13 SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY-EDUCATIONAL COUNSELLING

The Department School Psychology-Educational Counselling has two different categories of tasks:

1. Addressee-oriented tasks
2. Quality assurance tasks

13.1 Adressee-oriented tasks

These include psychological counselling, examinations and expert opinions, e.g. educational guidance, integration, promotion in special education, school maturity, learning problems, behaviour problems, personal difficulties and crises, in particular counselling of pupils, teachers and parents seeking advice in questions concerning educational psychology. Other areas include psychological support, psychological care and psychological treatment, if necessary also psychotherapeutic methods, the targets being personality development, prevention, intervention, rehabilitation and psychological health promotion.

In these two areas there are almost 130,000 personal contacts each year with pupils, parents and teachers; in addition to this, 30,000 psychological examinations and numerous other forms of intervention (provision of moderators or lecturers) are carried out. 28,000 pupils are given help in connection with some problems. Additional tasks include psychological care for, and coaching of, approximately 2,000 teachers per year, with no direct connection with pupils or their problems.

Promotion of cooperation at school

In 2006 and 2007 particular emphasis was placed on promoting teachers' health issues and in this connection especially on making teachers aware of various possibilities for improving working conditions as well as for handling resources and stress. Several workshops with experts dealt with the transfer of knowledge obtained in research actvities to teaching practice, the exchange of projects, programmes, strategies and with networking the actors in health promotion and prevention with those in education.

In 2006 and 2007 work was started on the development of an Austrian violence prevention strategy containing the following points of emphasis: in-service training offensive for teachers, intensification of information and net-

working of participating and affected persons, agreements on acceptable behaviour as a common measure for achieving a positive school climate, further development and expansion of school psychology and start of concrete violence prevention programmes at school.

Psychological research in school matters

In the years 2005 to 2007, in addition to research studies on, and further developments in the possibilities for supporting children with reading and spelling deficiencies, a great deal of attention was given to promoting motivation in education. In this connection a research project was started which is to develop and test methods aiming at better qualifying teachers for supporting and increasing pupils' motivation to learn and to acquire knowledge (project: TALK – Training Programme for the Acquisition of Competences on the Part of Teachers for Raising Educational Motivation and Promoting Lifelong Learning).

Participation in planning and coordinating initial, continuing and in-service training in the school system

During the period under review the existing models for the initial and in-service training of pupils' counsellors at schools were further improved by the introduction of courses at the new university colleges of teacher education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*) as of October 2007.

Public relations

Particular emphasis was put on public relations and on passing on psychological knowhow to parents and teachers. New brochures provide valuable basic information on and methods for the prevention of violence and addiction, as well as on psychological health promotion and on the subject "Learning to Learn". The website of the Department School Psychology – Educational Counselling (*www.schulpsychologie.at*), which offers all this material free of charge, was reorganised and further expanded.

13.2 Quality assurance tasks

Internal further and in-service training, supervision, organisational development

During the period under review numerous developments occurred in this field: a new in-service training concept was worked out for persons working in the Department School Psychology-Educational Development, standards were set which are to guarantee that tasks are uniformly fulfilled in the whole of Austria, and a project was started on fundamental questions concerning the positioning of the Department School Psychology-Educational Development in which the Department's staff intensively participated.

In 2005 an all-Austrian meeting on continuing training was held which aimed at networking the manifold knowledge elements within the organisation and putting this knowledge pool to wider use.

In 2007 another all-Austrian meeting on the subject of continuing training was held which discussed questions of public relations work as well as skills necessary in dealing with the media.

Administration, internal information exchange

In the period under review, the uniform reporting system already introduced in 2003 was implemented in the whole of Austria; it serves as a valuable tool for assessing past achievements and priorities both on the regional and the federal levels.

Pupils' and educational counselling at schools

For the purpose of supporting the Department School Psychology-Educational Counselling, all secondary schools have specially trained teachers, viz. pupils' counsellors and educational consultants, who are intended to be the first contact persons for pupils with educational problems or unsure about their future educational careers. Initial, continuing and in-service training, as well as the continuous information of these teachers about new developments in the counselling field, is primarily ensured by the Department School Psychology-Educational Counselling in cooperation with the university colleges of teacher education.

The activities of these pupils' counsellors and educational consultants cover especially three areas:

- Information counselling (counselling by the provision of information)
- Problem counselling (counselling by problem analysis)
- System counselling (counselling by cooperation and coordination)

During the period under review new challenges have arisen in all three areas. In the field of information counselling the Internet has become the most important medium. This fact has been taken into account by the development of tools facilitating Internet research, as well as by training programmes on how to use online databases. As regards problem counselling, focuses varied, depending on regional requirements. In the field of system counselling, particular emphasis was put on the development of cooperation models in order to be better able to cope with conflict situations at school.