



“One Square Kilometer of Education” in the Reuter neighbourhood (Neukölln district, Berlin)

“One Square Kilometer of Education” is a long-term (ten-year) programme running a learning and development platform for individuals and institutions across Germany with responsibility for the successful education of all children and adolescents in an urban district or a rural community.

The “One Square Kilometer of Education” programme was initiated towards the end of 2006 by the Freudenberg Foundation, the Karl Konrad and Ria Groeben Foundation and the RAA Berlin in cooperation with the Berlin Senate Department for Education, Science and Research. Since then, the Linden Foundation and the BMW Stiftung Herbert Quandt have joined the initiative.

The aim of the “One Square Kilometer of Education” project is to invest in a local alliance for education, identify and close gaps in the support provided to children by the educational institutions of the district, and ensure a high level of understanding between day-care centres, youth welfare centres and schools.

“One Square Kilometer of Education” was first started in the Reuter neighbourhood in Berlin’s Neukölln district in the spring of 2007, the Moabit district of Berlin following in 2008. Being geographically close to one another and imbued with basic structural and procedural features which can be easily transferred to other “Square Kilometers”, the two projects in Berlin have become spearhead projects. Germany-wide, the programme has since been launched in the cities of Wuppertal, Herten, Mannheim, Hoyerswerda and Bernsdorf.

Berlin’s two “Square Kilometers of Education” are located in the two very similar districts of Neukölln and Moabit. Each has a population of 18,000 to 20,000, the majority of whom are poor, have immigrant backgrounds and depend on government subsistence payments. Both are part of the “Socially Integrative City programme”, having joined in 2002 and 2000 respectively. Consequently, there have for some time been many efforts made to promote urban development and reform the local education structure. Here “One Square Kilometer of Education” is faced with a situation that can be found in many other places as well: not only are conditions extremely problematic, the many different approaches initiated to solve these difficulties often compete with one another, are not long term, focus only on short sections of the educational process or do not have broad support in the educational institutions. In both districts, “One Square Kilometer of Education” is concerned with correcting such failings within existing projects. In Neukölln, for example, it works in schools and day-care centres with models of self-assessment, project planning and educational workshops as places to learn through discovery; in Moabit, the focus is on language skills and the inclusion of parents.



The partners involved in the project group themselves around a core school, always a primary school, and the day-care centres associated with that school. As a rule, primary schools are the educational institutions most closely connected to the neighbourhood. Primary school teachers tend to know relatively well where their pupils come from and where they go. Moreover, involvement of parents, learning methods not limited to grades or subjects, and a mixture of informal and formal learning arrangements have become established in primary schools more than elsewhere.

A pedagogical workshop is at the heart of any neighbourhood's "Square Kilometer" and represents the confluence of its learning, developing and supporting elements. The workshop is open to professionals, volunteers and parents all day. The responsibilities of the pedagogical workshop project team include working together with day-care centres and schools to change conditions as well as evaluation and quality development. The change managers need enough scope to be seen in the district and its institutions as people with external perspectives and, at the same time, as carers. Thus the project team and the workshop form a support system for the relevant neighbourhood and also cultivate the concept behind "One Square Kilometer of Education". The pedagogical workshop provides a collection of tools, processes and instruments for developing the quality of education, training personnel and improving organization in day-care centres and schools.

In Neukölln, for example, this means that "One Square Kilometer of Education" acts as an intermediary between the "Campus Rütli" project initiated by the municipality, which brings together various educational institutions in one area and the "Gemeinschaftsschule" (new comprehensive school), a project which stems from the recent reform of the education system. In this respect, it is viewed as a structure that ensures pedagogical quality and supports the teachers. It also means that "One Square Kilometer" is an integrating element between the relatively limited (in geographical terms) "Campus Rütli" and the broader educational alliance of the entire Reuter neighbourhood – a neighbourhood which is subject to complex changes and considerable variations in external involvement.

"One Square Kilometer of Education" focuses on people, children as well as adults, and institutions willing to learn and change something in their community. For regional government authorities, communities and foundations, this alliance offers a development platform for long-term engagement in the district. "One Square Kilometer of Education" thus places the needs of children and adolescents in the centre of attention and accompanies processes of change within families, institutions and communities. In doing so, it takes on a bridging and mediating function. "One Square Kilometer of Education" closes gaps and tries to find answers help restructure the way education is organized within a community.



Example projects from the Reuter neighbourhood – “No child, no adolescent will be lost”

MSA preparation courses

In 2005 the project for MSA courses (preparation courses for pupils wanting to receive their middle school diploma) started at the Rütli school in the Neukölln district of Berlin. Initiated by the intercultural mediator Dr Ahmad Al-Sadi and manned by university student volunteers – often also with a multicultural background – holiday camps were organised to prepare pupils for their final examinations. For four years, “One Square Kilometer of Education” has been supporting this initiative. These preparation courses help pupils to focus on their deficiencies, mainly in maths and sciences, and strengthen their skills. It started as a small course for a limited number of select students but soon developed into a course attended by nearly 60 percent of all pupils in year 10. Now, 24 university students teach 74 pupils in 34 German, English and maths classes. To ensure the quality of the courses and complement the way the subjects are taught in school, the tutors work closely together with teachers.

Scholarship programme

In June 2010 the first scholarships of “One Square Kilometer of Education” were given to six pupils from Neukölln. These scholarships honour the efforts of children and adolescents from the Reuter neighbourhood who attend Berlin’s first “Gemeinschaftsschule” (new comprehensive school). These efforts may have been shown in various areas such as music, sports and art. The important is that the children’s efforts have contributed to the development of their personalities. The scholarships are paid monthly and should be used for school or extracurricular activities. To ensure this, the scholars are accompanied by a coach who helps them to formulate their own goals. The coaches cooperate in this regard with the children’s parents as well as other teachers and pupils.

Temporary Garage at the Rütli Campus

The temporary garage is supported by “One Square Kilometer of Education” as another location that supports the job-related development of pupils from the Rütli campus. The idea was created when a 1950s tractor in need of repair was donated to the Rütli campus three years ago. The pupils and a local car repair shop are supposed to use the garage to fix the tractor and later auction it for a good price. In this way, they will earn some money to pay for spare parts and other old vehicles. The goal of this project is to increase the pupils’ technical knowledge, give them an insight into the working world and teach them how to engage in a communal project.

Pedagogical Workshop of the Nikodemus Day-Care Centre

The pedagogical workshop of the Nikodemus day-care centre was set up in 2008 to enable children to gain an insight into the world of maths and sciences. In these workshops, the children can experiment with every-day items and interesting materials and thereby increase their curiosity for a great variety of different phenomena and strengthen their learning and linguistic skills.

