

The Pathways of Young Migrants in the
Education System of Lower Austria and
NYC: Development of New Approaches
and Exchange of Practical Pedagogical
Models

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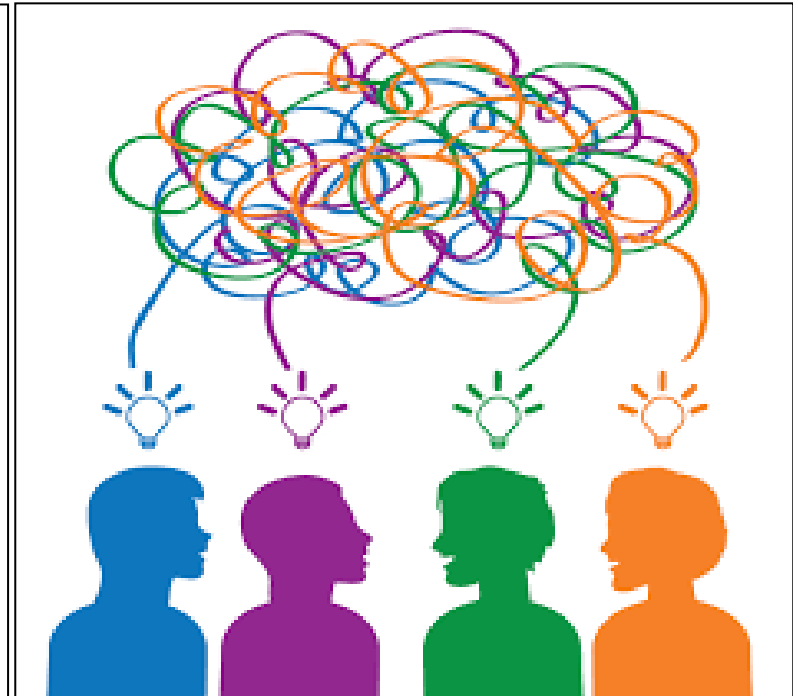
Identifying Shared Concerns

In August of 2017, the LIU Team from Brooklyn, NY and Karl Zarhuber, from University College for Education (PU) in Lower Austria came together to explore common concerns about Immigration trends in Austria and the United States.



Team Process

- We engaged in study groups in Austria and NYC.
- We met with key stakeholders: teachers, policy-makers, social workers, researchers, and advocates to enrich our work.
- Several field trips to schools, refugee centers, and policy experts informed us.



Key Groups and Stakeholders that the Team Consulted With

- Children's Village, NYC
- Jessica Gorelick, LCSW, Human Rights First, NYC
- International Rescue Committee, NYC Headquarters
- Study visit of the Gymnasium in Horn
- Study visit of the NMS Hirtenberg, Austria
- Trip to St. Pölten, Austria
- Study visit at the Refugee Centre, NMS Traiskirchen
- ICMPD - International Centre for Migration Policy Development, Vienna
- School Board of Lower Austria (Landesschulrat)
- MiM-Group (Migration and Multilingual), Lower Austria
- Meetings and workshop at the University College for Education (PU) in Baden. Pedagogical University

Study Objectives (Austria Study)

The joint research project is a semi- comparative study (NYC and Lower Austria) aimed at

- opening new approaches to the understanding of migration,
- learning from each other,
- developing and exchanging practical examples that help school partners to deepen the issues of migration, integration, inclusion.

Study Goals and Expected Outcomes (Austria Study)

- 1) Develop a Toolkit for all partners involved in education.
- 2) Work resource oriented: Identify what were successful experiences and strategies of all target groups to build on it for future success.
- 3) Advocate for schools and education: schools are doing an excellent job on including refugees and migration to the school communities which has strong relevance for the entire society: advocate for the important role schools and education play for a peaceful migration society (Advocacy is included to the Toolkit).

Research Questions (Austria Study)

What are the factors of success in personal and academic growth and development?

How education (school) contributes to personal growth and development?

Research Method

- The Austria Study is based on qualitative research methods. Group discussions based on a guideline derived from the Socio-Ecological Model are being used to collect data.
- Two persons for each group: one to record and take notes and one to facilitate group discussion.

Data Collection and Sample Study (Austria Project)

- **Group discussion**
- **Students / age group 10-14 years (secondary 1) – max. 3); max. 25**
- **Students / age group 15-18 years (secondary 2) – max. 3 groups (in Austria; max. 25**
- **Alumni / age group 17 plus – one mixed group (secondary 1 and 2); duration of stay not limited**
- **Teachers / diverse: headmasters, teachers, school board, parents, educators; 8-12 persons**

Theoretical Framework (Austria Study)

We selected the Socio-ecological Model as the Theoretical Framework for study as a means of conceptualizing factors that influence wellbeing and social functioning among school age migrants.



Social Ecological Model (SEM) Levels

Guide Focus Group Questions

Individual

Characteristics of an individual that influence behavior change, including knowledge, attitudes, behavior, self-efficacy, developmental history, gender, age, religious identity, racial/ethnic identity, sexual orientation, economic status, financial resources, values, goals, expectations, literacy, stigma, and others.

Interpersonal

Formal (and informal) social networks and social support systems that can influence individual behaviors, including family, friends, peers, co-workers, religious networks, customs or traditions.

Community

Relationships among organizations, institutions, and informational networks within defined boundaries, including the built environment (e.g., parks), village associations, community leaders, businesses, and transportation.

Organizational

Organizations or social institutions with rules and regulations for operations that affect how, or how well, for example, educational services are provided to an individual or group.

Policy/Enabling Environment

Local, state, national and global laws and policies, including policies regarding immigration, the allocation of resources for access to healthcare services and education, restrictive policies that limit resources.

Sample Questions for Students

- 1. How are you doing in school? Do you like school? What do you like?*
- 2. What do you like to do together (as a class)? Why? Who or what has supported you most at school? Why/How?*

Lessons Learned

We Found that Successful International Collaborations are based on Principles of Intercultural Competence

- **Mindfulness:** the ability of being cognitively aware of how the communication and interaction with others is developed. It is important to focus more in the process of the interaction than its outcome while maintaining in perspective the desired communication goals.
- **Cognitive flexibility:** the ability of creating new categories of information rather than keeping old categories. This skill includes opening to new information, taking more than one perspective, and understanding personal ways of interpreting messages and situations.
- **Tolerance for ambiguity:** the ability to maintain focus in situations that are not clear rather than becoming anxious and to methodically determine the best approach as the situation evolves. Generally, low-tolerance individuals look for information that supports their beliefs while high-tolerance individuals look for information that gives an understanding of the situation and others.
- **Behavioral flexibility:** the ability to adapt and accommodate behaviors to a different culture. Although knowing a second language could be important for this skill, it does not necessarily translate into cultural adaptability. The individual must be willing to assimilate the new culture.
- **Cross-cultural empathy:** the ability to visualize with the imagination the situation of another person from an intellectual and emotional point of view. Demonstrating empathy includes the abilities of connecting emotionally with people, showing compassion, thinking in more than one perspective, and listening actively.

References

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It's A Small World!



Thank You for Your Participation and Hospitality