Teaching Adolescent Struggling Readers
European Research Findings About Good Practice

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Introduction

- From PISA-Shock to European Educational Benchmarks: Adolescent Struggling Readers in European Countries

Research Findings from a European Project

I Introduction

From the PISA-Shock 2000 to the European Educational Benchmarks:
Some Basic Informations about Adolescent Struggling Readers in European Countries
What is PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment)?

- an international comparative study of the OECD conducted in three-yearly cycles (2000-2009)

- assesses a) the performance of 15-year-old students in basic competences/subject domains (narrow focus) and b) further skills such as learning attitude, self-concept and learning-strategies (large focus)

- focuses on how students apply knowledge in new situations

- collects context data (school, parents and students)

- assesses and queries representative samples in all participating countries (4,500 - 10,000 students per country)
Who takes part in PISA?

Participating countries in PISA 2009

Share of global economy: 87%
„PISA assesses how far students near the end of compulsory education have acquired some of the knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in society. In all cycles, the domains of reading, mathematical and scientific literacy are covered not merely in terms of mastery of the school curriculum, but in terms of important knowledge and skills needed in adult life. “

(OECD 2001:14)
PISA‘s concept of reading literacy:

"Reading literacy is understanding, using, and reflecting on written texts, in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate in society."

(OECD 2002: 25)

→ Functional and pragmatic approach to reading
PISA-results: What caused the „PISA-shock“ in Germany / Europe in 2000?

Results of selected countries on the reading-literacy-scale:

Finland
Canada
NZ
Australia
Norway
France
USA
OECD-mean
Spain
Germany
Portugal
Russia
Mexico
Brasil

500 = statistic mean of all OECD-countries

(PISA 2000, p. 107)
### PISA-results: Share of students at the five competence levels in reading literacy 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of students</th>
<th>OECD Ø</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Finland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At level V</td>
<td>9,5</td>
<td>8,8</td>
<td>12,2</td>
<td>18,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At level IV</td>
<td>22,3</td>
<td>19,4</td>
<td>21,5</td>
<td>31,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At level III</td>
<td>28,7</td>
<td>26,8</td>
<td>27,4</td>
<td>28,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At level II</td>
<td>21,7</td>
<td>22,3</td>
<td>21,0</td>
<td>14,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At level I</td>
<td>11,9</td>
<td>12,7</td>
<td>11,5</td>
<td>5,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below level I</td>
<td>6,0</td>
<td>9,9</td>
<td>6,4</td>
<td>1,7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Almost 25% of the German students are struggling readers
- About 10% belong to the students at risk (performance below level I)…
  - …2/3 are male students
  - …most of them attend middle- or special schools
  - …50% of the students have a migration background

(OECD 2002, p.195)
PISA-results: Performance-gap between boys and girls 2000

-60 -40 -20 0 20 40

Brasil  Mexico  Spain  United States  Canada  Finland  New Zealand  OECD-mean  Latvia
Reading  Mathematics  Science

Girls perform better  Boys perform better

(Selection, PISA 2000, p. 107)
PISA-results: 42 % of the German students do not read for fun / PISA 2000

(PISA 2000, p. 114)
„Adolescent Struggling Readers“ according to PISA

- „It is most likely that adolescents who fail to reach competence level II by completion of school, will experience their further opportunities in life as restricted.“ (OECD)

- ADORE partner countries who have failed to reach competence level II (according to PISA 2006):
  - FIN: 4.8%
  - EST: 13.7%
  - PL: 16.2%
  - CH: 16.4%
  - B: 19.4%
  - G: 20.1%
  - H: 20.6%
  - A: 21.5%
  - N: 22.4%
  - I: 26.4%
  - RO: 53.5%
  - Ø OECD: 20.1%

- In PISA 2000, 17.9% of the students in the United States scored at or below competence level 1
Five Education Benchmarks for Europe

1. **Low achievers in reading**
   By 2010 the percentage of low achieving 15-year olds in reading literacy in the EU should decrease by at least 20% (compared to 2000).

2. **Early school leavers**
   By 2010 a share of early school leavers of no more than 10% should be reached.

3. **Upper secondary attainment**
   By 2010 at least 85% of 22-year olds in the EU should have completed upper secondary education.

4. **Maths, science & technology graduates**
   The total number of MST graduates in the EU should increase by at least 15%, gender imbalance should decrease.

5. **Participation of adults in lifelong learning**
   The EU average level of participation in lifelong learning should at least reach 12.5% of the working age population (25-64 age group).
Low achievers in reading

In the EU (comparable data available for 18 countries) performance deteriorated from 21.3% low performers in reading in 2000 to 24.1% (girls: 17.6%, boys: 30.4%) in 2006.
II Research Findings from a Europ. Project: ADORE: Teaching Adolescent Struggling Readers

• The idea behind the project
• Participating institutions and countries
• Project work-plan

• First phase: What are the differences and commons between the participating countries?
  • National Positionpapers about educational systems and discourses

• Second phase: What is considered as “good practice“ in the different countries?
  • National research on examples for „good practices“

• Third phase: Observations - What are key elements for a “good practice” in a transnational perspective?
  • Transnational team visits, analysis, and evaluation

• Fourth phase: Analysis of Findings - Dissemination of Conclusions
  • Defining key elements and finding agreement in conclusions for teachers and politicians
The idea behind the ADORE Project

**Socrates topic**

Better understanding of the phenomenon of poor reading skills and poor readers in order better to combat the problem
(a) Point out effective methods / exchange of findings concerning good practice
(b) Identify objective criteria for establishing the quality of “good practice” cases

**Needs**

- Open a dialogue between European experts on reading and reading instruction (University / Schoolteachers)
- Evolve a common awareness of the types of manageable problems connected with encouraging reading
- Ask questions such as:
  - What kind of instructional approach proves effective?
  - Which criteria and standards gain transnational consensus, which do not?

**Objectives**

- Developing evaluation criteria for elements of good practice
- Identifying methods of good practice concerning struggling readers’ needs
- Establishing a network of reading researchers and practitioners in the field of adolescent literacy
Participating institutions and countries

**Project Participants (Project Syndicate)**

- **Core Partners**
  - Belgium: Univ. Liège
  - Estonia: Univ. Tallin
  - Finland: Univ. Jyväskyla
  - Germany: Univ. Lüneburg (coordinating partner)
  - Hungary: FS Kecskeméti
  - Norway: Univ. Stavanger

- **Corresponding Partners**
  - Switzerland: Zentrum Lesen der PH FHNW Aarau (self financed)
  - Germany: HLF Frankfurt
  - Italy: IRRE L’ Aquila
  - Poland: Coll. Lodz
  - Romania: Filocalia Foundation Iasi
  - Austria: Pädagogische Akademie Wien.

**Additional Participants**

- **External Adviser/Evaluator**
  - International Reading Association: Prof. Donna Alvermann

- **External Reading Professionals**
  - U.S.A.: Dr. Cynthia Greenleaf, Ruth Schoenbach, SLI WestEd, Oakland, California

**Other Experts**

- Publishers, Educational Authorities etc.
## ADORE Project Workplan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identification of consensus or dissent governing central concepts and reference systems on reading</td>
<td>Workshop I (3 days, March 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Presentation of national models of good practice</td>
<td>Workshop II (3 days, September 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Carrying out the trans-national case studies</td>
<td>Research visits (March 2008 - June 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Analysis report on the trans-national visits, planning of final publication (“Handbook of Methods/Models of Good Practice in European Countries”)</td>
<td>Board-Meeting (2 days, end of June 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Presentation, evaluation and reflection of the case studies</td>
<td>Final conference in Lueneburg (5 days, October 2008)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Editorial meeting (2 days, Jan. or Feb. 09)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Dissemination of the findings</td>
<td>International Handbook, national publications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First Phase: Position papers on reading literacy and national educational systems

- Compilation of papers on national positions concerning: “Reading Skills / Reading Literacy“ - Central Concepts and Reference Systems / Educational Systems in all participating countries

- Discussion of the papers during the first workshop in L’Aquila (Italy) in March 2007

- Working definitions for „Adolescent Struggling Readers“ (ASR) and for „good practice“
Who are the „Adolescent Struggling Readers (ASR)“?

Adolescent struggling readers belong to the 12-18 year age group but we include: pre-adolescents (10-12 years, 5th and 6th graders) and post-adolescents (18 - 20 years).

Their reading obstacles are mainly in the areas of:

- Decoding, reading-fluency and adaptive reading,
- Reading comprehension in general and/or in specific domains,
- Critical reading, interpreting and evaluating content, language, textual elements,
- Digital literacy, online research skills,
- Meta-cognitive skills for reading and/or learning critical reading and reflection,
Who are the „Adolescent Struggling Readers (ASR)“?

Their reading obstacles are mainly in the areas of:

- Creating and using communicative contexts for reading activities within families, peer-groups and school-environments,
- Motivation for learning to read better and/or for reading to learn more effectively,
- Reading-engagement/motivation; building up a stable self-concept as a reader,
- Activating and altering the reader’s point of view while reading (aesthetic vs. efferent stance according to Rosenblatt); responding to literature/fictional texts.
Basic Model I
Five Levels of “Good Practice” (Jan. 2008)
Second Phase: National Research on “Good Practice”

Deductive Research Method - e.g. in Switzerland

• **Directly approaching** well-known, potential cooperation partners in technical colleges or schools, further educational institutions and administration

• **Compilation** of presentable reading promotion projects (ca. 10) in research centre

• **Criteria** for the selection of examples: Focus on (pre-)adolescent struggling readers
  - Focus on (pre-)adolescent struggling readers
  - Focus on lowest educational level of secondary school (i.e. middle school)
  - Evaluated projects
  - Scientific foundation
Inductive research method - e.g. in Germany:

- **Approaching** all 16 Ministries of Education and Culture, all educational servers, all 16 state institutes for teacher training courses, all German didactic colleagues via SDD (Symposium Deutschdidaktik e.V.) mailing list and other networks

- **Returns:** ca. 50 replies

- **Criteria for** selection of examples:
  - Suitability for (pre-)adolescent struggling readers
  - Pedagogical intervention addresses at least two problems directly
  - Description of such intervention suitable for analysis.
Third Phase: Trans-national visits

- 3 Trans-national teams created from 12 project partners

- Team members visit other countries and observe 2-3 examples of “good practice” there

- Trans-national teams discuss these examples and analyse them (looking for “key-elements” of good practice)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team 1</th>
<th>Team 2</th>
<th>Team 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Germ-L.</td>
<td>CH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germ-F.</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Tools

- Evaluation of curricula, research overviews, statistics etc. (Guidelines for document analysis)
- Questionnaire about reading materials
- Observation sheet for classroom practice
- Guidelines for interviews with teachers and students.
Example from the transnational visits

Key-incident: reading environment
Example from the transnational visits

Key-incident: reading environment
Fourth Phase: Systematization of findings and experiences

- Evaluation of the material collected in phase 3 and findings from trans-national groups

- Conference-meeting of the publication board (one member per core-partner) in Lueneburg (June 2008):
  - Compilation of key-elements of good practice for ASR
  - Development of a basic model for systemic reading tutoring of ASR
  - Recommendations for further evaluation/preparations for final conference
Findings: One superior goal and 15 key-elements of good practice for ASR

Self-concept and meta-cognitive knowledge of students: supporting students’ self-confidence and self-efficacy

1. adequate reading materials
2. teacher expertise: quality of teacher training and professional development
3. multi-professional support at school level
4. financial and legal resources at all levels
5. national reading research that matters for practice (transfer)
6. classroom practice that involves students into texts
7. reading engagement and students' involvement in planning the learning process
Findings: One superior goal and 15 key-elements of good practice for ASR

8. (meta-)cognitive reading strategies

9. diagnostic / formative assessment in the classroom

10. teacher-student-interaction has to be based on respect and care

11. inspiring reading and learning environments

12. teacher participation in school programmes

13. community support and involvement in reading promotion programmes

14. national conditions of education policy / national curriculum

15. information & communication technology / media literacy as part of reading literacy.
Basic Model II: five-level model of “good practice” (discussion in progress)

1. Basis: The personal dimension: Building up a stable self-concept as a reader

2. The level of classroom-practice

3. The level of school-programmes

4. Public or private initiatives to promote reading (at different levels)

5. The level of municipal, regional or national educational policy
IV Findings and Conclusions - our Basic Model of Good Practice

- National educational values and curricula
- National evaluation systems
- School programmes and intervention strategies
- National legal and financial resources
- Multiprofessional support
- Supporting students' self-concept and self-efficacy
- National reading instruction research
- Community support
- Teacher participation
- Teacher training and professional development
IV Findings and Conclusions: 8 Key elements for good classroom practice

- Students' involvement in planning
- Cognitive strategies
- Students' involvement in texts
- Reading Material
- Classroom Environment
- Teacher-Student Interaction
- Formative Assessment
- ICT / media literacy

Supporting students' self-concept and self-efficacy
IV Findings and Conclusions:
8 Key elements for good classroom practice

- Classroom Environment
- Students' involvement in planning
- Reading Material
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- ???
- Supporting students' self-concept and self-efficacy
- ???
IV Findings and Conclusions: 8 Key elements for good classroom practice

- Classroom Environment
  - Cognitive strategies
  - Students’ involvement in planning
  - Reading Material
  - Formative Assessment
  - ITC / media literacy
- Teacher-Student-Interaction
  - Choosing learning media
  - Performing activities / approaches
  - Assessing students’ achievement.
- Traditional Teaching Unit
  - Defining achievement objectives
  - Choosing learning media
  - Performing activities / approaches
  - Assessing students’ achievement.
Choosing learning media

Identifying students’ needs

Defining achievement objectives

Performing activities / approaches

Monitoring students’ achievement.

Classroom Environment

Teacher-Student-Interaction

Identifying students’ needs

Defining achievement objectives

Performing activities / approaches

Monitoring students’ achievement.

Classroom Environment

Teacher-Student-Interaction

Identifying students’ needs

Defining achievement objectives

Performing activities / approaches

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### Central Constraints for Good Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acquisition of Reading Literacy</strong></td>
<td>Elementary grades only (learning to read)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary grades too (reading to learn)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolescent Struggling Readers</strong></td>
<td>Non readers with insufficient motivation readers with special needs to overcome obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional Ideas</strong></td>
<td>Content oriented (learning of)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competence oriented (learning for)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers’ Knowledge of Literacy Instruction and Diagnosis</strong></td>
<td>Only language arts teachers/reading specialists All teachers in all content areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Materials in Language Arts Curricula</strong></td>
<td>Canonical literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Authentic texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading Research and Knowledge Transfer into Practice</strong></td>
<td>Casual cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Systematic cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Values and Systems</strong></td>
<td>Achievement principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial / Legal Resources</strong></td>
<td>Financial resources only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal rights for individual support also</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

Legal right for individual support

Literacy across the curriculum

Evidence-based adaptive instruction

Formative assessment
Thank you very much for your attention!

Further Information and contact:

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