incorporated the Federal Air Defence League (founded 1951), which had concentrated on educating the population about the dangers of air strikes, and an early warning service. Importantly, the new agency was subordinated to the Ministry of the Interior, rather than the military, as had been the case in the Third Reich, in order to emphasise its civilian nature. Equally, responsibility for civil defence in the localities was transferred to the mayor, from the local police chief (Franke, 2008; Biess, 2011).

A few weeks after the Berlin Wall was built in 1961, the first public information pamphlet, 'Everybody has a chance', (Jeder hat eine Chance, FOCP, 1961) was distributed to every household. The pamphlet appeared to aim to reassure the population that if they followed a few simple instructions, including holding a briefcase over their heads, and staying at home in an emergency rather than evacuating, they could survive a nuclear or chemical attack (Franke, 2008). Biess (2011) argues that the real goal of the campaign was to win public support for civil defence programmes. Indeed, the pamphlet avoids depictions of destruction and horror, which might remind the population of their wartime experiences. The style is factual, rational and cool. Unlike similar public information pamphlets in the US and UK, pictures of the nuclear family were also not included due to perceptions that the German male soldiers had been unable to defend German women and children from total defeat.

However, 'Everybody has a chance' simply reactivated the suspicion of the German public that the government was trying to deceive them (Biess, 2011). In 1962 Der Spiegel news magazine ran the article, 'Nobody has a chance', a contribution to the debate on the possibilities of civil defence under the threat of nuclear war. The article accuses the government of misleading the population, claiming that in the event of any attack, there would be no chance for the normal population to be saved, and the government of West Germany was just using the nuclear threat and their claims of protection to glorify and legitimise themselves (Franke, 2008). Never again has the German state attempted a high profile public information campaign about self-help in emergencies to the general public.

After the end of the Cold War, until 2001/2, issues of civil defence had declined in relevance in Germany. Indeed, in 1997, the Federal Office for Self-Protection, (the re-named Federal Agency of Civil Defence, which had existed in a similar form since 1968) was amalgamated with the Federal Office for Civil Defence (founded in 1973), which became a smaller organisation altogether. In early 2001 the Federal Office for Civil Defence was itself incorporated into the Federal Office of Administration and had its budget cut (Franke 2008; Goersch & Werner 2011).

Early in the 21st century, two disasters occurred which made German politicians re-think their neglect of civil protection. In 2001, the attacks of 9/11 on the US made many politicians realise how badly prepared the country was if something similar had happened to them. In August 2002, as explained above, large portions of the River Elbe flooded, causing widespread devastation, made worse by a badly coordinated rescue response. Germany was left with over € 9 billion in damages. In response, Germany developed a ‘New Strategy for population protection in Germany’ (2002) in order to better coordinate any response to a national crisis and introduced a new law, the ‘Civil Defence Law’, to improve the collaboration between the federal states (Schoenbohm, 2008). In 2004 Germany founded the new Federal Office for Civil Defence and Disaster Assistance (FOCPDA), which is part of the Ministry of the Interior. This was a reawakening of the Federal Office of Civil Defence, with an extended remit and an increased budget. Previously, civil defence and disaster assistance had been considered as linked only to external hostilities, however, the new Federal Office’s remit extends to natural disasters and internal incidents such as power black-outs. There has then, been a significant shift in the role of civil defence and disaster assistance in Germany as a whole over the last fifteen years (Goertz, 2011).

Whilst the political and cultural context has shifted, and German democracy has proved itself to be a stable regime able to provide a certain level of security to the population, the interviews with the civil servants confirmed that the German state has still invested little in disaster education for the general public, and where they have, the emphasis remains on security rather than risk or threat. Analysing these materials a civil defence pedagogies, they seem to suggest that Germany is above all a secure nation, rather than emphasising real potential disasters. Disaster education falls under the jurisdiction of the FOCPDA rather than the Ministry of Education, and although as the interview participants pointed out, education has not been a main focus of their work, the Federal Office has produced some new materials for children as well as practical information for the general public available via their website.

The FOCPDA produces a brochure for self-help and preparedness for the general public, ‘Guidelines for emergencies’ (FOCPDA, 2013a). This is full of practical tips and is available on the FOCPDA website in its full form, and hard copies can be sent out free of charge on request. It is however, not distributed to every household.

For children aged between seven and twelve, the FOCPDA has produced an online game, ‘Max and Snowflake in Helperland’ (FOCPDA, 2011). This is a game about how to behave in emergency situations, including learning to prevent accidents. In the game, the player moves about the online house, collecting useful objects, clearing up to make rooms safer, and dealing with potential emergencies. Practical tips are provided by a voice and screen instruction booklet. An accompanying puzzle book is available, based on stories of emergency rescues. Whilst the game focuses on individual, small-scale emergencies, the emergency situations addressed in the accompanying materials for teachers include fire, storms and epidemics. However, rather than real people, the protagonists are cartoon characters. As Preston as argued, using cartoon characters rather than real people ‘may act to normalise the consequences of a disaster and to mitigate individual fears- cartoon characters do not get hurt in the same way as visceral bodies’ (Preston, 2010, p. 558).

Equally the educational DVD aimed at nursery age children, ‘Save the rescuers – adventure operation in the land of helpers’ (2013b), produced as a result of a collaborative project between the Ministry of the Interior, the FOCPDA, a working group from the emergency

services in Augsburg and the Augsburg puppet theatre, a well-known and well-loved puppet theatre which has been performing since the early 1950's (Gsottburger & Doderer, 2013) is a 30 minute story played by wooden puppets. It is about the adventures of members of the emergency services (fireman, lifeguard, paramedic) in a fictional land called the Land of Helpers. While acknowledging the role of fantasy in a young child's world, it could be argued that this film remains very distant from both children's experiences, and from the reality of emergencies and the emergency services in contemporary Germany. Like 'Max and Snowflake in Helperland', the protagonists are not real people. The action is set in the Land of the Helpers, one of 'the strange and unusual lands of this earth [and] no one knows where it is'. It appears that it is not meant to be located in Germany itself. The emergency vehicle is unrecognisable as anything you would come across in modern-day Germany, being a magical vehicle which can fly and is fuelled with milk chocolate. No technology is depicted at all, not even a telephone is available, despite the fact that working for any emergency services today requires the handling of highly specialised equipment. It could be argued then, that by implicitly distancing them from the reality of disasters, these materials by the FOCPDA function to emphasise German children's security, rather than attempting to prepare them for the reality of emergency situations.

The FOCPDA also finance and coordinate a first aid course targeted at 10-16 year olds with a specific aim to improve what is referred to as 'self-help' in emergencies and was introduced in 2005. The interview participants suggested that this course builds on more traditional courses in First Aid with additional self-help content, including how to behave in a black-out, tips for emergency supplies or how to help out in floods or storms. It is recognised and certified by some of the leading disaster and rescue organisations in Germany, including the ArbeiterSamariter-Bund, the Deutscher Lebens-Rettungs-Gesellschaft, Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe, the Malteser Hilfsdienst and the German Red Cross. However, as the participants argued, these courses only run in some German federal states, and are not part of formal schooling, rather they form part of the extra-curricular offer. FOCPDA figures indicate that about 90-100,000 young people are trained in first aid per year (FOCPDA, 2011, p. 25-6), but it is not known to what standard.

Preparation and education for disasters for the general public has attracted little public funding in Germany, and is neither high-profile, nor comprehensive. Moreover, disaster education materials are not widely distributed, nor widely available. It is left to the individual whether they access these materials. As was pointed out in the interviews, no official records are kept of how often the materials available are downloaded, due to public resistance to surveillance mechanisms, so it remains unclear how much non-specialist public engagement there is with these materials. Indeed, the German public seems to still expect the state to emphasise security (Beckenbach, 2005). A recent example of this is the reaction of the media to the comments from the leader of the FOCPDA, Christoph Unger, who gave a report to the German Press Agency encouraging the public to prepare by stocking up on food, water, medicines and candles, as well as a battery-powered radio during heavy snowfall in 2010. Unger was heavily criticised by the media, who implied he was exaggerating, frightening the public and fuelling hysteria by suggesting they panic buy and hoard supplies (Author unknown, 2010).

Disaster education as specialised and expert

Civil defence and disaster assistance is mainly provided by highly trained volunteer forces, in particular the THW and the Volunteer Firebrigade. The interview participants suggested that

the emphasis of these organisations on formal, technical and specialised training (e.g. THW, 2013a and b) fuels the notion that disaster response and assistance is only for trained experts, and not for the general public. Although this is not an unusual stance internationally, it is perhaps particularly extreme in Germany. The perception of a disaster as something alien, a break in continuity, with scientific causes and scientific solutions, remains a common view (Clausen et al., 1978; Kitagawa, 2014). While sociologists, including German sociologists, have long tried to challenge this attitude, arguing that disasters should be demystified and regarded as sociological event with sociological causes, contributing factors, and sociological solutions, this remains the prevailing approach. As long ago as 1978, German sociologist Lars Clausen identified a problematic ‘publicophobic attitude’ (Clausen et al., 1978, p. 62) of civil defence and disaster assistance organisations, who regarded the public as a hindrance in disaster response. Unlike in a country like Japan, which has an integrated programme of disaster education in the national curriculum, where preparedness, resilience and self-help are regarded as essential life skills for all pupils (Kitagawa, 2014), in Germany, the dominant view is that only the ‘competent authorities’ (Clausen et al., 1978, p. 62) can respond appropriately to a disaster.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, there were complaints from the expert rescue organisations that the public hindered the rescue effort during the floods in 2013. In response, as explained by interview participants, the THW has made numerous offers of membership and training to those involved in the rescue effort, however, very few have actually signed up. Speculating as to the reasons, the interview participants emphasised that membership in disaster assistance organisations requires a significant commitment: extensive training and weekly attendance at meetings as well as other support activities. There is however, no more flexible and less time-consuming alternative in Germany for individuals to engage with disaster preparedness - widespread, easily accessible disaster education for the general population is not available.

The THW and volunteer fire brigade are funded with taxpayers’ money, and the THW is in fact part of the Ministry of the Interior. These organisations can therefore be considered to represent state interests. The THW is also active as a highly trained and efficient search and rescue organisation, internationally, as well as nationally. Analysing the German state’s investment in a highly trained civil defence force, and reluctance to develop new ways of involving the general public in more flexible ways, as a civil defence pedagogy, it can be argued that the German state continues to invest in projecting the image internationally of Germany as a successful, modern, technological and peaceful state which supports others in an emergency. As argued above, this has been a priority for Germany since the founding of the new German democracy in 1949 (Berger, 1999). Germany’s approach to disaster management reinforces this narrative.

Disaster education as decentralised and localised

Disaster management, preparedness, response and recovery in Germany is decentralised and localised, in large part due to the federal system of government. Whilst in the US, for example, the super-ministry, the centralised Department of Homeland Security, has supra-powers, as the civil servants from the FOCPDA pointed out, in Germany there is no equivalent due to the resistance to any centralised ministry with strong powers. Civil protection is the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior, in the form of the FOCPDA. However, emergency and disaster management is the responsibility of the individual German

Laender¹. The Ministry of the Interior has a coordination role. There is thus no holistic national strategy to emergency and disaster management (FOCPDA, 2010).

‘Self-help’ in emergencies is referred to explicitly in Art 5 of the new Civil Protection Law (amended 2009), which states that it is the responsibility of the Laender, ‘Organisation, delivery, and leadership in matters of self-help of the population, as well as leadership of the self-help of the authorities and businesses [...] are the responsibility of the local authorities’ (Federal Ministry of Justice, 2009). Further, the law states that this self-help is to be organised with the support of the following disaster assistance and first aid charities, the ArbeiterSamariter-Bund, the Deutscher Lebens-Rettungs-Gesellschaft, the German Red Cross, Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe, and the Malteser Hilfsdienst. However, somewhat confusingly, the Bund is responsible for developing the content of educational materials (art 4) and educating the population in first aid (art 24) (see also Goersch & Werner, 2011). There is, therefore, no cohesive strategy for what is referred to as self-help or self-protection in emergencies in Germany. Too add to this lack of cohesion and confusion over responsibility, each federal state has its own Disaster Assistance Law, which are all different, some of which mention self-help, and some of which do not (Goersch & Werner, 2011).

The new Civil Protection Law aimed to strengthen the work between Bund and Laender, after deficits were recognised in disaster management during the flooding of the River Elbe in 2002. The floods extended over the borders of several Laender, and it was recognised that the lack of a coordinated national approach to disaster management hindered all stages of the disaster cycle- preparedness, response and recovery. The FOCPDA civil servants suggested that although the floods in 2013 were generally seen as better coordinated than those of 2002, Germany is still lacking a fully coordinated approach.

Civil defence in Germany is built on local culture. This was the case even pre-war, but this in fact was strengthened post-war when responsibility for civil defence was passed to the local mayor as mentioned above (Franke, 2008; Biess, 2011). Despite being a national organisation, the THW, for example, is very tied to the local area and community. It is particularly popular in certain rural areas, forming an important feature of life in these areas, being tied to traditions of male bonding and rural celebrations (Dienel, 2013; Krueger, 2007).

As stated above, disaster education is the responsibility of the FOCPDA. However, even if there was a move to introduce disaster education in formal schooling via a collaboration between the FOCPDA and the Ministry of Education, participants argued that this would be difficult, as education policy is also decentralised and dealt with by the individual Laender. The Ministry of Education focuses more on general coordination and research, but does not proscribe the curriculum. Germany has no national curriculum, rather the school curriculums are written by the individual Laender, there are thus sixteen different curriculums across Germany. These curriculums are also comparatively flexible, with a good deal of input from both individual schools and teachers (West et al., 2010). Schools are virtually autonomous, and education authorities tend to make recommendations only (Capano et al., 2012). There is

¹ The German Basic Law states in Art 73 paragraph 1: “The Bund has exclusive legislation over matters of defence, including the defence of the population [...] The Laender on the other hand, have legislative responsibility for disaster management” (FOCPDA, 2010).

no system of accountability, performance standards, or inspections (West et al., 2010). There are currently no moves towards more centralisation in education, on the contrary, Constitutional Reform took place in 2006, during which even more powers were devolved to the federal states.

Moreover, the teacher in Germany is considered ‘a fully-fledged professional’, with much autonomy, and under no obligation to teach centrally designated learning objectives (Ostinelli, 2009). Teacher training varies massively according to the individual state in which the teacher trains (Czerniawski, 2011). Any kind of education reform is notoriously difficult. Thus if there was any move to bring in some kind of disaster education in any formalised way, this would be extremely difficult.

Participants pointed out that the gap in materials on disaster education seems to have been filled, at least partially, by private companies. For example, Lehrer-online.de is a provider of online resources for teachers, a limited company funded through advertising on the website, although from its beginnings in 1999 until 2008, it was financed by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research and Deutsche Telekom. Materials on the site are provided by various different companies and organisations. There are relevant and practical materials for disaster preparedness for Geography and Social Studies lessons provided by the German State Accident Insurance Company (DGUV). For primary school teachers there is, for example, a lesson on ‘Thunder and Lightning’, which include instructions for teachers of young children on behaviour (DGUV, 2013b), and a session on ‘How far away is the storm?’ (DGUV, 2013a) For secondary school teachers there is material on flooding and First Aid materials (DGUV, 2012). Equally, the German Committee for Disaster Reduction (DKKV), a non-governmental organisation, has a good deal of material on disaster reduction aimed at secondary students on their website. Whilst this is detailed and informative, most materials are about disasters globally, without a focus on Germany. Only one lesson focuses on Rhine Flooding in Germany, dealing with reasons for flooding, flood prevention or minimisation (DKKV, 2013).

Despite the recognition among civil servants that Germany would be better prepared for national emergencies if it took a more centralised approach, its federal approach, and protection of and investment in local culture, assumed to be key to German democracy has contributed to the lack of a fully coordinated disaster politics and disaster education.

Disaster education as exclusive

The final point to be made about disaster education in Germany is that it remains exclusive. Membership in civil defence and disaster assistance organisations, particularly the THW and volunteer fire brigade, consists mostly of white males. Only 10% of members are female (Dienel, 2013; Krueger, 2007), and there are very few minority ethnic members (exact figures are unavailable [Wuerger, 2009]). There are two key reasons for this. Firstly, the importance of local ties over national ties (Hanshew, 2012), as mentioned above, means that membership is higher in rural areas than urban ones, and linked to family tradition. It is therefore not easy to get involved in civil defence as a perceived newcomer. Secondly, disaster education materials portray actors who are overwhelmingly white. They do not represent the ethnic diversity of contemporary Germany. The images in the emergency publications, and the cartoon characters in the ‘Max and Snowflake’ game, are all white. The characters which appear in the DVD, ‘Save the rescuers – adventure operation in the land of helpers’ (2013b), despite being wooden puppets, are all identifiably white (except the animals and the devil).

'Guidelines for Emergencies' (2013a) appears to attempt to reflect the ethnic diversity of Germany on its first page, by printing a photograph of a mix of several headshots, two of which are visible minorities. However, all the models demonstrating preparedness are white. This is not necessarily a conscious and deliberate exclusion, and the THW and volunteer fire brigade are running recruitment campaigns which specifically target individuals from migrant backgrounds. However, as argued above, in a society in which national identity is generally understood as white, whiteness will inevitably be privileged. The (intended and unintended) consequence is that those who are not categorised as white will be marginalised.

Preparedness materials can also be understood as civil defence pedagogies which have an implicit function besides their more explicit one, and communicate a message about who will survive because they well-prepared, which lives are to be saved, and what kind of society will be allowed to continue in the event of a serious emergency. It can be argued that in Germany, both the disaster experts, and the survivors are expected to be white. Whilst it could also be argued that the function of the figures and models in the published materials is to depict the universal: a typical 'disaster expert', or a typical German citizen, in fact the non-representation of non-white German citizens and residents suggests exclusivity rather than universality. If disaster education materials are understood as narratives of the nation, this fits in with the idea of Germany as a white nation, a narrative which continues to have contemporary currency, and disaster materials continue to feed this narrative.

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that lifelong education for disasters in Germany is not easily nor widely available to the whole population. Indeed, it is currently unlikely that Germany will develop an extended programme of disaster education for the general public, whether that be high-profile public information campaigns or inclusive interventions in formal schooling. Although many may argue that this is because Germany does not face particularly dangerous threats to its security, I have suggested that there are other reasons why it is unlikely. Disaster education involves both practical learning for the disaster management cycle of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery, but like all security and civil defence discourses, it has a second pedagogical function beyond the explicit: it also involves the definition of the nation (Davis, 2007; Preston, 2008; Wibben, 2011). I have argued that in the case of Germany, what is most important in civil defence and security pedagogies, is educating both German citizens, and also other nations, that the German state is a functioning democracy, which can provide stability for its citizens. Germany also needs to prove it can safeguard democracy by creating the optimal conditions for democracy to flourish, rather than political extremism. Disaster education therefore continues implicitly to emphasise the German democratic nation state as secure, peaceful and unified, which have become defining narratives for German political identity, and continue to shape contemporary political narratives. However, an analysis of disaster education as a national narrative suggests that there are tensions in this narrative of German democracy as universal and secure. In fact the federal, localised and exclusionary approach to preparing for national emergencies, which reflects Germany's approach to democracy in general, means that, as in countries like the UK and US, and despite a policy focus on lifelong learning, preparation for national emergency is far from universal, and there is an implicit survivor bias (Preston 2012) which might in fact render certain sectors of society less secure in a national emergency than others.

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