

Preface International Week 2015

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Abstract

This preface gives an overview of the internationalization strategy of the University College of Teacher Education in Lower Austria and offers a summary of the International Week 2015 with the topic "Transition in Pedagogy, Inclusion and Research".

Zusammenfassung

Dieses Vorwort gibt einen Überblick über die Internationalisierungsstrategie der Pädagogischen Hochschule Niederösterreich und bietet eine Zusammenfassung über die Internationale Woche 2015 mit dem Thema „Übertrittspädagogik, Inklusion und Forschung“.

Keywords:

Erasmus+ Programme
International Week 2015
Pedagogy of transition
Inclusion and research

Schlüsselwörter:

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1 Introduction

Continuing professional development for teachers and academic staff of universities is at the heart of the European strategy for improving the quality of studies. The Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth and sport 2014 - 2020 is the main funding scheme for transnational teacher mobility. The University College of Teacher Education Lower Austria considers the participation in this programme an important contribution to the implementation of its own modernisation and internationalisation strategy and thus cooperates actively with European partner institutions in 30 countries of southern, central and northern Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Ireland, United Kingdom) in numerous projects, long-distance learning, as well as regular student and staff mobility. Additionally, a special priority programme helped to find partner universities in the eastern areas of Europe (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Poland). The selection of partner institutions is based on professional and qualitative criteria. The bilateral agreements with the School of Education of New York Mercy College, the University of Virginia's College at Wise, the Financial University Moscow and the Accra Training College in Ghana have expanded the European network.

All teaching and training activities of university staff in an international context are fully recognized by the institution. Students of the institution also benefit from transnational teacher mobility, whether directly – where they are involved in collaborative projects or in foreign school exchanges initiated by their teachers – or indirectly, when they are motivated to develop their own expertise to implement a more European or international dimension to education in their future careers. The integration of foreign-language related topics in the curriculum, information events and the annual "International Week" at the University College of Teacher

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Education in Lower Austria assembling teachers from partner institutions and university staff contribute to quality in teacher education and teacher training.

In June 2015 the University College of Teacher Education Lower Austria organised the annual "International Week" in cooperation with the Mercy College of New York, the Austrian American Educational Cooperation Association (AAECA) and the University College of Teacher Education Vienna. The conference focused on the topic "Transition in Education".

The term transition refers to four major points in time in the education system: when pupils move from kindergarten to primary school, from primary school to secondary school, from secondary school to vocational education or university and from vocational education or university to the professional world. While students experience other "transitions" during their educational journey - such as advancing from one grade level to the next - the four major shifts are particular focus areas for educators and school reformers because transitioning students often experience significant academic, social, emotional, physical, or developmental changes that may undesirably affect their educational performance. At the University College of Teacher Education in Lower Austria several researchers have specialized on topics like "Supporting Novice Teachers in their Transition Process", "Early School Leavers", "Neets (Not in Education, Employment or Training)", "Girls in Science", and "Language Competence for Successful Conversion". The dean of the University College of Teacher Education in Lower Austria, Erwin Rauscher, opened the International Week 2015 with the following words:

"To be, or not to be", that is the question of Hamlet by Shakespeare.
 But: Who am I? This is our question!
 It is a social question. And thereby it has become an eminent pedagogic question!

My very warm WELCOME to all of you coming from so many countries, especially from so far in the United States.

For a long week you will be all lost in transition.
 Only me, here and now ... I sometimes get lost in translation!

And so you might feel like getting a nasty surprise from my translation words, before you will be allowed to see and to hear the wonder of Auggi Pullman's world (in the play to be performed).

And after having watched the play by the New York dramatist Raquel Palacio, which is directed by Claudia Mewald from Lower Austria, we are invited to share the idea of "transition", as Andreas Bieringer from Upper Austria is interpreting, evaluating, teaching and developing this issue at our university.

And we put up the question: What kinds of transition (as a pedagogical question) do we have to ask for in terms of individuality and structural needs?

All together we are familiar with this subject: The free "I" has become a T-O-E, a theory of everything. And worldwide it has been shown in the shape of an apple: The "i" in iPod, iMac and iPhone stands for the big Ego. It stands for the entrepreneurial mind, for the corporate spirit of an individual person and for unlimited possibilities, as well as for boundless chances. The "i-Man", the "i-person", shows the persons own brand.

But what can that mean for school? When I was a student – a long time ago – the expectations of society to the individual were as homogenous as the pressure to meet these expectations. Anyone followed the expectations, obeyed the rules, anyone respected the standards ... Without much reflection, everyone went to church on Sunday and everyone took for granted what was broadcasted in radio and TV, no matter what was happening in the world.

Today, so it seems, we are damned to happiness, we are forced to be successful. We always are expected to be ourselves, to act individually. Individualism seems to have become our duty, our obligation.

And here I can find a paradox: The individual, the single person, paradoxically is pushed to adaptation and assimilation towards a big ideal, to be individualistic.

As a result, we find what I call "conformity of individualization": The blue jeans cannot be perforated and ragged enough. The yellow hat is worn inside out. The piercing on the lips is openly shown, and nevertheless the pierced girl will become a dentist. And still, there is something missing to become distinctive, to become unique. Isn't it similar for young teachers?

They should act self-controlled and rationally, at the same time, they should be charismatic and have passion as well as enthusiasm. Permanently, they should provide evidence for what they teach and verify their excellence. Moreover, they are diligently observed, monitored, evaluated, and assessed.

On the other hand, they are left alone, and they permanently have to choose and to decide, no matter if they know what for.

Since Aristoteles' time, mankind is acting based on the assumption that the ultimate goal in life is the quest for happiness, in ancient Greek for the so-called eudaimonia. However, in the ancient world, happiness was the same everywhere and as such, universally valid.

Nowadays, eudaimonia and happiness have become more and more subjective – representing a general term for the satisfaction of individual preferences. Everyone has his own dimension and point of view concerning his fortune and felicity. Everyone has his own form to become happy and be successful.

And now I would like to ask you to reflect for yourselves: Who and how do you personally want to be? This is not only the question posed by the protagonist August in the play, we are going to see today.

At this crossing – between tradition and modernity, between normative duty of everyone for society and individual desire for freedom – we also can find our schools. And so tradition becomes transition to a historic downfall – in German: Transition ist der Übergang des Untergangs!

Tragically and comically at the same time, I have to add, it is the transition from fear to mischief, from uncertainty to arrogance. Education, however, is not the transition from teenager to manager. And graduates need and want more than only transition from regulation to activity.

A good school needs and seeks for the transition from awareness to application. The first step in this kind of transition is curiosity. We know it from Socrates. The second step is disbelief, The third step is amazement. This is the reason, why transitions mark separation, as soon as they link. And still, neither nature nor a poet nor our school is in favour of abrupt transitions. If so, they would run the risk to become lost in transition.

The Austrian writer Maria von Ebner-Eschenbach already knew: There are no wonders for the one, who is not able to wonder himself. In German: Es gibt keine Wunder für den, der sich nicht wundern kann. And we – as teachers – have to believe in wonders every day. And every day in the classroom we are able to see/find them.

Teaching sometimes does not mean to explain wonders, but to repeat them. And a teacher, who appeases little wonders, this teacher is able to create a big wonder!

Today we are not modest: We already expect the wonder – although it is only on stage.

But with Shakespeare's words in "As you like it" we know: "All the world is a stage". Therefore, we will hear later, what research should be about. It should aim at building bridges between pedagogic transitions, and to avoid potential rifts between them. Then, we will be able to achieve small wonders, in which we can believe. And in order to not make you all wonder to much about what I tried to say with this translation of my "welcome words", I will leave the stage and open it for the transition to our play. So that you are able to witness the „wonder of transition“ – during this week of ours.

Once more: A very warm welcome to this international week here in Baden and Vienna – ... in which we should not forget: The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to grow sharper. And at this point, I will end with a quote from Franz Kafka, which for me as an old man shows a last hope and aspiration: "Youth is happy because it has the capacity to see beauty. Anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty never grows old."

Have a good time here in Austria!

After the welcome note all participants experienced the amazing performance of "Wonder", a stage adaptation of the novel by R.J. Palacio, written and performed by the sixth semester trainees of the secondary school programme and directed by Claudia Mewald, Sabine Wallner and Elisabeth Weitz-Polydoros. (Also see the project report in this journal.)

2 Lectures

Andreas Bieringer (Pädagogische Hochschule Niederösterreich)

Transition and Education at Pädagogische Hochschule Niederösterreich

The lecture presents the pedagogy of transfers and transitions at the University College of Teacher Education (Pädagogische Hochschule Niederösterreich) and gives an overview about twenty five current projects, which are focused on transitions in the school context, namely preschool, primary school, secondary school (lower and upper level) and tertiary level / world of work. (Also see the article in this journal.)

Pascal Perilo (Suor Orsola Benincasa University Naples, Italy)

Internship and Vocational Guidance Counselling

The author presents a model of organization for training activities that focuses on the educational professions and is based on "reflectivity" and "transformative learning". The intention is to show the organizational structure of a still ongoing experience performed by the internship-students. Considering reflection as a professional habitus, the research develops its theoretical and methodological framework on the basis of different points of references: Dewey's "theory of inquiry", Schön's "reflective practitioner" and Mezirow's "transformative learning". (Also see the article in this journal.)

Nancy Heilbronner (Mercy College New York, USA)

The Pink and the Blue: Separating Myth from Fact in Gender Research. Are boys better at mathematics? Do girls write better than their male counterparts? Gender stereotypes pervade most societies, but what do brain research and social science actually suggest about boys' and girls' cross-cultural learning aptitudes? This presentation will discuss different types of research surrounding gender issues, with a focus on periods of transition (e.g., from childhood to adolescence). Practical strategies for promoting the talents of boys in girls in the classroom in non-stereotypical ways will be explored. (Also see the article in this journal.)

Olga DeJesus (Mercy College New York, USA)

Helping Adult English Language Learners Transition into Postsecondary Education

Adult immigrants come to the United States with widely divergent educational backgrounds. Some learners come with graduate degrees - an engineer from the former Soviet Union, or a Somali law professor from Egypt. Many immigrants come having had little or no access to education - young men from Bolivia hoping to do something better than farming and processing coca. However, all English Language Learners can and should aspire to post-secondary education in the economy of the 21st century. Raising the consciousness of all adult learners to the American possibilities of a college education is part of the transition services from ESL to post-secondary education. (Also see the article in this journal.)

Vilmos Vass (University of Applied Sciences Budapest, Hungary)

The Transition of Creativity in Education

The basic motto of my lecture is based on Jonathan Plucker's famous statement: "The correlation to lifetime creative accomplishment was more than three times stronger for childhood creativity than childhood IQ." In the 21st century creativity has focused on the several parts of our life. For that reason, in the introduction part of my lecture, I would like to take some evidences regarding the Age of Creativity, namely the Arts, the Creative Industry, the Sports, the Psychology and last but not least the Education Science. On the base of the evidences of the Age of Creativity, at the first part of my lecture, I will focus on the coherency between creative knowledge transfer and the different transitions in education. Under the umbrella of this feasible coherency at the second part of my lecture I will analyze the process from "Old" via "New" towards "Deep Learning", stressing some stages of the information processing (searching, selecting, constructing, applying). To sum up this part of the lecture I would like to summarize the different levels of creativity, from mini-c to Big-C. From the interpretation and the problem solving (mini-c) to the redefinition and new approaches, the overlapped, core item is deep learning, which is based on the dominant psychological models on creativity: originality and task motivation.

Alfred Posamentier (Mercy College New York, USA)

The Transition to Enrichment in Mathematics Instruction - a Key Factor of Successful Teaching

One of the most neglected aspects of good instruction is to infuse enrichment activities and topics into the regular lesson. When students are motivated to the subject of mathematics they are far more receptive

learners. This presentation takes the theme of “transition” and applies it to moving seamlessly – transitioning – from the required curricular material to topics that enrich the content and motivate students. More effective learning is the desired result. The examples shown will be appropriate for a general audience. (Also see the article in this journal.)

Phillip Mittnik (Pädagogische Hochschule Wien)

The Transition of Teaching National Socialism and Holocaust from a Basic Level at Primary Schools to an Elaborated Level in the Lower Secondary

The presentation shows how the teaching of National Socialism and the Holocaust changes from Basic Level at Primary schools to an elaborated level at the Lower Secondary school. Austrian history textbooks for elementary school deal with these key concepts to a certain extent. In – the German – speaking scientific community it is not a matter of if (Beck 1996/97), but how the Holocaust should be taught to students at the age of 8 to 10 years. The transition to the 13 to 14 year old students will be focused in this talk.

Susanne Pind-Roßnagl (Pädagogische Hochschule Niederösterreich)

Supporting Novice Teachers in their Transition Process

The article presents the research on the support structure that novice teachers receive during their first few years on the job at Pädagogische Hochschule Niederösterreich. There is a group of 34 teachers, who do advanced studies for the first time in their first two years of teaching. Bentler and Bührmann (2005) tell, that knowledge, information, methods, techniques, reflecting about yourself, social contacts, support from outside and realistic valuation of your competences are important in transition processes. The aim of the presentation is to show, how the novice teachers deal with these challenges by reporting results of two surveys and e-portfolios. (Also see the article in this journal.)

Thomas Bauer (Pädagogische Hochschule Wien)

Erasmus+...and the Benefits of the Mobility Programs on the Employability of Students

Erasmus+ students are a fixed and integrated part of every Austrian University. The presentation shows how outgoing students benefit from their stay abroad for their later employability. The different actions are explained and some outcomes of the Erasmus impact studies of the European Commission are mentioned.

Petra Szucsich (Pädagogische Hochschule Wien)

Reflective Practice e-Portfolio / Open Badges

The presentation gives an overview of research and work on reflective practice with e-Portfolios and Open Badges. The major aim of the KidZ E-Portfolio Study 2014 (“KidZ” for “classroom of the future”) was to illustrate and analyze the use of e-portfolios at Austrian schools and to document and share experiences and good practice examples. The study included virtual interviews with teachers as well as possible implementation scenarios at schools and universities. The results of the study are available via an e-portfolio collection on Mahara.

Paul Schmidt (Austrian Corporation for European Politics Vienna, Austria)

World of Work: A European Perspective. Since the beginning of the economic and financial crisis in 2008, the youth unemployment rate has risen all over Europe. In some European countries like e.g. Greece and Spain it has reached up to 50% (15-24 years). In other European countries liege e.g. Germany and Austria youth unemployment is still relatively low. (Also see the article in this journal.)

Merethe Roos (Telemark University College Porsgrunn, Norway)

Training Skills in Critical Thinking in Teacher Education in Norway and Sweden

This paper will shed light on the gap between theory and practice in teacher education, aiming to discuss how this gap can be bridged. By shedding light on how knowledge can be developed in the intersection between teacher’s practice and the theoretical part of teacher education, the paper will discuss the formation of discourses, which are meaningful for both theory and practice.

Wendy Mages (Mercy College New York, USA)

Drama in Early Childhood

The presentation gives an overview about the use of drama in early childhood and its benefits for promoting language development. Educational drama is a fun and engaging method of promoting children’s language and

literacy skills. This is important because fostering children's language and literacy development in early childhood education can support their transition from prereaders to competent readers, and strong reading skills are associated with academic success. (Also see the article in this journal.)

Joyce Coppin and Linda Ochser (Mercy College New York, USA)

Making Effective Cognitive Shifts and Transitions from Teacher to Administrator: Emotionally, Socially, and Professionally

How can teachers leave the security and comforts of teaching to successful transition to the "other side of paradise" as a school leader? They learn "by doing". This presentation explores a succession – planning model for leadership training in school and community settings, conducted collaboratively with mentoring by practicing school leaders and college professors. Opportunities are provided for teachers to try new things, develop new behaviors, listen to peers, and apply what they learned in coursework.

Maruca Fabry and Sofie Vercauteren (Karel de Grote-Hogeschool Belgium)

GOAL-Experiment to Improve the Academic Performance of Bachelor Students

In September 2014 the Karel de Grote-Hogeschool started an experiment based on the study by Dominique Morisano, Jacob B. Hirsh and Jordan B. Peterson (University of Toronto, 2010). By setting up an experimental group and a check group in five different departments, research on the influence of setting, elaborating and reflecting on personal goals on the academic performance of students during their first year was done.

Zsuzsanna Szilvási (Kaposvár University, Hungary)

Foreign Language Teaching and Learning at the Different Educational Levels. Aims and Effectiveness

Foreign language knowledge is indispensable in the obtaining of a degree at a university or a college but in the working world, too. The lecture shows how far the Hungarian school education supports the pupils to get proficiency in one or more foreign languages. The article presents what is the function of the different educational levels and how they are founded on each other. (Also see the article in this journal.)

Bernadette Nagyházi (Kaposvár University, Hungary)

From School to the Working World. What the Teacher Trainees Expect?

The Faculty of Pedagogy at Kaposvár University makes an effort to expand the aspiring teacher trainees' opportunities in the working world. To help the students having a better chance for a job after graduation, the Faculty of Pedagogy started specialized courses to extend the future teachers' skills. The lecture shows the result of a survey made among the students of these special courses about their expectations: how the new knowledge and the new skills would give an advantage for them in the working world. (Also see the article in this journal.)

Witold Wolny (University of Virginia's College Wise, USA)

Global Education and International Programs in the USA: Recent Trends and Perspectives

International Programs at the university level in the United States are constantly growing. By the next 1-2 years, the number of international students enrolled in different colleges and universities is expected to reach 1 billion. There already are colleges that are requiring study abroad for graduation and more and more schools are seeing the internationalization as top priority. At the same time, there is a shift from traditional international programs based on the idea of bilateral agreements and exchanges of students and faculty, towards "global education".

Orsolya Richter (Eötvös József College Baja, Hungary)

Failures and Successes of 'Bridging' Programs in South Africa

The presentation is a brief analysis of the difficulties experienced by non-native English speakers when applying for further higher education and the attempts to ease this transition in the South African context. Although only 10% of approximately 52 million people living in South Africa speak English at home (native speakers), English is the language of education, government, business and the media; so to be able to communicate competently in English is vital.

Maria-Luise Braunsteiner, Irmgard Bernhard, Stefan Germany, Roswitha Lebzelter, Claudia Rauch
 (Pädagogische Hochschule Niederösterreich)

Inclusive Higher Education

Higher Education has to address diversity, inclusion and equity due to new law in Austria and critical to the implementation of the newly developed curricula for graduate and undergraduate programs. Making the University College in Lower Austria inclusive is thus an active process that requires building communities with colleagues and students to help integrate diversity, equity and educational quality efforts. Recently the Centre for Inclusion at PH NOE has constituted an open group – based on earlier initiatives and expertise – to discuss and promote the development towards an Inclusive Institution (identifying inclusive educational practices, discuss student access issues and high-quality learning conditions). Participants are warmly invited to share their experience with us and join our discussion. (Also see the article in this journal.)

3 Cultural Programme

On Tuesday the participants visited the Vienna Ring Road which was built during the 19th century and is a circular road surrounding the Innere Stadt district of Vienna. Many of the buildings that line the Ringstraße date back to the time before 1870. We saw the following notable buildings:

The Vienna State Opera (formerly K.u.K. Hofoper) in neo-romantic style by August Sicard von Sicardsburg and Eduard van der Nüll, the Palace of Justice (now Federal Ministry of Justice), the Austrian Parliament Building, in neo-attic style (a reference to the democracy of ancient Athens) by Theophil Freiherr von Hansen, the Town Hall (Rathaus) in Flemish-gothic style by Friedrich Schmidt, the Burgtheater by Karl Freiherr von Hasenauer, and the University of Vienna, in neo-renaissance style.

One group of participants visited the Vienna State Opera enjoying *Fidelio*, a German opera with spoken dialogue by Ludwig van Beethoven, his only opera. The work premiered at Vienna's "Theater an der Wien" on the 20th of November 1805. The opera tells how Leonore, disguised as a prison guard named "Fidelio", rescues her husband Florestan from death in a political prison. The scenario fits Beethoven's aesthetic and political outlook: a story of personal sacrifice, heroism and eventual triumph with its underlying struggle for liberty and justice, mirroring contemporary political movements in Europe. Some notable moments in the opera include the "Prisoners' Chorus", an ode to freedom sung by a chorus of political prisoners, Florestan's vision of Leonore who appears as an angel to rescue him, and the scene in which the rescue finally takes place. The finale celebrates Leonore's bravery with alternating contributions of soloists and chorus. Thus this opera demonstrates an interesting political transition in Europe.

On Wednesday the participants visited the Campus Melk, the monastery and Dürnstein. Melk has been a spiritual and cultural centre of the country for more than 1,000 years, first as a castle for the Babenbergs, then from 1089 as a Benedictine monastery, founded by Margrave Leopold II. Since the 12th century a school has been connected with the monastery, and valuable manuscripts have been collected and created in the library. In the course of the monastery's history, members of the Melk monastic community have achieved significant success in the fields of natural science and the arts. In the 15th century, the monastery was the starting point of one of the most important medieval monastic reforms.

On a bus ride through the Wachau, a picturesque landscape formed by the river Danube, the participants got to know one of the most attractive tourist spots in Lower Austria. They admired Dürnstein where King Richard the Lionhearted of England was held captive by Leopold V, Archduke of Austria after their dispute during the Third Crusade. Dürnstein Castle was almost completely destroyed by the troops of the Swedish Empire under Field Marshal Lennart Torstenson in 1645.

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