C O P E
Member since 2019
JM14482

Angela Enders*
Rudolf Hitzler*
Christian Gößinger*

Current Challenges for Preschool Primary Education

Abstract

Challenges for elementary and primary education in many areas neither occur in isolation nor are limited to individual states but often represent themselves as area-wide and complex problem situations. The text discusses how to deal with a heterogeneous student body in elementary schools, which has been exacerbated by immigration in recent years. The focus of reflection is on individual, instructional, and organizational approaches to make educational processes as fruitful as possible for all children.

Keywords: elementary school, heterogeneity, language development, literacy education, individualized and adaptive instruction, new school entry level.

Aktualne wyzwania dla edukacji przedszkolnej i wczesnoszkolnej

Abstrakt

Wyzwania stojące przed edukacją przedszkolną i wczesnoszkolną w wielu obszarach nie występują samodzielnie, ani nie ograniczają się do indywidualnych stanów, ale często przedstawiane są jako złożone sytuacje problemowe występujące na wielu obszarach naraz. W artykule omówiono sposoby radzenia sobie z niejednorodną grupą uczniów w szkołach podstawowych, w sytuacji zaostrzonej w ostatnich latach za sprawą imigracji. Przedstawione w tekście rozważania skupiają się na indywidualnym, instruktażowym i organizacyjnym podejściu do tego, aby procesy edukacyjne były jak najbardziej owocne dla wszystkich dzieci.

* University of Regensburg, Germany.
Received: 23.03.2023; accepted: 24.04.2023.

https://doi.org/10.18778/2450-4491.17.03

Słowa kluczowe: szkoła podstawowa, niejednorodność, rozwój językowy, edukacja w zakresie umiejętności czytania i pisania, indywidualna i adaptacyjna instrukcja, nowy poziom wejścia do szkoły.

Problem Situation

In Germany, as in most industrialized nations, there is agreement that elementary educational processes should not begin with entry into school, but should start as early as preschool. Pre-school educational processes seem to be a guarantee for a successful educational career later on (Hellmich 2010: 59-61). For this reason, kindergarten in Germany, even if attendance is voluntary, sees itself not only as a place of care and education for children from 3 to 6 years of age, but above all as a place of early education. A visible sign of this understanding is provided by the framework concept for education in the preschool sector, which was jointly developed in 2004 by the Conference of Youth Ministers and Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, and from which the development of various education and upbringing plans followed in the individual German states as a consequence. The basic preschool domain-specific areas of learning in which children should be introduced at an early age include German, Mathematics and the Natural Sciences in particular – in addition to the acquisition of basic interdisciplinary skills (personal development, social learning) as well as skills from the aesthetical and musical field.

PISA 2000 has already shown that the above-mentioned domain-specific learning areas are not well developed among 15-year-old pupils in Germany. In the meantime, however, results such as those of the recently published new IQB study suggest that serious deficits are already evident in primary school years. This negative development was already apparent in 2016 and became even more impressive 5 years later (Stanat et al. 2022a: 271).

The "IQB-Bildungstrend" is an empirical school performance test that examines the achievement of the educational standards defined by the German Conference of Ministers of Education (KMK) for primary education in the subjects German and Mathematics. The "IQB Education Trend 2021" is the third test of this kind. It was conducted in the summer of 2021. A total of 26,844 pupils in the 4th grade from 1,464 schools were tested; the selection was based on random samples. In the subject German, the competency sub-areas "Reading", "Listening", and "Orthography" were examined; in Mathematics, the competency sub-areas "Numbers and Operations", "Space and Form", "Patterns and Structures", "Sizes and Measurement", and "Data, Frequency, and Probability" were examined. At the same time, the external learning conditions were also included in the study by interviewing teachers and parents. Since the study was carried out during the coronavirus pandemic, which had a massive impact on schooling in Germany, questions were also asked about distance learning.

Initial results of the study were published in July 2022. They caused considerable concern among both experts and the public. Compared to the tests from 2011 and 2016, a significant drop in performance was consistently measured, which can be summarized in one sentence: "In Germany as a whole, the mean scores achieved in 2021 are significantly lower in both subjects and all skill areas than in 2016" (Stanat et al. 2022b: 17). In addition to the coronavirus pandemic, three influencing factors were mentioned as an explanation for this drop in performance: gender, social and immigration-related disparities.

Gender-related disparities could be excluded as irrelevant. The social disparities, however, had significantly worsened compared to the 2017 survey. According to these findings, immigration-related disparities are of particular importance: "In all studied subjects and areas of competence, there are significant competence disadvantages for pupils from immigrant families in 2021." (Stanat et al. 2022a: 279)

At the same time, since the first survey in 2011, the proportion of pupils with an immigrant background has increased dramatically. It increased by 14 percentage points in the decade from 2011 to 2021. The share of children from immigrant families currently stands at 38 percent among fourth-graders (Stanat et al. 2022a.: 278).[1] Since the "Education Trend" tests were carried out in the summer of 2021, a current problem situation has not yet been identified: Due to the war in Ukraine, the immigration situation in German schools has again dramatically changed. However, there are no clear figures which would allow an allocation to individual types of schools or grade levels. According to data collected weekly by the German Conference of Ministers of Culture, 170,901 Ukrainian refugee children attended general education schools in Germany in December 2022. No precise information is available on the distribution by type of school and grade level. There are also no statistics on preschool attendance.[2]

Compared to the well-known situation in the schooling of children with a migrant background, there are still special problems among Ukrainian refugees, about which the teachers' associations have reported.[3] There is a high turnover, the children are often assigned to schools at very short notice and often leave them again quickly, depending on the individual situation of flight and life. Some of the children also take part in Ukrainian online lessons in addition to the German school lessons (Brücker 2022: 9f). The teachers' associations complain about the additional teacher

[1] These figures were collected during the test itself; according to the currently valid definition of the term "migration background" by the Federal Statistical Office, the family immigration history was only traced back to the parents' generation. If both parents were born in Germany, the children are recorded with the grouping characteristic "without immigration background." (Stanat et al. 2022a: 182) However, the IQB study no longer uses the terms "migration" and "migration background", but instead speaks of "immigration history".

[2] "In almost all families with school-age children, the children attend a school in Germany, a considerable proportion of children of kindergarten-age attend a kindergarten" (Brücker 2022: 14).

[3] In a survey of secondary school principals at the end of 2022, the German Philological Association surveyed the problematic situation with regard to the schooling of Ukrainian refugee children and young people at German secondary schools, with the result that 90 percent of schools have accepted Ukrainian pupils, but they are not equipped with sufficient personnel or material to enable an adequate education. (Deutscher Philologenverband 2022).

shortage, which is partly to be filled by Ukrainian teachers, who in turn have to learn German in order to be able to work together in the groups of colleagues.

The children, of course, do not have any knowledge of German, and their prospects of staying are also unclear, depending on the wishes of the parents – almost exclusively of their mothers. In current surveys, around 48 percent of respondents say they want to stay in Germany permanently or for a longer period (Brücker 2022: 5). Conversely, however, there is also a demand for the preservation of Ukrainian identity, which should not be affected by German school education, since the children would eventually return to their country of origin:

> It should therefore be possible to preserve Ukrainian identity and language, also against the background that many families want to return to their homeland as soon as possible (Ständige Wissenschaftliche Kommission der Kultusministerkonferenz 2022: 7).

Here, dilemmatic pedagogical constellations arise in the classrooms, which overstrain the traditional didactic concepts of a "pedagogy of diversity".

Speaking about pupils with a migrant background often gives the impression that they are a homogeneous group. De facto, however, this group of immigrants has always been very different, even among the so-called "guest worker generation". Nevertheless, immigration in 2015/16 and especially again in 2022 due to the influx of refugees from Ukraine are likely to present new challenges that can no longer be grasped solely by the notion of heterogeneous learning situations and interests. This has created a new situation in German classrooms, for which new didactic concepts must be developed.

Whereas the beginnings of immigration from the 1960s onwards were labor migration, i.e. controlled, planned and predictable immigration, with mostly a great willingness to integrate, albeit often a deficient knowledge of German on part of the immigrants, the problems are now much more diffuse and the challenges are less predictable: migrant children with high potential who learn German perfectly in a few years attend kindergarten and school; but also a not inconsiderable number of children, especially Turkish children, who live in the same country even though they or their parents were born in Germany – need German-promoting instruction in preschool age and further in school; children from non-literate cultures who first have to find access to writing and literacy; or also Ukrainian refugee children who often have high demands on education and prefer to be taught by Ukrainian teachers. In addition to these different ways of dealing with language and writing, various cultural and ethnic practices can make learning processes easier or more difficult, as well as traumas, which are too difficult for schools to treat.

Other "dimensions of heterogeneity" are also emerging in the current socio-political discussions, as "new groups repeatedly make their voices heard and demand their equal rights and recognition of their special forms of life" (Prengel 2007: 56). In particular, it is foreseeable that the LGBQIT and transgender discussion in primary schools may become pedagogically relevant in the short or long term

(Prengel 2007: 56), while the demand for the "inclusion" of disabled pupils, which was once clearly reinforced in the years around 2010, has clearly lost importance in both political and educational policy discussions.

Currently, however, migration is undoubtedly the biggest challenge for primary schools. One of the fundamental principles of modern primary school education is the postulate of a "pedagogy of diversity" – today often referred to as "diversity education" – which was explicitly shaped in view of the migration situation in German schools since the 1960s (Rehle, Thoma 2003: 67f). Diversity education responds to this situation by recognizing differences. Primary school should allow for "heterogeneity" and bring it "productively into play"; if "differences are consciously lived", according to this understanding, they contribute to "common learning" (Faust-Siehl 1996: 30).

The "pedagogy of diversity" responded to these challenges with the didactic demand for the "design of learning situations that involve differentiating and individualizing measures" (Rehle, Thoma 2003: 70). For these children with a wide range of entry requirements, primary schools must offer educational opportunities in order to continue preschool education processes and thus enable them to connect to systematic, school-based learning with entry into primary school. To achieve this, teaching-learning processes will have to be initiated at different levels – the individual, the teaching, and the structural. The IQB findings, with their observation of a continuous decline in performance, obviously closely related to the increasing heterogeneity caused by immigration in the last decade, raise the question of whether this concept is still viable.

If schools want to fulfill their educational mission and enable all children, including children with a migrant background, to succeed in their education, they will have to focus on their core task of imparting cultural techniques. Since language and written language are the medium to communicate and to acquire knowledge independently, special emphasis will have to be placed on the teaching of language and written language. "German as a language of everyday life and education is the key competence for integration" (Michlbauer, Mergele 2022: 33). This key statement of German education policy since the first Pisa study acquires increased importance in connection with the current migration situation. The acquisition of a so-called language of education, which is crucial for school success, can be achieved at pre-school level primarily through individual language support and literacy education.

Successful teaching and learning processes also require teaching that adapts to individual learning requirements, so-called adaptive teaching with high quality.

In order to counteract deficits that could increase with school enrolment, new models such as the "new school entry level" have also been envisaged. This model of the "Flexible School Entry Level" allows – as the name suggests – a stay of between one and three years and gives children with difficult learning conditions more time to acquire basic skills.

Support through language promotion and literacy education

The call for systematic language support for children with a low level of German language skills was recently formulated by the IQB Study 2021:

> A particular challenge remains in the area of language support. It must be systematically further developed to ensure that children who enter the education system with a low level of German language skills can successfully complete it (Stanat et al. 2022b: 32).

This demand for language promotion as early and continuous as possible is already old. As a result of the Pisa shock in 2000, all federal states in Germany had launched language support programs for pre-school education. These were language support programs with different accentuations: those that explicitly envisaged specific, often predetermined funding content in certain linguistic areas, or programs that implicitly sought to strengthen everyday communication and understood themselves more as situational-holistic. Often, the programs also followed both accentuations.

One language promotion program in the preschool sector, which also gained a certain degree of recognition in the aftermath of Pisa 2000, was the support program "Sag' mal was" in Baden-Württemberg. On the one hand, it was scientifically supervised (EVAS – Evaluation von Sprachförderung bei Vorschulkindern), on the other hand, a special language assessment (LiSe-DaZ) was developed to check its effectiveness, which also took into account the duration of contact of migrant children with German as a second language. The project, which was funded by the Baden-Württemberg Foundation (2005–2009), focused on the implementation of specific language support for preschool children aged 4–6 years, especially for migrant children. The children received a total of 120 hours of language support in kindergarten. The aim of the study was to verify the effectiveness of the language support provided, to identify best practice conditions, and to develop recommendations for effective language support.

However, the results of the study were sobering:

> After completion of the support measures, there were no differences in the language skills of children in need of support, regardless of whether they had been supported by one of the three specific support programs or "only" nonspecific support in day-to-day kindergarten. Both the specifically supported children and the children of a control group who were supported in day-to-day integration showed performance improvements over the period of support, but did not reach the level of those children without support in any of the studied language areas after completion of the measures (Dubowy, Gold 2014).

The lack of a compensatory effect of pre-school language support programs, here as elsewhere, has been associated with a number of uncertainties: for example, the ideal group size of only 4-6 children (as a guarantor of an appropriate proportion

of the language spoken by each child) was not respected, the necessary intensity of implementation was not given, the teachers lacked the necessary linguistic qualifications, or the support programs took place late, in the final year of kindergarten (Dubowy, Gold 2014). Thus, even if preschool language support programs stage language learning situations in a variety of ways, such as reading aloud and viewing picture books together, singing songs or speaking rhymes and verses, telling stories by children, but also carrying out explicit language learning games or exercises, the quality of the framework conditions is likely to determine success or failure. The preschool institution will have to offer the child the same linguistic stimuli provided by the parents in educational-oriented parents' homes. In everyday life, these are language stimulating situations that challenge children to communicate and playfully use language, a common focus on speech and language, or even an accompanying speech with corrective feedback, which is likely to be of great importance for children with a migrant background in getting closer to German as a second language. The kindergarten will have to make these key literacy experiences available to children who are far from education, in order to enable them to have access to writing and literacy at an early stage:

> *Literacy experiences* in the broadest sense include activities relating to writing, book, listening, visual and media cultures and thus contribute to children's early writing-related skills (Wildemann 2015: 97).

In addition to the quality of support, the factor "time in contact" with German as a second language will play a decisive role for children with a migrant background. In particular, consideration will have to be given to how it is possible to ensure that parents with a migrant background or parents who are far from education place their children in a preschool institution as early as possible. The earlier and more regularly educationally disadvantaged children attend kindergarten, provided the conditions are right, the more time there will be to initiate and develop educational processes that always rely on language. For example, we now know that it is not everyday language competence that determines school success, but a language that is described in linguistic research with conceptual writing or in the more recent pedagogical discussion with the term "language of education". Thus, children with a migrant background can build up good everyday language skills in the contemporary language German in two to three years; however, it takes five to seven years to develop an abstract school or educational language that requires cognitive-academic language skills (Achhammer 2016: 83). The acquisition of this language of education as a language close to the standard should, however, be initiated as early as possible, but at the latest when entering primary school, since educational success is defined by the presence of such a language of education. The register of the language of education as a conceptually written language has a cumulative effect on educational processes not least as a medium for knowledge transfer and as a tool of thought (Morek, Heller 2012: 70).

There are likely to be different approaches to how primary schools can respond to this challenge: on the one hand primary school children are becoming increasingly heterogeneous in terms of their linguistic abilities, but on the other hand, they have to meet societal demands for mastery of a complex language. Here, the suggestion of Fürstenau and Niedrig, who call on Bourdieu for the rules of language to be disclosed in school language lessons:

> Explicit language education would [...] reveal the linguistic norms of the legitimate language that are relevant in school, convey the corresponding forms of language expression and also practice them (Fürstenau, Niedrig 2011: 82).

And, last but not least, the equally trivial and central insight of language and all teaching research in general should apply: learning, especially the learning of language, takes time, and the primary school – and also the secondary schools – have to take that time in order for educational biographies to be successful.

Support by adaptive, open, good teaching!?

The demand to promote pupils with their very different learning conditions in school in such a way that as to achieve the most positive educational development possible is by no means new, even if this impression could arise given the intense debate on heterogeneity in recent times, which has been rekindled, in particular, by large numbers of immigrants. The debate also focuses on the question of how all learners derive the best benefit from teaching. Individual support is the key concept here, which is regularly found in very different contexts, in teacher education and training, in school laws, in the context of school development and inclusion, and which is regularly formulated by interest groups of parents and teachers (Fischer 2014: 97). Given its central importance and the claim to individual support in the classroom, it is surprising that this term is often hardly explained in detail, or that it is hardly possible to speak of a uniform understanding of the term (Dumont 2019: 251). This also applies in part to scientific discourse, even if there are different terms here (Dumont 2019: 253). This shortcoming partly affects the answer to the question of how such support should be properly implemented in the classroom. Here I follow the understanding of Klieme and Warwas, who understand by individual support any "educational action with consistent consideration of personal learning and educational requirements" (Klieme, Warwas 2011: 808). In the context of teaching implementation, they mention concepts of open teaching and adaptive teaching and refer to these two as "variants of a pedagogical understanding of individual support" (Klieme, Warwas 2011: 808).

Open education, the roots of which can be found, among other things, in reformed pedagogy, found its way into the debate on school education and primary education in the last third of the last century. In general terms, open teaching is a form

of teaching in which pupils work in a more self-organized and self-determined learning environment. The learners are actively involved in the learning process and have the opportunity to bring their individual interests and needs into the learning process. Bohl and Kucharz also stress the importance of self-determination opportunities for students as a constitutive feature of open instruction (Bohl, Kucharz 2010: 5ff). In the introductory chapter of their book, the authors also point out the complexity, elaborateness and inconsistent use of the term. For example, there are many dimensions of opening. As dimensions of openness, Peschel distinguishes between organizational (framework conditions such as place, time, social form), methodological (choices in learning methods), content (co-determination in content) and social or participatory openness (co-determination in various aspects such as planning or procedures) from teaching (Peschel 1995: 77). However, this understanding differs from concepts such as "open education" or "open learning" in the English-speaking world (Lewis 1986). In terms of empirical findings related to open education, there are many findings on effectiveness in the Anglo-American space (Dumont 2019: 260). Interestingly, open instruction with low teacher control has been shown to be less effective than instruction with high teacher control (Alfieri et al. 2011). On the other hand, open teaching with stronger teacher guidance combined with cognitive structuring often leads to better results than teacher-led instruction (Hardy et al. 2006). The prerequisite for the positive effects of open teaching is the presence of existing competences or corresponding prior knowledge in the pupils, which enable them to deal with the contents of the lessons themselves in a self-directed manner. However, since these prerequisites exist to very different degrees among learners – this is likely to apply in particular to children who come from other countries with a more teacher-centered teaching – a different degree of structure is also needed for learners (Lipowsky, Lotz 2015).

Hartinger has shown that open teaching can promote the learners' experience of self-determination (Hartinger 2005). However, this does not automatically mean that professional understanding is also promoted (Peterson 1980).

In addition to open teaching, adaptive teaching is also seen as a promising option when it comes to promoting pupils with different learning requirements. The term "adaptive teaching" first appeared in the Anglo-American world. The theoretical basis is the aptitude-treatment-interaction research (Cronbach, Snow 1977). Klieme and Warwas draw on Glaser's understanding of adaptive teaching (Glaser 1972: 6) and characterize it as

> […] a provision of different instructions and learning opportunities from which the teacher chooses the appropriate variant for the pupils. Unlike open teaching, very specific guidance is provided by the teacher (Klieme, Warwas 2019: 810).

The focus of such teaching is thus on learning opportunities that aim at a consistent orientation of the teaching to diagnosed individual learning requirements of the learners (Hertel 2014). Dumont points out that the learning requirements "result

not only from the prior knowledge and the current level of achievement, but also from learners' interests, personality, and a variety of other characteristics relevant to learning" (Dumont 2019: 255). Appropriate adjustments can be made at both the macro and micro levels. While macro adaptations focus on broader or longer-term adaptations such as the selection of methods, materials or social forms on the basis of diagnostics (e.g., performance assessments), micro adaptations, on the other hand, focus on short-term adaptations in the context of teacher-pupil interaction, such as individual feedback. The adaptions at the macro- and microlevel are related to each other insofar as the former is the prerequisite for the latter (Martschinke 2009: 16). Regardless of the teaching settings or treatments in which adaptive teaching is implemented, the decisive factor is always the extent to which it succeeds in adapting it to individual learning requirements. A look at empirical findings of adaptive teaching shows an unclear picture. Meta-analyses that examined the differences in cognitive ability associated with teaching that did not show the characteristics of internal differentiation show, for example, the best learning outcomes for low-achieving learners taught in heterogeneous classes of achievement. The same is true for pupils with an intermediate level of achievement, but in homogeneous learning groups. For learners with a high level of achievement, however, it does not matter whether the reference group is rated more homogeneous or heterogeneous (Kulik 1992; Lou et al. 1996). Individualizing and differentiating measures generally have little effect at first glance, but they vary depending on the group composition (Roßbach, Wellenreuther 2002). On the other hand, there is little controversy about the importance of teachers (Terhart 2006: 234).

An important aspect of adaptive teaching is therefore the question of the quality of teaching. To what extent can well-founded characteristics of "good teaching" be found in adaptive learning arrangements, for example? The fact that individual support is of central importance in Meyer's catalogue of characteristics of good teaching (Meyer 2004) and that the term also plays an important role in Helmke's teaching quality (Helmke 2009) already points to this connection. It is worth taking a closer look here. For if the learning requirements of pupils are to be adequately taken into account, whether in forms of open or adaptive teaching, both treatments, with all their different manifestations, must at the same time meet the requirements of so-called good teaching. Contemporary models of teaching research see teaching as an offering of learning opportunities (Helmke 2003; 2009). However, this does not automatically mean that they are effective by their mere existence. This only happens when there is a certain perception, use and processing by the learners (Lipowsky 2007: 26). These models also take into account conditions outside the classroom, e.g. on the part of learners (such as motivational and emotional factors), on the part of the teachers (such as their skills or competencies), or also the composition of the learning group (such as performance). Empirical evidence suggests that up to 30% of learning progress can be explained by group composition and teaching characteristics (Hattie 2003). This also means that it is important to establish or maintain continuity in the learning group, which is likely to be hampered by irregular migra-

tion in schools at the moment. Overall, it can be stated that there is an accepted set of characteristics that, regardless of subject or grade, describe good teaching. However, subject-specific and level-specific aspects could also play a role in the success of learners. Also noteworthy are the points of effective classroom management (Helmke, Hosenfeld, Schrader 2002), clear structuring of teaching (Meyer 2004), didactic competence of the teacher (Hattie 2003), cooperative learning (Slavin 1996; Johnson, Johnson 2002), exercises and repetitions (Helmke 2003), and class climate (Lipowsky 2007; Gruehn 2000). In addition to these characteristics, which apply irrespective of school level, subject and content, the subject-specific and didactic skills of teachers seem to be of particular importance when it comes to learner success (Hill, Rowan, Ball 2005). In particular, aspects such as cognitive activation, which aims to include students to reflect deeply on the content of the lessons, are also gaining importance in the context of the characteristics of good teaching. This also applies to the focus on content-related points and a high degree of content-related coherence. Both points guarantee a central structural element of good teaching. All in all, it turns out that when looking for empirically evident components of effective teaching, it is not helpful to think dichotomously about teaching concepts, such as open teaching or closed teaching, or student-centered versus teacher-centered teaching.

In the current situation of a great shortage of teachers, many states of Germany are trying to meet the demand by means a high proportion of so-called "lateral entrants" (lateral entrants are applicants who have completed their studies but have not completed a teaching training course; they are currently employed as teachers after short retraining programs). Above all, however, it will also have to be a matter of continuing to promote high quality in teacher education. This is because the heterogeneous student body needs more than ever an equally solid teaching body, in terms of professional and disciplinary homogeneity.

Supportive organizational measures in primary education

In order to respond to the heterogeneity of children in the transition from kindergarten to primary school, in addition to individualizing, teaching, organizational and structural measures in the field of education have been envisaged. In the past until today, scientifically supervised school experiments have made a significant contribution. Influenced by the discussion about the smoothest possible transition from elementary to primary education, most of the German federal states carried out model experiments for a two-year so-called integrated entry stage in order to ensure a successful start to school as early as the 1970s. This should compensate for the unequal learning conditions of school beginners. However, none of these models has been consolidated (Faust 2006: 2). Since the 1990s, there have been renewed structural reforms and school experiments for the transition from kindergarten to primary school. A central model here was the "New School Entry Stage". The primary objective of this New School Entry Stage was to:

> On the one hand, to enable equal opportunities with regard to the entry requirements of school beginners, and on the other hand, to counteract the postponement of children by means of appropriate new organizational forms of the organization of initial education (Hellmich 2010: 48).

Core elements of the so-called optimal model of the New School Entry Stage, which was propagated in 1993 by the Standing Conference of German Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (Götz 2014: 86), were and still are until today a more flexible period spent in the first and second years of schooling. Most children attend the entry stage in the usual two years. High-achieving children go through this stage of school in only one year, while low-achieving children or children with disabilities or language difficulties may stay for up to three years. The advantage of the flexible length of stay in this model is that a change of class is not necessary and a third additional school year is not counted towards compulsory schooling or counted as a repetition of a year. In addition, the New School Entry Stage in the Optimal Model is characterized by other elements: for example, the organizational and pedagogical summary of the first two years of primary school taking into account mixed-year learning, several enrolment dates per year, the cooperation of special primary and social pedagogical professions, as well as the renunciation of postponements while simultaneously admitting all compulsory school children – regardless of their respective learning requirements.

However, the optimal model has not always been implemented in all federal states with all its features. The model of the New School Entry Level (2010/2011) introduced in Bavaria under the name "Flexible Primary School" took only part of the characteristics of the optimal model into account. The flexible length of stay and the mix of years were adopted as central elements of the New School Entry Level, but the use of special teachers, for example, was dispensed with.

The foundation "Bildungspakt" (Stiftung Bildungspakt Bayern 2014) has clarified important elements of the Bavarian model in its publication. This includes the assessment of the individual learning situation using a computer-based method, appropriate support through individualized learning opportunities (such as the use of open tasks and cooperative methods), an educational partnership with parents, and individual learning and performance feedback (e.g. learning development interviews).

However, the New School Entry Level model is not per se successful. Rather, its success with the objective of supporting a heterogeneous student body in cognitive, linguistic, motivational and/or socio-emotional development depends essentially on the quality of teaching, special support services (e.g. for children with German as a second language), and a flexible handling of the model under changing social conditions.

Outlook

As studies and public media-discussions have shown, the German education system has been in crisis for some time now. On the one hand, there is a multitude of different prerequisites, needs and interests of learners, from kindergarten children to pupils, whom wants to cater as individually as possible; on the other hand, there is currently an extreme shortage of educators and teachers, which will hardly make it possible to carry out individualizing, adaptive teaching. The current persistence of immigration as well as an increasing birth rate are likely to an increase in the number of pupils. In the face of this reality, the intensive debates in school and educational research about professionalization and quality development, which have been conducted in recent years with the aim of improving educator and teacher training, are almost counteracted: in theory, very high demands persist on the professionalism of educators and teachers and on quality standards, in practice, which has to face reality anew every day, a different picture emerges: a decaying education system with poorly qualified personnel and poor framework conditions, which can no longer meet its own demands.

Bibliography

Achhammer B. (2016) *Pragmatische Fähigkeiten bei Mehrsprachigkeit – Steigbügel oder Stolperstein?* in: *Diagnose und Förderung von bildungsbenachteiligten Kindern im Schriftspracherwerb. Theorien, Konzeptionen und Methoden für den schriftsprachlichen Anfangsunterricht in der 1. und 2. Jahrgangsstufe der Grundschule*, E. Inckemann, R. Sigel (eds.), Bad Heilbrunn, Klinkhardt, pp. 75–88.

Alfieri L., Brooks P. J., Aldrich N. L. (2011) *Does Discovery-Based Instruction Enhance Learning?*, "Journal of Educational Psychology", no. 103, pp. 1–18, https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021017.

Bohl Th., Kucharz D. (2010) *Offener Unterricht heute. Konzeptionelle und didaktische Weiterentwicklung*, Weilheim – Basel, Belz.

Brücker H. (2022) *Geflüchtete aus der Ukraine in Deutschland. Flucht, Ankunft und Leben*, „IAB-Forschungsbericht", no. 4, [online:] https://doku.iab.de/forschungsbericht/2022/fb0422.pdf (access: 10.12.2022).

Cronbach L. L., Snow R. E. (1977) *Aptitudes and Instructional Methods: A Handbook for Research on Interactions*, New York, Irvington.

Deutscher Philologenverband (2022) *Befragung zum Umgang mit geflüchteten Schülerinnen und Schülern aus der Ukraine unter Schulleitungen an Gymnasien*, [online:] https://www.dphv.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/DPhV-BDK-Ergebnispraesentation_Umgang-mit--gefluechteten-SuS.pdf (access: 09.01.2023).

Dubowy M., Gold A. (2014) *Sprachförderung im Elementarbereich: Was – wann – wie fördern?* in: *Das Kita-Handbuch*, M. R. Textor, A. Bostelmann (eds.), [online:] https://www.kindergartenpaedagogik.de/fachartikel/kinder-mit-migrationshintergrund/2307/ (access: 09.01.2023).

Dumont H. (2019) *Neuer Schlauch für alten Wein? Eine konzeptuelle Betrachtung von individueller Förderung im Unterricht*, "Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft", no. 22, pp. 249–277, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11618-018-0840-0.

Faust G. (2006) *Zum Stand der Einschulung und der neuen Schuleingangsstufe in Deutschland*, "Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft", no. 9, pp. 328–247, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11618-006-0054-8.

Faust-Siehl G., Garlichs A., Ramseger J., Schwarz H., Warm U. (1996) *Die Zukunft beginnt in der Grundschule. Empfehlungen zur Neugestaltung der Primarstufe*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, Rowohlt-Verlag.

Fischer C. (2014), *Individuelle Förderung als schulische Herausforderung*, Berlin, Friedrich--Ebert-Stiftung.

Fürstenau S., Niedrig, H. (2011) *Die kultursoziologische Perspektive Pierre Bourdieus: Schule als sprachlicher Markt* in: *Migration und schulischer Wandel: Mehrsprachigkeit*, S. Fürstenau, M. Gomolla (eds.), Wiesbaden, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-92659-9.

Götz M. (2014) *Schuleingangsstufe* in: *Handbuch Grundschulpädagogik und Grundschuldidaktik*, W. Einsiedler, M. Götz, A. Hartinger, F. Heinzel, J. Kahlert, U. Sandfuchs (eds.), 4th. edition, Bad Heilbrunn, Klinkhardt, pp. 82–92.

Gruehn S. (2000) *Unterricht und schulisches Lernen*, Münster, Waxmann.

Hardy I., Ionen A., Möller K., Stern E. (2006) *Effects of Instructional Support within Constructivist Learning Environments for Elementary School Students' Understanding of "Floating and Sinking"*, "Journal of Educational Psychology", no. 98, pp. 307–326, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.98.2.307.

Hartinger A. (2005) *Verschiedene Formen der Öffnung von Unterricht und ihre Auswirkung auf das Selbstbestimmungsempfinden von Grundschulkindern*, "Zeitschrift für Pädagogik", no. 51, pp. 397–414.

Hattie J. (2003) *Teachers Make a Difference, What Is the Research Evidence?*, paper presented at the Building Teacher Quality: What does the Research Tell Us ACER Research Conference, Melbourne, [online:] http://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference_2003/4/ (access: 10.01.2023).

Hellmich F. (2010) *Einführung in den Anfangsunterricht*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, https://doi.org/10.17433/978-3-17-022864-1.

Helmke A. (2003) *Unterrichtsqualität – erfassen, bewerten, verbessern*, Seelze, Kallmeyer Verlag.

Helmke A. (2009) *Unterrichtsqualität und Lehrerprofessionalität. Diagnose, Evaluation und Verbesserung des Unterrichts*, Seelze, Kallmeyer Verlag.

Helmke A., Hosenfeld I., Schrader F.-W. (2002) *Unterricht, Mathematikleistung und Lernmotivation* in: *Die Studie MARKUS – Mathematik-Gesamterhebung Rheinland-Pfalz, Kompetenzen, Unterrichtsmerkmale, Schulkontext*, A. Helmke, R. S. Jäger (eds.), Landau, Verlag Empirische Pädagogik, pp. 413–480.

Hertel S. (2014) *Adaptive Lerngelegenheiten in der Grundschule: Merkmale, didaktisch-pädagogische Schwerpunktsetzungen und erforderliche Lehrerkompetenzen* in: *Individuelle Förderung und Lernen in der Gemeinschaf*, series: Jahrbuch Grundschulforschung, vol. 17, B. Kopp, S. Martschinke, M. Munser-Kiefer, M. Haider, E.-M. Kirschhock, G. Ranger, G. Renner (eds.), Wiesbaden, Springer VS, pp. 19–34, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-04479-4_2.

Hill H. C., Rowan B., Hall D. (2005) *Effects of the Teachers' Mathematical Knowledge for Teaching and Students' Achievement*, "American Educational Research Journal", vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 371–406, https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312042002371.

Johnson D. W., Johnson R. T. (2002) *Cooperative Learning Methods: A Meta-Analysis*, "Journal of Research in Education", vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 5–24.

Klieme E., Warwas J. (2011) *Konzepte der individuellen Förderung*, "Zeitschrift für Pädagogik", no. 57, pp. 805–818.

Kulik J. A. (1992) *An Analysis of the Research on Ability Grouping. Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. Research-Based Decision-Making Series*, University of Connecticut, National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented.

Lewis R. (1986) *What Is Open Learning?*, "Open Learning, The Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning", no. 1, pp. 5–10, https://doi.org/10.1080/0268051860010202.

Lipowsky F. (2007) *Was wissen wir über guten Unterricht?*, "Friedrich Jahresheft", no. 25, pp. 26–31.

Lipowsky F., Lotz M. (2015) *Ist Individualisierung der Königsweg zum Lernen? Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Theorien, Konzepten und empirischen Befunden* in: *Begabungen entwickeln und Kreativität fördern*, F. Mehldorn, F. Schulz, K. Schöppe (eds.), München, kopaed Verlag, pp. 155–219.

Lou Y., Abrami P. C., Spence J. C., Poulsen, C., Chambers, B, d'Apollonia, S. (1996) *Within-Class Grouping: A Meta-Analysis*, "Review of Educational Research", no. 66, pp. 423–458, https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543066004423.

Martschinke S. (2015) *Facetten adaptiven Unterrichts aus der Sicht der Unterrichtsforschung* in*: Lernprozessbegleitung und adaptives Lernen in der Grundschule*, series: Jahrbuch Grundschulforschung, no. 19, K. Liebers, B. Landwehr, A. Marquart, K. Schlotter (eds.), Wiesbaden, Springer VS, pp. 15–32, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-11346-9_2.

Meyer H. (2004) *Was ist guter Unterricht?*, Berlin, Cornelsen.

Michlbauer K., Mergele L. (2022) *Integrationsperspektive von ukrainischen Geflüchteten im deutschen Schulsystem*, "ifo Schnelldienst", no. 8, pp. 29–34.

Morek M., Heller V. (2012) *Bildungssprache – Kommunikative, epistemische, soziale und interaktive Aspekte ihres Gebrauchs*, "Zeitschrift für angewandte Linguistik", no. 57(1), pp. 67–101, https://doi.org/10.1515/zfal-2012-0011.

Peschel F. (2005) *Offener Unterricht. Idee, Realität, Perspektive und ein praxiserprobtes Konzept zur Diskussion,* Teil I*, Allgemeindidaktische Überlegungen,* Baltmannsweiler, Schneider Verlag Hohengehren.

Peterson P. L. (1980) *Open Versus Traditional Classroom*, "Evaluation in Education", no. 4, pp. 58–60, https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-765X(80)90017-8.

Prengel A. (2007) *Diversity Education – Grundlagen und Probleme der Pädagogik der Vielfalt* in: *Diversity Studies – Grundlagen und disziplinäre Ansätze*, G. Krell, B. Riedmüller, B. Sieben, D. Vinz (eds.), Frankfurt, Campus-Verlag, pp. 49–67.

Rehle C., Thoma P. (2003) *Einführung in grundschulpädagogisches Denken*, Donauwörth, Auer.

Roos J., Polotzek S., Schöler H. (2010) *EVAS – Evaluationsstudie zur Sprachförderung von Vorschulkindern: Abschlussbericht*, Heidelberg, Pädagogische Hochschule.

Roßbach H.-G., Wellenreuther M. (2002) *Empirische Forschungen zur Wirksamkeit von Methoden der Leistungsdifferenzierung in der Grundschule* in: *Heterogenität, Integration und Differenzierung in der Primarstufe*, F. Heinzel (ed.), Opladen, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften Wiesbaden, pp. 44–57, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-99542-1_4.

Slavin R. E. (1996) *Success for All*, Lisse, Swets & Zeitlinger.

Ständige Wissenschaftliche Kommission der Kultusministerkonferenz (SWK) (2022) *Stellungnahme zur Unterstützung geflüchteter ukrainischer Kinder und Jugendlicher – Integration*

in das Bildungssystem, Bonn, [online:] www.swk-bildung.org/veroeffentlichungen (access: 10.01.2023).

Stanat P., Schipolowski S., Schneider R., Sachse K. A., Weirich S., Henschel S. (eds.) (2022a) *IQB-Bildungstrend 2021. Kompetenzen in den Fächern Deutsch und Mathematik am Ende der 4. Jahrgangsstufe im dritten Ländervergleich,* Münster – New York, Waxmann, https://doi.org/10.31244/9783830996064.

Stanat P., Schipolowski S., Schneider R., Sachse K. A., Weirich S., Henschel S. (eds.) (2022b) *IQB--Bildungstrend 2021. Kompetenzen in den Fächern Deutsch und Mathematik am Ende der 4. Jahrgangsstufe im dritten Ländervergleich. Pressemappe*, Münster – New York, Waxmann, [online:] https://www.iqb.hu-berlin.de/bt/BT2021/Bericht/ (acces: 10.01.2023).

Stiftung Bildungspakt Bayern (2014) *Schulversuch Flexible Grundschule. Dokumentation. Ergebnisse. Empfehlungen für die Praxis*, [online:] https://www.km.bayern.de/epaper/flex_grundschule/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#1 (access: 14.01.2023).

Terhart E. (2006) *Kompetenzen von Grundschülerinnen und -lehrern. Kontext, Entwicklung, Beurteilung* in: *Grundschule in Entwicklung*, P. Hanke (ed.), Münster, Waxmann, pp. 233–248.

Wildemann A. (2015) *Heterogenität im Sprachlichen Anfangsunterricht. Von der Diagnose bis zur Unterrichtsgestaltung*, Seelze, Kallmeyer in Verbindung mit Klett.

About the Authors

Angela Enders, Prof. Dr. – Professor at the Chair of Education (Primary Education) at the University of Regensburg. Research interests: acquisition of written language (with special emphasis on difficult learning situations such as children with a migratory background or with hearing impairment), language promotion and elementary instruction and inclusion. Her habilitation thesis is entitled: *The Loss of Writing. Educational and Cultural-Theoretical Dimensions of Literacy Acquisition*, Berlin, LIT-Verlag 2007.

Rudolf Hitzler, Dr. – Academic Director at the Chair of Education (Primary Education) at the University of Regensburg. Research focus: childhood research. Further focal points of work: internationalization (e.g., school systems in Europe and worldwide), models of progressive education and factual teaching.

Christian Gößinger, Dr. – Elementary school teacher and currently seconded to the Chair of Education (Primary Education) at the University of Regensburg. Research focus: political and media education. Main areas of work: social sciences in factual education and methods.

Angela Enders – prof. dr, profesor w Katedrze Edukacji (edukacja podstawowa) na Uniwersytecie w Ratyzbonie. Zainteresowania badawcze: nauka języka pisanego (ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem trudnych sytuacji w nauce, np. dzieci ze środowisk migracyjnych lub z wadą słuchu), promocja języka oraz elementarne nauczanie i inkluzywność. Jej praca habilitacyjna nosi tytuł *The Loss of Writing. Educational and Cultural-Theoretical Dimensions of Literacy Acquisition*, Berlin, LIT-Verlag 2007.

Rudolf Hitzler – dr, dyrektor w Katedrze Edukacji (edukacja podstawowa) na Uniwersytecie w Ratyzbonie. Główny obszar badań: badania nad dzieciństwem. Dalsze główne punkty pracy: umiędzynarodowienie (np. systemy szkolne w Europie i na świecie), modele edukacji progresywnej i nauczania opartego na faktach.

Christian Gößinger – dr, nauczyciel szkoły podstawowej, obecnie oddelegowany do Katedry Edukacji (edukacja podstawowa) na Uniwersytecie w Ratyzbonie. Główny obszar badań: edukacja polityczna i medialna. Główne obszary pracy: nauki społeczne w edukacji faktograficznej i metodologia.

To cite this article

Enders A., Hitzler R., Gößinger Ch. (2023) *Current Challenges for Preschool Primary Education*, "Nauki o Wychowaniu. Studia Interdyscyplinarne", no. 2(17), pp. 29–45.

© by the author, licensee University of Lodz – Lodz University Press, Lodz, Poland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license CC BY 4.0