

## EVALUATION OF THE BERLIN STORYTELLING PROJECT *ErzählZeit*

Authors:

Straus, Florian & Höfer, Renate (2011). Evaluation *ErzählZeit*. IPP- Arbeitspapiere Nr. 09. München: IPP München. ISSN 1614-3159.

Translated from German by Adelheid Kaessens. *Translator's Note: I have chosen to keep very close to the original German text in order to communicate the information as accurately as possible.*

### INTRODUCTION

"Telling fairy tales is nice." Such assessments are often heard by people who are involved in storytelling. Kristin Wardetzky, initiator of the Berlin project *ErzählZeit* writes in her book "Projekt Erzählen" (Project Storytelling) of a class reunion at which she was asked what she teaches at the university: "My answer: 'storytelling' was met with surprised silence, followed by laughter. Storytelling? That's what we've been doing all evening. So, what do you really teach your students?" (Wardetzky 2007, 7)

The aim of the Berlin project *ErzählZeit* (literally: Time for Telling) being evaluated here is, however, a different one. The goal is to further develop the speaking and storytelling competence of children. "Therefore the instruction and development of linguistic competence is one of the most important, often most difficult tasks of current school practice. This is exactly where *ErzählZeit* fits in and this long-term project offers a low-threshold program to encounter the German language in a pleasurable context. (*ErzählZeit* 2011)

In the structure of the project, which started in 2005 with the pilot project *Sprachlos* (literally: Speechless or Without Language), combines both the rational and emotional elements of comprehension (understanding), and the teaching of values and norms with the use of poetic language. Thus, *ErzählZeit* aims to realize more than simply a pedagogical approach. The goal is also a combination of normally separate disciplines and fields. Trained employees from childcare institutions and school teachers meet with theatre educators and literary minds: Culture and education come together.

This evaluation report provides a fundamental assessment of the project, based on empirical evaluations carried out – as well as results and detailed recommendations concerning the project's further development and future potential. We chose to include many original quotes in our presentation, as this is the first external evaluation of the project, in order to provide as full and authentic a picture in our assessment of *ErzählZeit* as possible.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who filled in questionnaires, our interview partners, and the participants in group discussions for their contributions.

Munich

Dr. Florian Straus

Dr. Renate Höfer

## 1. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

At the centre of the planned evaluation there were four assessment dimensions/questions:

**Sustainability and innovation.** Does the project achieve the posited acceptance and the described effects, such as the development of language and storytelling competence? And how strongly do the effects remain, also after the project has ended? Which framework conditions have been shown to support or inhibit the achievement of these goals? And to what extent are innovative processes initiated by storytelling and which impulses result from this?

**Cross-environmental, Berlin-wide, intercultural.** The project was tested and carried out in a wide variety of Berlin districts in the last three school years. To what extent does the project achieve the typical mix of different milieus, intercultural groups, and district specifics through its structure? Which scholastic and local conditions are particularly advantageous for storytelling; which prove to be limiting and inhibitory?

**Developing a networked culture.** With the topic of storytelling, the *ErzählZeit* project connects different cultures and professions: theatre educators, librarians, teachers as well as trained nursery staff. Do more than just isolated connections result? How successful is it to present storytelling locally at a neighbourhood library and take advantage of a networked culture for this goal?

**Local and supraregional/international perspectives.** Storytelling is glocal. Through storytelling local stories (everyday tales) are created and transported, and also the values and norms out of the most different cultures of the world are brought to life. Storytelling as an international project also includes artists and networks far beyond the country's borders<sup>1</sup>. To what extent is the connection of local with global influences, as described here, successfully achieved? Which values and traditions from other countries are actually brought to life through storytelling in childcare institutions/nurseries and schools? How is the international nature of the storytelling scene taken advantage of by this Berlin project?

## 2. EXECUTION AND METHOD

The evaluation was carried out from 15<sup>th</sup> December 2010 to 27<sup>th</sup> May 2011. The answer to the question formulated above is based on four methodical modules, which will be briefly described below.

In **Module 1**, a written interview of the trained nursery staff and the teachers involved in the schools in the year 2010/22 was carried out. Goal of the interview was to receive the trained staff's assessment of the realisation of *ErzählZeit's* goals and its achieved effects. Parallel to this, written interviews of teachers/staff from nurseries/schools involved in the year 2009/10. Through the comparison with already completed projects, questions regarding the sustainability of its effects were to be answered. In total 79.7 percent (N=114) of all interviewed staff (N=144), of these 80 from schools and 34 from nurseries<sup>2</sup> sent back a completed questionnaire.

The centre of **Module 2** was an analysis of the public events of *ErzählZeit*. These take place mostly in public libraries which are located in the vicinity of the schools and nurseries involved in *ErzählZeit*. Here the respective storytellers, children, and, in some cases, also parents tell stories at public events. In this way, *ErzählZeit* works to affect the urban culture and to encourage children and parents to tell more stories themselves, at home. A total of six such events were observed. At three of these events brief interviews were held with the storytellers, children, parents, and library staff before and after the event.

Via **Module 3** the existing storytelling network was analysed. For this, the collected data was supplemented by specific network analysis with two key people in the project.

In **Module 4** three group discussions with a total of 21 participants were carried out. This included teachers<sup>3</sup>, trained nursery staff, librarians, storytellers, as well as internal and external experts<sup>4</sup>. Using the focus group method, the status of the *ErzählZeit* project and particularly the necessary conditions for success, as well as the innovative potential of the *ErzählZeit* project, were to be discursively analysed and assessed.

Due to the time restrictions on the evaluation project it was not possible to carry out an independent analysis of its effects. Therefore the assessments of those involved were compared with other evaluation studies on storytelling.

### 3. ERZÄHLZEIT AS A REGIONALISED, BERLIN-WIDE PROJECT WITH A CURRENT FOCUS ON DISTRICTS WITH A HIGH MIGRATION SHARE.

The project *ErzählZeit* was carried out over three stages in the years from 2008 until present day, in 41 institutions.

Table 1: Schools and nurseries

	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	Total
Schools	6	7	16	29
Kindergartens	2	3	7	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>41</b>

As the following table shows, at least one institution in each of Berlin's 12 city districts was selected.

Table 2: Distribution of the projects over Berlin's districts<sup>5</sup>

Berlin Districts	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	Σ
District Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf		1 S	1 S	2 S
District Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg	2 S	1 S 2 SM 1 K	1 S	4 S 2 SM 1 K
District Lichtenberg (Hohenschönhausen)	1 S		1 S	2 S
District Marzahn-Hellersdorf		1 S		1 S
District Mitte (Tiergarten, Wedding)	1 S	2 S	4 S 2 K	7 S 2 K
District Neukölln			3 S 2 SM 1 K	3 S 2 SM 1 K
District Pankow (Prenzlauer Berg, Weißensee)	1 S	1 S 1 SM 1 K	1 K	2 S 1 SM 2 K
District Reinickendorf	2 SM 1 K		1 K	2 SM 2 K
District Spandau			1 K	1 K
District Steglitz-Zehlendorf			1 S 2 SM	1 S 3 SM
District Tempelhof-Schöneberg	1 S 1 K	1 S 1 K	4 S 1 SM 1 K	6 S 1 SM 3 K
District Treptow-Köpenick			1 S	1 S

<sup>5</sup>Key: S = school, SM = school (myths), K = kindergarten

The focus should be on institutions in districts that have an above-average migration share. As Fig. 1 shows, using the example of the evaluated years 2009-2011, most institutions are in the districts marked red on the map with a high share of children and youth with a migration background.

Particularly in the initial phase schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods were specifically targeted.

*“In the two years before we also always had applications from districts with fewer disadvantages. At that time already we made our selections according to where the socially disadvantaged areas are, the schools lie in these neighbourhoods. Although the teachers from the other neighbourhoods said we should come there too, that it is just as necessary there.”*  
(Project leader)

Figure 1: Schools and kindergartens, in which the *ErzählZeit* project was carried out between 2009 and 2011.

[\(add map\)](#)

This high share is also mirrored in the individual schools/kindergartens. The average percentage of children with a migration background in the classes that took part in the evaluation was 57% and in the kindergartens 46.6%. In nearly half of the school classes/kindergarten groups the share of children with a migration background was over 75 percent. There were also classes/groups which had no children with a migration background (12.7%). As the following chart shows, the share of children with a migration background was lower in the kindergarten groups.

Figure 2: Share of children with a migration background in school classes/kindergarten groups (N=76 schools, 29 kindergartens, given in percentages)

Text in Figure: dark pink = schools, light pink = kindergartens

No children with ...  
Share of up to 25%  
Share of 26-50%  
Share of 51-75%  
Share > 75%

---

Conclusion and recommendation: *ErzählZeit* has, in the meantime, carried out projects in all of Berlin's districts. The focus is on those districts and neighbourhoods that have an above-average share of immigrants. With this selection the project lives up to its aim of reaching particularly children with a migration background, in whose parental homes German is not spoken, as well as children with socially disadvantaged backgrounds and children with severe learning difficulties.

This focus should be maintained in the future. However, in the medium-term, other schools should also be included, as storytelling shows an effect not only on language learning, but also generally a value with regard to learning, performance and the development of personality (cf. Huber, Hagen 2005, Kahlert 2005).

---

#### 4 WHY STORYTELLING? WHY FAIRY TALES AND MYTHS?

*“...the storyteller enchants the audience; the storyteller gives the word its voice, which it had lost through writing” (an expert)*

Why storytelling? The poetic description of the special magic of storytelling in the quote above shows that one of the oldest cultural techniques in the world has lost (some of) its significance. Writing and today, in particular, the media have pushed everyday storytelling situations in Western culture into the background. This historical development is not simply described as an unalterable, historico-cultural necessity, but more and more also as a loss that is not simply to be accepted. The special quality, not so easily created through other media, which storytelling has for both the storyteller and the listener, has brought a renaissance of storytelling, which today is found in many disciplines and sections of society.

The telling of stories takes place in a community of storytellers and listeners and both sides are part of a world of their own imagining. There is no educational prerequisite needed in order to listen to storytelling. *“Even illiterate people can listen with fascination to storytelling, and so can intellectuals. That is the odd thing – that it always becomes a hot occasion when it works well. Everyone listens and everyone is somehow magical and enchanted. I do find this quite amazing. Storytelling is the most democratic of all art forms.” (an expert)*

Storytelling, so goes the proposition that has been repeated many times and in part also well proved (cf. Huber et al 2005, Ehlich 2004, Höfer et al 2009), has a wide spectrum of effects. Storytelling not only develops imagination and the ability to listen, but also the ability to concentrate and the experience of self-efficacy. It strengthens self-confidence and the personality.

The *ErzählZeit* project stands for an interpretation of language development as a key competence. *“Command of language is a key competence in order to be able to take part actively in the cultural and political life of the community. Therefore the teaching and development of language competence is one of the most important, often most difficult tasks of present-day school praxis. This is exactly where *ErzählZeit* steps in and provides, through its long-term projects, a low threshold offer for a joyful experience of the German language.” (ErzählZeit 2011)*

Why fairy tales? But, one may ask oneself, must the renaissance of storytelling actually take place via the content of fairy tales? Wouldn't freely told stories (every day stories, fantasy stories) be better suited, or indeed in the times of Twitter and Facebook a more adequate form, than (of all things) prose tales of wondrous and not rarely rather gruesome encounters? These objections<sup>6</sup> are opposed in the specialist literature, but also by the interviewed teachers and kindergarten specialist staff mainly by six arguments which show that the fairy tale genre is as relevant today as it was in earlier times, and that fairy tales are particularly well suited for the language development process<sup>7</sup>.

- (1) **Fairy tales fascinate children today as they did in the past, they are timeless.** Even those who declare to be against fairy tales cannot deny the fascination that fairy tales have for children. The enthusiasm with which children listen to fairy tales shows that the children have decided: Fairy tales are just the thing for us! The fluid transition from the real to the imaginary world, in which the main characters are speaking animals, magicians, giants, fairies, and witches as well as quite normal people, with whom the children can identify themselves, enchants and fascinates them.<sup>8</sup>

*[Pretty Woman] ...is also a modern fairy tale. It is the same pattern. But a fairy tale is simply shorter than “Pretty Woman”, and it summarizes things, it also ritualises them in a particular way and thus also has a familiar character. When one has heard more than ten fairy tales, one recognises certain forms. I have to do all this and that and go along there and there – these are all familiar things, and I think that also makes it fascinating. And, of course, the gruesomeness. For children are extremely gruesome and they love this gruesomeness. And in fairy tales – they are of course totally able to*

*distinguish this from reality – one can really live this out. That also makes out the fascination.” (a librarian)*

- (2) **The logic of fairy tales fit with children’s way of thinking and perceiving.** Besides these magical moments fairy tales show certain structural elements that also favour the child-like recipients. The linear narrative style, the simple, familiar structure, the mostly one-dimensional characters and their brevity make it relatively easy for the listener to follow the telling of the fairy tale. This is complemented by the imagery, the mobility, and the rich plot variety. Apart from the essence and the structure of the fairy tale, the affinity of the child to the fairy tale is also explainable through their psychological needs.<sup>9</sup> ccc

*“[Fairy tales] are manageable, clear stories, have a good dramatic composition. Even when I tell badly, the pattern works so well that I bring the listener in with me, so through the often-given three tasks. ... Yes, okay, there is also again and again the discussion, if possible to immediately start with made-up stories, I reject this because I think you can first polish this fairy tale diamond in order to experience the dramatic composition of stories and learn to tell interestingly about your own experiences.... I find [fairy tales] an excellent object for this.” (an expert)*

In addition, the fairy tale with its symbolic language is an essential medium for the promotion of language learning:

*“But first, I think, you must have a basic experience and a language repertoire, in style as well as imagery – have something to draw on. And that has to be taught first. I always say that the fairy tale is the primary school of storytelling, things are taught here that no longer exist in everyday language.” (an expert)*

- (3) **Fairy tales create pictures in your head, they stimulate the imagination.** Fairy tales help the child in forming their imagination, as they show the world by using imagery. Particularly today, when the imaginations of many children are characterized by pictures prepared by the media, the development of their own pictures is not simply given, but must be learned with time and practice.

Only when this is possible, can the “shared world” of teller and listener, referred to by Ehlich (1980), be created. In addition it is obvious that the emotional and language development of the children is supported by the ability to express feelings and put them into pictures.

*“So I simply think that this symbolic language, the symbols, that are talked about, and these old myths that come here, that they fascinate and move the children and that of course things happen in fairy tales that are not possible in everyday life. That’s the nice thing about it ... the miracle, natural, clear, and that is what they are looking for in other media forms. They seek out fantasy films, they read fantasy books and they are interested in mangas, where there are constantly things happening which are not realistic at all. But that stimulates the imagination and that fascinates.” (a librarian)*

- (4) **Especially in a world that is becoming more and more complicated there is a need for manageability and orientation.** In a world that is growing ever more complicated the fairy tales, as in Rölleke<sup>10</sup>, explain a micro-cosmos in which the world is manageable, in which there are fixed mechanisms and rules. **(Nachfolgender Text ist orange markiert, weil genau derselbe Text in Punkt 6 wiederholt wird. Dort ist der Text ebenfalls orange markiert. Ist diese Wiederholung gewollt?)** Fairy tales do not avoid conflicts and do not remove difficulties. The fairy tale hero must overcome many dangers and survive tests of courage. Fairy tales thus connect on an emotional level with the experiences of children, which includes every day joy and fun, but also challenges and feelings of fear. Buske (2011) says that the figures in fairy tales and their conflict-laden relationships are so open so that every

listener can thus experience and process his own conflicts in his own way. Fairy tales are about courage, self-confidence, determination, love, security, respect, and help.

*“And fairy tales and myths have been alive for tens of thousands of years, exactly because they deal with issues that move everyone. How do I stand up for myself, how can the prince win the princess, how can you overcome death, what do I do if a dragon comes, and all these important things that one has in one’s life – the problems that one has to solve as a child.” (a librarian)*

Fairy tales give a good portion of “courage”, as they show that it is worthwhile taking on dangers, going one’s own way and overcoming difficulties.

*“... The fairy tale hero – and that is something that they do not experience in this way in the stories that they see on television – the hero must prove himself in all possible situations. He must, for the sake of the beloved person he wishes to rescue, climb over mountains, swim through rivers, must beg witches to help him, must be cleverer and more cunning than the giant, must be stronger than a dragon. And all of this he can do out of the power of the love that drives him to reach his goal, whatever it is. And that is something that children today must particularly learn in this totally open society, in which there are no fixed values anymore – to develop strengths as an individual in order to reach your goals. That is why: fairy tales.” (an expert)*

- (5) **Fairy tales strengthen the sense of justice.** As a rule, Good and Evil are strictly separated in fairy tales, often in the form of good and evil characters. But at the end of a fairy tale, Good is rewarded and Evil is punished.

*“And at the same time I think, we see again and again that in childhood today, in this whole setting of profit, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between Right and Wrong, between the positive role model and the negative role model, between the right way and the way that leads one astray. And I consider it to be an effective method to show the children possibilities of dealing with these questions in a completely different context. And I think that in addition it is also a certain contribution to form the child’s personality a little bit in what is important and what is wrong.” (a teacher)*

*“In any case children mostly have a well-developed sense of justice and also have a need for things to be fair. And this is naturally satisfied in fairy tales. Fairy tales in which it ends up being unfair are relatively few in number. Mostly the evil ones are punished accordingly, the wicked stepmother or the giant, and the events are somehow fair. And of course it helps in finding one’s own values, and it also satisfies a feeling that children wish for.” (a librarian)*

- (6) **Fairy tales communicate strong life optimism.** In this, fairy tales do not avoid conflicts and do not move difficulties out of the way. The fairy tale hero must overcome many dangers and survive tests of courage. Fairy tales thus connect on an emotional level with the experiences of children, which includes every day joy and fun, but also challenges and feelings of fear. Buske (2011) says that the figures in fairy tales and their conflict-laden relationships are so open so that every listener can thus experience and process his own conflicts in his own way. The fairy tales are about courage, self-confidence, determination, love, security, respect, and help.

*“And fairy tales and myths have been alive for tens of thousands of years, exactly because they deal with issues that move everyone. How do I stand up for myself, how can the prince win the princess, how can you overcome death, what do I do if a dragon comes, and all these important things that one has in one’s life – the problems that one has to solve as a child.” (a librarian)*

Fairy tales communicate strong life optimism in that they mostly end well and even apparently hopeless situations change for the good in the end.

Why myths? When children grow too old for fairy tales, storytelling does not lose its purpose. Particularly the myths with their strong adventure character fascinate not only older children, but also adolescents, especially because human passions play such an important role.

*“Nothing of human passion is omitted, be it of a positive or negative nature, so no outrage nor betrayal, no greed, no negative aspect of the human soul, all of this is dealt with in highly dramatic stories. And this extreme adventurousness in the escalation of conflicts, which one simply cannot avoid. Because that goes so deep, even into the deepest abysses of the human soul and the human imagination. And when one also tells this, in the moment it comes alive in their heads and it seems to be actually happening. And the horror is just as big as the amazement, what can be found there of beauty or loyalty or positive aspects.” (an expert)*

Despite these extremes the myths retain a simple logic and due to their structure are easy for children and adolescents to understand and comprehend.

*“And it is the simple stories, nevertheless, they are not so convoluted, the ensemble of figures is as a rule easy to understand. There are not many subplots; it is the main narrative which is easy to follow when one listens. The narrative is central. And that drives the storytelling forward and the imagination ever further, into the next episode, and another episode and yet another – so it is a nearly breathless tension that is built up in these myths because one always thinks they lead right past the abyss. So you really see on the one side, there is Death. If you fall in there – so. And how will the hero now get away or not, or will he fall in there at the end after all? So they have absolutely risked their lives. And I also think that this is well-received, especially by young people. The assessment in school pedagogy, in children’s literature, which says one should not overwhelm children with such things, I believe to be simply wrong.” (an expert)*

---

#### **Conclusion and recommendation:**

- The choice of fairy tales as the content for storytelling appears useful. The experiences of the kindergarten specialist staff in and teachers confirms that in practice storytelling of fairy tales is highly attractive for children. Fairy tales and myths have a language-developing character and allow one to experience the basic pattern of stories, which we apparently cannot experience in this way in a world characterized by TV and virtual media.
- With the extension into myths older children and adolescents can also be reached. The use of myths is to be extended.
- Through storytelling the children also learn to share their experiences with others “in an attractive way”. Storytelling fulfils important functions in further life, also in the world of adults. Therefore it also appears meaningful to us to complement the spectrum with further story genres (animal stories with fable characteristics, every-day stories, stories about letters and words, emotive word narratives, fantasy stories, etc.) Especially when the goal is to strengthen the children’s storytelling abilities (particularly at the point when the children themselves begin to tell), the exclusive restriction to fairy tales and myths seems to us to fall short.<sup>11</sup>

---

## **5 ACCEPTANCE AND EFFECTS OF ERZÄHLZEIT**

The testimonies regarding the project’s acceptance and effects are primarily based on the results of the written survey of teachers and kindergarten specialist staff for the project years 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 respectively. The response rate of a total of 79.7 percent can be considered

extraordinarily high. This also applies to the year 2009/2010, in which the survey questionnaires were not delivered personally to the participants by the storytellers, but were sent to the heads of the schools and kindergartens with the request to distribute these to the participating teaching or kindergarten staff (cf. Figure 3). The quantitative data is supplemented with statements from the interviews and focus groups.

**Figure 3:** Response rate from schools and kindergartens by project year (N=114<sup>12</sup>, information in percent)

(dark pink = school; light pink = kindergarten)

The interpretation of the data was mostly done together for school and kindergarten as well as for the years, as the differences in the assessment between the different groups was relatively small.

### 5.1 HIGH SATISFACTION AMONG THE PARTICIPATING TEACHERS AND KINDERGARTEN STAFF

*“The authority of the storyteller, it seems so easy and yet it is so difficult. The ability of the storyteller to capture the attention of the pupils with voice and gestures.” (teacher’s response to the question: What especially impressed you?)*

As the following Figure 4 shows, the much greater majority of participants is very satisfied with the project or with the project flow.

**Figure 4:** Satisfaction with the project *ErzählZeit* in total (N=105, information in percent)

(very satisfied / satisfied / partly satisfied - dark pink = school; light pink = kindergarten)

None of the participants reported to have been dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the project. The satisfaction of the school teachers was even somewhat higher than the kindergarten teachers. This small difference may be due to the fact that the project started as a school project and was later extended to kindergartens.

The previous development story as well as the pilot phase “*Sprachlos*” have obviously lead to a generally consistent concept for nearly all participants, the core of which can be considered to be tested. This can also be seen in that the project in its structure and its weekly implementation was largely evaluated positively.

**Figure 5:** Satisfaction with the flow of the storytelling day in schools and kindergartens (N=75 schools, 31 kindergartens, information in percent)

(Very satisfied with....

... parents’ response ... children’s participation ... with their own role ... fairy tales selected ... storyteller’s performance ...total process

dark pink = school; light pink = kindergarten)

**Great satisfaction with the storytellers.** The majority of teachers and kindergarten staff were satisfied with the professionalism and performance of the storytellers they experienced, as well as with their own role during the storytelling session.

Particularly the teachers were very much in agreement with the **fairy tales selected**. In the kindergartens the evaluations were more ambivalent. Some of the kindergarten staff found the performance of the stories by the storyteller too exciting for their youngest children, the content too challenging and the materials often too difficult. They requested that the stories be even shorter and simpler formats.

The **children's participation** can, at least in the opinion of nearly half of those surveyed, be intensified even further. And the survey participants were also not (yet) completely satisfied the **parents' response** to the *ErzählZeit* project. Working with the parents is, in general, rather difficult at the participating schools, and this is mirrored in the partly relatively low response to the project *ErzählZeit*. The events held for parents in the libraries are however showing first reference points for their greater involvement.

Although the pupils and kindergarten children looked forward to the storytelling session according to the majority of the teachers (89.2 percent) and the kindergarten staff (84 percent), it was also a learning process for the children to listen to the story. Although there were also disciplinary issues and classes that were very restless<sup>13</sup>, in which a lot of work had to be done on rules of conduct during *ErzählZeit*, as some teachers reported, but the majority of the teachers and kindergarten staff<sup>14</sup> was repeatedly surprised by how well and quickly their children learned to listen to the stories told. Through the use of gestures, voice and movements the storytellers managed to fascinate the children and involve them emotionally.

*“That is something different than when we sit here and tell stories. Of course we also tell stories, but firstly we haven't learned how to do this, I consider it something like a specialized profession, like theatre actors or something – storytelling is something different. You always see that when S. is here and how she can fascinate the children with gestures, voice and movements.” (a kindergarten teacher)*

A teacher who has often tried to read to her class reports similar experiences. In comparison to the *ErzählZeit* storytelling session, she was unable to get the children to listen for a longer time. *“After two, three minutes the children are jumping over tables and benches, if one offers it just like that. But with storytelling it works better.” (a teacher)* Clearly, children still allow themselves to be carried away into the magical, wonderful world of fairy tales and stories – even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## 5.2 STORYTELLING SHOWS A BROAD AND SUSTAINABLE EFFECTS PROFILE

*“The storyteller has an eye for whether the children have understood the story, she repeated a little at a time. She was not afraid to use words that the children did not know. Through facial expressions and gestures she underscores the vividness of the story. She explained the words or connections if the children ask, and she used her voice to create atmosphere...” (teacher's response to the question: What especially impressed you?)*

This study was not able to analyse the effects, due to the short running time. We asked school teachers as well as kindergarten teachers for their observations and compared these with the empirically confirmed effects from our own investigation (Höfer, Jentgens, Knecht, Straus 2009)<sup>15</sup> and the claims of the project.

The specialty staff was asked on a scale of 1 to 4 (1=strongly agree to 4=disagree) which effects they observed in their children. As the following figure shows, all the average values are better than 2.5, which means the staff saw to a high degree that effects from the storytelling occurred in the children.

Thus the following figure shows that the target of language development was attained throughout. This refers to the storytelling competence as well as extending their vocabulary and developing the joy in storytelling in the children. As an expert says, the children take up the language very intensively through the fascination with the story told.

*“And that also fascinates me so much in this, that they remember words, where I always think that’s just not possible. He was now four, that was the most impressive thing, they had the story of the tortoise and the lettuce and he had actually retained the word “water droplet”; I found that phenomenal.” (a librarian)*

**Figure 6:** Effects of storytelling on the children – Part 1 (N=110, mean values – scale from 1 to 4 (1=strongly agree to 4=disagree))

Storytellers good language role models – improved concentration ability – learning unknown words and phrases – expanding active vocabulary – improving storytelling competence – joy in storytelling in children with migration background – children with migration background profit linguistically especially

dark pink = school; light pink = kindergarten)

Strong effects were reached by storytelling especially when it came to developing the children’s imagination. In the storytelling the children actively took part in the events and use what they heard in their own images and ideas. This distinguishes oral storytelling from medial stories, as a kindergarten teacher notes.

*“I think that through this ErzählZeit the imagination is naturally stimulated – through this vividness, yes, that comes across so vividly, then the children’s imagination is even more stimulated and I think that books and telling have this in common, that by looking and listening your own pictures are created and naturally then also own stories develop, maybe in each child a different one in their head. That is what is stimulated and the children tell a lot here, they tell these fairy tales that they have heard and tell them to each other. And out of this comes something new. It is very lively.” (a kindergarten teacher)*

But also social learning and the reflection about people’s actions are supported by storytelling and the contents communicated thereby. Another study (Höfer et al. 2009) was able to show that storytelling for children also has personality developing effects. Also in the present survey such effects are shown, such as strengthening self-confidence in speaking in front of or to others, or supporting social learning processes.

*“...and then they [the children] became storytellers themselves. And what I found fascinating was that they also sat down in the afternoon in the after-school program and other children then sat down around them and they played storytelling. And the other children listened. Then fairy tales came out of the children, I experienced really amazing examples, how they did it, how they found the fairy tale structure helpful in telling about their own problems in these structures.” (an expert)*

The “re-telling” of fairy tales becomes a creative act, in which fantastic elements are built in, in which the story is rebuilt, words sought and explanations are added. Through fairy tales, the children learn

structures of stories which make it easier for them to make themselves understood as a storyteller. Language becomes a toolkit to be able to articulate thoughts and pictures in your head. The language is enriched with imagery, for example “the white carriage, that is drawn by six black horses”. Language is not only cognitive and full of facts, but also contains pictorial expressions.

*“The storytellers become language examples, role models through whom the children can learn how to structure their every-day experiences in such a way that others will listen to them and also understand their stories. In this, fairy tales are especially well-suited for structuring experience.” (an expert)*

*“...Fairy tales are reduced to the essentials. And that is what I find so exciting. And that is how, in my opinion, the children get to know the dramatic structures. In other words, how story functions, how to tell a story. And even if I am only telling what happened to me recently. That is also something I can tell in a way that bores everyone and then nobody listens to me. Or I can tell it in a way that – hey, yes, and then what happened? So that I learn to tell private stories so interestingly that the others listen to me.” (a storyteller)*

For the children it is important that the stories have a beginning and an ending. Fairy tales have these, in contrast to cartoon films which are consumed by most of the children in the schools and kindergartens investigated.

*“When the children tell about their cartoon films, then we all do not understand what they are actually telling us, because there is no reflection, no context, no connecting lines, but it is like a straight line in which everything is told and everything somehow picked out. And these stories [fairy tales] are round. And because they are round, they can remember them better and they recognize why that happened or when this happens, that happens. They can tie things together and thereby it is rounded off. And there, I think, they can also remember them and retell them, because it is complete and not endlessly long. And that is important for our children.” (a storyteller)*

**Figure 7:** Effects of storytelling on the children – Part 2 (N=110, mean values – scale from 1 to 4 (1=strongly agree to 4=disagree)

The imagination is stimulated – Developing one’s own pictures in one’s head – Learning unknown words and phrases – Self-confidence speaking in front of others increases – The project aids social learning – Learning to connect between cultures – Interest in books is higher

dark pink line with blue square = school; light pink line with dark pink square = kindergarten)

The results further show that

- Kindergarten and school children in the age group (2 – 10) independent of education and migration background were reached equally well. Also children with a small German vocabulary increasingly participate and develop joy in the German language.<sup>16</sup>
- For the school classes the storytelling also contains community developing elements. In this way shared storytelling becomes an object of common memory, that does without experiences of discrimination and competitiveness. This is probably the reason why 73.5 percent of the teachers report that the feeling of community was positively affected by the storytelling.<sup>17</sup> To a slightly lesser degree this is also true of the kindergarten groups (65.6 percent of kindergarten staff agreed with this).
- *“Also restless, fidgety pupils participated in the storytelling sessions with enthusiasm and attentiveness and enjoyed this lesson very much.” (a teacher)* This quote refers to an

observation that also applies to other problem groups: *“Very quickly even the shy children dared to tell a story themselves.” (a teacher).*<sup>18</sup> It is obviously also children with a “difficult background”, that are able to use the experiences in *ErzählZeit* for themselves. But finally the predominant assessment was that the structures of *ErzählZeit* do not support any particular group of children more than the others.

The aimed-for effects were assessed by the participating schools and kindergartens as even more exceptional, as the children’s language ability was generally not especially strong. Many children, according to one expert, could not carry out the discrimination for terms as they had never learned it, because they live in an environment with very poor language stimuli.<sup>19</sup> Through the storytelling the children now get a chance, through the development of pictures in their heads also to develop the corresponding vocabulary. The effects described above refer not only in a narrower sense to language development in the German language, but involve overall the entire language development process.

In addition, the storytelling session offers the school and kindergarten teachers the opportunity to experience their children from a different perspective, a view that is closed to them when they are teaching.

*“... but to be able to observe the children in their fascination and in their behaviour and from this to sometimes observe a deeper insight also into their personality development. We then suddenly realize that when we go away from this very strong pressure, from this writing and arithmetic and set things up a little differently, that we suddenly discover facets to the children which can contribute very strong elements to personality development, which also give them the strength, the power, the courage to dare to try difficult things, even if they actually cannot do it yet. Not yet.” (a teacher)*

The *ErzählZeit* successes verified in the project report for the school years 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 continue on. The encounter with the cultural technique of orality (spoken language) captivates the children, and they actually experience what is being told. This active listening strengthens the children’s ability to concentrate, develops their child-like imagination and creativity. Storytelling also expands, as determined above, the active vocabulary and grammar. Active listening, which the children learned, obviously form an important cornerstone for the development of storytelling and language competences, which go far beyond simply increasing vocabulary. In “empathizing” with the fairy tale heroes opens up for the children a dialogue with others in the world. Telling stories from all around the world allows a curiosity for other cultures to develop and makes intercultural understanding easier.

These effects could however be partly even more amplified if the stories told were more integrated into the school lessons. This is especially true for strengthening pupils’ self-confidence, social learning, increased joy in storytelling in children with a migration background and particularly in improving the storytelling competence of the children (cf. in more detail Chapter 6). However, until now, only 26 percent of teachers reported that they actually integrated the fairy tales told in their teaching (1=strongly agree). For nearly two-thirds this is only the case to a limited extent. In the kindergartens the fairy tales told were integrated into the daily routine more often (41.9 percent 1=strongly agree), and 38.7 percent do it occasionally.<sup>20</sup>

### **5.3 STORYTELLING SUPPORTS INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION AND INTEGRATION**

*“Children with a migration background speak better and more freely within the group. They have learned to converse in German with*

*each other.” (teacher’s response to the question: Which children profited from storytelling?)*

The approach of storytelling through the medium “fairy tales from around the world” is generally positively evaluated. A majority of the speciality staff agrees with the statement<sup>21</sup>, that through the fairy tales the children learn to know and value connections between the world cultures. Fairy tales are described as an important approach particularly in a medially organised world (television, games, mobile phones, facebook and Twitter),

- which on the one hand helps to recognise the logic also behind stories consumed through the media (cf. Merkel 2000),
- and on the other sets also a conscious counterpoint to the medial consumer world. Children not only enjoy listening to fairy tales are, so the perception of the specialty staff surveyed, but also actively re-tell them themselves.

A special characteristic of the Berlin project includes a consistent utilisation and implementation of intercultural storytelling patterns. On the one hand fairy tales from many different countries are told. Intercultural learning here means getting to know the values and ways of life of other cultures. But it also means discovering similar storytelling patterns, which however vary differently but are similar at their core.

*“Fairy tales are indeed the internationally administered literature. The fairy tale pattern exists all over the world, the anachronists exist all over the world, the themes are altered or not altered, show a similarity, and that is so fascinating for the children that they suddenly hear *The Wolf and the Seven Little Kids* from Azerbaijan or a variation of *Snow White* from India. So the fairy tale per se is appropriate for intercultural learning. That is the interculturally circulated literature.” (an expert)*

Commented [AK1]: Isn't this antagonists?

Through this the children can experience that it is about discovering similar or the same themes in the fairy tales from their native culture and in cultures foreign to them. Fairy tales make it possible, from this perspective, to make discovery journeys into other and yet not completely foreign worlds.

*“... I also like to make sure that I include stories from other regions of the world and use themes that I have already told previously. In that sense I often tell themes again, which I have already told in a different packaging, I like doing that. It is simply nice when I have told *Mother Hulda* and then I tell a Scottish variation that also has a good and a bad girl or a Russian variation. That is really fun and is also a super voyage of discovery for the children. Or you can tell the English *Rumpelstiltskin* or the Austrian one, and that makes the world different again.” (an expert)*

The children obviously also find this exciting and interesting. So nearly half of the teachers<sup>22</sup> agree with the statement that their pupils find fairy tales from other cultures particularly interesting. For the kindergarten children this does not apply so strongly.<sup>23</sup>

With the telling of fairy tales from other cultures the children’s cultural roots gain a prominent meaning.

*“...I think the nice thing is that there is always a child in the class from whose culture of origin maybe, or from whose cultural background this fairy tale just stems and that then animates their cultural background that he for once is the centre of attention, equal beside the others,*

*that he is important and not somehow something exotic or strange, but that he is taken seriously and experiences appreciation.” (a storyteller)*

Besides telling fairy tales from various cultures the *ErzählZeit* project also **includes storytellers from different cultures, who at regular intervals tell stories in languages other than German**. For example, in one school there are three foreign-language storytellers who handle this differently. One storyteller/one teacher from one of the focus groups, who took part in an event “Telling in Twos”, reported:

*“So, the event “Telling in Twos”, storytelling in a foreign language and German, I found this very, very exciting because it is hugely enriching for the children when two tell. That is even more special when it can take place parallel in two languages.” (a storyteller)*

*“Our English storyteller also told fairy tales from his Welsh home, which were actually not suitable for children at all. And he told them anyway, and the children loved them. So he said that there has also often been criticism: For God’s sake, you can’t tell these stories to children, which maybe was also a little problematic or whatever – so to really also dare to also tell small children challenging stories. But in my experience they can handle it well as long as it is presented accordingly.”<sup>24</sup> (a teacher)*

#### 5.4 SUSTAINABILITY AS A TARGET – CONTINUATION HAS BEEN REQUESTED

*“Many thanks for the great initiative, the project should absolutely be continued.” (a kindergarten teacher)*

The comparison of the evaluations of the current *ErzählZeit* year with those of past school and kindergarten years show a very high agreement. Also nine months after the end of the project the teachers and kindergarten staff gave nearly identical assessments of the effects reached in the children. Obviously these evaluations by the speciality staff were not simply a case of short-term spontaneous enthusiasm.

Naturally this does not mean that the effects will also simply be maintained without the storytelling. There are indications that the effects weaken over time. This applies e.g. for the effects in pupils with a migration background. Here the teachers’ assessment one year later of the question whether the children have gained joy in storytelling and speaking, was somewhat more reserved. The same is true for the assessment that particularly children with a migration background profit linguistically from storytelling. This does not seem surprising if one assumes that the children continue to grow up in an environment in which little (German) is spoken.

Also the optimistic assessment that storytelling is a very positive experience, from which they will still profit in the future, goes back somewhat with time, but stays at an overall high level. And so, even nine months after the end of the project 64 percent of teachers and 46 percent of kindergarten staff assume that the reported effects will continue, in comparison to 78 percent of teachers and 68.4 percent of kindergarten staff of the current year. Although both professions assume that their children will also profit from the project in future, the majority wish for a consolidation of the storytelling and/or a continuation of *ErzählZeit*.

**Figure 8:** Wishes to the perspectivity of *ErzählZeit* (N=105, information in percent, “strongly agree”)

Our school/institution or I would be interested in continuing storytelling in teaching

It would be good if there were a permanent storyteller at my school/kindergarten

Commented [AK2]: Remember to translate numbers too!

I find it very important that storytelling gets a higher significance in children's education

Storytelling should be used again and again in class/in the group

The storytelling day was a very positive experience for my children, from which they could also profit in future

dark pink = school; light pink = kindergarten)

Outside the funded *ErzählZeit* project there were already cases in which storytelling could be established long-term. A storyteller, who told stories in a kindergarten for three years, personally experienced how positive this continuity affected how she saw herself and the children's development:

*"... I don't know how we managed it but we managed to make it possible that I could tell stories in a kindergarten for three years. I was able to see for myself what came out of it after the three years, and also for the kindergarten teachers it was interesting to see this developmental leap in the children." (an expert)*

---

#### Conclusion and recommendation:

- The results on the assessment of the effect based on an extraordinarily high response rate on the part of the surveyed teachers and kindergarten specialty staff. This as well as the broad agreement in the evaluations of both professions and nearly identical assessment of the effects throughout the present and the past project years speak for a high validity of the statements. In addition, there is a broad agreement with the results of our own studies (Höfer et al. 2009), which were done at least for the language acquisition also through an age-normed longitudinal study. Therefore we consider the following statements to be justified:
- Storytelling improves the linguistic abilities of nearly all children and raises the abilities of concentrated listening as well as how it stimulates the imagination and helps children to be more confident in speaking in front of others. These effects have a direct positive influence on the capacity to act and the performance ability of children in school or kindergarten life.
- These effects explain the meaningfulness of taking up storytelling in the form practised in *ErzählZeit* in the regular daily routine of school and kindergarten (cf. Hagen et al. 2006). The reworking of the told contents in the daily work in school and kindergarten raises the effect and should therefore be systemised and upgraded.
- The slightly weaker assessment of the effects in the kindergarten area has, in our opinion, to do with the fact that the development work of the *ErzählZeit* project was done mainly in the school environment. To date a separate conceptual adaptation to the kindergarten environment has not been done to our knowledge and should be undertaken in the near future.

---

## 6 ACCEPTANCE AND EFFECTS OF ERZÄHLZEIT

### 6.1 PROJECT LOCATION SCHOOL

*"And I found that simply important that the children encounter the German language in the form of stories and fairy tales and there have the possibility of hearing the*

*language properly and that in a lively, beautiful form.” (a teacher)*

With *ErzählZeit begegnet Kunst* (*ErzählZeit* meets Art) and *Kultur dem Alltag Schule* (Culture in Everyday School), each with their own structural factors and processes. This is a meeting of two worlds that must move towards each other in order to see the children’s encounter with the cultural technique of oral storytelling not simply additively as an extra offering, but integratively as an essential moment of the language development process. For this purpose the state of the project as well as the success factors and problem areas are listed in the following.

#### On the Structure and Process of the School Project

Structure	Process
In the project year 2011 (cf. <i>ErzählZeit</i> 2011) 16 primary schools with four classes each were chosen. Every week there is storytelling in one school lesson per class. <i>ErzählZeit</i> begins in October, and per class there is an average of 30 storytelling sessions.	After a recurring starting ritual one story always forms the main focus of each event. After the first approx. 10 storytelling sessions, re-telling and creating stories by the children takes up a part of each lesson.  Fairy tales from around the world are told, especially from the children’s countries of origin. In all school a foreign storyteller is also included. Approx. once a quarter they tell a story in their native language.
In the project year 2010/11 five secondary schools were added, at which myths were told. The short-term project <i>Myths</i> consisted of five weeks, during which there was also one storytelling lesson per class per week. Here, too, four classes per school were involved.	Content is myths from around the world (among others: Gaia and her children, Perseus, Theseus and the minotaur, the Argonauts, Odysseus, the goddess Durga (Indian)).

A fundamental factor for the success of the *ErzählZeit* project is the **receptiveness of the teachers for storytelling**. Thus the large majority of teachers surveyed reported that they took part in the *ErzählZeit* project out of personal interest (84 percent: 1=strongly agree). It is also optimal for the project’s success if the decision for storytelling is made quite purposefully and deliberately:

*“In our group that is responsible for the seventh year we first addressed which educational needs our pupils actually have and we ascertained that one problem is the lack of attention, another problem is also a very, very limited vocabulary and that they also read relatively little or also have no experience with narrative texts. And as a result we became aware of this project and thought it would make sense to implement it.” (a teacher)*

It becomes rather more difficult if teachers see the project as purely “*easing the teaching burden*” or if they are only partially motivated, because they do not want to take part in yet another project or they feel overloaded anyway.

*“For those teachers that refused to accept the project or showed no interest in it, the reason was mostly that they were already very burdened and then also feared having to prepare something additional, something new, which was connected with additional appointments and also a deviation from the existing routine.” (a teacher)*

In the storytelling situation, teachers are also a **role model, which they need to realize**. If they barely show interest in a story, do not know what to think of the topic “fairy tales” and give the impression that they themselves are barely listening or not at all (because they are doing other tasks meanwhile or chatting) it becomes difficult for the pupils to engage in the storytelling situation.

*“So if he [the teacher] is a good listener and says: I relax during the lesson and I look forward to this lesson, then it is wonderful. Then he sets the children’s mood with his own curiosity and delight [for the storytelling situation]. But if the teacher is stressed and worried whether a crumb will be dropped in the front row or if someone has chewing gum in his mouth or if they will fidget or whatever else might happen, and he thinks, oh God, what’s the storyteller thinking now? Then it actually backfires. So the teacher must absolutely be a partner. Then it is very beautiful. If the teacher is stressed because of something, it rather carries over to the class.” (an expert)*

Above and beyond this there is the often cited problem area of lack of clarity in relation to **the expectation of each other’s roles**. This refers to active listening as well as the question whose task it is to keep things quiet.<sup>25</sup> Here, however, there is also a different pattern of expectations among the storytellers about who carries this responsibility: the storyteller himself/herself, who must manage to captivate the pupils or the class teacher who is responsible for quiet and prepare the pupils for the situation accordingly. In any case it is necessary to clarify together the expectations each side has before the beginning of the project.

In the school year 2010/2011 the appearance of the storyteller at a full staff meeting was systematically introduced, in order to make them known among the staff as well as to document their status as an artist at the school, as these two factors had often been experienced as deficits in past projects.

With the storyteller’s performance some of the teachers experienced storytelling for the first time in its authenticity and made them look forward to the *ErzählZeit* project. *“Both storytellers came to our full staff meeting and both told a story there. And in that moment the entire staff really wanted this ErzählZeit project.” (a teacher)*

In addition important information could be communicated and the conditions for a good project process could be clarified in advance with the teachers. Although this systematic introduction to the project was shown to be particularly important for the preparation of the storytelling sessions within the school, according to the survey results over a third (38 percent) were not actively involved in this preparatory process. Compared to 62 percent in the previous year it may be a considerably smaller share, but in our opinion still too high.

A **separate room**, which is made available to the storyteller, is a further important factor. The storyteller can stay in the storytelling room, she need not hurry from one class to the next, and she can set the room up according to her needs. This promotes an atmosphere that is fruitful for storytelling and simplifies a quick start into the storytelling situation in light of the limited time (45 minutes each). It has, however, not been possible to enforce the necessity of such a room being available for this time at all schools<sup>26</sup>.

As opposed to the teachers, who are mostly satisfied with the course of the storytelling day, **storytelling at schools** includes a few further **challenges** for the storytellers. Five of the most important examples named are:

- (1) **The 45-minute timeframe**. This rhythm of school lessons and not the story itself sets the timeframe for *ErzählZeit*. It not only makes it difficult to reach the prescribed targets, as one

storyteller formulates it: *"We have the job of telling them stories and at the same time the job of bringing them into storytelling. For this we have only 45 minutes."* (a storyteller) But this fixed rhythm also influences the pupil's audience attitude/culture. *"As soon as I ended the story, the bell rang. Everyone immediately stood up, no applause, nothing, they just went out. And then I think, that's not culture."* (a storyteller). Fortunately this example is, however, an exception, particularly as the teachers in this example did not actively support the project. This narrow timeframe does limit the storytelling in a certain way, but it also a break in the school routine, and creates a space to slow down:

*"With this, [ErzählZeit] brings idleness into the daily routine, a totally different rhythm in the time plan, where you can really take the time to develop things in your head and are not under permanent pressure that the bell will ring right away and this and that need not be checked off. So once again in general: I believe education requires quiet, needs time, needs leisure. Despite the limited 45 minutes there is really a deceleration: slowing down. The storyteller tells slowly, it is about one story."* (an expert)

However, experience has also shown that it is advantageous or even necessary to depart from the 45-minute timeframe from time to time and add a project day, in which the class has *ErzählZeit* for four lessons in a row. *"This brings the [pupils] themselves to a new level and we also need this to prepare the projects in the libraries."* (a storyteller)

- (2) **Every class, every lesson a new fairy tale.** That was a true challenge for the storytellers, particularly at the beginning, because *"our repertoire simply wasn't so large. Today, of course, I have the advantage of also being able to react spontaneously and then to say: oh, aha, that's happening right now here? And then to have a story at your fingertips, that is of course an advantage."* (a storyteller) Such flexibility requires long experience, but a majority of the storytellers obviously have this in the meantime.
- (3) **Four classes in a row.** As a rule stories are told in front of the classes one after the other on one morning. This allows hardly any breaks and allows no follow-up exchange about individual pupils or about the course of the storytelling session.
- (4) **Telling stories in front of big classes (25 – 30 children).** While it is possible, due to the small groups in the kindergartens, to adjust to one of the children based on the situation and the individual, in the schools this requires the regularity of the weekly return. The storytellers describe that it requires a different effort in school, to *"push away the daily routine and dive into the story."*
- (5) **Broad range of ages in the enrolment phase.** The age spectrum in the enrolment phase from 5.5 years to 8 years often makes storytelling at the beginning of the school year rather difficult, because *"the little ones that are coming from the kindergarten, they are still in a cocoon, the others are much further along."* (a storyteller)

**Artistic storytelling in schools – a (successful) balancing act:** All these examples and, in the meantime, the project's five years of further development in the school context make it clear that, on the one hand, a fitting process is required in order to adapt the storytelling situation that was originally stage-oriented to the pedagogically structured school system. On the other, the adaptation should not go too far, the artistic moment should not be dissolved by pedagogy.

A short look back at the problems at the beginning shows again the special challenges and at the same time the development that has been reached. Thus in the development of the concept at the Anna-Lindh school (Project *Sprachlos*) one of the greatest challenges at all was to last longer. *"The storytelling lessons were like contrast baths: occasionally concentrated, delighted listening, then again shouting, fist fights, frolicking, without any chance of getting to the end of a story. The reasons for the change were hard to make out. None of the previously dependable recipes ensured lasting success – success and failure lay close together. The storytellers' conflicts with this phenomenon of*

*unpredictable restlessness often took more space than the storytelling itself.” After about four months and diverse modifications the breakthrough was achieved. “The children now often listen as long as 40 minutes (!) with visible emotional involvement. They enjoy the quiet, in which one can hear the famous pin drop, they speak along with verses and some phrases.” (Wardetzky et al. 2010)*

Today the storytellers manage the situation from the beginning with few exceptions.

Preparation and follow-up work in class: Not uncontroversial, but necessary. A survey of the pupils<sup>27</sup> shows that the classes in which an intensive preparation and follow-up of the project took place, the project was very well received and also the interest was high, while in a class without preparation and follow-up the entire project tended to be less well received.

*“So that was also something that we should still discuss in more detail, that this can probably only be carried out with teachers who are prepared to do a high degree of preparation and follow-up. However even in the class that said that they didn’t like it so much, they crossed off: I have learned a lot.” (a teacher)*

Also our survey of the teachers has impressively confirmed this result. Thus an intensive follow-up again improves the achieved effects, particularly with regard to the children’s narrative competence.

**Figure 9:** Follow-up and assessment of achieved effects in pupils (N=52, mean values) Scale of 1 to 4 (1=strongly agree to 4=disagree)

Black line with blue diamond = follow-up; dark pink line with dark pink square = some follow-up; light pink line with green triangle=no follow-up

Joy in storytelling in children with migration background

Children with migration background profit particularly

Learning connections between cultures

Contribution to social learning

Self-confidence speaking in front of others strengthened

More interest in books

Narrative competence has improved

However, there were also teaching staff in the focus group discussion that made the case for a “relaxed approach to follow-up” in light of their high work load, or also were worried that something creative like storytelling becomes school-like too quickly. They were in agreement that the follow-up is the primary task of the teachers.

*“So I find it the most meaningful if the storytellers really stay storytellers and the contents are picked up by the teachers in such a way that it really continues to have an effect and reaches in to the teaching. Of course it would be good if there were shared considerations together with the teachers regarding which material one should choose so that it can then be further worked on in class by the teachers. So that would be the ideal situation of our cooperation.” (a storyteller)*

In the following a few examples were selected that were named by the participating teachers of the focus groups.

- **The morning circle.** *“There is always a review there – what did we understand, which vocabulary, what was unfamiliar to you, then we will look it up on the internet.” (a teacher)*
- **Wall newspaper – dramatic play.** *“First the language basics – vocabulary, which we then mix up in German and in Turkish and check what is going on in the Turkish culture, when the Turkish teacher is in class. My plan is now for the third grade, that the entire class will develop a story and a large picture into which the story will flow, so a really huge wall newspaper. Or that we play a scene and then stage it at the spring party, with music by the music teacher. And at heart it doesn’t matter where one learns spelling or grammar. If one has one’s own language and paper and a pen and something you can pin it to, and simply creative ideas and also include the children in planning the lessons, then it works.” (a teacher)*
- **Comparing fairy tales from different countries.** *“It is also important to reach out to the children and include their ideas and to look what ideas they have, what problems did they have with the story? Was there even a problem? Maybe I thought they don’t know this and that, but they did know it because they knew it from their own cultural circle, because there are many fairy tales they also have: Ah, my grandmother already told me that! We have the same one. Then we simply compared stories, okay. So that is a wide field.” (a teacher)*
- **Picture, Theatre play, Rap.** *In my class in Neukölln there are no more German pupils. We have three projects in which they worked on the sagas in the form of a picture. The others made a rap based on a saga and the third group put on a theatrical scene. ( a teacher)*
- **Writing stories down.** There were different experiences in the written fixing. Some of the teachers reported having had the children fix the fairy tales either in writing or in pictures,<sup>28</sup> so that they can then tell them better. *“It is part of learning, at least here, that the children have a storytelling book and are encouraged to tell the story again to someone at home and then to get a signature. That means promoting discussion, conversation about the story.” (a teacher)*
- Others had the experience that this way partly did not work well. In the assessment of opposing experiences it was agreed that it is a question of how the writing is in the respective class. *“When the writing is a pleasant, good thing that is fun, in which one can communicate, where one can express oneself and present oneself and if it is also presented to the outside, then this method of follow-up can work.” (a teacher)*

**Fairy tales, myths and other stories.** The approach of storytelling through fairy tale content in primary school classes, is controversial. However, it has been shown that with increasing age (particularly with the boys) the immediate binding force of fairy tales decreases slightly.

*“So the idea with the fairy tales is indeed meaningful, however there is a limit at a certain point. We noticed this in my fourth grade class: “Oh, fairy tales, does it have to be a fairy tale every week?” They were much more captivated by other stories such as myths, for example Prometheus, a story that went over several weeks and then even those boys who found the storytelling totally uncool were involved again.” (a teacher)*

Besides the myths free stories are also possible.

*“I don’t necessarily always do it so regularly that I say, here I am and what did we do last lesson, that’s too much school for me. But I offer a platform again and again where it is all about stories and where the children can also tell stories. And I am now realizing especially in this year that they take the style of the fairy tale but tell their own stories of their day. And that is very, very exciting.” (a storyteller)*

*“And my wish is that the next time – it doesn’t always have to be only myths, it could also be other stories that are told.” (a teacher, secondary school)*

**The teachers' wishes.** In the written survey, the teachers were asked about their wishes or suggestions for improvement for the course of the storytelling session. The following suggestions refer to a smaller group of teachers (N=12), as the greater majority were so satisfied that they saw no need for changes or in this space explicitly praised the project yet again<sup>29</sup>. The suggestions pick up different ideas, the time aspect, the participation of the children, and in some cases referring to the structure:

- **Time.** This refers firstly to the 45-minute timeframe, which is too short for shared activities such as, for example, planning performances, which is also too short to take time for getting to know each other, or addressing the needs of individual pupils optimally. More time is also desired for a joint preparation/reflection of the storytelling session with the storyteller, or rather, to plan the topics into the school routine more. Suggested was, among other things, a 14-day double lesson alternating with the following class. On the other hand, the suggestions refer to the time of the event. It should not be in the last lessons, so that the story told can be taken up directly afterwards in the next lesson. Another wish refers to the end of the project, which should be less abrupt after a year, but that another few lessons should be completed in the following school year.
- **Active participation by the children.** There is a wish for a stronger participation by the children, they should be encouraged even more strongly to tell stories themselves, e.g. as a repetition of the last story. There is also a wish for a larger repertoire for this active participation, such as for example role-plays, theatre.
- **Structure.** Here there was a wish for greater continuity in the storytellers as well as the wish for alternation and rotation throughout the year.

Only three of the suggestions came from a background of indirect criticism of the project. For example one teacher criticized that there was too little movement for the children, such as "statues or songs", so that the children can move a bit within the 45 minutes.

## 6.2 PROJECT LOCATION KINDERGARTEN

*"I find ErzählZeit really great for our children, because fairy tales are not told so often at home. And here in the kindergarten we however also do not tell stories so often. In addition, it is something different if people who have been trained come from the outside. So I am totally happy that it takes place here once a week, because it really brings us something wonderful." (kindergarten staff)*

In the year 2008/09 the project *ErzählZeit* was carried out for the first time in the field of kindergartens. Since that time the number of participating kindergartens has increased steadily.<sup>30</sup> However, as the figure shows, *ErzählZeit* still has its main emphasis in the field of (primary) schools.

**Figure 10:** Comparison of participation of schools and kindergartens (given in absolute numbers) (1=strongly agree to 4=disagree)

dark pink = schools; light pink = kindergartens

**On the structure and course of the project location kindergarten<sup>31</sup>:**

Structure	Course
In the project year 2010/11 there were 7 kindergartens each with 4 groups chosen. In total 20 storytelling units were available.	<p>At the beginning are sayings and rhymes, short sequences that are connected to the children's areas of experience. This invites and empowers the children to active participation. Their own body as a "stage" and an element of play connects doing with listening. Fingerplay and hand-stories connect bodily actions and processes with the spoken word and manageable little stories.</p> <p>In a second step of the project animal stories and stories with children as heroes are freely told.</p> <p>In this, great importance is attached to the connection between the stories and the corresponding design of the storytelling situation. A minimal "stage setting" forms the frame for the fairy tales and stories. Here it's all about clear forms, colours, objects, which transport aesthetic development on a different level.</p>

Interesting is the comparison of the **framework conditions** for the storytelling between **kindergarten and school**. In many aspects the kindergartens are better off from the viewpoint of the storytellers.<sup>32</sup> Thus, as a rule, the work in the kindergartens allows a faster and more personal view of the individual children. Also, the status of storyteller is less controversial and requires less clarification in this environment, compared for example to schools. Two storytellers on this:

*"But for me it is actually the directness, which I otherwise do not experience like this. With regard to group sizes it is, compared to school, a pleasure, because it is really engaging. I have each child's eyes. It is more nest-like in the kindergarten." (a storyteller)*

*"In the kindergarten I really have the chance of a connection with the children. In the school we are always a kind of special event, in the kindergarten routine it is more normal. In the kindergarten I can identify myself in my role differently, because I then can really speak to everyone using their name. I don't manage that in the school. It is somehow a different feeling, the connection that is built there, than it is in school. That is – yes, now that I'm talking about it I am actually realizing that there, in the kindergarten, I really have no problem with myself, how I am as a storyteller and am accepted. But in the school it requires a different effort." (a storyteller)*

Compared to school the tightly planned timing falls away. This does not mean that the storytelling is longer, but the different timeframe allows significantly more space for follow-up conversation and the exchange with the kindergarten staff. The storytelling becomes more relaxed in the view of the storytellers.

*"We have time to talk to each other before and afterwards, to deal with each other, I find that good. ... And here it is more normal than in school, school is really so – there are rules, I can only explain it like this, and here it is a natural approach to learning." (a storyteller)*

But also in the kindergarten routine the children need to be won over, and that is not always achieved:

*“So we have children who really cannot sit still at all, so listening, concentration is really, really difficult, that requires a great deal of patience. Especially on Monday it is always like this. On Monday all the frustrations of the weekend have to get out.” (kindergarten specialty staff)*

*“Yes, one should also not idealize storytelling. I’m thinking of a particular girl. She always comes when I come and hugs me and gazes at me adoringly. Then when I tell a story, then I can be sure that she is thinking of a thousand things. She enjoys the circle and maybe also the voice, but what I am telling, doesn’t actually matter to her.” (a storyteller)*

The latter is, however, rather an exception. As was described in detail in Chapter 5, the kindergartens mostly see the same effects that are found in the schools. Also the kindergarten teachers are surprised, similarly to the school teachers, how the storytellers manage with apparently few resources to trigger far-reaching effects.

*“Because the children also tell stories, what they get here, and they also retain these stories, which I found really great, which I would not have thought was possible. I must add that we have very restless children, we have children who cannot concentrate well at all.” (kindergarten staff)*

Also the **follow-up** is easier in the kindergartens. Their routine, in comparison to school, allows more room.

*“So we always have breakfast together, also with the children, and often it is a discussion topic at the table, where they ask each other what happened there or we ask them. If, for example, one of us was not there and there are then two of us in the group, then we ask the children and say: M. was not here, could you maybe tell her the story that you heard today? And then they repeat the story as well as they can, or we draw pictures from it. Yes, that is the most common form, drawing and telling the story. One can therefore say that we actually always pick up the stories.” (kindergarten staff)*

This question about the follow-up was affirmed in the written survey, however with a downward tendency. While in the years 2009/10 nearly all kindergarten staff reported that they always integrated the stories told into their work, there was nearly a third in 2010/11 for whom this did not apply.<sup>33</sup> One should not interpret this as a trend. Rather a hint that also for the kindergarten field the topic of follow-up should be on the *ErzählZeit* agenda.

**Mutual ideas and topics.** It is also conceivable that the storytelling not only specifies the story and this is followed-up on in the kindergarten’s daily routine, but the other way around, that the storytelling session picks up topics out of the kindergarten’s day and tells stories around that. This now only occurs in individual cases and rather spontaneously.

*“And two colleagues were talking to the group and said they were doing a project, and what kind of project – a person, says one of the teachers, and what does a person have? He has five...? Fingers, says one. No, five senses. (Laughter) The little ones, yes, here - ears and nose and – and then I have – I had a story, yes I told about the Pancake. And I then really worked intensely on the senses in the circle, where I saw, that fits. So how I then had every animal sniff and how it tastes and so on. So that could be done well, when you also do it like this –*

*when they say, oh, don't you have an idea? Somehow one always finds a hook or a viewpoint from which one tells, which maybe then has to do with it." (a storyteller)*

The special status of the kindergartens lies in the opportunity for early influence. An important part of language development is already shaped in these years. And just here some kindergarten teachers see an important opportunity for *ErzählZeit*. Even if it sounds paradox: One trusts that the old-fashioned language of fairy tales will set a counterpoint to abbreviated present-day language. One speciality staff member describes it as follows:

*"I am firmly of the opinion that language is currently undergoing a rapid radical change. So that even we speak in short sentences or – if we are completely honest, I, at least often catch myself doing it – even taking over certain things, abbreviations and incomplete sentences. And one can do a whole lot without talking. But it is just there that storytelling sets a counterpoint." (kindergarten staff)*

So it is also an important stimulus for a future development of *ErzählZeit*, to build bridges from the children that have already experienced storytelling in kindergarten to those for whom storytelling is continued and deepened in school life.

**The wishes of the surveyed kindergarten specialty staff.** The specialty staff were asked in the written survey about their wishes or their suggestions for improvement with regard to the course of the storytelling sessions. The following suggestions refer to half the kindergarten staff (N=17). The other part is so satisfied that they saw no need for changes or explicitly parised the project at this question.<sup>34</sup>

The wishes of the surveyed kindergarten specialty staff refers mostly to

- **active participation by the children.** The specialty staff would like the children to be more involved, for example through interactive elements such as hand movements, sounds, but also through drawing and role-plays.
- **the fairy tales or stories.** This could, in their opinion, be partially kept even more simple, and sometimes more thought could be put into which fairy tales are suitable for which ages.
- **the follow-up.** Requested were materials (CDs, books, pictures, etc.) to further fix the stories or fairy tales as well as tips, suggestions, collection of ideas on how to implement the stories into every-day life.

One kindergarten teacher would in addition appreciate it if the great importance of storytelling would be made more transparent for the parents as well as for the staff.

### 6.3 PROJECT LOCATION LIBRARY (AND MUSEUM)

New in the current development phase of *ErzählZeit* is a series of public events in those local libraries that lie in the neighbourhoods of the schools and kindergartens participating in *ErzählZeit*. Here the storytellers and children from the schools and kindergartens perform. Parents, siblings, friends, and other library visitors make up the audience. The expectation is that with this project module the "storytelling will have effects into the city culture and encourage children and parents to continue to tell stories themselves at home" (*ErzählZeit* 2011).

**On the structure and course of the project location library<sup>35</sup>:**

Structure	Course
-----------	--------

The schools participating in *ErzählZeit* had the opportunity to plan four events in the local library, the kindergartens two.

In addition there are additional storytelling events in cooperation with the children's and young people's library "Hallescher Komet" of the Central and Regional Library Berlin and at the Märkisches Museum.

The public events take place in the local libraries that lie in the environment of the schools and kindergartens participating in *ErzählZeit*. Children and parents are invited to listen to the respective storytellers. In addition, the children in the project classes tell stories they have heard or invented.

In this way *ErzählZeit* has effects into the urban culture and stimulates – this is our hope – children and parents to tell stories themselves at home.

The last point cannot be checked by this evaluation. The effect of making storytelling more visible in the public arena is, however, on a good way. In the project year 2010/11 there were 67 events with over 2000 attendees carried out by May. On average there were 33 attendees present. The events have taken place in 20 different local libraries until now.

**Figure 11:** Number of events carried out and average number of participants (absolute numbers)

October

November

December

January

February

March

April

May

light pink = number of events; dark pink = average number of attendees

The libraries are **more than "simply the event location"**. They also have the goal of language learning and development. With storytelling they gain, in their self-assessment, a new form of communication, as the following two librarians explain:

*"Yes, so we make the venue available, and we are also always happy to be there and happy to learn something new, because we also work with children a lot. We read to them more, but by and by we are also telling stories now." (a librarian)*

*"This storytelling brings a whole new facet into language development, which perhaps works a little more directly than e.g. reading aloud. We often read aloud in the library, but the book as a medium is kind of an intermediary. When reading pictures also are created in your head, but here too – we surely all remember when we were children, when we read, we completely dived into this book. One doesn't hear anything and is in this world and lost to it. But that is actually something that works best when one does it for oneself. And I believe that the fascinating thing about storytelling is that you share something and experience it together." (a librarian)*

**Gaining new clients.** A second benefit is children and parents who up until now have never set foot into a library. The storytelling events are a form of a low-threshold access work, for pupils, kindergarten children, and parents.

*"With the children's and young people's library we have a further ally in our cause. That is, at the same time, a possibility to also attract the parents with their children. I find that already very promising." (a teacher)*

*"What one can combine well with that, and that's what I found very important, particularly for our parents, that they also had the possibility of getting cards for their children, where they can then borrow literature. And I found that to be a good aspect. And that is of course also so important for our children here, because here we are in a special district; here there is really only poverty. (kindergarten staff)*

*"So for us it is also good if the parents overcome their fear of entering this place and come in here. The room in which the children do storytelling, that's our event room, it's very very beautiful. Young and old admire it, and also the library is very beautiful. And when the parents then see that we also have very many bilingual books, then they are of course also happy and borrow these things." (a librarian)*

Storytelling is a meaningful and good addition to reading aloud and reading, and can support the fun and the curiosity about books. Doubts that storytelling might become competition to the book, that storytelling could replace reading aloud and reading, are not shared. They rather see a useful connection.

*"The children and their parents, that normally come to these events, are active in the library before and after the event, and I think that it simply awakens joy in stories. And what better thing to happen? So no one says, now I will never again read a book, absolutely not. And I also think one must work on all possible channels to do language development." (a librarian)*

*"And the children always ask where did you get these great stories? And when I then say I got them from books, then they come the next time, bring a book with them and say, I also have a book. Sometimes they have only one, but nevertheless. Exactly, and they are then suddenly proud of it and also want to read more, and then also want to have such wonderful stories in their head." (kindergarten staff member)*

Despite some initial problems in the implementation this element is positively evaluated by the teachers as the most important additional element. For their children it is a special form of appreciation, to be able to show themselves outside of school. Also in the kindergartens the positive evaluations predominate for the same reasons. Similarly as in other places the surprise effect is reported:

*"So the first time there were fewer people here, but the last time there were many people here, parents, who also actively participated and they loved it. Then the children were also allowed to tell a story, which they had previously heard. And it was unbelievable, even our 5. of four years was able to tell a story. We all did not think it was possible beforehand. And the parents really sat there with tears in their eyes, they really cried, they were so happy because they themselves did not know that from home and it was a completely new experience to see their children like this. And through such experiences – that gets talked about in the parents' café, the parents talk about it, of course that motivates the others also and they also come and then participate. And I believe through such events the parents' participation improves. Also from that standpoint I find it great." (specialty staff)*

There, were it didn't work, to include the parents actively, there are other possibilities.

*“And there I found it really great that through the libraries – so the libraries did advertising, so to speak, and the advertising attracted the kindergartens. And now, our children are practically telling stories to other kindergartens, and through this yet another connection occurs. They are a little proud that they are already older and in school, and then come into the library and tell stories in front of kindergarten children.” (a teacher)*

For the storytellers the performances in the libraries are also an important dramaturgical highlight. They form a new high point for the second half of the storytelling. With this public event there is a second extracurricular storytelling space and, above all, the possibility of a public performance as a storyteller. Particularly the theatrical element of storytelling finds its stage here.

For many parents (and often also siblings and other relatives) it is a first real encounter with storytelling, which may well communicate the special fascination of storytelling, also for adults. The parents here discover the difference between storytelling and reading aloud and are themselves stimulated to tell stories at these events. However, this has, until now, only occurred in exceptional cases. But the first pilot year also made the difficulties clear:

- there, where working with the parents does not (immediately) show effects and at first only a few parents come
- libraries define themselves only as a venue and not as a partner
- libraries do not have or offer suitable rooms
- the event in the library is sadly neglected (no advertising, no signage, bad conditions in the rooms)
- the event was planned with too short notice

At the second of each of the six events externally observed by us such shortcomings were also to be seen. And those involved themselves complained:

*“It depends on the library's rooms. When you then want to take a corner and they are very careful and fearful, that one is telling too loudly and then the other visitors will be disturbed – libraries tend to be very, very sensitive here, that it must always be quiet there. It has to always be nice and quiet, so that no one is disturbed. I cannot quite understand that.” (a teacher)*

*“As a result – we were very nervous of course, also because the library was not really prepared, we still had to prepare the room, then suddenly the people already came and so many came. So yes – but under the circumstances it was good.” (kindergarten specialty staff)*

*“We had very different experiences. Some libraries were very happy, were very, very dedicated. Others were rather wait-and-see. And others have even blocked. ... they already had so many offers, they did not want another public program.” (kindergarten specialty staff)*

---

**Conclusion and recommendations.** In the school area, the *ErzählZeit* project have a concept that has been tested and further developed over a number of years. The by no means easy balancing act, to continually implement artistic elements in the school routine and at the same time to satisfy artistic as well as pedagogical demands, often is successful. Need for further development we see in the two areas:

- (a) Follow-up. This amplifies the effects and is crucial. The teachers should be supported by best-practice examples. The suggestions should include different timeframes and include different interdisciplinary references.<sup>36</sup>

- (b) More flexible time frame. This is practiced in part and should be used beyond the project day.

Positive developments, which, however, should in part be implemented more consistently, refer to

- (c) Framework conditions. Framework conditions such as room, time, expectation of roles, arrangements are requirements for the success of *ErzählZeit* and are clarified in advance by the storytellers/teachers via introductory sessions and agreements.
- (d) Parent work. Getting parents to tell more stories is a difficult but at the same time a hugely important target for the renaissance of storytelling. Because of this, further variations of parent work should be tested.

In the area of early childhood education there are positive experiences, without a specialized concept development having gone before. The framework conditions in this area are simpler and therefore allow the storytellers to build up individual ties with the children more quickly. Further development needs we see:

- (a) in the reflection of experiences up until now and separate concept development,
- (b) in the active involvement of the children,
- (c) in the cooperative selection of stories. The good possibilities for preparation and follow-up work in the kindergartens make it possible to select at least a part of the stories together with the specialty staff at the kindergartens in advance.

With the funding year 2010/11 an important step into the public arena was taken with the systematic involvement of local libraries. The connection of school/kindergarten and local library included advantages and future opportunities for all those involved. This connection should become an integral part of all new projects in school and kindergarten. For many parents (and often also siblings and other relatives) these events are a first real encounter with storytelling, which may well also communicate the special fascination of storytelling, also for adults.

The “pilot year” however also made a few problems obvious, which seem easily resolvable with more long-term planning and organisational certainty (suitable rooms, sufficient signage, respectful environment ).

Central to this is that the library defines and experiences itself not simply as a venue, but as a partner. This must be taken into account more strongly during preparation.

If the storyteller manages, besides their performance and that of the children, to also involve the parents actively in the running and content of the event, these public storytelling events gain an integrative power which particularly in their intercultural effect, has hardly been attained in other places up until now.

---

## 7 “ERZÄHLZEIT IN BERLIN” – STATUS AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE NETWORK

### 7.1 THE STORYTELLING NETWORK

With the *ErzählZeit* project a storytelling network grew in Berlin. The characteristic of this network is that storytelling forms a communication platform in different settings, which makes it possible for different groups of people and fields to network and make it possible for Berlin’s citizens to experience storytelling in a variety of locations.

**Figure 12:** Network *ErzählZeit* – schematic representation

School

Libraries

Kindergartens

Museums

District/neighbourhood

Berlin-wide

Storytelling pedagogy

National contacts and projects

International contacts

The art of storytelling

Theatre pedagogy

UDK (university of arts)

As Fig. 12 shows, a variety of protagonists are meanwhile a part of the network. Those implementation-partners central to the project – school, kindergarten, and local library – have already been described in detail in Chapter 6. In the area of public events two further partners are added:

- Already for three years events have taken place in the winter half-year (October to March) in cooperation with the children's and young people's library "Hallescher Komet" of the Berlin Central and State Library. Here the storytellers of the storytelling theatre FabulaDrama invite listeners into a twice a month Mongolian yurt in the library's inner courtyard. There are fairy tales and stories told from one country or cultural circle.
- For the first time with this project year *ErzählZeit* is visiting the Märkische Museum. There is storytelling for children age 6 and up, their parents, and friends of Berlin stories.

Noteworthy is not only that hereby storytelling again gains publicity and comes out of its niche (theatre pedagogy, open storytelling stage), but that at the same time different partners, systems, and professions are connected with each other. Some of the many possibilities are have already been realized:

- Kindergarten and school children perform in public libraries.
- School children tell stories in front of kindergarten children.
- Children from one kindergarten tell stories on front of children and parents from another kindergarten.
- *ErzählZeit* storytellers tell stories in museums in front of children and parents who also come out of the project classes.
- Among the listeners parents, relatives, friends out of the project classes mix with outside visitors who are interested in storytelling.

At a majority of the events the audience is intercultural. For example, during the events in the yurt parents with and without a migration background listen equally fascinated and experience the event as something shared (see also Chapter 9).

In the network exist also contacts to individual schools and kindergartens that are financed outside the *ErzählZeit* funding. These also offer the opportunity of trying different settings (e.g. multiple years of storytelling at one school) and then use this for the future development of *ErzählZeit*.

*ErzählZeit* has managed in the last years to also win numerous individual as well as institutional sponsors,<sup>38</sup> supporters, and ambassadors<sup>39</sup>. With their help an initially one-time project “*Sprachlos*” at a Berlin primary school has become a steadily growing project with long-term perspective.

This network would not function if there had not, with the university of arts, been a place which enables the training of storytellers through the course of study Theatre Pedagogy and relevant seminars. Here is also one of the central and most famous storytellers of the international scene, Ben Haggerty, involved as visiting lecturer, and here begins in autumn one of the most ambitious training courses in the German-language storytelling field: “Storytelling in Art and Education”.

**Figure 13:** Network *ErzählZeit* – fields and protagonists (excerpt status May 2011)<sup>40</sup>

ErzählZeit

Storytelling Theatre FabulaDrama

Erzählkunst e.V. (Storytelling Art Association)

Events Festivals

Open storytelling stage

Networking & supervising similar projects – *Menschen Märchen* (lit. People FairyTales) Project (Heilbronn/Hannover) – Lippe erzählt – etc.

German Storytelling Scene – various storytellers – Remscheid Academy – universities (Bremen, Hildesheim,...)

Training

Storytelling seminars

Storytelling in Art and Education

UDK University of Arts

Visiting lecturer Ben Haggarty

International contacts (particularly Ireland, England, Norway – storytellers – universities – EU projects

<sup>40</sup>Legend: S=school / K=kindergarten / B=library / M=museum / F=funding, sponsors, ambassadors

In the network there are also numerous contacts in the international storytelling scene<sup>41</sup> and to important training locations for storytellers (for example the Academy Remscheid) as well as to academic locations and individual projects that also work intensively for the further development of the storytelling art and its implementation into educational contexts. Two examples, at which *ErzählZeit* itself set impulses, shall be mentioned as representatives<sup>42</sup>:

- The **Menschen-Märchen-Projekt** (lit. People-FairyTales-Project) in Heilbronn and Hannover. Under the management of the theatre educator Bärbel Jogschies amateur storytellers were trained in Heilbronn and now in Hannover, who then do storytelling in primary schools. With the support of Prof. Kristin Wardetzky trainers for the amateur storytellers were found out of the circle of experienced professional fairy tale storytellers, who also work in Berlin in *ErzählZeit*.

- In the project “Lippe erzählt” one also referred to the experiences in Berlin and the support of Prof. Kristin Wardetzky. The target is, for the first time in the Federal Republic (of Germany), to establish a storytelling project as a regular course district-wide in the Lippe’sche kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. Up to the end of 2013 eight professional and up to 36 volunteer storytellers will have been trained, so that they can then each be responsible for one group/class. In this year the first professional and amateur storytellers have started storytelling in two primary schools as well as one secondary school.

From a networking perspective it is obvious that the communication platform through the **trias** storytelling – listening – telling it again has a high attraction not only amongst the target group of children but also works across age groups and cultures. Therein lies the local potential of the networks. The current status of the network saw a sufficiently heterogenous mix and contains both tight and loose network contacts. The impulses (projects) already given in other cities show that *ErzählZeit* has a model character and it works through the charismatic person of its initiator but also already without her. In the meantime, the various projects are also each capable of surviving. One question appears to be open, and that is whether the youth development at the UdK is sufficiently secured and the strong pedagogical expansion will not have to be supplemented by additional theatre-connected contacts (wished for is a famous theatre as a partner). Also to be clarified: how far the core of the network, *ErzählZeit*, can satisfactorily carry the growing complexity of its network. The latter will be examined more closely in the following section.

## 7.2 THE “ORGANISATIONAL CORE” OF THE NETWORK

Like nearly all real networks this network also has an “organizational core”. Besides the legal entity, the association *Erzählkunst*, it is above all the project management of *ErzählZeit* (“Organisation node Sabine Kolbe”) and its initiator Prof. Kristin Wardetzky, who both contribute substantially with their contacts to this network. Important parts of the network outlined above run back to these two people in a radial form. Besides these two and especially important for the local networking are the storytellers, currently ten. In consultation with project management they often independently create regional contacts and performances in the schools, kindergartens, and libraries.

For the build-up phase of the project and the network *ErzählZeit* this form of division of labour was functional and in the light of the insecurity of a long-term funding also efficient. For a sustainable and lasting project perspective, however, it requires some changed structures. Typical for projects in the development phase is that a large part of the available resources are put into the development and less into quality management and the basic structure. With the transition from short-term “unsure” project into an at-least medium-term perspective as “regular institution” it requires some modifications. These refer particularly to the quality management, the project management, and some of the processes in *ErzählZeit*.

### (a) Quality Management

**Regular exchange and reflection.** Up until now there is no forum, in which reflection regarding the content takes place. The fixed date here appropriately described as private is a forerunner.

*“So up until now we do that as part of a fixed meeting, but actually it’s more of a private initiative of mine, it isn’t directly part of ErzählZeit, but I find it extremely necessary, especially for this reason: we share experiences, we inspire each other: ‘Oh, and the story would fit there, and for this I’d never use that one, I’d rather use the Norwegian version”. This regular appointment is therefore a kind of market, when it comes to story contents.” (project management)*

*“Exactly, for the preparation this is of great importance. There should be paid time available for regular exchanges and there should be paid time for the writing up of experiences. With regards to quality – it must stay fun and for it to be fun it also requires power and not always this way: just managing to get through with your last breath. That is also the special characteristic of this project, I think.” (project management)*

Further important elements within the quality management are **opportunities of work shadowing (sitting in on classes) and time for individual follow-up work.**

#### **(b) Project Management**

The example of expanding *ErzählZeit* into the areas of libraries makes two things clear. For one, the potential that lies in the idea and in the special structure of the *ErzählZeit* project, but on the other hand also the *difficulties* in the project organization. The project management describes this as a balancing act:

*“I think it’s good that the storytellers actually have complete individual responsibility. They take care of their schools, they decide which classes, they decide which library, so no one tells them what to do and everyone can do things in their way and they are self-sufficient in this. I think this is right. The question is, if you now put a giant apparatus over this, what happens to it? This is now, I think, also a kind of turning point. And that just is like that, we are all freelancers, we cannot live from the money, and that is the margin. We run a regular project, where you must go somewhere every week. But you have to do other projects, and you cannot do them all in this timing. Sometimes you have a guest appearance here or there, or there is a seminar here or there. Then you have to manage this in a compatible way.” (project management)*

With the size *ErzählZeit* has attained the resources available for project organization are estimated too **small/little**. The organizational talents of (some) storytellers and also of the project management should not become self-exploitation.

*“This year we are already working on a scale with a too-small organizational apparatus around it. It’s not enough at all anymore, that is how I feel.” (project management)*

An important point ought to be the question of payment. Only if the payment is also attractive for professional storytellers, will these continue to make their storytelling work available. The concern voiced in the following is not an isolated case.

*“I find it difficult doing a side job besides *ErzählZeit*, because now it is two mornings per week for me, for other storytellers even three times a week. So if the remuneration were now reduced as well as the hours, then I could no longer take part in the project because I am now really at my lowest limit. And that is not to be guaranteed as a profession. So then I would definitely leave.” (storyteller)*

#### **(c) Processes**

The top priority is to modify the rhythm of the storytelling sessions in the schools. The current situation with four classes one right after the other, in which there is storytelling, seems to tend towards overextending. In addition there is too little time left for the exchange between the storytellers and the teachers.

*“In the school I notice that the teachers have a great need for discussion and that I, in my school – I run from classroom to classroom. I think that the time that I spend with the*

teachers, to work together on this project, should be lengthened. So that I have an hour to speak with them, also whether there are problems. Because there are sometimes also communication problems, that teachers do not know how far they are allowed to get involved in my work. So it is very, very difficult, because one simply hasn't enough time to coordinate how it should actually run." (storyteller)

"Yes, the basic prerequisite is – so at the moment all the storytellers are so capped with what they have to do, so that they simply also earn their money, so that there is little free head space in order to really develop ideas and to brainstorm and simply to see what else might be possible. Quite boldly to simply say what we might be capable of doing. At the moment it is all organized pragmatically, because we somehow must see that the daily routine – well, to get through the daily routine, pragmatism is simply necessary. And that should not remain this way, free spaces have to be created." (expert)

"For me it is quite clear that four hours of storytelling with short breaks, in which I am asked questions by teachers and pupils – I'm done. I am actually already exhausted in the third lesson and then I go into the fourth lesson and cannot really do the children justice, not like in the three lessons before. I cannot even explain what it is, but I believe that it is the high, high concentration, to get into the story, with body and voice, fully involved, to be with the children. When they tell the story, listen fully concentrated, which is also tiring. Listening is also work." (storyteller)

In the transition into a medium-term, regularly funded stage of *ErzählZeit* all the other processes should also be checked for their functionality for "continuous operation".

---

**Conclusion and recommendations.** The project *ErzählZeit* forms the core of a diverse network. This network connects different areas and professions and it is well-established in Berlin. The basic structure suitable for a network enables flexible and un-bureaucratic processes. However, parts of the network are still too strongly fixed on the two central figures in *ErzählZeit*. The network has created impulses beyond Berlin and could also make *ErzählZeit* into a nationwide "brand". Even if an international project failed shortly before its realization, it nevertheless shows the potential here. This and also national contacts should definitely be used more strongly to enrich the Berlin storytelling scene (for an international storytelling festival, expert discussions about the value of storytelling, etc.) This existing network is a good basis for the image work that storytelling needs.

The organisational core of the network has done very good development work, but is now reaching its limits. In order to ensure the storytellers' independence – a useful approach – it will require different conditions. It is recommended, in the transition to regular funding to re-calculate and/or put to the test not only the organisational basis (half a post for project management) as well as fees, measures for continual quality development (work shadowing, days of reflection ...), and central processes.

Even if it may seem paradoxical at the first moment, the network currently has its "weak point" more in the artistic core. This regards the establishment of youth development in the UdK (arts university) as well as the closer cooperation with the theatre sector. The goal of winning a famous Berlin Theatre as a permanent partner can only be welcomed.

*“You have to see storytelling in a triangle. It consists of storytelling in public, here it is important to strengthen the public presence of storytelling. The other is the training and a goal-oriented youth development, and then applied storytelling, especially in schools and kindergartens. And storytelling moves within this triangle. And in this triangle, I think, ErzählZeit should be thought further, not only related to schools but really storytelling in the public and training.” (Wardetzky)*

In the six years since the beginning of the project *Sprachlos* in the Anna-Lindh school there have already been a number of notable developments:

- In the implementation of the experience from *Sprachlos* in the structures of *ErzählZeit* at schools
- In the expansion from schools to the kindergartens
- In the connection of school and kindergarten projects with performances in the local libraries
- In the thematic extension with myths

The following chapter is all about the innovation potential of *ErzählZeit*. Here the focus is not on the improvements to individual modules/structural processes as described in chapter 6 and 7, but three central future questions. These are grouped along the “storytelling triangle” described above by Kristin Wardetzky.

### 8.1 APPLIED STORYTELLING



Establishing storytelling culture – ensuring permanence and sustainability

How to make sure that what has been achieved with the children with *ErzählZeit* will be as sustainable as possible? How would the implementation of regularly funded *ErzählZeit* look?

The project’s history up to now seems to suggest that every year different, new schools/kindergartens get the opportunity of a storytelling year. The children then experience storytelling as a fascinating but ultimately a one-time experience. In the focus groups there is widespread agreement that this experience is not enough to stabilize the effect in the long-term. The antithesis to the project idea (storytelling comes into a school as a one-year project) is the establishment of a storytelling culture at schools/kindergartens. For this there were four approaches discussed and a radical alternative/vision.

(a) **Storytelling becomes a part of the daily routine culture**, for example in working with parents, at project days or school festivals.

*“In the schools I would also find it nice if one made it into a regular institution, to invite the parents to the storytelling lesson once a month or so. And then maybe they will always like coming if one puts out a few biscuits and coffee.” (teacher)*

*"We did an Africa project and said: Dear Storyteller, do you maybe have a story from Africa during the time when we have our Africa project? Then she said, okay, she will go and find a story." (teacher)*

- (b) Through **storytelling bridges** can be built between different classes or also between storytelling and theatre projects.

*"They now have one year of ErzählZeit at the beginning of primary school. In the fourth grade they will get the great fairy tales once more, and later come the myths." (storyteller)*

*"If it was possible/allowed to continue it, here, then a path would be opened for these children that is unbelievable. I see it in grades four, five, six, that my colleague has, they are just practicing Romeo and Juliet for the theatre week – so if this class had already had the storytelling project, I think, we could now send them right up to the high stage. Through storytelling and this active listening unbelievable experience-worlds open up for them." (teacher)*

- (c) There are institutions that are interested in a continuation, so-called **tandem solutions**. Besides the artist storytellers there are teachers or kindergarten staff trained in storytelling. Storytelling occurs in various combinations (artist storyteller and trained staff member together, separately). Later the trained teacher/staff member continues the storytelling, and the professional storyteller comes back, as far as possible, to individual projects or at certain points (cf. for example Hagen et al. 2006).

- (d) In schools/kindergartens in which storytelling has run in the long-term, the **children** are "trained" as **storytellers**, who then tell stories to other younger children.

*"What I would find really wonderful would be that a professional storyteller tells stories at school and the children become storytellers. Because I notice that the one lesson often isn't enough. There are very, very dedicated teachers who can then do that themselves, but often they don't have the capacities. And then it unfortunately falls behind. Either I can only tell a shorter story and then work for a longer time with the children and their storytellg, or I tell a longer story and then the children come too short. So I would find it somehow really, really good if one had even more time for a class to intensify it more strongly." (storyteller)*

*"So that would also be my dream, that we use a two-pronged approach. In traditional communities it was usual that the younger ones learned from the older in such a process. And then the older children could go back to the younger ones and could also tell stories to the younger children in the class." (expert)*

*"In both schools I have children very talented in storytelling. I would love so much to develop this further, but I have no lesson potential, so I would have to do it for nothing, and I can't afford to do that. And I would find it cool if ErzählZeit also offered opportunities here." (storyteller)*

*"I tried this in the concrete case of one girl, who then also won something at a storytelling competition. And she then went from the higher grades to the lower grades, some of the children even knew her. And that was, of course, an amazing experience for her and also for the children. It is really, really fantastic." (storyteller)*

- (e) *ErzählZeit* prefers to come to schools where the project *ErzählZeit* took place in the surrounding kindergartens (**storytelling bridge kindergarten/school**). Aside from those schools/kindergartens financed by the project funds there are already examples, where similar solutions are sought.

*"I am the principle of a primary school, and here approx. 90% of the children are of non-German origin. Therefore we face the challenge every day and every hour, to inspire the children's language development. I was able to use my contacts in the social problem area to implement *ErzählZeit* at our school and in our district for some years. And in the meantime we*

*have taken the next step on this route, that we have passed it on to the kindergartens, so the preschool groups in the nearby kindergartens, as part of the continuity.” (principle)*

### **Storytelling at all schools/kindergartens**

The vision of establishing storytelling at all schools/kindergartens goes a great deal further. The idea was not controversial, but the question how one can actually implement this was. At the core is one of the key issues in storytelling: pedagogy or art? Does one need storytelling as a separate school subject or, quite the opposite, shouldn't external artists become an integral part of everyday schooling? The following longer passage shows an excerpt from the debate

*“Storytelling is for me one of the really great opportunities of dealing positively with many of our problems in growing up, and therefore it simply has to be spread. It is of course wonderful if it can take place for 30 schools, kindergartens. But if we do not advance generally for society as a whole, then it is only pretty. I would like to spread it out wider. I don't want to have only 30 schools, I want every school in the whole country to have it, for at least one year. I can imagine that two years would be ideal. But if one could manage it for one year at every German primary school, one year of storytelling; that would be a giant step. And that is naturally not possible, the way we are now structured, even to imagine this, for we don't have enough storytellers. And therefore I have been saying from the beginning that one should include storytelling in the education of teachers. One ought to create a subject similar to performing arts. And in their training of course teachers are needed, who are trained by the current professional storytellers. And every school – that is my dream – then has one teacher who teaches the subject storytelling instead of mathematics or something else.” (expert)*

*“This sets of my alarm bells. Because I would say that I think it's better to bring artists into the schools. Storytelling is one of the performing arts. A teacher will always be overwhelmed by the other things that school means for him/her and the pedagogical mission/task he/she has there. But to have professionally trained storytellers and send them to every school, that is the better way in my opinion.” (storyteller)*

*“The wonderful thing would be if both perspectives could come together, support and train each other. But not replace each other. Why not a storyteller in every school? But that is a political decision, that has to go to the political level and must be recognized as an important measure for language development, intercultural learning, etc.” (expert)*

## **8.2 TRAINING**



### **Ausbildung**

Establishing/developing different forms of education and training

The first attempt at training was established in the current project year. The question that comes up is whether there are even more possibilities for education and training in addition to this “small” solution. A question that ultimately also concerns the storytellers and theatre pedagogy as a source of training.

The small form currently consists of some training days, in which information about storytelling take place and there is the opportunity for structured information exchange, led by a storyteller. Those involved found this to be a sensible possibility, the project management is however only partially satisfied with this.

*“I have decided that once in every half year my colleagues with the participating kindergartens will get one day that is used for training, that simply give the opportunity to*

*share with the kindergarten teachers, but also a qualified exchange and training with our storytellers.” (principle)*

*“So I found it very interesting for us kindergarten teachers to see how it works. You do need it somehow, of course one can’t tell stories exactly like the storytellers. But it is helpful if you tell stories more consciously and you think and plan how you could do this. I would wish that we also continue that, because one also gets into the story better and one can talk about it better.” (kindergarten teacher)*

*“I consider the current situation inadequate. What is happening now, is actually only that the teachers realize that this even exists and what it is. But that they themselves are put in the position to also want to tell stories – which we had yesterday – in principle that does not happen yet. What you just said, that has given me the idea that one might think differently about this segment training and says not only that the teachers at storytelling maybe have the wish (to tell), but also be able to do something in class with what was told.” (project management)*

With this in mind other training models (cf. Hagen et al. 2006, Hoffmeister-Höfener 2009) also do not have the aim of replacing the professional storytelling artists, but to teach the staff or teachers storytelling methods so that they can use these in their own daily work. The target is thus also to support the sustainability of the storytelling.

*“And what my colleagues always say is, we would very much like to be able to do this but that is a highly complicated profession, that is not something one can just do on the side, but it is also a highly complicated training. And we are working on this, that we surely can also take parts into our normal daily routine, but to simply copy this, to imitate and duplicate it, I think that could not work because it is very, very challenging.” (teacher)*

The interviews show that about a third of the expert staff can imagine learning such methodical skills. There are in the meantime also enough experiences, how one can interpret this in training modules. Also here one can integrate a tandem idea in the training.

A different tandem variation targets the artistic young talent.

*“Ideally I can imagine that interested young people, who come out of the theatre pedagogy, as far as I’m concerned – that they are in tandem with the storytellers in the school and/or kindergarten for half a year, in order to bit by bit become active themselves and in the following year take over a school themselves. The immediate experience in accompanying a storyteller to see what they can expect: I would consider that extremely important. Besides work shadowing they would then have to be trained further in theory and practice to give them the necessary reservoir of materials, of techniques. So it would be urgently necessary that we develop something like this.” (expert)*

*“What I would find wonderful in the further development, if the theatre pedagogy institute would really send a signal that storytelling is firmly anchored in the theatre pedagogy curriculum and that it is also ensured that teaching assignments are paid that first must be fund-raised through external foundation assets.” (expert)*

This points to the in no way satisfactorily solved problem of the future training of storytelling artists. Here the retirement in emeritus status of Prof. Wardetzky has left a gap for the moment. In addition comes the challenge not to train exclusively in one world (theatre) and then work exclusively in another world (pedagogy).

Standing on both feet – living school and theatre

*“For me it is very important, the recognition of an art occurs for me also that we as storytellers not only tell stories in schools but also stand on the stage. And if that does not happen, if we only tell in schools, then it stays a school subject. And I notice that I tell better in the schools when I also gain stage experience, so when I have both. And the art of storytelling is not an art if it always only thought about in this pedagogical framework.” (storyteller)*

*“This balancing act must somehow take place for the storytellers, that they also feel the challenge of an adult audience and the quality demands of a grown-up theatre-experienced audience. If storytelling is an art, then this art must take place where art takes place. So in a theatre, e.g. on stages and not only in school. The school profits from this in turn.” (expert)*

## 8.2 PUBLICITY

Storytelling can build bridges



**Publicity**

*“That we also got into the libraries this year, I think is an absolute step in the right direction.” (expert)*

Storytelling goes public in several respects. The project *ErzählZeit*, but also the storytellers find a suitable publicity through performances in the libraries, in the yurt, and in the Märkische Museum (see also chapter 6). Also storytelling itself comes back out of obscurity and can be staged in a setting that makes the difference to reading aloud clear through a sense experience. There, where a suitable frame can be made, one can imagine many more places.

*“Why not bring storytelling into the city neighbourhoods. Here we also just have to develop ideas how storytelling can carry itself out of the school and overall gain a greater level of recognition, through libraries, museums for example to the socio-cultural centres, whatever.” (expert)*

*“The potential that is reached in the school through storytelling should not be reduced to the school. Instead it should be beyond the school – and for this the storytellers should observe their responsibility – for no one else does it, that can only be the storytellers.” (expert)*

Also conceivable is a combination of storytellers and project children from *ErzählZeit*. Such events and actions need not be limited to the neighbourhood. Not only for the storytelling but also for the children it is important to get “out of their ‘hood”.

*“I am at a school in Neukölln, and my children often do not get out of this district at all. I mean, it is important to get out. I once did a two-week project in the old national gallery “One, two, three, words come here.” Wonderful, we got out of our usual fug, the children experienced a world they wouldn’t have experienced otherwise. They crept reverently through this museum, and I thought, my goodness, that is beautiful to see. And at the end we of course also brought the parents with us. That was wonderful. Getting such institutions to do this, is great.” (teacher)*

*“Why shouldn’t school classes be guided through a museum by ErzählZeit storytellers, telling stories? (expert)*

If storytelling is integrated into the local network in the neighbourhood (and that is not at all the case everywhere and basically requires that it exists at the institutions in the long-term), the question of performances will be easy to solve. Especially the minimal effort permits (if the conditions are right) many opportunities. It has proved very advantageous, also in other towns, if easy-to-set-up storytelling tents are available (meaning can be borrowed).

Beyond the districts there are not only many places where one can successfully imagine storytelling, but also corresponding ideas that help to improve the image of storytelling. Three examples:

- International storytelling festival
- Expert discussions regarding a variety of applications for storytelling/narratives
- “Long Night of Storytelling” as a public event with all the storytellers from *ErzählZeit*

Commented [AK3]: Quartiere

---

**Conclusion and recommendations.** *ErzählZeit* was and is a project that still has high innovative potential. At every corner of the Wardetzky Storytelling Triangle there are new, implementable ideas.

The central and still open question is, how to organize the transition of the project into a regular institution. How will the more than 400 Berlin primary schools<sup>43</sup>, how will the over a thousand kindergartens be provided with the *ErzählZeit* offering? Besides the question of frequency (how many new schools/kindergartens per year?) raises the question, where to get enough storytelling artists, who do not work only at schools and kindergartens.

If one wishes to hold onto the construct “external storytelling artist goes into schools/kindergarten” (and we consider this to be useful), it will require an increased training of storytellers and tandem solutions. Only the latter seems to us to guarantee sustainability in the schools. At the same time such a solution prevents that storytelling artists are only in a school/kindergarten once every ten years. If there is a trained storyteller in a school/kindergarten, then other ideas (see above) are more likely to be established.

---

## 9 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is about a final assessment of the issue of target-reaching and consequences and bundled into eleven recommendations. In between are two short sections concerning comprehensive conclusions which, in our opinion, can explain a great deal of the special fascination of storytelling.

### 9.1 THE TARGETS ARE REACHED

The 2011 study confirms that the project *ErzählZeit* has a very high acceptance in schools and kindergartens and the project goals are reached.

Storytelling as an event and as a method is considered to be an enrichment for the process of language development, particularly in classes with a high percentage of children with a migration background. It is noteworthy that one goes beyond simply the promotion approach, with which primarily pupils with deficits are reached. Storytelling reaches all children nearly equally and supports both individual development processes (strengthens self-confidence, the social competence, the ability to concentrate...) as well as the community building within the class or group. The fascinating thing about storytelling that these effects are attained in and through an

atmosphere which is described by pupils, kindergarten children as well as teachers and kindergarten staff as positive, playful and stimulating.

The effects observed by teachers in schools and kindergartens correspond to the effects that were also found in other studies. As far as possible it was also possible to show that the effects are not short-term but sustainable (more so if the stories are taken up again in the school or kindergarten) and that there is further innovation potential in the project.

**Cross-environmental, throughout Berlin, intercultural.** The project was tested or carried out in all Berlin's districts in the last three school years. Primarily it was implemented in those Berlin districts that have an above-average number of children with a migration background. Through a wide repertoire of stories from a wide variety of countries and the approach of telling the stories mostly in German, but at regular intervals also in other languages, the mix of different milieus, intercultural groups that is so typical for Berlin was adequately reached and interconnected according to "true integration". There are statements by the interviewed experts and participants that give storytelling an above-average integrative power.

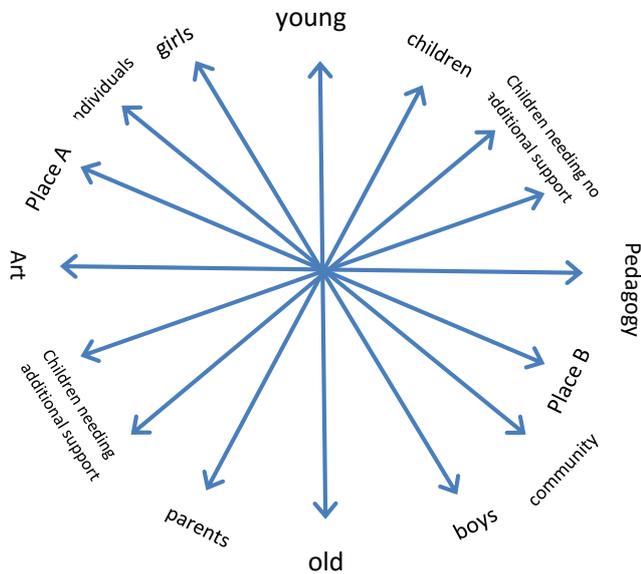
**Promoting an interconnected culture.** With the topic of storytelling the project ErzählZeit connects different cultures and professions: theatre pedagogues, librarians, teachers as well as kindergarten staff. With the local district libraries, the yurt in the central library, and in the Märkische Museum the (first) locations have been found to help bring storytelling onto a public stage. In the places where a series of events were held, it has already been achieved, first steps in developing a culture of storytelling (with a growing audience of listeners and structures oriented towards participation). The experiences in the schools, kindergartens and at these public locations thus show a successful process of crossing frontiers between different cultural sectors, between old and young and between those who live in Berlin who come from different ethnic backgrounds.

*ein Bein ausreißen* interest, values and actions is increasing. This simplifies the side-by-side existence of different courses of action and styles, because the traditions and rituals in a society of individuals make fewer and fewer standards and rules. However, it makes it increasingly more difficult to create common ground, or rather, the space for shared experience is decreasing.

One of the characteristics of storytelling is a special integrative power that often brings together people of different backgrounds and interests.

Commented [AK4]: Milieuübergreifend,

Figure 14: Integrative power of storytelling



Four examples out of the experiences of *ErzählZeit* can demonstrate this:

- *ErzählZeit* as a general language development programme does not separate into pupils with or without a need for additional support. Nor is the statement true that applies to many pedagogical interventions, that the children with many resources and skills in particular profit. Especially the “shy children” or also the “restless/fidgety” or also children with special needs are also described by their teachers as having profited.
- Generally it becomes more difficult just before, and increasingly during, puberty, for girls and boys to still find common topics or actions. Also with the fairy tales one will see that the “cool boys” find fairy tales increasingly boring. However, the telling of myths creates a common focus again.  
*“Particularly at the age of 12 to 14 years, which is the difficult reading age where one says that specifically at this age they really hit home, the gender specifics, that the boys jump at adventurous topics and the girls are more for psychology and love. And these are both in the myths. That is an extraordinarily eventful adventure; there is a whole lot of action. Does Odysseus find his way home, or not? And then what about Circe and Calypso, where he is roaming around? That is lovely, then the girls are again into it.” (storyteller)*
- In storytelling, although there is mostly the storyteller as an individual person. The role of listener is shared by everyone and this obviously has something community building.  
*“This class has grown together, they are more confident to show things in front of each other, also to show emotions and talk about topics differently.” (teacher)*  
*“A very important aspect that I always experience, which I only became aware of in time: that through the storytelling lesson a cultural identity develops in the class. They hear the same stories and that absolutely connects them. So regarding the class culture, the teachers always rave about this, that this project has brought a true class culture to life.” (teacher)*

- And for a multicultural city like Berlin it is particularly important that with storytelling there is a medium available that can connect people with a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. Not only that the fairy tales and the different languages give these cultures their own space, but that there are true shared experiences.

*“For one thing of course this atmosphere in the yurt is special, it is really special and it is very inviting, to sink into this storytelling. What I really find very special – I have been doing events in libraries for 25 years. But I have never experienced that such the integrative character in an event has worked here. We really have a great many migrant families that come, and German families, and families from other European countries living in Berlin temporarily or permanently – here a shared experience really takes place for once. Otherwise one can bend over backwards and make a great deal of effort, it is unbelievably difficult to get German and Turkish or Arabic families at one table or at one event. Here that works all by itself, and I find that really fascinating, I’ve never experienced that anywhere else.” (library)*

### 9.3 “LITTLE MIRACLES”: WHY STORYTELLING WORKS – MANY ATTEMPTS AT EXPLANATION

Many of the explanations and descriptions of storytelling moments speak of magical moments or also of how “surprisingly quickly” children learn to listen well, how they master complicated words and situations basically overnight, which one previously tried to practice with them for a long time. How does that work? How can one explain this special “magical” effect of storytelling? Four attempts at explanation:

- Important is the combination of cognition and emotion, of experienced contents and expressions, gestures, moods. Or as one storyteller describes it: *“During the fairy tales everyone listens, is incredibly excited, this emotional involvement of course also connects. Once a week they all have a shared, big, emotionally-moving experience.”* One explanation for the also often described good memory shown by the children could be **basal** foundations on a neural level. Neuroscientists (cf. Spitzer 2003) have long pointed out that positive emotions within learning considerably increase the effectivity of the learned matter and, above all, also what is remembered.
- Under the influence of narrative psychology (Bruner 1997, Kraus 1996) one today assumes that central identity questions are also answered in acts of self-narration. People not only exchange stories about others, but also about themselves. Identity research speaks of core narratives, which we change many times in our lives and communicate to ourselves and others. Storytelling skills therefore also gain great importance for personality development (Keupp et al. 2006).
- Storytelling creates a counterpoint to the flood of information and images in the current media reality. *“Through the fact that we work with such minimalistic measures in the whole setting, the children have a chance to reduce it to their five senses, to reflect. Where else do we have that in normal life?” (teacher)* To put it another way, storytelling is partially so effective because it comes alive without a lot of sensationalist trickery.
- (And) storytelling again and again achieves the integrative moments described above. Storytelling builds bridges and connects across borders.

**Commented [AK5]:** Eine Erklärung für die auch häufig beschriebenen guten Erinnerungsleistungen der Kinder könnten *basale* Grundlagen auf neuronaler Ebene sein. So haben Neurowissenschaftler (vgl. Spitzer 2003) schon lange darauf hingewiesen, dass positive Emotionen in das Lernen eingebunden die Effektivität des Gelernten und vor allem auch des Erinnerten erheblich steigern

### 9.4 TWELVE RECOMMENDATIONS

**(1) The results show that it is meaningful not only to continue to support this project, but also to make it a fixed part of the experiential and learning routine in Berlin’s schools and kindergartens in the medium and long term.** The basic project conception developed for *ErzählZeit* already makes a

transition into a regular offering possible and also includes enough potential for innovation to build up the even more sustainable effects.

(2) The central question, which is still open, is how to organize the transition from a project structure to a fixed course structure (in a few years?) Do you want to hold onto the construct “external storyteller goes to a school/kindergarten” (and this is what we consider useful), **requires an increased training of storytellers and tandem solutions**. Only the latter seems to us to ensure the sustainability in the schools. At the same time, it prevents a situation in which a storyteller only comes to school once every ten years. If there is a trained storyteller in a school/kindergarten, other ideas have a better chance of being established (responsible person).

(3) Even if it seems paradox at first, the *ErzählZeit* network/project perspective rather has its “weak point” in its artistic core. This refers to the anchoring of its **youth** development in the Berlin University of Arts as well as a closer cooperation to the theatre field. The objective of winning a renowned Berlin theatre as a constant partner, can only be welcomed.

(4) As long as the schools/kindergartens are selected, two selection criteria are important. On the one hand, the previous **focal point** (districts and quarters with an above-average percentage of migrants / share of socially vulnerable families) should also be maintained in future. However, in the medium term other schools should also be included, as storytelling not only shows effects on the language development but in general a significance in view of learning, performance and personality development. On the other hand, classes/kindergartens should be selected, whose teachers/staff are themselves interested in stories.

(5) The choice of **fairy tales** as the content subject in storytelling is meaningful and should be maintained in combination with the “continuation option **myths**”. The more strongly the objective of actively turning children into storytellers can be realized, the spectrum should however be supplemented by **additional story genres**.

(6) The effects of storytelling are strengthened by **follow-up work** after the storytelling situations and stories. In the kindergarten this follow-up work takes place significantly more often. For the schools the teachers should be supported by best-practice examples. The suggestions should include different time frameworks and expand on a variety of subjects. These best-practice aids should be created as quickly as possible.

(7) The development work of the *ErzählZeit* project occurred mainly in the schools. An individual **conceptual adaptation for the kindergartens** has, to our knowledge, not yet been done and should be undertaken in the near future. Here it is important to take up the good possibilities for preparatory and follow-up work in the kindergartens and at least some of the stories are chosen in advance together with the kindergarten teachers.

(8) Storytelling has particularly lost its significance in the daily life of the parents. To get parents to tell more stories is a difficult but at the same time the outstanding objective. The renaissance of storytelling that was started by the *ErzählZeit* project has to try to **motivate parents more strongly in this area** again and increase their accountability. This could be the project’s experimental focal point.

(9) The systematic **involvement of the local libraries** means an outstanding step into public. The connection of school/kindergarten and local library holds advantages and future opportunities for all parties involved. Crucial for its future success will be that the libraries define and experience themselves not only as a location but also as a partner. This has to be taken into account even more strongly.

(10) The **network's organizational core** has done very good development work, but is coming up against limits. In order to guarantee the useful approach of giving independence of the storytellers on site, different framework conditions will be required. It is recommended, in transitioning to a regular course to check and/or recalculate the organizational basis (a part-time position as project manager) as well as the fees, measures for continual quality development (work shadowing, reflections days...) and central procedures (more flexible organization of time...).

(11) The network *Erzählen* also sets impulses beyond Berlin and could make **ErzählZeit** into a **country-wide "brand"**. Particularly the systematic combination of the three places: school, kindergarten, and local library has a "model character" and could be the starting point for additional projects outside Berlin, but also the starting point for a national expert conference about the status of storytelling at schools and kindergartens.

(12) The good international contacts should definitely be used even more strongly to enrich the Berlin storytelling scene (for example for an international storytelling festival, for an interdisciplinary expert discussion about the significance of storytelling in a variety of professions, etc.) Particularly the existing network is a good basis for further necessary **image work for storytelling**.

**Translator's Note: The Bibliography and further Appendices have not been translated.**

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The project aims at including foreign-language storytellers and, by telling fairy tales from the countries of origin of their parents, to sensitize the children for the richness of the languages and cultures.

<sup>2</sup>Three questionnaires from kindergartens could not be included in the data, as they were returned long past the deadline.

<sup>3</sup>In writing, we will refer to the teachers and storytellers exclusively as "she", as the participants in the focus groups were exclusively women.

<sup>4</sup>The cited comments have been anonymised correspondingly.

<sup>5</sup>**Legend:** S = school, SM = school (myths told), K = kindergartens

<sup>6</sup> Further objections refer to the fear that they might perpetuate the power structures of long ago, or that they communicate foreign knowledge in a globalized world and hold on to moral values of the past. (cf. Becker-Textor 2011)

<sup>7</sup> After the Second World War and especially also after 1968, fairy tales had the reputation of being "black pedagogy". It was only Bruno Bettelheim, according to Rölleke (2011), who with his book "Kinder brauchen Märchen" (lit. "Children need fairy tales"; English translation: "The Uses of Enchantment") brought a different view. The development in the former GDR was completely different: There, fairy tales always had a prominent position in the spectrum of literary interest, particularly for primary school children (cf. Wardetzky 2007, 175).

<sup>8</sup> See also Buske (2011).

<sup>9</sup> See also Poser: "The folk tale" (1980).

<sup>10</sup>Heinz Rölleke (2011), literary scientist at the University Wuppertal. Cited in "Märchen als ‚Superdoping‘ für Kindergehirne" (translation: "Fairy tales as Super-doping for Children's Brains").

<sup>11</sup>Some of the storytellers have also already begun to include other genres.

<sup>12</sup>A total of 144 questionnaires were distributed, one teacher had a long-term illness and was not available. A total of 114 questionnaires came back, three of them could no longer be included in the study as they were only sent back in May.

<sup>13</sup>In one class the project was broken off for this reason.

<sup>14</sup>Only a few of the teachers had the feeling that they had to repeatedly motivate the children to listen (10 percent), among the kindergarten staff it was one in four.

<sup>15</sup>In this study the effects could be compared in two different ways. Kindergarten staff from various project years were compared in their evaluation of observed effects. Both groups described nearly

the same effects. And through the age-standardized monitoring procedure SELDAK or SISMIK (Ulich et al. 2003/2006) it was confirmed that storytelling has positive effects on language development.

<sup>16</sup>“I have three children who absolutely cannot speak, I mean one cannot understand them at all when they say a sentence. And that is really fascinating, they told a whole story together. ...they spoke the entire text, practically the whole story. And they normally manage to tell about their weekend: I played. That’s the end, very, very often. And it’s really fascinating.” (teacher)

<sup>17</sup>19.1 percent of teachers and 24.1 percent of kindergarten staff say that this community feeling has even changed very positively.

<sup>18</sup>“And what was totally amazing to me was that just those children that otherwise take part less in talking, that they had a whole lot of ideas how the story could continue at this or that place, or really managed to listen super-well, and they were able to answer questions afterwards. And that was always especially nice for me afterwards. Or also a pupil that finds it very, very hard to write, ... and I was amazed what grammatically complete and correct sentences the pupils said. And such things are simply nice for a teacher. And for the other children I find it very important that something like that comes into the foreground.” (teacher)

<sup>19</sup>The pilot project *Sprachlos* (Speechless) selected its name for this exact reason.

<sup>20</sup>There are, however, great differences between the years: for 2009/2010 83.3 of the kindergarten teachers reported that they integrate the fairy tales told, for the year 2010/2011 it was only 15.8 percent (3 out of 19 kindergarten teachers). In the schools it is similar: also here the teachers in the year 2009/2010 report integrating the fairy tales told in the lessons (48 percent 1=I strongly agree).

<sup>21</sup>41 percent agree completely with this statement, another 49 percent partially agree. Only 10 percent do not agree with this statement.

<sup>22</sup>45.3 percent marked “I strongly agree” and 41 percent “I partially agree”.

<sup>23</sup>37 percent of kindergarten staff each marked “I strongly agree” and “I partially agree.”

<sup>24</sup>“At our school in the second grade, they told of Merlin and how Welsh women who married English men had their tongues torn out if they had a child. At first I thought, Oh my God, is that brutal. But the children understood immediately what that meant. Because the language only continues if it is spoken and if these women, if they had continued to speak Welsh to their children, then this culture would have been continued, this language would have continued. For that is what they experience every day that they are not allowed to speak their native tongue in class.” (teacher)

<sup>25</sup>“I told myths, and I stood in front of two classes that were absolutely wild, wild in that they chatted and ate their snacks or drank something. I stood in front of them on the stage – I even had a stage, they also saw me, but they were not at all interested that I was standing there. And two teachers were there, and neither of the teachers said anything to the pupils.” (storyteller)

<sup>26</sup>“In two out of three schools this is not a problem. In the third school we also had an extra room at the beginning. The teacher was so stressed out that they had to go with their classes to this room that we then said that we can do it in the classroom. There they always build it up like that – I mean the teacher does, that’s his responsibility to push back the tables a bit and that there are then two rows – but one is somehow weirdly stuck in this room, in which the milk had been flying around just a short while ago. Yes, I find that a little difficult.” (storyteller)

<sup>27</sup>This was carried out at a school. The partial results were reported within the focus group.

<sup>28</sup>“So a child writes down or draws in the lesson afterwards, or, depending on competence, what it has retained and remembered from the story. And some really meticulously write two pages and others draw a big, colourful picture. But that is our treasure, with the background, we remember the beautiful stories we had.” (teacher)

<sup>29</sup>A typical answer: “No, it was optimal. It’s unfortunate that our story time is already past.”

<sup>30</sup>The origin of the expansion came from outside, via the participation in other projects. “