

# Indoors & Outdoors: Group Separation and Garden Design in Times of Pandemic

Tool: Diamond Ranking

## Context:

<b>Pre-School location</b>	Kindergarten Auer, Kindergarten district Neumarkt, South Tyrol Italy
<b>Details about students</b>	age range: 2-7 years approximate number on roll: 79 children (4 groups), 12 educators relevant characteristics of students: inclusive approach
<b>School premises</b>	size, age, typology: ? m <sup>2</sup> , build 1967, renovation 2018
<b>School context</b>	city, sub-urban, town, rural; language of instruction: rural, German
<b>Type of activity</b>	whole school, classroom, outdoor, indoor, redesign, new design etc.: entrance area & corridors, stairs and outdoor: playground, redesign
<b>Stage in design process:</b>	in use reflection, POE

## Tool used: Diamond Ranking

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

The tool is first tested with the educators and then carried out with the children for specific design concerns (pedagogical space planning). Dates of first testing:

27. September 2021

Discussion with the educators on the results of the Diamond Ranking and exchange on the children's Diamond Rankings:

9. Juni 2022

## Rationale for activity and tool adopted

In the kindergarten district of Neumarkt, space and room design have been a topic in the pedagogical work for a long time and are actively supported by the kindergarten district director. Since the pedagogical concept of opening is applied in principle, themes and functions are assigned to the individual rooms or parts of rooms. Thus, in all kindergartens there is a room for language education, a room for science 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 kindergarten Auer the thematic attributions and the corresponding room design are more or less completed and are adapted annually to the needs of the children and the team. The entrance area and the access routes, as well as the outdoor area, have great potential for development in all three kindergartens. Here, the pedagogical staff would like to have suggestions and discussions on how to use these areas. For this reason, photos of these areas are used for the "Diamond Ranking" tool. Due to the diversity of the areas, two sets of photos will be compiled per kindergarten and two Diamond Rankings will be created in the meetings with the pedagogical staff.

By comparing the indoor and outdoor space, different approaches, pedagogical beliefs and spatial conditions can be shown. From the perspective of educational science, the question arises as to which factor is more effective, the pedagogical convictions of the educators or the possibilities of spatial design in the respective buildings. The shared space of experience of the kindergarten teachers is the confrontation with the space as a third educator in their everyday work, but also in the elaboration of the annual plans with the kindergarten management.

## 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.

## Photo \* documentation - Diamond Ranking Selection

### INDOORS



Fig. 1: Hall & Wardrobe



Fig. 2: Group room, experiments



Fig. 3: Group room, construction



Fig. 4: Group room, building



Fig. 5: Group room, nature



Fig. 6: Group room, snack area



Fig. 7: Storage room



Fig. 8: Group room, role play



Fig. 9: Hallway & storage

### OUTDOOR AREA

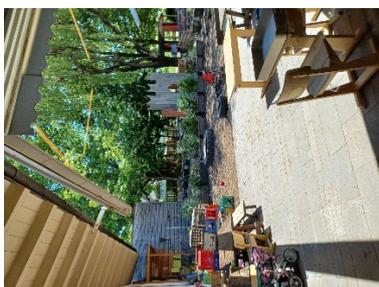


Fig. 1: small terrace area



Fig. 2: terrace



Fig. 3: access to the garden



Fig. 4: Plants as a separating element



Fig. 5: Boxes for building



Fig. 6: Sitting area



Fig. 7: Outdoor area extension



Fig. 8: Swings



Fig. 9: Climbing

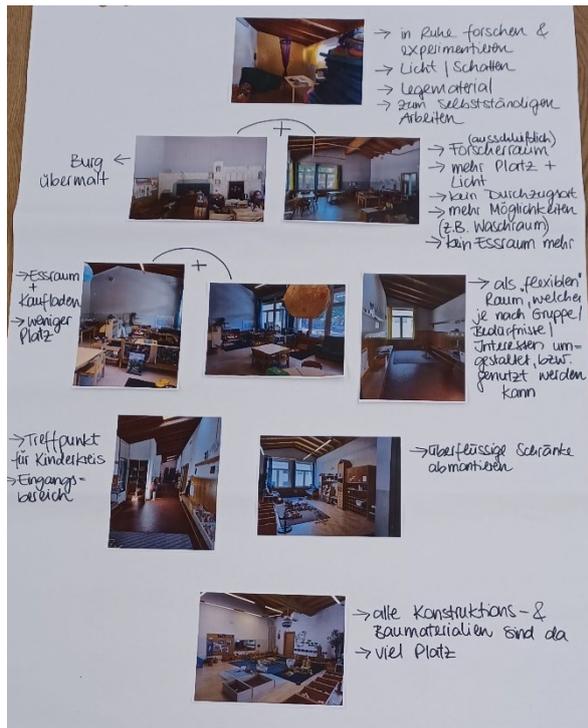
## Case study description: Outcomes

### Results from the Diamond Rankings made by the pedagogical staff

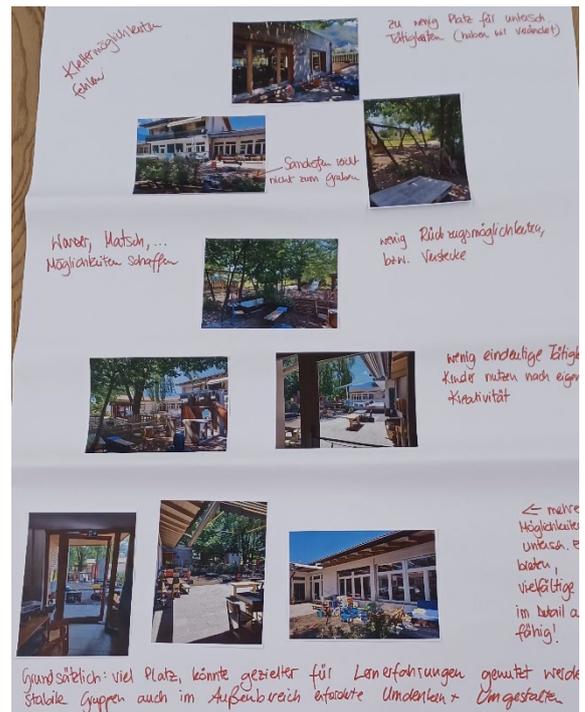
The objective of this workshop with the pedagogical staff was to get to know the Diamond Ranking tool and to plan further cooperation in the project. For this purpose, the pedagogical staff in the two kindergartens created a Diamond Ranking themselves. The task was to put the room situation at the top of the Diamond Ranking, which absolutely has to be changed. In other words, the greatest potential for change would have to be defined. In order to document the discussion and the decision-making process and to analyze them afterwards, the conversations of the pedagogical professionals were recorded and transcribed. In addition to the discussion of the content, the pedagogical professionals were also asked about their impression regarding the use of the tool. This feedback was also recorded and transcribed. (Transcription and analysis are underway, results will be available by the end of 2021)

In order to be able to compare the results of the three kindergartens, the identical question and the same procedure were chosen in both kindergartens.

In the kindergarten Auer a total of 8 pedagogical professionals, including the kindergarten management participated in the first joint meeting within the framework of the project. The workshop was held on 27 September 2021 from 17:00 to 19:30. First result are these Diamond Rankings:



DK 1: Indoors



DK 2: Outdoors

## Comments and notes on the Diamond Ranking: Interiors (DK 1)<sup>†</sup>

Fig. 1: Hallway & Cloakroom

Als „flexiblen“ Raum, der je nach Gruppe/Bedürfnisse/Interessen umgestaltet, bzw. genutzt werden kann. (As a flexible space, which can be rearranged or used according to group/needs/interests.)

Fig. 2: Group room, experiments

Fig. 3: Group room, construction

Dismantle superfluous cabinets

Fig. 4: Group room, construction

überflüssige Schränke abmontieren (Remove superfluous cupboards)

Fig. 5: Group room, nature

Alle Konstruktions- & Baumaterialien sind da, viel Platz (All construction & building materials are there, plenty of space)

Fig. 6: Group room, snack area

(ausschließlich) Forscherraum, mehr Platz + Licht, kein Durchzugsort, mehr Möglichkeiten (z.B. Waschraum), kein Essraum mehr ((exclusively) research room, more space and light, no pull-through place, more possibilities (e.g. washroom), no more dining room)

Fig. 7: Storage room

<sup>†</sup> Translation of German notes in brackets

*In Ruhe forschen & experimentieren, Licht/Schatten, Legematerial, zum selbstständigen Arbeiten* (Quiet research & experimentation, light/shade, laying materials, for independent work)

Fig. 8: Group room, role play

*Burg übermalt* (Castle painted over)

Fig. 9: Hallway & storage

*Treffpunkt für Kinderkreis, Eingangsbereich* (Meeting place for the children's circle, entrance area)

### **Comments and remarks on the Diamond Ranking: Outdoor area (DK 2)**

Fig. 1: small patio area

*Mehrere Möglichkeiten, untersch. Elemente, vielfältige Möglichkeiten, im Detail aber ausbaufähig!* (Several possibilities, different elements, various possibilities, expandable)

Fig. 2: terrace

Fig. 3: access to the garden

*Mehrere Möglichkeiten, untersch. Elemente, vielfältige Möglichkeiten, im Detail aber ausbaufähig!* (Several possibilities, different elements, various possibilities, expandable)

Fig. 4: Plants as separating element

*Sandreifen reicht nicht zum Graben* (Sand tires are not enough for digging)

Fig. 5: Boxes for building

*Mehrere Möglichkeiten, untersch. Elemente, vielfältige Möglichkeiten, im Detail aber ausbaufähig!* (Several possibilities, different elements, various possibilities, expandable)

Fig. 6: Sitting area

*Wasser, Matsch ... /Möglichkeiten schaffen* (Water, mud ... /create possibilities)

Fig. 7: Outdoor area extension

*Klettermöglichkeiten fehlen, zu wenig Platz für untersch. Tätigkeiten (haben wir verändert)* (Climbing possibilities are missing, not enough space for different activities. Activities (we have changed))

Fig. 8: Swings

*Wenig Rückzugsmöglichkeiten bzw. Verstecke* (Few retreat possibilities or hiding places)

Fig. 9: Climbing

*Wenig eindeutige Tätigkeiten, Kinder nutzen nach eigener Kreativität* (Few clear possibilities, children use according to their own creativity)

The educators did not succeed in creating a Diamond Ranking because they could not agree in the discussion. Many outdoor areas have already been changed, i.e. the photographs did not correspond to the current state. In addition, the outdoor areas are always subject to some redesign by the children.

As a final comment, it says at the bottom of the poster:

- Basically: lots of space, could be used more purposefully for learning experiences.
- Stable groups in outdoor area requires rethinking + redesigning

After the first visit by the project management in May 2021, the kindergarten teachers in Auer had already started thinking about the design of the rooms. Surprisingly, exactly the areas that were selected for the Diamond Ranking were redesigned. So, changes in room design were inspired simply by the preliminary discussion of the project. The Diamond Ranking discussion therefore focused on the process of change and the further design possibilities that resulted.

In both group discussions on the Diamond Ranking, it became clear that the pedagogical professionals have so far paid little attention to the children's perspective when designing the rooms. The rooms have so far been designed according to the curricula (framework guidelines of the province of South Tyrol) and according to the concept of pedagogical opening.

It was agreed that the Diamond Ranking would now be implemented by the kindergarten teachers themselves with the children, without project support. The plan is for children to take their own photographs, for nine photos to be selected from these for a Diamond Ranking, and for children to create a Diamond Ranking. The kindergarten team will be responsible for documenting the implementation. In spring 2022, another meeting will take place to compare the Diamond Rankings of the children and the pedagogical staff. Concrete steps for changing the room situation will then be derived from this.