

The Literacy Project at the Office for Teacher Training – an example of in-service teacher training (Germany)

The Hessian framework for literacy development

After the devastating PISA results in Hesse (27 % “students-at-risk” in reading competence) the Hessian government set a strategic aim in 2005 to considerably reduce the number of struggling readers. The Office for Teacher Training (Amt für Lehrerbildung, AfL) designed a Hessian-wide reading development programme to train teacher leaders for in-service teacher training.

This programme started in 2005 and is primarily committed to those students who need special support: students who are *struggling readers*, who have a *migration background*, who are *socially disadvantaged*, *mostly male*. In a second project phase (from 2008–10), the emphasis lies on reading in all subject areas and *reading at grammar school level* (= challenging average readers to improve their competence.)

International networks

To achieve the aims mentioned above, the AfL team used national and international networks in the field of adolescent literacy. International teacher training conferences with reading experts from Europe and the US were held in Hesse in 2003 and 2004. In 2003 an intensive cooperation with two American reading experts was started. Their programme, a best-practice model for adolescent literacy in all content areas, opened up a range of new perspectives for Hessian literacy projects.

The design of the innovative Hessian intervention programme

After intensive theoretical studies and personal training in this programme, the AfL team adapted this approach to the specific needs of the German educational system. They complemented it with diagnostic tools and based it on the expertise of 5 years of teacher training. The holistic and cross-curricular American approach to reading added valuable tools to the modular teacher training that contains diagnosis, reading strategies, reading motivation, reading in heterogeneous classrooms focusing on poor readers.

The Hessian teacher trainers were able to move away from deficit-orientated to resource-based teaching that centres round the often ignored strengths and expertise of the learners. Aiming simultaneously at the personal, social, cognitive, knowledge-building and metacognitive dimensions, it provided them with a whole toolbox for strategic and metacognitive reading and learning, facilitating higher comprehension skills and enhancing reading engagement.

In-service teacher training across the subject-areas

The programme was put to the test in grade 6 to 12 and was presented at many in-service teacher training sessions. Since 2005, teams of teacher leaders (130 colleagues) from all 15 school districts in Hesse have been qualified / 30 more are currently being qualified in this modular programme. They are not theoretically trained but go through an inquiry-based professional development. The 18-months training motivates them to investigate their own and their students' beliefs and ways of learning, it offers numerous opportunities for cooperation and common reflection and builds close links to their teaching practice. Based on this design, the AfL organising team tries to adapt their programmes to the results of recent studies in the efficacy of teacher training, such as those by Lipowsky (2004) and Wahl (2001).

Teacher leaders in the AfL-training document their learning processes in a learning portfolio and present their results at the end of their 1 ½ years training in so-called portfolio-talks. They receive a certificate on the basis of these instruments.

Before training their colleagues in schools, the teacher leaders implement their knowledge in their own classrooms in all subject areas. Since 2005 they have reached about 6,000 teachers in Hesse, training whole staffs, or teams of reading specialists or teacher leaders from the schools.

They counsel schools on their way to a reading concept that is now mandatory for all Hessian secondary schools.