

**TARGET**

Primar, Sek 1, Erziehungsdirektionen

**KEYWORDS**

- > Didaktik der Mehrsprachigkeit
- > Multilingual approach
- > Didactic of plurilingualism
- > Integrated multilingual curriculum

## FIRST EXPERIENCES WITH A MULTILINGUAL APPROACH IN THE PASSEPARTOUT PROGRAMME

Die Studie untersuchte wie Primarschullehrpersonen die Umsetzung des neuen Ansatzes der Didaktik der Mehrsprachigkeit im Projekt Passepartout erlebt haben. Die Daten von acht Lehrpersonen, die Englisch als zweite Fremdsprache an einer 5. Klasse unterrichteten, wurden gesammelt. Die Auswertung zeigte auf, dass Lehrpersonen sich sehr eng an die Anleitungen im *New World Lehrerhandbuch* hielten, um den neuen Ansatz einzuführen. Es zeigte sich auch, dass die Lehrpersonen vor allem Zeit benötigen, um überhaupt einen Überblick über die neuen Lehr- und Lernmaterialien, sowohl für Französisch als auch für Englisch, zu erhalten. Zudem brauchen die Lehrpersonen Zeitgefässe, um sich über die neue Sprachendidaktik auszutauschen, um zu reflektieren und um mit andern Sprachlehrpersonen zusammenzuarbeiten. Die Ergebnisse führten zur Anregung der Schaffung von *Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)* um zwischen den Sprachen, zwischen den Schuljahren und auch zwischen Schulen, Brücken zu bauen.

Susanna Schwab-Berger



Susanna Schwab-Berger is a lecturer at Bern University of Teacher Education (PHBern). Her special interests are mostly in connection

with foreign language pedagogy and how research (as well as theory) can find its way into the classroom. One of her current research projects focuses on vocabulary in a multilingual approach.

**PHBern**

Pädagogische Hochschule

**Context**

In 2006, the six cantonal ministers of education from the cantons BE, BL, BS, FR, SO, and VS (all located along the language border between the Swiss-German and the French speaking part of Switzerland) signed an intercantal agreement to implement the new National Language Strategy (EDK, 2004). They named the resulting project *Passepartout* and agreed to combine their efforts in five major domains:

1. The development of a new curriculum for foreign languages (Years 3-9)
2. The design of a methodology concept
3. The design of new course materials for French and English
4. The requirements for teacher profiles
5. The professional development programme (PDP) for preservice and in-service language teachers.

The new curriculum for French (first foreign language, as of Year 3) and English (second foreign language, as of Year 5) and the new methodology concept were mainly based on theories of constructivism and third language acquisition. The

focus of the study described was on the reform from a monolingual to a multilingual approach to language teaching. *Passepartout* defined the multilingual approach as follows:

*Languages are not learned and taught in isolation. Instead, many links are made, through language comparisons, language sensitisation and language reflection. This has an effect on the curricula, the teaching aids and the cooperation of the teachers.* (Passepartout, 2008, p. 13)

During the piloting phase of the new teaching materials, external evaluations were conducted (see *Passepartout* website). The third pilot study was of special interest to the study as it was conducted in the school year 2011/ 2012 when the new teachings materials for English, named *New World*, were piloted at grade 5. The evaluators concluded that the *New World* materials offered few links to the French materials and rarely required learners to use their experiences and resources from learning previous languages.

### The study

The purpose of the study described in this article was to explore how teachers experienced the implementation of the new multilingual approach in their classrooms during the implementation of the new Passepartout curriculum when English is taught as the second foreign language at primary school. A qualitative case study was used to collect data from interviews and classroom observation of eight teachers at eight different primary schools. The main research question was how teachers perceived the introduction of a multilingual approach in their classrooms in the first year of the Passepartout programme. Data analysis revealed that teachers reported having implemented the multilingual approach by closely following the instructions provided in the *New World Teacher's Book*, but required more time to conceptualize the teaching materials and to collaborate with other language teachers. As the research was conducted during the first year of the implementation, some of the findings were no surprise given the extremely short preparation time teachers had available because the teaching materials were only published during the summer break, a few weeks before the new school year began. The findings prompted the development of a project to establish professional learning communities (PLCs).

In answer to the main research question, teachers explained that they had introduced the approach by following the *New World Teacher's Book* like a recipe book. The research findings indicated that the multilingual approach was not well understood by teachers and was not (yet) being implemented in creative ways. Some teachers maintained that the

multilingual approach was not as important as teaching English and that learners wanted to learn English and not other languages in their two lessons of English a week. These teachers did not seem to consider integrating learners' previous language learning experiences and resources as useful when teaching English as a second foreign language.

Time constraints was a topic that all the teachers mentioned but for slightly different reasons. Some teachers wished for more time to get to know the new English materials, others mentioned time to look at the French materials learners used in Year 3 and Year 4, and some would like time to collaborate with the other language teachers at the same school. A further topic in connection with time was technology and the available infrastructure. The unrestricted use of at least three computers/laptops in each classroom was on the wish list mentioned by three teachers. Teachers and learners would then not lose time moving from one room to the other or for setting up technical resources during their lesson time.

In order to successfully introduce an educational reform such as the Passepartout programme, the findings of my study suggest the creation of professional learning communities (PLCs) across grades, across languages, and across schools. For a successful introduction of an integrated multilingual curriculum, teachers need to collaborate, discuss and exchange their instructional strategies across all languages and across grade levels. Teachers need to be given time, time to collaborate, time to reflect, and time to exchange their teaching practices in an organized and structured way.

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Link zum vorgestellten Projekt:  
<http://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1762&context=dissertations>

Link zum Projekt Passepartout:  
<http://www.passepartout-sprachen.ch>