

1 Introduction

This doctoral thesis addresses specifically a school program that is likely unknown to most researchers both in the United States and even more so in Germany in spite of the fact that it has been working and is in place for more than sixty years by now. This program exists under the name *Host Nation Program* or *Host Nation Studies* and is an essential curricular part of the US American school system for children of military personell in various foreign countries.¹ The purpose of the Dependents School System (DSS) is to support and teach children and adolescents of families in the Armed Forces within and outside of the USA. In various locations where military personnel is living outside of America and where dependent families establish a somewhat permanent residency, DS elementary, middle and high schools have been installed in order to secure American educational offerings on foreign soil. (cf. Simpson 2000, Miller 2000). Thus, this particular education system features a global distribution – this by itself a mark of exceptional importance in geographical respect alone.²

One of many peculiarities is rooted in the DS school curriculum itself: Apart from most US-standard school subjects of primary level education (the so-called Three R's: Math, Reading and Writing Skills etc.), both DS elementary and middle schools feature a specific subject, named Host Nation. Its purpose being to familiarize its students – who happen to grow up in a non-American environment due to the foreign deployment of their parents – with the culture and language of their host country (i.e. host nation) in which they temporarily reside for a certain period of time. This mandatory curricular element in the syllabus holds true for every school of the program all over the world and has thus reference to the German, the Japanese, the Italian, the Turkish or many other cultures, depending on the localization of each individual US-American DS-school.³

The Program itself has been in existence since the opening of these schools in 1946, albeit with several different titles. In the beginning, it was called Language and Culture Program (cf. AOSHS: Beerbaum 1965), in the 1970s it was renamed to Intercultural Education (cf. AOSHS: USDESEA PAM 350-216 1965)⁴ and in the curriculum currently in existence, it operates under the name (and technical term) of Host Nation Studies. (cf. www.dodea.edu/

¹ In regard to the current schoolsystem's research and evaluation stipulations, the schools and the schoolsystem serving children of military personnel abroad, will in this work be abbreviated with the original capitals DSS or DS schools, referring to the original name of the founding years: Dependents School Service.

² Many more specific characteristics about dependents schools could be named as well: Simply, the continually changing student body, their special social and cultural backgrounds (cf. Drysdale 2000, 18) and especially their unique constellation of family patterns (cf. Ross 1971, 10) surely are interesting aspects when analyzing the school system, though this cannot be part of this work's content.

³ The DS-school system states following locations: "Bahrain, Belgium, England, Germany, Guam, Italy, Japan, Korea, The Netherlands, Cuba, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Spain, Turkey" (www.dodea.edu/home/about).

⁴ When quoting material cited in the *American Overseas Schools Historical Society* (AOSHS), its acronyms are mentioned in the quote, just as file number and publication date, as far as this data exists. In some cases, alternatively, the names of the authors is given, when official file notes are missing.

curriculum/index retrieved 2nd January 2012).⁵ All researched or contacted teaching staff, German as well as American, do and did speak consistently of their Host Nation Program, which proves how this terminology has evidently permeated since the 1980s, in spite of the fact that the term Host Nation was and has been critically reviewed on occasion (e.g. cf. AOSHS: Beerbaum 1965).



Figure 1: DS-school locations in Germany in the year 2007 (screenshot taken from www.eu.dodea.edu, expired page S.G.)

In the current DS Curriculum, the mandatory subject Host Nation is foreseen for the age groups from Kindergarten to 6th grade, i.e. elementary and some secondary school levels.⁶

⁵ For historical reconstruction, the Program is titled, as it was initially named: Language and Culture Program (LCP), the continuing program (about 1970), is stringently called Host Nation Program (HNP) In this work, even though during some time spans this title varied slightly (e.g. Host Nation Studies).

⁶ Unlike in Germany, Kindergarten in the United States is part of the elementary school (cf. Buttlar 1991, Dichanz 1991). The Host Nation Program can also be curricular content of DS middle schools.

And according to the DS Curriculum currently in place, the subject is taught in each country by native-speaking teaching staff.

The Host Nation program provides (...) elementary school students with a cross-cultural and language acquisition focus to develop an appreciation and understanding of the culture and language of the country in which they are located. Host nation education is a unique feature of the Department of Defense Dependent Schools (...) K-6 school program and is designed to provide elementary school students with an introduction to host nation languages, taught by host nation teachers, as an essential experience of the (...) curriculum. (www.dodea.edu/curriculum/hostNation.cfm retrieved 20th February 2008).

In Germany, US American DS-schools for children of military personnel have been installed since 1946. For the school year 2007/08, a total of 57 DS elementary, middle and high schools are reported for the country, of which 33 are elementary and/or middle schools, which include the relevant years from Kindergarten to 6th grade for Host Nation Program teaching (illustrated in figure #1, previous page).