

Intercultural expertise in supporting nutrition and physical activity

A research project with practical implementation

Ulrike Johannsen, Nele Schlapkohl, Flensburg

Summary

The research project “Nutrition and Physical Activity without Borders” [*Ernährung & Bewegung ohne Grenzen*] has identified positive and negative factors that can influence the development of intercultural expertise on nutritional education and encourage physical activity in target groups – both within and outside schools. The project employs the model of participation and of the peer education approach. The present article reports the initial results on the implementation of these approaches and of the “Food & Move literacy concepts”, which were developed, tested and evaluated within the project.

Keywords: nutritional expertise, physical activity expertise, participation project, interculturality, peer education, food literacy, move literacy

Project description and objectives

The German-Danish INTERREG 4A¹ project “International Expertise Network: New Perspectives on Sustainable Expertise in Nutrition and Physical Activity” (in short: “Nutrition and Physical Activity without Borders/*Mad & bevaegelse uden graenser*”) [*Grenzüberschreitendes Kompetenznetzwerk: Neue Perspektiven für eine nachhaltige Ernährungs- und Bewegungskompetenz*]; in short:

“*Ernährung & Bewegung ohne Grenzen*”) has already extended over several years and has the objective of encouraging the independent, responsible and joyful planning of everyday nutrition and physical activity. Flensburg University and University College Syddanmark have identified additional objectives that extend beyond individual countries, subjects and institutions. Their plan is to initiate a very broad project approach with heterogeneous target groups, and to succeed in implementing the educational processes in practice [1]. This approach focuses on developing expertise in nutrition and physical activity and on enhancing independence and responsibility in the everyday life of schoolchildren, functional illiterates and immigrants. Functional illiterates are individuals who have been to school, but who nevertheless cannot read, write or calculate well enough to fulfil social requirements. According to the Level One Study in

2011, this is the case for 7.5 million people in Germany² [2, 3].

The present article describes innovative project approaches to support expertise in nutrition and physical activity, including peer education approaches, together with their practical implementation in schools. For this purpose, school subprojects or interventions were examined in more detail and it was attempted to answer the following questions:

- 1.) How do the interventions modify the schoolchildren’s expertise — including knowledge, methods, personal and social expertise?
- 2.) Do the interventions lead to sustained changes in everyday school life?
- 3.) What does the teacher (if he is the only one asked) think of the benefits and effects of these interventions or subprojects?
- 4.) How can these projects be integrated, further developed and permanently established as part of normal school life?

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¹ INTERREG 4A is a program of the European Union that supports a variety of international projects. In the period 2007–2013 (optional project extension till 2015), the Syddanmark region and the Schleswig and K.E.R.N. regions were supported with more than 44 Mio. € from the European Fund for Regional Development. The INTERREG 5A Support Program is currently being planned for the period 2014–2020.

² Including 4.4 million with German as mother tongue and 3.1 million with another mother tongue.

Projects

in elementary schools [Grundschulen], comprehensive schools [Gemeinschaftsschulen], vocational schools [berufsbildende Schulen], adult education centres [Volkshochschulen], communes and hobby centres

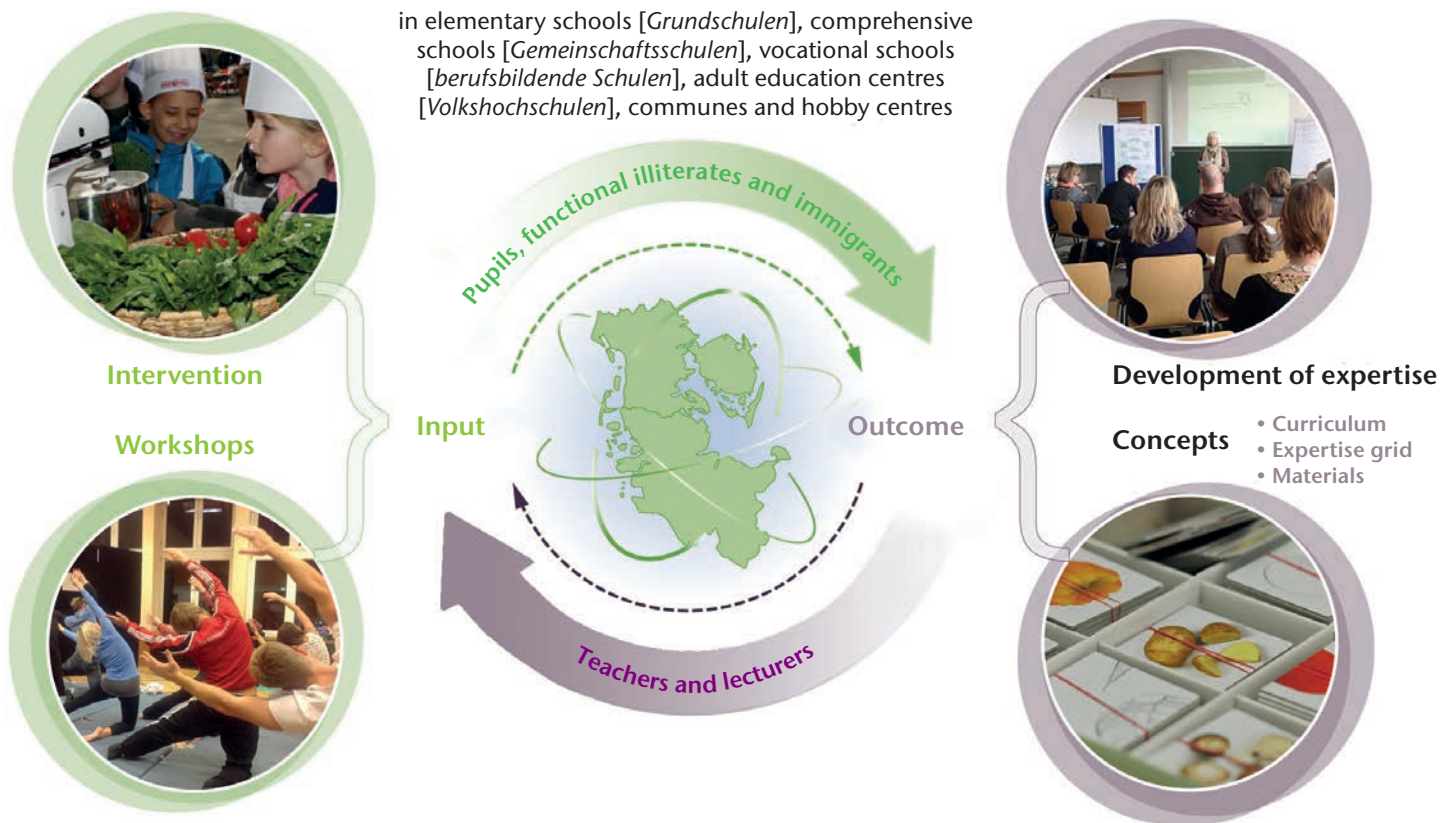


Fig. 1: The international expertise network as “Nutrition and Physical Activity without Borders”

The special feature of this project was its intercultural context (in the German-Danish language area). In other words, it was considered (5.) whether international collaboration influenced the development of the individual subprojects and daily practice.

The present article focuses on presenting the project results on expertise development (point 1), project effects (point 3) and interculturality (point 5).

Interculturality — a special challenge

Because of increasing cooperation within Europe and internationalisation, intercultural projects will become increasingly common.

As part of the project “Nutrition and Physical Activity without Borders”, the project partners are developing and checking new practically relevant interventions, subprojects and practical methods, as well as low threshold teaching and learning materials (♦ Figure 1). These are developed in various workshops and team meetings and pass through the

classical phases of project management: Development — Testing — Evaluation — Documentation” [1]. They are then transferred to school practice or adult education. In the context of German-Danish collaboration, a network was developed within the border area, in which the institutions provide mutual support, inspiration and exchange.

Project model and measures

The fundamental idea of this project is participation. All project participants, including schools, lecturers and pupils, determine their own subprojects and subsidiary objectives; they clarify the issues and work together, sharing the responsibility for the practical implementation.

Common plans are recorded in writing in the so-called “objective templates”. These clarify and document local resources, subsidiary objectives, participating individuals and groups, together with the timetable and the specific next steps. Most of the participants feel that this procedure re-

duces their workload, as they can concentrate on their wishes and objectives for their own school and do not have to deal with general information about the projects. Thus, the project is closely linked to the principles of school development. This encourages the participants to be open and to be prepared to collaborate on the project, which focuses on the development and planning of their own school and permits synergies with other activities within the school system.

The crucial point in the whole project is the development of so-called “tandems”. Before these are described, the concept of expertise will be discussed.

The concept of expertise

This project employs WEINERT’S definition of expertise [4] as “the cognitive abilities and skills that are available or that can be learnt by individuals in order to solve specific problems, as well as the linked motivational, volitional and social readiness and ability needed to exploit the solutions of the problems successfully and responsibly in variable situations” [Original

Network partners: project participants within and outside schools

The project is in the process of development and growth. It involves collaboration between educational institutions in the region South Denmark-Schleswig-K.E.R.N. (Kiel, Eckernförde, Rendsburg, Neumünster; ♦ Figure 2). The current participants include five Danish schools or universities, ten German schools (elementary, comprehensive³ and vocational schools), as well as eight adult education centres, the Federal State Association of Adult Education Centres in Schleswig-Holstein and a team of school social workers (♦ Figures 3). Students and lecturers in nutritional education and sports sciences are also involved. Important cooperation partners include health offices, the service for juvenile medicine, the State Society for Health Support [Landesvereinigung für Gesundheitsförderung e. V.], the Central Office for School Care and the Institute for Quality Development in Schleswig-Holstein Schools.

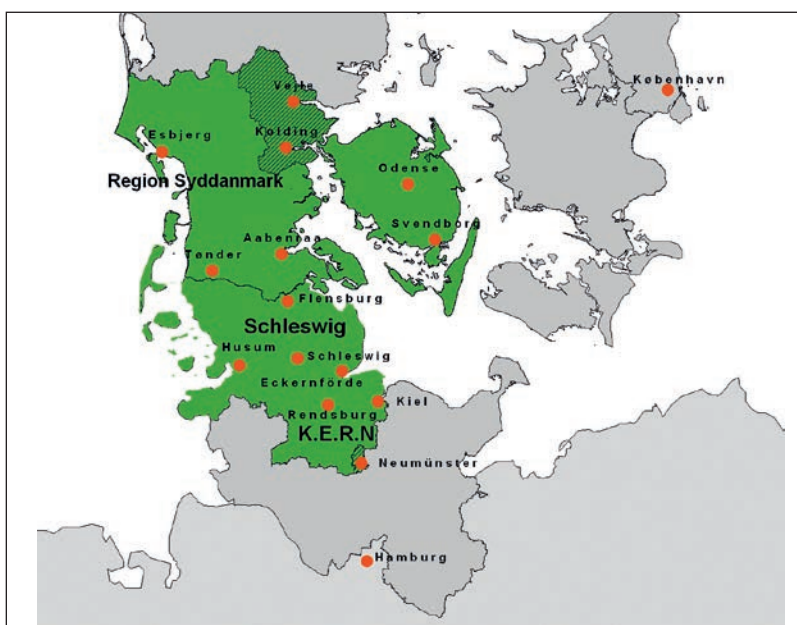


Fig. 2: Project sites and regions

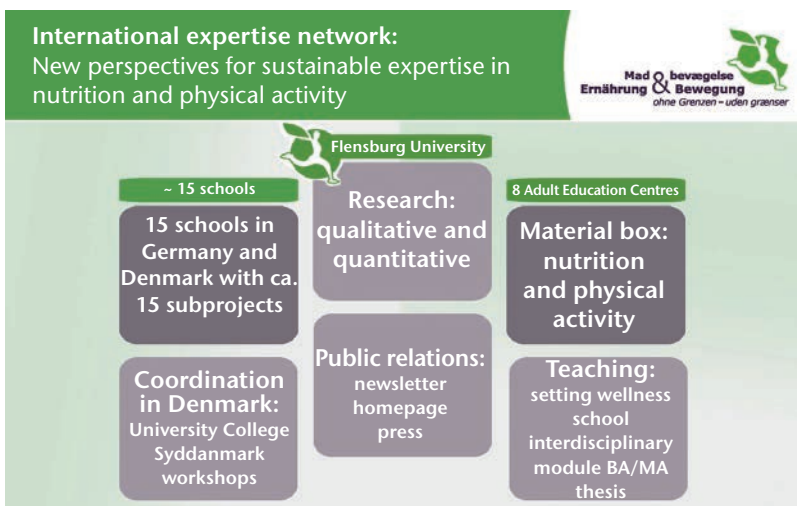


Fig. 3: Institutions participating in the project

citation: “die bei Individuen verfügbaren oder durch sie erlernbaren kognitiven Fähigkeiten und Fertigkeiten, um bestimmte Probleme zu lösen, sowie die damit verbundenen motivationalen, volitionalen und sozialen Bereitschaften und Fähigkeiten, um die Problemlösungen in variablen Situationen erfolgreich und verantwortungsvoll nutzen zu können.”) This includes not only purely cognitive abilities, but also individual skills and readiness. Thus, this covers not only interactions between knowledge, ability, understanding, action, experience and motivation, but also mastering specific requirements and important daily situations. TSCHÉKAN [5] commented that: “even if the pupils in principle possess all the knowledge, ability and interests needed to master a situation — usually schoolwork —, they may not be able to do it. The problem is not the schoolwork and not only the lack of knowledge and skills, but mainly lies in the transfer” [Original citation: “auch wenn die Schülerinnen und Schüler grundsätzlich über die Summe der Kenntnisse, Fähigkeiten und Interessen zur Bewältigung einer Situation – in der Schule meistens Aufgaben – verfügen, können sie es nicht [...] Das Problem sind nicht die Aufgaben, das Problem ist nicht allein das Fehlen von Kenntnissen und Fertigkeiten, das Problem ist vor allem der Transfer”], i.e. the transfer into the situations of daily life [6].

Description of the tandem measures

So-called “tandems” are sponsorships and/or partnerships which have developed into important interfaces and which imbue the project with structure, innovation and stability. The concept of tandem formation crops up throughout the project:

³ In this type of school, pupils in Schleswig-Holstein from years 5–10 are taught together up to the “First General School-Leaving Exam” [“erster allgemeinbildender Schulabschluss”], to the “Intermediate School Leaving Exam” [“mittlerer Abschluss”] or in year 13 to the “General University Entrance Exam” [“allgemeine Hochschulreife”].

Food & Move for Future

The areas of nutrition and physical activity are still often dealt with separately. One reason for this is that they have different institutional foundations and different cultures for project support. In contrast, in the present project, expertise in nutrition and physical activity were mostly supported together, as an interlocking tandem.

The concept of integrative expertise in nutrition and physical activity is connected to current concepts of “literacy”. This term is no longer used in the restricted sense of reading ability, but has been extended to all forms of expertise in life. Concepts such as Health Literacy, Nutrition Literacy, Food Literacy and Consumer Literacy etc. have been introduced in recent years. The debate on literacy is increasingly focused on procedures related to personal health [7, 8]. HEINDL [9] defined food literacy as follows: “being educated in health matters on the foundation of scientifically based nutritional knowledge, with the ability to confidently apply this nutritional knowledge in its cognitive, social and communicative context” [Original citation: “*durch ein wissenschaftlich fundiertes Ernährungswissen gesundheitlich gebildet sein und das Ernährungswissen in seiner kognitiven, sozialen und kommunikativen Bedeutung sicher anwenden können*”]. This definition has been complemented by the aid and by GROENEVELD et al. [2, 10, 11]: “Food Literacy is the ability to plan everyday nutrition in an independent, responsible and joyful manner” [Original citation: “*Food Literacy ist die Fähigkeit, den Ernährungsalltag selbstbestimmt, verantwortungsbewusst und genussvoll zu gestalten*”]. Thus, it is not only a question of knowing about foods and being able to deal with them, but also about understanding the connections in nutritional activity. But we should not forget the importance of enjoyment. One new element in this project is the “Move Literacy” approach, which is a pendant to Food Literacy and which is to be defined and tested during the present research project. “Move Literacy” means the ability to

plan everyday physical activity and physical activity during the normal day, in an independent, responsible and motivated manner.

For the target groups with low literacy, there are often no teaching and learning materials on nutrition and physical activity that use simple and easily comprehensible language. These materials should be appropriate for different degrees of literacy and different cultural customs. Moreover, they must be related to everyday life. It is crucial to have simple visual images to communicate information on nutrition and physical activity. In this way, it is intended that “Food & Move Literacy” should develop new methods, materials and physical activities for adults. These must activate, motivate and enhance the learning success of these target groups. For example, one subproject is to develop a nutrition and physical activity box for lecturers in adult education centres. This is to contain a collection of materials, methods and physical activity.

The peer education approach

In peer education projects, so-called “lay multipliers” are trained as intermediaries to instruct the target groups in their own environment. In the present intercultural project, older pupils are used as multipliers, who instruct the younger pupils in a wide variety of areas of nutrition and physical activity. The Federal Centre for Health Education (*Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung*; BZgA) defines this as follows [12]: “Peer education in health means teaching and sharing health-related information, values and behaviour with members of the same age or status group [Original citation: “*Peer Education im Gesundheitsbereich meint das Lehren und Teilen von Informationen, Werten und Verhaltensweisen zur Gesundheit durch Mitglieder gleicher Alters- oder Statusgruppen.*”] According to BACKES [13], the peer education approach also impressively implements the theoretical principles of health education. For example, this means supporting networks, self-help or-

ganisations and empowerment (processes to support empowerment and qualification).

When pupils act as lay multipliers, as in this project, this task helps them to use their personal resources in such a way that they help both themselves and other pupils [14]. For example, in the present project, older pupils lead work groups (e.g. for cooking, dancing or football) or act as physical activity or game leaders in the playground. Pupils in a vocational grammar school organise a health day for elementary pupils (see section on “Cooperation Project GEBbi”, p. 49). Thus, the peer education approach is a central measure in the development of expertise within the present project.

Support from students

Each subproject — either within or outside a school — is personally supported by a student, who provides an onsite link between the university and the subproject. This takes between 2 and 5 hours a week. The peer education approach is also employed here. For example, students instruct teachers, pupils and other students and this helps them to see themselves and their roles differently. This tandem too has proven itself in practice, as both sides (teachers and students) benefit and learn.

Intercultural collaboration

This is implemented within the project by international teams, Danish-German workshops, school visits and the exchange of teaching and learning materials. The increasing cultural variety demands time and motivation, as confusion and misunderstanding may arise from philosophical, technical and cultural differences, particularly when these are not properly discussed; this can effectively inhibit the development of the project.

During the implementation of the project, this means that adequate time must be allowed, although it should not be forgotten that developing intercultural expertise may

take a lifetime [15]. German-Danish collaboration between individual professions and sectors bore these issues in mind and led to the formation of an international network.

The scientific concept: Food & Move for Science

It is intended that the project should lead to the practical implementation of scientifically studied concepts. The evaluation must therefore employ quantitative and qualitative methods to analyse the subprojects. The results provide innovative impulses for enhancing the quality of nutritional and development processes (see the section: "Procedure: Four Phases of the Evaluation") [16]. The evaluation is based on the Standards for Evaluations⁴ of the Society for Evaluation e. V. [*Gesellschaft für Evaluation e. V.*] (2002) [17].

Study design

The design includes mixed methods approach⁵ for the following target groups [18]:

- Qualitative instruments: episodic interviews with teachers, focus group interviews with pupils and analytical evaluation of the results of objective templates [19, 20].
- Quantitative instruments: pre-, post- and retention test⁶ in the context of a written survey of the pupils. The dependent variables include cognitive knowledge (technical expertise), the we-feeling (social expertise), motivation (self-expertise) and everyday application (method expertise). In addition, workshop evaluations were performed. The (quantitative) questionnaire contains eight questions on nutrition, eleven questions on physical activity and six questions on the we-feeling. Some of the questions were taken from the following studies: KiGGS study [21], DONALD study [22], HBSC study [23], DSB Sprint study [24] and ALS [25]. The episodic guided interview contains seven questions.

Procedure: four phases of evaluation

The evaluation is in four phases (following ♦ Figure 1):

Phase I: Input

- All project partners are supported in the development and planning of their freely selected subprojects and encouraged by regular offers of international workshops on more advanced themes. The themes are selected on the basis of a written analysis of the needs and requirements.
- A qualitative content analysis⁷ is performed of the objective templates developed by the teachers for their projects within the school [19].
- With the help of a pupil questionnaire, the actual situation is recorded with respect to the themes of nutrition and physical activity in the individual schools at the start of the corresponding subproject.

Phase II: Intervention

In the context of the subprojects, the interventions developed by the participants are implemented by the participating teachers and pupils. The interventions are accompanied by quantitative surveys in the pre-, post- and retention design. These are complemented by qualitative interviews, such as episodic guided interviews⁸ and focus group interviews⁹, in order to document the time course and effects of the different interventions. The challenge in this phase is to employ methods and instruments that provide a valid reflection of the real progress.

Phase III: Outcome

All subprojects are described with a document analysis (practice description and videos) and contribute to setting up a collection of good practice. Project participants use the results to support changes in the formulation of future new subprojects. For example, these modifications can be related to curricular and structural changes or to newly developed teaching and learning materials.

Phase IV: Further development

Depending on the outcome, further development is already possible for individual subprojects that have already been evaluated. The planned post-outcome analysis examines pupils and teachers and quantitative and qualitative data are recorded. At the quantitative level, an intervention and control group is analysed in a pre-, post- and retention design. In this phase, the results are extended with a large sample in different schools. Additional transfer processes are complemented by interviews with teachers and pupils.

Evaluation

The guided interviews are recorded, transcribed and coded. The quantitative data are evaluated using MAXQDA [19, 20]. Only qualitative results are described in the present article. The interview results are reflecting the answers of interviews with one teacher of a comprehensive school and with two teachers of a vocational school.

⁴ According to the standards, the evaluations should exhibit four fundamental properties: usefulness, feasibility, fairness and precision [17]. The standards are intended to assure and to qualify the evaluations.

⁵ Mixed methods approaches are now regarded as a promising approach in social research, in order to overcome the duality of qualitative versus quantitative methods in a productive manner [18].

⁶ Pre-, post- and retention design: three time points of the same investigation, which take place before an intervention, directly afterwards and some weeks afterwards.

⁷ Qualitative content analysis: procedure for systematic text analysis (here documents and videos), which is intended to support interpretation.

⁸ Episodic guided interviews: open interview form of a qualitative survey, which in this case considers the process of the development of the interventions.

⁹ Focus group interviews: form of a moderated group discussion, which is orientated towards a single theme.

Results of the qualitative investigations

The first nutrition- and physical-activity-related subprojects have already been implemented and are in the phase of evaluation. Two cases of the peer education approach are presented as examples.

Case 1: Feel fit — a tasteful journey organised by the Zentral-schule Harrislee, a comprehensive school near Flensburg

Project objective

The objective was to encourage older pupils (with “Health” as special subject) to transmit their knowledge of phenomena related to nutrition and physical activity to elementary pupils. The object is to stimulate motivation and pleasure in healthy nutrition and physical activity.

Project plan

Within this project, 28 older pupils (classes 8 and 9); 13 girls and 15 boys; mean age = 14.6 years) were trained to be nutritional experts and physical activity mediators. Using the peer education approach, they transmitted their knowledge in play to 55 younger pupils (class 4; 25 girls and 30 boys; mean age = 10.1 years). On the project day, the younger children could try out various tasting experiments (tasting, smelling and feeling tests with foods) at different food and physical activity stations and perform physical activity tasks. The focus was on the nutrition and physical activity behaviour of the younger children. The results and conclusions were recorded in the personal research book.

Evaluation

After the project day, the teacher reported how the peer education approach had helped the older pupils to develop their expertise. This is an extract from a qualitative episodic interview with the responsible teacher: “I think that it is important to explain things as equals. When

pupils explain something to other pupils, they are always roughly equal. But when a teacher explains something to a pupil, he is always talking down. [...] If a pupil explains something to you as an equal, even facts, you will remember much more.” [Original citation: “*Ich glaube, Formulierungen auf Augenhöhe sind wichtig. Wenn Schüler Schülern etwas erklären, hast du immer etwas auf Augenhöhe. Und wenn ein Lehrer einem Schüler etwas erklärt, hast du immer ein Gefälle. [...] Also wenn du Schüler hast, die sich auf Augenhöhe etwas erläutern, auch fachlich, bleibt da viel mehr hängen.*”] (2014, Z 37)

The underlying concept of the project was to encourage participation and this had interesting effects on the pupils involved — including their development of expertise. The pupils assumed responsibility for their own actions and were motivated to take additional steps in learning and development: “If pupils are motivated and given responsibility, they develop a relationship to the whole project and feel that they are part of the whole. This then develops its own dynamics and this is very, very important for the pupils. [...] If they have the feeling that they are helping to decide the rules in the classroom, they always have the feeling that they share the responsibility that the rules are obeyed. [...] For personality development and for me as project manager, it’s a fine thing to see this. This is training in expertise —expertise in life in all its variations. [Original citation: “*Wenn Schüler in die Motivation und in die Eigenverantwortung genommen werden, entwickeln sie einfach auch zu diesem ganzen Projekt eine bestimmte Beziehung und sie haben das Gefühl: Sie sind Teil des Ganzen. Und dadurch entwickelt sich eine Eigendynamik und das ist für Schüler ganz, ganz wichtig. [...] Wenn sie das Gefühl haben, sie stellen die Regeln im Klassenraum mit auf, haben sie auch immer das Gefühl, auch mit dafür verantwortlich zu sein, dass sie eingehalten werden. [...] das ist, für die Persönlichkeitsentwicklung und für mich als Projektleiter, oder*

auch für uns Kollegen, einfach schön mit anzusehen. Das ist Kompetenzschulung, Lebenskompetenzschulung in allen Variationen.”] (2014, Z 35)

Case 2: “GEbbi” cooperation project between the Klaus Groth Elementary School and Husum Vocational Grammar School

Project objective

The objective was the development of the existing school project: “GEbbi — Healthy nutrition needs special initiative” [*Gesunde Ernährung braucht besondere Initiative*]. Five pillars of a healthy school (community, peace, nutrition, physical activity and experience) were developed and implemented during the normal school day.

Project plan

Since 2008, there has been an annual day of action, when ca. 20 vocational pupils in nutrition and health were responsible for the themes of nutrition, relaxation and physical activity for 350 elementary school pupils at various stations. The special feature of this project approach was that, aside from the elementary school pupils and the students of the vocational grammar school, a third group was involved in the peer education approach: the students in the local vocational school [*Berufsschule*], who receive more practical training.

Evaluation

Extract from the qualitative-episodic interview with two responsible teachers after the day of action:

As a result of the peer education approach, the older children are brought into a new mediation situation: “By accepting the new role, they are highly motivated to pass on their knowledge and their expertise in action to the younger children.” “This is simply a perfect situation. Some of the children were very difficult [from a vocational grammar school] and had thought for years

that the teacher wants the worst. This suddenly vanishes and they have the courage to ask a vocational school pupil: 'Please show me that.' [...]'. The older children are extremely motivated when the elementary pupils come, who are, by the way, very susceptible for healthy food. [...] And then they try even harder to succeed, as they want to show this to the younger children. This is really an excellent double effect."

[Original citation: "Durch das Annehmen der neuen Rolle sind sie sehr motiviert, ihr Wissen und ihre Handlungskompetenz an die Jüngeren weiterzugeben." "Das ist einfach eine perfekte Situation: Es waren zum Teil sehr schwierige Schüler [aus einem Berufsbildenden Gymnasium], die seit Jahren die Einstellung haben 'der Lehrer will Böses'. Mit einem Mal löst es sich auf, sie trauen sich auch, einen Berufsfachschüler zu fragen: 'Du, kannst du mir das mal eben zeigen [...]'. Die Großen sind extrem motiviert, wenn die Grundschüler kommen, die übrigens sehr empfänglich sind für eine gesunde Ernährung [...]. Und dann geben sie sich im Grunde genommen noch mehr Mühe, das zu können, weil sie das dem Schüler ja vermitteln sollen. Also, das ist ein ganz toller Doppeleffekt." (2014, Z 56)

In addition, the teachers interviewed describe the effect and benefit of project-related cooperative instruction as follows: "Well I think it's an enormous advantage that the inhibition threshold of learning something is actually broken through. [...] We had cooked with the pupils, the pupils from the vocational school with the grammar school pupils. Some of the grammar school pupils knew that they could not follow the recipe (here chutney). And wouldn't let me tell them how. And at that moment the elementary school teacher walked in and sorted it all out and discussed the problem with them. And incidentally commented: 'Don't you think you should have cooked this before?' [...]" [Original citation: "Also ich denke, ein Riesenpluspunkt ist, dass diese Hemmschwelle, etwas zu lernen, eigentlich gebrochen wird

[...] wir hatten mit den Schülern gekocht, die Berufsfachschüler mit den Gymnasiasten. Ich hatte Gymnasias-ten dabei, die wussten, dass sie das Rezept (hier Chutney) nicht können. Und wollten sich von mir überhaupt nichts sagen lassen. Und in dem Moment ist die Grundschullehrerin rein gegangen und hat das Ganze entzerrt und dann mit ihnen ein Gespräch geführt und ganz nebenbei gefragt: 'Meint ihr nicht, dass müsstet ihr vorher kochen?' [...]" (2014, Z 54)

Discussion and Outlook

Two examples have been presented of the initial results from the project. These show clearly that the concept of participation has proved its value as a model for the overall development and planning of the project. The individual subprojects show that once any of the wide variety of target groups is given scope for responsibility and decision making, this is not only used, but has more wide-reaching consequences. These apply not only to structures, such as changes in the times of breaks, but also to personal changes, such as motivation, personal responsibility and pleasure in learning. The evaluation of the cases described shows that the innovative approach of peer education has excited intense interest from the participants from different school structures and educational systems. This approach can be transferred to heterogenous school systems and situations, or to a variety of themes and curricula [14]. Taken together with the school development approach, an interesting variety of projects can be triggered, such as setting up a "vitamin bar", introducing games or new locations for the break or special music or dances for the break (e.g. hip-hop).

The interventions outside school focus on developing and testing new teaching and learning materials for adult education in Food & Move Literacy. Participants are motivated by the wish to transfer practicable

teaching and learning material to other lecturers who have no special knowledge of nutrition or physical activity. This could close a gap that exists throughout Germany, as conventional teaching and learning materials for nutritional education and enhancing physical activity are designed for other target groups, mostly children and juveniles. Thus, the existing materials are linguistically and visually unsuitable for the target group of adults.

All the teaching and learning materials developed in the INTERREG-project are currently being tested during the intervention phase in courses in adult education centres and then are further developed. The uses and benefits of these materials are then introduced in "train-the-trainer" courses. In addition, a cooking and physical activity handbook from A to Z with didactic materials has been prepared and is currently being tested in practice.

In the longer term, there is great interest in integrating the peer education approach in the area of Food & Move Literacy, by integrating functional illiterates as mediators within the peers and thus strengthening their expertise.

As regards the tandems described, experience in projects shows that participants are very interested in considering the areas of nutrition and physical activity together in the subprojects. Moreover, there are synergistic and innovation effects in intercultural collaboration that should not be underestimated. The strengths of the other country may be perceived and exploited for project work. Getting to know other cultures and how they live and work can enrich both individuals and institutions. Experience has shown that the following aspects and expertise should be identified and developed:

- The ability to change perspective, and to feel empathy for working and living in other cultures;
- The ability to tolerate, control and approve of ambiguous or unsettling situations;

- Communicative abilities extending beyond understanding the other language, such as the significance and background of essential technical terms;
- Knowledge of one's own culture, as well as of other national cultures. For example, other cultures regard nutrition, foods and their preparation differently.

These aspects provide motivation and perspectives for teachers, lecturers and project managers to continuously exchange knowledge and experience across national and institutional borders. National developments can be accelerated and developmental and implementation processes shortened. Language barriers are not the actual obstacles to intercultural collaboration. These are rather misunderstandings and reservations, which are deeply anchored in national history or culture. (Educational) systems are subject to cultural historical traditions, with their possibilities and limits. In exchanges with other countries, these possibilities and limits are perceived much more clearly. Overcoming these limits and finding passable routes are a great challenge to intercultural projects. The investments and additional work are nevertheless worthwhile, as the intercultural richness of the inspiration during the course of the project and the new perspectives for everyday practice appear almost incidentally.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest according to the guidelines of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors.

Dr. Ulrike Johannsen¹

Dr. Nele Schlapkohl²

Europa-Universität Flensburg

Institut für Gesundheits-, Ernährungs- und Sportwissenschaften

Auf dem Campus 1, 24943 Flensburg

¹E-Mail: ujohannsen@uni-flensburg.de

²E-Mail: schlapkohl@uni-flensburg.de

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