

Burkhard Mielke:

The 3rd. ESHA Conference of the German speaking regions in Europe in Landau/Germany

It has in the meantime become a tradition that school leaders, presidents of the school leader organizations, representatives of school administration come together once a year to discuss the newest developments in education and to summarise the results of the conference in a declaration.

At the beginning the decision was to start with a regionalization project in ESHA

It was decided in Potsdam 2006 to give ESHA a new regional structure following the regional languages.

2008 in Basel (Switzerland) the Regional Coordinator, Margret Rössler, organized the first Regional Conference as a pilot project for the German Speaking Regions with participants from South Tyrol, Switzerland, Austria, The Netherlands and Germany. Now we have new partners from Hungary and Belgium. The second conference took place in Goldrain/Coldrano, organized by the South-Tyrol section of the ANP (l'associazione italiana dei dirigenti et delle alte professionalità). This year in 2010 we are meeting in Leinsweiler near Landau in Rhineland-Palatinate/Germany. First of all we have to thank the Board of the school leader association of Rhineland Palatinate and Theo Bauer for the perfect organization and the social program which gave us a good insight of the history and the culture of this part of Germany. It was a wonderful setting with endless vineyards, castles, walnut and chestnut trees and the special cuisine of the region.

The topics of the conference were Inclusion and the way to realize inclusion in general and especially in rural areas with small schools. And consecutively from our discussion in Goldrain the necessity for new models of school leadership with regards to senior and middle management.

The conference was opened by Theo Bauer, representing the hosting organization SVR, the ESHA Honorary President Dr. Burkhard Mielke, Margret Rössler, ESHA coordinator for the German speaking regions and Bernhard Jäger, President of the ASD.

The first evening started with a brilliant speech by Prof. Faber from “The German Association of Cities”. From the point of view as attorney she explained the difficulties and different possibilities of interpreting the Human right of Inclusion and the implementation of this Human right in the different countries. Following her interpretation there is no way not to implement this in all schools at least for more than 80 % of all handicapped students. This lecture was followed by an intensive and sophisticated discussion with short descriptions of the current situation in the participating regions. On a really high and impressive level the participants forgot the time for dinner and the discussion went on the whole evening.

The next day we had a lecture about the way schools can build up a network and find new forms of cooperation in rural areas under the thread of the demographic situation with less and less students and a low birthrate. Günter Drenkelfort replaced Armin Lohmann and held his speech about some areas in Lower Saxony and a model how schools can react and do the best for their students in the current situation. Following the experiences of the project “Autonomous Schools”, he stressed on regional networking of schools and new leadership models. One of them seems to be a good solution for declining schools: cooperation, based on a contract, between two or more schools and rotation of the school leaders role every two years, including each school, one

after the other. This principle of cooperation proves sustainable if the schools are not in competition with each other and it was a voluntary decision to work together.

This was followed by the Honorary President of the Finish School Leaders association Sure Fire, Jorma Lempinen. He studied once in Germany and therefore he gave a speech in German about the change of the Finish school system to an entire inclusive system without inspections based on trust and respect. Inclusion is feasible in cities and in very small schools all over in Finland up to Lapland- like the example and the results that Finland demonstrate. The inclusion of all kinds of handicapped children is taken for granted

The last day Burkhard Mielke and Margret Rössler presented the results of a worldwide survey about Vive principles, their role, status and working conditions and new tendencies, regarding the change to more autonomous schools and the new tasks and challenges for school management and leadership.

Therefore different forms of school leadership are being discussed worldwide. We think that autonomous schools need senior and middle management positions, with Deputies / Assistant Heads / Vice Principals and Heads of Departments.

School leaders prefer Vice principals in images' like: the tandem- working equally together, Pilot and Co-Pilot. the right hand of the Head teacher / Principal or The relay runner in the team, but only if there is a loyal and good working atmosphere and a high qualification of the vice principals.

The leadership models shift more and more from delegation to distributive leadership and full responsibility of each member of the team. This includes

also a redefinition of the corresponding roles of educational administration, inspection, consultancy and monitoring.

This survey and the Leinsweiler declaration will be published soon on the ESHA website. But besides the interesting discussions the most important is that over the three years a growing network has now been installed which is getting more and more influence and interest and makes ESHA work better everywhere, and therefore becomes better known and respected.

Next year from the 12.-14. of October the Hungarian German community will host the 4th ESHA Conference of the German speaking regions In Pécs/Fünfkirchen. The topic is the future function of government organisations in relationship to autonomous schools. We are really looking forward to this event.

Dr.Burkhard Mielke, ESHA Honorary President