

MYTEP

Spring School in York February 2024

Final Report

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All photos in this report are courtesy of the Feb 2024 MYTEP participants and staff.



The MYTEP Spring School participants in front of Heslington Hall.

Introduction to the Münster York Teacher Education Project

written by: N. Harsch

In February 2023, the Centre for Teacher Training of the University of Münster and the Department of Education of the University of York launched an exchange between teacher training students from Münster and York. The starting point was, among other things, the long-standing partnership between the cities of Münster and York.

The start of this unique project called the “Münster York Teacher Education Project” (MYTEP) was a two-week “Spring School” for ten teacher training students of the University of Münster. During the first week of their stay in York, the students attended specially selected lectures and seminars at the University of York. During the second week, they got the opportunity to spend several days at local schools in York in order to observe the teaching and learning culture. The Spring School was rounded off with a workshop in which the students and the organizing team reflected upon the content and outcomes of the Spring School.

Due to the success of the program, MYTEP continued with another Spring School in November 2023, this time for a group of students from York visiting the University of Münster as well as local schools.

The outcomes of the two Spring Schools made it clear that MYTEP is an outstanding project in terms of international mobilization and intercultural education of teacher training students. Thus, in February 2024, another group of this time eleven teacher training students from Münster got the opportunity to spend two weeks in York in order to participate in the yet third MYTEP Spring School.

The following pages summarize the participants’ learning effects and impressions of the February 2024 Spring School in York.

MYTEP Spring School in York 2024

written by: N. Harsch

The third MYTEP Spring School took place from February 19, 2024 to March 1, 2024 in York with a total of eleven teacher training students from Münster. The basic schedule was as follows.

Week 1: University of York

- Introductory lecture “The UK education system through a comparative lens” (Ursula Lanvers)
- Selected lectures for the MYTEP participants:
 - Communicating the Climate Emergency
 - Language & Power
 - Positive Psychology
 - Motivation and Education
 - Gender
 - Higher Education in 21 C
 - Genetic
 - Mind Brain and Education
 - New Directions in Education (not attended, due to itinerary change)
- Presentations and discussion with teacher training students of the University of York (guided by Mirjam Bühler): “Teacher Training in England vs. Germany: Opportunities and challenges”

Week 2: Local schools

- Each student spent a total of four days (8:15 a.m. – 3.15 p.m.) at a total of two schools (organized by Mirjam Bühler)
 - All Saint’s RC School
 - Archbishop Holgate’s School
 - Fulford School
 - Huntington School
 - Knavesmire Primary
 - Clifton with Rawcliffe Primary School
 - St. Peter’s School: MFL Debating Competition
 - Vale of York Academy (cancelled, due to staff absence)

Last day: Reflection Workshop

The UK education system through a comparative lens

written by: F. Potthoff

During our visit to the University of York and various schools in York, we gained valuable insights into the differences between the English and German education systems. This essay will explore these differences through a comparative lens.

One of the key structural differences between the English and German education systems is the school starting age. In England, children usually begin their formal education at the age of four or five. The daily schedule also varies between the two countries. In England, school typically starts between 8:30 and 9:00 AM and finishes between 3:00 and 3:30 PM. This schedule often includes a morning break, a lunch break, and an afternoon break.

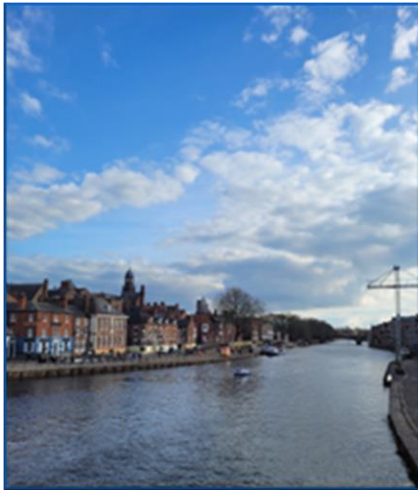


Another difference between the German and English education systems is the absence of a core curriculum in England. Unlike Germany, where a standardised curriculum is prescribed for all schools, the English education system allows for greater flexibility in curriculum design. While this flexibility may lead to differences in what is taught in different schools, it also enables teachers to adapt their teaching to the needs and interests of their students and encourages creativity in the classroom.

In England, high school diplomas are divided into two main qualifications: the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and the Advanced Level (A-Level) qualifications. The GCSEs are typically taken by students at age 16 and cover a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, and humanities. The A-Levels, on the other hand, are specialised qualifications taken by students at age 18, focusing on only three subjects in greater depth. This diversification of high school diplomas allows students to pursue their interests and strengths and provides a more individualised pathway to higher education and career opportunities.

English schools are regularly inspected by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) to evaluate their performance and ensure that they meet national standards. These inspections result in ratings that are published and used to compare schools across the country. While these ratings promote accountability and

encourage schools to strive for improvement, they also place considerable pressure on schools and teachers.

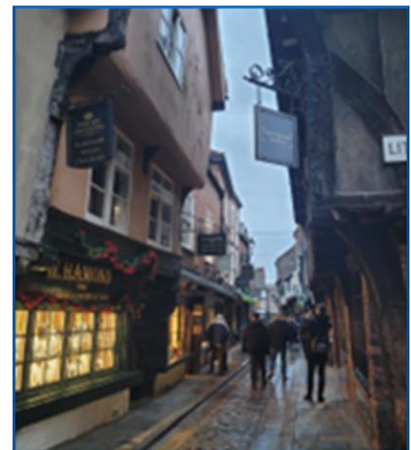


Finally, the English education system has a comparatively higher proportion of public schools, particularly in the London area. Public schools, also known as independent schools, charge tuition fees and are typically more selective in their admission processes. While the proportion of public schools in England is slightly higher than in Germany, it is essential to consider the broader context and potential implications of this difference. In England, public schools tend to be concentrated in urban areas, such as London, and often have a reputation for providing high-quality education with more resources and smaller class sizes. However, access to these schools is often limited to families who can afford the tuition fees, which can lead to socioeconomic disparities in educational opportunities. By exploring these differences, we were able to gain a deeper understanding of English teaching approaches and the potential benefits and challenges they entail.

Teacher Training in England vs. Germany: Opportunities and challenges

written by: A. Gentrup, S. Gördes, P. Henniger

On our last day at the University of York, we joined a group of students who train to become teachers. The students are all participating in the “Modern Foreign Language Post-graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE)” course at the University of York. This seminar is part of their teacher training programme and had just restarted after the mid-term break. The focus of this session was teacher training in England compared to Germany with a specific focus on opportunities and challenges. In preparation for the intercultural exchange, both groups (the students of York as well as we, the German students) compiled an informative presentation. These presentations were used as the basis for a group discussion on similarities, differences and further questions.



As we had limited knowledge about teacher training in England before, it was specifically interesting for us to learn that the structure of the training differs a lot from the German one. One topic we learned about was “How to become a teacher in England”. To train to teach, you will need to have a GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education) with a grade 4 (C) or above in English and Maths (and Science if you want to teach in primary education). Moreover, you also need a degree in any subject to teach primary and secondary – or an equivalent qualification to do postgraduate teacher training. If you do not have a degree, you can do an undergraduate teacher training to get a degree alongside the qualified teacher status (QTS). A must have for everyone becoming a teacher is a DBS (*polizeiliches Führungszeugnis*) as this is taken very seriously. In England, teacher trainees often decide only after their bachelor’s degree that they want to become teachers. Therefore, it is not crucial that the subject of the undergraduate degree correlates with the subjects which one will teach in the future. Instead of a master’s programme, students take part in a ten-month PGCE programme at a university which includes two school placements. Another interesting fact to note is that the University of York PGCE is recognised worldwide.

We also learned a lot about the application process. You have to fill in an online application form on a government website which contains personal details, qualifications, references and a personal statement. If you are successful you get invited to an interview. You have to be fully prepared to answer questions on your motivation to teach, how you deal with workload and more. There is also a Subject Knowledge Enhancement course (SKE) which some people might need before starting their teacher training to top up their subject knowledge. The length of these courses ranges from 8 to 28 weeks and are 25 hours per week.

The students we met had just finished their first placement and were about to start their second one. Thus, we were able to accompany some of them in our second week of school visits. They only had a few months left until they will have finished their programme and work as teachers. In their first two years of teaching, teachers in England are called Early Career Teachers. During this time, they get a mentor, extra support to foster their teaching skills and a reduced timetable. Initially, the prospective teachers observe lessons in their placement schools and then gradually start teaching. By the end of the year, they teach 80% of a teacher’s standard timetable.

The discussion with the English students showed that they were mostly surprised about the low “*Semesterbeitrag*” in Germany compared to their expensive university fees. Moreover, they explained that scholarships and bursaries depend on their chosen subject(s)

and the current situation in schools. At the moment, for example, there is a low demand for history and English teachers which is why students of these subjects do not receive as much funding as MFL (Modern Foreign Languages) or science trainees. In addition, there is no such thing as “*Verbeamtung*” in England and their general salary is much lower compared to Germany. This aspect and the length of our teaching programme were shocking to the English trainees. In general, they were stunned to perceive that many differences. Our groups’ presentation also explained the different school types in Germany, which raised a lot of interest because there is no separation into different school types in England for all students. Another difference that the German group could detect was the fact that the majority of teachers in England is teaching just one subject, whereas in Germany teachers have at least two specifications. Furthermore, in England, teachers have the freedom to basically work wherever they want. They can apply for positions directly at various schools and work at locations of their choosing. In contrast, this kind of freedom does not exist in the German system.

All in all, the seminar was a great experience to get an insight into British school and university culture. Especially the exchange with the English students was valuable and had a lasting impact on us. Beyond that, we decided to meet up again a few times after this seminar to continue our conversations and discussions during our free time. This included visits to different pubs and a nightly tour through the city centre of York.

Spring School lectures

written by: J. Baumann, M. Geduldig

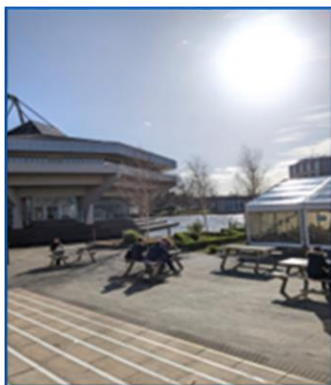
During our first week, all of us visited different lectures or seminars on Campus. The classes were almost exclusively part of the Master of Education Program from the University (which, however, is not equivalent to a teaching degree). We mostly visited smaller seminars and got insight into the following courses: Language & Power, Positive Psychology, Communicating the Climate Emergency, Motivation and Education, Higher Education in the 21st Century, Genetic and Mind Brain & Education. During the week we also got access to the VLE platform, which is the University’s equivalent to the Learnweb. We noticed the number of students in most seminars was smaller compared to seminars in Germany. The professors also really tried to implement a lively discussion culture. Moreover, the relationship between students and professors is more personal than in Germany with the professors being called by their first name.

Münster York Teacher Education Project (MYTEP)

The courses themselves were very interesting. Even though they were not necessarily specific to the teaching degree, they all talked about the course's topics in the context of school, children and teaching. To give some examples: In the Genetic course we talked about how the teacher's actions can be based on prejudices they have because of students' genders or illnesses or other features based on genetics. We also discussed the differences of nature and nurture, in specific, how much a child's development is based on genetics or their environment. In the course Language & Power we designed an ideal country and school system where all languages that are spoken in that country are equally represented. The session of the course Communicating the Climate Emergency focused on the importance of talking about climate change and its effects in schools. Furthermore, we discussed how to talk about it in a way that also includes hope and constructive ways in which to change something.



Since it was only the second week of the semester in York, the courses were easy to follow, and we were all able to participate and include the knowledge we had from our studies in Germany. In between or after classes we often went to the cafeteria to have lunch or find a place to work in the library. Walking on campus is highly enjoyable because it is home to a large number of animals like ducks and geese due to its large lake and lots of green spaces, which made the campus very beautiful. It was extremely interesting to see a campus university, because we do not have that in Münster. Overall, we highly enjoyed the classes we participated in and the campus experience.



Overview of the courses' topics:

- **Communicating the Climate Emergency:** The session of the course Communicating the Climate Emergency focused on the importance of talking about climate change and its effects in schools. Furthermore, we discussed how to talk about it in a way that also includes hope and constructive ways in which to change something.
- **Language & Power:** In the course Language & Power we designed an ideal country and school system where all languages that are spoken in that country are equally represented.
- **Positive Psychology:** In this week's session of Positive Psychology in Education, we looked at our own strengths and based on Martin Seligman's book *The Optimistic Child* studied the principle of Learned Optimism and the Cognitive ABC Model. This was the basis for a group work to develop interventions that can be implemented in the school context (e.g. gratitude journals, constructive feedback, and warm showers) to promote resilience in pupils.
- **Motivation and Education:** As the title suggests, the session of the course Motivation and Education focused on motivation in the educational context. We compared our own experiences and opinions on the motivation of boys and girls at school and in different countries with the empirical research provided by the professor. The lively discussions with the other student from different backgrounds made the session very interesting.
- **Gender:** Not attended due to itinerary change.
- **Higher Education in 21 C:** The course Higher Education in the 21st Century may be of relevance to those interested in the rather competitive university system in the UK and the background of rankings, league tables and associations of top universities such as the Russell Group.
- **Genetic:** In the Genetic course we talked about how the teacher's actions can be based on prejudices they have because of students' genders or illnesses or other features based on genetics. We also discussed the differences of nature and nurture, in specific, how much a child's development is based on genetics or their environment.
- **Mind Brain and Education:** The course Mind, Brain and Education turned out to be a very interactive and well-attended lecture rather than a seminar. In the session, we looked at topics such as short-term and long-term memory. In addition to the professor's presentation, the students explored various self-experiments to better understand how the short-term memory works.

School Visits

written by: J. Götz, S. Paine, A. Spielkamp

Each of us spent a total of four days at two of the following range of local schools:

- **All Saints RC School** (secondary school): This Roman Catholic school comprises both lower and upper secondary education, which are physically separated into two campuses. We were given an insight into a wide variety of subjects and were delighted to meet many open-minded and motivated students, teachers, and teacher trainees.
- **Archbishop Holgate's School** (secondary school): During our visit at Archbishop Holgate's School, we could participate in educational assemblies and get an overview of the school's concept. One of us visited a class for lower achieving students, which was very interesting because the British school system does not separate students into different schools.
- **Fulford School** (secondary school): A few of us also got the chance to visit Fulford School in the South of York. The school presented a mixture of old and new buildings, which were equipped with digital devices. We also noticed that the school attaches great importance to high attendance in their form groups and uses a behaviour marking system during classes.
- **Huntington School** (secondary school): At Huntington school we spend most of our time at the MFL department and observed a variety of foreign language classes. Especially during German lessons, we were able to assist the teachers a lot. During our stay, Huntington took part at a language debate at St. Peters School. We had the opportunity to join and support the judges regarding the German debates.
- **Knavesmire Primary School** (primary school): Visiting Knavesmire Primary School was an interesting experience. The classrooms could be joined by a mobile partition, which facilitated co-teaching. This feature allows for a more collaborative and interactive learning environment. The teachers at Knavesmire especially focused on enhancing pupils' literary skills.
- **Clifton with Rawcliffe Primary School** (primary school): As the youngest of York's primary schools, Clifton with Rawcliffe Primary School follows a special learning concept based on open-plan classrooms. This concept was of particular interest to us as it makes learning spatially and methodologically open, accessible, and learner-led. This is an approach of which the benefits and downsides were highly interesting to observe from a pedagogical and didactic point of view.

In order to give a better insight, we give exemplary descriptions of our time at three at the above-listed schools.

All Saints Roman Catholic School



Arriving at All Saints Roman Catholic School on a cold Monday morning in spring, we were about to make our first experiences in an English public secondary school. We were kindly picked up at the reception by Erin and taken under her wings, herself a young teacher trainee in the final months of her one-year long PGCE programme (Post-

graduate Certificate of Education) at the University of York. As warmly as we were welcomed by Erin and the ladies at the reception, as strict are the requirements to be permitted to enter an English school. We brought our passports and our DBS (*Führungszeugnis*) with us, which were checked before we were issued with visitor badges. When you enter the school building, you are required to use the barcode on the visitor badge to check in; when you leave, you have to check out to record who is in the school building at all times. For us, this was a much more striking difference to our often freely accessible school grounds in Germany than the expected school uniforms worn by the pupils swarming through the corridors. UK schools are therefore much more intentional about making schools a safe space compared to German schools.

Being introduced to the group of teacher trainees, we were surprised by their young age: Erin, being twenty-one years old, was nowhere near being the only trainee in her early twenties; in fact, all of them were still in the first half of their second decade of life. While it will have taken most of German education students at least 6.5 years to be a fully trained teacher, the one-year PGCE programme enables students to become a fully qualified teacher only after a three-year undergraduate course in their respective subject and the additional one-year course focused on teaching. Following these enthusiastic young professionals, we were given insights into a range of different subjects taught at All Saints, a school which combines lower secondary education until the GCSEs and a Sixth Form preparing pupils for their A-levels.

Time	Activity
8.15am	Site opens to students
8.30am	First bell – students move to form room
8.35am	Tutor time start (late bell)
9.00am	Period 1
10.00am	Period 2
11.00am	Break
11.15am	End of Break
11.20am	Period 3
12.20pm	Lunch
1.05pm	End of lunch
1.10pm	Period 4
2.10pm	Period 5
3.10pm	Year 7 Depart
3.12pm	Year 8 Depart
3.14pm	Year 9 Depart
3.16pm	Year 10.11 Depart
3.18pm	Year 12/13 Depart

What we as future English teachers found especially inspiring was an English lesson in Year 8 (which translates to the German Year 6) in which the class was studying the play *Noughts and Crosses*. We were impressed by the teacher's competence and the young pupils' willingness to participate in discussions about 'big' and complicated topics including racism, class divide, intertextuality, and love. It was particularly interesting to observe how the teacher effectively and sensitively encouraged the engagement with the issue of racism in a highly diverse postcolonial British classroom. This lesson reminded us of the value and importance of conveying the joy of reading and celebrating literature – in this instance, by reading the play out loud, giving the pupils the opportunity to experiment with their acting skills. As the pupils tried to add meaning to their passages by performing it either in a serious or comical way, we could see that children in every country are creative and curious beings to be nurtured. By connecting the contemporary play to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, this lesson also took an intertextual approach and taught us that every supposedly academic topic (such as intertextuality) can be broken down and brought into the classroom to be taught to children.

A general observation was that teacher-centred teaching approaches were preferred to group work and teacher-learner-interactions – something that we as German education students were highly critical of. However, discussions with the younger generation of teacher trainees suggested to us that these types of dialogue-based, interactive, and multi-perspective teaching will gain ground in the years to come. Our experience at All Saints Roman Catholic School was thoroughly enriching and was everything it was meant to be – an exchange on a personal, professional, and cultural level. We were able to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the German and British school system and are eager to see how both systems will continue to learn from each other in the future.



Classrooms at Knavesmire Primary School.

Clifton with Rawcliffe Primary School

Due to an unforeseen high level of staff absence at our second school placement, Vale of York, there was no longer capacity to receive visitors. Although this news came at very short notice, Mirjam's good connections within York meant that she was able to find a new school for us. Clifton with Rawcliffe Primary School is not your average primary school in the area. It has a newly designed building where the typical classrooms no longer exist. The learning spaces are open and simply divided by small movable walls. It is also a relatively large school, with around 650 pupils aged between 5 and 11.

Having been placed in Key Stage 1 for the first day, I was particularly impressed by how much the open space classroom atmosphere seemed to benefit the children. Although the noise level was always high, the children were well used to not being distracted by it. The focus was always on the teacher and her tasks. In comparison to Germany, schooling in the UK starts earlier and therefore the reading and comprehension skills of the young learners were impressive. In addition, the learning materials were well thought out and organised. Each class had its own large screen which the teacher used to display group and individual work. One topic that particularly surprised me was internet safety and use. At such a young age, the students learn to think about what it means to share information online. Potential risks and consequences were collected and shared.

On the second day I kindly asked to stay at Key Stage 2, as a future secondary teacher I was keen to see the skills and teaching methods used for older year groups. The lesson began with an independent task that was displayed on the screen as a follow-up to the previous lesson. As the students arrived, everyone remained quiet and began to work independently on their task. Having a clear daily routine with known expectations from the teacher seemed to help the students to stay focused.

Another interesting aspect for me was the early grouping of students with different levels of ability. Particularly in mathematics, learning deficits were addressed early by forming homogeneous groups. Learners with deficits were taught in a separate room and motivated to learn and participate through lots of positive feedback. It was amazing how well certain methods of increasing participation seemed to work.

Overall, my experience in Clifton with Rawcliffe Primary School was very enriching and as interesting as visiting another secondary school. In general, do not hesitate to ask for changes to your stay at the school. The staff seemed very supportive of your own preferences and needs.

Huntington School



Four of us had the chance to spend two days at Huntington School, an outstanding secondary school located in the north of York. Since the teacher trainee that we were shadowing for the two days of our placement is studying to become a teacher for French and German, we spent most of our time at the MFL (Modern foreign languages) department

at Huntington. Most of us MYTEP participants from Münster aspire to teach English as a foreign language in the future. Therefore, it was very interesting to observe a variety of foreign language classes. As native speaker of German, I was particularly struck by the language proficiency of Sixth Form (German Oberstufe) German students at Huntington School. Personally, I had never experienced language classes for non-native speakers of German prior to my time at Huntington. Once a year, the school takes part in a MFL debate. This debate is hosted by St Peter's School, one of the oldest schools worldwide. Fortunately, the debate took place on the second day of our placement at Huntington School. The four of us were not only given the chance to watch the debate but were also kindly asked to support the judges in their decisions for the German debates. I was amazed by the participants' ability to spontaneously articulate their thoughts on profound topics in German. The students discussed vegetarianism, the minimum age for voting, the influence of celebrities on teenagers and the advantages and disadvantages of teaching online. As a future teacher of English as a foreign language, I will remember that events like this can be a huge motivation for students.

The language classes for younger learners of German that we observed at Huntington mainly consisted of basic translation tasks. The amount of active language use was rather low, compared to my expectations of foreign language lessons that I drew from my own school and teacher training experiences. Nonetheless, the Sixth Form students seemed rather confident while speaking German. The two students from Huntington School even won the German debate in the end. However, their class only consisted of three students. Therefore, their language use probably increased drastically when entering Sixth Form. I would be interested in spending more time at Huntington to observe further features of foreign language classes in the UK.



Final Reflection

written by: N. Hattrup, L.-M. Schneider

Finally, on our last day of the stay in York, we made a last journey to the campus to gather with Ursula and Mirjam to summarize, share, and reflect on our experiences both at the University of York and at our different schools. Having had the opportunity to collect many different impressions, all of us were more than happy to partake in the program's closing discussion workshop.

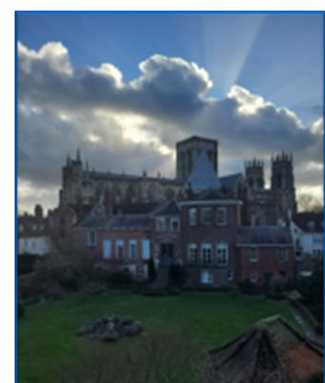
Mirjam started off the first round of reflection and invited us to share our impressions from our school visits, beginning with our highlights of the week. The responses were varied and diverse, but one memorable event was that year's MFL (modern foreign language) debate taking place at St Peter's school that some of us were able to attend. We were fascinated seeing students from all over York participating in debates conducted in the German language but also to have a look at a tradition-steeped public school. Further, some of us especially enjoyed being able to experience a different school type, e. g. a primary school, since the opportunity to do so had previously not been there. Another highlight that was mentioned more than once was the variety of different subjects that UK schools offer their pupils: Subjects like Drama, Food & Textiles, or PSHE were exciting to observe and gave a new outlook on the way education works in the UK. For their GCSE's (equivalent to German 'Mittlere Reife Prüfung') and their A-levels students can choose a variety of subjects. Therefore, an early specialization takes place which limits the possible choice of subject.

Moving on to ideas we want to take home to Germany, all of us were fascinated by the concept of 'Form Time' - a period dedicated to informing students of any relevant news and their preparation time, sorting school material and mentally preparing oneself, before the start of the actual school day. Most schools also have detailed security guidelines, including a lanyard system that can be used to identify who is on the school ground at any given time and for what reason. Safety is a stark priority at UK schools. In addition, there were no traditional classrooms, instead the teachers each had their own room which they could design themselves and materials and projects could always be left in the room. Some schools even had a fully open floor plan.

Although the above-mentioned points highlight insights, we separately learned and noticed that the British school system is all in all highly competitive with the school ratings made public. Students do not receive grades for active participation; however, a system of

merits and demerits is used so that parents can constantly monitor their children's performance. This was a very interesting realization for us.

Following our conversation with Mirjam, Ursula was also eager to know our impressions of the first week in York, especially our experiences in the seminars and lectures. For many of us, it was our first time studying at an English university and we were grateful to explore the campus, the library, and overall, the student lifestyle. We enjoyed our courses and collected intersectional insights in different degrees. The seminars 'Genetics' and 'Communicating the Climate Emergency' were named as highly valuable and inspiring. The teaching style differed from the German one too, as a culture of personal interaction between students and lecturers is lived. As mentioned before, we extremely benefitted from the exchange with the PGCE students and the discussion which sparked from that. These are contacts which may persist for many years and could reinforce the exchange between the cities York and Münster as well as the exchange of intercultural educational opinions and methods. As this was only the second MYTEP spring school, room for improvement was also considered in the light of our two weeks and we hope that it can develop further based on our assessment. Positive feedback from the lecturers as well as from the teachers was forwarded to us at the end of our time which supported our feeling of great validation. In reflecting on the MYTEP, all of us agreed on how grateful we are that both universities can offer us this invaluable experience and diverse cultural insights. The program provided a platform for personal growth, professional development, and meaningful connections with peers. Through engaging discussions in university courses and hands-on activities in our schools, we were able to expand our knowledge, skills, and perspectives in ways that will undoubtedly benefit us in the future. Overall, this two-week program has been a transformative journey that has equipped all of us with the tools and confidence to navigate future challenges and opportunities with resilience and adaptability.



Münster York Teacher Education Project (MYTEP)

