Full classes, full buses—German schools are becoming a coronavirus trap

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In Germany, the total number of people infected with coronavirus exceeded a quarter of a million this week. At present, almost 17,000 acute cases of COVID-19 are officially registered, which is about four times as many as in the summer months. The largest group of newly infected people is now 20- to 24-year-olds.

The seven-day average has been around 1,200 newly infected people per day for weeks. On Tuesday, almost 1,500 new infections were recorded—the highest figure since the end of April. On Wednesday, it was 1,176 and on Thursday almost 1,900, an alarming new high since spring. In Germany so far, 9,400 people have paid for the pandemic with their lives.

While the number of cases is currently rising rapidly again in France, Spain and other European countries, Germany, with its rigorous policy of reopening schools, is resolutely steering towards a second coronavirus wave. At the same time, politicians from all parties in the Bundestag (parliament) and state governments are ignoring the warnings of serious virologists.

In the *Fuldaer Zeitung*, Prof. Philipp Markart, director of pneumology at Fulda Hospital, warned, “Currently, the number of infections is rising again. And not only that, but the number of patients is increasing again. At Fulda Hospital, we are again treating people with COVID-19 who are so seriously ill that they need in-patient treatment and oxygen.”

The pulmonary physician reported “dramatic individual developments,” including a number of “relatively young patients without serious pre-existing conditions, who, while completely healthy, suffered severe, sometimes fatal, complications.” Prof. Markart cited the lack of a vaccine against COVID-19, the “high infectivity, the transmissibility even by asymptomatic infected persons and the sometimes very severe course of the disease” as factors that make it so dangerous.

Despite all this, politicians are determined to force teachers, educators and over 10 million pupils back into the same dilapidated and overcrowded schools as before the pandemic. After the start of school in Bavaria on September 8 for 1.6 million pupils, regular classes are also to begin for a further 1.5 million pupils next Monday in the last federal state, Baden-Württemberg.

Despite a highly reluctant information policy on the part of the authorities, which is already bordering on an information blackout, sporadic reports of more and more cases of coronavirus at schools are appearing.

In Berlin, the Senate [state ministry] Department for Education announced on Monday that 25 Berlin schools are currently infected with COVID-19. A total of 70 learning groups are affected. However, how many pupils and teachers tested positive, how many are in quarantine and how many are seriously ill are being concealed.

In Dresden, 110 people have been in quarantine for one week. There is coronavirus in Torgau in Saxony, too; one primary school, one secondary school and one after-school care centre had to close, and in Pirna there was a COVID 19 case at a grammar school. On the Baltic Sea coast (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania), new cases are known at schools in Güstrow and Rostock. In Güstrow, more than 70 people from the state support centre “Hören” and pupils and teachers from the “Küstenschule” in Toitenwinkel were sent into quarantine for 14 days after two pupils tested positive for coronavirus

In the southern and western federal states, too, more and more new cases are becoming known. In Olching (Upper Bavaria), there was a case at a grammar school on the first day of school on Wednesday, and 103 pupils were sent into quarantine. In Lower Saxony, according to a brief communication from the ministry, there are “just under 50 schools with coronavirus-related restrictions.” Twenty-four pupils and four teachers had tested positive.

In Wiesbaden, more than 100 pupils from two schools in Erbenheim are in quarantine after cases of coronavirus, and at a third Wiesbaden school, the suspicion of infection so far has been neither confirmed nor eliminated.

In North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), several schools in the districts of Holsterhausen and Frintrop in Essen, among others, are newly affected, with two pupils and one caregiver testing positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday. Since the end of the summer holidays, the number of Essen schools affected has thus risen to 15.

In Düsseldorf, there was a particularly severe case: on September 3, 20 pupils from Freiherr-vom-Stein-Realschule tested positive for COVID-19 after taking part in a four-day

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class trip to Chiemsee. Although one pupil fell acutely ill there, the 54 pupils drove home together in a 10-hour trip by coach. In Bavaria, school trips are not yet permitted.

This probably illustrates best how carelessly and irresponsibly the authorities are dealing with the pandemic and that they are not warning, preparing and protecting teachers and pupils from infection.

All the safety concepts that were painstakingly worked out before the holidays are being discarded. Almost everywhere, there are explicit rulings against wearing a face mask in class. In Wiesbaden, an administrative court has even expressly prohibited the "urgent recommendation" to wear a mask in class.

The education politicians responsible are apparently deliberately trying to risk new so-called superspreading events.

Schools are in no way equipped to deal with coronavirus. The summer holidays were not used to install modern ventilation systems, air filters and CO2 measuring devices or to renovate sanitary facilities. The politicians' contempt for the life and health of teachers and pupils was summed up by NRW Education Minister Yvonne Gebauer (Free Democratic Party, FDP) when she remarked that €100 per child for the purchase of air filters in classrooms was "a good idea, but too expensive."

The same government, which is paying €3.2 billion from the coronavirus programme alone for better digitisation in the federal armed forces, among other things, has failed to equip schools with the necessary IT equipment for online learning. As a result, teachers and pupils are forced to spend many hours a day in full classrooms whose windows often cannot even be opened. And on their way to school, they are forced to squeeze into crowded buses and trains.

In several federal states, e.g., Berlin and Baden-Württemberg, handouts have been distributed to parents, according to which children should also be sent to school "if they have a cold, a slight or occasional cough or a scratchy throat." If a child does indeed test positive, often only this one child is sent home without those they have been in contact with being identified, isolated and tested.

In the meantime, it has been established beyond doubt that children can be highly contagious even if they are infected but asymptomatic or show only minor symptoms. "Trace, isolate and test, test, test" has been the World Health Organisation's recommendation for six months now.

At the same time, teachers, educators and school employees who belong to the risk groups or have relatives at home at risk are morally pressured or forced by the courts to take part in face-to-face teaching. And the parents of previously ill pupils are left completely alone. Hundreds of posts by indignant parents are now blazing across social media.

"Ma En" from Lower Saxony writes that what is going on in schools is "inhuman": "Family members from risk groups with whom a pupil lives together are worth absolutely nothing! Russian roulette is being played with us!"

Taty, the mother of a previously ill 13-year-old and two 4-year-old twins, writes: "I am so incredibly angry right now. So terribly angry. ..." As she writes, the special schools in Märkischer Kreis (NRW) have just been stripped of everything: "School psychologists, toys, playground equipment, because it's too expensive."

As the twin siblings of the "big one" were also previously ill with pseudo-croup, the latter had been at home since March. "I reported my first home-schooling to the school without any problems. It was immediately decided that I would receive a permit until 31.07.2020. ... I contacted the school management during this time and asked for an extension—but they refused immediately."

Taty describes an odyssey that lasted for weeks until she finally succeeded in releasing her 13-year-old son from attending classes with the help of a medical certificate. "One day before the start of school we got the permit. I am grateful for this. But I don't want other pupils or parents to have to experience such fears and desperation."

There are lots of reports like this. Jennifer tells about her aunt, a 61-year-old teacher who has survived cancer and is currently being forced into attending classes. She states: "Problems in the education system have existed for a long time. Now it's all blowing up in our faces! When you consider how many teachers belong to the risk group." The pedagogical staff would have to "line up in rows at the company doctors to check whether they are really at risk".

And when asked why the state and federal authorities do not publicly report coronavirus infections in schools, Eva answers: "Because then it would also be clear as hell to the general public that reopening schools without a concept is a no-go. This must be prevented so that the money rolls in."

As these contributions show, the politicians' lies, manoeuvres, and motives are increasingly being exposed. The impetus behind the reopening of schools is the drive to reopen all businesses for profit. Corporations and banks insist that parents are at the disposal of production. For this reason, politicians in unison categorically rule out a new lockdown.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) is the only party that takes the CoV-Sars-2 virus seriously and gives top priority to the fight against it.

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