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Reading with friends and pleasure – opportunities and activities for reading promotion in Germany

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Abstract:

This paper gives an overview of successful approaches, methods and projects to promote reading in Germany.

Keywords:

PISA, reading skills, literacy programs, model of reading

Rezumat:

Lucrare oferă o prezentare generală a abordărilor, metodelor și proiectelor de succes pentru promovarea lecturii în Germania.

Cuvinte-cheie:

PISA, abilități de citire, programe de alfabetizare/literație, model de lectură.

To promote reading well, it takes the entire country!

1. Parts of opportunities to promote reading

Opportunities to promote reading can be assigned to various subcategories. The assignment supports in becoming aware of the main responsibilities. Illustration 1 lists the following subcategories:

a) *Socialisation in Reading:* Society and family have the main responsibility. School and friends are supportive.

b) *Motivation to read:* Family, peers, educational institutions have the main responsibility. All in all measures can be taken to improve the social

image of reading. Additionally educational work can be carried out.

c) *Promotion of reading skills*: Educational institutions have the main responsibility. School-based literacy instruction supports reading promotion. Elsewhere in this paper, methods of teaching reading literacy are presented.



Illustration 1 This categorization supports finding reading promotion resources.

2. Multilevel model of reading

In this part of paper, subskills of reading literacy will be presented. Reading competence contains a entire bundle of partial abilities, which are located on different levels. The competence model distinguishes reading process performance from components of personality as well as from the situational requirements of concrete reading-acts in each case.

Level of process	word and sentence identification local coherence global coherence superstructure identification
Level of subject	self-concept as a (non-)reader knowledge participation, empathy motivation reflection
Level of socialisation	connection communication family, school, peers, cultural life

Illustration 2 (Rosebrock, Nix 2008)

The Multilevel model of reading supports the classification of reading promotion activities. The *process performances* are mental activities, that have to be performed cognitively in the act of reading. They are mental acts that have to be performed during the reading process in order to reach text comprehension (Christmann 2010). Readers first have to identify words and sentences. With the identification of words and short sentence, reading is still on the linguistic surface at an isolated point in the text. To a certain extent this is also still valid for the *second level of performance* that need to be be during achieved the reading process, which is the establishment of small-scale connections between groups of words and individual sentences. The next step is the creation of content. For this purpose the individual pieces of information must need to be put together and conclusions have to be drawn from these connections of individual pieces of information. Before reading we build expectations about the content. As competent readers we don't just form assumptions about the content of the text but we also use our knowledge of text types. Cognitive psychology here speaks of superstructures on the reader side. The *third level* consists of the ability to talk about what we have read. The ability to reflect is also part of reading competence.

3. Methods to promote reading skills – It needs regular activities!

In Germany the school education of reading is traditionally closely linked to the humanistic educational tradition: Literary reading is understood as the prototypical core of all reading. The weight of literature instruction within native-language education is strong. Literature instruction aims at teaching students to perceive and interpret poetic features of texts, in particular to recognise the representational strategies of such texts. Such should enable social participation in literary culture and history.

Literature instruction should also promote the *joy of reading*. Good literature instruction can have a reading-promoting effect, as we know from reading socialization research, as well as promote reading motivation. However, literature instruction is not traditionally understood as the central field of reading promotion. Reading promotion should encourage people to read.

This includes book nights at school, which should motivate children to read more in their free time at home. Library visits should also be listed to make the children used to use libraries. Author readings are intended to motivate interest in a particular author, or book presentations by classmates. Animational projects are all primarily aiming at encouraging motivation. In a sense, reading gets advertised. Animating strategies thus does not train the reading process itself.

However the process of reading is not trained or supported by reading animations. Reading animation methods are relatively successful with students who have any basic problems at the process level.

The authors of the first PISA study criticize the fact that the dominant practice of reading promotion in Germany consists of reading animations. This means that reading promotion is not well adopted to the actual reading deficits of the students.

The PISA studies have identified the actual reading deficits at the process level. Many students are not able to perform basic process tasks. For example they aren't able to give explicitly information of the text. They are also unable to connect this information in terms of content.

PISA authors have therefore recommended the teaching of *reading strategies*. Reading strategies are mental actions used to get aware of what a passage or text means. They are used during reading. Three broad groups of reading strategies can be distinguished: Repetitive reading strategies, such as reading again or summarizing a passage after reading, are used to overcome local comprehension problems. Organizing reading strategies are used when important topics in the text are marked, passages are summarized, or the structure of the text is made explicitly clear. Finally elaborative reading strategies can be used to unfold particularly dense texts or sections, such as lexicon entries or lyrical texts, for example by formulating questions to the text or associating one's own experiences. In summary reading strategies are mental steps that are used for working through a text in a targeted and conscious way on one's own. They are primarily aimed at constructing the context of a text. The need to teach explicitly reading strategies has definitely arrived at German schools. Reading

strategy training is not aiming at basic reading skills either.

There are also methods of reading promotion that targeting at the basic requirements of reading: These are activities, in which the amount of reading is increased, so-called *frequent reading procedures*. Incentives are used to encourage children to read a book of their own choice over a longer period of time for example once a week. This needs to be monitored and rewarded (Bamberger 2000). In contrast to reading animations, reading is actually demanded in frequent reading programs. The quality of the texts to be read is not a central criterion. The idea behind is: The transition to autonomous reading should be ensured in late childhood. For this, it is necessary that reading becomes more effortless, that reading is fluent, so that decoding problems do not repeatedly disturb the concentration on the contextual relationships. In addition the enjoyable reading is to be consolidated thereby as a habit.

How can the basal automation of word and sentence recognition be promoted? The answer is simple: through practice. For weak readers it must be ensured that they actually read. So called *sound reading methods* have proven effects here. The students read aloud or half aloud and are accompanied by a good reading model. They also repeat the same short piece of text in order to incorporate the words into their visual vocabulary, to improve the sentence structures, to understand the content with certainty, and also to experience directly how quickly one can improve in reading if one practices (Rosebrock/Nix/Rieckmann/Gold 2011).

Reading promotion activities summarized:

- sound reading (silent, read to someone)
- frequently reading
- Fluency reading
- reading strategies
- reading of non-fictional texts
- literary reading
- reading animation (staging of literary culture)

4. Characteristics of effective literacy programs

In his instructive contribution to the anthology „Best Practices in Adolescent Literacy Instruction“ (2008), U.S. reading scientist David W. Moore presents key take aways from two decades of reading instruction practice in the United States regarding the development and nature of programs. By program, he means „a comprehensive school-wide curriculum-based master plan. Such plans relate to instruction throughout the school; they extend beyond remedial instruction as well as specific products or services purchased or applied in the school” (Moore 2008, p. 314). In my opinion his results can be applied to all reading promotion programs.

Characteristics at a glance

Goals and directions

All parts involved in a funding program should be aware of their goals:

- a) *Mission*: an overarching purpose of the program
- b) *clearly defined goals*: to accomplish this overarching mission. These should ideally be defined as „output“. It must be verifiable
- c) *standards of practice*: definition of quality standards
- d) *cycles*: of development, implementation and evaluation

Resources

Effective support programs require adequate resources in terms of materials, staff and time:

- a) *materials*: rooms, furniture, technology, but also different reading materials that appeal to the interests of readers and represent different levels of reading
- b) *staff*: well-trained teachers/readers and additional staff (volunteers). They are essential for success of programs
- c) *time*: time resources for all teachers training, for developing concepts and materials and for additional instruction time for reading

Professional Development Communities

The expertise of teaching staff is a central element of „good practice.“

Responsiveness to readers

Effective support programs address both: the cognitive abilities (keyword:

reading diagnostics!) and the social and emotional needs of the readers.

Teachers or other people should respond to the heterogeneity of readers by creating a positive reading climate and perceiving each individually as a reader.

Separate promotional activities are often necessary for second language learners and readers with reading and writing problems or disabilities.

Leadership structures

Leadership is essential for literacy program success.

„Administrators play absolutely crucial roles in developing literacy programs. Their primary role is to recognise and support reading professionals as they plan, implement, and develop effective reading instruction“ (ibd., 317).

Monitoring for Continuous Improvement

A central aspect of effective support programs is:

- a) a regular use of assessments to make decisions and improvements based on their results.
- b) a wide variety of information (through standardized tests, evaluation forms).

5. Examples for effective Programs

In the following two associations are presented that are particularly committed to promote reading in Germany.

5.1 Federal association for the promotion of reading

<https://www.bundesverband-lesefoerderung.de/startseite/>

Goals

- The association is committed to ensure quality in the teaching of reading, writing, literary and media skills.
- The association supports the exchange of opinions and experiences of all people involved in the field of reading promotion.
- The association cooperates with other organizations and institutions, promotes discussion as well as education and training.
- The association supports members bringing up their concerns as reading promoters to the public and to offer them services.

5.2 Reading foundation

<https://www.stiftunglesen.de/>

Activities:

- Nationwide reading day
- World Book Day
- Program: Reading Start 1,2,3 (Pediatrician)
- Book gifts at Happy Meal
- kindergarden: reading with APP, Book Reviews Recommendations
- Reading clubs
- Media labs
- Reading in refugee homes
- Support for volunteer

6. Summary

Successful reading promotion requires a number of measures. First it is important that the federal and local authorities be aware of its responsibility to promote reading. Reading promotion has to be evidence-based, which means that measures have to be scientifically evaluated. Reading promotion must also include possible resources and literacy models.

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