

SOAL QUALITY DEVELOPMENT (SOAL-QE)- a culture of learning

The Kinderladen Maimouna is a member of the umbrella organisation SOAL ('social and alternative'), the 'Alternative Wohlfahrtsverband e. V.' ('alternative welfare association'). SOAL-members and the SOAL team in cooperation with lecturers of University of Cologne developed an autonomous quality development procedure that was orientated towards childrens' educational processes. The Kinderladen Maimouna is taking part in this procedure since 2005 because it is open to the concerns of Children of Colour, who are growing up in migrant conditions with multicultural and multilingual backgrounds. It supports the work of the Maimouna team: offering a wide range of experiences to the children, strengthen their competences and their selfconfidence. It also helps to achieve a good communication within the international team and towards the parents and contributes to a regular reflection of our daily work. SOAL's quality development activities are focused primarily on the needs, interests and creative concerns of the children: The adults give each child space and encouragement to help build up and develop his/her needs and interests. Before this is done, the educating staff observes the child for evaluative purposes. This ability to observe must be learned and assumes a capacity for self-reflection on the part of the educating person. The observation of the children, self-reflection and picking up on the childrens' creative concerns bring about a process of communication between each child, the group and the pedagogs. SOAL-QE is oriented towards the following childrens' rights:

- Children have a right to education from birth.
- Children have a right to pedagogs who reflect their educational behaviour.
- Children have a right to their own educational processes, which are acknowledged by adults despite often seeming puzzling and strange.
- Children have a right to topics, surroundings and materials that allow them scope to learn through discovery.
- Children have a right to pedagogs with a deep interest in a particular educational field.
- Children have a right to sustainable educational processes.

SOAL-QE combines these rights with reflective thought on how they can be supported pedagogically; it regards them as a didactic challenge. For this purpose, the employees of the Kinderladen Maimouna were trained in five modules in a continuous process lasting two-and-a-half years.

Module 1: communication and relation

how the pedagogs see themselves in pedagogical terms deals with the question of what determines the pedagogical behaviour and how pedagogical convictions shape their notions of how they should ideally handle children. The way they actually deal with children every day, though, only partially complies with these notions. Reflection on their practical work is therefore necessary to convince themselves of the professionalism of their own behaviour on a regular basis. – The educational work with the children depends on cooperation with colleagues and parents; this also requires regular reflection on the teachers' own behaviour if it is to succeed.

Module 2: biographical reflection

The "me-as-a-child" book is devoted to the experiences that the educating staff have been through personally during their own educational and upbringing processes. This is important because our

own practical educational and upbringing experiences form the basis of pedagogical thought. Changes in pedagogical thought and action go to the heart of these experiences and have to be harmonized with them.

Modul 3: perception of early childhood educational processes

If the educating work is designed to build on the children's resources, educating staff should gain some insight into what the children are thinking and experiencing. It is necessary to use a form of observation that sensitizes them to the different communication methods that children use to tell something about themselves and what they are thinking. That is why Module 3 devotes itself intensively to finding a perceptive and discovering form of observation, one that does not classify and categorise what is already known, but is geared towards finding out still undiscovered things about the child.

Module 4 : concept of specialization in different fields of education

If the children are teaching themselves, and we want to help this selfeducation process, they first need an environment that challenges them to be curious, ask questions and undertake independent exploration. Indoor and outdoor spaces provide opportunities for that. Where children start to ask questions, we can involve them in further-reaching educational processes. We need didactic notions and concepts to enable us to convert the children's perceptions into a far-reaching educational offering. When children test their skills and ask curious questions about the world, they need adults who can be pulled into their thoughts and actions as competent partners. This means that the educating staff must have an interest in one of the early childhood education areas where they feel competent in answering the questions posed by children.

Module 5 : rooms and equipment

It is the task of each „expert“ to find out the appropriate materials for each child and give his / her room a structure, that enables all children to explore and experience by their own.

In a 6th Module, the recorded results of SOAL-QE will be checked, the institutions certified and the sustainability of the children's educational processes developed further. The Maimouna team was certified for its quality development in 2007 , 2009, 2011, 2014, 2016 and 2018. This is not the end of our quality development. We are continuously working on our quality and adapting it to the special requirements of Children of Colour at the Maimouna Kinderladen.