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Intercultural Qualification of Police Officers

A model proposal



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The proposed training modules for strengthening and improving intercultural competence(s) are based on the findings of the Saxony-Anhalt investigation “Police handling of migrant victims”. The interpretive reconstruction of interviews and group discussions with police officers at all hierarchical levels with victims, victim advisors and victim counsellors (e.g. interpreters) revealed the systemic insensitivity of operational forces towards migrants who have been victims of crime. On this basis, there are two starting points for (paradigmatic) novel intercultural training. The first and fundamental points of reference are the police’s internal mechanisms that produce and reproduce an insensitive approach to migrants (victims). The second points of reference are the thought and action patterns of the hierarchical levels (immediate supervisors and senior officials), which stabilise the attitudes of the operational forces in a communicative interaction. In the first case, the goal of the training is to reappraise work performed in interculturally lacking situations, reflecting beyond any moralisation, e.g. with the Critical Incident Method. This makes the self-evident aspects of police behaviour and thinking conscious and changeable. The second point of reference serves to differentiate the groups of people, topics and goals in the training. As a result of the intercultural qualification of police officers at every level of the hierarchy, we expect in the medium term a significant increase in sovereign professional intervention, taking into account the protection of victims and opening the police organisation up to diversity.

INTRODUCTION

The question of whether police behaviour is professionally correct, insensitive or even xenophobic when dealing with migrants who are victims of generally right-wing extremist offences was the subject of our investigation (Asmus/Enke 2016). The occasions were police operations with alleged right-wing extremist background in Saxony-Anhalt, which have repeatedly met with political and media criticism. The investigation could also have been carried out in other federal states or in other coun-

tries, since such cases have also been and will be reported there.

In 23 individual interviews with senior officials and seven group discussions, migrants, migrant advisors and victim counsellors as well as police officers from all hierarchical levels (senior officials in top positions, immediate supervisors, police officers and administrators from the Criminal Office) spoke up and presented their views on the research issues. Police officers were presented with authentic case

descriptions of police operations from the victim's perspective in order to stimulate discussion.

The individual interviews and group discussions were evaluated using qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2010; Gläser/Laudel 2010) and the documentary method of Bohnsack and Pfaff (Bohnsack/Pfaff 2010). This concerned the elaboration of interpretations of meaning associated with the actions of police officers when dealing with migrant victims of crime.

RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The results of the study showed that the expectation of operational security forces and criminal police was determining the principle of neutrality and the principle of identifying on all sides how technical rules should be applied equally to everyone. Paradoxically the deliberately neutral and professional approach of the police usually results in non-intentional discrimination against the victims. This attitude enables them to evade situations that are overly complex for them and to avoid having to pay attention to the cultural background of the public (see Kebaili 2009).

The results of the investigation show that a lack of sensitivity in the police's handling of migrant victim witnesses cannot be denied in many cases of police mission activities. The significant aspect of this, first and foremost, is the lack of awareness and action on the part of police officers and administrators regarding racially motivated acts.¹ Migrant victims perceive the police approach as a trivialisation of racism and ignorance of their social and legal interests directly in the operational situation. However, the negative consequences of this unsuccessful intercultural communication are also evident among the police officers. They experience the protests of and criticism from migrant victims as a loss of

authority; they perceive the criticism of the police approach, which comes from the police organisation, as unfair, prejudicial and disloyal. Their critics in the police and in politics do not offer any reliable communication bridges for them to reconsider their previous convictions. The criticism from the media is fundamentally experienced as undifferentiated and far removed from the police, and is rejected. Under these conditions, they retreat – though sometimes resignedly – into their group culture. Communication with colleagues of the same organisational units solidifies police attitudes towards migrants (victims). In contrast to internal and external critics, communication with each other reinforces personal and professional normality and self-esteem.

The lack of sensitivity can be structurally attributed to the implicit habitual experience and practical knowledge of the police officers and administrators, which guides their behaviour and actions in the field. The understanding of the law, its binding rule and the tactical rules of police officers are overlaid by their ideas about "correct" behaviour as unquestioned, self-evident facts. This concerns experiential prejudices against migrants, which rarely solidify into xenophobic attitudes. Such attitudes cannot be excluded in individual cases of interviewed police officers, but are considered an exception.

However, the police perspective on publicly criticised intercultural intervention is not uniform. While the focus with the police is on coping to ensure that the situation is handled as swiftly and smoothly as possible, with a focus on prosecution (offender work), the senior officials emphasise the professionally and politically correct conduct of police work, including the consideration of its external impact. The perspective of the police officers is

thereby only partially considered. Senior officials clearly feel their limit of reaching the operational forces with their normative ideas.

“In between” are the direct supervisors, whose perspective shifts between the expectations of the senior officials and those of the operational forces, which leads to uncertainty among the staff as they cannot build firm expectation structures as to whether they are sympathetic to or critical of their operational or investigative behaviour or whether they are even sanctioned in disciplinary proceedings.

All in all, the findings show convincingly the power of the informal way of thinking and acting of the professional group compared to the concept-oriented expectations of senior police officers in police operations.

Not surprisingly, the results of the investigation show that by no means all police officers are resentful of migrant victims. This is made very clear by statements made by police officers on improving intercultural policing.²

INTERCULTURAL QUALIFICATION – PREMISES AND GOALS

The perception of previous training by police officers reveals fundamental weaknesses. On the one hand, both senior officials and most of the police officers articulate an urgent need for intercultural training, while on the other hand, it is consistently said in the group discussions and interviews that the measures taken so far have passed by their professional needs in overcoming the difficulties of dealing with intercultural situations.

Based on the empirical findings of our study, there are two starting points for a different approach to intercultural education. The first and fundamental points of reference are the police’s internal mechanisms that produce and reproduce an insensitive approach to migrants (victims).

The second points of reference are the thought and action patterns of the hierarchical levels (immediate supervisors and senior officials), which stabilise the attitudes of the operational forces in a communicative interaction.

In the first case, the objective of the training is to reappraise work performed in cross-cultural situations, e.g. with the Critical Incident Method.³ This makes the self-evident aspects of police behaviour and thinking conscious and changeable. As a result, in the medium term, we expect a significant increase in sovereign professional intervention taking victim protection into account.⁴

The second point of reference serves to differentiate the groups of people, topics and goals in the training. The ability to reflect on policing in cross-cultural situations in a case-oriented manner and relieved of moralising aspects is regarded by us as the most important thing for police training measures for all participating officers of all hierarchical levels.

In concrete terms, this means the following:

- ▶ The intercultural qualification of the police should serve the successful police mission and situation management, with the special aspect of culturally sensitive and effective handling of intercultural situations, and if necessary, conflict situations. This mainly requires general cultural competences. Culturally specific knowledge is helpful when police officers are dealing with certain ethnic groups in the long term (see Leenen et al. 2005; Jacobsen 2011; Giesbert 2013).
- ▶ Thus, competent intervention cannot be expected from a one-off training, and certainly not from one “course”. The accompanying evaluation, which also reviews the sustainability of the learning process, decides on the end of the training.

- ▶ The “situational approach” according to Jacobsen (Jacobsen 2011) should be pursued in order to overcome learning resistance in the training of officers and to develop a culturally open attitude. This approach aims to adopt this attitude and focuses on the development of methodological competence to achieve this. Jacobsen sees intercultural competence as a method for “gaining information” in cross-cultural situations “where a decision for a particular action can be made” (*ibid* 160). The situational approach provides a practical solution to dealing with diversity, by treating national, ethnic or religious diversity in a similar way to other differences due to gender, income, marital status, etc. The “demystification of strangers” allows the police to gain sovereignty and confidence to act in intercultural situations (*ibid* 170).
- ▶ The police-specific, situational approach and the development of an open attitude as a prerequisite for the acquisition of intercultural competence require a theoretical concept of intercultural qualification. A start to a longer-term competence can be made on the basis of a process model for the development of intercultural competence analogous to Leenen et al. (Leenen et al. 2005; Leenen et al. 2014).
- ▶ The concept of interculturality used in the study is initially an analytical tool to understand the interpretations of police officers of all hierarchical levels, as well as those of victims, victim advisors and counsellors. The empirically based term forms the starting point for developing the topic in the intercultural qualification of the police. Criticism of the term interculturality means that it should be reflected on in practical training events with a view to transculturality, diversity and ethnic attributions in order to reflect a holistic understanding of culture (Welsch 2010; Müller 2014). The danger of the culturalisation of social problems should be avoided.
- ▶ The building blocks (learning contents, learning objects and methods)⁵ should enable reflection on cross-cultural situations oriented towards police practice in the respective field of action (operation, processing and management).
- ▶ Since it addresses not only the officer in his function, but also the human being behind it, one’s own enculturation, which has become self-evident, should also be reflected on. This can promote sensitivity to the enculturation of foreigners and to the long journey migrants have to make when they are required to integrate.
- ▶ Implicit attitudes towards foreigners that have been acquired by the police should be “thought through”, but should not be the central focus of rapidly targeted changes as they can hardly be changed, or only with great difficulty, in the short term (see *inter alia* Ahlheim 2007).
- ▶ Based on the decision for a process model of intercultural qualification, the measures would need to be strategically interwoven into the organisational development of the police (see Leenen et al. 2005; Leenen et al. 2014). The necessary processiveness of the intended changes affects both the required (always individually related) learning process as well as the integration of these measures into the organisational development of the police towards a culturally open organisation.
- ▶ The training process implies a paradigm shift away from the learning resistance deficit approach (key terms: racist police, police and xenophobia) to the needs-based approach to dealing with the problem (see police officers’ expecta-

tions regarding the training – Asmus/Enke 2016, 144–147).

- ▶ If attitudes (solidified interpretations) in the groups and between the groups of police are to become newly and reservedly discussable, the usual selection of participants of training measures must be reconsidered. Participation should be on a voluntary basis, if one does not wish to generate demotivation and rejection from the beginning by a “commanded” delegation. Accordingly, the training centre must operate a clever information policy that transmits incentives for participation.
- ▶ While so far, only the police groups of interest, generally the operational forces, have been involved, police officers at all hierarchical levels must now be included in the measures.
- ▶ For didactic reasons and in the sense of informal learning, it would make sense to include police officers with different levels of experience and knowledge, separated into security and criminal police and senior officials, in further training measures.
- ▶ The intercultural qualification measures should (initially) remain associated only to victim-related police operations in order not to expand the topic too far (perpetrators, independent controls, etc.).
- ▶ Based on the general shortcomings in police victim work as shown in our study and in the literature, the “ideal image of the police from the victim’s perspective” (see Kube/Rohde 2003) should be introduced as a model for training (victim protection), but not in a formulaic sense. Victim protection must be understood as a police task and not simply known.
- ▶ New teaching and learning materials should be used for intercultural qualification. The use of video vignettes that depict exemplary operational situations

is common in the area of situational practice reflection and competence-oriented training.

- ▶ The new training concept places high demands on the personal, social-communicative, technical and didactic competences of the lecturers, seminar leaders and possible disseminators, who should preferably come from the police, such as academy trainers, academies, teachers of police training and further education, as well as police officers with a migration background. All instructors must be able to adhere to adult education standards.
- ▶ The new process model of intercultural qualification should be evaluated concomitantly. A formative and summative evaluation concept has to be developed for this.

INTERCULTURAL QUALIFICATION – A MODEL PROPOSAL

Four coordinated, strategic approaches of intercultural qualification of the police are proposed on the basis of the empirical findings of the Saxony-Anhalt study (see Figure 1, page 19). The following goals are connected to this:

1. The qualification of teachers as disseminators (with and without a migration background) for the successive acquisition of intercultural teaching competences.
2. The qualification of the operational forces of the security police and the Criminal Office for the successive acquisition of intercultural (operational) competences.
3. The qualification of direct supervisors for the gradual acquisition of management skills to improve the police error culture.
4. The qualification of senior officials to progressively acquire management skills to change to an organisational culture which is open to cultural diversity.

In order to achieve the strategic goals, we are pursuing a training concept which is based on a study established on the results of the Saxony-Anhalt study, inspired by Jacobsen (Jacobsen 2011), Flos and Ohlemacher (Flos/Ohlemacher 2014) and based on Leenen et al. (Leenen et al. 2014) followed by the design and testing of consecutive modules. Thus, the intended innovation for the intercultural qualification of the police is conceptually state-of-the-art.

However, we are extending the procedural concept of Leenen (Leenen et al. 2014) of basic and advanced modules by a performance module (an action-oriented format of practice-oriented police training).

Figure 1 illustrates a cyclical, three-stage design of the planned R&D project with four three-tiered training modules as workshops, each of which are focused on the strategic approaches to further qualification.

Each workshop begins with a basic module, limited by its particular content and goals. This concerns the development of a self-reflexive attitude and willingness, e.g. by dealing with one's own enculturation and intercultural blockades. In the advanced module, the training continues with a focus on police-specific requirements for the development of intercultural competence(s) in order to finally take a closer look at concrete actions in everyday police life (performance).

In terms of the process-oriented understanding of the development of competences, a project cycle over three phases is planned. These include the development, testing and evaluation of the training modules (workshops). The project must be preceded by a preliminary phase in order to prepare for these procedural activities.

The prerequisites for the successful implementation of the project must be cre-

Source: Asmus/Enke 2016, 187

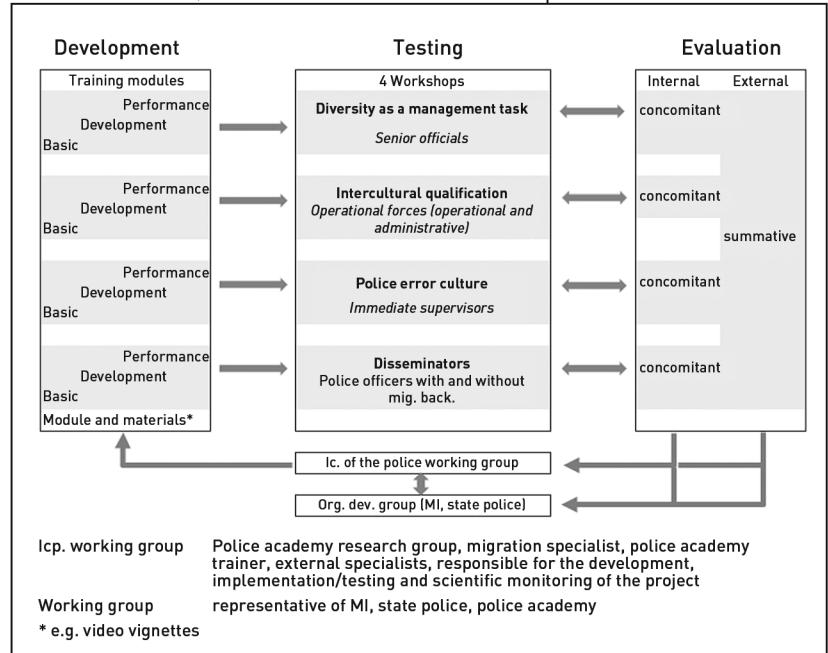


Figure 1: Overall system of the planned research and development project "Intercultural qualification of the police" ©

ated in the preliminary phase of the planned research and development project. The clarification of the question as to which parameters guarantee the feasibility of the project is connected to this. In addition to securing the financial and material resources necessary for the implementation of the project, such as the development and production of materials, this includes the creation of a project working group "intercultural competence of the police" and the creation of a group with coordination tasks for the "organisational development of the police". The qualification of the intended lecturers/moderators who conduct the workshops is particularly important.

The three-level training modules (basic, advanced and performance module) for all four workshops must be developed in terms of content and didactics during the development phase. The development and production of video vignettes for the visualisation of critical events from everyday police life play a special role. Each one is

Source: Asmus/Enke 2016, 191

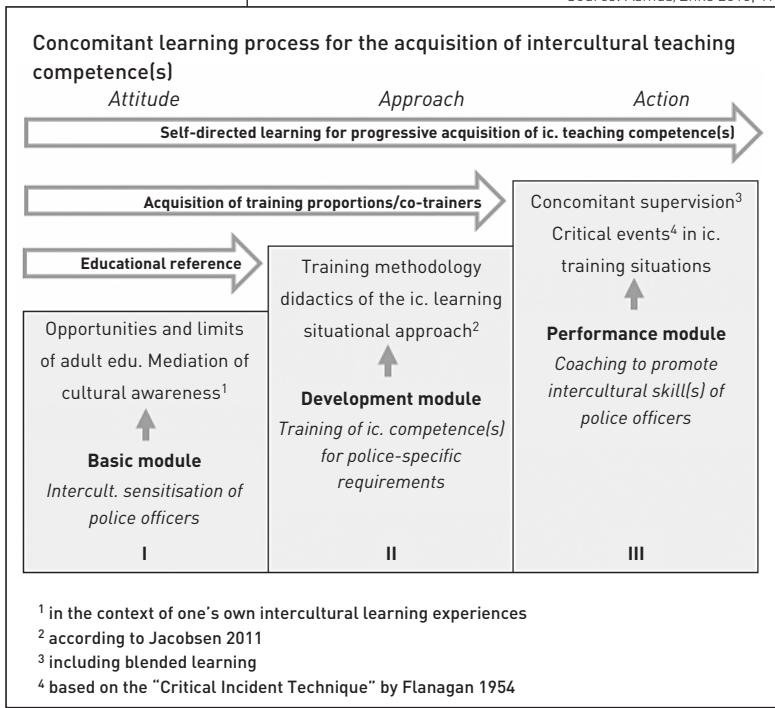
¹ in the context of one's own intercultural learning experiences² according to Jacobsen 2011³ including blended learning⁴ based on the "Critical Incident Technique" by Flanagan 1954

Figure 2: Modules for disseminators in police vocational and further training for the acquisition of intercultural teaching competence(s); police officers with and without a migration background©

oriented to the specific objectives of the four workshops.

A concomitant internal evaluation for the testing of the modules, as well as a procedure for a summative external evaluation of the overall system of the project also have to be developed. With regard to our postulated inclusion of training measures for intercultural competence development in the organisational development of the police, the "four-level model" proposed by Kirkpatrick (Kirkpatrick 1998) is suitable for the evaluation (see Leenen et al. 2005, 290 f).

The trial phase includes the performance of the workshops. The subsequent evaluation phase falls on the end of the first cycle. The results of the internal and external evaluation serve as scientific input for the evaluation and for any necessary improvements of the programme parts of the project.

THE FOUR WORKSHOPS OF THE PROJECT

Our procedural understanding of competence development as a progression of promoting a "reflective attitude – approach – professional sovereign action" is illustrated in each of the four workshops illustrated below. While the readiness for the acquisition of competence ("intercultural competence as a blocked resource", Flos/Ohlemacher 2014) is created in the first stage (attitude), the police-specific requirements are presented in detail and trained on the second level (approach). Intercultural competences are developed in this stage, in the development module, as dispositions for behaviour and action, based on the specific work positions and requirements of the police officers (understood as "self-organisation dispositions" according to Erpenbeck/Heyse 2007; Erpenbeck/v. Rosenstiel 2007; see also Enke/Kirchhof 2009). The performance of the previously developed dispositions is developed in the third stage (action) under the conditions of everyday police life, situated in the workshop and directly practice-oriented (sovereignty in the respective action, see Jacobsen 2011).

All of the four workshops' modules use video vignettes for the visualisation of cross-cultural situations in police operations, as well as for organisational interaction situations with intercultural relevance. Based on Flanagan's "Critical Incident Technique" (Flanagan 1954; see also Göbel 2003), the film sequences are used as case studies so that they can be dealt with critically. It is assumed that the sector-specific promotion of empowerment can be successfully supported (see Leenen et al. 2014; Giesbert 2013; Hemmecke 2007). Role-plays of situations in which one can practice and examine intercultural competences may also be useful in the performance module.

Figure 2 (see page 20) illustrates the general procedural principle of acquiring competence for the intercultural qualification of disseminators in police training and, as far as possible, of police officers with a migration background. This workshop is at the beginning of the project.

The three-stage approach of “attitude – approach – action” is specified in the modules for the disseminators as follows:

The assumption of a prescribed attitude for the acquisition of intercultural teaching competences is understood as a pedagogical reference or pedagogical relationship. The acceptance of the (intercultural) knowledge to be imparted and an emotionally positive interaction between the teacher and the learner are achieved on this basis. The learning object “intercultural competence” is based on the experiences and learning needs of the participants and not on their possible behavioural deficit towards foreigners. A pedagogical relationship presupposes a high level of self-reflectivity on the part of the disseminators (see Enke 2003, 166 ff, but here for the pedagogical relationship of socio-educational work).

The approach implies the didactic-methodical approach to promoting intercultural competence(s). Jacobsen’s (Jacobsen 2011) situational approach based on police-specific requirements is relevant here, as are the general adult education approaches for stimulating intercultural learning (see Hufer 2009; ibid 2011; Hufer et al. 2013). The acquisition of didactic-methodical competence(s) enables disseminators to take on training components in intercultural further education.

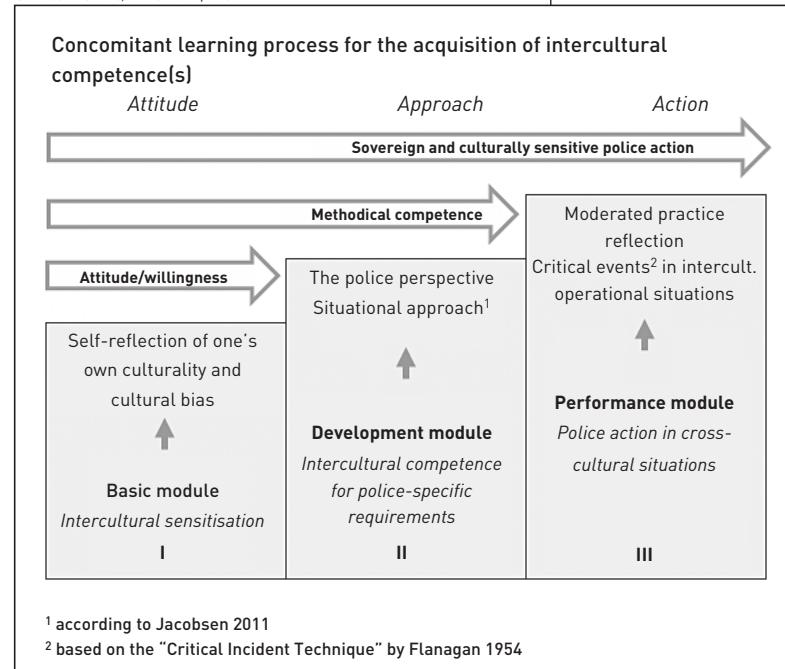
Finally, action (performance) is understood as self-directed learning for the further acquisition of intercultural teaching competence(s), which is supported in the context of the performance module, but

also supported beyond that (blended learning) by concomitant supervision.

QUALIFICATION OF OFFICERS OF THE SECURITY POLICE AND ADMINISTRATORS IN THE CRIMINAL OFFICE

The operative forces, the officers from operational and patrol duty (security police) and the administrators from the Criminal Office (criminal police) represent the “classic” subject of the training measures (see Figure 3):

Source: Asmus/Enke 2016, 193



¹ according to Jacobsen 2011

² based on the "Critical Incident Technique" by Flanagan 1954

Figure 3: Modules for the intercultural qualification of officers of the security police and administrators in the Criminal Office©

This shows the three-stage approach of “attitude – approach – action”, which is specified in the modules for the operational forces as follows:

The basic module aims to develop an open attitude towards intercultural learning through intercultural sensitisation. This goes hand in hand with the willingness to reflect on one's own cultural bias and cultural irritations in everyday police life.

The approach implies the acquisition of methodical competence aimed at coping with cross-cultural situations in everyday life, as targeted by the development module. The situational approach of Jacobsen (Jacobsen 2011) is primarily used here to develop a methodical competence.

Sovereign and culturally sensitive action (performance) is at the (provisional) end of the concomitant learning process of the police officers for the acquisition of intercultural competences. Therefore, there is a supervised discussion of “critical events”, which reflect difficult intercultural operational situations from everyday police life (e.g. problem-solving suggestions, direct action in role-plays).

Source: Asmus/Enke 2016, 194

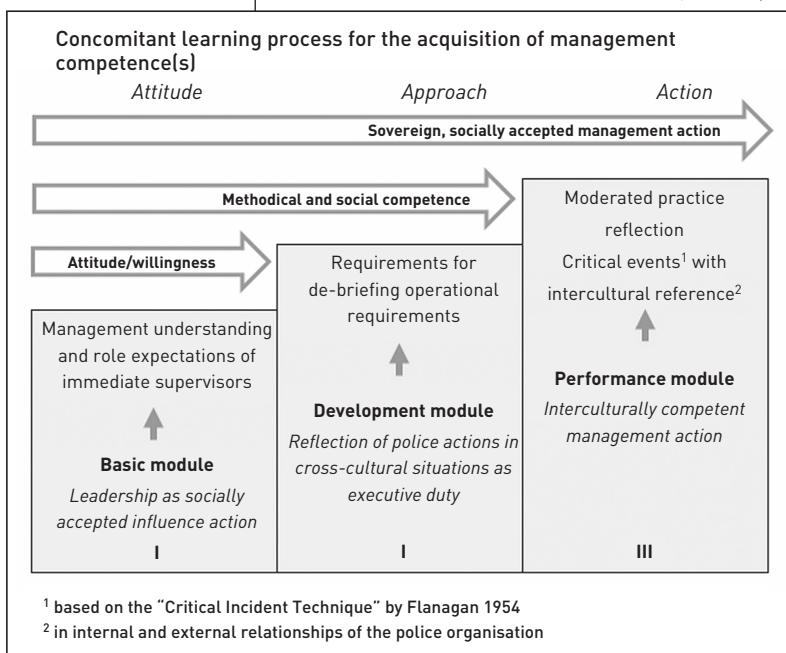


Figure 4: Modules for the acquisition of management competences from immediate supervisors and for improving the police error culture©

QUALIFICATION OF IMMEDIATE SUPERVISORS

According to our findings, the training modules for immediate supervisors are a key position in the intended improvement of the police error culture (see Asmus/

Enke 2016, 183 ff).

In the modular three-stage workshop for immediate supervisors (see Figure 4), attitude is paraphrased as a modern understanding of management, approach as methodical and social competences for performing (especially) de-briefings on interventions with cross-cultural situations and action as a sovereign and a (socially) accepted (by employees) management action.

The training of immediate supervisors in the development of management competences should be complemented by coaching for de-briefings. For example, the police migration specialists of some federal states are worth considering as interculturally competent coaches. They could be trained as part of the second module (see Figure 2, page 20).

QUALIFICATION OF MANAGEMENT IN SENIOR POSITIONS

The qualification of senior officials should serve in the progressive acquisition of management competences to change to an organisational culture which is open to diversity including the interculturality of the police at all hierarchical levels. Leenen et al. (Leenen et al. 2014, 67–77) proposed similar training for senior officials, but with the subject “Diversity as a management task” in order to recognise and use the benefits of migrant police officers in the police organisation. In addition to personal sensitisation, the “management task related to diversity” is in the foreground (ibid 69). Cultural diversity in the police should be understood and used as a human resource. This proposal by Leenen et al. (Leenen et al. 2014) refers to police organisations that employ a large proportion of police officers with a migration background.

In line with our findings, we wish to first focus on improving the communicative

competence of management in the case of intercultural problems. Their concept-oriented claim should not be “announced”, but become communicable, which presupposes communication requiring acceptance on the basis of mutual understanding. Such an approach promotes an open approach to diversity including interculturality in the police organisation.

Our content-related focus for this module results from the empirically established trust problem of employees towards their supervisors. This can be explained and problematised in terms of management theory as follows: “management” is not only a position-based claim of supervisors (managers), but must also be recognised by the “managed persons” (see Weibler/Thielmann 2010, 64). In other words: any influence intended by management can only be successful if it is accepted by the employees, and vice versa, the management must trust them despite any misconduct which may occur. Mutual trust as a central prerequisite for the functioning of the cooperative management system (CMS) (see Christe-Zeyse 2006) should be understood as a cyclical process: it grows in communications and is abstracted from communications as experience to enable rehearsal for a new understanding in conflict situations.

Barthel (Barthel 2006) shows that the change in management understanding is inextricably linked to the process of the organisational development of the police. This is carried out by the “disciplinary supervisor” via the “manager” to the senior management as organisational developer. While the supervisor (only) requires professional competence in the disciplinary function, the manager must also have methodological competence (e.g. for employee appraisals, assessment), and the “organisational developer” must have specialist, methodological, social

and personal competence. As empirically demonstrated (see Reuter 2007), social competence, in particular, which Barthel claims to be a “winning management” and personal leadership is manifested above all in the self-reflection of police management (see ibid).

The workshop “Diversity as a management task” (see Figure 5) expanded by the changes made vis-à-vis Leenen et al. (Leenen et al. 2014) again follows the modular three-stage approach of “attitude – approach – action”.

The necessary attitude is reflected in the willingness to assume management responsibility for innovations in the police in the context of cultural and diversity-theoretical research findings in the context of social change.

The approach implies a modern management understanding as an organisational developer (Barthel 2006). Linked to this

Source: Asmus/Enke 2016, 195

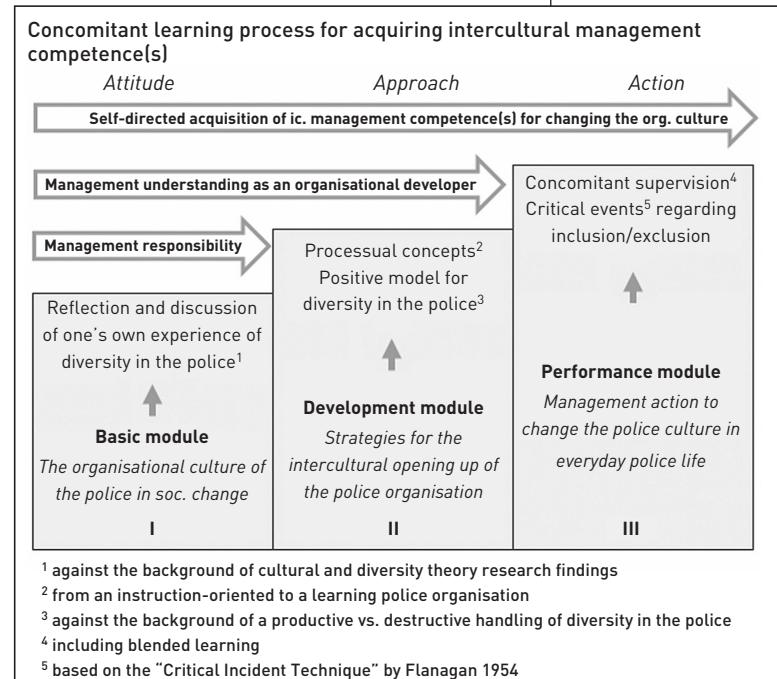


Figure 5: Modules for workshop “Diversity as a management task” for officials in senior positions©

is a knowledge of strategies for the intercultural opening of the police and the development of a positive model for diversity in the police (human resources) (for the model debate and for diversity management in the police, see Behr 2010, 145 ff). Understanding the police as a learning organisation as a process is indispensable for the intended innovation. This means a departure from instruction-oriented senior or management (see Leenen et al. 2005, 38–39; Büttner 2004, 97).

The self-directed acquisition of intercultural management competence(s) to change police culture should lead to a verifiable management action. The perception of group-related exclusion processes in the police and counteracting these, management decisions that promote inclusion are trained as part of accompanied supervision.

CLOSING REMARKS

The presented cornerstones of the intercultural qualification of the police point to an ambitious innovation programme

for the police, which moreover has to be completed within the planned research and development project. Its theoretical and empirical foundation, based on the current state of research, and its praxiological orientation are, in our view, the guarantee of successful professionalisation of the police for interculturally relevant tasks. The implementation of the proposed measures and programmes should enable the significant long-term reduction of incidents demonstrating a lack of sensibility in the police handling of migrant victims. It should be noted that the realisation of modules 2, 3 and 4 is related, as the only way to ensure intercultural competence development is through organisational development. Ideally, ethnic diversity should become the norm for the police and there should no longer be any major differences made in the way the police deal with the ancestral and immigrant persons. The (domestic) political approval and the willingness to contribute to the project are indispensable prerequisites for its realisation.

¹ One could also speak of a limited “reading ability” of the social situations in which the officers act.

² We bring the reason why the interviewed detectives showed little interest in intercultural training together with their strong attitudes of having always acted according to police rules in their corrective action, which is also reflected in having little empathy with the allochthonous victims (see Asmus/Enke 2016, 146 f):

³ For intercultural learning, see Kerstin Göbel 2003, for the method Flanagan 1954, 32–358.

⁴ For more detail, see Asmus/Enke 2016, 178–196.

⁵ There are elaborate practical examples available in the literature as building blocks for the intercultural qualification of the police (e.g. Leenen et al. 2014).

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