

DEVELOPING

EDUCATING

CARING

CHILD DAY CARE CENTRES OF THE CITY OF MANNHEIM

Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework was jointly developed in several writing workshops by the management of the facilities, by specialists and the district managers.

To all those participating, we express our heartfelt appreciation for the stimulating discussions and their commitment.

CHILD DAY CARE CENTRES OF THE CITY OF MANNHEIM

Conceptual Framework

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PREAMBLE

Educational justice and successful integrations are two of the big challenges which are confronting the educational system not only in Mannheim. By consolidating the areas of education, children, youth, family and health under one umbrella, the decisive structural and functional preconditions for the integrated planning for the education of children and youth were created. This allows for the implementation of an educational chain which accompanies a person's life. Here, the early childhood educational sector is the first building block of a successful developmental "biography" of children (see also 2nd Mannheimer Bildungsbericht).

The development and guarantee of quality always also means an adjustment to new insight from science and research, as formulated in the "Orientation Plan for early education in nursery schools and other child care centres in Baden-Wuerttemberg" (Version 15 March 2011). This conceptual framework is therefore guided by the Orientation Plan and, in addition, takes into consideration the specific conditions of the city of Mannheim.

It offers an overview of the responsibilities of early childhood development in municipal child day care centres and is designed to stimulate dialogue between children, parents, education professionals and an interested public.



MARIA WAGNER

Department of child care centres and day care centres

Youth Welfare Service Mannheim



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*I put my foot into air,
and the air carried me.*

HILDE DOMIN

INTRODUCTION

The conceptual framework of the child day care centres of the city of Mannheim arose from close co-operation between the management of the facilities, district management and special service for the municipal child day care centres. It is a continuation of the conceptual framework for education of January 2003.

It expresses the joint identity of the municipal child day care centres where the needs of the child are the main focus. To this purpose, the facilities can and must act in accordance with the respective needs and developmental stages and place the emphasis on individual development and do justice to all children.

This course makes diversity and vitality possible and affords an opportunity not to work according to a precast formula, but to keep placing the child into the centre of educative acting.

The conceptual framework offers orientation to all those who work in municipal child day care centres, but also allows enough individual creative leeway.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES

In terms of Section 22 of the Social Code VIII, the mission of child day care centres is to provide age-appropriate education, development and care of children, taking into consideration life circumstances, interests and needs as well as the ethnic origin of the child. Depending on the help needed, children with disabilities and those without are to be raised jointly in groups. Here the focus is on the social, emotional, physical and intellectual development of the child.

THE DAY CARE CENTRES THEREFORE UNDERTAKE

- to foster the development of the child to grow into an independent and socially competent personality
- to support the development and education of the child in the family
- to contribute to the better combination of work and family

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY ON THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL

In the joint “Framework of the counties for early education in child day care centres”¹ the standards for the profession and contents for the elementary level were formulated. These were duly accepted in the “Orientation plan for early education in nursery schools in Baden-Wuerttemberg”² (hereafter called the “Orientation plan”), which is a guideline for all municipal child day care centres.

The early childhood development is the central concern of the municipal child day care centres. For the nursery school levels, the City of Mannheim in co-operation with Bremen University developed the Education Initiative for Young Children (“BilKi”) specifically directed at nursery school teachers. BilKi supports specifically the development of infants and ensures the professional quality in nursery schools through supervision and the systematic qualification of educational staff.

On the preschool level, the professional educators use the tools of the “infans-Konzept der Frühpädagogik” (“infans” concept of early education). This embraces the systematic observation of the children, the reaction and response to their interests and topics and the preparation of educational and behavioural targets.

Educational justice and the combination of work and family are two of the main objectives of the City of Mannheim and are therefore of paramount importance to the municipal day care centres. Examples of this are the expansion of nursery school facilities and a reasonable offer of space in day care centres. Taking into account educational justice, the emphasis in the educational work was placed for instance on language education, early childhood development and the integration of children from different backgrounds and cultures. The Parent-Child Centres have low-threshold offers for families to experience early educational support.

¹ Resolution by the conference of the ministers of youth of 13 /14 05 2004 and the resolution of the conference of ministers of culture of 03 /04 06 2004

² Baden-Wuerttemberg Ministry of culture, youth and sport (Publ.)

OVERVIEW OF THE MUNICIPAL CARE SERVICES

The municipal day care centres provide care for children ranging from 8 weeks to 14 years. There is a range of offers and opening times (part time care / full time care):

■ NURSERY SCHOOL

Early childhood development in a day care facility for children between eight weeks and three years

■ PRE-SCHOOL

Education, development and care in a day care facility for children ranging from three years to school-going age

■ DAY CARE

Education, development and care of school children

■ “KINDERHAUS”

Facility combining a nursery school and pre-school or a nursery school, pre-school or day care facility under one roof

■ “ELTERN-KIND-ZENTRUM”

“Kinderhaus” with a contact point for parents and their children ranging from eight weeks to three years. The “Eltern-Kind-Zentrum” is an open offer for all parents in the suburb, where education professionals work closely with doctors, social workers, psychologists and staff of the contact point to provide early assistance.



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A child intrinsically needs three things:

Firstly: Tasks from which to grow.

Examples to orientate by

And communities in which it feels safe.

GERALD HÜTHER
IN THE FILM “KINDER” BY REINHARD KAHL

FOCUS ON THE CHILD

The following chapter gives an overview of the central topics which are relevant to education professionals and areas of responsibility which arise from this for educational institutions.

THE IMAGE OF THE CHILD

Children and childhood studies and brain research assume that every child from birth has a unique individuality and is much more competent than presumed to date. From their first days, children inventively, creatively and actively create an image of the world. They are inquisitive and take a high degree of initiative. Children approach their topics and interests in a spirit of research, discovery and adventure.

A child who may cultivate its chances of sentience and perception, will become more self-assured, deal with its environment more critically and use its acquired competencies to solve problems.

„If we approach a child with curiosity and openness, without reservation or prejudice, we give children a chance to create their own image of themselves and the world and without being restricted by our image. We also give ourselves the opportunity to experience surprises, a chance which was possibly blocked due to our restricted field of vision.” (Lill 2005, P. 32)

STANDING UP FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILDREN

“Children have the ability and the right to perceive, express themselves and to experience and develop their abilities and knowledge in their own way. They want to learn and have a right to topics that interest them and an enjoyable learning experience.” (Loris Malaguzzi)

Children need special protection for this and adults who stand up for them and their rights. On November 20 1989, the United Nations agreed on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This protects the rights of all children (from birth to the age of 18 years) to survival, protection, development and participation. 192 countries, amongst them Germany, undertook to recognise and realise these rights.

OVERVIEW OF THE MOST IMPORTANT RIGHTS OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

A child has

- The right to equality, independent of race, skin colour, sex, language, religion, political or other orientation, national, ethnic or social background, ability, disability, birth or other status of the child itself, its parents or its guardian.
- The right to a name and a nationality.
- The right to a healthy intellectual and physical development.
- The right to sufficient food and medical care.
- The right to love, understanding and care.
- The right to free schooling, play and recreation.
- The right to special care if it has a disability.
- The right to protection from cruelty, negligence and exploitation.
- The right to protection from persecution and an education in the spirit of universal fraternity and peace.

Educational institutions must stand up to scrutiny regarding the extent to which they contribute to the implementation of these basic rights of children, and to what extent they consider the wellbeing of the child as a priority over other interests (see Orientation Plan, version of 15 03 2011).

The education professionals in the facilities contribute actively to the implementation of these rights and monitor the daily routine in the child care centre accordingly.

STANDING UP FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Targets formulate the chosen direction of an educational institution and therefore reflect the attitude of the provider. These targets have been derived from a justification framework, which envisages societal structures and conditions of the present and future. In its critical study "Zukunftsfähigkeit", the Bundesjugendkuratorium compiled the following analysis for the society of the future:

[...] „THE SOCIETY OF THE FUTURE (WILL BE):

- a knowledge-based society [...], where intelligence, curiosity, the wish and ability to learn, problem solving and creativity will play an important role;
- a risk-based society [...], where the "biography" must be kept flexible, while the identity must be maintained;
- will remain a working society [...], which has not run out of work, but where increasingly high demands are made of people to remain a part of it;
- will (have to) remain a democratic society, where people take part in political discussions and express their opinion freely [...] and respect majority decisions;
- (must) be strengthened as a civil society, with multiple forms of participation, solidarity and co-operation of the citizens, irrespective of their origins;
- remain a society of immigrants [...], where people of different origins, religions, culture and tradition will have to be integrated, existing conflicts and prejudices overcome and forms of co-existence will have to be developed." (Bundesjugendkuratorium 2001, P. 2f)

Children need tools in order to find their way today and as an adult in this society and contribute actively to it. This can be achieved if children can experience challenges and feel secure at the same time. The Orientation Plan puts it as follows:

"the two most important general aims of education and development, on which social research, behavioural research and bio-scientific research agree, are: Autonomy, i. e. self-efficacy and self-determination and connectedness, i. e. bonding and belonging. These two aspects represent the most important basic needs and developmental tasks of man and are mutually dependent. " (See Orientation Plan, Version of 15 3 2011)

The child day care facility is a place where autonomy and belonging may be tried and experienced. The substantiation of these aims is individually formulated by the education professionals on the basis of the conditions of their facility. It is important that these aims are brought to a level of operation which the education professional can perform and supervise.

KEEPING IN MIND THE CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENT

The environment and the life situation of children and their families significantly affect the individual development of the child. By environment we do understand not only the familiar and socio-cultural environment of the child, but also how the child experiences and perceives its environment. Child day care facilities in our society form a considerable part of the children's environment. The experiences and encounters which the children have are the content and starting point of our educational conduct. The child is part of its family system, so we incorporate the whole family into the educational work. In so doing it is important to create a viable partnership with the parents and to make various contacts to neighbours and other institutions in the suburb. It is our aim to accompany and support the children so that they may develop competencies that enable them to act in a differentiated, self-determined and responsible manner in current and future life situations.

EDUCATING, DEVELOPING, CARING: CONCEPTS IN TRANSITION

EDUCATING means the support and accompaniment, stimulation and challenge of the developmental process through adults (See Orientation Plan, version 15 3 2011). It comprises the conscious creation of social relationships, interactions and spaces. Important social and cultural values, competencies and skills of our society are set as an example and passed on to the children.

DEVELOPING means the lifelong and self-activating processes of acquiring a picture of the world from birth. (See Orientation Plan, version 15 03 2011). Children are inquisitive, they want to learn and discover with all their senses. Developmental processes occur individually and in a differentiated manner, depending on the child's individual development level. This takes place alone and by the children and adults interacting jointly in specific life situations.

The **CARE** in day care facilities comprises the fulfilment of basic needs of children. These include: food, care, medical care, relationship bids, protection and a balance between movement and periods of rest. This takes place in a sensitive manner and in dialogue with the child. In doing this, the educators are challenged to deal reflectively with their own attitudes and behaviour. This also includes the critical reflection of power structures and their own role in these structures.

*Two dragons that
frighten a bear.*

PHILIPP (8 years)





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I believe that the greatest gift I can receive from somebody is to be seen, heard, understood and touched.

The greatest gift I can give is to see, hear, understand and touch that person.

When this happens, contact is created.

VIRGINIA SATIR

CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH

Our educational acting is guided by the latest scientific insight which is the basis for the continued ongoing development of our work.

ATTACHMENT RESEARCH

Children are inquisitive by nature and enjoy discovering their environment: They discover, communicate and look for tasks which allow them to grow. An important precondition for these significant developmental processes is the feeling of trust, security and protection. A child learns this trust through people to whom it has strong emotional ties – his attachment figures. They give the child the feeling of emotional security and help the child to regain its balance after aggravation.

Attachment does not occur automatically, it develops over time. During this process, the amount of sensitivity is important with which the adult reacts to the child's needs and signals. Usually, the parents are the most important attachment figures for their child. Children may also build up relationships with attachment quality to other people in their close environment. Every child needs attachment figures as a secure basis from which to explore the world and to whom it may return.

When joining a child care facility, children experience a significant transition into an initially unknown environment. They learn new rituals and get to know other children and the education professionals. In order to provide the best possible start, the child, with its need for security and protection, needs to be accompanied by a familiar person. We therefore structure these transitions jointly, usually with the parents, individually and sensitively. We affirm the parents as their children's experts and find out from them anything special we need to know about their child.

BRAIN RESEARCH AND LEARNING

Since brain research has been able to observe and reflect the changes in the brain taking place during the process of self-education, it has been of paramount importance to early childhood education. There are a multitude of nerve cells in the brain, which form connections before the birth, join up and continue to develop after birth. During that process these connections harden through repeated experience, leave traces on the neural network and continue to change throughout one's life. Good attachments and good relationships are essential for a good development of the brain – and thus for all learning processes. Children learn through interaction with others and the active involvement with the environment. This environment must be stimulating and challenging. In order to get actively involved with it, time and people are needed who accompany, support and facilitate the process. Learning processes in early childhood are most effective if they address the child's experiences and everyday life of the child and take into account its questions, concerns and interests.

In the child care centre the insights from brain research regarding learning are taken into consideration and implemented. It offers children space to experience and explore, where education professionals accompany, support and actively stimulate the various learning processes and experiences.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PEERS

There are numerous variations of age combinations in the municipal child day care facilities, because children need both relationships to peers and children of different age groups. The basic thought here is to offer children good chances for their development by enabling them to learn from and with each other. In the context of holistic learning different relationship structures facilitate diverse areas of experiences and discovery. Children learn particularly intensively and permanently when they deal with similar topics and interests. Developmentally and psychologically this occurs most frequently in peer groups.

The education professional is familiar with the importance of playing with peers for the personality development and will encourage children in this pursuit. In the interaction with peers, children develop their playing co-constructively to more complex forms. They learn to have discussions and to argue on a similar language level, take over operating strategies and to negotiate. Here they perceive the competition with each other as a positive challenge.

In co-operation, young children experience success and a positive self-efficacy. The children benefit from each other not only by imitating or leading the way, but also by same-level planning and creating. In our

facilities, peers can find each other and act out their interests and inclinations with age-specific materials in a prepared environment. Children learn to deal with peers and make friendships which will continue to accompany them.



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*It is not the task of education
to form the child,
but to allow it
to reveal itself.*

MARIA MONTESSORI

PRECONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

In order for child day care centres to fulfil their educational mandate regarding education, development and care optimally and in the interest of the child, there needs to be an interplay of various factors and pre-conditions which should complement and reinforce each other.

THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT AND DEPUTY MANAGEMENT

Management has the overall responsibility for the facility. It safeguards the educational and structural quality and is responsible for its continued development.

HERE MANAGEMENT FINDS ITSELF UNSURE HOW TO PRIORITISE THE CONFLICTING EXPECTATIONS OF

- the individual child and the whole group of children
- the child's family
- the staff of the facility and
- the provider.

ADDED TO THIS ARE PERSONAL EXPECTATIONS:

- I am professionally up to date.
- I can do justice to everything.
- I can challenge and support my colleagues.
- I can make a commitment and distance myself.

In order to do justice to all expectations, management must continuously mediate, position itself and remain able to act. This includes the understanding of management as having an executive function which requires professional, methodical and social competence. In addition, management needs scope for development, possibilities of ongoing training and the support of the provider.

The deputy management takes over organisational and administrative duties in consultation with the management and, in the absence of management, takes over its duties

THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL

“The youth or child care worker is not responsible for the distant future, but for today. “
(Janusz Korczak, aus Heinrichs et al 2005, P. 97)

Based on the far-reaching insights gained from brain research, a paradigm change is currently taking place in the field of early childhood education. Development is a construction process during which the child actively discovers its world. The education professional's role arising from this changes to that of an accompanying developer. Her tasks lie in the accompaniment, support, stimulation and challenge of the child's self-education process:

„By contrast to the children, she has an understanding of the things there are between heaven and earth. Children cannot initiate something that they do not know exists.” (Heinrichs et al 2005, P. 98)

Observations on which she and her team reflect form the basis of her educational strategy. The education professional does not perceive herself as an adult who knows everything and teaches the child, but as a partner, who shows trust in and solidarity with the child. She demonstrates that she is prepared to develop and learn further. Together with the children, she is both the enquirer and the explorer. The education professional works closely with the parents in the interest of the child. She contributes her point of view to the co-operation and respects that of the parents.

The interaction with other people is influenced by the own biographical experiences, standards and values and the basic attitude resulting from this. Any education professional is aware of his or her own attitude and reflects on it by herself and in the team. The educational work of the individual professional and the whole team is an object of regular reflections and is continuously developed further. Here, changes in society and their resulting new demands are taken into consideration.

CREATING EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Parents are experts for their child – education professionals are experts for the educational work in the nursery school, the pre-primary school and the day care centre.

It is in this spirit that both sides work closely together, because the parents are the first and most important attachment figures for the child, who is being strengthened in its development if it feels that parents and education professionals support each other when jointly solving problems.

Engaging in discussion with the parents means to the staff that they will respect and discuss different points of view and perspectives and then to find mutually acceptable solutions together. In this way, both parties are actively involved and create connections between the educational worlds of the families and the day care facility. The basic attitude is characterised by mutual appreciation of each other's educational ideas and work.

In the discussions, the education professionals offer the parents information on educational questions and, if necessary, refer them to the relevant institutions.

In addition, the child day care centres provide a protected environment where the parents may have contact with each other to exchange their ideas and questions and contribute their skills and know-how.

In summary, it is the task of the day care facilities to develop practical forms of co-operation together with the parents so that the expectations and wishes of the parents can be incorporated in the decision finding processes of the facilities and the provider.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SPACE AND MATERIAL

“As soon as we understand the child as the protagonist of its own development, we require generous space concepts, which are not adjustment-orientated, but challenge particularly personal forms of acquisition and self-determination. It is obvious that, on the basis of such a concept, we promote the opening up of breakout rooms. Because children want to learn everywhere, preferably in active dialogue with their peers and without the well-meant instruction and supervision by adults.” (Lange, Stadelmann 1999, P. 8f)

The design of the space and the material on offer therefore have a direct effect on the specific activities of the children. They are invited to move, to withdraw, to explore together, experiment or observe. In this way, children can discover something new or experience something familiar from a different angle.

The rooms in the day care facilities are therefore also places of indirect education, workshops, where children can discover and learn and where they find the necessary materials and tools (See Sommer 1999, P. 17).

When designing the room, the education professional has the important task of (re)creating the prepared environment, of choosing the materials on offer together with the children and to put them in order and sort them. She supports the children in their efforts to understand the predetermined structural order of the room, for example through symbols, labelling or her own handling of the materials. In order to support these processes, the education professionals intentionally organise the room and the materials on offer on the basis of their observations and incorporate the children into this organisational process.

In this process, the specific needs of all age groups are taken into consideration.

UNDERSTANDING THE DAY CARE CENTRE AS A LEARNING ORGANISATION

Because of the changes in society and the further development necessarily arising from this in the elementary education field, educational institutions, a priori, need to be understood and conceptualised as a learning organisation.

In a learning organisation the participants review their actions and the achieved results. This creates ideas for change. These are transformed into organisational structures, processes and actions to be taken.

The ability to understand the need for change and the competence for strategy implementation go hand in hand.

Based on the continuous reflection on the conditions and experiences of the educational work, the educational offers, work and organisational structures get adjusted. The provider does not only allow this adjustment, but supports it actively and claims these processes. In order for child day care centres to become a learning organisation there needs to be a culture of being prepared to change and a management who lives this culture and stimulates constant ongoing development. As this process often includes a feeling of insecurity and raises new questions, the education professionals require support and assistance. We achieve this through transparency and jointly created objectives as well as agreement on the implementation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

The City of Mannheim places great value on the quality assurance and quality development of the child day care centres. In this, it is guided by the guidelines of the Orientation Plan for Baden-Wuerttemberg. The focus is on the following areas:

EDUCATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL QUALITY DEVELOPMENT:

- Reflection on and documentation of educational offers and projects.
- Use of a comprehensive internal continued education programme.
- Consultation and assistance to management through professional advice and support of the team with the aid of team seminars and team support.
- Routine conferences.
- Obligatory priorities for the facilities for the orientation and planning of the educational work.

ASSURING QUALITY DEVELOPMENT:

- Written documentation of the planning and execution of processes.
- Routine ongoing development of structured offers.
- Transparency and access to agreements by all role players.

QUALIFICATION OF THE EXECUTIVE AND STAFF:

- Conceptual framework developed by the management of all facilities.
- Need-based structured educational offers.
- Courses for the preparation of education professionals for management positions.
- Quality assurance in the municipal day care facilities through the professional service of quality assurance and quality development.



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*If you want to walk quickly,
walk alone.*

*If you want to walk far,
walk with others.*

AFRICAN PROVERB

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

In our day care centres we refer to a variety of educational standards which guarantee both the high-quality care of our facilities and accompany, support and protect each child on its growing up journey.

CREATING TRANSITIONS

Every child experiences all kinds of transitions and needs to deal with them:

for instance, from its parental home to the day care facility and back, from a small group to a bigger group, from the nursery school to the pre-school, from the pre-school to the school and from the day care centre into increasing independence. For this, each child needs its own competence, time, rituals and attentive caregivers. In a child's life, the positive experience of transitions contributes to the fact that later in life it can positively handle further transition experiences.

Here, the education professionals in the day care centres have the important task of ensuring that these transitions are successful, by building bridges for the children to cross over and feel secure.

The respective requirements of the children must correspond to their age and developmental stage.

The transition from the family to the child day care centre (nursery school, pre-school, day care centre) affects the whole family, because the parents and children jointly enter new territory. In the settling in process it is important that all role players create support in such a way that trust can be built up from both sides. During this process the child needs assistance and guidance by a familiar person. If the assistance is successful, the child will feel protected, secure and accepted. On such a basis it can explore the new environment with joy, curiosity and interest and build up contact to other children and the education professionals.

The entrance phase of a child needs careful, organisational and professional preparation. This is taken into consideration in the municipal facilities and, based on the Berlin “Eingewöhnungsmodell” (entry phase model), together with the parents, an individual entry phase for the child is created. This model comprises a step-by-step integration of children and parents into the facility’s daily life and the building up of new attachments.

FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUALITY OF THE CHILD

Keeping each individual child with its needs and interests, its individual circumstances and the stage of its development in focus and under continued observation forms the basis of our education work.

It is our aim to support the child unfolding its personality and the development of its feeling of self-confidence. During this process, we particularly take into consideration the child’s relative life situation by detecting and purposefully reacting to its individual competence and resources as well as possible needs (for support).

This takes place by observing and documenting the child’s development and routinely exchanging information with the parents and in co-operation with other professional services – and always with the objective to offer to the child motivation in accordance with its mental and intellectual development.

The individual care of a child and its family starts with its entry into the child day care centre. We give the space and time to get to know each other well and, in so doing, lay the foundation for a good relationship with the child and a good educational partnership with the parents.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

„The child grows into the understanding of the linguistic community and so begins to understand itself.” (Friedrich Georg Jünger, German lyricist, novelist and critical essayist of culture, 1898 – 1977)

Language (verbal, non verbal, mimicry), the ability to articulate oneself via tools, is the key to our society and culture. It is important to every human being and therefore to every child. Language facilitates the conveying of directions, stimuli and knowledge, we express our desires, needs, emotions and ideas, acquire knowledge of other people, their culture, standards and values. It facilitates both the handing-down of culture and the development of new, unknown knowledge and deeds.

Language is everywhere and surrounds us as soon as we are in contact with others; in personal contacts amongst friends and in the family, as well as in the day care facilities, schools and at work. Therefore language, both in the verbal and later the written form, is an essential key to the interaction with others and also to the educational success of the children in our society.

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION:

We understand language acquisition to be the automatic acquisition of language in the interaction with the world and with other people. Only in the exchange with others who listen and communicate by speech, language acquisition processes can be stimulated. Language is learnt in contact with other people: In speech and its practice, in the need for communication and making contact, in listening to what the other person has to say.

LANGUAGE EDUCATION:

Language education is the responsibility of the education professional in the child day care centre. It comprises the intentional linguistic interaction with the child in the everyday life in the child day care facility and the creation of an environment that stimulates language. For children requiring special language support there is a range of tuition offers which are carried out by the staff of the facility specially qualified for this.

TYPICALLY GIRL? TYPICALLY BOY?

From birth, boys and girls are treated with gender-related expectations. Putting boys and girls in the male/female category is one of the most formative compartmentalizing aspects of our society. Boys and girls are equal, but they are not the same in every aspect. Their similarities are greater than their differences. It is the task of the child day care facility to support children in developing their own gender identity without restrictive attributions and to foster their development potential without misattribution to gender. (Niesel 2005, P.13)

In this connection we understand gender identity not purely as biological, but also as dependant on such aspects as:

- How do I see myself and what suits me?
- How do the others perceive me?
- Do these two perceptions match?
- Am I comfortable with my visual gender identity?

We prioritise the individual personality of the child and pay close attention to the lived-in world of girls and boys. We thematise culturally informed multifaceted ideas about gender identity.

All areas of experience are equally open to girls and boys, both in same-gender and in mixed-gender groups.

In order to implement this or rather a development regardless of gender, we, as adults, question the models of our own gender-specific expectations, our ideas of gender roles and our own behavioural patterns.

CHILD PARTICIPATION

Participation means taking part and having a say in decision making processes which affect their particular environment.

Children are responsible for their own conduct and experience the consequences arising from their actions. They can decide and accept responsibility in the group that is appropriate to their age and development.

Children are active partners in planning processes and experience how they can actively change and create their environment.

They are protagonists of their own development, know their various needs, interests and topics and know what they need for their own wellbeing.

The education professionals understand the participation of the child/children as a basis for their educational acting and enter into negotiations with them.

They create participation-friendly structures, reflect on these and develop them further. Participation in the child day care facility is a fundamental attitude of all role players on all levels to prepare the children for a life in a democratic society: In this context they are expected to learn and experience:

- How can I actively participate and who supports me?
- Where am I heard?
- How do we find solutions and reach a compromise?
- Which rules do we need for coexistence?
- How do we succeed in everybody being able to participate actively?

Democracies start in small ways. This means to us that the children HAVE a say and that their ideas, perceptions and wishes are heard and included in all decision making processes.

SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION AND DOCUMENTATION AS THE BASIS OF EDUCATIONAL ACTING

„To see more, observe – to see more of what is not yet known.“ (Schäfer 2004, P.3)

Observations form part of our everyday life. We perceive other people, situations, the weather or other events – wittingly or unwittingly – and use this information to plan our next steps and tactics. This unsystematic observation provides us with orientation and helps us to make decisions.

In education, decisions have to be made about possible tactics, assistance or room design. To implement these, the education professional, apart from the general every day observations, needs observation methods that are target-orientated and, particularly, systematic. Here, the child's needs are in the centre:

- What does the child need?
- What is it busy with?
- What are its strengths and resources?
- Who belongs to it and what is important to the child?

The following observation mandates are derived from the Orientation Plan (Version of 15 3 2011):

- Detecting the children's topics of education and development
- Observation of the state of development
- Detecting development risks

For this, the municipal facilities use selected tools from the "infans-Konzept der Frühpädagogik" ("infans" concept of early learning) and in the day care centre Petermann's "EBD 3 to 48" method.

Knowledge that the education professional gains from various observations is reflected on and documented by the team. The aim is to understandably document the child's developmental process for the parents and the education professional.

THE BODY AND WELLBEING

We consider physical wellbeing as the basic precondition for all learning and developmental processes. Health, movement, sufficient food and emotional security promote this condition. Children experience physical wellbeing between priorities which they try to balance:

CHILDREN WANT TO

- Feel part of something – be independent
- Experience periods of calm – and movement
- Feeling tension and relaxation
- Experience the known – and the unknown
- Feel happiness and sadness
- Be in a group – or alone
- Feel full – feel hungry

A child can embark on these priorities and put itself to the test if it feels secure and protected.

IN THE CHILD DAY CARE CENTRE THE CHILDREN CAN

- Make contact with other children and education professionals
- Feel their bodies via multiple sensory experiences
- Have many options of movement patterns of their choice
- Be encouraged to experience their own borders by trial and error and
- Assess their abilities
- Experience attentive care situations and be actively involved
- Enjoy food
- Communicate their needs and feelings

DIVERSITY AS ENRICHMENT

The City of Mannheim aspires to a culture of co-operation, inclusion and joint experiences which are characterised by the recognition and appreciation of the variety and diversity. In coexistence, children and adults benefit from this diversity. Some of it we find easy to accept, other aspects challenge us. What challenges us and what does not depends on our own experience, our fears and our limitations.

“The precondition for inclusion requires a radical change of vision – away from the learner who is supposed to integrate into an existing education system and towards the education system itself which should be adjusted to the needs of all learners” (Sulzer, Wagner, P. 11).

A society is diversified and rich if it includes all its people equitably and, as a matter of course, makes provisions for the joint (inclusive) education, development and care of children with all their heterogeneous needs or abilities (See Preissing 2003, P. 222).

The main concern of the child day care centres initially is to have regard for the successful creation of relationships and to address and answer the individual questions of the children and their families:

- Who am I? Who is part of my family? Where do I come from?
- What am I good at, what do I enjoy and what do I find difficult?
- Do we speak the same language?
- Are there people here who support me?

Further important topics like respect of the rights of each individual, consideration, mutual learning etc. are of particular practical relevance. The perception and discovery of a difference at simultaneous equality applies also to differing cultures and religions and socio-economic circumstances.

Education professionals must increasingly face up to these challenges so that inclusion becomes a matter of course and does not just remain a vision.

THE OPEN CHILD DAY CARE CENTRE

The formative processes of the child are also always self-education processes. The child is the protagonist of its development. We therefore trust that children know their needs, know, what is good for them and hugely enjoy learning. If we want to create a place for children where they can act in a realm of vitality and world discovery, self-determination and participation, distinctiveness and similarities, it will only be possible if we ourselves open up. (See Lill 2008, P. 13ff)

The open child day care centre (“Kita”) with its intentionally selected diversity offers space for developing independently and living and learning together. It is a place therefore where children may participate and choose their places of play, partners, contents and time. Education professionals in the Open Concept are reliable care givers for the children and offer them structures and a safe environment. They take over the joint responsibility for all children and ensure an age-appropriate introduction into the possibilities of the facility. This includes joint planning and organisation of the daily routine, the joint taking over of tasks and the joint use of rooms and materials.

The open work is based on an attitude that allows for new ideas and in the process continues to develop with the children, parents and the whole team.



*Grass landscape
with frogs*

EMIL (3,5 years) and
VICTORIA (3,8 years)



”

*When imagination causes feelings to
awake, intelligence flourishes.*

LORIS MALAGUZZI

THE CHILD DAY CARE CENTRE AS A PLACE OF TRAINING

The training of female and male child care workers plays an important role in the municipal child day care centres. The day care centres offer capacity for practical training to interns. Since 2012/13, the City of Mannheim as one of the first municipalities in Baden-Wuerttemberg has been taking part in a practice-oriented training (“PiA”) – a highly innovative training model. Students training according to this model receive practical training from the first day of their professional education.

The facilities offer qualified professional support and guidance for both forms of professional training. We offer the interns and “PiA” students an individually designed training plan and continuous support by professionally qualified instructors. “PiA” poses new, additional challenges to the instructors. For this reason, the City of Mannheim, in co-operation with Hochschule Mannheim initiated an ongoing training course for the further qualification of instructors.

Through the networking with training facilities we guarantee the transfer of up-to-date theoretic knowledge into the practical work. In this manner, interns and trainees can be familiarised early with the Mannheim-specific concepts and tools.

Overall, the training field represents a big part of the work in the day care centre. This poses particular challenges for the instructors as well as the team overall. We attach importance to life-long learning and a continuous ongoing development.

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CO-OPERATION AND NETWORKING

Day care centres are an active part of the social infrastructure of a suburb. Based on the co-operation with the providers of the city, with other institutions and initiatives we promote the networking in other suburbs. In this manner, children get to know the offers in the suburb beyond the day care centre. This includes co-operations with institutions of child and youth work, libraries and the numerous associations and initiatives of the suburb.

The children make the first contact with the school via their child day care centre, which networks with the future school. The education professionals, together with the children and in consultation with the teachers prepare this transition in preparation for the next phase in the children's lives.

Child day care facilities see themselves as a part of the support system of the family and are a low-threshold offer to initiate contact with and for the parents. If required, the facilities network with the relevant advice centres and service providers in Mannheim. The starting point for this are the individual needs and requirements of the children and the family with the aim to strengthen the parents in their parenting skills.

Not everything that is true

do I want to express –

yet what I express

must be genuine.

RUTH COHN

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