

Children's Experiences in Learning Workshops-A Pedagogical Child Research*

Öğrenme Atölyelerinde Çocuk Deneyimler - Bir Pedagojik Çocuk Araştırması

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Abstract

Learning workshops as environments of self-directed and individualized learning have become common in German schools in the last few years. These learning environments were designed with the hope of improving the quality of the learning culture of educational institutions. They focus on the learning of the student, not on the teaching of the teacher. Because of its origins, learning workshops are places of reform. They allow teachers and students to rethink learning. Considering the general debate on improving the quality of teaching and schools, it seems natural to research the topic of learning workshops. Besides viewing learning workshops from the perspective of adults, the value of viewing the workshops from the perspective of children will be described in this paper. From a pedagogical point of view it is the heart of all education-related issues - how students learn best and which learning environments and learning strategies they need to develop individual skills. The children's perspective illustrates the subjective experiences of learning in a workshop - also in comparison with learning in the classroom.

Key words: Pedagogical Child Research, Perspective of Children, Learning Workshop, Learning Environment, Open Education

Öz

Kendi kendine öğrenme ve bireyselleştirilmiş öğrenme ortamı olarak öğrenme atölyeleri son yıllarda Almanya'da oldukça yaygınlaşmıştır. Bu öğrenme ortamları, eğitim kurumlarının öğrenme kültürünün kalitesini artırma beklentisiyle tasarlanmıştır. Bu ortamlar öğretmenin öğretimine değil, öğrencinin öğrenmesine odaklanmaktadır. Kökeni itibarıyla öğrenme atölyesi çalışmaları reform niteliği taşımaktadır. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin ve öğrencilerin öğrenmeyi yeniden düşünmelerini sağlar. Öğretimin ve okulun kalitesinin artırılmasına yönelik genel tartışmalar göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, öğrenme atölyeleri konusunun araştırılması oldukça doğaldır. Bu çalışmada öğrenme atölyelerinin yetişkinlerin bakış açısından incelenmesinin yanı sıra, çocukların bakış açısından da incelenmesinin değeri betimlenecektir. Pedagojik bir perspektiften bakıldığında, öğrencilerin en iyi nasıl öğrendikleri ve hangi öğrenme stratejilerini geliştirmeleri gerektiği konusu öğrenme ile ilgili tüm sorunların özünü oluşturur. Çocukların bakış açısı, öğrenme atölyelerine ilişkin bireysel deneyimlerinin sınıftaki öğrenme ile karşılaştırmaları içermektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Pedagojik çocuk araştırmaları, çocukların bakış açısı, öğrenme atölyeleri, öğrenme ortamı, açıköğretim.

* The term "learning workshop" depends on the German term "lernwerkstatt". Therefore the German theoretical background is used for explanation.

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Introduction

„...Our learning workshop creates a learning environment in which every student has the chance to develop from a passive to an active learner. Students appear from time to time as real experts for one topic. The cooperation between students and teachers is systematically encouraged. The learning workshop offers the environment for the students to achieve skills they need for active and independent learning. The tasks of the teachers change towards monitoring and guiding their students and a positive designing of a didactically prepared learning environment...“ (Statement of a German Principal)

One of the most famous studies concerning successful learning conditions is the Hattie study (2009). This meta-analysis includes 50,000 individual studies and analyzes the factors of influence on the learning of students. Hattie shows in this study 138 factors and sorts them from effectively relevant to harmful. He points out that learning is determined by children themselves: personal characteristics, motivation, self-concept, knowledge and cognitive conditions. On the other hand, the socio-economic status of parents also plays a central role. A key finding of the meta-analysis was that thirty percent of the success of learning depends on the teachers and their professional action. Particularly important is how teachers organize and structure their lessons.

Professional action means to see teaching and learning through the eyes of children. It should be included in lesson planning. Hattie (2009) therefore emphasizes the active role of the teacher as a designer of teaching and argues against teachers in the role of passive learning companion. A wide repertoire of teaching skills is necessary: a variety of methods, high expectations of learners, and cognitive activation in appropriate learning environments etc.

Learning workshops as environments of self-directed and individualized learning have become common in Bavarian schools in the last few years. These learning environments were designed with the hope of improving the quality of the learning culture of educational institutions. They focus on the learning of the student, not on the teaching of the teacher. Because of its origins, learning workshops are places of reform. They allow teachers and students to rethink learning. In this context, it is interesting to see how the findings of the benefits of learning workshops can be implemented into school practice. The didactical designs of learning environments, in which the learning processes of children are promoted, have to be reflected on and adapted.

Considering the general debate on improving the quality of teaching and schools, it seems natural to research the topic of learning workshop. Besides viewing learning workshops from the perspective of adults, the value of viewing the workshops from the perspective of children will be described. From a pedagogical point of view it is the heart of all education-related issues - how students learn best and which learning environments and learning strategies they need to develop individual skills. The children's perspective illustrates the subjective experiences of learning in a workshop - also in comparison with learning in the classroom.

In the curricula for primary schools, the competence orientation is currently being implemented. The active role of the learners in their learning process is the prime consideration. Therefore it is important to understand students' learning processes. For this reason, the perspective of students and their subjective experience of learning in a Learning workshop were investigated in this study. The statements of the students in particular and the testimony of adults about the students provided information about the importance of learning in the learning workshop. The study examined the phenomenon of learning workshop from the perspective of students and therefore falls into the area of educational children's research. The next section is an approach to the phenomenon of learning workshop.

On the Term Learning Workshop

First of all the term *Learning Workshop* (see Reich 2008) has to be defined:

"LEARNING" - learning is assumed to be not a linear process, which takes place at regular small steps, but often in surprising leaps in unplanned and non-conscious processes and often at unexpected times. The implementation of this learning theory and the use of individual learning opportunities demand self-directed learning and a changed role of the teacher towards a learning companion. In this way, the learner takes responsibility for his learning.

"WORK" - In order to allow the learning described above, learning must be process-oriented and product-oriented. The process and the product are both important. Working in a workshop implies dealing with different materials and hands-on-activities.

"SHOP" - Originally the workshop was a room in the school; later the workshop materials were packed up and mobile learning workshops were created (learning boxes, learning modules).

The form of teaching that takes place in a learning workshop is often referred to as "workshop classes". It is a form of open education. The term "workshop" implies the type of work that is done: children work simultaneously at different tasks, some alone and some in groups, and mostly without teacher guidance (Reichen 1991, 61).

The terms shown above describe a learning workshop as a stimulus-rich learning environment (VeLW 2009, 9). Hagstedt (1998) uses the term "designed learning environment". The work in the learning workshop is also featured as an educational interaction between learners and learning companions (VeLW2009, 7) Subsequently, for a better understanding of this term the meaning of learning environments and the understanding of learning in the learning workshop have to be described.

Learning in a Learning Workshop

Learning environments

Quality learning tasks can only be developed using a didactically prepared learning environment, which utilizes the ecological-systemic context of learning and development. A "good" learning environment takes into account the social-emotional climate, the educational action of the teacher, the introduced rules and rituals, the time and space design, the materials and the media - in short, everything that has impact on opportunities for participation and strengthening the learning confidence (Bartnitzky 2012, 30). This shows the importance of the necessity of designing learning environments that enable individual learning. Individual learning does not just mean individual work, but an active, interest-driven construction of personally significant knowledge in cooperation and dialogue with others. Students are active and support each other. Teachers guide, encourage, and facilitate the children's learning processes working with the students (Lang 2011, 6). Learning in a learning workshop has been linked to theories in the next section.

Theories in context of learning workshops

Discovery learning

Discovery learning is intrinsically motivated and active and is based on the personal relevance of learning processes. Piaget's findings on the active appropriation of the world by the creation of complex schemata and thinking concepts, as well as Dewey's work on the importance of experience in learning processes are theories on which the learning workshop is based. "Conceptual Change" (Max, Duit) and the "Moderate Constructivism" (Piaget, Dewey, Vygotsky) were also considered in the discussion of discovery learning. In discovery learning, children ask focused questions about the topic, investigate the topic in various ways, and finally, discuss their findings and observations (Zocher 2000, 25). This creates individual learning processes that consider the prior experiences and

skills of the learners. The students investigate topics on an appropriate level of complexity. Thus learning is all placed in the responsibility of the learner along with a learning companion and a learning group. Learning with all of the senses, learning with head, heart, and hand, using creativity in the learning process - all these aspects are united automatically in the course of discovery-based learning processes (Zocher 2000, 32). Students' motivation and the students' interest in successful learning are important considerations in the context of discovery. The influence of motivation and interest on student's learning will now be considered within constructivist pedagogy.

The importance of interest and motivation for successful learning processes

Assuming that the essential educational task of school is to interest students in the learning objectives, the question arises as to what extent the interest of the students can be aroused and to what extent the self-determined choice of the learning objective and its appropriation are important. Many teaching-related proposals for the promotion of favorable emotions, motivation, and interest can be related to the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (1993). This theory proclaimed three basic psychological needs: the sense of self-determination, competence, and social embeddedness.

To build intrinsic motivation and interest as well as positive motivation for learning, these basic needs must be met. Content and methodically open forms of education are hereby described as favorable to the experiences and feelings of self-determination (Lohrmann & Hartinger 2011, 263). According to findings, there is no intrinsic motivation if the learner doesn't feel self-determined (Fölling-Albers & Hartinger 2002, 41). Learning workshop as a form of open education meets the essential needs of self-determination, competence, and social embeddedness. Learning workshop promotes the motivation to learn.

Open education

We can look at this research from the point of view of learning workshop as a form of open education. Open education is currently being discussed in public again. According to Hattie (2009), open teaching is less effective in terms of student performance (Steffens & Höfer 2012, 41). Educationalist Steffens comments that the problem of so-called open concepts is that students' learning is not structured, therefore, new knowledge is not effectively processed and applied. This is especially true if required prior knowledge is lacking, for example, when introducing a new topic. Students need guided assistance, especially students with learning difficulties who have more problems in open learning contexts. They do not have the cognitive maps for self-organization. For them, closer guidance and instruction in smaller chunks are more important. Eckhard Klieme in the German Institute for International Educational Research stresses that open learning methods are relevant for building intelligent knowledge only if they are accompanied by clear structuring and challenging content. In such teaching, for example, weekly planning is very demanding and requires systematic practice. This is certainly a key reason for much of the unsatisfactory learning in open education (Steffens 2012). The essential prerequisite for successful learning processes in open education is cognitively challenging content as well as clear structures. In addition, learning in open situations must be well-planned and practiced with students. Do learning workshops meet these requirements for successful learning processes? The aim of the following study is to find out how children experience learning in a learning workshop.

Design of Study: Data Collection, Analysis and Results

Data Collection

Research question: How are students' perceptions of learning in a learning workshop?

The study investigated the learning experiences of primary school children in learning workshops. The focus was on the subjective perspectives of the children. The aim was to get the children to talk and open up to a deeper understanding of their experiences.

Design

A total of 20 children's interviews were used for the study, among which were 12 girls and eight boys from the second through the fourth class, who were seven to 10 years old. The specific selection was not made on representative criteria, so no random samples were drawn, but typical cases were selected (Lamnek 2005, 384). The conceptions and model¹ of learning workshop, in which the students undergo their learning experiences, are shown in the following table:

Table 1

Allocation of student interviews to models of learning workshop

Open workshop <i>Pulse model, separate room</i>	Theme and objective oriented workshop <i>Aligned to the curriculum, two rooms, third under construction</i>	Theme and objective oriented workshop <i>Learning landscape with several thematic learning workshops, several rooms</i>	Theme and objective oriented workshop <i>Focus: Skill workshop, room with multiple use</i>	Theme and objective oriented workshop <i>Separate room, additional mobile themes boxes</i>
I ² 8, Boy 4 I 9, Girl 5 I 19, Boy 8 I 20, Girl 12	I 5, Boy 3 I 7, Girl 4 I 11, Girl 7 I 13, Boy 5 I 18, Girl 11	I 6, Girl 3 I 12, Girl 8 I 14, Boy 6 I 17, Boy 7	I 2, Girl 2 I 3, Boy 1 I 4, Boy 2 I 15, Girl 9	I 1, Girl 1 I 10, Girl 6 I 16, Girl 10

Survey instrument: Guided interview with children

The basic idea of research with children is that children must be given a voice through research. They must be regarded as linguistically gifted subjects with their own experience and knowledge (Alanen 1994, 94). Therefore, research with children has to deal with the following criticisms: First, it is a metaphor; second, there is the equality aspect; and third, there is the question of an appropriate method. Therefore, the following statements focus on the question of an appropriate method. In addition, the children's knowledge is qualitatively different from that of adults. For this reason, a researcher must ask how this knowledge can be utilized. The researcher has to ask oneself the following question in order to get a successful interview: Do the children's responses give information about their knowledge? Critics note that answers often are teased out by adults (Trautmann 2010, 120). Consequently, statements of the interviewed children are actually results of a co-construction by the child and the person conducting the interview. An asymmetric structure between interviewee and interviewer is formed by the context of conversation. Furthermore, it is important that the parents and the school agree to the interview. The children are usually not asked personally whether they want to participate in the interview. Therefore, it is not always a voluntary participation.

¹ Organization of learning workshops after Bönsch (...): 1 Weekly plan: partner or individual work; 2 Buffet model: thematic materials are provided, the choice is up to the learners; 3 Stations model: the materials are available at stations, stations are run; 4 Pulse model: personal learning motive, self-responsible learning process.

² Abbreviation for Interview

The social aspect is also significant. It matters fundamentally that school judges the behaviour of children wrongly or correctly and puts them into categories. The difference between talking and behaviour must be taken into account. The interview takes the child out of his usual context. Therefore, it is compelling in the interview situation to describe the complexity of a situation with fixed terms. Furthermore, there is the following problem: The interviewer doesn't want to hear anything personal from the child. Rather he or she intends the answers to be important in context of the research question. In this way the researcher determines the reality of the child. In particular, two factors are important: First, the meeting between researcher and child is influenced by the adult-child relationship. Second, you need a different understanding of theory and the importance of empiricism in a theory, if you want to grasp the perspective of children. Generally, there are interview situations in which children can talk about relationships they know. But, there are others in which they must talk about what they do not know. Methodologically, one must ask whether it makes sense to question children about something they know or what they do not know. Nevertheless, it may be useful to interview children when certain rules are observed: First, the questions must relate to the experiences of children. Second, the interview situation must be considered in the analysis. Finally, you have to ask about the relationship between experience and interpretation.

In interviews with children the following aspects must be considered: The interview should take place in a familiar environment. The conversation should be undisturbed and not influenced by third parties. The ability and willingness of children to respond to questions determines the length of the interview. A friendly, supportive, and open-minded attitude of the interviewer is a prerequisite for a successful interview. In order to create an atmosphere of trust, it is necessary that the child and the interviewer meet before the interview. Before the interview children should be shown the recorder and other materials the interviewer will use. However, many children are cautious in conversational situations. In particular, the basis of the conversation is important, so it won't become a "question-answer game". Children should be encouraged to talk about their own illustrations so there is a combination of the illustration and conversation (Fuhs 2000, 99). According to Fuhs this approach is called a "symbolic form of an interview." Here, it is possible to reduce the gap between the child and adult worldview. The researcher must ask following questions in order to obtain valid research results:

Does the child like to interview?

Is it a "sensitive" issue for a child?

Shall I continue or end the conversation if the child is uncomfortable?

Is there a familiar room available for the interview?

Is it possible for the child to play or rest after the interview?

At the beginning of the interview, the following aspects must be considered: The researcher should introduce himself to the child. He should clarify the purpose of being together and the purpose of the interview. It is helpful to indicate the possible length of the interview in order to motivate the child. Also, the researcher may offer to let the conversation take place in a different place and at a different time if needed. Finally, the child needs to know that the content of the conversation will be kept confidential. At the beginning of the interview, the child has to know the topic of the conversation. The researcher must tell the child his opinion is important to the researcher. Finally, the child needs to know that he can get help when needed. The child must know that his or her opinion is important, not his or her imagination. Also important is the way in which the interview takes place. A conversation should not last longer than 15 minutes. Short and specific vocabulary is meaningful, especially for young children; difficult words should be avoided. In addition, the interviewer must observe the body language of the child. In order to get valuable information, closed-ended and suggestive questions should be avoided. In contrast, open-ended questions are useful for obtaining details. If the interviewer notes that a child does not understand a question, it is useful to repeat the

question in other words. In the end, it is important to motivate the child which can be done with a tangible or intangible reward. The conversation should be concluded when the issue has been discussed sufficiently.

Development of the interview guideline

The questions in the interview guideline were aimed at the (learning) experiences of students in the learning workshop. They were based on the individual aspects of a learning workshop: spatial differentiations, atmospheres, time structures, time pattern, material objects and situations, people, functions, activities, actions, processes, interactions, and media (Schultheis 2004, 114). Of particular interest was the relationship between the child and the learning environment. In short, it was less about the "what to learn" than the "how to learn". In order to differentiate the child's learning experiences, children were asked to compare learning in the learning workshop to their regular classroom. During the interviews, it turned out that the guideline for the conversation was generally beneficial, but when opportunities arose to probe further into the topic, this was left behind in favour of an open conversation.

Analysis

Many non-verbal aspects of the interviews were not recorded in the data evaluation, as the spoken word and the written word have different qualities. Facial expressions and gestures of the interviewee are lost. Therefore, the perceived reactions of the children during the interviews will be described. The feelings were expressed by *embodied messages*³. Many children smiled as they were allowed to tell their experience, talked without taking a breath, and showed the interviewer around in the learning workshop to support their statements. Of course, it was obvious that the children were nervous in the interview situation. However, when the first question was asked, the nervousness of most of the children disappeared. They were now allowed to discuss their "expertise". The students spoke positively about "their" learning workshop. The children struggled to express their knowledge in words, but also their feelings concerning learning in workshops. This was amazing and impressive for the researcher. You could see that they were looking for a striking verbalization. This was not always easy and some statements were short. However, there were many students who responded in a particularly reflective way.

For data evaluation, the technique of content analysis (Mayring 2008) was chosen. First of all a coding guideline was created and categories were defined. Two evaluation categories were found in quotations from the interviews⁴ (Hiebl 2014). The categories refer to the *embodied* basis of learning and cognitive learning processes: Human learning processes are linked to *embodied* conditions. Learning is dependent on impressions, experiences, intuition, atmospheres and moods in rooms, but also on time and the structures of social relationships at any age (Schultheis2004, 102). Overall, the attempt was made to show the breadth of the statements. The statements of the children cannot be generalized, but one can certainly identify trends. The trends indicate how children learn in the learning workshop. Conflicting ideas in the children's statements refer to the different conceptions and models of learning workshop.

³ The embodied experience in learning process includes phenomena of self-bodily feelings as a direct entrance to the world. Besides it includes phenomena of body language. These phenomena are natural and the body is called „das Vehikel des Zur-Welt-Seins“ (Merleau-Ponty 1966, 106). Therefore the body is the main condition for learning. Embodiment points to the vulnerability and dependence of children concerning the relationship between the teacher and the child, the atmosphere and also the arrangement of learning.

⁴ All quotations of the children are translated from German

Category: Atmosphere

In the assessment of this category the circumstances of the interview are of importance: The interviews took place in the learning workshop. The students let their gaze wander and the learning workshop inspired their statements. The children described the atmosphere from the point of view of the *embodied* sentiments as well as from the point of view of the objective impact of the room, learning-offers and self-determination.

The children communicated their feelings and moods about the (learning) atmosphere in the learning workshop through verbal statements as well as through facial expressions, gestures and embodied messages. They said they enjoy working in the workshop room and many reported that they have fun there. This indicates that they are interested and motivated in their learning. They supported their statements and expressed their feelings by laughing.

„Ok, I liked it much because I liked it and I could have worked here for days and days (laughs)“ (I 16, Girl 10, 28).

„In class everything is more serious, I think, as in the learning workshop“ (I 3, Boy 1, 21).

The atmosphere of the room and the effect on the mood and the feelings of the children were described with the expression "beautiful" and refer to the *embodied* communication between the child and the objects of the environment in the learning workshop. The "beautiful" atmosphere promoted the learning. The children enjoyed the learning workshop also because it is a space that has a particular quality and offers many learning opportunities. In addition, students can work there on their own.

„It's just a classroom. But there the tables are in another order (...). The board is not for the teacher's notes, but there are the paintings of artists and then there is always a painter of the day and then there are different activities offered and many many books in which one can read“ (I 9, Girl 5, 36).

The learning opportunities were attractive to children and invited them to engage in discovery learning and new learning experiences.

„Because, I liked it very much here. Because one can work on your own activities“ (I 9, Girl 5, 62).

„[...] well I mean, well actually, well I find this much more nicer than normal instruction in class, because as I said I can research on my own“ (I 19, Boy 8, 55).

„Oh, many many posters and pictures and on the board there are many artists and musicians and many many maps and in the middle there's a round carpet and on the carpet there stand many many things from different countries and things (...) and it's nice is that we can do research on our own and that you don't need a teacher for it “ (I 20, Girl 12, 24).

However, the children do not want to give up their classroom. The classroom complements teaching and learning in the learning workshop. They appreciated being in the learning workshop from time to time.

„That would be not so nice, because one has to do things in the classroom. Of course one can do something else. The more you are looking forward to it when you have done something in the classroom before and then go to the learning workshop. That's nicer than walking from one room to the next room and back and forth“ (I 14, Boy 6, 16).

Category: Difference to learning in the classroom

Some children did not see many differences between the classroom and the learning workshop. Both in the classroom and in the learning workshop they learn. Therefore, they did not notice many differences, except for the ways the rooms are arranged and the different atmosphere in the learning workshop. An explanation for this is that they have become accustomed to both learning situations. Therefore, it may be that it is not entirely clear what is being asked at all, because it is natural for them.

„Well in class we as well have work stations and actually there are not so many differences“ (I 1, Girl 1, 25).

„Well (...) there aren't really big differences, only in class you have to work on your own and in the learning workshop you are free to decide whether to work on your own or with a friend or partner. Apart from that there are no real differences“ (I 16, Girl 10, 20).

In contrast, for some children, there were distinct differences. The following diverse aspects were important to the children:

„The difference is, that you don't have to sit at your place and you don't have the same neighbor, as you have in class, because there are always changing groups“ (I 4, Boy 2, 32).

„Yes. Yes, because of the board, you know. It's nearly like in the classroom, only nicer. Because in science you can build a circuit“ (I 5, Boy 3, 48).

„ (...) Now I compare that to learning science and social studies in the classroom. If you're doing real normal science and social studies you write into your school booklet, and you write down what the teachers write on the board, but also from time to time you make trips and you research, but in learning workshop you simply research differently. There everybody is allowed to choose their own topic; the main topic (well) is Europe. For example about the different countries“ (I 8, Boy 4, 29).

„Well it is different, because in the classroom you often write something down in your booklet. And in the learning workshop you can TRY something ON YOUR OWN. And then you have many experiences“ (I 14, Boy 6, 10).

„Well for me personally it's not very similar, but in the learning workshop you have the chance to find out something yourself and in school the teacher stands in front of the board and talks a lot and very fast⁵ and in the learning workshop well there you can take books and have a look at them and you look how far it is and so on. “ (I 19, Boy 8, 20).

„Yes, actually yes. Well the teacher gives in class pretty much commands. But here in the learning workshops, you could say, you can give orders to yourself“ (I 19, Boy 8, 33).

Being allowed to move around was also expressed as a difference.

„Yes, there's no need to put up your hands, if you want to say something. Or you have a choice what you are going to work on. You are allowed to stand up, walk around, have a look at what the others are doing. And in class you always have to sit on your chair and you always have to look, what the teacher is doing“ (I 9, Girl 5, 18).

However, there are also children who find arguments for learning in the classroom and describe that both forms are good and necessary. They are just different.

„Well, yes, normal instruction is nice, learning workshop is EVEN NICER“ (I 19, Boy 8, 59).

„Yes, there you learn differently. In class you learn with a book or the teacher says something, but there you are more independent“ (I 20, Girl 12, 26).

⁵ German expression for: talking like a machine gun, mechanical and fast

Reflection of interviews with children

The interviews are of varying quality from both the interviewer and the children. The reason lies in the ways the conversations took place. In the evaluation it became clear that the questions of the interviewer were open when the kids talked openly. On the other hand, the conversation was restricted when the children were saying little. Because of the shyness of some children, the interviewer was very careful and sometimes phrased questions that pre-empted the answer. Especially with the shy children it was difficult to wait for a response. Therefore, questions were asked too fast sometimes. The duration of the interviews (from two to ten minutes), showed how well the conversation flowed and what the tone of the conversation was. Particularly striking and interesting was the difference between the qualitative interviews with adults and with children. While the statements of adults at first glance seemed clear and understandable and also provided a comprehensible interpretation, many of the children's statements appeared to contain a message that must first be decrypted and then only understood as the adult researcher studied them a second time. This is also described in the theory of the "generational look" on the statements of the children. Problems of the linguistic expression of the children influence the interpretation as well. The evaluation of the children's interviews is therefore a highly subjective interpretation by the researcher and that must be considered.

Results

Below, the primary results of the perspective of students on learning in workshops are summarized. The children's responses emphasized that they were aware of the learning situations in the classroom and in the learning workshop and they are able to reflect on both critically. The results confirmed and proved from the perspective of the children that open learning situations tend to be highly appreciated and that open learning situations were actively accepted and used for learning experiences. The children's statements correlated with current theories of how children learn well.

Learning workshop provides an inviting atmosphere that promotes learning

The atmosphere plays an important role for children in the perception of the learning environment. Rooms have a certain atmosphere, a mood or aura. They are occupied with individual feelings (Schultheis 1998, 66). The rooms are experienced as *embodied*. The students described the atmosphere of the learning workshop and the impact of their feelings with "beautiful" and "fun". These expressions paraphrase the "*embodied* communication" (Schultheis) between the child and the learning environment in the learning workshop. The "beautiful" atmosphere promotes learning. The learning workshop is very inviting for the children, because it is a room that has a particular environment and many challenging learning opportunities which the children can access independently. There students become responsible for their own learning. Students said that they have fun in the learning workshop. They seemed to be motivated to work and learn there. The children describe the learning environment both subjectively and objectively, noting the learning opportunities and self-determination. Therefore the establishment of a learning workshop includes much more than just the architectural design of a room. The educational design of the learning environment and the learning situation initiate a new learning culture that focuses on the learner. Children feel challenged by the learning workshop, both emotionally and cognitively. This type of situation in such an educationally oriented environment supports learning processes.

'Embodied' learning opportunities

The study demonstrated the *embodied* access of the students to the learning environment. It ran through all evaluation categories. The relationship of the children to the learning environment, which arises from the *embodied* disposition of the child, can be illustrated (Baake 1999) by two very different requirements of the child's needs: First, the child has the need for love, safety, and security, and requires order and clarity to experience his environment. The learning environment of the learning workshop is structured by learning tasks and by providing learning opportunities. Students can rely

on their basic skills. This makes them feel secure and confident. Second, the need for exploration, novelty, activity, and independence should be noted. Guided by their interests, children acquire new skills individually and together. The natural desire for exploration lets the children investigate the learning environment in the learning workshop. Therefore, learning processes are determined by the pedagogically designed learning environment and by individual learning dispositions. A pedagogical discussion of learning must recognize the complexity of learning and must incorporate a theoretical reflection. This includes the fact that next to measurable learning outcomes is a qualitative dimension of learning that can only be influenced and controlled in part, because learning is casually done and its results are not necessarily available through linguistic-cognitive means. There's also a direct, intuitive, and unmediated learning, which is unconscious and does not require language, but relies on the resources of the "Body" (Schultheis 2008, 250).

Individual and collective learning processes

The children described their experiences with self-determination (choice of subject) and self-organization (organization, method, social form) in different ways, which may be due to the model of the learning workshop. This co-responsibility for their own learning was experienced and appreciated by the children as a special feature of learning in the learning workshop. Training workshops with little choice are accepted by the children as a matter of course in the school. The more open the learning workshop is designed, the more intensely and enthusiastically motivated the children were to learn through self-determination. They truly experienced the difference between external and internal motivation and self-determination. In most learning workshops, the children could choose their learning partners. They described the cooperation with other children as beneficial. To help other children and to support them in learning seemed comfortable to the students. They saw themselves as competent. Of course, there's the question of how children get along with their learning partners and how they chose their learning partners. It seemed natural for the children to look for a classmate with whom they could learn well. The students were aware that sometimes they had to compromise. Personal as well as social competence was promoted casually. The children describe basically an added value through working with a learning partner and did not want to miss that opportunity. Students said that it was typical of learning in the learning workshop to work with someone. They experienced themselves as socially competent and able to contribute to the success of their own learning through their technical and methodological expertise and through collaborative learning. In practice workshops, individual work is considered useful.

Preference of students for learning in the learning workshop and in the classroom

The children described the special aspects about learning in the learning workshop in different ways. For one, they know that there are opportunities for playing *and* learning in the learning workshop. It is clear to them that there are educational games and that some workshops are practice workshops. The different approaches to learning, for example, practicing or researching, are determined by the learning workshop model. Learning from each other and by dealing with different topics was emphasized. Thus, the students can address their own interests first and learn later when other students present what they have learned. Some children couldn't see a lot differences between working in a learning workshop and teaching; they learn both in the classroom and in the learning workshop. Because of this, they didn't notice a big difference except the arrangement of the room and the atmosphere in the learning workshop. Also, it was found that students are accustomed to the learning workshop and the regular classroom, because both are designed for open education. This means, the learning in the classroom and in the learning workshop are comparable. However, there were also children who found reasons for learning in the classroom and describe that both are beautiful and necessary. They are just different and therefore they complement each other perhaps in the best way. They don't want to miss the classroom; they appreciate the special feature of being in the learning workshop from time to time. Learning in the learning workshop and classroom learning are, for these children, complementary learning experiences.

Reflection of the results

In the following section, the results of this study are discussed. The study shows that students expressed a tendency *for* learning in workshops. They described learning experiences that meet current learning theories and knowledge about successful learning processes: We learn through experience. The sensory approach to learning is important from birth on and must be pursued in school. Learning occurs through the combination of experiences and meaningful assignments. It has been shown it is beneficial to learn something new in the context of what is already known. (Arnold 2006, 156 f.). So why is it so difficult to address these needs in the school? Open education is hard to prepare and requires strong confidence in the children, who need to deal appropriately with the transferred responsibility for their own learning. Only about 10-15% of German primary school teachers give their students possibilities of substantive self-determination and responsibility at least once a day, and 15 - 45 % give them choices once a day regarding methods (learning path, material use) and organizational forms (social form, workplace). Difficulties are mainly seen in the lack of suitable materials, too much need for preparation and planning, lack of familiarity with the method, and finally classes that are too large (Menzel 2008, 34). These are all legitimate arguments that must be dealt with in the classroom every day. However, if we look at the statements of the students, we can find many arguments *for* open education. Furthermore, methodological variations seem especially important to meet the diverse learning needs of children. At this point we can add findings about motivation and interest, stating that education, which is action-oriented and autonomy supportive, promotes interest better than more teacher-controlled instruction (Hartinger 1997). It is also interesting that the teacher hardly appeared in the student's statements. In the center of the students' perception are the aspects which are determined by the learning environment and the learning partners in the learning workshop.

Conclusion

This study illustrated learning in the learning workshop from the perspective of the children and offered a differentiated examination of the phenomenon, learning workshop. The students consciously understood their learning environment and reflected it actively. Therefore, it is important to make every learning environment intentionally educational. From the results it is possible to derive suggestions for supportive learning environments, such as a learning workshop or other open learning situations. From the perspective of students, learning workshops are experiential spaces that support the development of the individual personality. At the moment, current curricula follow a competence orientation and aim to develop students personally with the promotion of personal, social, methodological, and technical expertise. Competencies are visible in performance. The students' responses showed their skilled performance in the learning workshop, especially if discovery learning is possible. Because of the challenging nature of the learning environment, students are motivated to learn. This supports the feeling of co- and self-determination. Students learned that they could pursue their own questions in the learning workshop and are supported by a learning partner on their learning paths.

The learning workshop movement at Bavarian schools shows that learning workshops with their special pedagogical concepts are up to date. They are taken up again as a space for alternative learning experiences and to rethink teaching. Existing challenges of the educational landscape, results of national and international comparative studies, and findings about how children learn successfully demand concepts which address change for the benefit of the child's learning. Learning workshops give students, according to this study, from the perspective of students, the opportunity for learning that is based on current learning theories, thereby optimizing the learning success of students.

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Geniş Özet

Öğrenme Atölyelerinde Çocuk Deneyimler -Bir Pedagojik Çocuk Araştırması

Bireyselleştirilmiş ve kendi kendine öğrenme ortamları olarak öğrenme atölye çalışmaları son birkaç yılda Alman okullarında yaygınlaşmıştır. Bu öğrenme ortamları, eğitim kurumlarının öğrenme kültürünün kalitesini geliştirme amacıyla tasarlanmıştır. Öğrenme atölyelerinde, öğretmenin öğretimi üzerinde değil, öğrencinin öğrenmesi üzerine odaklanılmaktadır. Kökeni itibarıyla öğrenme atölye çalışmaları reform niteliği taşıyan çalışmalardır. Atölye çalışmaları, öğrencilerin ve öğretmenlerin öğrenmeyi yeniden düşünmelerine olanak sağlar. Öğretimin ve okulların kalitesini artırmayla ilgili genel tartışmalar göz önüne alındığında, öğrenme atölye çalışmaları konusunun araştırılması oldukça önemlidir.

Almanya'daki ilköğretim okullarının eğitim programlarında hâlihazırda yeterlik yönelimi uygulamalar yer almakta ve öğrencilerin öğrenme sürecindeki etkin rolü birincil derecede önem arz etmektedir. Bu nedenle, öğrencilerin öğrenme süreçlerini anlamak önemlidir. Bu çalışmada atölye çalışmalarına yetişkin perspektifinden bakmanın yanı sıra, çocukların perspektifinden bakmanın değeri de açıklanacaktır. Pedagojik bir bakış açısından, öğrencilerin en iyi nasıl öğrendiği ve bireysel beceriler geliştirmek için hangi öğrenme stratejilerine veya öğrenme ortamlarına ihtiyaç duydukları, eğitimle ilgili tüm konuların özünü oluşturmaktadır. Çocukların bakış açısı, sınıfta öğrenmeler ile atölyede öğrenmeye ilişkin öznel deneyimleri karşılaştırmalı olarak da kapsamaktadır.

Bu çalışma öğrencilerin bakış açısından öğrenme atölye çalışmaları olgusunu incelemekte ve bu nedenle de pedagojik çocuk araştırmaları alanına girmektedir. Çocuk araştırmalarında, çocukların öğrenmesine ilişkin soruların çocukların kendisine sorulması önemlidir. Birçok batı ülkeleri çocuklara yasalarla belli haklar verdiği için, çocuk araştırmalarında çocukların sesinin duyulması gerekmektedir. Bu nedenle, çocuklarla ilgili konuların yetişkinlere sorulması doğru görülmemektedir. Özellikle çocukların düşünceleri, tutumları ve davranışlarının onların bakışı açılarından araştırılması önemlidir.

Bugün çoğunlukla kendi deneyimlerimiz ve biyografimizden etkilenen ve belirginleşen bir çocuk ve çocukluk anlayışına sahibiz. Sosyalleşme süreçlerindeki ve günümüzün büyüme koşullarındaki eksiklikleri medya, bilgisayarlar ve değişen sosyal ilişkilerin yanı sıra çocukların boş zaman ve oyun stillerinin etkilerini izleyerek görme eğilimindeyiz. Modern çocuklukların bu resmini aklımızda tutarken çocukların yeterliklerini hafife alındığı söylenebilir. Bu çalışmada, çocuklar etkin öğrenenler ve dünyaya ilişkin kendi bakış açılarını oluşturabilen bireysel özneler olarak kabul edilmiştir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma çocukların öznel deneyimlerine yoğunlaşma üzerinde durmaktadır. Bunun için, çocuklarla bireysel görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Bireysel görüşmelerde öğrencilerin uzman statüleri yani görüşleri ortaya çıkarılmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu amaçla çocukların konu hakkında olabildiğince açık bir şekilde konuşmaları ve bu yolla yetişkin görüşmeciye çocuk deneyimlerin altyapısı ve anlam bağlamlarına ilişkin iç görü olanağı vermesi sağlanmaya çalışılmıştır. Görüşmeler sırasında iletişim dili ve görüşmeci davranışı, çocukların dilbilimsel ve bilişsel yeteneklerine uygun olmasına dikkat edilmiştir. Aynı zamanda görüşmeci, katılımcı ile güvene dayalı bir ilişki kurmaya çalışmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda çocuklarla yürütülen atölye çalışmalarının onların öğrenmesinde etkili olduğu saptanmıştır.