

# Action for Inclusion in Europe City Working Groups

## Migrant Parental Involvement in Education

'Only Together We Are Powerful':  
Improving Dialogue between  
Parents and Educational  
Personnel in Hamburg

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## Plan Summary

### Relevant contextual information

Hamburg is an “arrival city”, which has grown into a metropolis with more than a million inhabitants over the past 200 years, growing to a current population of nearly 1.8 million which has accelerated this development still further. Since the start of the second half of the 20th century alone, the composition of Hamburg’s population has changed so radically that immigrants or the descendants of immigrants, now number about 530,000. As such, nearly one in three of the citizens have a history of immigration. All these new inhabitants of the city have come in the hope of a better life for themselves and their families, which places new responsibilities on the education system:

“The statisticians now expect to see significantly more pupils in the state's elementary schools. Similar adjustments are being made by other states in Germany, with Hamburg enrolling more school children for the coming school year than it has since 1983!” Spiegel online, Melanie Amann, August 2015

In 2015 Germany received 1.1 million asylum seekers from the Middle East. About 25,000 of them have been accommodated in Hamburg. At the frontline of integration are schools. In 2016 Hamburg has enrolled approximately 9,000 refugee children and youth in its school system. They start in international classes that focus on literacy training, teaching German as a foreign language and the mediation of European culture, values and standards. Depending on age and individual progress, the students are streamed into regular classes within a period of two years.

In order to break down barriers to education, Hamburg is investing in early child education and offers a comprehensive network of child nurseries and daycare centres, so nearly all primary and secondary schools have all-day facilities; that is why all secondary schools—both high schools and so-called “district schools” (Stadtteilschulen) enable students to obtain their university entrance qualification.” 2015, Olaf Scholz, Mayor of Hamburg.

However to manage the high numbers of new entrants, Hamburg needs supplementary pedagogical personnel as well as new curricula and teaching materials. The Ministry of Schools and Vocational Training also encourages institutions, foundations and private initiatives for supporting the integration of refugee families and their children. Against this background the pilot project of the Agency for School Consulting in the Landesinstitut in cooperation with the Herz Foundation is increasingly regarded as an important contribution to improve the communication and cooperation between the groups involved in pedagogic activities of integration in schools. Due to the regional allocation of refugees, district schools, which already teach a high amount of students with migrant background, are almost exclusively responsible for the refugee children. So the workshops “Improving the Dialogue between Pedagogic Personnel and Parents” will also be offered to secondary schools in the next school year.

Comprising part of the educational structure, the Landesinstitut is an agency of the local board of Education and a service-provider both for schools, pedagogic staff, school leaders and the board itself. It trains pre-service and in-service teachers. Part of the Landesinstitut is the Agency for School Consulting, which supports school development around intercultural awareness in cooperation with the Information Centre for Intercultural Education. However, until now it has not offered regular qualifications for improving communication and conversation competences of pedagogues with parents. The action plan developed under the auspices of the Action for Inclusion project aimed to focus on a collective qualification for parents and the educational personnel. Until now there hasn’t been any cooperation with foundations

concerning this subject. Nevertheless, there are several schools that want to cooperate more effectively with their parents through special training as well as access information on how to implement adequate school-parent partnerships. As a great number of refugees have come to Hamburg within the last two years the number of students and their parents who both need pedagogical and therapeutic support and integration programmes has increased enormously. The Landesinstitut provides updates regularly and support for parent representatives concerning the rights of participation of parents with regard to the educational law and current school issues. To establish a successful school-parent partnership in a city with a constantly increasing amount of families with a migrant background, you need to improve communication and intercultural skills on both sides: professionals and parents.

### Brief description of action plan

The Agency for School Consulting at Landesinstitut Hamburg in cooperation with the Joachim Herz Foundation started a pilot project of a qualification with five modules at two primary schools in 2015/16: 'Improving the Dialogue between Parents and the Educational Personnel in our School and Region'. We qualified members of both groups together in order to improve the cooperation between the two parties for the benefit of students' educational outcomes and future success.

The plan built upon work established in 2015, where we had trialed a qualification like this with good results. In this pilot project we wanted to learn more, and aimed to explore what the main issues are that should be focused on to improve the dialogue and cooperation between parents and the educational personnel in schools. We found that on the one hand, there are teachers who really need better support for understanding and strengthening intercultural skills. On the other hand, parents, especially those with migrant backgrounds, need information, understanding and encouragement so that they can overcome passivity through fear, lack of knowledge or confidence in order to participate in and to support their children in the school system.



### Objectives

The aim was to develop qualifications offered for Parents and Pedagogues. In our qualification program in 2016 both groups in a primary school have participated together in a series of three modules. Overall we intended to establish an atmosphere of mutual understanding. We provided instruments for training empathy through roleplays that enabled the participants to assume and experience the different perspectives of parents and educational personnel/teachers. Furthermore, they were trained in active listening and how to lead a successful dialogue in a systematic way. We developed conversational guidelines as an instrument providing support in every situation where constructive dialogue is needed. In the third module we deal with situations of conflict and how to resolve them.

The objectives for small scale change were that through the qualification, the participants, parents and pedagogues would...

- experience mutual understanding of the different roles of parents and educational personnel;

- learn and practice the method of active listening “Aktives Zuhören”;
- improve their communication and conversation competencies;
- overcome stereotypes of each other;
- feel empowered to express their needs and suggestions (parents);
- acknowledge parents as partners for the educational outcomes of students and communicate with respect (educational personnel);
- improve their understanding of the role and intentions of teachers and the school system;
- more often take part in parent-teacher consultations.

The objectives for large scale change were for the qualification to lead to:

- Improved dialogue between home and school
- Parents being enabled to identify with their school, participate in school activities more often and regularly communicate with their children about their learning and performance at school.
- Encouragement of schools and the educational system to gradually establish better school – parent partnerships.



## Theory of change

Why did we start this project that aims on bringing two different target groups together? As described in the review by Caroline Oliver, “Migrant Parental Engagement in Schools” it is necessary that parents understand the school system their children attend. On the one hand, they should know how to encourage their children to achieve better results, but on the other hand, they need to feel understood and that their own cultural backgrounds and special traditions are appreciated by their children. Parents with a migrant background live with concern that if their children become successful in the new culture, they might become alienated from their cultural roots and from their families. The educational personnel on the other hand, especially teachers, are qualified experts assigned by the dominant culture of a country to transport exclusively its values and traditions and current standards. They want to be respected with their function and assignments. As such, the question of power, distrust and fear is often present when both groups sit together and communicate about their children/students. Empathy, understanding and the common targets concerning the development of the child are necessary for a successful cooperation.

## Timing

During the last year, prior to and within the Action for Inclusion project period, a number of steps were expected to be taken to achieve progress on the small scale plans:

May 2015	Beginning of Cooperation with the Joachim Herz Foundation in Hamburg
June/July 2015	Pilot project workshops (1 and 2), in one school, the Frieda Stoppenbrink Schule
November 2015	Consultation and cooperation with the Red Cross on: “Project Neighbourhood Mothers”: “Improving the Dialogue in Families with a Migrant Background”
December 2015	Establishment of project targets, Action for inclusion action plan, planning of three workshops and design of the flyer: “Only together We are Powerful – Qualifications Offered for Parent Representatives and Pedagogues”

- January 2016 Consultation with the Information Center for Intercultural Education at Landesinstitut Hamburg and held interviews with leading staff and parent representatives to set targets and plan organization of qualification
- April 2016 Meeting of freelancers for recruitment
- March/April/May 2016 Three workshops (3 hours) held for parents and educational personnel at An der Haake, Primary School:
- Workshop 1: Active Listening and structuring the dialogue (conversational guidelines)
  - Workshop 2: Case studies and solutions (roleplaying)
  - Workshop 3: Communication strategies in conflicts

After the Action for Inclusion project period, the Agency for School Consulting plans to do the following:

- June 2016 Evaluate and revise the qualification offers with the Joachim Herz Foundation and devise plans for new workshops in 2016/2017.
- July 2016 Give presentation of the evaluation results of the project in a working group “Cooperation with Parents” in the Landesinstitut.
- July 2016 Publish article in Friedrich Jahreshefte: “Successful communication – Parents and Pedagogues Working Together” (Erfolgreiche Gespräche führen- Eltern und Lehrkräfte ziehen an einem Strang), Angela Kling. New priority to be inserted in the portfolio of Agency for School Consulting:” How to communicate and cooperate in your School successfully!”:Team training, effective meetings, feedback culture, collegial consulting, dialogue with parents.
- August 2016 Offer the qualification through being published in the program and on the website of the Landesinstitut Hamburg. Extend the offer to secondary schools.
- Recruitment of experts/trainers for future qualifications
- October 2016 Run a workshop at conference in Rotterdam: Better Together, “We improve the Dialogue between Parents and the Educational Personnel in our School and Region.”
- November 2016 Presentation of the project “Action for Inclusion” and facilitating a working group at Landesinstitut Hamburg: “Improving School – Parent Partnership in Hamburg”

## Consultation

We consulted the following groups in developing the qualification:

- Information Center for Intercultural Education: This organization advises schools on how to contact different kinds of migrant organizations and networks. On 2nd July 2016 both teams came together in a roundtable event to improve the intercultural cooperation in schools in Hamburg.
- Network for Teachers with Migrant Background. This is also since we plan a qualification for the teachers with a migrant background in June 2016.
- Migrant organization for African and Arabic migrants. Exchange of information.

- Project for Neighbourhood Mothers (Nachbarschaftsmütter) A workshop “Improving the Dialogue in Families with Migrant Backgrounds” took place in December 2015 with trainers from the Agency of School Consulting, informing this project.

## Achievements and Experiences

### Achievements

In our qualification program in 2016 both teachers and parents in a primary school have been participating together in the series of three modules.

In the pilot project at the An der Haake Primary School we found out through feedback collected at the end that we achieved the objectives for small scale change, through six workshops in a region inhabited by many families with migrant backgrounds. The next three workshops will be evaluated by the Joachim Herz Foundation in July 2016. The most important aspects were active listening and using the conversational guidelines in role plays and in authentic situations to find solutions in real cases. The workshops gave parents important practice, and included tips such as writing concerns down before a meeting with teachers; asking for answers, and using the conversational guidelines for preparation.

There have also been several unanticipated achievements associated with the action plan including:

- The publication of an article in a journal for teachers, Friedrichs Jahreshefte, “Erfolgreich Gespräche führen”, Eltern und Lehrkräfte ziehen an einem Strang, Angela Kling
- Workshop with the “Neighbourhood Mothers Project” Qualification: “Active Listening, Conversational Guidelines”
- Cooperation with the Joachim Herz Foundation

### Impacts

During the last 12 months 52 teachers have gone through this training program. Around 90% report that they feel better qualified in dealing with parents with migrant backgrounds. Also 92% of the parents who participated report feeling more involved and better prepared to help their children fully participate in the school system in Hamburg. Unfortunately 12 months is not long enough to observe perceivable changes in students’ results.

### Measuring

The qualification was measured through feedback forms, records of achieving certification among teachers and evaluation of project participants.

### Experience

The program was correctly planned and carried out. More time is always desirable as would be as an official assignment of supporting parents’ involvement in schools by the Landesinstitut, but this is not to undermine the success of the project.

## Challenges and Modifications

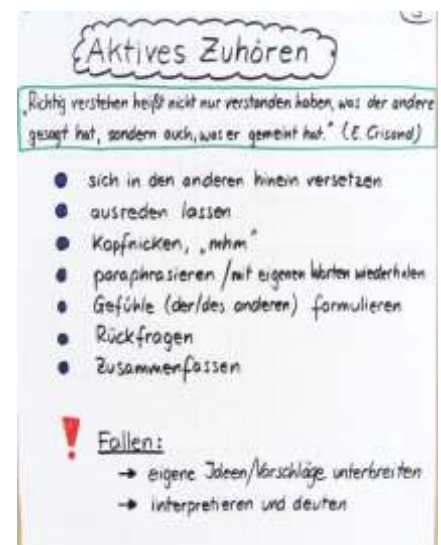
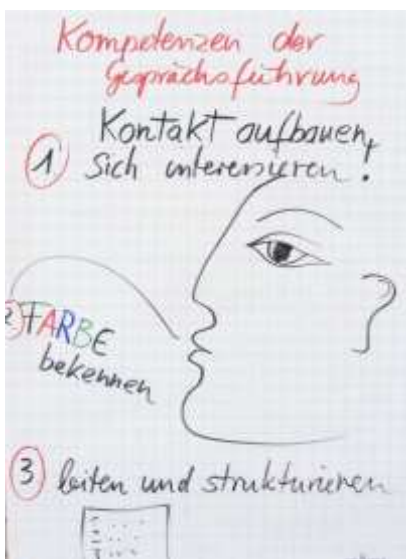
Challenges: The project was somewhat affected by the current crisis in Europe regarding refugees, which more urgently brought this issue to the fore and also prompted the relevant parties in the city of Hamburg



to take action. The Agency of School Consulting in the Landesinstitut Hamburg supports this process by publishing the results of this pilot project as well as the results of the European project “Action for Inclusion” and by suggesting ideas for further projects and activities. We did not encounter significant barriers to implementing the project and it met with enthusiasm among both teachers and parents. There were no major modifications needed.

## Further Plans

We intend to enlarge the program beginning in the next school year to include several secondary schools across Hamburg. Additionally the trainer qualification program will be expanded so that enough trainers are available when needed. We will also work together more closely with the Joachim Herz Foundation over the next period to continue in the development of this work.



## Progress Update Spring 2017

September – December 2017: Teacher Trainings for two Secondary Schools in Hamburg.

The trainer qualification program has been expanded, so that 8 trainers are available now when needed.

Close cooperation with the *Joachim Herz Foundation* in this school year

January 2017: article published in a Journal for Teachers, *Friedrichs Jahreshefte*, “*Erfolgreich Gespräche führen*”, *Eltern und Lehrkräfte ziehen an einem Strang*, Angela Kling

March 2017: Workshop with the “*Neighbourhood Mothers Project*” Qualification: “Active Listening, Conversational Guidelines”

April 2017: Workshop with Preschool teachers and other educational personnel, October 2016

Workshop at conference in Rotterdam: Better Together “*We improve the Dialogue between Parents and the Educational Personnel in our School and Region.*”

November 2016: presentation of the project “*Action for Inclusion*” and facilitating a working group at Landesinstitut Hamburg: “*Improving School – Parent Partnership in Hamburg*”



