

Balconies & terraces: play areas or safety risk in the kindergarten?

Tool: Diamond Ranking

Context:

Pre-School location	German-language kindergarten Lüssen, South Tyrol Italy
Details about students	age: 2 to 7 years 46 children (2 groups), 6 pedagogical staff Inclusive kindergarten with the concept of the opening
School premises	? sqm, built in 1970, renovation 2016 The kindergarten building includes a ground floor and a first floor in a building complex that also houses the infant care and is also used by associations. On the ground floor, the kindergarten has an entrance area and four rooms, and on the upper floor, another group room with a cloakroom. The kitchen is also located on the ground floor and the office of the kindergarten management is on the upper floor. Washrooms are available for the children on the ground floor and the upper floor. In order to create space on the ground floor for the joint lunch, the children's cloakroom was moved to the general entrance area, which is also used by the associations.
School context	Rural character; everyday language: German
Aktivitätstyp	Workshops with the participation of the pedagogical team
Stage in design process	in use reflection/POE



Tool used: Diamond Ranking

<https://www.ncl.ac.uk/cored/tools/diamond-ranking/>

The instrument is first tested with the pedagogical staff and then carried out with the children on specific design issues concerning the use of space.

Dates of implementation:

- October 2021 with pedagogical staff
- March 2022 Discussion of results with the pedagogical staff

Rationale for activity and tool adopted

In the kindergarten district of Brixen, space and room design have long been a topic in the pedagogical work and are actively supported by the kindergarten district management. As the pedagogical concept of opening is basically applied, themes and functions are assigned to the individual rooms or parts of rooms. Thus, in all kindergartens of the district there is a room for language education, a room for science and/or mathematics education, a movement room and studios for artistic work. The design of the rooms in each kindergarten is adapted to the structural conditions.

In the pedagogical concept of opening up, the children have the opportunity to use the rooms throughout the kindergarten according to their needs during free play time. In doing so, they are accompanied by the pedagogical staff and encouraged to deal with different topics and play ideas.

In the kindergarten Lüssen, the thematic assignments and the corresponding room design are more or less completed and are adapted annually to the needs of the children and the team. Each of the three group rooms has an outdoor area that is directly accessible from the room as a terrace or balcony. So far, these outdoor play areas have only been used sporadically, so there is great potential for development here. The pedagogical staff would like to have suggestions and discussions on how these areas can be used. For this reason, photos of these areas are used for the "Diamond Ranking" instrument. In a first workshop, the pedagogical staff will create a Diamond Ranking, which will form the basis for further considerations in the second workshop.

Case study description: Process

Participants: Kindergarten management, team and a representative of the district management.

In a preparatory meeting with the kindergarten management and a representative of the kindergarten district management, the steps of the joint work with the instrument were determined and photographs of the kindergarten (the interior and exterior) were taken by the researcher from the CoReD project. Ideas of the room design as a whole were discussed, but also the special framework conditions of the pedagogical work due to the regulations during the pandemic.

In a second meeting, the instrument was tested. In the run-up to the meeting, the project staff selected photographs corresponding to the impressions and agreements from the preparatory meeting. This resulted in one overarching theme for the Diamond Ranking: Connections of indoor and outdoor areas of the three rooms and their design possibilities. The central question for the Diamond Ranking is where the greatest development potential of a space is seen. Or which room should be changed immediately.

The work of the pedagogical team and the kindergarten children with the Diamond Ranking was recorded, transcribed and used for the results of the use of the instrument. The poster with the Diamond Rankings is also photographed.

In another pedagogical workshop, the results of the Diamond Rankings were discussed and validated with the team.

Foto * dDocumentation - Diamond Ranking Selection

Interior spaces with adjoining exterior spaces



Fig. 1: room 1. floor



Fig. 2: balcony 1. floor



Fig. 3: cloakroom 1. floor



Fig. 4: entrance area



Fig. 5: studio groundfloor



Fig. 6: Terrace ground floor



Fig. 7: technology room



Fig. 8: math & construction



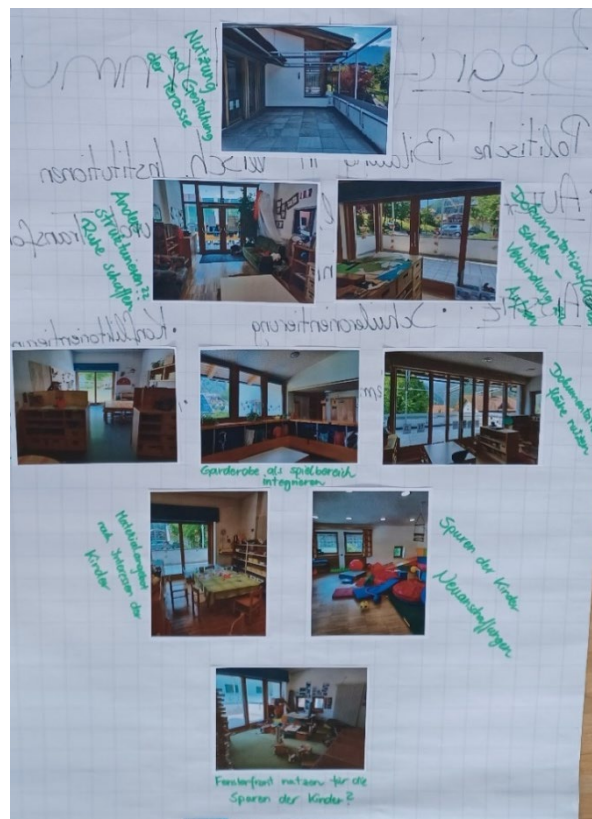
Fig. 9: movement area

Case study description: Outcomes

Results on the work of the pedagogical team with Diamond Ranking

The aim of this workshop with the pedagogical staff was to get to know the Diamond Ranking instrument and to plan further cooperation in the project. For this purpose, the pedagogical staff of the kindergarten created a Diamond Ranking themselves. The task was to put the room situation at the top of the Diamond Ranking, which absolutely has to be changed. In other words, the greatest potential for change was to be defined. In order to document and subsequently analyse the discussion and the decision-making process, the conversations of the educational professionals were recorded and transcribed. In addition to the discussion of the content, the pedagogical professionals were also asked about their impression of the use of the tool. This feedback was also recorded and transcribed.

In the kindergarten Lüssen, a total of 5 pedagogical professionals, including the kindergarten management and a representative of the kindergarten district, took part in the workshop as part of the project. The result is this Diamond Ranking:



It became clear that the question of how to connect the indoor space with the outdoor space will be the focus of further cooperation. Each group room has either a terrace or a balcony, which has not been used so far. Reasons for this were safety concerns and lack of ideas for year-round design as well as year-round use of the outdoor space.