7

GERMANIC-SPEAKING COUNTRIES
Germany and Austria as examples

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A general overview: the German-speaking area

The geographical/political area in which German has historically been the first language (die Muttersprache/the mother tongue) encompasses the Federal Republic of Germany (Germany hereafter) with its 16 states (Laender); the Republic of Austria (Austria) with its nine states; and 17 cantons of the Swiss Federation in which German is the only official language, as well as three cantons where German and French are co-official languages. For reasons of brevity, Switzerland, as well as some other areas with small numbers of German speakers, such as the (Italian) region of Südtirol, the Grand Duchy of Liechtenstein, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and a small area of Belgium, are not included in this chapter. The chapter will focus on administrative, social, cultural and linguistic factors that have significant effects on early literacy.

Consequences of state responsibility for early literacy in Germany and Austria

The 16 ‘states’ of Germany have primary responsibility in the areas of education, science and Kultur (‘cultural sovereignty’). On the higher political level, there is considerable consensus about foundational cultural assumptions in education. These have significant consequences for early childhood education in reading and writing, as will be discussed further. These cultural commonalities are shared, to a large extent, by Austria, which also has a federal structure. Broadly speaking, the school systems in Germany and Austria are comparable, particularly so in curricula and aims for early childhood provision.

The effect of dialects

The range of dialects across and within Germany and Austria pose significant difficulties for speakers of many dialects when they become readers and writers of standard German. For example, speakers of dialects from the far south of Germany and those from its northern seaboard are not readily understood by each other. There is a phonological, lexical, idiomatic and morphological and syntactic ‘distance’ between many dialects and standard German,
which creates problems for many children coming to school learning to read, and more so learning to write, the standard language.

In addition, Germany and Austria have large populations of a non-German-language background. This includes children born in Germany or Austria to parents who have come from Turkey or South-Eastern Europe, as well as more recently large numbers of arrivals from various parts of the Middle East and North and Eastern Africa. Children (of all ages) come to school speaking neither the local dialect nor the standard language.

A cultural influence: the term ‘literacy’

The word and the concept ‘literacy’ have no cognate in German. Over the last three decades or so, the term has gradually come into use as a loanword, in academic discussions. Translations into German have been attempted (e.g. Literalität) and with the German terms Sprechsprache (speech) and Schriftsprache (writing). Compared to ‘literacy’, they orient intellectual, academic, cultural and above all pedagogic attention in quite different ways.

A second issue among German speakers concerns the still dominant ideas in education circles around ‘Bildung’, with its overtones of cultivation and improvement. Bildung differs in its deeper meaning from the goal-oriented training and even more from instruction. Over the last two decades – with the participation of Germany and Austria in the PISA surveys – the Humboldtian conception of education as a humanistic enterprise has been joined by the much more pragmatic notions of education as preparation for the needs of an economy. The two exist in a not fully reconciled or integrated relationship.

The ‘PISA-Schock’ and ‘literacy’

One factor directly plays into the tension between Bildung and training: the ‘PISA-Schock’, the metaphor describing the effects of the PISA results in 2000. The test showed unexpectedly low scores for reading among 15–16-year-old pupils. In particular, the test showed that children with a ‘migration background’ had worryingly low results, as did many children whose first language was German (Baumert et al., 2001; Haider and Reiter, 2001).

The results suggested the need for significant active intervention in the teaching and learning of reading and writing. This seemed particularly urgent for early childhood education (e.g. Roux, 2005; Stanzel-Tischler and Breit, 2009). In German-speaking cultures, the early childhood sector was traditionally identified with care rather than with education. The Schock – and access to international research (e.g. EPPE: Sylva et al., 2004) brought early years’ education into focus. It became recognized that socialization into reading (and writing) was not a matter that should be left to the start of formal schooling.

The Kindergarten (directly translated as children’s garden, itself a potent and telling metaphor) has since been nudged to become a site of education with targeted support (Förderung). It is currently recognized as the site where first steps in reading and writing and in the direction of formal, standard (and ultimately academic) language can be taken (e.g. Charlotte-Bühler-Institut, 2009, 2010; Kieferle et al., 2013; Tietze and Viernickel, 2016; Viernickel et al., 2015).

At the same time, the aftermath of the PISA-Schock raised questions about early childhood educators (e.g. Fröhlich-Gildhoff et al., 2014). How are they educated? What training have they had? Does their professional preparation enable them to work systematically, to plan, to be aware of and sensitive to the needs of the children they educate? Do they have knowledge about support structures and possibilities? Do they have the skills and competences for analysis, for diagnosis and, where necessary, for designed and targeted support in practices
and structures? And, importantly, what are their own practices and competences in relation to the language forms required for building knowledge and understanding?

Questions were asked about the extent to which the development of language in general could be seen as separate from the learning of reading and writing (e.g. Charlotte-Bühler-Institut, 2009, 2010; Jugendministerkonferenz and Kultusministerkonferenz, 2004). A whole set of issues needed new terms to replace what had previously been called ‘pre-cursor capacities’ (e.g. Österreichischer Buchklub der Jugend, 2007). General capacities that could act as a solid base for the learning of reading and writing were identified as targets of early years education (e.g. Tietze and Viernickel, 2016).

The German language: orthographic, semiotic and phonological matters and practices in reading (and writing)

English orthography is notoriously complex, given its history of successive waves of Germanic and Romance languages, overlaid by histories of layered borrowings and further complicated by the practices of distinct scribal traditions. That legacy – except for scribal traditions – does not apply to German writing and orthography. It has loanwords though these have not had an impact on the phonological ground rules and have not affected the orthography of German. As with English, however, the traditions of scribal schools have left confusing traces.

As a consequence, German orthography is relatively transparent (e.g. Nerius, 2007; Schründer-Lenzen, 2013). That is a great advantage to the German-speaking learner of writing and reading, whether native speakers or those coming from different language backgrounds and script systems.

Given the high number of immigrants who are native speakers of Arabic, it is important to mention writing direction. It affects not just written sequences but also how a page is to be read, even when it is largely covered by images. However, writing direction is becoming a matter of central importance for all children, as the reading practices associated with digital devices become increasingly normalized. Touchscreen devices, such as smartphones and tablets, provide access to text, which is not necessarily arranged in traditional lines nor necessarily read top to bottom. ‘Linearity’ is giving way to ‘modularity’ with its quite different spatial arrangements of elements, themselves largely modular in form (e.g. Kress, 2010). On these screens the left to right reading path is no longer the norm, whether in ordering and arrangement of elements or in engagement with them. This has effects on very young people currently emerging into early reading in all settings and in all reading formats (traditional pages or new screens).

Children who are used to digital devices, whether at home or in early childhood institutions, are developing a whole new set of practices and a lexicon to go with these – clicking, tapping, scrolling, sliding, touching, pressing – as means for activating the resources built into the device (e.g. Flewitt et al., 2015). The effects of such changes are difficult to assess; they may lead to an upheaval of conventional practices of writing and reading.

The relation between letters and sounds in German is not as predictable as in, for example, Spanish or Italian, but much more than in English. This means that a pedagogy (or, using the German term, didactics) using prediction as a hypothetical principle might be helpful, as a useful first try at word reading. It has a large effect on teaching reading – somewhat less so on writing – in German. A cautionary note: despite this relative transparency, orthography is an enormously contentious matter in German academic – and popular – debates.

The German version of the Roman alphabet has 30 letters, used to represent approximately 40 phonemes. The terms phoneme and grapheme (are intended to) indicate discrete and distinct
entities in speech and in writing respectively. Some phonemes are represented by single-letter graphemes, others by graphemes that include several letters; similarly, some letters are used to represent different phonemes, in different grapheme contexts. Both are used to describe sounds for which there is no letter correspondence or vice-versa, representing combinations of either sounds or letters. For example, in the German word ‘Schock’ – the English ‘shock’ – the word-initial fricative consonant, a single sound, is represented by three letters/graphemes: s, c, h. The word-final plosive consonant is represented by two letters/graphemes: c, k.

The Umlaut, as in ä, ö, ü, is also an effect of scribal conventions: in this case a ‘shorthand’ form of writing /ae/, /oe/ and /ue/, in which the letter /e/, in medieval script, looked like and could be readily reduced to two vertical lines, which in turn could become two small vertical lines – and then dots – above the vowel.

We cannot expect children learning the German script to know this orthographic history. Whatever their background, learners need to be given a helping didactic hand to make sense of these conventions. Nevertheless, it is the case that some script systems prove easier to deal with and learn than others.

Other issues produce difficulties, usually more for writing than for reading. German nouns should be written beginning with a capital letter, but not every five- or six-year-old will know what a noun is. This does not pose an immediate problem for reading. Dialect differences matter in different ways and to different degrees – and differently for writing and for reading. In some north German dialects /st/ is pronounced as /stein/; in the South it is pronounced as /schtein/. Again, this produces no problem for beginning readers, but it does for beginning writers.

By far the largest amount of evidence available to any learner of a language is everyday speech. It is the stuff children constantly attend to in order to form hypotheses about the language they are learning. Little or no attention is paid by speakers to segmenting their stream of speech into words. In fact, to do so would result in odd ways of speaking. Yet, it produces real problems for learners of writing. Readers, on the other hand, deal with materials where words are presented as discrete elements. This is the case in German as it is in all cultures using an alphabetic script – though differently in each case.

All this impacts on the pedagogic approaches to be taken: the demands of policy, as well as the degree of power exerted towards conformity. Teachers need to consider the guidelines and emphases developed from policies; they need to factor in the implied cultural and social expectations about young children as learners in these policies. This is further influenced by the degree of diversity that early years teachers of reading (and writing) face in their groups. Their didactic/pedagogic decisions depend on careful assessment of all these factors.

In Germany in 2015, the proportion of children speaking a language other than German at home was 17.5 per cent (in Berlin 29.6 per cent, in Bavaria 15.6 per cent, in Thuringia 3.0 per cent) in Kitas (Kita is the commonly used abbreviation for Kindertagesstätte or day-care centre in Germany) (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015a). In Austrian kindergartens, in 2014, 26.4 per cent of children had not German as their mother tongue. With 61.7 per cent this proportion in Vienna is by far the largest (Statistik Austria, 2016).

Early childhood education, and success in early literacy learning

This chapter focuses on children aged 3–6, i.e. children who attend the Kindergarten. In Austria, children’s attendance during the last year of kindergarten has been compulsory since 2008. In Germany, there is no obligation to attend kindergarten, but children reaching the
age of 3 have been entitled to go to the kindergarten since 1996. In 2014, 93 per cent of 3–6-year-olds attended a kindergarten in Germany (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2015b).

A somewhat indirect indication of the link and the significance of early literacy institutions and their work comes from the PIRLS (in Germany called IGLU) study: ‘Even though German Primary School students perform better in international comparisons than our 15 year-old students, the qualifications and capacities of the pre-school period and the work of the Primary School remain an educational policy of central importance – in particular with the aim of an “levelling-out” of social disparities’ (Bos et al., 2007: 46, emphasis added).

Two points are relevant here. First, there are clear even if somewhat implicit aims and criteria evident in the work of early childhood institutions. The capacities fostered and the work done in sites of early childhood education are recognized as of central importance by both policy-makers and teachers in secondary schools. Second, a constant concern in the work of the institutions of early childhood language teaching is the goal of a successful transition to the next stage of the educational structure, the primary school: ‘it has a function which is of outstanding relevance, particularly in the frame of the present overall architecture of the German school-system’ (ibid., emphasis added). The transition from kindergarten to primary school has been, and remains, a topic for discussion, given the relative instability in schooling in general, and the relation between preschool and primary school.

Some German states, for instance, have Bildungspläne (‘learning plans’) for children that cover the age span from nought until ten or even 15 years, to support children’s continuous learning and development (OECD, 2013: 123–125).

There are some key quantitatively based research studies that have evaluated the work concerning language education, including literacy, in early childhood institutions, the development of reading literacy, the implementation of educational programmes and related topics (see, for example, Pfost et al., 2013; Tietze et al., 2013; Viernickel et al., 2013). Children’s language levels are tested in most of the German and Austrian states (e.g. Berlin about 1.5, Bavaria about two years before starting school) to find out which children need specific support. However, there is a seemingly minimal emphasis in the policy-oriented documents on quantitatively based metrics for evaluation of work done in early childhood institutions. There are firm expectations about levels of competences in the work of early literacy learning and teaching, which are expected to be met at the point of transition to the first stage of formal schooling. These expectations are held by authorities in primary schools – with different measures applied in different states, all grappling with the issues.

In 2004, the State Ministers of Culture and Youth (Jugendministerkonferenz & Kultusministerkonferenz) in Germany devised a Joint Frame Agreed by the States for Early Years Education in Day-Centres. A similar document was issued in Austria in 2009, with the Cross-Federal Frame for Institutions of Early Years Education Educational Planning (Charlotte-Bühler-Institut, 2009), followed by An Outline for the Final Year in Elementary Educational Institutions. Detailed Explanations Concerning the Cross-Federal Frame (Charlotte-Bühler-Institut, 2010). The former was ‘An avowal [Bekenntnis/‘commitment’] agreed by the governments of all the Federal States, for an educational mission for this type of institution and for the educational career for all children’ (Charlotte-Bühler-Institut 2009: 1). The documents set out general expectations and guidelines for all early childhood settings in Germany and Austria.

So although the power for setting policy, curricula and other aspects resides with the states in both Germany and Austria, there has been a preference on the part of the states to share aims, at a relatively high level of generality. The congruence rests on deeper principles: broadly, the Humboldtian (humanistic) legacy.
Clearly, the decision to issue standardized early childhood guidelines has had effects in terms of recognizably shared goals, aims and policies, even though it does not reach down as far as the development and contents of specific curricula. This leaves differences in implementation at the classroom level. Above all, the ‘avowal’ was bound to have effects on the kind of metrics that might or could be employed in documenting success. Metrics exist, though they are based on distinct conceptions about education.

These policy documents provide the core of early years education in reading and writing – as well as some measures and metrics. The term Bildung strongly plays into this, in its aims, conceptions and effects. It offers a generous, holistic conception of humans that affects early years education, and shapes the understandings of what may be involved in early stages in the learning of reading and writing.

Over the last two decades – with the crucial participation by Germany and Austria in the PISA surveys – and given support by large scale surveys from Anglo-Saxon societies, e.g. EPPE ‘Effective Provision of Preschool Education’ (Sylva et al., 2004) – the underlying perspective is changing. A significant change in thinking and practice is taking place, as illustrated by this quote from the policy document An Outline for the Final Year in Elementary Educational Institutions (Charlotte-Bühler-Institut, 2010), issued by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Economy, Family and Youth. The document sets out language competences that are assumed to have been acquired by children at the point of their transition from early childhood education to primary school, broadly at the age of six. The document provides the basis for guidance, support and the documentation of the individual child’s processes of learning. . . . The first years of life have enormous significance for the learning processes of children . . . In a spirit of individual development, we can draw conclusions from this which are conducive to holistic learning across the various areas of education. The impulses . . . as well as longer-term interventions, take as their starting point the ideas and interests of the children themselves . . . considering their developmental steps, their abilities, and prepare for their future educational trajectory/career (Bildungslaufbahn) without assuming or specifying developmental norms or any ‘judgements’/‘assessments’ of competences.

(p. 7, emphasis added)

The document makes it clear that the module is not intended to be interpreted as a ‘predetermined catalogue of goals to be achieved or met. Nor does it constitute a compulsory requirement for a “syllabus” to be achieved, and to be met by each child at the same pace’ (ibid.).

At the same time, there is continuing pressure towards more specific guidelines. The policy statements from all the states in Germany and Austria make it clear what assumptions exist about capacities and competences of children at the end of the period they have spent in institutions of early literacy learning and link these to their transition to the primary school. These policy documents provide useful indicators both about the kinds of learning experiences during the period in early education and about the core expectations about children’s capacities at the end, as illustrated in this extract:

At the age of five most children have far-reaching and differentiated linguistic competences in their first language; in relation to the general outlines of the system of sounds of their language (phonology), grammar (syntax and morphology); lexis (both the range of their ‘lexicon’ and its meanings); as well as speech performance...
Germanic-speaking countries

In German the knowledge of grammar and syntax manifests itself in a largely correct positioning of verbs; in the ability to construct and use embedded sentences; in the use of the perfect tense; in the use of the ‘perfect form’ in telling a story, that is, in ‘narrating’; and in the use of ‘rich’ vocabulary.

(Charlotte-Bühler-Institut, 2010: 28)

As far as phonological awareness is concerned, for children at this stage (5- or 6-year-olds), the document places emphasis on a differentiated understanding of the language phonology. Phonological awareness is perceived as closely connected to later competence in reading and orthography and at this point refers to ‘care with formal aspects of sound as well as the capacity to make differentiations of phonological factors independently of the “content”/“meaning” of these units’ (ibid.: 27). This degree of children’s phonological awareness is made manifest in their ‘ability to recognize rhymes; the ability to segment words into syllables; and the ability to segment syllables into their constituent letters’ (ibid.).

The authors of the policy document assume that these abilities will be developed for most children in the literacy components in the final year of their early childhood education. This understanding draws on everyday linguistic experiences – it constitutes phonological awareness ‘in an extended sense’ (ibid.). By contrast, phonological awareness in a more narrow sense, such as the identification and comparison of single sounds, presupposes a conscious capacity for operations using formal linguistic categories (ibid.: 28).

Early literacy: ‘documentation’ and related issues

Currently, touchscreens are the most readily available way for documenting the everyday practice in early literacy education. In Germany, as in many other places, there is, however, a major issue of privacy, and the actual or latent fear of abusive intrusion, for lack of a better word, into the private domains and lives of those whose activities are documented. That itself is surrounded by often dauntingly demanding ethical requirements of obtaining permission for videoing or photographing children. In multicultural settings this is complicated by culturally differing attitudes to visual means of recording. This has led, so far, to a reluctance to use touchscreens for documenting early childhood practice (e.g. Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft, 2014).

In the absence of these means, more traditional and less intrusive methods continue: observations recorded in writing, by sketches or through interviews. In this context, the publication of a 115-page long Mein Sprachentagebuch (‘My language learning diary’; see Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft, 2012) represents an example of how educators document the educational development of children in a Kita. At the same time, the book can be taken as evidence for methods and content areas of literacy instruction in early childhood. It is accompanied by an extensive guide of 30 pages, with detailed information about materials to use for early childhood teachers (Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft, 2008).

In Berlin, for each child at the kindergarten this learning diary has to be filled in by the educational staff together with the child. Topics regarding literacy are phonological awareness, interaction with language, linguistic structures and first experiences with visual and verbal language (Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft, 2012). The latter comprises 22 indicators; for example, you like to select picture-books on your own; you know which stories you like; you ask questions in relation to a story; you retell a story, even without pictures; you understand symbols and pictograms; you recognize your written name;
you ask adults to write something down; you write letters; you dictate words or sentences for a picture you have drawn (ibid.: 9).

In the *Sprachlernstagebuch*, the section on linguistic structures begins with a brief account of language development, from single-word utterances to very complex sentence structures. It goes into quite extraordinary detail, which could be considered as important information for teachers, but also as a challenge for the children. Consider this one example: ‘in German sentences, the order of subject and predicate is changed in specific sentence types. The subject then follows the predicate. In formal terms this is called “inversion”’ (ibid.: 93). The explanation is followed by a very helpful hint to the teacher on how and why this is difficult for German learners whose first languages contain different grammatical structures. It also gives examples of the likely sentence constructions by such speakers. Such accounts provide insight into other languages and can – when shared with the children – become very insightful for all the children, including those of different (linguistic) backgrounds. As for assessment, the document states that ‘the differentiated observation of a child and the continuous use of the language learning diary enables the teacher to answer questions which arise about the child, without needing to subject the child to a “test situation”, to an examination’ (ibid.: 11).

The so far unresolved tensions in the overall vision of education within the German-speaking area is, by and large, reflected in the current policies and practices. The statement of aims and goals in terms of general capacities avoids a narrow conceptualization of success in relation to reading and writing. At the same time, the emphasis, for instance, on phonological awareness in analytic capacities – both in speech and writing – point to an unease about ignoring the seemingly more empirically objective and quantitatively graspable OECD view.

In a brief introduction for parents to the Berlin Educational Programme7 (the *Sprachlernstagebuch* is part of this programme) the authors write: ‘Adults make their experiences, knowledge, skills and abilities available to their children. They are curious to see what their children will do with them. They realize that children are capable of creating something new out of something old during this process’ (Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und Wissenschaft, 2004: 11, emphasis added). This formulation bestows agency and creativity to children’s regular everyday actions: very much a Humboldian rather than an OECD position.

What is the country’s educational policy in relation to multilingual literacy and language learning? Is there provision for children with special educational needs?

In all the political entities of the German-speaking area, there is a strong emphasis on the value of knowing several languages (if not necessarily the ‘literacy’ aspect of these languages). There is equally a strong emphasis on the children who are in the process of learning German as their second language, and the need to support these children.

As the document of the Austrian ministry of education states (a comment repeated in much the same form in documents from states in Germany):

The process of acquisition of German as a second language has high priority and is seen as of fundamental significance. There is an attempt on the part of all responsible partners to provide favourable conditions. Given these... many children are able – after about one year learning the second language – to begin to cope in relatively complex situations.

*(See Charlotte-Bühler-Institut, 2010: 28)*
For all young people in early childhood education settings it is assumed that they engage actively and continuously with several languages, which includes ‘regional dialects, languages of linguistic minorities, and foreign languages’ (ibid.). This concept suggests an interest in children’s metalinguistic competences.

**Provision for children with special educational needs**

The document about *Bildungsprozesse* (‘educational processes’; Charlotte-Bühler-Institut 2010: 6) pays attention to matters related to children with special educational needs. The question of ‘failing’ is here not such an issue as it is in educational systems and settings focused on explicitly stated goals. Matched with the resources of the *Sprachlemtagebuch*, and other means and the possibilities for recognition, including close attention paid to ‘care’, the *Bildungsprozesse* document is very much in alignment with the policy statements.

In Germany, there is, for instance, a programme with a ‘federal reach’ (2016–2019): the project *Sprach-Kitas* (‘Language Kitas’), which offers opportunities for assistance in kindergartens with a high proportion of children who need support for their language development. The three main topics of this programme are language learning integrated in ‘the everyday’, inclusive education and cooperation with the children’s families.

**Characteristics of early childhood education in German-speaking areas**

It is clear that the close control and narrow focus on highly specific/prescriptive goals and outcomes of some Anglophone curricula are not a feature of the educational thinking in Austria and Germany. It is essential to stress that teachers in German-speaking areas retain a high degree of professional autonomy and the philosophical/pedagogic orientation of some key policy documents encourages teachers’ autonomy in implementing it at the classroom level (e.g. Charlotte-Bühler-Institut 2010; Tietze and Viernickel, 2016). Such an orientation is further reflected in methods, materials, timings and pace of work. In the German-speaking areas, the legacy of attentiveness and ‘care’, and of the metaphor of the ‘children’s garden’ (the Kindergarten) are influential. By and large, funding is such that a relative wealth of materials are available, from the entirely traditional to the increasing presence of digital devices.

**Major challenges for current and future early literacy provision**

Funding is, without doubt, a key major issue, linked to other ‘deeper’ issues, including political, ideological and economic developments, which early childhood education is part of.

**Political, ideological and economic developments**

Education is a political matter par excellence. It deals quite directly with the matter of the immediate future, namely that of the next generation(s). Education policies reflect the aims of a society, and of the state that it supports. The current situation is that of uncertainty and insecurity. If there is no longer a strong sense of the need for a coherent society, then that will become evident in less attention paid to the importance of the school. This depends only in part on economic development, as explained next.
The cultural factor of the tussle between Humboldt and Neo-liberalism

The social, cultural and economic contestations that mark the present period in Western and Central Europe (and of course beyond) appear at the educational level in the German-speaking areas in terms of the opposing conceptions between the humanistic Humboldtian vision, and the economic and ideological vision of, say, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). What appears as a pedagogic issue in classrooms has its origins and causes in the world in which classrooms exist.

 Those who work in and are committed to early childhood education are not usually engaged in and with the world of ‘Politics’. Nevertheless, the values, the ways of being together, the respect shown and received, act as potent forces on those who are in these sites. They experience a way of being that might act as a model for them when they enter adulthood and can engage in the social world in ways that might bring those values into that world as an unremarkable model.

Development and funding of teachers’ education, resources for working with children, recognition of the teachers’ work

It is essential to attempt to produce the political – and with that the economic – climate to ensure that whatever vision we have of education, it is given conditions to succeed. Those who see the form of sociality that characterizes the sites and institutions of early childhood education and literacy as a vision that they fully endorse need to ensure that these institutions are fully integrated into their social environments; that those who work in them are recognized and properly rewarded financially for doing highly significant work for the society. That would demand education not just for the children, but for those who ensure the children’s education. This would happen through funding for (initial and further) education, for research into the work done in these sites, to produce useable knowledge, which can be transmitted to children, as well as to their parents and to the community more widely. An important issue where funding is concerned is that children need time for learning, and teachers need time for supporting children in their learning, for being able to design situations and processes of learning. For that, it would be necessary that teachers can work with small groups of children, which, in turn, implies the need for well-educated and highly motivated staff for sites of early childhood education: for real kindergardens.

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Notes

1 Abbreviation used in Germany: Kita (Kindertagesstätte).
3 ‘Gemeinsamer Rahmen der Länder für die frühe Bildung in Kindertageseinrichtungen.’
4 Bundesländerübergreifender Bildungsrahmenplan für elementare Bildungseinrichtungen in Österreich.’
5 ‘Modul für das letzte Jahr in elementaren Bildungseinrichtungen. Vertiefende Ausführungen zum bundesländerübergreifenden Bildungsrahmenplan.’
Germanic-speaking countries

6 Frames/programmes/guidelines of early education of the German states can be found at www.bildungs
7 ‘Berliner Bildungsprogramm für Kitas und Kindertagespflege’ (Senatsverwaltung für Bildung, Jugend und
Wissenschaft, 2014).
8 Combined, if necessary, with specific programmes of language development.

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