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Project Title: Changing Methods in Teaching Migrants

English Summary

Austria

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Katharina Resch

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1. Introduction: The Project and the Program

Adult Education centres experience increasing diversity and heterogeneity of their course participants. Participants differ in social, ethnical, and educational background and they have diverse cultural socialisation and language knowledge (Pfabigan 2007). This causes challenges for adult education centres, teachers, and of course students. To cope with the growing requirements implies both potential and challenges: to thrive on the potential necessitates processes of opening and of changing views on a structural as well as on an individual level (Bruening 2004).

The project "NEW VIEW New methods in teaching migrants" aims at developing new views and approaches how the challenges can be handled whereby vocational training for professions within the field of health and social care are in focus, especially training for nursing assistants and home helpers. The European Commission supports NEW VIEW within the Lifelong Learning Programme, Grundtvig. Researchers and experts from Austria¹², Denmark³, Germany⁴, Greece⁵ and Hungary⁶ collaborate in the project which is coordinated by the Research Institute of the Red Cross, Austria.

Teachers are the main target group of NEW VIEW: They face different needs and specific demands in their classes, e.g. diverse educational backgrounds, language competences, learning styles and group dynamics. Thus, their teaching methods need reflection and possibly adaptation.

Developing new pathways also abets course participants, especially migrants, who are confronted with stress attending a vocational training: environment, teaching style and materials might be new; studying in a different language than the mother tongue may require high effort. Moreover, migrants often experience contempt of their competences and their accomplishments from their home country. This especially happens in the context of language. Mistakes in speaking and writing are often interpreted as "less competent"

¹ Research Institute of the Red Cross, Austria (European Coordination; research, development and dissemination Austria)

² queraum. kultur- und sozialforschung, Austria (evaluation)

³ mhtconsult ApS, Denmark (research and dissemination Denmark)

⁴ Diakonisches Werk Berlin-Brandenburg-schlesische Oberlausitz e.V., Germany (research, development and dissemination Germany)

⁵ EWORX S.A., Greece (dissemination)

⁶ Institute for Basic and Continuing Education of Health Workers, Hungary (research, development and dissemination, Hungary)

(Pfabigan 2007). The Western educational system reacts to these challenges with compensation like special support programmes, with differentiating of educational services or with the phenomenon of exclusion (Lanfranchi 2002).

Special services are of great importance, but there are alternatives and "NEW VIEW" underlines one: to adapt existing teaching methods more to the needs of migrants. Sensitive teaching and considering the demands of course participants brings out the whole potential participants have, improves cultural understanding and has an integrative aspect.

Concretely, the project aims at:

- exploring the specific challenges faced by teachers who teach mixed groups (migrants and non-migrants)
- exploring the challenges faced by course-participants attending these courses
- exploring the challenges managers of organisations offering courses see
- adapting existing and developing new teaching methods to integrate the demand of intercultural education into courses
- defining methodical-didactical competences and skills which describe the required profile of teachers in multicultural adult education
- sensitising the vocational teaching community about the impact related to the issue of migration and language.

As a result, a "Tool-Kit" with useful methods for teaching heterogeneous groups will be developed and be available in Danish, German, Hungarian, and additionally in English. Intense dissemination will support awareness rising and acknowledge enhancing activities. Via website and exploitation activities, all collected inputs are spread especially to the vocational teaching community.

This report summarises the results of the exploration phase conducted in Austria. It brings out the findings of three surveys with managers, teachers and course participants and concretises the main challenges in vocational trainings for each particular survey group from their point of view.

The extended version of this English report is available in German under the heading "Herausforderungen im Unterricht von MigrantInnen und ÖsterreicherInnen in der Heimhilfe- und Pflegehilfeausbildung" and is available under www.new-views.eu.

2. The Context of the Exploration

Vocational training in Austria differs in scope, funding and depth of training. Trainings vary according to the region/city it takes place in.

There is no constitutional law regulating adult education. The only federal law concerning adult education is the 1973 "Law for Promotional Measures" [Erwachsenenbildungs-Förderungsgesetz] which regulates financial support of adult education and public libraries.

People re-entering the labour market are usually the target group of vocational training offers in the health and social sector, which are:

- people who want to switch/change jobs
- long term unemployed
- older people
- migrants (not native Austrian with the legal right to stay in Austria who have spent more than 366 days in Austria and are not Austrian citizens). (Steiner et al. 2006)

Vocational training in the health and social professions is possible in the following professional fields:

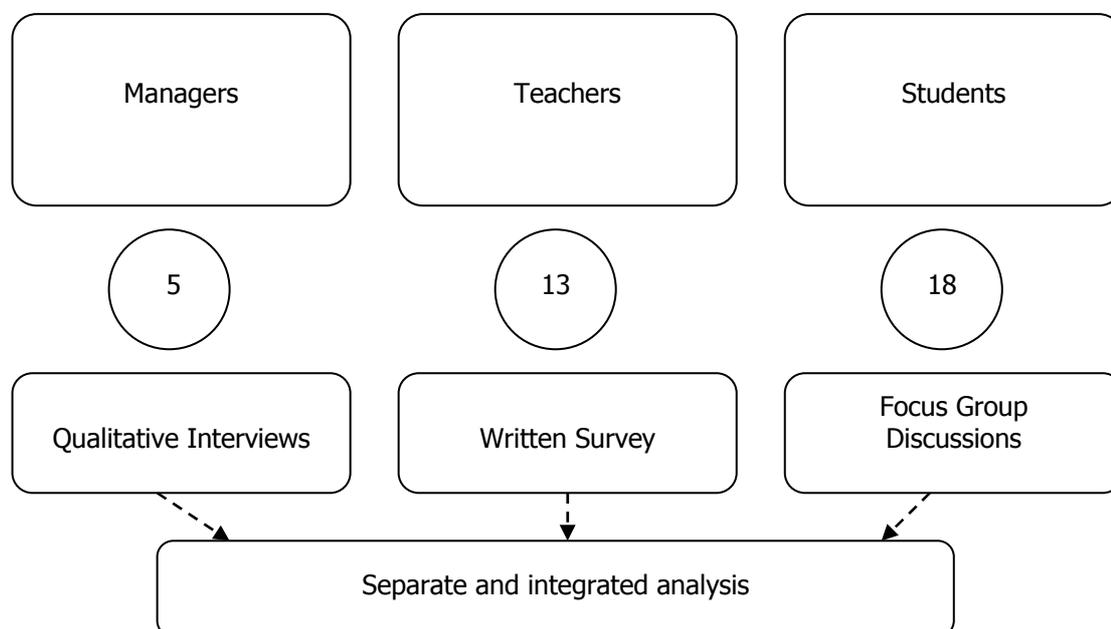
- registered general nurses (health profession)
- *nursing assistants (health profession)*
- *home helpers (social profession)* } Focus of survey 1, 2 and 3
- geriatric nurses (social profession)
- registered paediatric nurses (health profession)
- midwives (health profession)

For the three surveys nursing assistants and home helpers were in the central focus point. The duration and content of vocational training in Austria is regulated in Federal laws for the health professions and in provincial laws for the social professions. Vocational training for nursing assistants takes place in a one-year training (800 hours of theory and 800 hours of practical training), while vocational training for home helpers requires a three-month training (200 hours of theory and 200 hours of practical training).

3. The Interviewees and the Process

All three surveys work together for one research question, which is: How can teaching in mixed groups of migrants and non-migrants in vocational training of nursing assistants and home helpers work and which challenges do managers, teachers and students face? The research question was answered using three different empirical methods.

Figure 1: Methods used in survey 1-3



The three surveys (survey 1 with managers, survey 2 with teachers, survey 3 with students) lasted 41 minutes on average and were carried out between March 18th and June 15th, 2009. In all 36 people were questioned about the topic of mixed groups.

Table 1: Data on the surveys

Survey No.	Date	Form of survey	Length	Position of the interview partner	No. of interview partners
S1	18.03.2009	Qualitative interview	52 min.	Manager	1
S2	23.03.2009	Qualitative interview	21 min.	Manager	1

S3	30.03.2009	Qualitative interview	35 min.	Manager	1
S4	06.04.2009	Qualitative interview	29 min.	Manager	1
S5	07.04.2009	Qualitative interview	57 min.	Manager	1
S6-S18	18.05.- 15.06.2009	Written survey	-	Teachers	13
S19	09.06.2009	Focus group discussion	43 min.	Students	7
S20	09.06.2009	Focus group discussion	49 min.	Students	11
Sum					36

- Managers

Five managers of organisations who train nursing assistants and home helpers were interviewed. Their organisations are representative for the Austrian market.

- Teachers

10 female and 3 male teachers were questioned in the course of the study. All teachers are Austrians and are between 39 and 55 years old. The medium age is 45.2 years. All teachers have extensive experience in teaching nursing assistants and home helpers – between 5 and 18 years – the average lying at 9.6 years of teaching experience.

- Students

All 18 students who were surveyed attend the same class. They were separately asked in two focus group discussions.

55% of the students are between 30 and 39 years old, app. 33% between 20 and 29 years old. 12% are under 20 or older than 40 years. 14 students were female, 4 were male. All migrants in the group have been in Austria for 2 to 20 years (average: 12 years). App. 55% of the students had been employed in the health and social care sector before their current education as nursing assistant.

4. The outcomes of the surveys

In the following chapter only the highlights of the surveys 1, 2 and 3 are summarized. References are made with the survey number (S.) and a number between 1 and 20 (see table 1 for details).

4.1 Results of survey 1 (managers)

From survey 1 with managers it can be concluded that the share of migrants attending nursing assistant or home helper classes has risen in the last years (S.5). Managers state a rate of app. 50-90% of migrants in the courses. Migrants attending these courses often come from various continents and not only from Eastern Europe, as many would like to think. That means that cultural diversity is higher than some years ago (S. 2, 5).

The organizations in Austria offering nursing assistant or home helper classes commonly have one leader and one administrative employee. All other teachers are employed for one or more classes only. Teachers do not come together on a regular basis, but have the possibility to get together at a yearly teacher's conference on a voluntary basis (S.1).

The motives of becoming a nursing assistant or home helper vary between migrants and non-migrants. The ambition to do well is higher in the migrant group than in the non-migrant group according to the managers. Austrians have various possibilities of entering the labour market, while migrants often see the course in nursing assistant or home helping as their only way into the labour market and into a social profession. Most drop-outs occur due to social reasons but not because of the cultural background of participants (S.3). The level of sensitization of managers for the challenges and problems teachers and students face in mixed groups varies. Some managers see these challenges very clearly while others do not see any problems in mixed groups or migration as an issue that touches educational issues, since all participants are in the same situation (they want to successfully achieve a diploma).

Most organisations offering such courses do not employ any migrant teachers. They do not systematically look for migrant teachers and have never thought of employing or looking for

any in a systematic way. Most teachers are acquired through word-of-mouth recommendation. It is a central statement of all managers that teachers are „an external body“ which is not fully employed with the organisation offering nursing assistant or home helper courses. Teachers come to the school for one or several courses but there is no budget for common education, team building or exchange of experience between teachers.

4.2 Results of survey 2 (teachers)

Summarizing survey 2 with teachers it can be stated that the didactic methods teachers use for teaching non-migrants and migrants are not very different. In the future methods which are „language-free“ and narrative should be pushed according to the teacher’s survey. Teachers do well with mixed groups because of their extensive teaching experience.

The exchange of experiences between teachers of different organisations and subjects could be promoted in the future, which is not taking place in a formal way at the moment. 7 of 13 teachers regularly exchange experiences, 5 of 13 do so only sometimes and irregularly and 1 does not at any time. The potential benefit of this exchange could be the exchange of effective and working methods, materials and experience in coping with mixed groups: different language levels of participants, group dynamics, heterogeneous groups and time pressure. These issues were stated as the most important challenges in the teacher’s survey. Another issue is that teachers themselves do not have any migrant colleagues who can be a resource in times of need.

Mixed groups are seen as a challenge by some teachers while others do not see any challenges in teaching migrants and non-migrants with so many cultural and social backgrounds. Those who mentioned challenges stated the following points:

- Different cultures as an enrichment of teaching (S.7, 12, 13, 17)
- Group dynamics in mixed groups (S.10, 15, 17, 18)
- Heterogeneous groups (S.7)
- Other challenges, e.g. time pressure (S.12, 17)

Language levels of participants were mentioned as the major challenge in the teacher's survey. 8 of the 13 teachers explained that they have or have had difficulties with language, concerning:

- Taking notes in class
- More passive vocabulary than active vocabulary resulting in a better understanding of teaching but worse active discussing in class
- Not asking open questions by migrants
- Adapting the teaching speed to those who understand less
- Divergence of cultural expressions, like inflection, volume and energy

3 of 13 teachers saw few problems with participant's language. They stated that these differences could easily be handled in breaks or before and after class. Also, acceptance tests to becoming nursing assistants and home helpers rule out those who know less German.

4.3 Results of survey 3 (students)

All in all survey 3 with students resulted in a high level of satisfaction with the courses. Migration is not a topic students talk about with each other. 33% of the survey participants were non-migrants, 66% were migrants. The participants start the education with mainly three ambitions: first to be able to work in a stable job environment, secondly their wish to work with people, and thirdly as a next step in their career (e.g. from home helper to nursing assistant).

Challenges in mixed groups are mentioned in the beginning and during the course. Most challenges are interlinked with practical work in a social profession and the different level participants in the courses have. Most expectations or wishes for the future concern the organization of courses but not the teachers as such or the contents. Most students have troubles bridging subjects from class into practical everyday work in their internships (theory-practice gap). They also have troubles remembering contents over a long period of time when subjects are taught in one month and then again some months later. There should not be more than six weeks in between learning experiences, otherwise contents have to be repeated and that again causes time pressure and loss of time in other contents. Learning in a multi-cultural environment is seen as enrichment by students (S.20).

It is decisive for the differences and challenges in mixed groups of migrants and Austrians which function a profession has for the students in their biography. If the course to becoming a home helper or nursing assistant is the only possibility of action for the student to learn a social profession and is in this sense meaningful, then those participants are motivated and serious about the education. Other participants who see this education as one of many possibilities of a career do not develop the same motivation and ambition as the others. For many migrants a social profession is meaningful due to their own experience of escape and migration and the wish to help others. For the Austrians it is often one of many possible career paths.

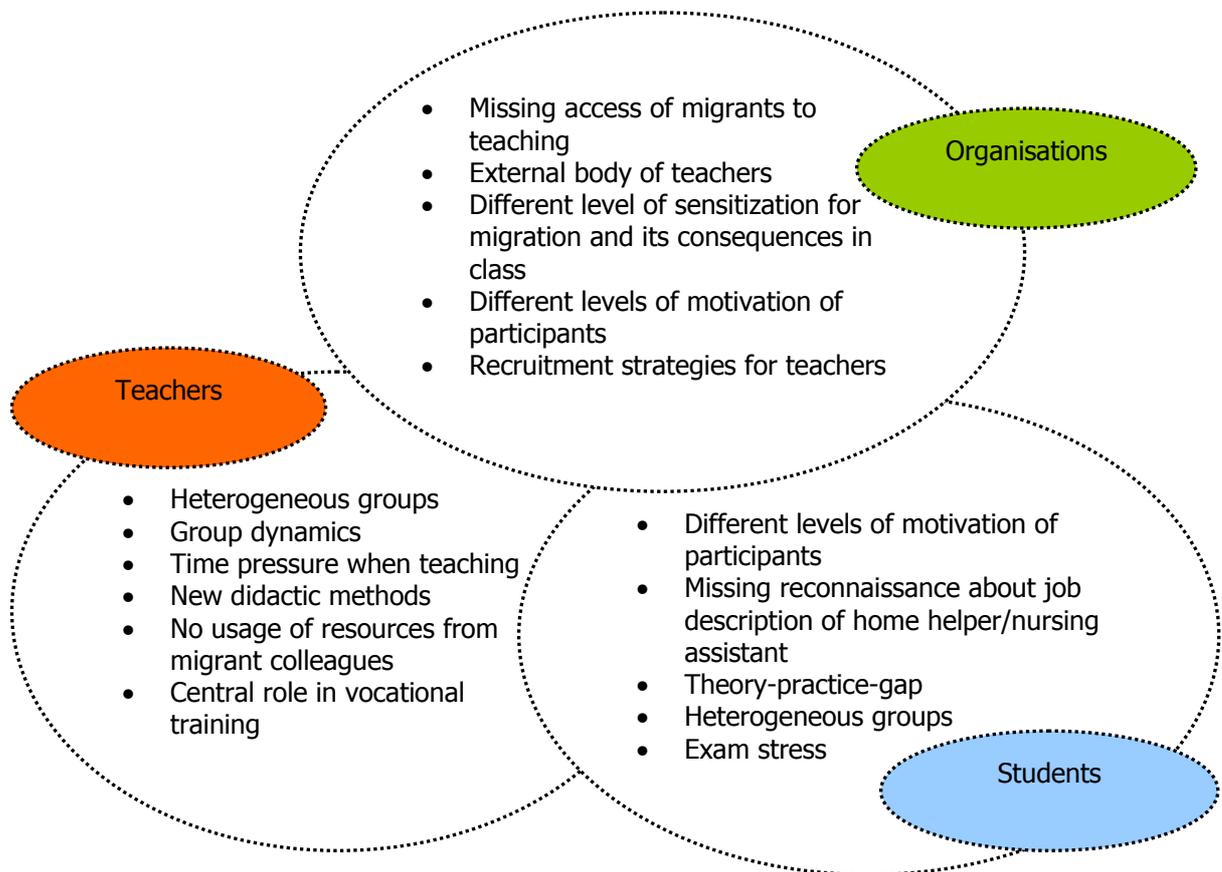
Students do not have the request to have migrant teachers. They explain that the cultural background of the teacher does not make a difference to them unless he or she can get contents across to the participants.

5. Conclusion: Major Challenges in teaching mixed classes

5.1 Main challenges

First of all, all challenges mentioned by the three interviewee groups are summarized below. The figure below summarizes the major challenges in mixed groups from managers', teachers' and students' perspectives.

Figure 2: Summary of challenges



Teachers have a central role in vocational training and are interested in learning new methods for teaching mixed groups. Most teachers mentioned troubles in teaching students with so many backgrounds (not always meaning the cultural background) and group dynamics. Managers are confronted with the external body of teachers in their organisations

and the missing access of migrants to teaching professions. Managers have a very different level of sensitization for migration and its consequences to mixed group teaching, although it is questionable if the statement of one manager can be representative for a whole organisation. There are few formal recruitment strategies for teachers in general and no strategies to employ migrant teachers. Students are faced with challenges when transferring knowledge from theory to their practical training. They miss an orientation phase in the beginning of their training in which the profession and the job description become clear.

5.2 Interrelatedness of challenges

The challenges managers, teachers and students face can be interrelated to each other. Some challenges are only faced by one group. The table below shows the possible interfaces of these challenges which is important for the future work on solutions since two or three stakeholders have to work together to find a solution.

Figure 2: Interrelatedness of challenges

Challenges for managers	Interfaces
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing drop-outs during training and after training 	Organisation/Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few possibilities of teambuilding activities and exchange between teachers 	Organisation/Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing recruitment process for teachers with and without migrant background 	Organisation/Teachers
Challenges for teachers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language of participants 	Teachers/Students/Organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group dynamics 	Teachers/Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heterogeneous groups, differences in educational background, different levels of speed when teaching different groups 	Teachers/Students
Challenges for students	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridging theory and practice 	Students/Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different standards in class 	Students/Organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocation of hours to subjects 	Students/Organisation

At the interfaces of these challenges problems can be discussed and solutions found with the respective parties.

5.3 Recommendations to meet these challenges

In the future a model should be worked on to integrate external teachers more into the organisations offering vocational training in terms of further education, workshops or simply the exchange of experience with other teachers. It is also necessary to rethink the missing numbers of migrant teachers in these trainings and to work on alleviating access. It also has to be possible for students to attend a German training course in parallel to the vocational training. Respective services – which exist – have to be cross-linked in the future. For teachers the problem of language differences has to be solved in the future. Possible methods to do that are team teaching methods, new teaching methods for mixed groups, a toolbox of methods which work well for mixed groups or workshops for teachers which will be carried out in NEW VIEW. Topics of such workshops could be:

- learning conflict management styles: avoiding, compromising, collaborating, accommodating, and competing
- learning about communication und multilingualism: symbols, signs, behaviour
- collection of exercises to train intercultural dialogue among different target groups in mixed groups, special exercise tips for adult migrants (Winkler und Halbartschlager 2008)
- working with skills profiles especially for migrants and making informal and formal competences visible (Plutzer 2005)
- carrying out of language needs analysis, which means meeting objective expectations of organisations and managers when entering a job and matching subjective language experiences (Plutzer 2005; Grünhage-Monetti et al. 2000)
- diversity management in organisations of vocational training (Leopold 2007).

5.4 Future research questions

The following research questions are open and should be answered in future studies:

- Which solutions can be worked on for the exchange and further training of external teachers in vocational training of nursing assistants and home helpers?
- How can the access of migrants to teaching in vocational trainings be alleviated?
- How can teaching in mixed groups be seen as an even greater gain than it is now by teachers?
- How can learning in mixed groups work well and which function does the teacher have in this process?

- How many possibilities of action do migrant and non-migrant students have who attend vocational training? Who stays in a health or social profession for how long with what kind of motivation?

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