

School Psychology in Germany

1. Context of school psychology

Geographic characteristics;

- Germany is one of the major industrial and economic powers in Europe.
- Fifth largest economy in the world
- Location: Central Europe, bordering the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, between Netherlands and Poland, south of Denmark
- Capital: Berlin
- Major rivers: Danube, the Elbe, the Oder, the Weser, and the Rhine
- Major cities: Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Bremen, Hanover, Frankfurt, Nuremburg, Stuttgart and Dusseldorf
- Climate: Relatively mild, with rare appearances of extreme temperatures or weather events
- Religions: Protestant, Roman Catholic, Muslim, and unaffiliated
- Languages: German
- States: Sixteen
- Small Country with a boundary of 3,621kms

Demographic characteristics

- Population: 82million
- Age structure:
 - 0-14 years: 13.1% (male 5,435,658/female 5,155,065)
 - 15-24 years: 10.8% (male 4,457,412/female 4,267,366)
 - 25-54 years: 42% (male 17,268,604/female 16,786,146)
 - 55-64 years: 13.3% (male 5,354,690/female 5,469,884)
 - 65 years and over: 20.9% (male 7,360,711/female 9,591,729)

- Ethnic Groups: German and Turkish
- Birth Rate: 8.33/1000
- Death Rate: 10.55/1000

Economic characteristics

- Europe's most industrialized and populous country
- The fifth largest economy in the world
- GDP: \$3.25 trillion (2012 est.)
- Population below poverty line; 15.5%
- Labor force: 43.93 million (2012 est.)
- Unemployment rate: 5.5% (2012 est.)
- Key Exports: Machinery, Vehicles, Chemicals, Metals and manufactures, Foodstuffs and Textiles

Educational system

- Sixteen states and each state has an autonomous control over their educational system
- Children between the ages of 3 and 6 attend Kindergarten, which are not part of the school system but run by families, church or registered societies.
- Primary and Compulsory education starts at 6 years and ends by ten years
- Secondary education starts at ten years and ends by sixteen years. Here the child has an option to decide among any five streams of education

Secondary Schooling Streams	Based on	Up to age	Prepares for
Hauptschule	Based on Practical Work	Up to age sixteen or Standard ten	Business and Professions

Realschule	Practical Work and Theory	Up to age sixteen or Standard ten	Technical Administrative Career	And
Gymnasium	Scientific Theoretical Orientation	Up to age eighteen or Standard twelve	International Standards	
Gesamtschule	Comprehensive school – Mixture of all the above three	Up to age eighteen or Standard twelve	Any type of student interest areas	
Special Education	Requirements	Up to age sixteen or Standard ten		

- After completing higher education the student chooses a career and starts with Berufsschule, a college based system of learning.
- Average Class Size: 22- 27 in all the four streams and 12 in case of special education
- Schooling is widely accepted and considered important.
- School drop outs starts from standard eight and there is no concrete mechanism devised to overcome this issue of adolescents missing out education.

2. History and current status of school psychology

- Start of 19th Century - First Instance – Mr. William stern demanding school psychology positions during the first conference on youth affairs in Hamburg, 1911.
- Before World War II - Hans Lammermann – First School Psychologist of Germany (1922 -1933, Mannheim)
- After World War II –

- West Germany
 - 1950's – School Psychology started again as Child Guidance Clinics were not encouraged by teachers and parents
 - 1965 – 106 school psychologists were working
 - 1975 - 454 school psychologists were working
 - 1966 – Dortmund Resolution was passed after a group of nationwide school psychologists met at Dortmund.
 - 1973 – Government plans to have one school psychologist for every 5000/ 2000 students at primary and higher education level.

- East Germany
 - Until 1973 – No trace of school psychologist
 - Nov, 1973 – Political order to have a school psychologist at every school
 - 1980 – International Congress of Psychology held at Leipzig brought changes in approach
- A unified Germany
- 1989 - East and West Germany School psychologists got united with Germany reunification
- 1994 – First large meeting of nationwide school psychologists at 11th meeting of National School Psychology Association at Rostock
- 2005 – 982 School Psychologists were serving nearly 12.5 million students
- Salaries – 60,000 euro to 95,000 euro per year

3. Infrastructure of school psychology

- All the sixteen states have a school psychology association of their own to speak about their rights and interests.

- German School Psychology Association, a part of German National Psychology Association represents the interests of all the school psychologists from all the sixteen states.
- 13 states require a school psychologist to qualify masters' level program
- Rest of the states has their own laws and programs as a requirement to work as a school psychologist.
- School Ministers in each state have established set of regulations and guidelines for school psychologists based up on their educational system in practice.
- There is no particular Journal for School psychology.

4. Preparation of school psychologists

- Basic requirement – Diploma in psychology (equivalent to masters)
- Universities do not offer any special training in school psychology
- Most universities require 12 weeks of practical in-service training under the supervision of a psychologist and this can be served in two different institutions.
- Some Bavarian universities provide training for School Psychologists
- Germany School Psychology Association conducts one week national conference for school psychologists once in every two years.
- There is a large extent of understanding in the midst of practitioners and learners regarding the need for supervised training to work as school psychologists.

a) Scope of Training - A bit of educational psychology within the frame work of the Diploma

b) Field Experiences Required - 12 weeks in – service training

c) Years of Study – 16 years of schooling and three years of college study

d) Training Programs –

- a. Once in two years – one week national conference
- b. Bavarian universities provide training for Bavarian School psychologists

e) Where Graduates are Typically Employed – Independent practice catering to the needs of various Primary and Secondary Schools

5. Roles, functions, and responsibilities of school psychologists

- School psychologists mostly practice outside the school in separate buildings serving to the needs of around 13000 children per school psychologist.
- Students can contact school psychologist for any kind of psychological and academic support.
- School psychologist plays the role expert who gathers information from the school, teacher, parent and the society in facilitating the child to overcome his/her issues.
- School Psychologists practice all aspects of the profession as mandated by International Association of School Psychology.
- School Psychologists use a wide range of acceptable psychological assessment tools to measure achievement, intelligence, behavior, social skills and personality of the child.

6. Current practice impacting school psychologists

- A large number of programs are made available to train school psychologists.
- Crisis intervention at schools has become the pressing issue after Erfurt incident in 2005

- Even after having an early start to its career, school psychology still suffers lack of recognition and proper training in Germany. The profession is not considered lucrative and the education system does not support interested personnel to match to the international standards. The education system on a whole needs a revisit and great debates and discussions are around for a change.
- The frightening fact is that most of the practicing school psychologists are above 50 years and in few years time, most of them will retire leaving the entire positions vacant. Present school psychologists need to take decisive stand to promote the profession and try involving themselves towards framing a new education system which will prove better for the nation as a whole.
- With a school psychology history of over seven decades, it's disheartening to know that the school psychology services are still at infant stage and requires more introspection from the side of the senior most professionals and government officials.

