

SMALL LECTURES, Interski 2015, Ushuaia

The Importance of Learning Environment and Stages of Development in Teaching

The project Swiss Snow League will be briefly presented, and the relation between the different levels and stages of development is explained. Afterwards, the teenagers and their needs are described in order to underline the conclusions that had influenced the project Swiss Snow Academy. The differences in both projects, i.e. SSLE and SSAC, will be explained. Furthermore, we would like to discuss the importance of the adaptation of teaching methods according to the age of the learners.

By Alex Taugwalder



Development stages and learning atmosphere in education

Swiss Snow League – Development Stages



SWISS SNOWSPORTS

Titel Präsentation

Seite 3

The Swiss Snow League (SSLE) is the „grading system“ of the Swiss Ski and Snowboard schools. Every school works according to the same system.

The SSL has a host of benefits for us:

- Easy grading of the children into a new ski school
- A means of client loyalty
- A progressive learning plan
- Educational support for the ski teachers

The contents and the structure of the Swiss Snow League are in line with the development of the children. The system is based on conclusions from studies about child development.

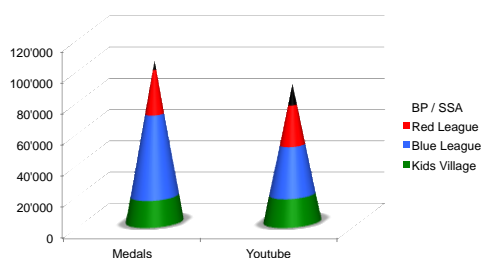
Stages of development:

In order to be able to supply an education appropriate to age and development capacity, we divide the children into different grading levels. The action competence of each level has different characteristics. It should be considered that children of the same age do not automatically belong to the same stage of development. There are significant differences in their individual levels of development.

In theory of course this all sounds obvious and logical. One could assume that ski schools are in a position to offer lessons, which exactly meet the requirements of the children.

Unfortunately the figures show a different picture. In fact in reality the higher we progress in the learning biography of the SSL, the smaller is the number of participants.

SSL – SSA comparison



SWISS SNOWSPORTS

Titel Präsentation

Seite 5

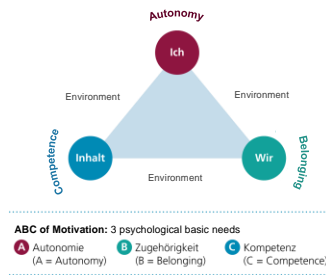
It is our objective that the number of participants should not diminish so strongly and that we can lengthen the Kids' commitment to the ski schools. We have to improve our ability to hit the nerve of the youngsters so that they remain enthusiastic skiers for longer. Well, in order to reach this objective we have to learn to know our target group, the teenagers, much better. We were all teenagers once and we know how difficult a task this is.

In the early teens, there may be less urge to move and willingness to perform. The teenagers are often concerned with exploring their identities and they lack self-confidence. The group is very important to

them. In the later teenage years, there may be a greater motivation for sports, personality characteristics become more and more individual. Teenagers wish to have a say, they want to be involved in decision-making.

In the ski schools for younger children we manage to create a learning atmosphere, which induces them to attend the ski school with pleasure. But are we able to focus the learning atmosphere so that teenagers also want to stay in the ski school?

ABC of Motivation



A good learning atmosphere is directly linked to motivation and can be divided into 4 segments: Me, We, Contents, Environment. If you want the individual participants to feel comfortable, there are three psychological basic needs which play a central role.

And here we are at the ABC of motivation:

- As a participant I expect to be able to put in a word or two. Like here at the Interski Congress, everyone expects or hopes to contribute in some way or another so that the congress is interesting. Therefore A is for Autonomy
- I would like to belong to a group. The „we“ feeling emerges from the interaction among the group members. We call it B for Belonging.
- Know-how, the feeling of being competent through an appropriate task, the right contents or structure of a lesson. That is the C for Competence.

We are now well aware of the characteristics of our target group, the teenagers. The ABC pattern will help us to maintain a good learning atmosphere. With this knowledge we should be able to supply the appropriate education to the target group. But it is not as easy as it sounds, unfortunately, since we cannot prepare a sample lesson which would be applicable everywhere. For every lesson, the environment, the participants and their expectations change; or, social tensions arise suddenly among individual participants. One must respond to these changes and this often requires great intuition from the group leader.

With the new structure of the SSL and the Swiss Snow Academy, we have been trying in Switzerland to create framework conditions, which enhance a positive learning atmosphere for teenagers. In the SSA there are certain skiing disciplines listed in the main sections and these can be worked out in any order. The children receive an individual learning biography focussed on their specific needs. As soon as a discipline has been completed successfully, a star is put on the corresponding field. The card has many other further advantages.

- It is a key card, it allows the loading of the weekly pass for the respective ski region
- It has a number with which the child can register and benefit from special offers
- The ski schools have the possibility to communicate with the youngsters more actively.
- Within this membership the young people will be able to follow their learning progress and define new targets.

What is our objective with the SSA? We want to create a community.

The SSA should be a meeting point for like-minded people, who exchange views and have fun together. It should focus on skiing with friends. Group experience should be just as important as the achievement of the learning targets. The wish to have more say is considered, the young people contribute with their wishes and objectives. It is only one winter after the start of the SSA and we are convinced that this product has the potential for growth. We are absolutely convinced that the community will grow.