

# The Anti-Bias-Werkstatt and the Anti-Bias-Approach

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## 1. The Anti-Bias-Werkstatt

The “Anti-Bias-Werkstatt” sees itself as a working pool, which deals with the Anti-Bias-Approach practically as well as theoretically. We offer workshops for different target groups and various bodies responsible for political, pedagogical, and social work in the field of education. At the same time we work on the theoretical substantiation of the approach both within the framework of scientific publications and by facilitating scientific exchange by running Anti-Bias theory conferences on a regular basis.

The “Anti-Bias-Werkstatt” began as the so-called “Oldenburger Gruppe”, a student initiative dealing with Anti-Bias. We began our work after participating in an Anti-Bias-Training run by two South African Trainers at the University of Oldenburg in 2002 (Beryl Hermanus and Welakazi Dlowa).

## 2. The Anti-Bias-Approach

Anti-Bias can be seen today as one of the most extensive and most innovative approaches within the antidiscriminatory field of education. The concept was developed in the beginning of the 1980s by Louise Derman-Sparks and Carol Brunson-Philips in the USA, where it was mainly used in the field of elementary and primary education. The approach has undergone some intensive further development after the end of the Apartheid system in South Africa, where it was being adapted for youth and adult education. It was not until the beginning of the 1990s that the approach reached Germany via an exchange of South African and German experts organized by Inkota e.V., Berlin. Now Anti-Bias in Germany is used in elementary education and in schools as well as in the field of adult education.

According to the meaning of ‘bias’ as prejudice, it is the aim of Anti-Bias to get an inequality based on one-sidedness and bias into balance, and to gradually reduce discrimination. Anti-Bias workshops are an intensive experience-orientated examination of dominance and discrimination and aim on the un-learning of oppressive and discriminating forms of communication and interaction. The approach assumes that everyone has prejudices. This is based on the consideration that prejudices and discriminations are not individual misjudgements, but institutionalized in society as ideologies, which are learned by the individuals. Correspondingly, the behaviour based on those prejudices can be un-learned, and institutionalized oppressive ideologies can be discovered, questioned, and analyzed.

*“Anti-Bias trainings are experience and process-orientated workshops. In an interactive group process they make it conceivable emotionally and show, how discrimination works on a personal, interpersonal and social level. Based on this non-discriminative behaviour for one’s own work and life situation are being developed.” (Annette Kübler/Anita Reddy 2002, 89).*

One speciality of the Anti-Bias-Approach is the ability to focus on many kinds of discrimination. Exclusion and reduction of people is being addressed not only regarding ethnic or 'racial' features, but discrimination on the basis of e.g. gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental health, or social class are also taken into view. In this connection, the complex entanglements and interdependencies between those dimensions are significant.

Furthermore, the inclusion of both the individual *and* the social level distinguishes the Anti-Bias-Approach from many other approaches. Discrimination is not only based on prejudices of individuals, but for the most part is also based on prevalent pictures, judgements, and discourses, as they are significant regarding different groups of people within society. This complex interrelation is in many cases deeply entangled with institutional, legal and organisational matters of everyday life. Thus Anti-Bias aims to bring into consciousness those various dimensions and their meanings, and to develop (alternative) possibilities of behaviour on that level.

We (the "Anti-Bias-Werkstatt") see Anti-Bias not as a self-contained approach with only specific anti-bias methods, but as a fundamental attitude and a life-long process. Thus we define the Anti-Bias-Approach as an open concept, which enables us to also fall back upon some methods of other concepts and approaches. By reworking and adapting these elements the Anti-Bias-Approach is in a constant process of development.