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## **Action Competence of Teachers through Diversity**

### **Introduction**

The Christian image of humanity is based on diversity: each individual is unique. For this very reason educational strategies in schools are based on central key concepts such as appreciation, care, tolerance, humanity, the strengthening of dialogue subjectivity on behalf of the learner as well as the teacher, these key concepts draw a baseline of what is to be understood under the Christian image of humanity (cf. Pirner 2008, S. 92). The expected learning ability of the student is something which also belongs to the ideal teaching framework. Education is not only restricted to the transmission of factual knowledge. It is to a greater degree the transmission of orientation knowledge in conjunction with information and important know how, which is imperative for the students in order for them to live an independent and autonomous way of life as well as enabling them to participate in the social environment (cf. Härle 2004, S. 74). The Christian image of humanity respects the diversity of human qualities, as well as personality profile and boasts a holistic view for the people so that they can recognize this diversity, respect it and take it seriously (cf. Pirner 2008, S. 96). A preexisting understanding of the holistic view means that one is aware of the many dimensions that construct a human being. Schools which profess the Christian image of humanity are therefore against a one-sided promotion of human dimensions in favor of mercantilist theories of education in the classroom.

## Conclusions/ (Repercussions) for Teaching

### 2.1 Social diversity and heterogeneous education contexts

Such structured lessons must create a place of meeting, where education can develop significantly and transcend the limits of standardized learning so that it goes beyond the contemporary relevance and education is understood as a process. In addition this process attempts to include ethical and religious horizons in which key topics such as life skills as well as possible ways of coping with life situation are taught (cf. Klafki 1993, S. 54). The lesson is thus a simultaneous orientating element for the successful handling of variety and diversity.

Consequently it is permissible to establish a way of teaching, which favors the social diversity within heterogeneous learning groups. Understanding this form of teaching is said to be pedagogically ethical as it aims in particular to empower students to be able to cope in heterogeneous social systems as well as take responsibility for certain social-democratic challenges.

In turn it is to be understood, that a homogenization of learning and achievement levels is excluded in the classroom. Self-determination, social responsibility, as well as the growing up with knowledge of certain key issues as well as being able to actively participate in the shaping of a socially fair society with equal opportunities characterized by heterogeneity and plurality is denied to individuals as early as their school enrollment and participation in the school environment.

### 2.2 Diversity Management in Schools

The challenge for the school is to provide conceptual responses to the daily practices that appropriately recognize and promote the diversity of individual talents possessed by students as well as their individual characteristics. A successful diversity management guarantees equality, equal treatment and a culture of recognition for the positive benefits of diversity. Diversity management particularly emphasizes the value of the uniqueness of human beings, insofar as it emphasizes a rejection of the promotion of homogeneous learning groups. Alone, the awareness that a pedagogy based on diversity, allows each individual

to develop uniquely so that within this diversity the potential can be seen rather than the problems, this requires a creative potential to overcome and tackle the major issues facing humanity (cf. Prengel 2006) and implements a potential-orientated pedagogy.

Based on a modified school model there is room to discuss a potential-oriented pedagogy as a structural-organizational response to diversity and heterogeneity in schools. (see Figure 1). As a result schools would experience benefits:

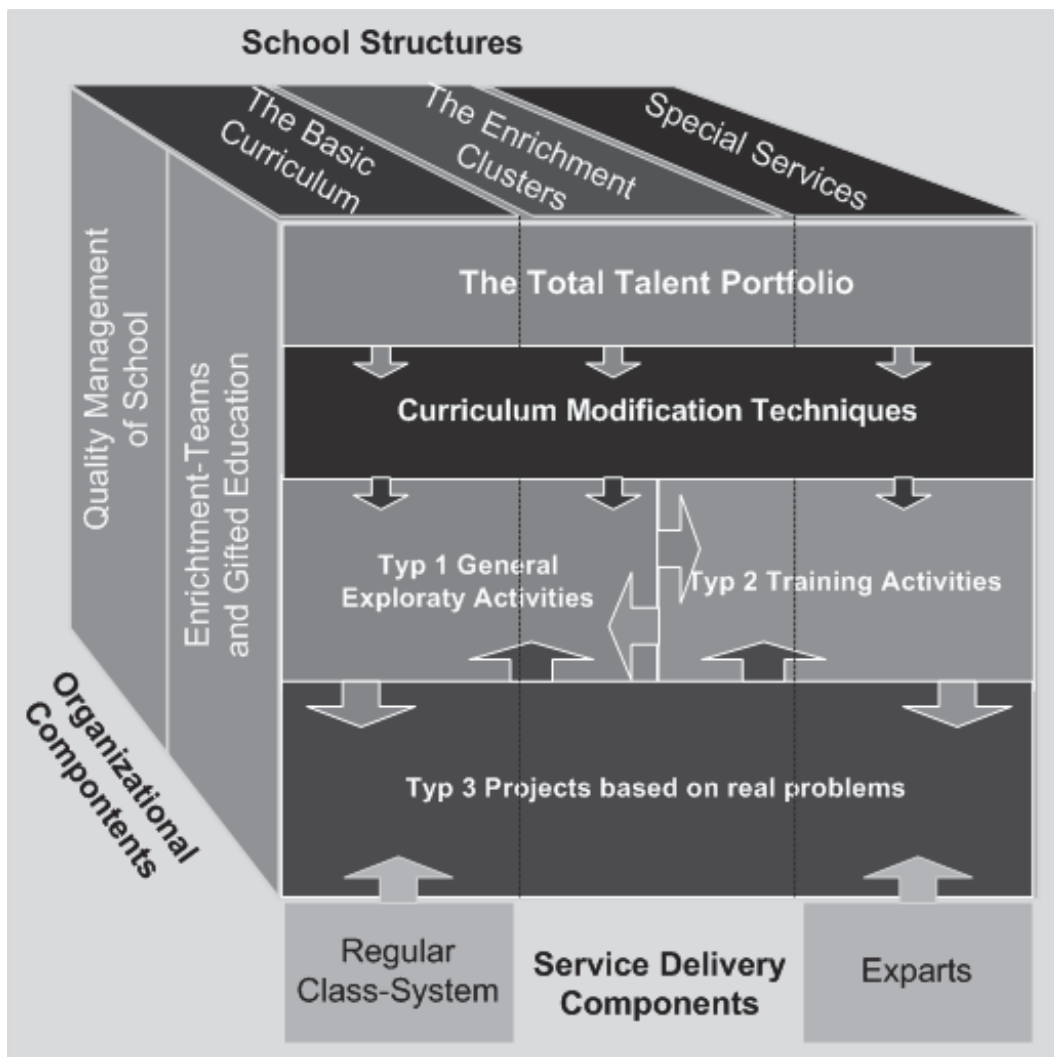
By being able to capture the strengths of each student and systematically promote and target potential talents;

Student performance can be improved across all subjects;

The professionalism of teachers is extended;

The growth of a learning community in which diversity and mutual respect with democratic principles and respect for natural resources can be formed;

A school culture can be developed which is built upon participation as well as enabling discussion making abilities.



**Fig . 1: School model potential-oriented pedagogy**

**Source: Rausch 2013.**

Such a model draws on key considerations of a subjectivist-constructivist learning culture (cf. Dubs 1997, S. 31-32), that no longer revolves around the teaching attitude or behavior of the teacher but rather the learning behavior of the student which is the focal point within the classroom environment. Even though there is a basic understanding that a learning culture which revolves around the student or learner is an important characteristic for successful dealings with diversity and heterogeneity in the classroom, the promotion of indi-

vidual talents cannot be favored in subjective-constructive learning methods.

The teacher's competence in dealing with diversity takes on an important role seeking to implement a mixture of teaching methods, materials and actions all designed to target different purposes. Didactic guidance principles remain within this model of methodologically subjectivist-constructivist art with the main aim being to give the students the ability to individually interpret their own life and meaning.

### **Diversity Managing as Teachers Competence**

The potential-oriented education model is a distinctive way of presenting the prospects for a successful diversity management, and depicts Managing Diversity as a teacher competence. It is helpful to concretise the three-step enrichment. With reference to the learning material, the three-stage enrichment offers support, as well as a talent portfolio and the adaptation of the curriculum to a central contribution for a successful diversity management within the school. The three-stage enrichment is based on the ideas of John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Maria Montessori or Albert Bandura, just to name a few (see Renzulli, Reis, Stednitz 2001, p 39) and can be concretely seen in the following principles (see Renzulli, Reis, Stednitz 2001, pp. 39-40) :

Each learner/student is unique, that is why teaching and learning should be conducted whilst taking the abilities, interests and learning style of the individual into consideration.

Learning is only sustainable when it is pleasurable or fun. Therefore, in the planning and evaluation of different learning experiences, the joy of learning is as equally weighted as other aspects.

Learning is important and personally worth more, when the learning content (knowledge) and learning processes (thinking skills, research methods) within a current context of a real problem, can be acquired. Therefore learners/students should be given the opportunity to per-

sonally select significant problem areas and apply real problem-solving techniques to solve them.

Enrichment- learning can include a certain amount of formal instruction. A major goal of this learning, however, is to formally apply acquired knowledge and skills in a personally relevant context.

Four main points achieved by the three-step enrichment (see Fig. 2) compared to uncoordinated within-class grouping are:

First it deals with various methods of a lesson-related support of giftedness: eg. Working with curriculum as well as free activity (cf. Achermann 1992), project-based learning (see Bastian et al. 1997) or weekly scheduled classes (see Strote 1985).

It allows a systematic, goal orientated internal and external differentiation.

It ensures permeability along different talents within different fields of learning and therefore opens the opportunities for each student to participate in extracurricular enrichment activities.

Lastly it grants the transferability of activities, actions and learning arrangements in terms of economically planning lessons in other „network“ schools, as well as promoting collaboration between school teams and outside partners.

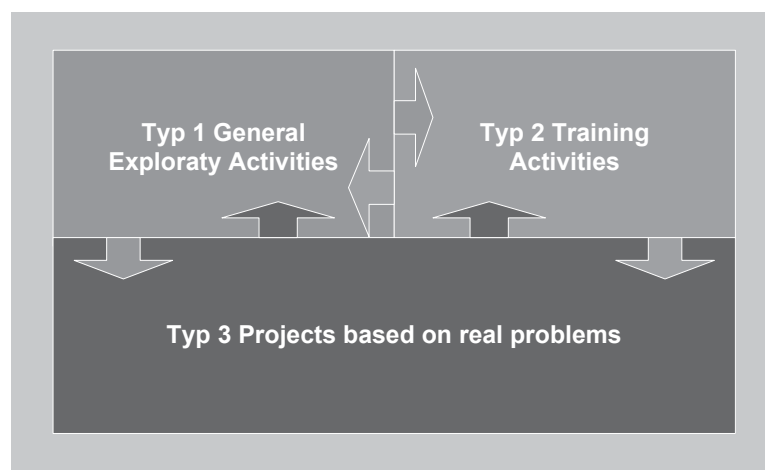


Fig. 2: 3-Step Enrichment  
Source: Renzulli 2001.

Overall this model shows the unfolding of a high level of independent learning, which results in the fact that knowledge is linked and applied and, in the case of the presentation also reflected and analyzed.

### **Managing Diversity in the Classroom**

Managing diversity as a method in the classroom is a holistic approach, originating from the management theory and is associated with a positive approach to diversity. Managing diversity always aims to tap into the social and organizational diversity and difference of an organization and its stakeholders in a productive manner in order to redesign systems. Goal of successfully managing diversity in the classroom is to make gender, race, color, age, impairment / disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief, marital status, parenthood, education, professional prior experience, etc. visible to students and to increase their awareness in order for them to create new ways of thinking and acting.

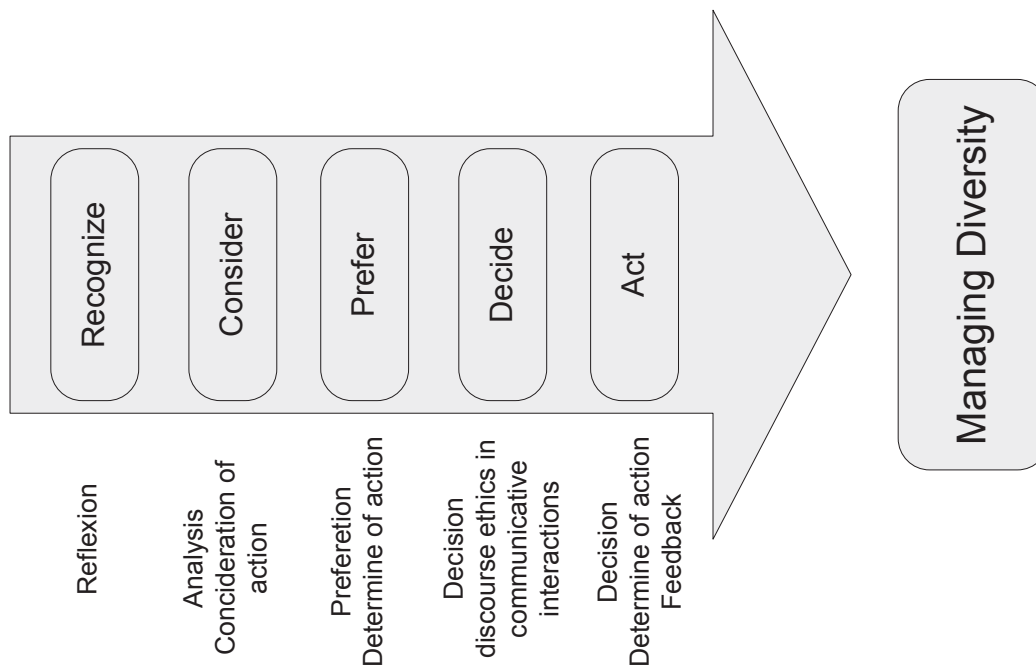


Abb. 3: Actionsteps in conflict situations.  
Source: Rausch; Schwendemann 2012.

In conflict situations, methodical steps can be outlined in the context of concrete learning activities, which are also suitable as indicators of diversity management skills of the teacher (Fig. 3).

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