

Germany's next top-literacy workers!

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Abstract:

It is the main target of the Bundesverband Leseförderung to establish best-educated pedagogues of reading and literature comprehension as „Literacy Workers“ all over Germany to achieve a way of furthering reading skills and motivation and the comprehension of literature successfully and with a long term effect.

Der vor 7 Jahren gegründete Bundesverband Leseförderung hat sich zum Ziel gesetzt, best ausgebildete „Lese- und Literaturpädagogen“ als „Literacy Workers“ in ganz Deutschland einzusetzen, um Leseförderung pädagogisch - und damit langfristig und nachhaltig abzusichern.

Keywords: Furthering of Reading, pedagogic, literacy, Professional network, Germany

Germany's Next Top-Literacy Workers!

It was on the Leipziger Book Fair in 2009 when a dedicated team of women had the marvelous idea to found the „Bundesverband Leseförderung“ (BVL) offering a unique platform for efficient networking throughout Germany. From the very first moment these women were convinced of their concept of developing an excellent further education to “Top Literacy Workers”. Well, the indicated analogy with the popular TV-contest “Germany's Next Top-Model” does not mean to compete with all those pretty, super slim young girls. It rather emphasizes the conviction that the idea is definitely good and of high importance. Since the foundation all members have worked persistently to realize the initial idea in a professional way - although the payment still is far from being appropriate.

„We dedicate ourselves to help children and youths to learn to understand the world and hence to be able to take part in shaping it.“

This was and still is our motor and motto.

What brought women of so different sectors all around books together was a deep discontent with the vagueness what „Leseförderung“ (furthering or supporting reading) in Germany should mean for an adequate selection of literature or methods of literary education. What were the criteria for furthering of reading and writing skills or measures for reading motivation to be?

The primary aim was quickly formulated: All projects and activities of any kind ever in the field of “Leseförderung” were to obtain a solid pedagogical base. Only by an approach of that kind they would become efficient, sustainable and could be made ready for follow-up projects.

The need for such an approach had become clear in the context of PISA still revealing poor results concerning Literacy and Reading Competence in the German education system. Due to those results some important educational reforms took place. They show a marked change in understanding learning, particularly in acknowledging the special significance of Literacy as a core and meta-competence.

In various researches the disappointing discrepancy between well-financed projects and their modest success for the children and youths with regard to their long-term effect had been shown. So the Bundesverband für Leseförderung started to follow a decidedly different path apart from the practice of a kind of “event culture”. It focused on a nation-wide sound education of multipliers being able to further reading skills and motivation. Pedagogically and literary well educated multipliers would be more successful in introducing literature to children and youths and their – hopefully – life-long work would have a lasting effect. Four years long a team of members from universities, schools, libraries and book trade developed a curriculum consisting of five modules. Completed by an oral exam and a final paper the further education “Pedagogic of Reading and Literary Comprehension” is equal to a master degree.

Pedagogic of Reading and Literary Comprehension (BVL)

Pedagogics und development- mental psychology 68 Units	Children's literature 164 Units	Planning, organisation, PR and management 36 Units	Narrating, reading out and writing 48 Units	Literacy and didactics of reading 76 Units
Academic basics of pedagogical practice 4 Units	Selection of present children's literature according to topical and aesthetic criteria 40 Units	Development of project schedules (quality loops: planning, performing, evaluating, improving) 8 Units	Vocal training/training of presentation skills 16 Units	Reflecting on personal reading experiences and skills 4 Units
Basic knowledge of devel- opmental and education- al phases according to age and gender 8 Units	Forms of literary expression and creative educational methods 40 Units	National and important international institutions working on children's literature 4 Units	Techniques of reading out to children and youths 8 Units	Step-stones of children's language and literacy acquisition 16 Units
Methods in motivating reading/settings of learning for different target groups 8 Units	Market overview 8 Units	Finding and establishing cooperation opportunities 4 Units	Theory and practice of narration 8 Units	Reading socialisation 40 Units
Professional pedagogical dialogue 4 Units	Current Media 32 Units	Basic knowledge and training of PR-skills 8 Units	Creative writing 8 Units	Methods of supporting reading 16 Units
Reinforcement of social skills (self-assertiveness, conflict-management) 8 Units	Academic basis of literary studies on children's literature (analysis, genres, varieties of style literary criticism) 40 Units	Legal basics (laws concerning the protection of children and youths, text and image rights, price maintenance, Contract and event law) 8 Units	Additional modules	Additional modules
Basis of adult education 8 Units	History of children's literature 4 Units	Fundraising 8 Units	<p>The course is divided into phases of face-to-face teaching (356 units), self-study (660 units) and practice phases (400 units). 56 units may be selected individually in case of documented professional knowledge.*</p> <p>Good practice in pedagogic of literature and reading support needs thorough preparation and follow-up work. Therefore 111 units of the 400 practice units are intended for and acknowledged as conceptual work. At least 89 of the remaining 287 units are dedicated to literary work with children and youths. All further units should be based on children's literature.</p> <p>*This is not the case if you sign up for the complete course 1 Unit = 45 minutes</p>	
Additional modules	Additional modules	Additional modules		

Description and Analysis of an Own Practice Project (individual task)

Final Colloquium on Pedagogic of Reading and Literary Comprehension (BVL)

Different institutions all over Germany offer the courses. On the basis of a profession in the field of pedagogics or a profession affine to books and literature any person can take part in this qualification. Professionals from all of these different fields of work are particularly experienced with the various kinds of difficulties children and youths have to cope with on their way to literacy – and therefore on their way to participate in social life. In any case „Pedagogues for Reading and Literary Comprehension“ will not be limited to unpaid volunteer involvement anymore. Instead, as “Top Literacy-Workers” they will be acknowledged to take part in important educational affairs. An efficient network is a precondition for all the BVL targets. That is why the BVL works together with other organizations, institutions and school libraries – of the latter there are still too few.

To name some of the BVL activities:

Literacy-Workers try to motivate and support non-professionals to take over pedagogically planned projects. So they can give even more children and youths the chance to experience literature. They also back up volunteers to highlight the pedagogical impact of their work in a self-confident way.

The BVL frequently presents its work on fairs and conferences – such as the IASL in Maastricht – and seeks to maintain an active dialogue with experts from pedagogics, science and other fields or institutions. The „Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft Schulbibliotheken“ in Hessen“ may be named as one example.

Interchanging or providing partners with accomplished experts and speakers in theory or practice is one of the most requested services of the BVL throughout Germany.

Since 2014 the Bundesverband für Leseförderung is also member of the European Literacy Policy Network and has been rewarded for the so-called „Warterich“ as a pilot project. “The Warterich – Books against boredom in waiting rooms” is a book – reading – literature campaign providing waiting rooms with a unique piece of furniture containing picture-, and children’s books. In practice that means that a box of well-chosen books can be ordered by institutions generally having to plague children and their parents with waiting time (at doctors’, in hospitals, at social welfare places etc.). It makes an end to boredom in waiting areas and fills the time with profitable impressions. The name “Warterich” refers to the logo - a funny fancy figure attracting children that’s name could be translated as “The Waiting one” or better “The Waiting-Me”.

“The Warterich” invites parents and their children and of course people of all ages - to read or read-aloud, flip or browse through a variety of inspiring books. Especially deprived families with or without a migrant background will thus have easy access to good books and literature. The campaign raises awareness towards local policy makers and funders that literacy is also linked to social and health issues and not solely an educational matter.

To close the circle: Concerning the professional contents as well as the ambitious aims our „Germany’s Next Top Literacy Workers“ are no slim models but rather well nurtured and sound – something to be proud of for our “Casting Crew”.

Biographical Note

Bettina Trwsnick was born in Dresden and grew up in Munich. She studied library science as well as music science in Stuttgart. Throughout her career she has worked and gained broad experience in all kinds of libraries and has been managing the Phantastic Library Wetzlar since 1989. Bettina Trwsnick is a foundation member of the Bundesverband für Leseförderung (BVL)

The Phantastic Library Wetzlar holds the largest collection of children’s books worldwide. As a member of the board of the BVL she engages herself for national as well as for international projects. The BVL further education on Pedagogic of Reading and Literary Comprehension takes place in her Library in the “Forum Language and Literacy”, a pedagogical department specialized on all facets of children’s literature, language(s) and literacy. By her direction the Phantastic Library has been developed to a center for social, cultural, scientific and pedagogical issues.