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Bedingungen vielfacher  
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# *Getting to the Starting Line of Improvement*

Case Studies on Schools Facing Challenging  
Circumstances in Areas Scarred by Deprivation

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## *Striving for Academic Success along with multi-risk conditions in segregated surroundings*

- The project is funded by the BMBF, the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research.
- The study is situated in the line of school efficiency research related to urban multi-risk surroundings.
- Its aim is to develop scientific knowledge about contextual factors of schooling in urban segregated areas.
- The data basis consists of interviews and group discussions with everybody involved in the process of educating children who live in the most disadvantaged communities.

# *Getting to the Line of Improvement*

- Due to the first results our presentation will focus upon two aspects which turned out to be major obstacles for the teachers working in this school.
  - 1) The teachers' core business is learning and teaching, but in order to meet their educational mandate they first have to establish a baseline of behavior.
  - 2) To complement the first aspect with a solution statement we secondly are going to illustrate divergent orientations among the teachers when trying to come to terms with their students.

# *Toothless Tigers – Their clientele and their core business*

*„...teaching is our core business.“  
„...so for the real lunatics, stick and carrot  
doesn't help any longer.“*

- The core business at the new school is teaching.
- Additionally the consensus among the teachers is that the daily routine of schooling is affected by students who impair, disrupt and make the process of teaching and learning impossible.

# *Toothless Tigers – Their clientele and their core business*

*Cm: [...] as we can see by now lessons almost aren't possible anymore in year seven. We are asked to answer back by using unconventional or even illegal methods which are not really supported by the law. Otherwise it doesn't work any longer. We have to think about how we are going to cope with this situation because we still have to be aware of the fact that beside all the problems it is our duty to support and to motivate these students who actually are willing to learn and who don't want to be dragged down by others*

*?w:           └yeah*

# *Toothless Tigers – Their clientele and their core business*

*↳ We are not able to answer back, we have no sanction measures anymore*

*Gm: ↳ This is exactly the way it is*

*Mw: ↳ I really think that we already worked off the penalty scale and at some point the last consequence is expulsion from school what we are not allowed to do any longer.*

*Gm: ↳ We have to come up with something new*

*Mw: You can call us toothless tigers*

# *Toothless Tigers – Their clientele and their core business*

- The common orientation is that rules and disciplinary methods function as sanction measures in order to get to the core business.
- Additionally, within the perception of the students as the essential impediment for realizing the educational mandate lies a central orientation among the teachers.



# *A baseline of behavior where children can learn and teachers can teach*

- *„...eventually we have to face the problem that we have to separate these students who cannot be schooled anymore“*
- The dichotomy of the students namely the „good“ and the „bad“ ones who „cannot be schooled anymore“.

# *A baseline of behavior where children can learn and teachers can teach*

*DL: Reconciliation room? Do you mind explaining it for me again?*

*Zm: L Sure, when a student is timed out of the lesson the reconciliation room is the place for him to go. There he or she can work alone with another teacher and you are able to continue your lesson with students who actually are willing to progress*

# *A baseline of behavior where children can learn and teachers can teach*

*Lm: but still the question remains (.) what is actually happening there? I've known schools where students really liked it to be sent to the reconciliation room – I mean if it truly happens this way then they won't care*

*└ mhm*

*Fm: └ and the question still remains- what is then the sense of such a room?*

*?w: └ well but once sent to the reconciliation room they have their worksheets to prepare*

# *A baseline of behavior where children can learn and teachers can teach*

*Ow:* well yes, but only if they get the worksheets from the teacher. It is too much (.) even when there are only two or three students in the reconciliation room, there is the rub (.) because working with them continuously or even keeping them busy is not possible anymore (.) at times there are six or seven of them in the reconciliation room – then all hell is let loose

*Fm:* └ well yes but then we  
should think about the sense of the reconciliation room (.) the pretention of such a room is not to provide high quality lessons – this is impossible (.) usually there are about 14 students who have to be supervised at once.

# *A baseline of behavior where children can learn and teachers can teach*

- Basic motive: the dichotomy of the students and their influence on the teaching and learning process
- Purpose of the reconciliation room: the removal of annoying and troublesome students from the lessons
- A „collecting pond“ for the „bad ones“

# *A baseline of behavior where children can learn and teachers can teach*

- An orientation in consideration of separation and integration by means of spatial structures
- A certain incongruity concerning the (educational) sense of the reconciliation room

# *Summary of results*

- The teachers are apt to divide their students into two parts.
- Educational regularities and discipline were characterized as the basic preconditions in order to carry out their lessons.
- The consequence was the desire of adequate sanction methods and therefore the requirement of an efficient reconciliation room.

## *Conclusion – what have all these orientations in common?*

- The perception of ones' capability of acting with regard to the core business
- All the orientations aspire to the restoration of the lost acting capability by effective sanction methods
- Fulfillment of the core business





*Thank you for your attention!*

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