

INCLUSION CONCRETE IN AUSTRIA



die pädagogische
hochschule
oberösterreich



INCLUSION CONCRETE

IN AUSTRIA



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- Katharina Soukup-Altrichter**
5 **Foreword by the Vice-Rector
of the Pädagogische Hochschule OÖ**
- Roswitha Stütz**
6 **Foreword by the head of the Institute
of International Cooperation**
- Ewald Feyerer / Wilfried Prammer**
7 **Preface by the editors of the German version**
- Ewald Feyerer / Richard Wimberger**
11 **Index-based Resource Distribution
of Inclusive Schools**
Development of new allocation models in connection
with the implementation of inclusive model regions
- Marianne Wilhelm**
17 **10 Steps to Inclusive, Competence-developing Lessons
in Heterogeneous Learning Groups**
Planning, Teaching, Evaluating, Documenting and Reflexion
Guidance for Teachers in the Inclusive Regions
- Elke Ravelhofer**
44 **How Should I Say it?**
On addressing the topic of National Socialism/
Holocaust in an inclusive setting
- Erzsébet Matthes**
61 **Much Ado About Playing**
Fostering Inclusion Through Dramatic Play
- Eva Prammer-Semmler**
70 **The Professionalization of Educational Assistants**
The study program "Assistance for Children and Adolescents
with Impairments in Childcare Facilities and in Schools"
being offered in Upper Austria
- Eva Prammer-Semmler**
74 **Could You Please Explain What Educational Assistance is?**
Searching for a professional definition of a highly desired resource.
- 83 **About the authors**

Foreword

On the Way to a Joint Educational Program for All

From exclusion to segregation and from integration to inclusion, an ideal-typical development or rather a paradigm shift in pedagogy is described in a general way.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was also ratified in Austria in 2008, recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to education. The signatory states guarantee an inclusive education system at all levels as well as access to lifelong learning with the aim of enabling people with disabilities, so they can fully develop their personalities, whereby they will be empowered to truly participate in a free society. People with disabilities should have equal access to excellent free primary and secondary education together with others in the community in which they live. The provision of support measures (teaching staff etc.) has been promised according to the UN Convention.

While in South Tyrol (Italy), in 1977, after the integration of all pupils with disabilities, much positive energy flowed into the question how to practically include these students, there is still a very fundamental debate going in Austria, "Inclusion if, inclusion but, inclusion except, inclusion only for, etc ..."

This makes it all the more necessary to have a publication that shows examples of how joint inclusive teaching programs can be organized for the benefit of all pupils.

Already in the 1980s, Feuser developed the concept of developmentally logical didactics, which is not only realized by individually prepared and differentiated lessons, but is truly realized when all children learn and work on and with a common subject in cooperation with each other, at their respective developmental level, and by means of their current thinking and action competences.

It is a fact that this is a challenging claim, and that it can only be realized when it becomes a common good of the entire school community. However, it is certainly feasible, as is shown by contributions in this volume. These articles should serve as encouragement and fuel the discussion about how inclusion should be implemented.

"The central resource is one's own change. Integration/Inclusion begins in the minds – in ours!"¹ (Feuser, 1985)

Dr. Katharina Soukup-Altrichter
Vice-Rector for teaching and research

Linz, October 2018

¹„Die zentrale Ressource ist die eigene Veränderung. Integration/Inklusion fängt in den Köpfen an – in unseren!“

Foreword

Dear Readers,

As head of the Institute of International Cooperation and Study Programmes, I see it as my task to establish and support cooperation with partner institutions within and outside Europe in the areas of teaching, research, faculty and student mobility. This also includes the visualization and positioning of the Pädagogische Hochschule Oberösterreich (PH OÖ) by outlining its focal areas. One of these focal areas is inclusive education, which has been prominently represented at our institution for years.

Over the last few years, increasing attention has been paid to the integration of inclusive education into teacher education curricula; teachers need to be able to effectively address issues relating to diversity, and to enhance an equitable and inclusive learning environment for all students. One of the main factors for this development is the fact that diversity (linguistic, cultural, ethnic diversity as well as special educational needs) has become a salient feature of the school environment. This is also true for cooperation projects with international partners. Internationalisation in teacher education according to our understanding cannot be thought of nor practiced without an inclusive approach; if we want to cooperate successfully with students, (teaching) staff and researchers from all over the world, we have to be able to deal with each other with great sensitivity and respect for each other's diverse backgrounds and different needs. Equality as well as gender mainstreaming and diversity are issues of great importance for the PH OÖ and thus for internationalisation.

In order to inspire and to encourage cross-border exchange and discussions, the Institute of International Cooperation and Study Programmes has decided to edit this present volume in English for you, dear readers; it gathers articles from former volumes of „Inklusion Konkret“ originally published in German by colleagues from the Institute of Inclusive Education at PH OÖ.

The volume features articles detailing concrete examples of didactical approaches in inclusive settings which have already been applied, tested and researched. Some articles, on the other hand, focus on central questions like the allocation and use of resources in inclusive schools in (Upper) Austria.

In this respect, **Feyerer/Wimberger** describe an index-based resource distribution model for inclusive schools where additional resources for special needs education should be made available for the entire learning system in order to prevent a “resource labelling dilemma”. As long as additional resources are linked to the diagnosis processes focusing on special educational needs of individual children, those children will be stigmatised as children with learning, behavioural or speech difficulties.

Prammer-Semmler refers to another highly desired resource in compulsory schools in her two articles: educational assistants, who play a key role in Austria and other German-speaking countries and who very often bridge the gap between the needs of individual students and what the mainstream school can currently do for them. Although the role of educational assistants is very varied, as Prammer-Semmler details in her article, it is only in Upper Austria that the PH OÖ supports the professionalisation of the assistants by offering a training programme of 25 ECTS.

In order to increase reading fluidity, we have translated original German quotations and put the original version in footnotes.

Mag. Roswitha Stütz
Linz, October 2018

Preface

Dear Readers,

This English-language version of the publication „Inklusion konkret“ by the Federal Centre for Inclusive Education is a compilation of articles taken from the four already published volumes. As editors, we would like to thank Roswitha Stütz, head of the Institute for International Cooperation and Study Programs, for making this publication possible, which corresponds to the view that we hold in common: “We want to live inclusion and diversity at our institution. Therefore, we invite students with other first languages than German as well as students with chronic diseases and disabilities to apply for a course at our institution.” Our goal is defined in the following way: “The objective is to avoid exclusion of pupils with special needs and to provide all teachers with the competences needed for teaching in a comprehensive school environment. Intercultural aspects as well as gender justice and social disadvantage are equally taken into account.” (<https://ph-ooe.at/international.html>)

The following statistics give a basic overview of the situation in Austria:

According to the National Education Report 2015¹, in the school year 2013/14, only 1.6% of all school-age pupils attended a special education school or a class solely for special education students. In comparison with its German-speaking neighbors, Austria can thus be classified as a very successful country in regards to integration or de-segregation. However, it should be noted that although 18,100 of the 30,200 pupils are schooled in an integrative context, 12,100 pupils in need of special education are still excluded from joint teaching. The following quote outlines the conceptual debate about the significance of integration and inclusion:

“Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences. Placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes without accompanying structural changes to, for example, organization, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies, does not constitute inclusion.” (United Nations 2016, p. 4).²

Being schooled together is therefore a necessary, but in and by itself not a sufficient condition. In addition, on the basis of changed school cultures, structures and practices, there must be social and teaching integration in the sense of joint activities and joint teaching. This requires a continuous process of external and internal school reform.

On behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, the Federal Centre for Inclusive Education and Special Needs Education (BZIB) is supporting this development process with its „Inklusion konkret“ series of publications. The aim of the series is to provide theoretically founded thought-provoking considerations that can benefit the daily practice, thereby providing ideas for long-term internal and external school development. Accordingly, we repeatedly focus on the term “designing inclusive teaching”, because, as it was already known before the Hattie study, personalized joint teaching is one of the key criteria for the success of achieving inclusive education.

1 Nationaler Bildungsbericht 2015 www.bifie.at

2 United Nations, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016). General comment No. 4, Article 24: Right to inclusive education, available online at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57c977e34.html> [18.10.2016]

The General comment No. 4 (2016) of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of the United Nations states the following core elements of inclusive teaching:

“Recognition is given to the capacity of every person to learn, and high expectations are established for all learners, including learners with disabilities. Inclusive education offers flexible curricula, teaching and learning methods adapted to different strengths, requirements and learning styles. (...) The education system must provide a personalized educational response, rather than expecting the student to fit the system. (...) Inclusive learning environments must create an accessible environment where everyone feels safe, supported, stimulated and able to express themselves, with a strong emphasis on involving students themselves in building a positive school community” (United Nations 2016, p. 5)³.

Successful learning essentially depends on the cooperation and collaboration of different people in practically dealing with daily life in the world (= nature, culture and people). It is about learning with each other and from each other what the other person does not yet know or can do, in order to work out a common understanding of as well as a responsible way dealing with the world. As Georg Feuser (1995)⁴ states, “Man reveals things to himself through man and to man through things.”⁵ Inclusive pedagogy is therefore based on the principle of heterogeneity and the recognition of the human being as a bio-psycho-social being. School should create learning opportunities that focus on important questions and interests as well as on the individual development levels of the pupils.

Learning through teaching should be based in dynamic research done while teaching rather than just in the static acquisition of ready-organized pieces of knowledge. Good educators therefore place the development and expansion of the ability of all children and young people to act at the centre of their pedagogical program. The interaction aspect is at least as important to them as the teaching of the content, and the process is more important than the product. The pupils’ actual environment combined with their developmental levels are the starting point of their pedagogical work. Artificial motivation is thus replaced by interest in and identification with life-relevant contents and processes. To this end, they involve children and young people in as many planning processes of learning and school life as possible, and also let them participate in making decisions. In addition to the increased participation of the pupils, they are also interested in greater participation of the parents in the educational process and open the school to community life.

Inclusive pedagogy and didactics places therefore the autonomous and self-determined actions of the children and the variety of different approaches to a common topic or concern at the center. It is only through the encounter and analysis of the diversity of daily life that the world as a whole opens up and no living condition is considered worth less than another. However, schools in German-speaking countries are still more teacher-centered and deficit-oriented. Often not the strengths are positively highlighted, but a negative emphasis is placed on mistakes and weaknesses. Inclusive pedagogy sees itself as a pupil-centered and competence-oriented counter-concept that opens up to the diversity of all pupils and enables personalized teaching and learning in the community of which all are a part.

3 United Nations, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016). General comment No. 4, Article 24: Right to inclusive education, available online at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/57c977e34.html> [18.10.2016]

4 Feuser, Georg (1995). *Behinderte Kinder und Jugendliche zwischen Integration und Aussonderung*, Darmstadt.

5 „Der Mensch erschließt sich die Dinge durch den Menschen und sich den Menschen über die Dinge.“

Cor Meijer (2005, p. 5 f)⁶, President of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, cites the following seven factors for the effectiveness of inclusive teaching:

- ▶ *Cooperative teaching* (usually referred to as team teaching)
- ▶ *Cooperative learning* (peer tutoring)
- ▶ *Cooperative problem solving* (systemic approach to dealing with unwanted behavior; clear rules)
- ▶ *Heterogeneous groups* (differentiated lesson and teaching design within each curriculum; individualization)
- ▶ *Effective teaching* (improved school performance through systematic observation, planning and evaluation with the help of individual development plans, pedagogical diagnostics and learning process support)
- ▶ *Designated classes* (the entire teaching of two or three classes of the same age group takes place in classrooms that are located in close proximity to each other with a shared general area; a small, manageable team of teachers is responsible for the students in the same age group)
- ▶ *Alternative learning methods* (pupils are given more responsibility for their learning, learning and problem-solving strategies are taught in a targeted way; project teaching and pupils' participation in the decision-making processes)

Inclusive education can therefore only be successful if attempts are made to do justice to the heterogeneity of all pupils through comprehensive didactic and methodological measures.

This volume is a selection of articles from the volumes published to date by „Inklusion konkret“.

“National Socialism and pupils with intellectual disabilities – is this not too much of a challenge?” In her article, **Elke Ravelhofer**, a special needs teacher, first examines this thought-provoking question as such, before substantiating more general aspects of inclusive teaching such as different learning prerequisites, mediation aids, language and teaching settings for history teaching and presenting selected core aspects of history teaching that seemed relevant to the treatment of this topic. Practical thought-provoking considerations and materials complete the contribution.

With the contribution “Much Ado About Playing”, **Erzsébet Matthes**, a researcher at the Institute for Special Educational Development and Rehabilitation at the University of Rostock as well as being a drama lecturer, shows unusual methods in dealing with pupils with Asperger syndrome. This contribution also encourages further thinking in working with pupils with challenging behaviors.

Our goal as editors was and will be to continually use concrete concepts that have been applied and successfully tested in the practice and thereby to provide thought-provoking considerations that will perhaps make work in the classroom a little more colorful and diverse. It will also be important in the future to establish the connection between theory and practice, because without a comprehensible background based on theory, practical examples are often lost as desirable “prescriptions.”

With this in mind, we hope that you will enjoy the reading of this publication, and hope that much of this series will be fruitful for your work.

Dr. Ewald Feyerer & Wilfried Prammer, M.A.
Linz, October 2018

6 Meijer, Cor (2005). *Integrative und inklusive Unterrichtspraxis im Sekundarschulbereich. Zusammenfassender Bericht*, Brüssel, available online at: https://www.european-agency.org/sites/default/files/inclusive-education-and-classroom-practice-in-secondary-education_iecp_secondary_de.pdf [16.10.2016]

Index-based Resource Distribution for Inclusive Schools

Development of new allocation models in connection with the implementation of inclusive model regions

Abstract

From February 2016 to April 2017, the BZIB carried out fundamental work to develop Austrian specific models of index-oriented resource distribution, taking special education into account. Taking part in this four-day event were school inspectors, experts from inclusive model regions (=IMR) and domestic and foreign practitioners. In this review, the initial situation, objectives, fundamental aspects of index-related resource models, respectively, the discussion process are presented.

1. Initial situation

In the decree "Binding guidelines for the development of inclusive model regions" (bmbf, 2015), the ministry points out that an inclusive school system can break down barriers to education and so create equal opportunities "for all pupils, with or without SPF (special educational needs), whether German speaking or users of other languages, male or female etc."

"Not just the individual child but the whole learning system should be in the focus of diagnosis and support." (bmbf, 2015, p. 1)¹

Accordingly, additional resources for special needs education should be made available for the entire learning system not just the individual child. The third sub-project in the binding guidelines is, therefore, "efficient, needs-based and flexible use of resources" (bmbf, 2015, 7 ff.)² and it is noted in the introduction that since the establishment of integration, the proportion of children with special educational needs has been rising. Since the resources in special education are capped at 2.7% of all school children, the overall number of pupils is decreasing, but the number of children with special needs is moderately rising, which has led to an increasing resources bottleneck over the last fifteen years in terms of special needs resources per child with SPF. Thus, a new means of control should create the foundations to allocate resources "in line with needs and without stigmatisation". (bmbf, 2015, p. 8)³

One of the tasks of the inclusive model regions is to find solutions for the so-called "resource labelling dilemma" by critically scrutinising the structural conditions of how they represent exclusion risks and how to reduce this. The integrated regular classes in Hamburg, for example, have shown that labels such as "learning disabled", "speech impaired", or "behaviour disturbed" are not necessary to ensure a fair distribution of resources. The allocation of resources there was not linked to the fact that special educational needs for individual students were decided by experts. The integrated regular classes receive a flat rate allocation of special education professionals without a formal diagnostic procedure for individual children. (cf. Boban/Hinz, 1994; Schuck et al., 1999)

1 „Nicht mehr das einzelne Kind, sondern das gesamte Lernsystem soll im Blickpunkt von Diagnose und Förderung stehen.“

2 „Verbindliche Richtlinien zur Entwicklung von Inklusiven Modellregionen“

3 „um Ressourcen bedarfsgerecht und nicht stigmatisierend vergeben zu können“

According to the concept of index-based resource allocation, the special education resources in Austria can, at least partly, be assigned to schools without labelling individual children as learning, behavioural or speech impaired. This could be based on socio-political characteristics such as parent education, unemployment or the proportion of people with a migrant background, bearing in mind that this must be seen differently regarding children with an organic, medically proven impairment, for example, deafness:

Sign and letter interpreters are a vital communication aid for the hearing impaired. At the moment it is hardly conceivable that at all times, in all classes, university seminars, conferences, workshops and congresses, appropriate help is available. Interpreter for the deaf is only available on request and applications only possible with a designated disability status. (Wocken, 2011, p. 81)⁴

If additional resources for special education support was no longer given to children with special educational needs like a backpack but rather assigned on an index-based allocation to schools on an autonomous basis, this would mean 80% of all current special educational needs students could avoid a decision process. About 22,000 children and adolescents would no longer be stigmatised as people with learning, behavioural or speech difficulties. The school, however, would still have additional funds available to compensate disadvantages caused by impairments and so prevent possible exclusion.

The binding guidelines for the IMR set out the target of the third sub-project.

A new resource management in the context of the re-organisation of ZIS forms the basis for allocating resources on demand and without stigmatisation. In addition to supporting and promoting pupils with SPF, special needs resources should be used fairly and flexibly to reduce or eliminate learning barriers as well as to temporarily support individual pupils. A legally compliant enforcement of § 8 SchPflG is intended to ensure that the required special education resources are guaranteed to students with mental and physical disabilities. (bmbf, 2015, p. 8)

Based on considerations by Johann Bacher on concrete models from Switzerland and South Tyrol, and examples from literature (e.g. Tillmann/Weishaupt, 2015; Schnell/Schüchner, 2016; Katzenbach/Schnell, 2013; Kuschaj/Schönpflug, 2014) a concept was drawn up within the framework of the BZIB workshops that, in addition to a special pot for physical, sensory or multiple-impaired children and adolescents, provide additional resources to schools depending on the social situation of their pupils which can be used not only reactively but also preventatively.

For pupils needing temporary support to achieve learning objectives – even if no SPF is awarded, appropriate funding concepts must be developed in cooperation with ZIS and included in the general funding concepts of the schools. In this sense, models of flexible resource allocation must be developed and tested.

It is important to ensure that special education teachers also participate in the promotion of pupils without special educational needs (SPF).

Applications for temporary special education support without SPF must come from the school management and addressed to ZIS at the LSR. They are required to provide resources that are flexible and needs-based as far as possible. (bmbf, 2015, p. 8)

4 Gebärdens- und Schriftdolmetscher sind für viele gehörlose Menschen unverzichtbare Kommunikationshilfen. Es ist zur Zeit [sic!] aber wohl kaum vorstellbar, dass immer und überall – in allen Schulklassen, in allen Seminaren an der Universität, in allen Workshops auf Tagungen und Kongressen – von vornherein auch entsprechende Kompetenzen und Hilfen vorgehalten werden. Dolmetscher für Gehörlose gibt es nur auf Anfrage, wobei die Beantragung allein mit einem ausgewiesenen Behindertenstatus möglich ist.

2. Basic aspects of index-related resource allocation

An index-based resource allocation pursues those objectives enshrined in our federal constitution as a general commitment of Austrian schools: thus equal opportunities and a guaranteed minimum education are realised on a formal level. On a content level, the population should be able to take part in cultural and economic life in Austria and the world, regardless of their origin, social disposition or financial means (see Federal Constitution Act §14, paragraph 5a)⁵. In fact, the above-mentioned goals have not yet been achieved as educational success is still strongly dependent on socio-economic factors. Individual educational success is determined by the socio-economic background of the parents and other factors such as migration background, place of residence, language and gender. This situation is aggravated by a high percentage of students at risk and composition effects.

To provide schools with public funds, the economics of education recognises three approaches, each of which achieves very different control effects. On the one hand are indicators which are decisive for resource allocation and the volume of financial resources distributed according to specific criteria. On the other hand, it is relevant to know where the distributed resources flow to.

Katzenbach / Fast (2013, p. 31) conclude that there are three models due to a control indicator: input, throughput and output systems. The indicators are identified on the basis of special education reports. This system is relatively accurate regarding the needs of individuals, but has the disadvantage of stigmatisation. Despite sinking student numbers in Austria: with the exception of Vienna – the need for special education is increasing. Thus, the question of the objectivity of the needs demands clarification.

Throughput systems do not cause stigmatisation of pupils as it is the tasks and not the needs which are financed. Flat-rate financing could be multifunctional. However, whether the funds are actually used according to the principles of thrift and pertinence is difficult to determine.

Students of small schools experience a disadvantage in such systems as individual support measures are usually not covered. It would, of course, be possible to compensate this by considering school factors.

Output models, very widespread in Anglo-Saxon cultures, work with target indicators that must be achieved: academic performance, exceeding eligibility, minimum special schools allocation etc. Generally, such models (see Schrodt, 2017) go hand in hand with testing “teaching for testing” (Katzenbach / Schnell, 2013, p. 32) and subsequently with rankings which, taking into account Austrian privacy laws, is not legally possible. At the same time, there is often a pseudo-culture of avoidance (Katzenbach / Schnell, 2013, p. 32) or pupils missing because of “illness” on exam days. Moreover, it is highly questionable why a cut in funds due to non-achievement has to be answered for in the following year.

Regarding the resources recipient Meijer (1999, p. 183 ff.) identifies various areas of international comparison. This ranges from individual support for the child, their parents, primary schools, special education schools, municipalities, regional institutions etc. This points the finger to another problem, namely that resources passed to those affected come from very different sources. In addition to federal government funds, support can come from entities for school maintenance, federal auxiliary funds, health insurance and social assistance, as well as private initiatives. As a result, there are complex procedures to direct these financial flows.

5 See <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/Dokument.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Dokumentnummer=NOR40064335> [30.10.2017]

3. Genesis of index-based allocation models for inclusive model regions

Conference review

The intention of the BZIB was to provide a forum to develop index-based resource models which meet the needs of inclusive model regions and can be transferred to the whole of Austria after a trial run and evaluation. Experts from home and abroad as well as representatives of the model regions were invited to take part. Initially the plan was to give some technical input and then allow completely open discussions – as a sort of *tabula rasa* using the title “Vision versus Current Situation”. However, the representatives of the model regions were very pragmatic and concentrated on discussions about the current situation and similarities between the different model regions. There was a clear commitment to working with a fair and just model. What also came across here were the feared distribution problems – in other words, that federal funds would drain across to other states under more pressure i.e. Vienna. These fears have in fact so far been found to be obsolete as the ministry clearly states that only models at county level within the existing federal distribution level can be developed. This proved to be an important point for further progress.

It quickly became apparent that no purely “index-based models” should be pursued but rather “mixed models”. Therefore, there should be person-based, individual support for children with genuine special educational needs and index-based supplementary resources for disadvantaged schools (supplementary teachers) in addition to the basic supply according to school types. At the second meeting in June 2016, Feyerer and Wimberger presented an initial model for discussion, using the example Upper Austria (under the conditions stipulated by the ministry that no additional funds could be used, but that everything had to be financed by redeployment).

The starting point for this model regarding financing was the current fixed fee per student. 10% of this amount should flow into the opportunity-index and another 35% should come from a special education pot. Fig. 1 illustrates this model:

According to this model, 1,050 new teaching posts in Upper Austrian compulsory education could be created which would, however, only result in about one new teacher per school. In order to build a truly effective system, it would ultimately be necessary to use significantly more than 10% of the fixum for the flexible index-related field and to combine small schools into school clusters.

Bacher’s model is similarly financed, namely from the *de facto* increase in student numbers. The opportunity-index model of the Chamber of Labour (= AK) (Fast/Schüchner, n.d.) assumes that additional funds would flow into education. Regarding surcharges for burdened schools, the models of Bacher and Schnell/Schüchner are similar. However, the AK model has more increment levels and an inclusion surcharge additional to the inclusion basic care.

During the meetings, the focus of the development process shifted to two issues: firstly, to find an efficient method for calculating index values – that is which data is readily available and secondly, which or how many indicators could be used as a basis to work as efficiently as possible.

The importance of regionalism was also discussed. It turned out that the established structures and regional conditions (small schools, management of schools) in the individual model regions need very specific models. As Wohlhart and Svecnik show in their comparison calculations, an exclusively calculated index allocation can be a disadvantage as well as an advantage for some schools. These shortcomings can only be compensated by experts on site. The more calculations were made, the clearer it was that the views of experts must be included in the pedagogical counselling centres. Furthermore, in addition to the index-related allocation for regions, respectively, a collection of

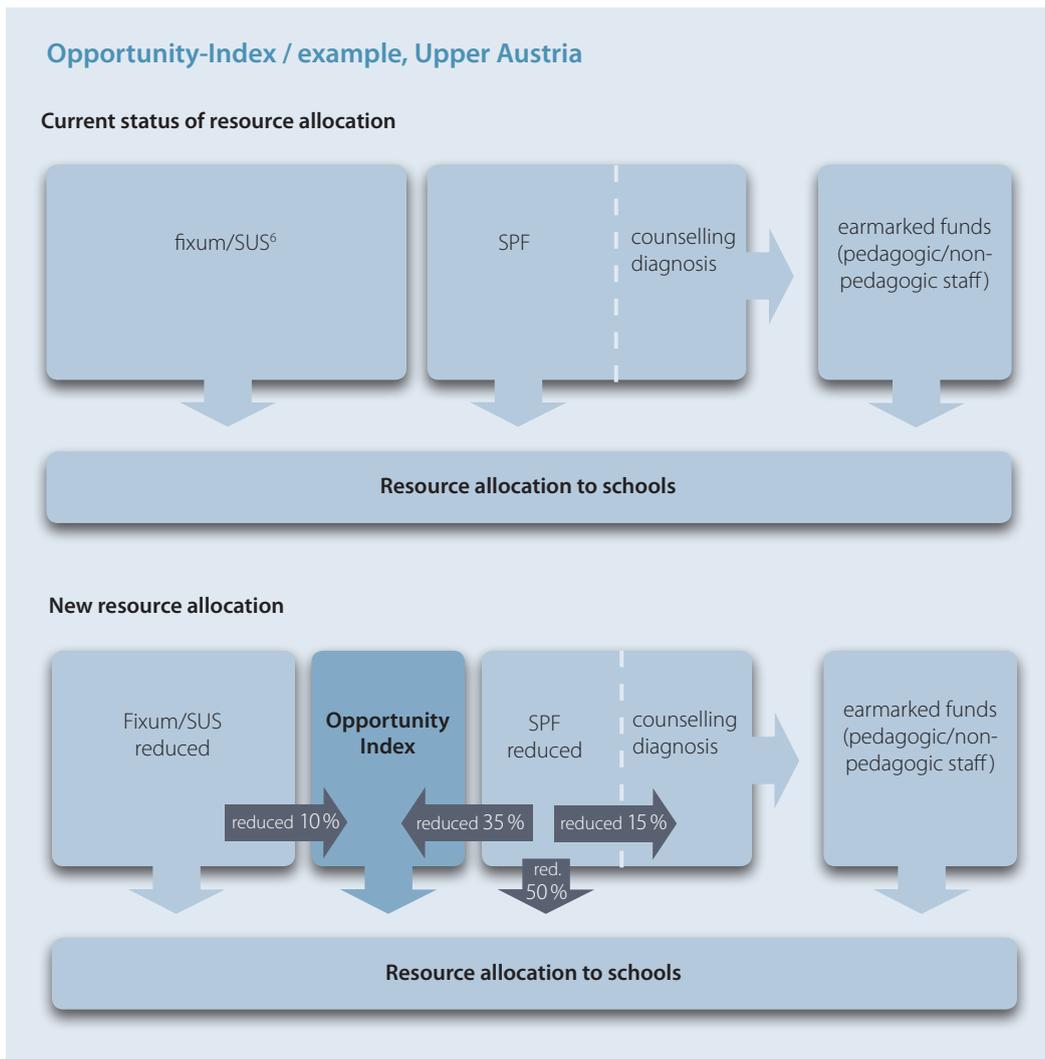


Fig 1: Index-based mixed allocation model for resource allocation
(based on the policy that no additional resources flow into the system)

schools, the final allocation of non-persons related supplementary resources awarded to individual schools can only be awarded in regional discussion and negotiations which include experts of the Pedagogical Advisory Service (formerly ZIS). The question of the volume of resources to be distributed remained open. Basic care is borne by the government with federal states mobilising extra funds. This would be a well arguable volume of resources but what resources would federal states have where no extra funds are freed up. The amount of money allocated or redistributed ultimately depends on the political will of the government and the individual regions. So far there has been no official statement issued.

4. Conclusion

An important goal of the BZIB was to start a field trial in each of the model regions in which suitable models can be tested and evaluated. This has not yet been achieved as political conditions were not given. A redistribution in connection with the development of inclusive schools, which deprives some schools of resources in order to give them to more burdened schools, is probably just as critical at the regional level as an index-based redistribution at national level between the federal states and must be sound and well

6 SuS = Schülerinnen und Schüler (pupils)

argued. Using international comparisons, it is foreseeable that mixed models, namely, a combination of input and throughput systems will prevail (cf. Katzenbach/Schnell, 2013). The workshops have not brought about an evaluated model, but some very good approaches and also concrete calculation models, which are put up for discussion.

A desideratum is and remains the effectiveness of index-based models. Neither nationally nor internationally are there meaningful studies. The city of Hamburg, for example, has had a social index-based resource distribution system for 20 years but cannot give a clear answer, whether the allocation is successful in terms of equal opportunities, regardless of origin and social disposition (cf. Schulte/Hartig/Pietsch, 2014). In the working group on inclusive model regions, there was consensus that the allocation of additional resources must be content related and subject to the implementation of teaching methods of individualisation, differentiation and personalisation (e.g. school concepts, agreement on effective use of resources, flexible procedures taking into account school location discussion as in Switzerland⁷, a departure from the ASO (allgemeine Sonderschule = general special education school) syllabus and an individualised application of the regular curriculum, the creation of individual education plans as in South Tyrol, ...). As Veronika Pfeiffer says:

I am convinced that inclusive schools must receive additional resources and that these should be used flexibly according to need. However, the basis for a "good" school is an appreciative and respectful approach, joint responsibility and reflection and development of content.

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⁷ See https://vsa.zh.ch/internet/bildungsdirektion/vsa/de/schulbetrieb_und_unterricht/sonderpaedagogisches0/ssg.html [26.10. 2017].

Marianne Wilhelm

10 Steps to Inclusive, Competence-developing Lessons in Heterogeneous Learning Groups

**Planning, teaching, evaluating, documenting and reflecting
Guidance for teachers in the inclusive region**

Abstract

This article is a handout designed to support all schools and teachers who have set their goal to target their teaching work towards competence-based didactics. The essential features are divided into ten action steps to be taken into account when developing lessons. Basically, we point out all the key aspects that interested parties can read in detail in the publication EU-KOKIDS. Competence lessons should increase the effectiveness of teaching and guarantee the safeguarding of basic abilities through its aim and action orientation, the in-depth long term work on key topics and its brain friendly learning networks. The goal of inclusive education is to ensure that *all* children gain the greatest possible increase in skills within the given learning time.

The initial situation

Here are some official extracts stating the ideals of developing inclusive education regions and subsequently an inclusive school system.

The National Action Plan for Disabilities 2012 – 2020, adopted in 2012, formulates objectives of the government that also provide for the development of an inclusive school system in the field of education and as a first step demands the implementation and evaluation of model initiatives (such as model regions).

The current government programme defines the “conception of model regions for the optimal and needs-based promotion of all pupils of this region with academic support as one of the measures in the development of inclusive education.”¹

To implement model regions, school test models were developed adhering to the principles of the UN Convention and inclusive education.

An inclusive region is a region that pursues the goal of fully completing Article 24: Education, of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in its sphere of interest.²

Article 24: Education

Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recognises the right of education for disabled persons. This regulation reiterates and reaffirms the provisions of Article 13 of the UN Social Pact. Articles 28 and 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

1 See BMBF (2015): Verbindliche Richtlinie zur Entwicklung von Inklusiven Modellregionen. Available at: http://www.cisonline.at/fileadmin/kategorien/erlass_an_Isr_Ir_Amtsfa_Praes_kaernten_stmk_tirol.pdf [10. 1. 2017]

2 CIS (n.d.): Inklusive Modellregionen. Available at: <http://www.cisonline.at/ueberblick/inklusioninkl-modellregionen> [10. 1. 2017]

Based on the principle of equal rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities thus ensures an inclusive education system and lifelong learning at all levels. It must be ensured that disabled people are not excluded from the general education system because of disability. Disabled children cannot be excluded from attending elementary or secondary school because of their disability. Rather, they should be given equal rights with other – non-disabled – children to access an inclusive, high-quality and free education.

Similarly, access to general higher education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning should be ensured on an equal footing with others.

Within the general education system, reasonable provision should be made and the necessary support provided to facilitate successful education. Furthermore, appropriate measures should be taken to enable disabled people to acquire life-practical and social skills.

The aim is to facilitate the learning of different forms of communication such as Braille, the acquisition of orientation and mobility skills, the support of other people with disabilities and mentoring.

Similarly, learning sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of deaf people should be facilitated. In order to do this, all education institutions should take appropriate measures to hire teachers, including those with disabilities, who are trained in sign language and Braille. Likewise, skilled workers and staff are to be trained at all levels of the education system.

Effective, personalised support measures must also create an environment that allows for the best possible school and social development, with the aim of fully integrating people with disabilities.

Regarding the acquisition of practical life-skills and social competences, deaf or deafblind people, especially children, must be provided with language and communication education using the means best suited to the individual, in an environment that allows the best possible school and social environment.³

An essential objective of an inclusive school system is the elimination of educational barriers and thus an increase in equal opportunities. A school for all should place every child and their needs at the centre and promote and challenge them optimally within the school community.

Scientific studies show that carefully planned and carried out joint instruction not only raises the potential performance of students with disabilities, but supports the overall quality development of school and teaching in general. This culture of teaching and learning in schools with integrated classes (more than three pupils with special educational needs – SPF in short) promotes closer cooperation, higher support orientation, more conscious design of learning environments, more cooperative forms of learning and less social norm-related developments. This leads to particularly positive performance evaluations.

The concept of inclusion stands for optimised and qualitatively enhanced integration: all students, whether with or without SPF, German speaking or speaking a different language, male or female etc. should be seen as individuals in need of assistance. Not the individual child but the entire learning system should be in the focus of diagnosis and support.⁴

3 UN-Behindertenrechtskonvention. Available at: <https://www.behindertenrechtskonvention.info/bildung-3907> [13.3.2017]

4 BMBF (2015): Verbindliche Richtlinie zur Entwicklung von Inklusiven Modellregionen – Annex-BMBF 36.153/0088/I/5/2015. Available at: http://www.cisonline.at/fileadmin/kategorien/Verbindliche_Richtlinie_zur_Entwicklung_von_Inklusiven_Modellregionen_1.9.2015.pdf [10.1.2017]

Annotation: The identification of SPF is not compatible with the principle of inclusion as it is purely a necessary administrative measure that must be replaced in the inclusive educational regions by other mechanisms of resource allocation. (See article Feyerer/Wimberger in this issue.)

The aim of inclusive education is to allow all students, through individual and flexible internal differentiation, to enjoy the highest possible education with flexible use of the appropriate resources. In this respect, § 17 SchUG, Paragraph 4 is to be interpreted as meaning that the instruction in general schools, even for those with existing SPF, should be based on the standard syllabus of the school, as far as possible. Only in compelling exceptions should the curriculum of special schools be applied. Therefore, students are to be taught and evaluated according to the syllabus of the school they are attending. The aim is to complete schooling using the respective syllabus, if necessary with some adjustments to the teaching plan. In this context, school trials can apply for a curriculum with differentiated learning goals to the standard syllabus instead of the syllabus of special education schools.⁵

The use of *differentiated learning goals* is once again a reinforcement of the demand for *individualisation*. Without taking leave of the grading system and replacing it with individual competence descriptions there will be no satisfactory solution in the heterogeneous learning group!

Further aspects of the present situation can be found in the current education reforms.

Within the school rights package the *interface kindergarten/elementary school* becomes closely interwoven. The last compulsory kindergarten year and the first two school years will be an intertwined educational area. An information exchange between kindergarten and elementary school will allow educators to find talents, interests and needs of children early on.⁶

On the question of performance appraisal, the school law package provides for more school autonomy. In the future, each school will be able to decide on an academic basis whether an alternative school performance report should apply to individual classes or even the entire school up to the 3rd grade. In order to let the children learn together, depending on the interests and needs and to foster their individual learning development, there will be the possibility of school autonomy for all classes and years.⁷

The extension of full time schooling, the possibilities of *school clusters and campus education* and the *flexibility of the teaching organisation* facilitate the implementation of the inclusive regions and schools.⁸

Inclusive regions should develop exemplary solutions for *cooperation with kindergartens and cluster and campus education* enabling transitions and better use of resources. In addition to structural changes, success will depend significantly on changes in lesson design.

In future, teachers will develop and apply an inclusive competence-based didactic concept for the design of teaching and learning in heterogeneous learning groups. Internationally and nationally there are ongoing discussions and test models.

5 Ibid.

6 APA: Hammerschmid: Erster Teil der Bildungsreform wird jetzt umgesetzt. Available at: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/ots_20160607_ots0174/hammerschmid-erster-teil-der-bildungsreform-wird-jetzt-umgesetzt [10. 1. 2017]

7 Ibid.

8 See BMB (2016): Update Schule: selbstbestimmt – zukunftsorientiert – leistungsfördernd. Available at: http://www.heute.at/storage/med/pdf/89648_bildungsreform.pdf [10. 1. 2017]

10 steps to inclusive skills development for lessons in heterogeneous learning groups – with KoKids⁹

STEP ¹⁰	Content	Who?	Aim
1. 	Collecting information	School teams	Laws and initial situation concerning teaching
2. 	Development of visual and team concept for inclusive competence developing schools and teaching	School teams	An inclusive competence developing didactic concept ¹⁰
3. 	Long-term planning	Year or class team	Key topics
4. 	Medium-term planning	Year or class team	General <i>interdisciplinary</i> skills to be acquired in key topics
		Specialist teams	General <i>subject specific</i> competences to be acquired
5. 	Student observation	Class team	Identify individual current areas of development and competence levels
6. 	Short-term planning	Class team	Differentiated learning tasks and stimulating learning environment
7. 	Implement team concept/design learning situations	Class team	Cooperative work on key topics – at an individual level
8. 	Evaluate learning results and reflection		Individualised learning plan
9. 	Document competence development	Class team	Portfolio
10. 	Teaching and teamwork reflection	Class team	Action plan

R e f l e c t i o n

9 ArGe KoKids (2013): KoKids-Arbeitsmappe – Kompetente Kids vom Kindergarten bis zur Berufsschule. Vienna: Bildungsvlag Lemberger

10 Source for all images: <https://pixabay.com/de> [10. 1. 2017]



Step 1 – Collecting information

Find out the legal requirements of professional school work – internationally, nationally and regionally. For example ...

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 24-Education

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning directed to:
 - a. The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
 - b. The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
 - c. Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.
2. In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:
 - a. Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
 - b. Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
 - c. Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
 - d. Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
 - e. Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.
3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:
 - a. Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;
 - b. Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;
 - c. Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.
4. In order to help ensure the realization of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.

- 5.** *States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.*

The existing diversity of educational forms and procedures of pedagogic advancement, the plurality of funding locations, the experience of teaching disabled and non-disabled children together, educational science ideas and school policy priorities in the individual states in the German Republic show many similarities. On the whole, they are hallmarks of a more personal, individualized and no longer primarily institution-based view of special needs and inclusive education.

An unconditional requirement of an integrated education system for persons with disabilities is the provision of needs-based, qualified support, especially in special needs education. The right to SPF support is needed for those children and adolescents so impaired that they cannot be adequately supported in general education without special educational support. Therapeutic and social aids or other extracurricular measures may also be necessary.

Special needs education within integrative education is designed to allow children and adolescents with impairments and disabilities the right to reach their full educational potential. It supports and accompanies these children and adolescents through individual help in order to provide them with the highest possible degree of school and professional integration, social participation and independent living.

Special needs education as an indispensable component of integrative education takes place in multiple tasks and actions and requires the use of different professional groups with appropriate specialist skills.

Special educational support is therefore geared to the individual and social situation of the child or adolescent with disabilities (“**child environment analysis**”) and includes the personal and development oriented preparation for future life situations.

As part of integrative education, intensive, trusting cooperation between the parents and the school is required. The joint responsibility for integrative education and special needs education of children and adolescents with disabilities makes a binding and qualified collaboration of teachers of all school forms indispensable. The collaboration between teachers and other professionals requires a common understanding of the tasks and a clear assignment of the areas of responsibility for each participant, both in education and school life.

Children and young people with disabilities or needing special educational support should attend mainstream schools, within the framework of integrative education, if the necessary special education, material support and required spatial conditions are guaranteed; the promotion of all pupils must be ensured.

In addition to external framework conditions, the necessary prerequisites include specially trained teachers, individualized forms of planning, implementation and evaluation of teaching processes and coordinated cooperation between the teachers and specialists involved. In this context, a content-related, methodical and organizational integration of educational measures, including individual teaching objectives and content should be undertaken. The framework of inclusive education applicable to the school sector must be continued in support services for access to higher education, vocational training and adult education.¹¹

¹¹ See UN-Behindertenrechtskonvention.

Available at: <https://www.behindertenrechtskonvention.info/bildung-3907/> [13. 3. 2017]

BMB – SQA framework target since September 2016

The SQA framework target of Section 1 of the BMB is the “further development of learning and teaching at general schools towards individualization, competence orientation and inclusive settings”.¹²

The development plans as well as the balance sheet and target agreements must refer to this binding framework target.

BMB – Syllabus of general education schools

They form the obligatory basis of education work.¹³



Step 2 – Vision and team concept for inclusive skills developing school and education development

Inclusive schools that understand themselves as learning organisations are in the process of adopting common teaching and school development. Inclusive school development refers to the process of a school developing specific school solutions for dealing with heterogeneity. Thereby, the testing and evaluating of all aspects of heterogeneity in a learning group must be taken into account. For example, gender specific heterogeneity, talent and interest heterogeneity, capacity heterogeneity, the impairment, age and development heterogeneity, cultural heterogeneity, social origin heterogeneity and heterogeneity in perception and processing of experiences.

Education development

A possible course of inclusive school development processes can be represented in eight steps. For each of these steps, an example of team activity is presented.

A story to get started:

There was once a king whose name was thirty-three. He summoned the court jester and said to him, “I want to be a just king, so that I differ from the other kings.”

“Good idea,” replied the court jester. “In my kingdom,” thought the king, “all must be treated equally.” So he took the canary out of its cage and let it fly. The canary thanked the king and flew away happily. The king, also quite happy with his decision, took the goldfish out of his aquarium and threw it out of the window. He died miserably. Poor fish! The king wondered if the fish did not appreciate equality and summoned the court jester. The jester recommended that he change his tactics. So the king went to the well, took out the trout and threw it into the river. Happily, the trout swam away. Then he took the blackbird out of its golden cage and threw it into the river. The blackbird did not appreciate this. “Stupid blackbird,” thought the king, “he doesn’t like equality either.” He once more summoned the court jester and asked for his advice. “Can you explain to me how I can treat everyone the same?” said the king.

“King,” replied the jester, “to treat everyone equally, you must first realise that everyone is different. Equality does not mean giving the same to everyone but giving the right thing to everyone”. (Concita Filippini Steinemann)

12 BMB – SQA Schulqualität Allgemeinbildung. Available at: <http://www.sqa.at/course/view.php?id=61> [13.3.2017]

13 BMB Lehrpläne der Allgemeinbildenden Schulen. Available at: http://www.bmb.gv.at/schulen/unterricht/lp/lp_abs.html [13.3.2017]

Sub-step 1

We want to change things together! We will take all decisions collectively and bear the responsibility!

Activity: My expectations for good teamwork

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete the questionnaire individually. Evaluate it and devise a poster out of the most important aspects for your future work as a team.

“What is particularly important to us?”

What is particularly important for you?	Very important	Important	Less important	Not important
Positive attitude to the objective and orientation to self-explorative learning				
Realistic assessment of one's skills				
Joint reflections				
Deferring own interests in favour of factual needs				
Appreciative communication				
Expressing expectations openly				
Open for something new				
Clarify discrepancies immediately and constructively				
No one is perfect, we are all learners				
Errors are learning opportunities				
Trust each other				
Take time to discuss matters				
Engage with others				
Develop common action-guiding values				
Willing to compromise				
Take pleasure in minor successes				
Curiosity				
Feel responsible for the school				

Sub-step 2

We want to get orientation by determining what is already here.

Activity: What works well/doesn't work well yet.

This is followed by an analysis of the current situation, with a particular focus on the existing strengths of the school. This should give a detailed picture of the school.

INSTRUCTIONS: Write down in a plus-minus list what is already working well at your school, regarding heterogeneity and what is not yet working.

Consider the results of the entire group and then jointly choose two aspects from the minus area you want to work on.

Area	Plus	Minus
Inclusive school culture		
Barrier free (areas, texts etc.)		
Preparation of students and parents at school		
Accompanied transition from kindergarten to school		
Observation and documentation of learning progress		
Differentiating and individualising teaching practice		
Learn-inducing environment and learning materials		
Gender appropriate education		
Performance-related culture, evaluation and documentation		
Social interaction of pupils in school and leisure time		
Conflict management (pupils/teacher)		
Educational work (behaviour) in the classroom		
Preparation for the transfer to the next school		
Cooperation of teaching teams		
Cooperation with parents		
Cooperation with specialists		
Address exceptional potential in children (gifted children)		
A support culture and development concepts		
Further training		
Reflection and evaluation of school work		

Sub-step 3

We get information! We want to find out what else is out there.

At this stage, teacher teams sometimes need information on educational theory approaches, alternative teaching methods, reform pedagogic ideas, school experiments etc. "thinking outside the box". Here, external consultants, internships and collegiate training play a major role.

Activity: My development potential

INSTRUCTIONS: Enter which areas you would like to develop and who or what could help you with this. Then plan the training for the coming semester with the team.

Area	Who?	What?
Inclusive school culture: positive attitude to people, values, attitudes		
Barrier free (accessibility); Plain, simple language; Easy to read		
Transfer accompaniment and creating transitions		
Pedagogic diagnostics: observation of learning progress		
Differentiating and individualising teaching practice (reform pedagogics, open learning)		
Learn-inducing environment and learning materials		
Support of girls' and boys' interests		
Performance-related culture, evaluation and documentation		
Social interaction of pupils in school and leisure time		
Mediation and conflict management		
Educational work (behaviour) in the classroom. Violence prevention, mediation		
Cooperation of teaching teams		
Cooperation with parents		
Cooperation with specialists		
Addressing exceptional potential in children (gifted children)		
Dealing with cultural and ethnic differences		
Support culture and development concepts		
Reflection and evaluation of school work		
Time management		

Sub-step 4

We motivate each other! We practice "active listening"!

Now there must be a phase in which teachers have the opportunity to get to know each other better. In many cases contacts are only superficially maintained or in small groups. One does not really know each other. There is a lack of knowledge about ideals, values, ideas, likes and dislikes and one tends towards prejudices which often obstruct a factual argument.

Activity: Love is ...

INSTRUCTIONS: For this activity you need cards and a poster with the following sentence beginnings

- ▶ Education means to me ...
- ▶ Education (upbringing) means to me ...
- ▶ Teaching means to me ...
- ▶ Lessons mean to me ...
- ▶ Learning means to me ...
- ▶ Heterogeneity means to me ...
- ▶ Disability means to me ...
- ▶ Foreign means to me ...
- ▶ Being a man/women means to me ...

Form groups of four. Each group member completes the first sentence on a card and places it in front of them on the floor. Now, each explain their interpretation of the term. Finally, a definition of "education" is listed as a group result. Each following sentence is then worked on.

At the end, the group result will be presented in the plenary session.

Sub-step 5

Our dream school! Our visions!

Gathering ideas, expressing desires and visions must be protected from premature evaluations and demotivating objections. Here one is allowed to imagine and exaggerate.

Activity: Our dream school

INSTRUCTIONS: You need posters and drawing utensils for this activity. Form groups of four and together design your dream school. To aid understanding you may want to label your work.

When your group is ready, look for another group and exchange ideas and visions – are there any correlations or similarities?

Once all groups have checked for similarities, they are presented in a plenary session.

At this stage, parents and students can be involved in the process.

Sub-step 6

From vision to implementation! Planning the first steps!

By dealing with the wishes and ideals of the individual team members, parents and pupils mutual and binding goals are developed.

Activity: From vision to action

INSTRUCTIONS: Indicate how you assess the actual feasibility of the correlated visions and desires and enter what might be helpful!

Present in a plenary session.

What?	Short-term feasible	Medium-term feasible	Long-term feasible	Who or what can help?

Sub-step 7

We set priorities! We share the work!

The goals set in the previous phase must be ranked according to urgency, feasibility, effort and so on. Team members take on individual tasks.

Activity: Create an action plan

INSTRUCTIONS: Discuss and prepare the following poster for the plenary session:

Enter: What is important? What is easy to do? What needs only little effort? Who is responsible for implementation? What will this person do? When should he/she be finished?

TOPIC	Importance	Easy to implement	Little effort	Who?	Does what?	Deadline

Sub-step 8

We examine our professional work reality with the intention of developing it further!

The reflective examination of the teams’ work and the professional work reality results in new action requirements and necessary changes so that the innovative process can start afresh.

Go back to step 2!



Step 3 – Long term planning

A possible process flow of inclusive, competence-oriented teaching development can be represented in six steps.¹⁴

Based on the targets (educational standards, curriculum, and individual curriculum for the child) the key topics will be worked on long term to provide school structure and enable learning.

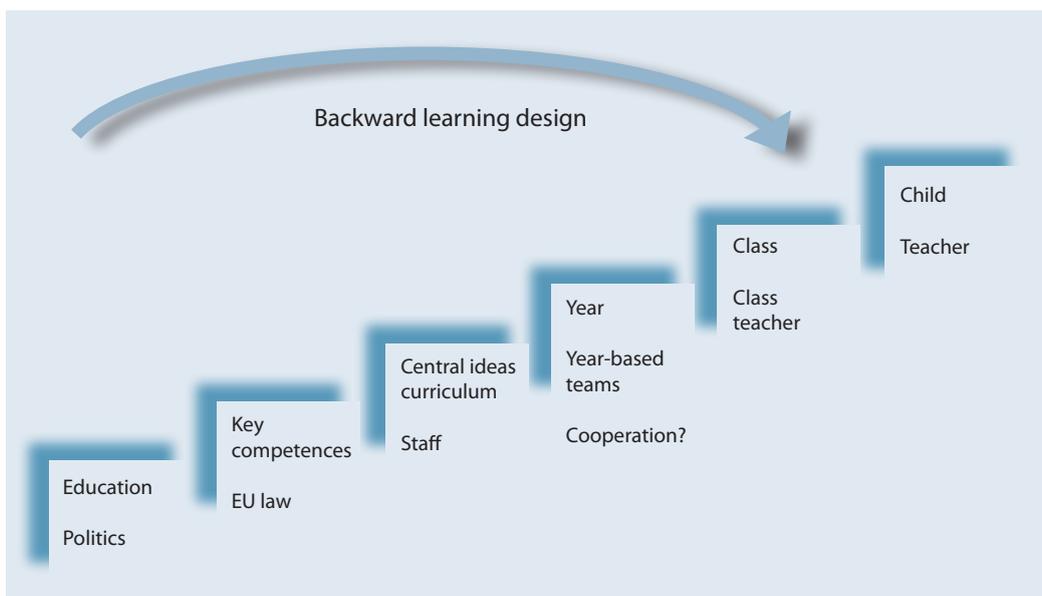


Fig: 6 stages of competence-developing teaching planning

Level 1 and 2: Education and politics

Educational goals are specified by the state (educational standards, syllabus). Educators also have to work intensively with the European Framework of Reference – key competences.¹⁵

They have to gain an insight into which sub-competences can be assigned to them. Competency grids can be found on KOKIDS.

This phase requires an examination of state education plans (kindergarten) and syllabi.¹⁶ Didactic principles and subject-specific learning objectives should be applied during planning.

Level 3: Competence-developing planning and content

Core ideas or key topics (curriculum) for school lessons are to be determined in the college. Project topics will be developed across disciplines and with reference to the eight EU key competences for long term work, taking curriculum requirements into account.

¹⁴ Excerpt from: ARGE KoKids Lemberger/Wilhelm (2013): EU-KoKids Arbeitsmappe. Vienna: Bildungsverlag Lemberger

¹⁵ Commission of the European Communities (2005)

¹⁶ Charlotte Buehler Institute (2009): Bundesländerübergreifender BildungsRahmenPlan für elementare Bildungseinrichtungen in Österreich. Available at: <https://www.bmb.gv.at/schulen/sb/bildungsrahmenplan.html> [18. 11. 2017]

The school curriculum can refer to focal points set by the schools but other selection criteria can also be created.

Taking into account all of these requirements, the team will select fields of learning or key topics for the school years. Within this framework key skills and competences can be required. This should help the educators to work with children on a cross-subject basis in a project-oriented and long term way. Each learning field or theme should focus on key competences. The Dutch Jenaplan schools have, for example, decided on the following themes:

- ▶ The changing of the seasons
- ▶ Our environment
- ▶ Technology
- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Living together
- ▶ My body
- ▶ My own life¹⁷

One could of course select topics which use the knowledge and learning areas of natural science studies taken from the elementary school curriculum.¹⁸

- ▶ Community
- ▶ Nature
- ▶ Space
- ▶ Time
- ▶ Economy
- ▶ Technology

It would also be possible to plan key topics together with students and to incorporate their interests, which is particularly useful for older students.

Working with key topics means that human resources are used more effectively to promote skills development. All educators who work with children do this within key topics and thus enable the children to understand the contexts, to deepen vocabulary and develop manifold associations and connections.



Step 4 – Medium term planning

The year group teams define the *sub-topics (modules)* for their main themes in terms of content and time.

The class teacher or the class level team create the *corresponding tasks (learning jobs)* for the modules at three different levels of demand

17 Nederlandse Jenaplan Vereniging (n.d.): The Curriculum. Available at: http://www.njpv.nl/nl/the_curriculum.html [18. 11. 2017]

18 BMUKK (2003): Lehrplan der Grundschule, p. 1. Available at: http://www.njpv.nl/nl/the_curriculum.html [18. 11. 2017]



Step 5 – Pupil observation

Pupil observation (see KOKIDS) is the basis for the assignment of the competence level reached. It determines the initial position of the child and the next objectives to be aimed for (individualisation).

With the aid of *competence grids*, the *competence-level* of each individual child can be determined (the current development zone). The achievement of the next level of competence (zone of the next stage of development) is now planned in detail (lotus diagrams and/or learning target list). Appropriate learning situations and learning tasks are developed, in which the child can acquire the appropriate skills.

To demonstrate the individual learning objectives, individual learning lists as well as "lotus diagrams" are suitable. Key competences (subject specific and interdisciplinary) can be clearly recognised as well as which learning goals are intertwined and which under-represented. Individual levels of aspiration can also be recorded. It would also be possible to visualise the relationships of interdisciplinary competences and special skills within specific learning tasks using arrows.

Stage 6 then leads to concrete lesson planning¹⁹ for the *cooperative work on the common subject at individual level*²⁰, which takes place in five steps (see step 7).



Step 6 – Short-term planning – concrete learning tasks

Content criteria of learning tasks at KOKIDS:

The content of a learning task guides the learner to the learning objective.

The learning task forms a self-contained unit, an independent work and can be processed independent of other learning tasks by using a teaching tool.

The learning task consists of the following dimensions:

1. Subject-related competences (e.g. first language competence, mathematical and natural science competence)
2. Interdisciplinary competences (e.g. methodological competence, computer skills...)
3. Self-regulating competences (e.g. motivation, strict working methods...)

The four building blocks of a learning task

TARGETS: (achievable EU competences) e.g. first language competence, methodological competence, civic competence

Competence level: First language competence B2 (competence grid)

Learn target: No. LZ 4

Contentwise, the structure of learning tasks is divided into four stages (building blocks).

¹⁹ Best practice examples and teaching preparation available in German at: <https://www.bifie.at/downloads>

²⁰ Feuser, Georg (1995): Behinderte Kinder und Jugendliche: Zwischen Integration und Aussonderung. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft

<p>1</p>	<p>Advanced Organiser Introduction and orientation</p>	<p>The Advanced Organiser facilitates the linking of new learning content with existing knowledge. Orientation markers enable entry into a new theme and new information can be set.</p>	<p>What is the issue? What do I already know? Where can I enter new learning content?</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Acquirement Theory and example</p>	<p>Using theory and application examples, the learner is confronted with new learning material and encouraged to use this independently.</p>	<p>How does it work? How should I do it?</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Consolidation Learning, practising, training tasks 3 levels</p>	<p>Learning tasks offer a didactic, methodological way of dealing with subjects. The learner can absorb, practice and repeat. The acquired knowledge. The solutions for self-control are attached. Level 1: Level 2: Level 3:</p>	<p>What should I do? How can I practice?</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Testing</p>	<p>The learning control points embedded in the learning task allows the learner to self-test their knowledge.</p>	<p>Did I achieve the target?</p>

Source: <http://handbuch.schulplattform.ch/handbuch-fuer-lehrkraefte/leitfaden-lernjob/inhaltliche-kriterien-von-lernjobs.html>

Examples

Key topic: ME (1st grade) – Focus: Teaching Competence German

<p>Requirements</p>	<p>Reading competence transition A1-A2 Literacy competence transition A1-A2 Methodological competence transition A1-A2 Social competence transition A1-A2</p>
<p>Aims:</p>	<p>Competences:</p>
<p>Objective 1 The child can express likes and dislikes.</p>	<p>First language competence Writing competence Learning competence Social competence Own initiative</p>
<p>Objective 2 The child can implement tasks.</p>	<p>Teaching language competence Social competence Own initiative Problem solving skills</p>
<p>Objective 3 The child can recite self-written texts.</p>	<p>Teaching language competence Reading competence Own initiative Problem-solving skills</p>

1	<p>Advanced Organiser Introduction and orientation</p>	<p><i>Every child has different preferences</i></p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>no <input type="checkbox"/></p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>yes <input type="checkbox"/> </p> <p>no <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> </div> </div>
2	<p>Acquirement Example</p>	<p>What I like. What I don't like. (assign pictures)</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Yes</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>no</p>  </div> </div>
3	<p>Consolidation Learning, practising, training tasks 3 Levels (free choice)</p>	<p>1. Make a collage. Stick on it what you like. 2. Print your learning word I. Draw the things you like. I ♥ ☆ ☆ (I like stars) 3. Write/draw on a chart what you like and what you don't like.</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center; margin-top: 20px;">  <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>bananas yes no</p> </div> </div>
4	<p>Testing</p>	<p><i>Read your sentences to the others</i></p>

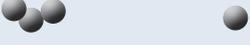
self-assessment:

external assessment:

Key topic: ME (first grade) Focus: Mathematical–scientific–technical competence

<p>Requirements (learning area) 2 The child can estimate quantity and distinguish number differentiation.</p>	<p>Reading competence transition A1-A2 Writing competence transition A1-A2 Methodological competence transition A1-A2 Mathematical competence transition A1-A2 Social competence transition A1-A2</p>
--	---

Aims:	Competences:
<p>Objective 1: The child can conceive, distinguish and lay quantities.</p>	<p>Teaching language competence Social competence Mathematical competence Own-initiative</p>
<p>Objective 2: The child understands the quantitiveness of numbers.</p>	<p>Social competence Mathematical competence Learning competence Own-initiative</p>
<p>Objective 3 The child understands and applies the terms "more/less."</p>	<p>Teaching language competence Own-initiative Problem-solving competence</p>

<p>1</p>	<p>Advanced Organiser Introduction and orientation</p>	<p>One child has more, one child has less.</p> 
<p>2</p>	<p>Acquirement Example</p>	 <p>more less</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Consolidation Learning, practising, training tasks 3 Levels (free choice)</p>	<p>1. Feel and recognise where there is more. (bag of stones) 2. Place more tokens on the red plate than on the yellow plate.</p>  <p>Draw where there is more (worksheet).</p>  <p>3. Invent a story with a partner. "Amir has more tokens than Eva." Or 4. "Ecevit has three more tokens than Amina."</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Testing</p>	<p>Act out your stories for the class!</p>

Self assessment:

external assessment:

Key topic: ME – YOU – US

Module: ME (4th class)

<p>Requirements:</p>	<p>Reading competence transition B2-C1 Writing skills transition B2-C1 Methodological competence transition B2-C1 Social competence Transition B2-C1</p>
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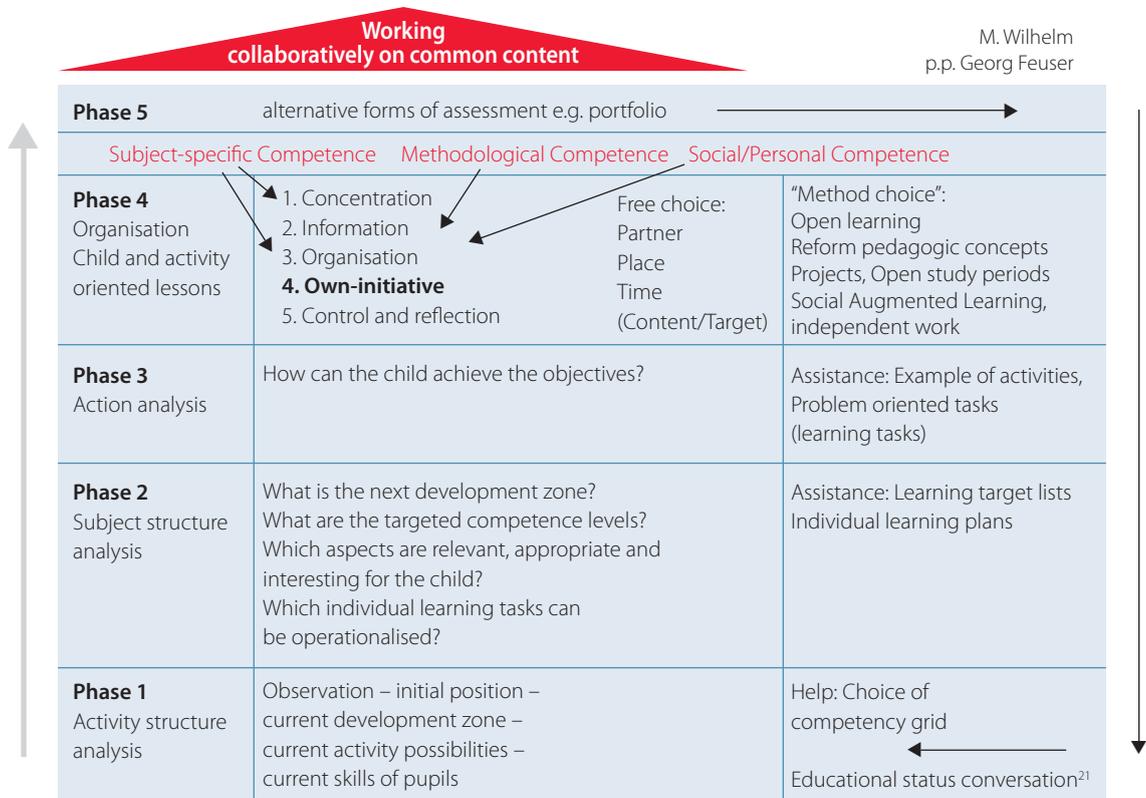
<p>Aims:</p>	<p>Competences:</p>
<p>Objective 1: The child can express what it has experienced.</p>	<p>First language competence Teaching language competence Own-initiative</p>
<p>Objective 2: The child can write an experience report.</p>	<p>Teaching language competence Writing texts Own-initiative Learning competence</p>
<p>Objective 3: The child can rework self-written texts.</p>	<p>Teaching language competence Spelling competence Reading competence Own-initiative Problem-solving competence</p>

1	Introduction and orientation	<p>The vacation is over. In this wonderful time you must have experienced a lot. We can't wait to find out more.</p> 
2	Example: Experience report	<p>Headline Introduction: Who? Where? Main part: What? Why? Conclusion: What remains?</p>
3	Learning, practicing and training tasks 3 levels	<p>1. Take an object to school which reminds you of a holiday experience. 2. Write about this experience. 3. Find a partner and read your texts to each other. Can you understand what it's about? Is the spelling/grammar correct? Could you improve it?</p>
4	Testing	Present in class!



Step 7: Team concept implementation / Design teaching and learning situations

The following presentation shows you how to get from pupil observation to the concrete teaching plan (from top to bottom)



21 Bildungsdirektion Kanton Zürich: https://vsa.zh.ch/internet/bildungsdirektion/vsa/de/schulbetrieb_und_unterricht/sonderpaedagogisches0/ssg.html

Open Learning – a prerequisite for individualisation

A “closed” form of learning, which is rigidly divided (content and method), can be compared with “open” lessons. This is a form of organisation which, on the one hand enables a teacher to respond to the learning requirements and the willingness to learn of the individual pupil, and on the other hand, offers the pupils the opportunity to actively participate in the planning process and so incorporate the pupil’s needs, wishes, interests and abilities as perceived by the learner.

Meyer & Jank provides the following thesis: “Open learning is not a teaching concept in the usual sense, but a dynamic and networked process of unfolding a new teaching culture in everyday school life.”²²

Demanding a unified concept for open teaching would therefore be a contradiction in terms. This type of teaching usually comes from practice, as teachers try to find new ways to facilitate a more individualised development of their pupils’ competences. Often they follow ideas and concepts of reform education. “Principles of conventional teaching, past experiences and taking the current living conditions of the learners seriously are combined in an open and dynamic process.”²³

The “opening” in the classroom takes place by focusing on the individuality of the individual (teacher and learner). The teacher steps back from the traditional role of planning and determining lesson format and looks for opportunities to broaden learning. Open learning is therefore also action-oriented education in which the pupils have the opportunity to participate in planning, execution and design of the lessons. The teacher promotes “pupil-oriented, problem-solving and therefore interdisciplinary teaching.”²⁴

Open learning comes in many different guises. From planned lessons pre-determined by the teacher (daily, weekly plan) to free work lessons. Open learning can mean that all students in a class try to reach their goals at the same time but with different materials and learning content. The teacher prepares the learning environment of the child by providing appropriate materials and so gives the pupils the possibility of independent activity and learning.

Open learning is thus characterised by the opening up of content, methods and organisation and requires a change in the traditional roles of teachers and pupils. It is a “collective term for different sets of reforms in various forms, content and methodological and organisational openness with the aim of changing the way one interacts with the child.”²⁵ It is a changing approach to inter-active learning and requires a change in the role of the teacher and the pupil.

22 Meyer, Hilbert; Jank, Werner (1994): Didaktische Modelle. Berlin: Cornelsen Scriptor, p. 323

23 Wopp, Christel (1994): Offener Unterricht. In: Meyer, Hilbert; Jank, Werner (1994): Didaktische Modelle. Berlin: Cornelsen Scriptor, p. 323

24 Ibid.

25 Wallrabenstein, Wulf: (1991): Offene Schule – Offener Unterricht. Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, p. 54

Open content

Open learning attempts to involve pupils in the selection of learning content. The degree of freedom granted to the pupils in this selection depends both on the willingness of the teacher – to allow this – and on the independence of the pupils – to be able to make a choice.

According to Wallrabenstein one of the basic elements of open learning is: “A change in learning that relies on independence, initiative, children’s genuine interest and natural experiences. But also the realisation of new, unusual types of experience that are increasingly closed to children in their planned consume and media world and in traditional school textbook learning.

Open methodology

In open learning the method is based on the prerequisites given by the pupils’ heterogeneity. “This means that learners should not simply be recipients of ready-made learning packages, but should be agents of their own learning processes. Just as the topic should be action-related, so the methodology of teaching cannot be without action: Knowledge content should not be taught separately from experience content. The experiential context of the child, his everyday understanding of the subject, is allowed in open learning.”²⁷ One can only speak of open learning if pedagogical situations arise in the classroom and elementary interests and needs are taken into account. An educational situation can arise if, for example, a group of children, under the guidance of a teacher, is encouraged to use certain material. They do not arise from the educational intention of the teacher but they result from the needs of the children and their input in this situation. While in closed classes primarily the teacher decides how pupils have to work, in open learning that decision is increasingly given to the individual. The prerequisite for methodological openness is the opening up of the organisation.

Open organisation

Open learning often causes changes in the teaching process and calls for organisational forms such as: free work, weekly plans and projects. The organisation of social forms, time, space and material must be thought out in order to offer pupils free choice. The teachers make this possible by “providing a time-based framework and preparing tasks for independent work. Teaching preparation means creating an age-appropriate stimulating environment. It should in particular be ensured that the new learning material matches the skills, interests and needs of the children. This requires sensitivity and an understanding of the didactic value of the learning material.”²⁸ By providing suitable materials and meaningful and flexible room solutions, they enable pupils to choose suitable social forms, their own time management and appropriate workplace.

The teacher role

The role of the teacher in open learning is not limited to the acquisition of learning materials and the organisation of teaching, but also requires an “attitude change, the acquisition of new images of learning and teaching and the skills required for them.”²⁹ Although the teacher sometimes seems passive in open learning, she/he always has an active and supporting role that determines social action in the classroom:

26 Wallrabenstein (1991), p. 35

27 Ramseger, Jörg (1985): *Offener Unterricht in der Erprobung*. Weinheim, Munich: Juventa, p. 25

28 Hammerer, Franz (1994): *Hammerer, F.: Freie Lernphasen in der Grundschule*. Vienna, p. 61

29 Ibid.

- ▶ Teachers allow learning success for each individual on the basis of individualised teaching.
- ▶ Teachers create a learning atmosphere.
- ▶ Teachers support the development of their pupils' skills through learning advise and learning support.
- ▶ Teachers support pupils in their personal development by allowing independent action and decision choice.
- ▶ Teachers promote a democratic conversation climate.
- ▶ Teachers also present themselves as learners.

The role of the teacher in open learning changes. The teacher is no longer the person who determines the course of the lessons, no longer the person who conveys set knowledge, no longer the sole controlling agent, in short: no longer the sole teaching authority. He/she has to take a step back, so that the children can unfold their potential.³⁰

The learner role

The relationship of the pupils to the teacher is very different to a conventional class. Pupils have the opportunity to plan open lessons, to actively shape them and to reflect in retrospect. Self-responsibility, meaningful self-control and consideration for others (i.e. external responsibility), to name a few building blocks of free work, must however, first be learnt. It is the teacher's responsibility to lead the learners to self-employment and self-responsible action. "Last but not least, the mastery of working techniques is indispensable for independent learning. Sometimes the children need a lot of time to develop these skills and abilities".³¹

- ▶ Pupils participate in the planning by contributing their own interests.
- ▶ They create lessons by actively participating.
- ▶ They decide on suitable social forms and time scheduling, possibly also the methodical approach.
- ▶ They work independently during lessons.
- ▶ They assume responsibility for their actions.
- ▶ They reflect on their work and the teaching process.

From this point of view, pupils increasingly become decision makers regarding the content and processes of their learning. In order to enable pupils to work independently, teachers need to provide a suitable learning environment and learning materials that allow meaningful, independent and self-experienced learning. It is up to the teacher to observe and stimulate independent work, self-responsible action and critical reflection.

30 Jürgens, Eiko (1993): Wie unterrichte ich „offen“? In: Neue Praxis der Schulleitung, Vol. 93, p. 48

31 Ibid., p. 50



Step 8: Evaluation and reflection

After observation, the current competence level is entered in the competence grid³² of each individual child (portfolio). An example:

Learn area 2 / Learn year 1		Learn area 2		
Marianne Wilhelm				
First language competence (e.g. teaching language competence): German, Reading, Writing				
Competence grid: Alicia 😊: Can do (achieved competence level – current status); in progress (targeted competence level)	Elementary language usage		Independent language usage	
	Competent language usage			
Competence area Listening, speaking, talking to each other (D1)	A1 transition from nursery	A2 individual focus	B1	B2
	Differentiated hearing; clear pronunciation of sounds; conversation rules compliance; situation appropriate language; age appropriate vocabulary in active use; use gestures, facial expression and voice guidance to support linguistic statements 😊	Listen attentively to others; talk about experiences related to the listener; present observations and facts in a way that makes them understandable to listeners; have linguistic conventions for various speaking situations; find solutions to conflicts together with others	Pass on factual information to others and use appropriate terms; talk to others about a topic, think it through and express own opinions; take up and continue discussion contributions; express own opinions appropriately; accept mistakes and listen respectfully to others and deal fairly with their opinions; abide by the rules of conversation	Talk about events and experiences in an understandable and thematically coherent way; summarise work results and present them using key words; correctly assess situations and react appropriately in terms of language; use forms of words and sentences correctly in standard language; talk to class colleagues as equals and behave appropriately

32 See: <http://kokids.medien-infobox.at/materialien.html>

33 bife: <https://www.bife.at/node/369> and see also bife: Themenheft für den Kompetenzbereich

„Hören, Sprechen und Miteinander-Reden“ – Deutsch, Lesen, Schreiben. Volksschule Grundstufe I + II

34 See: http://www.individualisierung.org/_neu/praxis/kompetenzraster.htm

Now enter the individual learning goals for the child in his/her learning target list.³⁵ Potential support measures can be included here as learning goals. The competence grid and learning target lists form the individual portfolio.

Name: Alicia / learn year:1
I can ...

Learning targets list: German

	D1 Listening, speaking, talking to each other	Remarks:
A1	Pick out individual words from stories and show them	✓
A1	Recognise and name the first sound of a word	✓
A1	Pronounce individual sounds clearly	✓
A1	Listen attentively to others and repeat the information heard	✓
A1	Support my conversations with body language, mimic, gestures	✓
A1	Talk to others about a topic	✓
A1	Keep to the rules of conversation	✓
A1	Relate everyday experiences relating to the topic being discussed	In the discussion group, Alicia's contributions do not match the current topic of conversation
FÖ ³⁶	When a story is read aloud, I recognise if the topic suddenly changes	
FÖ	Before I speak, I repeat what the previous speaker has said	
FÖ	I summarise what class colleagues tell me and link with my topic	



Step 9 – Documenting competence development

The competence grid and learning targets list form the portfolio which reflects the learning process and – supplemented by pupils work or other evidence of achievement of learning objectives – is used for reflection, evaluation and assessment. The KoKids portfolio accompanies the learner from kindergarten to vocational school.

It is the basis for planning and reflection work with the children and their parents and it is proof of efficient pedagogic education. There is no need for different documentation.



The competence grid provides an overview of the long-term development of competences and the learning target list documents the steps on the way to competence and replaces the development plans. The child's work is the proof of competence achievement and shows the child's learning achievements.

³⁵ See: <http://kokids.medien-infobox.at/materialien.html>

³⁶ Fördermaßnahme (= support measure)



Step 10 – Reflection on teaching and teamwork

What is reflection?

Self-reflection

“Redirecting attention from the objects of the external world to the experience of the soul, to the activity of consciousness, to the knowing and thinking subject” (Regenbogen, Meyer, 2013).³⁷

Reflection, then, is a deliberate activity in which a subject subjects its own psychic processes to consideration. Self-reflection is a higher mental activity. Reflection looks at and analyses a record of one’s past thoughts and actions.

Self-reflection gives rise to the possibility of self-modification and the drafting of new action plans. Through the consideration and critical analysis of our own thinking and actions it is possible to change according to our wishes or to activate completely new thinking and operational processes. In this way, an unsolved intellectual problem can use a reflective process to scrutinise the problem and to identify its weak points.³⁸

Team reflection

“Team reflexivity is defined as the extent to which teams regularly reflect their goals, strategies and processes.” (Scholl, Knipfer 2013)

Indicators for team reflexivity include, for example, the mutual giving and receiving of feedback, discussions of goals and underlying assumptions and values, or the regular evaluation of previous (interim) results of teamwork. A shared vision can be conducive to learning processes through reflection because this vision represents a shared frame of reference on the basis of which goals, strategies and performance can be mutually evaluated. Transformational leadership emphasises this common vision and goals, stimulating reflection in teams.

Reflection (as a team) can have the following positive effects:

More communication between one another: if the team has a climate of frequent reflection, the team members communicate more openly with each other and can thus better identify effective and ineffective strategies.

Better performance of the individual and the team: reflecting can solve problems, identify sources of error, create ideas and encourage the performance of the individual team members or the entire team.

Promote cohesion and satisfaction: reflecting on these experiences can help one’s own energy reserves, especially after successes; shared achievements can also contribute to team spirit.

Consolation in case of failures: just as reflection can provide solutions to problems, it can also provide consolation for those failures that could not have been prevented, by becoming aware of them.

37 Cited from Regenbogen & Meyer, 2013, Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe, p. 558; Keyword Reflexion psychologisch

38 Cf. Weixelbaum (2016): Mit Teamreflexion zum Teamerfolg – Analyse, Modellierung und gezielte Förderung kollektiver Reflexionsprozesse. University of Bamberg Press. p. 1–75. Available at: <https://books.google.at/books?isbn=3863094158> [6.7.2017]

Numerous situations in everyday working life make us think about and consider our (team) work.

We often reflect on the following aspects:

- ▶ Situations we want to improve in the future: What exactly can we do to improve our collaboration and address issues more effectively?
- ▶ Achievements to celebrate: What has helped us to be so successful?
- ▶ Planning for still unclear results: What can we do to get the best possible results? Which strategies are most effective?

If we succeed in mastering future challenges by reflecting on experiences made so far, we can speak of *Learning by Reflection*. It seems that reflection, compared to other methods of performance enhancement, is relatively simple as it requires comparatively few resources and external influence (e.g. through the organisation). The danger is that one loses oneself in the (collective) pondering and the constructive potential of reflection is not fully utilised. Reflecting has, above all, effective consequences if one limits oneself to those aspects of a situation that one can influence oneself (teaching, cooperation), and if we are forward looking instead of exclusively thinking about what could have been. (upward thinking)

It is helpful to have constructive reflection processes with no “brooding and complaining” or other side effects. To achieve this, regular behavioural feedback, the ability to experiment with alternative courses of action independently and autonomously and the continuous, open exchange between team members is necessary. (promoting best practice)

Especially for the reflection of failures (a rather sensitive topic for many organisations!) it is important to have a living learning culture in which mistakes and failures are seen as an opportunity for further development, and an open feedback and discussion climate, in which all contribute constructively to review and work on mistakes.³⁹

What are the characteristics of successful teams?

“These include, for example, shared mental models in the team, the collective efficacy expectations of a group and processes of team reflection. These are the driving forces behind experiential learning in the team.”⁴⁰

Therefore, a common vision is needed – a team concept – of good efficient teaching, a clear idea of what can and should be achieved together and room (space and time) for exemplary reflection processes, all of which result in quality teaching for the learners.

Pupils

Reflection is an essential element of learning for children and adults. Children only build up what we call “method competence” – the ability to learn independently – through the reflection of learning sequences. Only reflection teaches them to regulate their behaviour and become strong through success (resilient). But reflection is also always the repeating of the imagined, its formulation in own words, all of which serves long-term appropriation. During reflection the child receives the full attention of the others – this reflects the performance culture in the classroom and the children are motivated for the next work sequence. Therefore a brief reflection should take place after every learning sequence:

39 Cf. excerpt from: Scholl, Knipfer (2013): Projektarbeit 2.0 – Teamreflexion als Schlüssel zu effektiver Projektarbeit. Available at: <http://wissensdialoge.de/teamreflexion/> [6.7.2017]

40 Weixelbaum (2016): Mit Teamreflexion zum Teamerfolg – Analyse, Modellierung und gezielte Förderung kollektiver Reflexionsprozesse. University of Bamberg Press, p. 1–75. Available at: <https://books.google.at/books?isbn=3863094158> [6.7.2017]

- ▶ What did you want to achieve? What did you achieve?
- ▶ What worked well? What were the problems?
- ▶ What do you intend to do next time?

It is not necessary for all children to have a turn every time. You could let volunteers offer their reflection but make sure all children are heard weekly.

Methodologically, a “thumbs up” feedback or a “traffic light” is a good introduction to the feedback process. The children use the thumbs down sign or show a red card to indicate problems. These problems are then reviewed.



Elke Ravelhofer

How Should I Say it?

On addressing the topic of National Socialism/ Holocaust in an inclusive setting

Abstract

How can we teach the topic of National Socialism/Holocaust/Second World War in heterogeneous learning groups? What do we have to take into account? Is that not asking too much? What possible inputs can satisfy the requirements of both inclusive pedagogy and history didactics? The following pages are intended to provide some guidance and, within this complex subject, to identify central questions which are then listed at the end of every section. Thus, I shall attempt to draw up guidelines that may prove useful for working with teachers' individual materials; I also, however, aim to present specific topics as stimuli and additional references to literature and online resources.¹

The Roman Age, medieval castles, the French Revolution – terribly boring or fairly thrilling. Everyone sees that differently. Due to teaching styles, a topic may be sealed away or provide stimuli for an on-going interest in and engagement with historical issues and contexts that extend beyond one's schooling and continue long after its end. The engagement with the cluster of topics of National Socialism/Holocaust/Second World War seems to take a special place in this case, since practically everyone appears to be able to find an interesting way – for whichever reason – to approach them. The fact is that the events of that time still have repercussions in the present: mechanisms of the future may present parallels to the past.

Basic Principles

Inclusive education and the topic of National Socialism/Holocaust/Second World War – a difficult pairing. Each part is complex in and of itself. A classic case for the relationship status: "It's complicated"? The relationship is certainly not banal, but enriching and full of remarkable aspects. And it is viable!

The development of the inclusion movement and the development of history didactics also have something in common. Both have undergone a paradigm shift in recent history. In the case of the inclusion movement, this meant a reorientation towards the diverse entirety of the learning community – "How does this topic present itself to the individual?" – and away from the image of a "homogenized" group (with "outsiders"): "That will do for the entire group". History didactics performed this shift through the so-called "linguistic turn" in narrative theory, the shift away from "this is what history was" and towards "this is what history might have looked like" or "this was a part of the historical context" (cf. Barsch 2014, 40f.).

Now, at the beginning, a basic question may arise: "Are we not expecting too much of certain parts of the student community when confronting them with this 'heavy stuff'?" As for that, I would like to refer to an article by Mittnik on the topic of "Holocaust in Primary Education" (cf. Mittnik 2016, 59f.), which lists a number of pro and contra arguments that can also partially be applied to inclusive education at the secondary level and may

¹ I designed parts of the presented didactic materials during a course on the pedagogy of memorial sites at the University of Education Upper Austria. I must furthermore thank Dr Maria Ecker/erinnern.at for her historical advice.

similarly serve as a didactic and methodical aid to self-positioning for the planning of lessons. Langer and Windischbauer also take a clear stance and, like Mittnik, come out on the side of “pro”, while of course taking age-specific boundaries into account (cf. Langer & Windischbauer 2010, 175 ff.).

Theoretical Considerations

Perspectives of Inclusive Pedagogy:

Inclusion – considering everyone in the learning community

Inclusion does not only mean focussing on children and adolescents with disabilities. Migration, under-developed “family literacy” – this refers to the linguistic and literary milieu in a family (cf. Dippelreiter, Jörgl & Aspalter 2015) – gender issues or problematic socio-emotional circumstances are also aspects of the representation of the inclusive learning community (cf. Booth & Amrhein 2014, 11).

Which differences appear within the learning community?

Learning conditions – becoming aware of differences

Based on the characteristics of the learning community, we may thus identify diverse fundamental points concerning the learning conditions, which must be taken into account in order to be able to work together. Here the following areas may be of importance: *cognition, linguistic competence, motor skills, sensory perception, stimulus processing, or concentration.*

The *sociocultural* background (flight, migration) must also be considered, since we often implicitly assume a European socialization, to which, after all, specific conceptions and previous knowledge apply.

Difficulties regarding one’s own *socioemotionality* (disruptions in one’s own biography, reduced self worth, own experiences in the role of the victim, strong elements of aggression, a small capacity for empathy and/or too few personal opportunities to come to terms with having been confronted with “difficult” topics) take on a special role here. In particular, they can lead to a problematic reception of content – especially on the topic of the Holocaust/Fascism/Second World War. Reactions like “victim-blaming” or provocative actions may result from this (cf. Priebke 2006, 91 ff.).

In this context we must also consider that the contempt for the individual that was shown during the Third Reich would have led to quite a few students in the modern inclusive setting to be labelled as “inferior”, or would even have threatened their right to exist.

How do the differences within the learning community affect the learning conditions?

Teaching aids

The effort of the reception of (textual) data requires the use of teaching aids. Sensory modes (audio sample, picture, 3D model, braille text, ...) or degrees of abstraction (concrete, representational, symbolic or linguistically abstract) are only a few variants of differentiation (cf. Musenberg & Riegert 2015, 224f.). It must be noted at this point that said sub-categorization based on degrees of abstraction is identical to the parameters used to break down topics in the curriculum for special education schools for students requiring academic accommodations (BMBF 2015), so there is a clear link. Teaching aids must not, however, be adapted solely with regard to “previously raised aspects of accessibility” (Barsch & Dziak-Mahler 2014, 128).² Barsch and Dziak-Mahler posit that the differences among students must be taken into account already at the beginning of teaching and learning processes (ibid.). Content must be made tangible and encourage engagement.

² „angerissene Formen von Barrierefreiheit“.

How accessible are the materials? Are there barriers for individuals? Do the materials offer the opportunity of developing competences (concerning subject content, time, source, interpretation, perspective, society, ...)?

Language

Language is the primary means of communication during lessons. It is – starting with the last two years of primary education – increasingly technical and subject-specific and presents a contrast to the language used in the living environment of many students (cf. Leisen 2013).

In literature on everyday or technical language, the terms BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) are frequently used. The most salient characteristics of both forms will be briefly listed here (cf. Weis 2013, 13ff.).

BICS – Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills	CALP – Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
everyday language	technical or erudite language
shared situation specific to the interaction	no shared/specific situation as a report/presentation
simple vocabulary	complex vocabulary
simple constructions and syntax	complicated construction of language
supported by facial expressions and gestures	only language as a medium
low density of information/complexity	high density of information/complexity

Especially in history and sociology, (technical) language is also strongly rooted in the socio-emotional context and often has connotations. A clear representation exclusively on the basis of facts is not always possible.

The discrepancy between technical and everyday language predominantly affects children and adolescents with learning disabilities/cognitive disabilities and students with first languages other than German, which for various reasons could undergo no or only inadequate literarization in our language. In order for us to be able to work productively, we must use linguistic tools that are capable of opening up complex texts. Two of these will be described in more detail below; these are the concepts of “Sprachsensibler Unterricht” (“language-sensitive teaching”) according to Leisen and “Leichter Lesen”/“Leichte Sprache” (“Simpler Reading”/“Simple Language”).

Language-sensitive teaching is conceived in terms of scaffolding that helps to reach a deeper understanding, can be adapted as linguistic competence develops and can, ideally, be dispensed with eventually. To this end, Leisen lists a comprehensive range of methodical tools in the areas of speaking, reading, and writing, such as word-lists, image sequences, speech bubbles, structural diagrams or sentence building kits. Language-sensitive teaching insists on achievable, subject-authentic terminology in the respective area of competence as obligatory (cf. Leisen 2013; Weis 2013).

Simpler Reading (SR)/Simple Language (SL) defines itself as a constant aid to a better understanding. SR/SL often occurs together with Publications Using Difficult Language – a technical term.

In order to qualify as an SR/SL text, a certification is necessary (cf. Peböck 2015; www.leichte-sprache.org).³

³ In order to prevent the use of inadequate terminology, I shall identify the following examples as texts in “easily understandable language”.

SR/SL is subject to a fixed body of rules (extracts):

- ▶ using easily understandable words
- ▶ avoiding long, complicated words/explaining long words/using hyphens
- ▶ representing numbers only as numerals/using terms like “very many” or “that was a long time ago”/using illustrations
- ▶ avoiding foreign words, abbreviations
- ▶ phonetic representation of special pronunciations, e.g. hygiene (we say: hi-jeen)
- ▶ using short and simple sentences
- ▶ using direct language (ibid.)

It is possible for there to be hardly any or no progress when the personal maximum limit in SR/SL has been reached. SR/SL may, however, also be an interim stage in developing individual reading competence.

Simple Reading has, for instance, been adopted in the educational resources (tours and information catalogue) of the learning and memorial site Hartheim Castle (www.schloss-hartheim.at). The special issues on the topic of National Socialism (online publications) by the network “Chancen erarbeiten” in Germany may also provide helpful models, although they do not possess an SL-certification (cf. Verein Schloss Hartheim 2014, Themenhefte Nationalsozialismus).

In this respect, we may also point to the critical reception of the simplification of language in the context of inclusion (cf. Schädler & Reichenstein 2015).

Both approaches (language-sensitive teaching and SR/SL) may also be augmented in their possible applications by being connected with sign language, braille materials, symbolic systems of assisted communication etc.

[How is the meaning of terms understood and conceptualised?](#)

[How are terms interpreted and applied?](#)

[Which form of language simplification is suitable?](#)

[Is there a danger of historical distortion?](#)

Lesson settings – internal differentiation

Our objective is not only to create freedom from barriers but also to implement suitable forms of internal differentiation. On this topic, Wenzel (2012) gives a clear and very diverse overview based on 13 components (forms of tasks, social forms, task assistance, approaches, products, ...), which may apply to the use in heterogeneous learning communities (cf. Wenzel, 224). The same author also presents a very practically-oriented collection of advice for planning inclusive lessons (focus on history lessons; *ibid.* 252 f.). Krämer, Przibilla and Grosche (2016) list nine inclusion indicators for the area of methods, individualization and differentiation in the classroom for this purpose. Among them we find: learning on the basis of a common subject, targeted instructive techniques or the structure of materials (cf. Krämer, Przibilla & Grosche, 90). Yet Wenzel also cautions against so-called differentiation traps, which further focus pre-existing strengths/weaknesses and do not foster differentiated development (only good students always form one group, students can actively avoid some kinds of tasks, ...). An inappropriate choice of materials (too complex or too childish, ...) is also listed as a stumbling block to a beneficial differentiation (cf. Wenzel 2012, 246).

Furthermore, it appears to be essential that the tasks handled by different participants in a heterogeneous learning community should at least be connected, complement each other or bring to light different perspectives on an issue. Only in this way can, through different forms of work or topics, “the fruitful complementarity of difference be made transparent to all those involved” (Hasberg 2014, 18).⁴

⁴ „den Beteiligten die fruchtbare Ergänzung der Unterschiedlichkeit transparent werden“.

Which possibilities of internal differentiation do I use?

What do students especially benefit from?

What would I like to try once?

Perspectives of History Didactics:

We shall now examine certain central aspects of the teaching of history which appear especially relevant to the treatment of this topic (cf. Priebke 2006; Pandel 2013; Halsberg 2014, 34ff.):

Source/Authenticity

Learning to use the Five Ws and other questions is an essential ability in this case (What? When? Who? Where? Why? By whom? To whom? ...). In a reality in which media abound, help is needed in order to distinguish between sources and to develop a sense of selectivity.

- ▶ Edutainment shows with numerous cuts, sound effects, music, ... (What is original, what has been added? ...) must be viewed critically.
- ▶ Literary examples which are conceived as purely fictional accounts like "The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas" by John Boyne are not suitable for conveying basic historical knowledge.

Working with historical biographies/references to everyday life

Opportunities for identification can provide good bridges to the present. The tangibility of the situations can, however, help to stay "at the heart of the action".

- ▶ The series "Nationalsozialismus in den österreichischen Bundesländern: Opfer – Täter – Gegner" ("National Socialism in the Austrian States: Victims – Perpetrators – Opponents") describes the life stories of different people, which creates opportunities to work out personalised narratives in a regional environment and from different perspectives (cf. erinnern.at).

Questions and interpretation

Here, the ability to deconstruct/reconstruct comes into play. What started with a review of sources can now be developed further.

- ▶ An example for this would be a prisoner's censored letter. He writes, among other things: "I am all right ..." Now, the deconstruction/reconstruction begins: Were people really all right? Why does he still say so? Why did many others say the same? How were they really feeling? Why were they imprisoned? What would he have liked to write? ...

Possible courses of action

Here we come to the link to the present. That was then. What do things look like now? Can we do some things differently?

Multiperspectivity (for instance victims, perpetrators, bystanders, ...)

There is a need for differentiated teaching, which has the ability to fan out and counteract simplification. In this way, we may also oppose one-sided perspectives and overwhelming representations.

- ▶ There are forced labourers, factory/land owners, free workers, the population, civil servants, guards, passers-by, ... Everyone has their own representation of events, their narrative.

Historical awareness

A well-developed level of historical awareness is fundamental to successful teaching. The structure of the sub-items according to Pandel (1991) marks out topic areas that may provide points of contact for everyone in a heterogeneous learning community.

Historical dimension

- ▶ temporal awareness (yesterday – today – tomorrow)
- ▶ reality awareness (real – fictional)
- ▶ awareness of historicity (static – changeable)

Social dimension

- ▶ identity awareness (we – you/they)
 - ▶ political awareness (above – below)
 - ▶ socioeconomical awareness (rich – poor)
 - ▶ moral awareness (right – wrong)
- (cf. Pandel 1991, in Alavi & Terfloth 2013, 189)

We must, at this point, not fail to consider a comment on temporal awareness, since this is often taken to be a basic competence necessary in order to successfully take part in history lessons. Besides the previous explanation by Piaget that temporal awareness develops in gradual steps, other findings now suggest that the development of such an awareness occurs in an area-specific way and is not primarily tied to developmental stages. This is particularly significant for children and adolescents requiring academic accommodations for very young students, since this can or should result in an adaptation of didactic considerations in this context (cf. Alavi & Terfloth 2013, 186 ff.).

To which of the students' dimension of awareness do we appeal?

How are the sources presented?

Where are the points of contact with biography/everyday life/the present?

Which perspective do reports/representations take?

What must be clarified concerning media representations?

Didactical Perspectives on the Topic "Holocaust":**Particular characteristics**

Special pedagogic models and considerations have proved to be highly relevant as a framework for covering the topic of the Holocaust, especially for young children or students accordingly hampered by their learning capabilities.

Abram, for instance, lists the following aspects of teaching in his "3-point programme" for an "Education after Auschwitz" (for children up to 10 years of age):

- ▶ warmth (an atmosphere of safety, security and openness)
- ▶ empathy (with victims, on-lookers ... perpetrators – everyone knows these roles)⁵
- ▶ autonomy (reflection, self-determination, non-conformism)

For older learners he adds the following points:

- ▶ understanding that Auschwitz is a repeatable event in the history of humanity
- ▶ understanding the mechanisms and principles of operation of aggression and destruction (cf. Abram 1998, 3 f.)

According to McKayton, material for the above-mentioned target groups is characterized by:

- ▶ personal introduction of the protagonist
- ▶ a "normal" life before the historical turning point
- ▶ an age structure close to the students' own

⁵ As far as empathy with the perpetrators is concerned, there is a need for differentiation: we must assume an empathy of comprehension rather than sympathy ("I understand these actions in context" vs "I sympathize with their actions").

- ▶ people who appear whose character shows them neither as angels nor as devils, but who may nevertheless display strongly marked character traits
- ▶ occurrence of options for action, dilemmas or turnarounds
- ▶ a positive environment, survival, a new beginning
(cf. McKayton 2011, 3 f.)

Langer and Windischbauer also reach similar results (cf. Langer & Windischbauer, 2010).

Who are the central characters?

What was their life like before/during/after the turning point?

How are their characters shown?

Are there possible choices, changes, dilemmas?

How does it all end?

Empathy vs identification

Regarding the danger of emotional overload while covering this topic, McKayton states: "While identification means a complete merging of the student with the character of the protagonist, empathy may be understood (...) as a cognitive reaction to the emotions of someone else (ibid., 3).⁶ In this case, empathy means a cognitive and sensitive correspondence with the sensitivities of the protagonist; this can be developed and thus counteract the pedagogical strategy of emotional overpowering. It therefore seems important to create active points of entry and exit when intensively covering this topic in the course of lessons (films, images, theatrical scenes, intense texts), so as to make this distance clearly transparent to the individual through physical boundaries as well (changing classrooms, forming a circle out of chairs, picking up/putting down tools, stepping through an archway/over a threshold). Other additional activities (physical exercise, painting, drawing) may take on a regulatory or reassuring role for the individual as well, especially if writing/speaking are not the primary means of communication.

Are there tools (suitcase, headwear, ...)

Which might help with the visualization?

Are there entry and exit points to and from intense stages?

How much visualization is bearable?

At this point, I would like to refer to a very differentiated and recommendable list of possible pedagogical questions on the subject of addressing the Holocaust in the classroom: www.holocaustremembrance.com/How to Teach about the Holocaust in Schools.

Practical Stimuli/Materials

Working with Words/Paraphrase Sheet and Word Analysis

Both forms of structuring are listed in Leisen's methodical catalogue (cf. Leisen 2013, 298 f., 302 f.), some suggestions were also taken from books/websites (Gluck Wood, 2008; Themenhefte Nationalsozialismus; Verein Schloss Hartheim, 2014). In this way, 45 instances of paraphrase and word analysis were collected; some of them are listed as examples below. Since children and adolescents who are only in the process of learning the German language form an important target group, articles and, where appropriate, plural forms are also listed in order to meet the requirements of the field of German as a Second Language.

Possible uses

Consolidation, categorization, quizzes, forming pairs, sorting into topic areas, aid to comprehension, creating glossaries, ...

⁶ „Während Identifikation das vollständige Aufgehen des Lernenden in der Figur des Protagonisten bedeutet, kann Empathie (...) als kognitive Reaktion auf die Emotion eines Anderen verstanden werden.“

Word Analysis

- ▶ Compound nouns, with their “powerful meaning”, are *divided up* and made *more intelligible* (ensuring understanding).
- ▶ Word analysis can also be used for further questions or initial stimuli, which is possible for students at both an elementary and an advanced academic level.
- the German term “Kristallnacht” – “Night of Broken Glass” – What glass was broken? Why? Who broke it? etc.
- the German term “Kinderfachabteilung” – “Special Children’s Ward” – What do you imagine when you hear that term? What really happened there? What was the reason for creating this term?
- the German term for the SS, “Schutzstaffel” – “Protection Squad” – Who did they protect? – What they did was the opposite of protection...
- ▶ Helpful grammatical insights for learners of German (articles, plural forms) are provided.

„Gleichschaltung“ (co-ordination/ bringing into line)	„die Schaltung“ ordination = in this case: an order (for everyone to follow)	„gleich“ co- = the same applies to everyone
„Kristallnacht“ (Night of Broken Glass)	„die Nacht“ night = the opposite of day	„das Kristall“ broken glass = shards of windows or mirrors
„Hitlerjugend“/HJ (Hitler Youth)	„die Jugend“ youth = in this case: German boys over 10 years of age	Hitler = he is their role model, their hero
„Rüstungsbetrieb“ (armament industry)	„der Betrieb“ industry = factories	„die Rüstung“ armament = everything you need for war: ammunition, mines, bombs, rifles, tanks, pistols, ...
„Sturmabteilung“/SA (Storm Detachment)	„die Abteilung“ a detachment = a group	„der Sturm“ storm = in this case: attacking violently
„Schutzstaffel“/SS (Protection Squadron)	„die Staffel“ a squadron = in this case: a group	„der Schutz“ protection = protecting someone
„Todesmarsch“ (death march)	„der Marsch“ a march = a very long way on foot	„der Tod“ death = in this case: many people die while doing it
„Kinderfachabteilung“ (Special Children’s Ward)	„die Fachabteilung“ a special ward = in this case: a special department in a hospital	„die Kinder“ children
„Kindertransport“ (children’s transport)	„der Transport“ transport = in this case: someone is taken away	„die Kinder“ children
„Konzentrationslager“ (concentration camp)	„das Lager“ a camp = in this case: an open-air prison with many barracks (rough huts)	„die Konzentration“ concentration = in this case: people have to remain together in one place

Paraphrasis

- ▶ Technical terms are explained in simple main clauses so that their *meaning can unfold* (ensuring understanding).
- ▶ *Further questions or initial stimuli* can be designed.
- ▶ *Helpful grammatical insights* for learners of German (articles) are made clear.

<p>„die Front“ (the front)</p>	<p>There is one in a war. That is where two groups face each other. They fight (shoot at each other). It is particularly dangerous there.</p>
<p>„die Nürnberger Prozesse“ (Nuremberg Trials)</p>	<p>These were trials in a court of law. The Second World War was over by then. A few important Nazis went to court. They went to prison for a long time or were sentenced to death.</p>
<p>„die Propaganda“ (propaganda)</p>	<p>People think that only their own opinions are right. Then you are only allowed to hear (radio, music, videos), see or read (books, TV, newspapers, movies, postings, websites) these opinions. Other opinions are often banned.</p>
<p>„der Putsch“ (a coup)</p>	<p>A group of people wants to rule, but they are not elected to rule. They want to use violence and schemes to take over (=become the rulers). What they do is called _____.</p>
<p>„die Sowjetunion“ (the Soviet Union)</p>	<p>It was where Russia is now. But it was larger. You can see that in the atlas. It shared a border with, for example, these countries: Poland, Rumania, Afghanistan, Iran, and China</p>
<p>„die Synagoge“ (a synagogue)</p>	<p>This is the place of worship (=church) for Jews They meet there. They pray there and read from their holy book. That book is called the Torah.</p>
<p>„der Zivilist“ (a civilian)</p>	<p>That word is often used during a war. This is someone who is not a soldier and who does not fight.</p>

Working with Visual Stimuli

Who says what? Who thinks what?



fig. 1: Occupation of the Sudetenland, 1938



fig. 2: The destroyed Tummelplatz in Graz, 1944

A picture sheet: “Who said what?“, “Who thought what?“

The picture sheet addresses the topic “dominance – promises – manipulation”.

About the pictures

The pictures on the sheet are only marked with “fig.” and a number, without any other designation, in order to allow for a freer didactic and methodical approach.

The first picture shows a street decorated with swastika flags. It is a celebration of the annexation of the Sudetenland region in 1938. On the street, people are walking side by side and holding hands: four German soldiers, a woman, two girls, a boy and a small child. Two of the soldiers each carry a toddler in their arms. Some of them are carrying bunches of flowers (Sudetenland, 1938). The fact that the picture contains no Hitler salute is deliberate, since this might become an unwanted focus point when developing oral statements.

The second picture shows the Tummelplatz square in Graz in 1944, which was destroyed by bombs. People are running across the debris-strewn square. A woman carrying several things under her arm is looking towards the photographer, which means she is looking directly at the viewer.

Didactic considerations

The starting point that has been chosen is deliberately very elementary, since a presentation that is elaborated further reaches a point of transition to materials for regular history lessons. These materials can be used for the entire learning community or as a tool for differentiation.

Objectives

- Becoming aware of manipulation in politics
- Confronting the failure of (unjust) systems

Preliminary considerations

- ▶ The image sheet can be chosen as an introduction: “What happened in between?”
- ▶ Addressing the topic “everyday life in Germany before and during the Second World War (cheering, big promises, parades, construction, soldiers at the front, bombing campaigns against cities, hunger, fear, destruction)”.
- ▶ Students have already covered sequences of events and cornerstones of the topic area Holocaust/Second World War/National Socialism and now focus on the civilian population.

Introductory text (in simplified language)

- ▶ This text can be used as an introduction, a conclusion, for consolidation or as a textual basis to be expanded upon during a history lesson. It can also be expanded by part of the student group.
- ▶ It may be used as a basis for role play/shadow play, posters, or drawings. This may also happen on an interdisciplinary basis.

Everyone is very happy!

He made a big promise.

He said: "I'll give you many good things!"

Everyone cheers (=shouts for happiness) and says:

"You are the best! You can rule us!"

Then they notice:

None of that is true!

That was a lie.

He did not give them anything. He took away a lot of things. Like a thief.

A lot of things were also destroyed.

Picture sheet and introductory text:

- ▶ The sheet is supposed to contrast the situations at the beginning of/before the war and at the end of/after the war.
- ▶ It shows, as clearly as possible, individual people in a context that can easily be interpreted. The aim is to present situations that can easily be linked to the student's own everyday life; to this end, the introductory texts may provide an initial anchor point.
- ▶ Additionally, individual experiences can be brought in. The students' own experiences then serve to frame the material encountered when dealing with historical contexts.
- ▶ The picture sheet is intended as a stimulus for groups, as a presentation sheet and, possibly without speech bubbles, as a basis for a simple handout.
- ▶ The decision whether to explain/present dates or whether to only use a simple before/after framework depends on the specific situation.
- ▶ Similarly, depending on the didactic use of the picture sheet, it can be cut into individual pieces when revising historical context (before/after).

Speech and thought bubbles

- ▶ A possible course of action would be not to write into the speech and thought bubbles immediately. Since these are not fictional characters like those of a graphic novel, there is a real story behind each person. One might thus wish to proceed with a certain care.
- ▶ The speech and thought bubbles serve as stimuli in order to elicit comments. They are the visual stimulus for the question "What might these people be saying/thinking?" The aim should be to avoid premature scribbling.
- ▶ It is possible to create larger speech bubbles and glue them onto the sheet. This makes for greater flexibility.
- ▶ If a large laminated copy is used instead of a single paper copy, the texts might flexibly be attached to it with tape or post-its. Thus, greater versatility may be achieved.

Timeframe and progress modules (proposed)

These may vary widely between groups.

- ▶ The modules in blue are designed to consolidate and expand on the topic, but are not vital to the central process. They can also be seen as possibilities of expanding on the topic in an integrative setting.

Options for lesson sequences

Actions	Materials/Methods	Comment
<p>Introductory stories for personal identification</p> <p>sharing experiences/finding words for feelings maybe developing role plays</p>	<p>copy of the introductory texts sheet or blackboard for gathering keywords or pictograms (feelings)</p>	<p>introduction and making sure of basic concepts (events, feelings) Only the reference to personal everyday life is important here.</p>
<p>What do you see? What do students perceive?</p>	<p>enlarged picture sheet (on the blackboard or with a projector)</p>	<p>perception, not interpretation</p>
<p>What is shown? presenting the pictures in a roughly historical situational context "Many people were thrilled by the Nazis. They cheered. They were hoping that ..." maybe already speculating about: what happened (immediately) beforehand, what happened (immediately) afterwards?</p>	<p>maybe gathering notes on the blackboard</p>	<p>Clarifying content in order to prevent misinterpretation. It is possible to refer to the whole context on the basis of the perceived parts. The clarification of "before" and "after" is something of a careful approach to the situation. The temporary situation of the picture is a bridge between the personal introductory text and the larger context of historical developments.</p>
<p>First thoughts on oral statements, gathering thoughts/writing or having someone write thoughts on strips of paper.</p>	<p>working in groups or all together collecting strips above the pictures on the blackboard.</p>	<p>Here the momentary situational context of the picture (historically framed) serves as a starting point.</p>
<p>Presenting the different statements For each picture, one person is needed to serve as a spokesperson. The students stand next to the sheet and say their statements OR the spokespersons take the poster, face the group, hold the poster up in front and say the sentences.</p>	<p>cut up and enlarged picture halves strips of paper with sentences</p>	<p>The speech itself precedes the filling in of the speech bubbles. I am a spokesperson. By hiding behind a sheet of paper, it is possible to keep some distance while emphasizing the role as spokesperson.</p>

<p>Maybe: What happened before? What happened afterwards?</p> <p>the content covered before is briefly revised – see preliminary considerations</p>	<p>assisted by visual material from relevant units and maybe a few notes</p>	<p>A sequence of historical events is vividly described. A connexion is made with the larger context of historical developments. The students' knowledge of context is boosted.</p>
<p>Now the process of searching for texts is repeated or existing texts are either changed or kept the same.</p>	<p>copies of the picture sheets working in pairs, groups, all together</p>	<p>If statements remain the same, that is not a problem; however, other texts may have been created.</p>
<p>Presenting the different statements For each picture, one person is needed to serve as a spokesperson.</p> <p>The students stand next to the sheet and say their statements OR the spokespeople take the poster, face the group, hold the poster up in front and say the sentences.</p>	<p>cut up and enlarged picture halves strips of paper with sentences</p>	<p>By hiding behind a sheet of paper, it is possible to keep some distance while emphasizing the role as spokesperson.</p>
<p>Filling in the blanks the entire group (students and teacher) decides what is put in</p>	<p>own sheet of paper</p>	<p>Variant: the student group chooses example sentences and writes them in the speech bubbles.</p>
<p>Presenting the results</p>	<p>presenting the sheets</p>	
<p>Possible additions: How could we continue? maybe speculating what happened after the second picture was taken ... or: What does that mean for me? Can I experience something like that, even if times are different now?</p>	<p>discussion with the student group</p>	<p>purely intellectual consideration</p>

Working with texts

Völkel (2012) describes numerous possibilities for working with historical texts in the course of a lesson, and some of the options she proposes can also well be realised in heterogeneous learning communities (cf. Völkel). There are, however, also historical texts which in themselves seem made to offer opportunities for differentiation. The following example presents exactly such a statement by a contemporary witness.

Texts by a contemporary witness

About the texts

During a guided tour (2014/15) of the Mauthausen Memorial, the guides handed out two texts rendering the statements of a "neighbour" of the Gusen Concentration Camp. Subdivisions in the texts that were handed out are shown.

Initially, the texts appeared in a play by Franz Innerhofer called "Die Scheibtruhe – die Geschichte der Hanni R." ("The Wheelbarrow – The Story of Hanni R."). This play recounts

the life story of a woman who worked as a maid on a farmstead near the Gusen Concentration Camp. The texts address the problematic topic of bystanders (ideological “fellow travellers”).

The speaker/contemporary witness

Hanni R. – Johanna Rittenschober, née Lampelmaier – is born in 1921. She receives a very strict education. She works as a maid, and for her, the annexation of Austria is also something of a liberation. But afterwards she becomes aware of the regime’s severity and cruelty. Relatives/acquaintances of hers work in civilian roles at the concentration camp. SS-men visit the farmstead. They tell her about murders with poison gas. Johanna sees the prisoners during their heavy labour, their collapses, and later on death marches. She sees them being abused and beaten to death. She smells the smell of burning from the crematoriums. She herself must fear denunciation for dropping fruit along the way for the prisoners. Only in the 1990s does she tell her story to the journalist Helmut Schödel and the author Franz Innerhofer (Angerer 2011; Angerer & Ecker 2014).

Preliminary considerations

The local conditions and events in and around the concentration camp should already have been covered (roughly). The Gusen Concentration Camp does not exist anymore, and yet it was there/was real.

Working with the text – introduction (options)

- ▶ The students are given the text without context ... (What can it be about?)
- ▶ The students ask the text questions: Who? Where? When? How old? ...

Texts:

Text 1: **But the camp was next to us /
Every day we knew about the camp /
Everyday we did not talk about the camp**
(Innerhofer 1996, 25)⁷

Text 2: **I knew about it after all / How could things have been different /
And my mother also knew about it / and other women also knew about it /
but afterwards / everything only afterwards /
so much nonsense / I cannot even think about it /
how much nonsense / I submitted to**
(Innerhofer 1996, 37)⁸

Text 1 – basic text: declarative statements

- more suitable for students requiring academic accommodations

Questions about the text:

- ▶ What does “next to” mean? Like a neighbour in a village or a block of flats?
- ▶ How close are you to someone who is your neighbour?
- ▶ What do you know about them, even if you only hear them or think about them?
- ▶ Here, connexions can be made on a tactile, optical or acoustic level of the perception of others, e.g.: how does their voice sound when they are happy, when they are ordering someone around, when they are tired?

7 Aber das Lager war neben uns /
Jeden Tag haben wir vom Lager gewusst /
Jeden Tag haben wir nicht über das Lager geredet

8 Gewusst hätte ich ja / Wie es anders gehen hätte können /
und meine Mutter hats auch gewusst / und andere Frauen habens auch gewusst /
aber hinterher / alles immer hinterher /
soviel Unsinn / Ich darf gar nicht daran denken /
wie viel Unsinn / Ich über mich ergehen hab lassen

- ▶ **Every day we knew** ...: "Can we forget neighbours?", "What do you know about your neighbours?", "What did they know about the camp?", "Where did they know it from?"
- ▶ **Every day we did not** ...: "Have you already experienced something about which you had to think all the time (=every day)?", "Did you talk about it?", "Why did these people say nothing at all?"

Text 2 – advanced text: declarative and interrogative statements

Questions about the text:

- ▶ "What could have been different?"
- ▶ "Who still knows about it?", "What happens afterwards?"
- ▶ "What 'nonsense' is the person talking about?"
- ▶ "What does it mean to submit to nonsense?"
- ▶ "Do you have any idea how things could have been different?"

Further Suggestions

- ▶ Johanna Rittenschober's biographical notices (Angerer 2011; Angerer & Ecker 2014) and, in parallel, a simplified version may be used as a basis for closer consideration. The latter source also contains pictures of Johanna Rittenschober (ca. 1940 and 2011).
- ▶ further developing the problematic topic of bystanders, consolidating historical knowledge
- ▶ further lessons on topics like "civil courage", "wishes for others", ...

Memorial Sites, Books, Websites

Memorial sites⁹

- ▶ Lern- und Gedenkort Schloss Hartheim/Hartheim Castle (schloss-hartheim.at) (educational programmes starting from fourth grade)
- ▶ Mauthausen Memorial (www.mauthausen-memorial.org)
- ▶ Catalogue of memorial sites to the victims of National Socialism in Austria (www.erinnern.at/bundeslaender/oesterreich/gedaechtnisorte-gedenkstaetten/katalog)
- ▶ Langer/Windischbauer give an overview of ways to support visits to memorial sites (Langer & Windischbauer 2010, 182).

Literature (selected)

- ▶ „Was war los in Hohenhorst?“ – a book on the Nazi era in simple language with a focus on Lebensborn care homes, in German (Felguth 2015)
- ▶ "Anne Frank: Her Life" – Anne Frank's story in simplified language – (Hoefnagel 2014 ; also online, in German, at bidok.uibk.ac.at 2015)
- ▶ „Weg von hier, Linz – Shanghai – Israel“ – a picture book with a particular connexion to Linz for children in third or fourth grade, in German (Führer, Hoheneder, & Nowotny 2012)
- ▶ "Holocaust: the events and their impact on real people" – a Dorling Kindersley book, somewhat more compact (in English: Gluck Wood 2007; in German: Gluck Wood 2008)

Online resources (selected)

- ▶ Books and materials – including a large number of rescue stories – can be found among the educational materials of the International School of Holocaust Studies (ISHS)/Yad Vashem (www.yadvashem.org)
- ▶ A large number of materials, literature and advice on lessons in German can be found on the homepage of erinnern.at (www.erinnern.at).

⁹ Since I am from the region of Linz, I list the first two memorial sites separately.

Conclusion

Modifying materials on the topic of the Holocaust/National Socialism/the Second World War for the teaching of heterogeneous learning groups can be both valuable and dangerous. The additional value we may gain is the opportunity to make an important part of human history accessible and to give students a chance to reflect on this to the best of their abilities. We can encourage a process of opening up the world. The danger lies in aspects like trivialization, placation or a pedagogical strategy of emotional overpowering. But to avoid the topic for fear of these dangers is no alternative. In doing so, we would leave behind a part of the learning community. To enable others to access a share of knowledge (of the world) is helpful (to everyone). Maybe even more in times like these.

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List of illustrations

- Page 53: fig. 1: Besetzung des Sudetenlandes 1938, Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-H13158 / photographer: unknown
 Page 53: fig. 2: RF147042, Kristan Adolf, zerstörter Tummelplatz nach Bombenschäden in Graz, 1944, Multimediale Sammlungen / UMJ

Much Ado About Playing

Fostering Inclusion Through Dramatic Play

Abstract

The school subject “Performing Arts” has by now become an important component of the curricula of many countries. This subject is supposed to challenge the aesthetic and artistic competence of students; its positive effects on social competence are also mentioned as a beneficial side effect. Is that all? Can “Performing Arts” only be of use in an artistic context?

This article presents the theoretical aspect of play and Performing Arts; it aims to answer the question whether the methods of Performing Arts can also be applied in other subjects, and how these methods succeed in producing positive experiences with relationships – not only between teachers and students, but also in an inclusive setting among students.

Furthermore, an inclusive project for adolescents with Asperger syndrome is presented as a successful example.

Play

For thousands of years, regardless of culture, social class or age, humans have played alone or in groups. By playing, children get to know their own body, their own emotions, then their environment as well as other beings and their reactions. “Play is the stuff from which childhood is made” (Quill, 2000, in Dodd 2007, 275).¹

Curiosity, imagination and motivation are important parts of play. It is always voluntary and has no fixed objective. In order to play successfully, we do not even need a common language, we do not have to be the same age; it is sufficient to be in the same place and to want to play in the same way. Humanity possesses an inexhaustible store of forms of playing and play materials.

Humans who play together are in synchrony with each other. In the context of social interactions, synchronization may be observed in terms of movement, of affective and linguistic expression as well as of posture. Interpersonal synchrony is both an indicator of the quality of a relationship and a stepping-stone for initiating and maintaining successful social relationships (cf. Jahnke, Julius & Matthes 2016).

Furthermore, players mutually get to know the weaknesses and strengths of an individual and the group. In teams, they have to work together to determine possible courses of action concerning a problem, they have to solve conflicts, and, not least, together they experience emotions from happiness to frustration, depending on the outcome of the game.

There is no single definition of play. According to Dodd, play is “a natural activity that fosters the development of cognitive abilities, positive social and emotional behaviour, verbal and nonverbal communication and motor skills” (Clinton & Dodd 1998, Dodd 2007, 275).²

1 „Spiel ist der Stoff, aus dem die Kindheit gemacht ist“.

2 „eine natürliche Aktivität, die die Entwicklung kognitiver Fähigkeiten, positiver sozialer und emotionaler Verhaltensweisen, verbaler und nonverbaler Kommunikation und motorischer Geschicklichkeit fördert“

The function and meaning of play have been investigated since the 19th century. Freud, Vygotski and Piaget have developed different psychological theories in order to interpret play.

According to Freud, play has the function of fulfilling desire. Children can escape reality and live out their need for aggression and taboo impulses. The Freudian catharsis hypothesis posits that the frequent repetition of a problem in play results in “cleansing”. Vygotski holds the view that unrealistic desires can be fulfilled in play: children can play at being adults – small people become powerful and strong. Piaget describes play as a cognitive activity which unilaterally adapts the environment to the child’s model; this assimilation is a reaction against the pressure of socialization and the imperative of a universal reality (cf. Oerter & Montada 2008).

Human play takes different forms and, depending on a child’s level of development, these appear in a certain order with fluid transitions.

Oerter and Montada (2008) attempt to describe the development of play with the following model:

- ▶ sensorimotor play (function play)
- ▶ information play, exploration play
- ▶ construction play
- ▶ as-if play (symbolic play, fiction play)
- ▶ role play
- ▶ rule play

In the course of normal development, children start playing from their third month and usually reach the stage of role play by the age of four. Rule play is mostly adopted from primary school age.

The development stages “as-if play” and role play are to be highlighted especially. We speak of as-if play/symbolic play/fiction play/fantasy play when children are able to differentiate between a real and an imagined situation. Only then can they act in play, e.g. as if they were police officers. Children can now play together and cooperate with others. The children agree in play where they are (e.g. a police station) and distribute roles (e.g. the teddy bear plays a policeman and the doll a criminal). Objects are also made to represent something (e.g. a pot lid becomes a steering wheel).

Through “as-if play”, children begin to play together with others interactively.

Role play or socio-dramatic play requires highly developed social and cognitive competences. Mostly, several people play together, with everyone taking on a fictional role in a fictional world. For the duration of the role play, all players have to stay in character and coordinate their joint actions; this results in a functional co-dependence between the players. They have to pay attention to each other and negotiate and realise their play proposals in such a way that there are no major breaks in the flow of play.

Dramatic Play

Both forms of play provide the basis of dramatic play. Depending on the literature, dramatic play is called and defined differently. In Germany, the terms “Darstellendes Spiel” (Performing Arts) or “Szenisches Spiel” (“Scenic Acting”) are frequently used, but these can also be applied when working with theatre pedagogy. Kaposi (2008) describes dramatic play as a form of playful activity in a group which creates a fantasy world (fictional world). In this fictional world, participants act in different roles, encounter real problems/conflicts and gain real knowledge and experience by resolving these problems.

Dramatic play, however, does not only consist of role play itself, but also of exercises and play that promote group dynamics, concentration, communication, awareness of the self and the group, creativity, association and the ability to improvise. How these exercises/games are put together depends on their objective. Ideally, one should have a definite conception what is to be achieved with the group. One must always ask the question whether a group should work in a product-oriented or process-oriented way. Product orientation means that the objective is to stage a play; in order to reach this objective, group dynamics and the development of the individual are given a subordinate role in the group while achievement is foregrounded. With process orientation, group dynamics and promoting the development of the individual become central elements. Shared activities produce shared experiences that lastingly shape the personality of all participants; importantly, the time spent together generates interpersonal relationships. The final product, the play itself, can but need not be staged. Thus, this form of work seems ideally suited to launch inclusive processes.

It would be an important step for schools to adopt dramatic play as a part of the curriculum so that all children have the opportunity to make these experiences within their peer groups. The subject "Performing Arts" does exist, but not, generally, as a compulsory subject.

Nevertheless, it is possible to adapt methods from dramatic play for different subjects; there are no restrictions. In mathematics, chemistry or physics lessons, concentration games can be very useful for activating students. In subjects like German, English, or religious studies, role play is a frequently used method, and improvisation play can be very helpful in language learning.

There are, by now, many collections of games. These are grouped by main categories; this makes it possible to quickly find exercises appropriate for teaching.

These main categories are described below.

Icebreaker games and games boosting group dynamics and team spirit can be employed with newly-constituted school classes at the start of or during a school year, but may also be employed with pre-existing groups. The objective of such an exercise is for the participants in the group to shake off their reserve, begin to trust each other and, not least, get to know each other in playful situations and build positive relationships with each other.

Managing the playing process

The person in charge should always actively take part in these exercises and not only give instructions; this is the only way to build trust. These games can be played confidently in every subject at all school types.

Relaxation and concentration games serve to diffuse tension of a mental or physical nature. It is important to note that certain games activate the group in physical terms, while other exercises restfully provide mental conditioning. In everyday school life, such concentration games may serve to ensure relaxation after a demanding situation or as a mental warm-up before written exams or quizzes. The exercises do not require a high level of preparation; they are easily adaptable for the classroom.

Managing the playing process

In much the same way as above, it is important not only to instruct the players, but to actively play together with them. This allows teachers to optimally incorporate the mood created by the game into the following lesson.

Perception exercises can stimulate the senses for self-perception and social perception in single, pair or group activities. How do I perceive myself, my partner, or my environment? What happens when I close my eyes and cannot see anything? Can I trust my other senses? Can I trust someone when they guide me? Am I afraid of being guided or rather of the responsibility of guiding myself? How strong is the group together, and can the individual interpret what the group wants?

Managing the playing process

It is necessary to have a calm and focused starting situation for this kind of play. Especially for games like “guiding the blind”, loud noises and unnecessary conversations are very disruptive. It is difficult for many students to close their eyes, which is why it is advisable to employ these games continuously and to increase their duration. If participants find it difficult to stay calm, it is possible to use gentle and slow music without lyrics. A communal evaluation after perception exercises is indispensable.

Improvisation games do not only provide a lot of fun, they also help to develop a capacity for repartee in everyday situations. Being able to react spontaneously in a situation is the result of exercise in real life and in play. Not only imagination is needed, but also the courage to improvise. Improvisation games can be very helpful in foreign language teaching. Students are given the opportunity to use foreign languages in simple, relaxed situations, to play with the language and thus also to develop their communication skills.

Managing the playing process

It is important for beginners not to start with improvisation games immediately, but to acquire a certain level of confidence through the games described above first; then, lesson by lesson, they can accept new challenges in a playful way. Improvisation does not always yield the results wanted by the players. They should be given the opportunity to begin the game anew and be encouraged to find new solutions. An unsuccessful game should not be seen as a failure.

Younger players often need more support. In this case, it is helpful for teachers to take part in the game themselves (which also further encourages the participants). It is also possible to provide prompts for situations, characters and emotions and then to gradually withdraw from the game.

Games for closing or reflexion games are always useful. A day in school is tiring – countless things occur and, in practice, we often do not have time to reflect on our experiences. If we do, however, this often involves sitting in a circle and discussing them. But there are many games for closing that do not only help to express experiences in words, but also to represent them in a playful way.

Managing the playing process

With games for closing, there is no need to analyse and comment on everything. The participants need to feel that their opinion is accepted as it is and does not need to be defended. We must not forget that with the reflexion group, everyone is presenting individual perceptions. This means it is all right for them not to conform to the expectations of the group.

How can Inclusion Be Put into Practice with Dramatic Play?

In school, children are taught together. From the first school day on, they are supposed to be able to learn together. In group exercises, students are supposed to cooperate, to help each other, to accept each other’s weaknesses and strengths and to solve educational problems successfully so that educational requirements are met.

There are few play situations occurring in lessons, and if they do, they are mostly started and shaped by the teacher. During breaks, on the other hand, students are at liberty to explore. In doing so, they mostly stay together with their fixed circle of friends. Among these friends, there are often children with similar interests and preferences, and it is therefore not necessary to include diverging perspectives in their games. Students who are not included in games frequently remain alone and feel excluded.

It is up to adults to create situations in which all students play together, because when children are able to play together they are also able to learn together. Games and exercises fostering group dynamics reinforce the learning group's team spirit, and in a strong group, every child is welcome. Students also call on these experiences in regular lessons.

The inclusive theatre group for children and adolescents with Asperger syndrome is a successful example that supports this statement. This research project is presented below because its findings show that the method of dramatic play has positive effects on the behaviour of participants with Asperger syndrome. Furthermore, although this did not constitute a focus point of the investigation, it demonstrates that typically developed participants were also able to profit from this intervention.

Inclusive Theatre Group for Children and Adolescents

Autism spectrum disorder is defined as a serious developmental disorder which affects people on a cognitive, social and emotional level (according to ICD-10 & DSM-IV). Asperger syndrome is described as a distinct category in both systems of classification. Those affected have normal to above average intelligence, but also have trouble with social interaction and communication and display stereotypical behaviour as well as special interests. Frequently, this only becomes apparent when special unforeseen demands are made of their social competence, as they regularly are in kindergarten or in school. Conventional therapies for people with autism rely on individual meetings with therapists or with homogeneous groups of people with the same disorder. In such a context, it is difficult for those affected to further develop their skills of communication and social interaction, to adapt what is being discussed to their everyday lives or to experiment with it in social groups. It is not helpful to let them practise social situations, e.g. small talk, among themselves or with the therapist, who is already well known, because such situations bear little resemblance to reality. In real situations, however, people with Asperger syndrome are often overwhelmed and very agitated. In heterogeneous groups, those affected are given the opportunity to experiment with communication scenarios in a safe space and to apply their experiences and practised skills to the real world.

The fact that the range of group therapies for autistic children and adolescents does not appear to have any inclusive functions is an additional problem; in these cases, the contact with typically developed children is completely missing. The peers of children with Asperger syndrome should also have the opportunity to get to know and understand autistic disorders. People with Asperger syndrome behave differently from typically developed people. If we understand how a person with Asperger syndrome perceives the world, which difficulties might arise in communication and interaction, then we are better prepared to engage in common interaction and even to steer it in a positive direction. Thus, an encounter can be successful for both sides instead of provoking incomprehension and frustration.

We need to find approaches drawn from inclusive therapy from which both autistic and typically developed people may benefit (cf. Jahnke & Matthes 2013).

It is the objective of inclusive theatre groups to create situations in which people with Asperger syndrome can play together with their peer group. These interactions were scientifically evaluated in 2010.

Research Design and Setting

For this study, the multiple baseline design (MBD) from the area of controlled studies of individual cases was chosen (Julius, Schlosser & Goetze 2000). Three groups took part in the study, each with one male student diagnosed with Asperger syndrome, aged 11, and six to eight children from the school class of the test person. Participation in the study was voluntary, but attendance was compulsory, so that each meeting was integrated in the fixed timetable of the students. The intervention was conducted over the course of 12 weeks. Meetings took place once every week in school during a fixed time slot and lasted for 60 minutes. In all three groups, the same objective, that is the preparation of a play, was agreed upon. It was up to the participants themselves to decide whether the play should be staged outside the group. This ensured that we were able to concentrate on the process and did not have to focus primarily on the product. All meetings were filmed and evaluated through standardized behavioural observation.

The intervention had four stages, with seamless transitions between one stage and the next: the exercise stage, partially guided improvisation, goal-driven improvisation and play consolidation.

During the exercise stage, the group and the group leader got to know each other. Since the situation, the environment and also the exercises were new to all those concerned, pre-existing structures from the classroom also had to be newly created. At this stage, exercises were provided which would form the basis for improvisation. Depending on the progress of the participants, such interventions became gradually less frequent.

During the stage of partially guided improvisation, the focus lay on free play. Improvisation was introduced and minimal prompts were given (e.g. setting, emotions). The players developed the stories independently. It was important for players to listen attentively, recognize actions and emotions, react to an action, initiate actions themselves and use their imagination.

During the stage of goal-driven improvisation, the play itself was developed. The group decided which characters were to appear in the play, in which settings, which conflicts were to arise and how these conflicts should be solved. Each participant played one or more roles in each scene.

Play consolidation was a time of rehearsal, in which the group worked together like an ensemble. Each player had to know the entire sequence of events: what was happening on stage, which tasks they had to perform, how long a scene lasted, which costumes and props were needed, and how they should behave during a performance (cf. Jahnke & Matthes 2013).

The meetings were planned from one date to the next. The challenge was to connect the methods of theatre pedagogy with the nature of the support provided by special pedagogy. This support was always primarily aimed at the student with Asperger syndrome yet without disadvantaging the other participants. In choosing games, it was important to consider which exercises would help all participants to develop their social and communication skills as well as their self-perception and perception of others. It was essential to present the exercises in such a way that the test persons were not overwhelmed and their fellow players did not feel too little was demanded of them. In each group, there were two adults: the group leader and an observer (therapist), who, for reasons of scientific rigour, did not interfere. After each meeting, it was possible to produce an evaluation based on two different perspectives: once from the perspective of the observer and once from that of the group leader. It is advisable to have a second adult in each group in order to be able to guarantee safety and structure. Autistic children can easily feel overwhelmed if they reach their limits or lose orientation. In such cases, the adult observer can help stabilize the child/the adolescent while the group leader continues working with the group.

In the course of the exercises, it became apparent that not only the test persons had difficulties recognizing emotions; typically developed students were also often unsure when trying to differentiate emotions. They were not able to name, identify or represent emotions correctly. This led to the introduction of emotion cards – 50 cards with 50 simple sketches of emotions. In each meeting, a number of emotion cards were discussed and integrated into the further process of play, e.g. improvising on the basis of a specific emotion like “angry”. The participants were able to talk together about emotions, the test persons became aware that they were not the only ones having difficulties and their fellow students learned to identify and show emotions more clearly.

All three groups developed a play together; all three test persons played an important part in it.

We were successful in encouraging adolescents with and without Asperger syndrome to play together.

In planning these interventions, we were not able to draw on any previous reports. We had, in a manner of speaking, to “jump in at the deep end”, since apparently such exercises had been classified as too difficult for people with Asperger syndrome and thus had not even been tried.

I shall attempt to illustrate this on the basis of an example – the game “occupying a chair”.

- ▶ Every child sits down on a chair somewhere in the room.
- ▶ One child (seeker) gets up and goes as far away from the chair as possible. Goal: to find an empty chair.
- ▶ The seeker can only walk at a slow speed, determined by the group leader, and can only increase this speed when instructed to do so.
- ▶ The group act as guardians with the aim of preventing the child from sitting down in a chair.
- ▶ The guardians are not allowed to talk with each other, but they can move across the room at a speed of their choosing.

During this game, it is important for both the guardians and the seeker to think strategically. The guardians have to communicate non-verbally in order to be able to guard the empty chairs. The seeking child must attempt to decipher these non-verbal signs in order to get hold of a chair. The guardians also have to work well as a group, so that the seeker’s task is not too easy. The game fosters perception, concentration and also empathy, i.e. abilities that present difficulties for people with autism. In all three groups, the participants loved the game, and the test persons also participated actively and successfully in accordance with the rules of the game. All test persons were able to cooperate with the other participants as guardians and to defend the chairs as part of the group.

This exercise has shown that we can be ambitious in planning interventions and should not assume from the outset what autistic people “are capable or incapable of”.

The findings of the study indicate that the increase in prosocial behaviour, the increase in prosocial interactions, the decrease in isolation, the increase in cognitive play, and the decrease in the frequency of object manipulation were all a result of the intervention (cf. Julius 2013).

Thus, the research group was able to prove, after analysing the data, that the inclusive theatre groups for adolescents with Asperger syndrome did not only encourage the integration of the test persons into their peer groups, but also strengthened social and communication skills (cf. Jahnke & Matthes 2013).

Conclusion

Icebreaker games give students as well as teachers an opportunity of getting to know each other in a playful encounter. Relaxation games and concentration games can positively influence the course of a lesson. Through these games and exercises, processes of group dynamics are stimulated and supported. Improvisation games and role play also make it possible to provide some variety in many school subjects. Games for closing can become rituals, and the time spent together in the classroom is evaluated together. Students learn to reflect on conflicts as well as on successes, to identify them and to consider different perspectives together.

Through the method of dramatic play, students are given the chance to see their fellow students and teachers in another light and to begin building relationships independently of situations in which academic performances are compared.

What is remarkable about the findings of the research project is that people with autism are absolutely capable of interacting with groups, influencing group processes and adapting to others. Strict categorizations often make it impossible to attempt simple steps, which is what this article aims to encourage.

For “encounters with others need a real space of possibilities in which they can occur; they should take place within living spaces and social structures where everyone can meet in a brotherly fashion; where everyone perceives and appreciates others with all their individual peculiarities; where they meet fully aware of their equal dignity and where intersubjective differences do not become causes for degrading, discriminatory practices and hierarchizing domination and subordination” (Wocken 2014, 30).³

We need pedagogues and schools that are ready to learn new methods and to apply them not solely in the context of dramatic performance. Play should also take on a more important role in teacher education, because “Performing Arts” is not only an artistic subject, it also encourages and promotes what humans need for optimal development – it helps to build relationships.

It is important to stress that role play only constitutes a part of dramatic play; the other exercises are also relevant. There is no need to found theatre groups in order to make these games/exercises work; we do not need a “subject on the timetable” or any education in theatre pedagogy. It is possible to integrate games and exercises from the field of theatre pedagogy into everyday school life, as long as the teacher is open-minded, enthusiastic about playing and motivated to thus encourage interpersonal relationships.

Collections of games (in German) may be found at:

www.till.ch

http://www.antonwelt.at/pdf_files/Darstellendes_Spiel_s.pdf

C. Osburg & A. S. Schütte (2015). *Inklusion in der Praxis. Theater und Darstellendes Spiel inklusiv*. Verlag an der Ruhr.

³ „die Begegnungen mit den Anderen brauchen reale Möglichkeitsräume, wo sie sich auch ereignen können; sie sollten in Lebensräumen und sozialen Strukturen stattfinden, wo alle sich im Geiste der Brüderlichkeit begegnen können; wo alle sich in ihrer jeweiligen individuellen Besonderheiten wahrnehmen und anerkennen, sich wertschätzend im Bewusstsein gleicher Würde begegnen und die intersubjektiven Differenzen nicht zum Anlass für entwertende, diskriminierende Praktiken und hierarchisierende Über- und Unterordnungen wird.“

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The Professionalization of Educational Assistants

The study program “Assistance for Children and Adolescents with Impairments in Childcare Facilities and in Schools” being offered in Upper Austria

Abstract

In Upper Austria (OÖ), there has been a long tradition of employing educational assistants in classes attended by pupils who have special educational needs. Already early on, the decision was also made to get assistants qualified. This article describes the intentions for a study program to equip assistants as well as the contents and the further development of this course of study.

Assistants did not need a specific education or training for their work while having come from a wide variety of prior professions. Long before the interest in professionalization and training of assistants became an issue in Austria and the German-speaking countries, a pilot study program for the training of assistants was already being offered in the province of Upper Austria (Austria). Between 2002 and 2005, as part of the European Community Initiative *EQUAL – the QSI (Quality Supported Skills for Integration)* project, uniform standards and curricula for the training of assistants were developed. After completion of the pilot study program, the province of Upper Austria, first the Social Department, and later the Office for Education and Society, took on the financing of the continued study programs being offered. The completion of the study program is voluntary, but in the meantime has been attended by nearly 700 assistants working at schools. The major employers clearly express their interest in employing trained assistants. The province of Upper Austria commissioned a study to find out more about the work situation from the point of view of the assistants (cf. Bacher, et al., 2007). On the basis of this study and based on the experience gained with the pilot study programs, the legal situation has also been standardized to better define the job description and activities of educational assistants in schools. Meanwhile, the interest in assistance (especially in inclusive schools) and its effects is also of interest for educational research. There are now also research findings, that clearly underline the need for the professionalization of assistants (e.g. Dworschak, 2012b; Heinrich & Lübeck, 2013; Lindmeier, et al., 2014a).

Since the need for professionalization has already been discussed in the other article, it will only be summarized briefly here.

1. Assistance must develop an independent professional image, which clearly differs from the profession of teacher. The vague boundaries between and the ambiguity of the areas of responsibility of the assistants and teachers not only make the professionalization of assistants more difficult, but also threaten to deprofessionalize teachers (cf. Lübeck & Heinrich, 2016). In some cases, assistants take over work areas for which only teachers have the necessary skills. In the course of the economization of education, it cannot be ruled out that assistants, because they receive a lower income, will partly replace teachers.
2. Roles, tasks and functions must be defined in relation to employers, to the school leadership and, in particular, to teacher responsibilities. Assistants are in an asymmetrical relationship to the teaching staff, and are hierarchically placed under them. Moreover, this also creates new coordination tasks for teachers, which have to be carried out.

3. The tasks of assistants have to be seen as educational tasks. They are complex and characterized as much by contradictions and paradoxes as the work of teachers. Therefore, assistants need to acquire the basics of special needs education and inclusive pedagogy, of didactics/methodology, of teamwork, of school organization, and of the relevant laws in order to have all the relevant information at hand so that it can be included in their planning and reflections on their actions.
4. Assistants can promote both the inclusion and the exclusion of students. In order to prevent negative effects it is necessary, as far as it is possible, to expand one's horizon, and to further develop one's own attitudes and beliefs, which should become the object of active exchange and lead to deeper knowledge of the system in which assistance is provided.

These points are part of the core aspects of the course of study that has been offered in Upper Austria since 2002, which has been undergoing continuous development. In the winter semester of 2016, the curriculum was changed, and a completely revised study program was offered for the first time. The University of Education Upper Austria has developed a curriculum in cooperation with the province of Upper Austria/Office of Education and Society, which has been approved by the Governing Board of the University. Thus, unique to Austria, the University of Education Upper Austria offers a study program for the qualification of educational assistants. The participants complete a course of study with 25 European Credits (25 ECTS equivalent to a workload of 625 actual hours). The graduates receive a certificate from the University of Education Upper Austria. For the first time, educational assistants are being trained in their area of expertise for all educational institutions, from the nursery to the completion of compulsory school, for school-supervised after-school care, and for after-school care that is not part of the regular school system. By this, there will hopefully be a standardized job description for "Assistants in Educational Institutions".

Organization of the Course of Study

The study program consists of 4 modules and lasts 4 semesters. The classes are scheduled as a block on Saturdays so that they can be attended while being employed. The participants do not need to meet any requirements to enter the study program and come from different professional fields, whereby applicants without educational qualifications are preferred for enrollment. The graduates of the course will be qualified for providing educational assistance in nursery, in kindergarten, in compulsory schools and occasionally in secondary schools, during school-supervised after-school care as well as during after-school care that is not provided by the school system. For this, they receive a sound, academically based qualification.

The Development of the Curriculum and the Study Program for Qualification are Steered by the Following Guiding Principles

a) The View of People and of Society

Disability occurs in cases where people are not or are not being sufficiently involved in their social environment and are thus hindered in their optimal development and in a wide-ranging participation in social and societal life. Thus, disability is not merely an individual, medical-biological category in the sense of a defect, but is in the first place much more the result of a stymied exchange between an individual and her/his social or personal environment.

b) Participation in Education

Access to education is also the key to accessing important sectors of society. The foundational principle that guides educational institutions is to ensure equitable access to educational assets for all children and adolescents, regardless of their gender, ethnicity and religion, social background, gifts and disabilities.

c) The term Integration and Inclusion

Even as inclusion is a socio-political goal and special services providing assistance are offered in integrative settings as well as (still) in specialized institutions, the qualification course aims to educate the participants according to the following principles.

- ▶ All people should have equal, independent access to all areas of life and education.
- ▶ The goal is the full participation of people with disabilities as well as socially disadvantaged people in social and societal life.
- ▶ This right is indivisible, a fundamental human right for all, regardless of the nature and severity of the disability.

For each step in the planning and decision-making process, the following questions are asked:

- ▶ Are the needs and opportunities of those affected being taken seriously?
- ▶ Do the planned programs and outcomes contain any discriminatory or alienating elements?
- ▶ How can contributions be made that promote independence?
- ▶ Are the planned programs and outcomes based on the basic principles of equal participation of all people?

d) Gender Sensitivity

All planned programs and outcomes are designed in such a way that they also contribute to promoting equality between women and men. Especially because the majority of the assistants are women, this is particularly important.

The Structure of the Study Program

The study program is thematically divided into the four following modules:

M1: Fundamentals 1: The Phenomenon of disability

M2: Fundamentals 2: Educational fundamentals

M3: Assistance in school and after-school care that is not supervised by schools

M4: Assistance in pre-school/nursery and in Kindergarten

Each module is completed with a related assignment. Furthermore, the participants finish the study course with a written assignment, that will also have to be presented. In terms of content, the paper should deal with a documented continuing professional development plan related to one's own professional field of employment and should be based on the principles of action research. The participants are part of regional peer groups in order to provide support for all assignment projects.

Qualification

The course intends to professionalize educational assistants employed in schools and working as support staff in childcare facilities.

Content of the Study Program

The course of study will focus on the following topics:

- ▶ motives, attitudes about the profession and towards people with disabilities,
- ▶ duties of educational institutions, especially their impact on inclusion,
- ▶ your own job/professional field, role and functions,

- ▶ the role in a heterogeneous teaching team,
- ▶ the interrelation and possible conflicts between “Inclusion and Special Education”, “Therapy and Education” as well as “Individual Support and Class Education”,
- ▶ methods of providing assistance in educational institutions,
- ▶ the exclusion risks and inclusion opportunities that might occur in educational assistance work.

Completion of the Study Program

The final examination consists of a written assignment about the continuing professional development of one’s own professional field of employment. The assignment will be presented to a board, with members selected from the staff and lecturers of the study program. The graduates receive a certificate from the University of Education Upper Austria.

The study by Bacher, et al. (2007), which has been the only study relating to the situation in Upper Austria, only inquired about the satisfaction of the graduates with the qualification program in a very general manner. Satisfaction was considered to be very high at the time. For a more detailed analysis, empirical data are not available, but we can refer to the course evaluations at this point.

On a consistent basis, the participants were very satisfied with the fact that

- ▶ they came together and had a quality exchange with each other;
- ▶ they learned how to relate their tasks to the responsibilities of the other school staff;
- ▶ they learned to analyze their implicit personal ideas about “helping” and the phenomenon of disability;
- ▶ they received methodological input relevant to their profession, and
- ▶ they realized that they have “a real job” in the course of the study program.

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Could You Please Explain What Educational Assistance is?

Searching for a professional definition of a highly desired resource.

Abstract

Educational assistance, in whichever form, seems to have arrived in compulsory schools, but has also become a scarce commodity. There are currently a great many different professional groups who offer assistance, with very diverse regulations, the most varied job descriptions, having quite different role assignments within the team of teachers, still facing uncertain remuneration conditions. Based on an example from the federal state of Upper Austria (Austria) and on current research findings, this article attempts to investigate the question to which extent assistants are already professionalized and why there is much to be said for professionalization.

Assisting staff play an essential role at schools. The assistance given does not only play a key role in Austria, but also in other German-speaking countries. Assistants¹ very often bridge the gap between the needs of individual students and what the mainstream school can currently do for them. They accompany children and adolescents often over many years and significantly influence their educational success or failure. Despite the key role, this kind of assistance has been surprisingly under-represented in research, in developing theory, and in the description of concepts. That seems to be changing now. This is indicated by at least a few research studies and publications (cf. Hoyer 2017). Despite different national and regional regulations, the first research findings indicate quite similar problems.

- a) The spectrum of people who work as assistants reflects a wide range of different prior occupations: people from other professions, including professional and social care workers in disability work as well as people with a pedagogical degree.
- b) Assistance is provided by newcomers making a career change, and who first have to be “trained”.
- c) There is a wealth of job descriptions, but no binding description of “professional assistance”.
- d) The employment situation of assistants is precarious and characterized by low salaries and insecure employment.
- e) The assisting activity is described in a variety of terms. Is it: assistance?, accompaniment?, helpers?, school accompaniment?, supporting force?
- f) Providing assistance for the school is not specified: Is it to provide mainly compensating or empowering assistance?
- g) In the organizational structure, the role of assistant is labeled as “non-teacher”, but nevertheless as part of a heterogeneous teaching staff, it is undefined.
- h) The allocation of assistance hours proves to be problematic. Assistance hours are assigned to individual students. This raises a number of questions: is the assistant responsible for the pupil?; how is her relationship to the classmates to be defined?; does she assist the teacher’s educational work? Assistance as well as special education as a whole face an underlying problem that is difficult to solve. It is called the resource labeling dilemma, which Füssel & Kretschmann (1993) already have postulated as a problem.

¹ Educational assistance (in Upper Austria) is mostly provided by women. Therefore, in this article, where appropriate, the female gender form is used.

This situation applies to Austria as well. There is no uniform way how and by whom assistance is to be provided in schools.

The province of Upper Austria certainly has a pioneering role in this regard, because assistance work has a long tradition, has been regulated by law with a compulsory job description, and has been offering the option of a qualification for assistants for about 15 years.

The following article therefore refers to the situation in Upper Austria and thus represents a specific situation.

In Upper Austria, the provincial government/Office for Education and Society is responsible for the assignment of school assistance. A manual for the deployment of assistants regulates their scope of activities. According to these regulations, assistants have to fulfill a variety of tasks. Under the guidance of teachers, they help pupils to integrate into the group/class, support individual learning, assist with educational tasks, share important information about and observations of students with teachers in the team and maintain the exchange with parents or other caregivers. The relationship between individual support and support for the entire class is specifically addressed by prescribing that the work of the assistant only serves the purpose of enabling individual pupils to participate in joint learning, to help them achieve the curriculum goals and to maximize their educational opportunities (cf. Land Upper Austria 2012, 15 ff.).

Thus Upper Austria offers a more differentiated picture of assistance:

- ▶ The job title has been standardized for the school system as “Assistance to Pupils with Special Needs in Daily School Life and in Educational Work”.
- ▶ There is a general legislation that regulates the assignment of assistants.
- ▶ Care and educational tasks are not differentiated. Teaching is a genuinely pedagogical event, which contradicts attempting to separate pedagogical and non-pedagogical aspects.
- ▶ The position of an assistant is ranked and defined in relationship to the teacher with the introductory sentence “Under the guidance of the teacher”.
- ▶ The description of the activities, in particular supporting integration into the group, indicates that assistants have a relationship to the classroom community as a whole and not just to the individual child.

The employment situation of assistants remains unsatisfactory even in Upper Austria. Despite all the efforts to formally regulate assistance in schools, to design catalogs with job descriptions, to describe roles and functions and to implement professionalization measures, assistance can by no means be described as a “profession”. It lacks a required course of study, specific professional and experiential expertise, its own professional language, an ethical code of conduct as well as a professional representative body, to name a few criteria. Nevertheless, pedagogical assistance does have aspects of a professional occupation. Furthermore, pedagogical assistance presents itself as a type of occupation whose particularities are to be implemented in precarious mediation services or in association with different, sometimes contradictory action requirements (cf. Helsper 2002).

In the following part, problems are described that do not only apply to the local (Upper) Austrian situation, but that also appear in a similar way on an international level, especially in German-speaking countries. By way of example, excerpts from and descriptions of development projects² written by participants enrolled in the continuing education

2 The examples are partly taken from: Prammer-Semmler, E. & Prammer, W. (2013): Pädagogische Assistenz im Spannungsfeld zwischen Assistenz und Anwaltschaft – am Beispiel der Pädagogischen Assistenz für Schülerinnen und Schüler mit besonderen Bedürfnissen im Schulalltag und in der pädagogischen Arbeit. In Feuser, G. & Maschke, T. (Hrsg.): Lehrerbildung auf dem Prüfstand. Welche Qualifikationen braucht die inklusive Schule? Gießen: psychosozial Verlag, 311–331.

program for further qualification, as well as examples from training situations are given. The examples have not been systematically chosen, but they give a good impression what assistants in Upper Austrian schools are dealing with. Without exception, the examples show the perspective of the assistants.

In spite of all the efforts, the structural embedding in schools has not taken place yet.

Assistants usually have several people they are responsible to. They are employed by a legal entity, are subordinate to the school leadership and are hierarchically placed under the teachers. Teachers thus take on an assignment and delegate tasks to the assistant. However, effective delegation requires more or less clear structures, clear job descriptions and standardized procedures. In addition, processes in the classroom cannot be structured down to the last detail and can only be planned to a limited extent. For all participants, this requires situational, qualified and reflected action. In order to master this situation well, time is needed for an exchange between assistant and teachers, to which the participants contribute from their respective roles and functions. Both teachers and assistants must be willing to do this. Moreover, it is done under precarious conditions of employment, as they usually do not get paid for the time spent on this coordination or only inadequately for a minimal part of it.

In the handbook of the province of Upper Austria (2017), tasks for the school management are described as follows:

In regards to providing assistance, the following points are to be observed:

- ▶ *The assistants are part of the school team.*
- ▶ *The school administration may invite assistants to conferences, staff meetings, and helper conferences related to the duties and activities of assistants. This is to be regulated within the framework of the coordination and organization time.*
- ▶ *Access to all information relevant to the assistance must be ensured; regarding sensitive content, the principle of trust (confidentiality) applies.*
- ▶ *Introduction of the assistants to the fellow teachers.*
- ▶ *Introduction to the practices and procedures of the school (School building, school grounds, leadership and staff, support concepts, ...).*
- ▶ *Corresponding workplace, access to a coat rack or locker, personal mailbox, computer access etc., as well as access to social and staff rooms of the school.*
- ▶ *Use of the infrastructure of the school for the purpose of carrying out the official duties.*
- ▶ *For the assistants, the school leadership is to be contacted for work-related issues (2017, 12).*

Nevertheless, assistants are received very differently in school teams as the following examples from assignments of graduates of the continuing education study programs illustrate.

One assistant titled her assignment as, "Where is My Place in School?". She talks about her first day, when she is not even noticed at the school. "I saw the teachers walking by in the hallway and also the headmaster. I just tried to draw attention to myself. I did not succeed. The door to the conference room was literally slammed in my face." The situation did not improve significantly either. For example, the assistant was given access to a coat rack in the children's wardrobe, not to mention having her own workstation.

In another assignment, the situation described is completely different. The assistant is introduced at the opening conference, and the headmistress explained the reason for her appointment, her responsibilities, and she introduced the other teachers to her that she would be working with.

Assistants as “non-teachers” are part of a more heterogeneous school staff

Especially in inclusive classes (but also in schools for children with special needs and increasingly also in elementary schools), several people are present in classes at the same time and become members of a heterogeneous teaching group. Besides the professionally trained classroom teachers and special education teachers, also assisting staff, as a professionally undefined group, are counted as part of this group. However, the entire heterogeneous teaching group is responsible for the development and the designing of the teaching lessons. For the cooperation of teachers, especially regular classroom teachers and special education teachers, research findings are already available that especially highlight the relevance of the cooperation. Since coordination between these two professions already proves to be difficult (e.g. Arndt & Wernig, 2013), it is only to be expected that the coordination difficulties in the team will become more difficult when people interact, between whom a massive qualification gap exists. This complicates communication as well as finding common goals. A positive example from a thesis underlines this:

“Motivation for Desiree” tells of a development project in which the assistant deals with the motivation of a student. In consultation with the class teacher, she introduces a treasure chest in which the girl, among other things, finds favorite recipes, stories or songs. The assistant assumes that these treasures can motivate the student to carry out necessary but not popular activities. The individual work with the student is also reflected in the cooperation with the whole class. The class teacher discusses the topic “motivation” repeatedly with the entire class and thus makes “Desiree” and the work of the assistant part of the general classroom activities.

On the other hand, there is a massive risk of separation and stigmatization if cooperation does not take place and the difficulties associated with support for an individual are not reflected and remedied.

When I started working, I hardly had a chance to get to know the entire class. As a rule, I was provided with worksheets and was working with Philipp somewhere outside the classroom. At least the special education teacher was interested how Philipp performed on these worksheets.

The roles and functions of the assistants are not defined.

Assistants assume a place in the team structure that is not yet a permanent position. If they focus too much on a single student in their assistive work, there is a risk that this student will be labeled as “different”, thus increasing the risk of exclusion for those affected. If the assistant takes on the task of teaching staff without having being involved in the conceptualization of the teaching program and curriculum, they lack the needed professionalization and will miss their core task. Teachers also find themselves in an unfamiliar role. On the one hand, the assistant ideally supports and facilitates the work in the classroom; on the other hand, the teachers are in an asymmetrical position towards the assistant, where they are expected to provide guidance to the assistants. In addition, the assistant can use her perspective to contribute observations and experiences that are valuable information and feedback for the responsible teachers.

“I’m part of the teaching team, of course,” an assistant says. She attends the teachers’ staff meeting once a week. “I explain how I experienced some situations with Kerstin.”

In the assignment paper of an assistant whose first language is Croatian, the situation is pictured quite differently. The immigrant experience and the multilingualism of the assistant are used as an opportunity at the school to entrust her with the support of a group

of non-native pupils learning the German language used in school. The assistant reports in the paper about her own internal conflicts. On the one hand, she knows that she is fulfilling tasks for which she is by no means responsible or has been trained to do; on the other hand, she enjoys the freedom and trust she receives.

What do assistants do?

Do they compensate or are they enabling?

The criticism of the Disabled People's Movement, that the adoption of the term assistance will lead to a dilution of the original concept as well as create ambiguity about the task and the activities of assistants in the original sense, does not seem to be unfounded. Assistants should help to realize the independence, self-realization, empowerment and participation of every person with and in society or, as the Independent Living Movement says, ensure that they have control over their own lives (cf. Langner, 2016, 14). With the adoption of the concept of assistance in school, there is a reclassification of independence in educational and teaching goals. According to this reclassification, assistance can compensate for participation impairment, for example by taking over support for a student. In the case of a motor impairment, a participation can be secured by providing personal or technical support. On the other hand, assistance can have an empowering character if, depending on the respective needs, it offers development-oriented, supportive help to enable the greatest possible educational opportunities for individual pupils in social integration. In individual cases, it is necessary to clarify which form of assistance is involved in order to be able to develop a suitable task profile. In the area of school education, however, these two areas can hardly be completely separated, as the following examples show.

An assistant describes her job in a New Middle School. She accompanies a student with a physical disability, who is schooled according to the curriculum based on school attendance. "I am responsible for being the extended arms and legs of Kerstin." She confers with the student and agrees with her personally which assistance is to be given. She has little to do with the teachers. She has more of a compensatory function, but in the context of school, it cannot be that clearly differentiated from an enabling function. She continues to describe in her assignment that she has to clarify problems, because some teaching processes are just too fast for Kerstin, although she partially unsuccessfully tries to slow them down. "Moritz and the Enclosed Spaces" is about the student Moritz, who finds it difficult to move from one place to another, to complete a task and to start a new one. Together with the teacher, the assistant designs action and orientation plans that should make it easier for the boy to adapt to new situations. The pupil loves it when doors of rooms where he is are closed, as they signal to him that he has arrived and can prepare for what is coming up.

... and once again: the "Resource Labeling Dilemma":

What does "empowerment" mean if the employment of the assistant per se is legitimized by the need of a pupil for support?

Assistants as well as special education teachers work in a slight conflict situation, with on the one hand trying to develop autonomy, independence and self-sufficiency in the students, while at the same time their professional function is defined by the students' need for support. For female assistants, this dilemma is threatening in two ways. They are, unlike teachers, existentially affected: if the mandate for special needs educational support is removed because their need for assistance no longer exists, the assistant may have lost their workplace. Besides, they were hired "to help". If "helping" does not become an essential part of the education and of the joint reflection in the team, it can easily lead to "serving", thus promoting the inability of a pupil while not leading to their independence and autonomy.

One assignment was titled "I do not want to hinder any more". In it, an assistant impressively describes a process in which she has gradually changed her initial "maternal care" so that she increasingly and responsibly allowed a pupil to regain her independence.

An assistant introduces an interesting topic about trying to motivate a student to "show her what he can". She describes the actions of the boy professionally, and tries to classify them on a developmental scale in order to get a better understanding. She offers him various activities that motivate him to participate. She can report on a positive outcome of her interventions. "I have learned that it is worth taking the necessary time. It was sometimes difficult for me not to intervene immediately. But then he would never have shown me what he was capable of."

Of course, there are also stories of teachers who are unsuccessfully trying to motivate assistants to take an empowering role rather than the compensatory role which is understood by them to be assistance.

Assistants also work under the same contradictions that generally characterize pedagogical fields.

Helsper (2001) names, among other contradictions, the relationship between closeness and distance. Professionals often appear in organized frameworks as distanced strangers and at the same time perform actions that are typical of close relationships (cf. 86). The distance is inscribed on the social construction of the school, however closeness results from the fact that pupils expect and address personal interaction from and with teachers. Although the distanced role is formally defined, assistants and teachers, as persons, are oriented towards biographical and real life backgrounds (ibid., cf., 86). What applies to teachers is even more relevant for assistants, since they mostly work in one-on-one situations with pupils. The more problematic a situation becomes when students, because of their difficult biographical background, exhibit a behavior that is extremely disruptive, the more difficult it becomes to maintain a professional role and the balance of closeness and distance. This can lead to border violation in children and adolescents and can sustainably destroy the trust in other people even more. Herz (cf., 2013) speaks of massively entangled relationships that can only be brought under control to a certain degree by a sufficient amount of potential and competent reflection so that larger long-term damage is prevented. Here is an example of a video-taped sequence:

In a school class at a special education school for support of social-emotional development, the following scene can be observed: An 8-year-old student sits on the lap of an assistant and cuddles close to her. From the personal history of the student, one knows that he has experienced violence in his own family, was abandoned by the mother and at the time of the video was already living with strangers. The assistant strokes the boy's back and speaks quietly with him. The boy visibly relaxes, clings closer to the assistant and you can hear him softly saying "Mommy". That seems to overwhelm the assistant. She takes the student and shoves him onto the empty chair next to him and turns away.

What was probably meant well by the assistant became a possible re-traumatization of the student: In a situation of intimacy and security, he is again "abandoned" and literally pushed away.

The "dual function" of school can bring assistants into loyalty conflicts.

School has to fulfill certain functions. Among other things, Fend (2006) mentions the ability to allocate, meaning that school has to fulfill the task of enabling students to have a successful educational career through the designation of status as well as placements, even though this can also have the opposite effect. School sees itself in the function of

enabling participation in society through good educational qualifications on the one hand, but at the same time also finds itself denying access as there are no provisions made for certain pupils in the school's systemic logic. If teachers are unaware of or deny the existence of this "logic", there is a danger that they will implicitly follow this logic and thus mix it conceptually with the educational mandate and economy as well as with their actions. If this is beyond the scope of reflection, in this conflicting situation, especially pupils with (developing) participation impairments are in great danger of being neglected in regards to their educational needs. As a rule, assistants will follow this implicit logic and align their expectations with the students within this framework. However, working directly with a student can also make assistants more sensitive to their needs and help identify learning barriers, while looking for potential solutions. If these observations and assessments are not picked up in the classroom team and lead to consequent adaptations of classroom teaching, the result can be that the assistant sits "between two chairs". On the one hand, she sees opportunities for the pupil to participate better and more effectively in learning processes, on the other hand she sees teachers who do not want or cannot create these alternative learning situations.

"Sitting between two chairs", is how an assistant describes her situation in a class. A student who she supports cannot understand the teacher's abundance of verbal assignments. After the assistant's request to speak more slowly and simpler has not been accepted by the teacher, the assistant becomes accustomed to reword the teacher's instructions and whisper them to the student. This generally creates restlessness in the class and causes the student to sometimes simply refuse to do the work. He is warned by the teacher to cooperate; otherwise he would have to do even simpler tasks with the assistant in front of the class. In these situations, the assistant describes that she does not know how to react: take sides with the student or follow the teacher's instructions?

Assistance from the pupil's perspective

So far, mostly the perspective of assistants has been presented. In Upper Austria, no data are available on how students with special needs and their classmates experience assistance. As this is an essential aspect, I will refer to the initial findings of two research projects that shed light on students' perspectives.

Böing & Köpfer (2017, 127-137) deal with assistance from the pupils' perspective who have been labeled as being in need of assistance. Their first results, which they collected by means of interviews with pupils of different ages as well as having different special educational needs, are summarized as follows:

- ▶ Support is first identified in the form of the assistant and not the teacher.
- ▶ Instructional tasks that have to be done within a certain time frame are, so to speak, the instructional norm among the interviewees. Under these conditions, support of the students is welcome if it contributes to fulfill these given and only partially modifiable assignments. It is not the support of learning, but the fulfillment of the assignments that for a certain period stands in the foreground.
- ▶ In conflict situations, assistants are really perceived as protection. This may be necessary in some cases, but at the same time it can preventively inhibit social contact or deny students support in building problem-solving strategies.

Based on group discussions with primary school students, Lindmeier & Ehrenberg (137 – 150) assess their perception of assistance and their expectations and ideas regarding their role and how they should interact with assistants. They conclude that classmates perceive aspects of assistance that are of high importance in peer interaction, but that may not be considered relevant from the point of view of adults.

- ▶ The child-related responsibility is perceived as incompatible with the claim to equality, combined with an experience of injustice and a lack of clarity about what the assistant is actually responsible for.
- ▶ Support of a child creates a special status that can promote envy and resentment, thus creating a disagreement and increasing social distance from classmates.
- ▶ A constant presence of assistants in interactive situations implies a sense of control for fellow students.
- ▶ Designing assistive interaction can facilitate social interaction but can at the same time make voluntary symmetrical interactions between children more difficult or may prevent them all together.

Assistance naturally depends on the quality of the (inclusive) lessons. If lessons are not adapted to the needs, assistants sometimes provide involuntary compensation services in order to provide the desired products together with the student. Pupils perceive assistance and evaluate their presence, function and role. Pupils seem to have a need to be informed, to be able to describe their impressions and fears, and to express something that “resonates” daily and influences their daily lives anyway.

How lessons are organized, whether conversational opportunities are offered, is hardly influenced by assistants. Social interactions are far more likely to provide creative opportunities. They can be creative, as long as one is aware of their role and influence, and can reflectively change their actions.

Assistants can have a positive as well as negative influence on the performance, participation and integration of the students. All the more important is an adequate definition of roles, ensuring good cooperation and having sufficient qualification in order to make the best possible use of the potential positive influence. Some of the issues mentioned require provincial-wide structural changes. However, many aspects can also be implemented at the regional level or even within individual schools.

Practical advice that individual schools and teachers can implement

1. The assistant is introduced to the student.
 - There has to be a joint meeting with the parents of the student.
 - The tasks of the assistant are presented.
 - Parents or representatives of the student as well as possibly the student express their ideas.
 - Frameworks and goals for support will be determined together with the teachers.
2. The assistant is introduced to the school team.
 - She is introduced by the management.
 - Her area of responsibility will be explained. Is her field of activity in a class?
 - Will she be working in several classes?
 - Which mode of action controls this task?
 - She gets the opportunity to visit different classes at the school.
 - She is assigned a workplace (desk, closet/shelf, ...).
3. Assistants are introduced to the students in the class(es).
 - The students are informed about the tasks of the assistant.
 - It will be clarified to what extent all students can ask for her support.
4. The parents of the classmates are informed by a letter or on the first parent/teacher evening.
5. The cooperation within the teacher team or teacher teams will be discussed. Basic value orientations, goals, assignments and responsibilities are clarified.
 - Roles and expectations of the different teachers (regular classroom teacher, subject teacher, special education teacher, educator ...) are clarified.

6. In the teacher team or teacher teams, it is agreed, when and how the assistant receives relevant information.
7. The time frame for the team meetings is agreed on. A weekly meeting makes sense. Regularity and definition of the contents enable efficient meetings that do not take too much time: What content is relevant for the assistant?
8. In particular, the basis of the individual learning plan and the objectives for the pupil to whom the assistant is assigned are discussed.
What wishes did the student express?
Where does she/he need support?
What can the student achieve alone anyway?
How would you realize that support is effective?
How is it ensured that the assistance does not exclude the student from the class community?
9. The cooperation with the parents is clarified. Which aspects of working with the parents are the responsibility of the assistant? When does the teacher have to be involved?
10. As an outward sign that assistants are accepted as part of a heterogeneous team, it should be ensured that the assistant is part of the yearly “teachers” photo.

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