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### *Chapter 3*

# **THE LONG STRUGGLE TO TURN AROUND AN INHUMANE, CORRUPT, PARAMILITARY SCHOOL SPECIALIZED FOR STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL DIFFICULTIES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This case study examines a series of events that took place in West Germany at a specialized school for students with emotional and social needs. It focuses on a struggle lasting several years that was waged in this school and its environment to put an end to an inhumane, corrupt, paramilitary leadership, school culture and pedagogy. Some one thousand pages of text as well as media contributions from both TV and radio were evaluated and supplemented with interviews for the study. Analysis of these materials reveals the tight linkage between professional incompetence, human character deficits, intrigues, power struggles and micropolitical processes in a school and among the authorities supervising it. Additionally, it illustrates the shortcoming in German education law, which makes scant provision for firing professionally unqualified individuals from school administrative positions. Further, the detailed change strategies deployed are distilled into an effective overall change strategy that relies on highly principled and action-oriented individuals inside the school working together with the same type of individual outside the school. Ultimately, after some 5 ½ years, it succeeded in removing the principal from office thus clearing the way for long-overdue pedagogical reforms. The implications of these findings are relevant to pre-service teacher training, leadership preparation programs, continuing professional development as well as potential revision of administrative procedures relating to the appointment and removal of school administrators.

**Keywords:** abuse of teachers and students by principal, school micropolitics, paramilitary school culture, workplace aggression, specialized school for students with emotional and social needs, school turnaround

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This case study focuses on a specialized school for students with emotional and social needs in which a confrontational, paramilitary, and heartless pedagogy was practiced, coupled with a school leadership model in which the principal, who treated the school as if it was her fiefdom, by dispensing privileges bought the loyalty of a circle of teachers and social educators. Attempts at reform from inside the school by a new vice-principal initially seemed doomed to failure because the responsible school supervisory agencies were not effective in making the necessary changes. Nevertheless, a network of individuals formed within and outside the school whose members, despite all resistance and difficulties, continually worked for the elimination of the abuses and ultimately helped set the stage for what would be a pedagogical fresh start.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD, PROCEDURES AND GOAL

An objective of this case study (see Bassey, 1999; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Flyvberg, 2011; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009) is the critical reappraisal of approximately one thousand pages of raw documentation dealing with the “Schwarzegg” case.<sup>2</sup> These consist of institutional documents and diverse other material, some of it leaked to newspaper editors, radio and TV stations, that came into circulation dynamically in the course of the events were subjected to a qualitative content analysis (Patton, 2002), specifically:

Reports by the vice-principal and by other teachers sent to the school district superintendent and higher school supervisory agencies, performance evaluations by the school’s principal and responses contradicting these performance reports, disciplinary write-ups, criminal complaints against the principal, materials documenting several disciplinary proceedings against the principal, materials concerning a petition to the state parliament to force the school authorities with a history of covering up the problems to take action, an advisory opinion rendered by external inspectors, letters from parents, emails from managers of children’s homes and youth protective services, meeting protocols of the governmental education authority’s political committees, newspaper articles, letters to the editor, transcripts of TV broadcasts, etc.<sup>3</sup>

Supplementary personal and telephone interviews to better grasp details, clear up open questions and double-check details in the texts were conducted with students, parents, teachers, politicians and journalists who campaigned for reforms at the subject school during the timeframe under study.

Another goal of this case study is to reflect on these happening against a background of scientific knowledge and to answer the question of what can be learned from this case for future application. These individual research questions are also to be answered: What sort of pedagogy was practiced in this school? How was the collaboration with parents and network partners configured? What leadership style did the principal practice? What transpired on the

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<sup>1</sup> All individual and place names have been changed.

<sup>2</sup> The material originated between 2006-2011. The events play out in a rural region of West Germany. Part of this material was published in my book “Eros, Herrschaft, Missbrauch” (Broecher, 2011; pp. 156-328), using the same cover names.

<sup>3</sup> To preserve anonymity here, citations from searchable sources pertaining to media reports are omitted.

faculty level? How did the school supervisory authority responsible for the quality of the school's pedagogy conduct itself? How did the county commissioner responsible for public school operations conduct itself? What were the special challenges and discrete steps involved in ending the abuse at this school and throwing the switch for a new start?

The entirety of the material was first organized chronologically and then filtered several times according to core themes that are illustrated with citations in the "Findings" section. In doing so, stress was put on showing as many varied personal perspectives as possible.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1. Educating Students with Emotional and Social Needs**

In this context, a caring teacher-student relationship (e.g., Cefai, 2013; Cooper, 2011) is recognized as being helpful and effective if it responds with sensitivity to the developmental needs of the students (e.g., Doyle, 2003), if it tunes into the students' life experiences and learning preferences (e.g., Broecher, 2000, 2015 a; O'Connor et al., 2011) and if it works with the students' educational experiences and reflections on their placement (e.g., Davies, 2006; Polat and Farrell, 2002). It thus forms the backdrop for the abovementioned first research question. Teaching social skills and emotional literacy (e.g., Kavale, Mathur, and Mostert 2004) and teaching self-regulation (e.g., Mowat, 2010) are additional action approaches with potential for success.

In didactic terms, the following is recognized as being effective: employing variable and differentiated learning methods (e.g., Broecher, 2015 b; Kern et al., 2001; Popp et al., 2011), reducing the level of task difficulty and the task duration in order to decrease escape-motivated problem behavior (e.g., Lee, Sugai, and Horner, 1999; Moore, Anderson, and Kumar, 2005), offering opportunities to respond (e.g., Haydon et al., 2012), offering choices (e.g., Shogren et al., 2004) and giving behavior-specific praise (e.g., Marchant, and Anderson, 2012). All pedagogical and didactic strategies must be carefully tailored to the specific context of a learning group (Conroy, Alter, and Sutherland, 2014).

Research shows that teachers who lack occupational competence for this challenging work domain and have deficits in perceived self-efficacy tend to resort more readily to aggressive and violent behavior toward students with behavioral difficulties (Khoury-Kassabri, 2012). The literature also suggests that teachers' violent behavior is influenced by the school climate and by the ideology of student control (Elbedour et al., 1997). For instance, there is discussion in the literature of the phenomenon of the "master narrative of the tough principal" (Zirkel et al., 2011), in which children with emotional and social needs are construed in a certain way that allows teachers and members of the public to consider abusive behavior as an appropriate way of improving their behavior (*ibid.*). In such contexts especially, frequent and drastic suspensions (e.g., Partington, 2001) with their negative consequences – such as alienation from the school – are simply accepted as collateral damage (see also Herz, 2012).

### 3.2. School Climate and School Culture

School climate research is a further theoretical reference point for this case study. Here we concern ourselves with how school life is experienced and with the goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures of a school, etc. (e.g., Thapa et al., 2013). A destructive school climate leads to stress accumulation on the part of at-risk students and may elicit violent student behavior. Should it reach the point of degrading put-downs of students, the worst-case result can be tragic rampage shootings (e.g., Henry, 2009; Levin and Madfis, 2009; Steffgen, Recchia, and Viechtbauer, 2013). Perceived social support, on the other hand, is actually a protective factor against the bringing of a weapon to school. Besides parental support, it is especially the social support received by the individual student from teachers and the school that can also boost everyone's security at the school (Brank et al., 2007; Fleschler Peskin et al., 2009; Malecki and Demaray, 2003).

Looked at from the standpoint of the school's overall culture, a key factor in school leadership is enabling the students' voices (Mitra, Serriere, and Stoicovy, 2012). Core values of student voice work include communication as dialogue, participation and democratic inclusivity as well as the recognition that power relations are unequal and problematic (Robinson and Taylor, 2007). This includes acknowledging the students as experts in their own learning (Busher, 2012; Groom and Rose, 2006) and encouraging student involvement in service evaluation and decision making (Hartas and Lindsay, 2011). Student participation is connected with a sense of belonging, engagement and school identification (Jones, 2011). In the case of students with emotional and social needs, if these efforts are to achieve success they must go hand in hand to a special degree with high quality relationships and consistent, positive communications (Sellman, 2009). Leaders taking on this role is not only important for school transformation (Beattie, 2012) and school improvement (Scanlon, 2012) but also for learning democracy and citizenship (Davies et al., 2009) and increasing social justice (Broecher, 2014 a; Gaetane, Normore, and Brooks, 2009; Kose, 2009; Mansfield, 2014), particularly in the domain of educating students with emotional and social needs. Altogether, this demands an ethical approach to leadership, the principal's commitment to that particular school, respect for the students and their families and focus on providing a breadth of learning experiences (Lance, 2010).

It also calls for the meaningful linking of intervention at school, interprofessional work and parental work (Duchnowski and Kutash, 2009). Well-developed interprofessional work (e.g., Eber and Keenan, 2004; Fries et al., 2012; O'Connor, 2013) and after-school programs that offer stability and direction and, at the same time, relevant learning opportunities tailored to students with emotional and social difficulties are important pillars of a school culture if it is to effectively support the teachers' classroom work. Involving the parents in all school-related issues (e.g., Ogden, 2013; Sheldon and Epstein, 2002) when it comes to emotional, social and behavioral difficulties counts in the literature as a key element of an effective pedagogy and school culture. One of the school principal's roles is fostering parent engagement with the school (Barr and Saltmarsh, 2014), with the goal of linking home-school partnerships and behavior support and including parents when making educational decisions (Muscott et al., 2008; Park, Alber-Morgan, and Fleming, 2011; Turnbull et al., 2010). Good home-school relationships not only permit gaining greater insight into family perspectives, worries and hardships (Fox et al., 2002; Worcester et al., 2008), they also increase student

academic success (e.g., Tran, 2014), especially when it comes to cultural and linguistic diversity and social marginalization (e.g., Linse, 2011). On the other hand, home-school dissonance significantly predicted both amotivation and disruptive classroom behavior (Brown-Wright et al., 2013). Segregated schooling in self-contained classrooms, which was in fact the case in the school under discussion here, impairs opportunities for social communication and participation by students (Panacek and Dunlap, 2003). Active involvement by the larger school community (e.g., Klein, 2000) in the life of the school therefore assumes that much more significance.

### 3.3. School Leadership

In educating students with emotional and social difficulties, support from colleagues and a dedicated principal (e.g., Gamman, 2003; Gardiner and Enomoto, 2006), for instance, through joint supervision or reflection and the development of school-wide strategies, are indispensable for the individual teacher. Effective principals bring out the best in their teachers (Blase and Kirby, 2009), encourage collaboration, empowerment, and the building of learning communities (Blase and Blase, 2004) and can be transformational leaders in promoting organizational change, new visions and new possibilities (Sarros, Cooper, and Santora, 2008; Tucker and Russell, 2004) and in transforming their school into a learning organization (Bass, 2000; Schein, 2010; Senge, 2006).

Effective principals help teachers reflect on their own practices (e.g., Schoen, 1983) and increase the latter's self-awareness and resilience (e.g., Howard and Johnson, 2004; Richardson and Shupe, 2003; Skovolt and Trotter-Mathison, 2011). They provide coaching and performance feedback (e.g., Lane et al., 2014), reinforce the individual teacher's professionalism and optimize the application of available evidence-based knowledge (Anderson-DeMello and Hendrickson, 2014). Nevertheless, even principals can be overtaxed professionally by their assignment or may even act out psychopathological personality aspects in an extreme work environment, such as the segregated, specialized EBD school examined here. It may also come to a combination of both factors. For analyzing such anomalies a literature that deals with teacher mistreatment by their principals can be cited (e.g., Blase and Blase, 2002, 2003; Blase, Blase, and Du, 2008; Schnall 2009). The spectrum of destructive behavior stretches from lack of support, destructive criticism, teacher isolation, withholding of resources, denying of approval, opportunities or credit, to spying, sabotaging, and lying, as well as explosive and obnoxious behavior. This type of leadership behavior can lead to massive emotional distress and serious health problems for the affected teachers (see Schnall 2009, pp. 335-380).

Another research literature that can be cited as relevant to the analysis of destructive school cultures is the one dealing with workplace violence and aggression in a more general sense. It differentiates between verbal or physical, direct or indirect, and active or passive forms of aggression or violence (Baron and Neuman, 1996; Neuman and Baron, 1998). Other research studies address emotional abuse in the workplace (Keashley, 1998, 2001), bullying cultures in paramilitary organizations (Archer, 1999) or mobbing and psychological terror in the workplace (Leymann, 1990). In this regard, the aggression can stem either from leaders or colleagues. Since, in the Schwarzegg case, the themes of micropolitics and power play a material role, theories and research related to these phenomena must be brought in as well.

Unique laws apply in the school context because of the peculiar structures that prevail here (e.g., Ball, 2012; Blase, 1995; Lindle, 1994; Samier and Schmidt, 2010). Power in a school system that is tied into leadership positions and teaching posts can, as the Schwarzegg case demonstrates, produce self-interested behavior and a self-centered economy of privilege (DeCelles et al., 2012).

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1. The School's Pedagogy

From a report to the district superintendent Hundstorfer by the vice-principal Konecny newly arrived at Schwarzegg School: "A student in Frau Brandl's class for weeks has been banished to a basement passage where he lies on a bench and, when he emerges, is baited as 'basement boy' and chased back down. He is excluded from class... A female teacher without a degree in special education is perceived by the principal as optimally prepared for teaching in the EBD field for no other reason than she had prior experience in dog training. The principal's leadership philosophy derives from the barn yard, i.e., you constantly had to herd cattle in the right direction... Should a student already put on his cap in the hallway, he is guilty of a severe offense. It also creates a problem for me because, in the principal's view, I am helping the boy subvert the school's regulations. 'Loud and clear' is the catchword that is heard most frequently at Schwarzegg, combined with the nerve-racking decibels of referee's whistles, even in closed rooms. Very painful for the ears! The principal places the sports facility off limits for me and my students. One of the boys in a fit of anger had thrown a piece of sports equipment into a corner. I mentioned this during a phone call with the responsible youth worker. The rectress, having overheard this, decided that the students' safety was not properly safeguarded in my sports class. Once again I tried to convince her that my students need to move more, that I can occasionally take them outside to play soccer maybe on a nearby sports ground at the end of a long morning of classes. She rejects this categorically. The students are to stay in their seats for six hours and work..."

Outside classroom 1/2 squatted a child that repeatedly hit a trash can with some kind of object. It was cold and a light rain was falling. The child's clothes were thin; he was barefoot and was left outside for nearly four class periods. A huge provocation for the rectress was that two students with concurrent learning problems were 'foisted on us in really shameless fashion.' She does not want to have to offer individualized instruction ('here we don't fry special order sausages') and told me she intended to 'push back' these students and she expected 'appropriate assistance' in this from me the classroom teacher. We could do much better by these children if we could teach them individually using simplified learning materials. However, this precisely is what the principal forbids and she instead specifies the only textbooks that we are allowed to use for each subject and each grade level. She makes repeated control visits during class time to see if I, in fact, follow these precepts. Frau Rinkel was told by principal Grese to test Fernando, one of these students, in order to certify him as possessing a low I.Q. According to Fernando, he was treated in an extremely unfriendly manner by Frau Rinkel on the occasion. As he told me resignedly, it kept him from demonstrating what he really was capable of doing..."

Frau Brandl, the former acting vice-principal, and the principal daily burst into my class and interrupt my pedagogical work by disciplining my students in front of me. First, the students have to stand up to greet the teacher or principal entering. But this turns into a time-consuming procedure every time because this boy still has a hand in his pocket or is touching his chin or that boy is leaning on his table. The boys are screamed at until at last they are all standing ramrod straight. At that point, the reprimands or purely preventive hectoring start... they give the students long writing assignments. The next day, they return to collect what they ordered; again, we go through the drill of being made to stand up and be disciplined. When it turns out that nothing has been written for the most part now they double the writing workload, quadruple it, and so on; the prospect of parent-teacher conferences is raised and the boys are threatened with still 'other measures'... Frau Brandl's presence comes across as cold and mechanical. She looks into the room with empty eyes. Rectress Grese, on the other hand, comes on as domineering, demanding, loud and space-filling. These invasions of our classroom life produce anxieties and aggressions in the students. When the ladies finally (!) have left again, I start my crisis management...

Just now Grese has grabbed one of my students, all of twelve years old, because he has said something or other about 'Hitler.' In all seriousness, she accuses the completely disoriented child of right-wing tendencies. If she hears anything like it again, she announces by shouting to my whole class, she's going to bring in State Security so that the boy's family once and for all 'is read the riot act.' An official with State Security comes to the school every few weeks to 'interrogate' the students... Frau Brandl very energetically announced in the teacher lounge that she would report her student Anita to the police. Some colleagues immediately voiced their approval, saying they also had students that be reported simultaneously with her...

Colleague Brandl sent her student Nino to the discipline room, where the Schwarzegg School runs the 'Training Room Program' (see Broecher, 2014 b) and where the boy had to stand on a pink blotter paper for forty minutes and I, as teacher in charge, had to monitor him. When Frau Brandl left the room, I told Nino to sit down and we talked about what brought him to Schwarzegg, his problematic school career and his family difficulties. At the end he said to me: 'No one in this school ever had a talk like that with me. I don't think that people are helped here. For most of them it just gets even worse here.'...

Frau Krekow came into my classroom during math class in connection with an early-morning student conflict regarding the taxi. She made all students rise from their seats the Schwarzegg way. My student Fernando, age eleven, however, failed to stand up straight and leaned a hand on the table. Frau Krekow demanded that he stand up straight. When he took his hand off the table, she insisted that he also straighten his legs. She asked the boy in an irritated tone of voice if he was 'at least sixty percent severely handicapped.' If so, he could then remain standing lopsided. The boy looked down, ashamed, and did not move. Frau Krekow screamed at him: 'So, because you had to be so stupid about it, you can just keep standing in your place for an hour.' Frau Krekow left. Since Fernando also had to work in his math assignment book, I told him to sit down. About twenty minutes later, Krekow came back in, saw that Fernando was sitting and said: 'Hey, you're not standing any more. Just for that you'll spend the fifth and sixth period downstairs with me. We're going to practice standing there.'...

The students do not get to choose their interest-related work collectives in Schwarzegg; instead they are placed in them by the principal. There is no such thing as pedagogical

reflection at Schwarzegg. I have never yet experienced a student-related case counseling conference... It is strongly recommended that the diagnostic area in the Schwarzegg faculty be professionalized. Instead what is heard is colleagues boasting of already being finished by 11:15 with the diagnostic tests in schools where students with EBD have been reported when all they actually did was to test for intelligence only.”

Subsequently, the vice-principal reports directly to the higher school supervisory authority, circumventing the district superintendent who failed to act. The document also makes its way through unofficial channels to the state superintendent, the highest governmental education authority: “According to a female classmate, a Turkish student was deliberately provoked by Frau Grese and Frau Brandl, who cornered him physically at his desk over homework he had not done. They carried on to the point where he reacted defensively by raising his arm to protect himself. This became the pretext for reporting him to the police for ‘attempted battery’ before ultimately expelling him from the school. Now the boy has to be examined by a public health doctor and undergo psychiatric treatment. He is expected to be out of school for at least four to six months. Principal Grese came to the classroom expressly for the purpose of being able to testify to this ‘physical attack’ on the teacher and to ‘eliminate’ the student as it is called here. Approximately 25 percent of Schwarzegg students are continuously moved out in this way and left to their own devices. These boys become more and more alienated toward school life. The district superintendent plays along and signs off without raising any objections. This practice is also criticized severely by the responsible youth authorities – rightfully so. ‘I’m going to blow them away one of these days,’ a fifteen year old student from Brandl’s class who felt he was being harassed told me... That I supposedly permanently overtax students with difficult subject matter considerably aggravates the behavioral problematic. I completed three appropriate, reasoned applications for supplementary grants to fund learning priorities and submitted them to the principal after consulting with the parents, who were in agreement. Rectress Grese hurled a double ‘denied’ back at me, refusing to pass the applications on to the office of the superintendent. She said she would issue an official reprimand to me should I take it upon myself to go around her and send the applications to Herr Hundstorfer... At Schwarzegg there is no student involvement, contrary to the provisions in the education act. In my class, we did elect class spokespersons and alternates, but none of the other classes did.”

Poschner, a colleague, writes: “My student Sven was excluded from project week by rectress Grese for being an accessory to breaking the non-smoking edict. This does not mean he himself was caught smoking, rather that he was standing near another student who allegedly was smoking. At Schwarzegg, the rule is that any student standing in the immediate vicinity of a student supposedly smoking is liable whenever a cigarette is lit up... These thugs – Grese, Brandl, Rinkel, Klaff and Ljubic at the time – who tried systematically in the past to finish me off and to defame me were the ones who attacked me continuously. This cold, heartless pedagogy whose only goal is to keep the students down and to break them made for some really bad times! I will never forget Brandl’s quote to the effect that ‘given this sort of student body,’ she regarded her pay as a scum allowance!”

Excerpt from the outside inspector’s report: “The area of individual remediation support still requires a comprehensive collegial reworking. Remediation diagnostic processes in the area of teaching subjects and teaching methods that facilitate internal differentiation as well as learning at different levels... are not yet grounded in an overall concept of lesson design and do not flow into individual remediation planning... and also were not observed in the

inspected class sequences... Only a small portion of the teaching staff structures classes in an action oriented manner, stimulates the student body to considerable dynamism in exploring own approaches to problem solving and accordingly let their approach reflect efficacy. Helping to self-help and the use of helper systems were not observed in the class sequences inspected... Promotion of problem-related thinking/exploratory learning as well as transmission of learning, search and solution strategies and reflection on the suitability of own ways of proceeding were not observable or not pursued adequately in the inspected class sequences...

The school's program lacks development goals and a work program derived from them therefore it cannot serve as an action matrix for the school community. No school social work of the standard kind takes place. There is no after-school program. There are no regular self-evaluations of the efficacy of school program work. No evidence of a school development program with target dates was found. Formal steering structures with participation by parental authorities and students do not exist... Students voice great dissatisfaction when interviewed. They feel their problems and wishes are not taken seriously by most of the teaching staff and the principal and they feel abandoned. They expressed this during student interviews as follows: 'Teachers and principal can do with us what they want! There are rules and regulations for everything. The least little thing gets punished'... Parental authorities and students during interviews expressed the wish to have activity-oriented instruction at differentiated levels. Moreover, they desire more opportunities for structuring school life and for becoming involved, as well as field trips to learning locations outside school.

## **4.2. School-Home Relationships and Interprofessional Work**

The vice-principal writes to the district superintendent, and, after a lag, to the higher school authorities, as well as the state superintendent because the district superintendent fails to act: "The principal systematically stymies the formation of all participatory organs prescribed by law such as the school parent-teacher association, student council, and school conference. This results in deliberately depriving students and parents of opportunities for participation... The principal compels the teachers to declare a lack of quorum during parents' night. By not declaring a lack of quorum, despite the few parents in attendance, I had parent-teacher association representatives elected for my class in order to keep the door open to parental participation in the school. When I stood in front of the faculty room with my two elected parent representatives to present them to the principal, she pretended not to understand... Although in the school program and the web site they extol cooperation with providers outside the school, de facto the principal blocks any form of collaboration with children's homes and youth welfare services. She repeatedly intones that she is not required to cooperate in this respect. Also, she had 'no desire to entertain their children at Schwarzegg.' This 'entertaining' that is often bruted about and parroted by many of the teachers stands for the socio-pedagogic or student-oriented teaching that is taboo at Schwarzegg and which Dr. Wieshaider demands for his institutionalized children, some of whom are traumatized. So, instead of conducting a well-founded case consultation, we are forced to listen to the destructive commentary by principal Grese on the subject of Dr. Wieshaider's 'outrageous demands'... Principal Grese uses these occasions to fortify her

position vis a vis the teaching staff: *See how I protect you from all these unconscionable outside demands.*”

The former school secretary said: “When one entered the faculty room in the morning around 7:30 or 7:45, there sat our colleagues Brandl, Rinkel and Parfenowa shoveling in and chewing their Muesli cereal. Although the school workday had already officially begun, the three resented it when a mother or a child care worker asked for them on the faculty room telephone. The ladies lied for each other on the phone, just so that the colleague being asked for could continue eating her breakfast in peace.”

Dr. Wieshaider, head of a children’s home, said: “In my experience, the Schwarzegg School is highly aggression-charged, because of the pedagogy and the prevailing leadership style. When approaching the school, it always feels like one is about to get backstabbed.”

From the outside inspector’s report: “The parents did not feel accepted by the majority of teachers and especially not by the principal and are left to handle problems on their own. Only some teachers maintained intensive contacts with the parental home; they would also offer individual help and make suggestions. The majority of teachers by contrast would only threaten sanctions. The parents were unanimous in saying ‘we don’t get any real help.’ Like the students, the parents see an excess of rules that are applied too rigidly, measures taken that do not differentiate student needs, and pedagogically unfathomable and overly drastic methods (screaming, use of police whistles, forced walks home of 10-15 km, rote copying of texts, and repeatedly summoning the police.) They say: ‘I’m putting my child in a jail and not a school that after all is supposed to help my child. Our children aren’t dangerous criminals.’ The parents see opportunities for improvement if able to participate in parent-teacher conference, by being involved more in school life and mutual promotion of parenting work, by being able to look for places of learning outside the school, as well as through an after-school program... The parents and students see an urgent need for action in the area of complaint handling. A quote from an interview with the parents: ‘Something has to be done here absolutely! We don’t say anything out of fear of retaliation.’ A quote from the student interviews: ‘They do with us what they want.’ The ability to complain either as a community of parents or as the student body is non-existent, since there are no participation forums or a school conference at Schwarzegg... Participation by the parents and student body in the school development process, in the school program work as well as taking an active part in school life are not ensured in any way. On the one hand, the state’s goals in this area are not implemented; on the other hand, the conception of the human being that forms the backdrop is not compatible with a remediation school supposedly focused on supporting emotional and social development.”

Konecny writes to the district superintendent after the inspectors have filed their final report, conveyed their findings to the school and announced a follow-up evaluation in six months:” The rectress proceeded the same way as in past year on the parent class representative evening; in other words, a determination was made that quorums were lacking in the parent groups and therefore no elections were held. The school parent representative session then once again did not take place, consequently a school conference could not be convened.”

### 4.3. The Principal's Leadership Style

The vice-principal writes to the district superintendent and reports how he was received by the principal: "As soon as you introduced me as the new vice-principal of Schwarzegg and after you voiced the thought that directing the school is a team effort and then left the room, the principal said in the presence of the three teacher's council members: 'And now you can forget everything Herr Hundstorfer said, because that's not how we run things here. I'm the queen here, I hold all the cards, and all that's left for you at most is to play Prince Philip'... Two hours out of my scant thirty hours are spent on administrative activities. I'm charged with coordinating the student taxi transport – surely a typical duty for a vice-principal – and to this is added servicing the school's kitchen (!?). This activity involves culling expired food from the refrigerator and keeping up the stock of cleaning materials and other kitchen items... I do not have an appropriate office work station. I have neither a telephone nor an Internet connection... The principal holds that I can do the telephoning related to student transport from the administrative office. She takes no initiative to bring me up to speed on any leadership or administrative subject. Actually, I was invited to an 'intensive briefing' as she called it; however, the content was limited to handing me twelve pages on which all conceivable special rules applicable at Schwarzegg were listed in small type. At no time was I shown a perspective on how I could prove myself as the school's second in command... Stepping into the faculty room, I introduced myself to my new colleagues by shaking hands with each of them. The principal did not think it necessary to introduce me officially since everyone was sitting around the table... that there was no room in the faculty lounge for me with a table of my own. The principal assigned me to sit in the interior of the horseshoe of tables. I would have to wait until something became available. Trainee teacher Piontek, who came on board the same time as I, however, was assigned a seat with table...

Given these conditions, will I be able to prove myself as a school leader and successfully complete my probation? In the end, will I not be measured against things that I can't fulfill because of the standards set by principal Grese?... I told the rectress that I would hope to get an appropriate seat with table in the faculty room... Aside from it being highly impractical to have to put everything on the floor, on top of my suitcase, it also kept me from symbolically finding my place among the faculty; in effect, I feel as if no spot has been designated for me. Wouldn't it be possible to put the missing table in the oval? Principal Grese answered sternly that it was out of the question... On my inquiring if I could integrate myself into the Schwarzegg school's management, principal Grese answered with an emphatic 'no'... I told her I found the school kitchen scarcely fitting as an area of responsibility... a bit more in the way of management or administrative tasks, also from the standpoint of the number of hours, could easily be added – setting aside two regular class periods for management and administrative tasks was less than I had expected... I said that 'although the school supervisory authorities favor school management by team, you are deviating from this in a totally blatant manner.' Principal Grese said: 'That's right.' Hadn't she 'made herself clear during our last discussion', she asked me curtly...

The education act nowhere provided any justification for sidetracking an assistant principal in this manner, I replied... I continued with 'I wonder about the reason,' to which principal Grese replied: 'You are the only one here not chosen by me personally.' Couldn't she then see this as an opportunity to work with a colleague who came from outside? Did not the flexibility and openness of integrating new people and ideas count for more? Upon which

principal Grese said: ‘This school is known far and wide as one of the most innovative’... I said I expected her to share the school management tasks with me in appropriate fashion. I would also appreciate being evaluated fairly at the end of my probation. She cut off the conversation then and there.”

Vice-principal Konecny makes further notes concerning the principal’s conduct and sends these to the district superintendent: “The principal’s vivid, graphic language pervades the school space. Constant snappy remarks, are rife; for instance, that a student ‘still doesn’t get it,’ that a certain female colleague had ‘stemmed’ triple if not quadruple her load. She would not hesitate ‘to take apart each and every one.’ When it comes to pointing out that there is an urgency to some matters, for Frau Grese it’s always ‘5 minutes before noon’... The principal’s language often slides into obscenities and references to fecal matter. All teachers must regularly line up outside in the school yard for collective disciplining. If silence does not prevail immediately, she makes use of the referee’s whistle. Teachers and students both must stand at attention in formation while they are screamed at by the rectress, for instance, because ‘some ass’ had dirtied a toilet. If the miscreants in question do not immediately speak up, it must be because they are ‘scared shitless.’ In briefing the colleagues on the results of the four-hour principal’s meeting on the school inspections, it was ‘crap as expected’ and ‘was meaningless.’ On the window over the principals’ office door dangles a postcard with the legend ‘Butt stupid fart.’ On the conference table in the principal’s office in a special frame stands the ‘the golden shit end of the stick’; on some days, just for a change, ‘the golden ass card.’ She comes into my classroom and yells at my students that ‘someone must have crapped in your brains’... There is always someone in the school sphere who ‘has a screw loose.’ She projects herself as a principal whose top priority is to get the students ‘working.’ Invariably, at the end of her harangues, she always puts down the opposing side as either ‘beating its head on a brick wall’ or ‘biting the dust.’ Wherever she sits, she decorates the spot with snappy sayings on postcards: ‘Here everyone can do as I say.’ At her desk in the faculty room stands a mini-flip chart on which she has tacked a postcard with a magnet. The card shows a scraggy man in old fashioned athletic gear crawling on all four and on whose back triumphantly rides a scantily clad woman showing off all her voluptuousness – hefty thighs, bulging breasts and broad behind – while looking jauntily at the viewer...

Surrounded by such symbolism, and always with this gross riding scene on display, principal Grese – known as both an equestrienne and even competition judge in equestrian sports – conducts her meetings and official discussions. All around her stand a lot of odds and ends, cups decorated with shrill sayings and cartoons, and colorful junk that she surrounds herself with everywhere and, time and again, postcards with scurrilous slogans. And on the reverse of the mini-flipchart in the faculty lounge, i.e., the side facing the faculty, there sticks a card with the saying ‘Everyone has a right to my opinion’ which is permanently visible to everyone sitting at the horseshoe of tables... The rectress rounds out these stagings every day with a coffee cup, grasped by fingers with colorfully lacquered nails, on which is printed ‘Same shit every day’. She mostly wears tight black leather pants and skintight tees with blaring imprints like ‘Grese play’ or ‘hard to educate’ over prominent breasts.

‘They are lobbing in students here from all sides. I’m not going to put up with it!’ she rants. She conceives of the school as wagons drawn up in a circle as protection against a hostile environment. ‘Getting rid of students under paragraph x is always our last trump card,’ she says, determined to give combat... Her loud and domineering speech is assiduously parroted by the teachers in the inner circle of power: ‘I’ve had it with them,’ ‘I’m going to

come down hard on that bunch'; 'those guys just don't get it,' 'institutionalization is all that's left or better yet straight to jail with them,' 'suspend compulsory education, that's all I have to say,' and 'I'm going to kick him out soon'... The principal categorically rejected my initiative to set up the legally prescribed steering committee in order to foster participation by the faculty in the school's development... The external school inspection in the view of rectress Grese is 'nothing but nonsense' and this disparaging attitude is forced on the faculty in conferences where only one person, namely the principal, has the word. In this atmosphere, the teachers and social pedagogues don't dare to express their own thoughts...

During the few pedagogical conferences that I led in the presence of the principal and at the behest of the district superintendent, it became clear that the principal blocked anything involving change processes. She peevishly discounted all proposals that I collected regarding the 'conceptual development of the school's own disciplinary sphere,' after you assigned me to work on and moderate a stronger special education variant of this method. After all, from the beginning she had said that we only needed to apply the existing regulations systematically. The same happened with the second main topic: the school program. While I as conference moderator argued for picking out other core themes from the school inspection area and to discuss them constructively, the principal sat there with a sullen face making deprecating remarks and choked off every new idea. Colleagues Rinkel and Parfenowa seemed to play reinforcing roles in this by repeatedly expressing their disdain for 'all my meaningless chatter'... The classes of the coterie of teachers very closely allied with the principal have between 80 to 100% or sometimes triple the staffing and this privileged group enjoys generous work relief in their classes that have been reduced in size through long-term suspensions. This sheds light on why some teachers walk around the administrative area with their coffee cups when they really should be in their classes, and why they are on the phone or write reports during class time. The annual average of dual staffing for my class was on the order of five percent of the class periods... The principal regrets that 'Schwarzegg is not part of the law enforcement system.'"

Here follow notes by the school secretary: "The rectress arranged a 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party for the custodian. The oldest students carried him on an armchair covered in gold paper into the gym. Earlier, some teachers had put a golden crown on his head. Then the younger students sang some songs and paraded by him with colorful congratulatory banners past, handing him medals, badges, lapel pins and scrolls. Each student had to bow before the custodian and his wife sitting next to him and give him a rose. Hundreds of flowers were put in big vases standing next to the throne and then several sumptuous breakfast baskets with food stuffs were handed over. This was after the school body first had to wait a long time for the event to start and was silenced for it to begin with a police whistle. The program went on for almost an hour."

Vice-principal Konecny writes: "I walked over to the principal and asked her to stop the use of loud whistles in the small gym immediately for reasons of protecting hearing health. She gave me an astonished look, said nothing. Because I knew I would be squelched in the teacher conference if I raised the subject there, I copied a flyer about noise protection with information on possible hearing damage caused by excessive noise in closed spaces or close to the ear and including relevant decibel data for my colleagues, quite a few of whom also daily worked with the police whistle. I placed this sheet in my colleagues' as well as the principal's mailboxes. For that I received an official reprimand; I had no business putting anything in those boxes."

The vice-principal responds to the performance evaluation at the end of his probationary period: “The principal’s evaluation is inaccurate. She writes: ‘Herr Konecny is familiar in theory with many facets of special education... calls himself an expert in his field of studies and endeavors to become versed in the basic findings of modern didactics in his field... is versed in theoretically highly promising approaches... his classroom relationship with the students is for the most part impersonal... takes his responsibilities for giving advice very seriously... follows instructions in carrying out his routine responsibilities... Herr Konecny’s work habits and execution were generally regarded as exceptional... he understood his dual role... he showed himself to be a demanding and censorious staff member, etc.’

This report fails to mention that I always pursued my assigned tasks dependably and conscientiously, that I was at all times super-punctual in school, that I never once took off without confirming with the principal that everything had been taken care of for the day. This report disregards that I worked in engaged fashion with my class, continually was in contact with the parents or social workers in context, in order to help my students achieve... My support plans and instructional plans are prepared carefully. The same holds true for the conferences, as observed by the superintendent and the principal... The problem is that this principal did not want me in the school and the principal’s will is the pivot on which this school’s culture turns. Frau Grese wanted this position to be occupied by her close friend and colleague, namely Frau Brandl, and in fact conveyed this to me during our initial conference in the school... You are well aware that I applied in this county for family-related reasons... The principal did not personally hand me this performance evaluation, only later did I receive it from the hand of superintendent Herr Hundstorfer. Hence the principal did not discuss this performance evaluation with me and did not provide me with an opportunity for my input. By proceeding in this fashion, she flouted the legal requirements. I had already asked the principal early on to share her performance criteria with me, because from the very start she had telegraphed a negative view of my probationary period. In the middle of the school year she announced to me that I was quite right in suspecting that she could only give me an adverse performance report. Once again, I asked for her evaluation criteria and the points that she viewed as critical. She left me in the dark and ended the conversation.”

Only due to the county commissioner’s intervention did the vice-principal pass his probationary period. The responsible district superintendent Hundstorfer was prepared to let the new vice-principal fail, but had to reverse course under pressure from the county commissioner, revise his official opinion and question the principal’s negative performance evaluation in his text. At the latest by this time it was clear to vice-principal Konecny that superintendent Hundstorfer would neither help him in particular nor the school in general. The vice-principal again wrote to the superintendent:

“Already during our last conversation you predicted that rectress Grese would not cease in her efforts to remove me from the Schwarzegg school... that she was a past master at enmeshing someone in conflict, at twisting her own statements, positioning certain colleagues in opposition to me in order to finally force my transfer on grounds that I was ‘disrupting the peace of the school.’ I took this to be a well-intentioned warning on your part and hence carried out my duties conscientiously, but I must tell you this: I went into this school year too optimistically... At the start of the school year, the principal Grese came into the faculty room with an outline of the new school classes, saying that we could all ‘just copy it.’ At no time was I brought into any deliberations concerning this new arrangement of the learning groups. I was assigned students from four different classes as well as newcomers from outside and

had to start all over from the beginning. The students that I had built up pedagogical relationships with during the past half year were simply moved into other classes.”

Indeed, Konecny had already indicated earlier that he would take the bull by the horns by applying for a position as rector. The following letter to department head Schwind and superintendent Hundstorfer was written in this context: “I would like to point out that I categorically object to having the principal prepare another performance report regarding my work. To this day, I have not been appropriately briefed on the school’s performance terms, hence have systematically been confronted with nothing but accomplished facts and completely shunted aside as vice-principal... rectress Grese totally ignores the regulation... embodied in the education law that the deputy is to be kept informed by the principal in such a manner that he would be able to take over leadership of the school in her absence... Add to this that I am so totally harnessed into a twenty-six hour classroom load that I would not be able to accomplish anything downstairs in the office... the typical duties of the vice-principal enumerated in the education law are assigned to other colleagues. Under my eyes, the principal negotiates financial accounts and related maneuvers with these colleagues. Almost everyone except me manages some funds. A female colleague told me that the principal weeks earlier had already emphatically announced in the faculty room that she would ‘really show me what’s what’ by completing this performance evaluation ‘in as negative a manner as possible.’ However, it states in the education law that anyone involved in the performance evaluation process may not bring personal bias to bear on it.”

A new performance evaluation of her vice-principal by rectress Grese as expected once again came in negative. Konecny replied once more with objections: “In connection with the end of my probation and evaluation by the rectress, I planned and led a total of three pedagogical conferences. This occurred against the backdrop of current education law provisions as well as the present state of knowledge on learning and change processes in organizations. The actual results were reflected in the collegial ‘as is’ status. Colleagues Frau Brandl or Frau Rinkel, who are very close to the principal, insisted repeatedly that the conferences led by me had no ‘discernible results.’ In fact, the results achieved reflected the faculty’s actual level of competence. In case of the third conference on the school’s portfolio, which is supposed to contain a multiplicity of concepts that must then be presented to the school inspectors, I was hindered outright by the principal and her followers.”

This is teacher Maggiarosa writing to the district superintendent: “Already when she was vice-principal, rectress Grese expressed herself to various colleagues in an extremely negative way about Herr Schaefer, that is, her predecessor, asserting that he was incompetent and got nothing done. This discredited Herr Schaefer, a very experienced and in my opinion a very competent principal, in the eyes of most colleagues so that many no longer took Herr Schaefer seriously by the end of his term in office... From the start, vice-principal Konecny was regarded very negatively by the principal and Frau Brandl. She would guarantee that Herr Konecny was not assigned any tasks ‘where he could do damage.’ From the start, she treated Herr Konecny in a degrading manner. As his ‘office,’ he was given a small corner in a multi-purpose room. The rectress instructed all staff members to conduct parent conferences in precisely this room. Collaboration was precluded from the start. If Herr Konecny spoke up during an official discussion, she interrupted him or deprecated what he said, so that it was out of bounds from the start. She frequently expressed herself very negatively about Herr Konecny and his work performance, making statements like ‘he simply can’t seem to get his act together’ almost daily. As I see it, from the very beginning Frau Grese’s behavior toward

Herr Konecny was an instance of orchestrated mobbing behavior that Herr Konecny could only put a stop to by giving up the position. I personally only had necessary work-related contact with principal Grese; I was always very careful around her and kept my distance so as not to offer her a target... So that I would not to be caught in her orbit, I never requested assignments...

The principal always linked praise for my work performance with a verbal swipe against Herr Konecny. If I telephoned parents, she would say: 'I'm just glad that *at least one* teacher from this class is taking care of it.' That said, I always experienced Herr Konecny as very correct and also engaged with regard to working cooperatively with parents. During the prior school year I was assigned to his class as subject teacher; our work together was always problem-free and appropriate to the situation... principal Grese often behaved in an inhumane manner. She massively intimidated the students, so that they were scared of her. In a work discussion, she recounted having threatened a student with taking him into the basement where she kept torture instruments in a special cabinet... She was also a misandrist. She had a habit of using sexist-obscene language and deportment to go with it. One time after you had visited the school and forgotten your glasses, the principals said: 'That's a typical pair of glasses for a man – nothing up top and sharp below.' On the day before a conference appointment with a man, she mentioned that she would wear a tight top 'so that he has something to look at.' She told a student whom she was upbraiding for something or other and who had put his hands in his pocket – probably out of embarrassment – that he must like to play 'pocket billiards.'...

A colleague told me that the principal was keeping a journal on Herr Konecny. Already shortly after he started work... the faculty council called a teacher meeting on short notice without the school leadership, i.e., also without Herr Konecny... The principal had asked the faculty council to collect 'lapses' by Herr Konecny in order to document how intolerable it was to have this colleague in the school. The colleagues started listing things like: let too many children into the toilets, did not react to a student tossing a schoolbag out the window. I replied that this sort of thing could happen to me, too, and I asked if this was not a case of Herr Konecny being made the scapegoat. The colleagues vehemently denied this. They decided to collectively confront Herr Konecny with his 'lapses.' To that end, he was to be put in 'the hot seat.' After the conversation, I called Herr Konecny and informed him of their intention... After summer vacation, the situation got worse for Herr Konecny. The principal had succeeded in stirring up almost all colleagues against him, even those who themselves had had run-ins with her. He was completely shunted aside; the talk about him when he was out of the room often was very negative. Some colleagues depersonalized Herr Konecny, so that he was, for example, called 'the suitcase' (he always had a suitcase with him for carrying his school materials)."

Young colleague Poschner, whose job at Schwarzegg was his first one, had come to the school about three years before Konecny. He wrote to district superintendent Hundstorfer: "Rectress Grese comes across as very intolerant in official discussions and in all faculty interactions. She has difficulty in accepting other opinions. She specifies how colleagues Krekow, Gelbke, and Poschner are to spend their breaks. 'You bet on the wrong horse,' was her reaction when I explained why I was loyal to Herr Schaefer, the previous principal. Colleagues Gelbke, Krekow, and Poschner are always be made to 'toe the line.' Discussions are not allowed during teacher conferences... My student Kevin apparently had offended rectress Grese. I apologized for Kevin's misbehavior and supposedly turned red as I did so. I

was thereupon accused of being too emotional and not professional enough for a special ed teacher. I pleaded Kevin's case and tried to explain to Grese the reasons for his behavior problems. Grese said: 'You really go way out on a limb for your students'...

I get an official order from Grese that I am no longer to train teacher interns due to my lack of loyalty to the Schwarzegg system. It is a calamity for me that rector Schaefer is retiring now and all leadership power transfers to Grese... Strong friendships on the part of the acting vice-principal Brandl with female colleagues ('Hi, sweets... kiss...'). In no way can a principal involved with her bosom friends on the faculty in such a theatrical manner be objective in problem situations. Discriminatory and sexist jokes on Grese's part are permanently par for the course at Schwarzegg. To top it all, Grese herself is also the equal opportunity officer! A typical Grese saying: 'The new teachers used to ask how we educate the students here and how they can adapt themselves to the rules of Schwarzegg School.' This draws derisive, shrill laughter from Grese's female supporters... In general, there is stagnation in conceptual questions. Fronts are permanently being opened against me. My contributions at official discussions and conferences are not desired. Grese says on those occasions: 'You don't always have to prove to yourself and us how good you are.' This is again followed by shrill, loud whinnying by the matriarchy that runs the school."

The school secretary writes to the vice-principal after he has already left the school: "Again today a student was made to cut up a music CD in front of the whole school because some forbidden thing or other was on it. All students had to line up outside in the school yard. Then Grese took up position in all her corpulence and bellowed that it echoed through the whole valley. All the while she glowered in a frightening manner. When a youngster in the back started grinning, she shouted in an even more aggressive way at him that this was serious. It made you feel really small and at her mercy. I regret that I could not testify at the disciplinary hearing before the district government. Because I would like very much to unburden myself of all that, somewhere up high, but apparently they do not want that."

Report by a representative of the county commissioner: "It must have been at least thirty degrees that day. The sun was beating on the blinds. Frau Grese, our host, offered neither us nor the school inspectors something to drink. Finally, Herr Konecny, who had not even had a place to sit at the start, stood up and fetched a carafe of water and glasses from the school kitchen. In that heat someone could easily have collapsed. But that is no doubt how the principal showed her antipathy for the inspection. Frau Grese that day wore a skintight blue t-shirt imprinted in glowing red with: 'Hard to educate'."

Konecny to the inspectors: "The animal figures and animal tracks painted in black on the hallway walls and doors were painted on by the principal's niece with the help of an overhead projector shortly before arrival of the school inspection team. There was no faculty discussion and decision regarding this and no student participated."

Excerpt from the inspectors' report: "The school inspection team, after exhaustive analysis of documents, interviews, and classroom observation comes to the unanimous conclusion: The principal exercises her leadership responsibility in an inadequate manner. District regulations and objectives are not implemented... No goal-directed, quality-oriented action is evident; systematic staff management and staff development is not recognized as an essential function; the principal has not fostered a viable consensus relative to key pedagogical values and aims... The students and parents do not feel they receive support for personal problems. They unanimously opined that the principal Grese is not someone they could talk to. Statements by parents: 'It would not occur to me to talk to the rectress or call

her up.’ The students stated the following in interviews: ‘The principal in any case does not undertake anything for us. She is only there for screaming in her maximum security wing. She is the one who yells the loudest’... The parents and students were not aware that the school had a vice-principal.

According to the principal’s personal leadership concept, the vice-principal is a member of the faculty, nothing but a teacher like the others. She does not acknowledge the need to have conversations with the vice-principal outside official discussions and meetings, to take joint counsel with him concerning goals and means of school development; on the contrary, she rejects it categorically. He is not kept informed about ongoing official matters, there are no regularly scheduled discussion dates, even though they are repeatedly requested by the vice-principal and directed by the school supervisory authority. The duties and coverage hours per the school management package have not been mutually agreed on. The principal stated to the inspectors that this had been agreed to by the higher school authorities; the higher school authorities could not corroborate this. Quote from the interview with the principal on the subject of cooperation in the school management team: ‘We conceive of ourselves as a small, independent, intact family enterprise that operates here independently of all rules and regulations. I’m the boss; the teachers are the department heads that I assign duties to without any middleman in between. There are decisions that I alone make and there are decisions we all make as a team and no one else. That is how it is here and that is how it will remain. This is not a subject for discussion with anyone!’... The vice-principal as member of the school management has no opportunities for helping co-design the school’s development process. He sees his activity reduced to class room teaching. ‘I’ve been in this school for one and half years; the position was denied me by the principal from the start. There have been conversations at different levels already, talks with school supervisory authorities, also with the county commissioner and individual school management members, but nothing has changed.’ Because of serious shortcomings, the inspection team has determined that a follow-up evaluation will take place in a half year.”

Among the sixty pages of the inspectors’ report are photos from the principal’s office. On one of them can be seen a red plush armchair of unusual shape with three upward pointing spikes. Above it hangs a set of handcuffs. The flat screen monitor on the rectress’ desk is framed in fur. The entire surface of the desk is covered with red, crinkled tulle. In the middle of the desk is a stand on which a postcard floats. On it is written: “The little golden ass card.”

#### **4.4. The Collegial Level**

The vice-principal reports to the district superintendent: “Colleague Rinkel on several mornings slammed the door to the faculty room in my face as I stood in front of the door and was about to enter. When I entered the faculty room with a friendly greeting, she scowled and did not answer. I encountered the same behavior pattern with colleagues Parfenowa, Ljubic, Brandl and Ruzicka... Students during break supervision repeatedly tell me that Herr Blutke allows them to jump from the see-saw in violation of the special school rules (‘the small print’). Because they are able to climb on the see-saw and jump off it with the colleague, they assume they can do it with me as well. I therefore have to do double duty. I’m the one who must defend and enforce the school rules, while Blutke and others constantly subvert them. At the same time, I’m under pressure to abide one hundred percent by all rules, because principal

Grese and her circle constantly watch me and immediately note down the least infraction... Frau Gelbke pushes two students on me in the discipline room without any referral form and leaves. It is a double rule infraction, since no form was filled out and there are one too many students...

When the end of the yard break sounds, although the teachers that were monitoring it outside come directly to the faculty room, those who should go and corral their students outside and head to the classrooms never leave promptly. They mostly take their time finishing their coffee, fill up another cup at the coffee machine to take to class with them. On average, said teachers arrive five to ten minutes late in the school yard... how often during just this interlude have we had conflicts and fights that then have to be laboriously parsed and worked out within an individual class or – resolved with much greater difficulty – between more than one class. Inside, the rectress giggles theatrically with her bosom buddies Brandl or Rinkel. Meanwhile, I'm outside, gather my students and have to keep an eye simultaneously on all the others, always in the hope that the other teachers should finally show up... The problem is that according to the peculiar Schwarzegg rules I'm not permitted to reenter the building with my students. Per the 'small print,' the classes return in sequence, starting with the 1<sup>st</sup> class, then the 2<sup>nd</sup> class, then classes 3 and 4 and only then can I go in with my class 5-6 and restore a quiet, orderly learning environment in the locked class room. I'm stuck there, in the midst of the yelling and acting out of the general student population. But if I simply took off for the classroom, which I did a few times, it is immediately recorded as a violation of the Schwarzegg small print...

And now the faculty council wants to invite me for a discussion about my not abiding by all the rules? I'm going to be on the 'hot seat' they say. What sort of tribunal is this? What sort of methods of intimidation are these? This faculty needs thoroughgoing team supervision and a few remedial hours on the subject of the education law currently in force, so that it finally achieves some professionalism... 'Well, she's a good chief for us,' says the social worker Blutke who occupies a teacher position. Yesterday he sat all morning long in his (own!) office and took his time doing paperwork, blowing cigarette smoke out the window from time to time, while elsewhere, such as in my case, there was not enough staff for the classes. On that day I personally was in my classroom without break from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., including two rain breaks that I had to take in the classroom with the students pursuant to the principal's decision. I was therefore prevented from even going to the toilet because of the need for uninterrupted classroom supervision... This was followed by a quarter hour of bus monitoring; only when the last taxi had finally left was I able to go to the toilet at 1:20 p.m. The staffing of the last two hours with Frau Maggiarosa fell through, as in fifty to sixty percent of cases, as gaps had to be filled elsewhere. Who among us can allow himself the luxury of writing his reports during class time?... Leaving aside his flouting the no smoking edict – Herr Blutke can, thanks to principal Grese. He is an aggressive ankle biter who attacks anyone who sounds even the least little bit critical of the rectress. Given his professional incompetence, only here could he install himself this comfortably. Blutke became a social worker by dint of a second-chance education. Before that he was an industrial mechanic. Initially, he had only short term contracts at Schwarzegg under the job creation program. Because the rectress was able to prove that the district government had made mistakes of form in drawing Blutke's contract she was able to force his permanent employment, in a teaching position at that. Naturally, Blutke now shows his gratitude."

Teacher Poschner, who had his first teaching job at Schwarzegg, writes to the schools superintendent: “I do not fit into the Schwarzegg system. I often experience a conflicted conscience. I will say only this: tribunal with being paraded and merciless intimidation of students and parents who are put on the hot seat and aggressively confronted by the principal and faculty! Time and again, accusations that Frau Gelbke and I do not penalize with sufficient severity. Colleagues agitate against us and our work when we are not present, which earns them a pat on the back from rectress Grese... My performance review is imminent and I fear I will get a poor evaluation. What about my professional existence? I need peace in my life. The present situation depresses me greatly.”

The vice-principal writes to his colleague Poschner: “Schwarzegg, despite my being appointed vice-principal, is turning into a horror trip for me. The rectress and her inner circle attack me with tripled intensity. Would you have thought that Frau Gelbke and Frau Krekow would completely go over to the other side after you left? Although married with children, Frau Gelbke is now in an intimate relationship with Blutke. The school secretary assumes that they regularly have sex in his office. One day Frau Gelbke was lolling about in the staffroom, towards the end of the break, heaving a sigh of relief, and telling everyone that she could not live without having sex *every day*; immediately afterwards Blutke entered the room in a macho gait, grinning broadly... Frau Krekow now talks exactly like principal Grese and even tries to do her one better. Frau Gelbke only rides on rules and their being obeyed and neither of them says a word to me. I am almost completely isolated now in the faculty. I wish I was long gone from Schwarzegg.”

#### 4.5. Conduct of the School Supervisory Authorities

The vice-principal writes the following in his criminal complaint against the rectress: “District superintendent Hundstorfer says he has always tried to put the rectress in her place, but she has support in higher places. Someone who heads up the apparatus is holding a protective hand over her. His initiatives all came to nothing.”

Herr Quirchmeyer, member of the state parliament and of its appeals committee raises the following question: “What do you do when the head of the government, as the highest authority, holds his protective hand over such a rectress?”

Fledgling teacher Poschner writes to the vice-principal: “But Superintendent Hundstorfer shares the culpability. He is the man who knows about everything but takes little action. Even at the time when the superintendent’s son was a trainee teacher at Schwarzegg, Grese at no time minced words and basically conducted herself exactly as she does now.”

Konecny writes to the district government outside official channels: “I first of all herewith wish to inform the higher school supervisory authority directly that since February 1 of this year at said school: I have been subjected to unending harassment at the hands of principal Grese and a circle of colleagues instrumentalized by her; the principal actively obstructs a productive school development process within the meaning of the guidelines and scientifically grounded recommendations for this type of remedial school; the principal and the faculty majority lack ethical-humane standards in dealing with the students; parents and institutions, such as the Benedictine children’s home, are regarded by the principal as opponents instead of cooperation partners; and, above all: The lower-level school supervision cannot work effectively in remedying the situation without your support... Frau Grese

continually denigrated the district superintendent in front of the faculty members until they lost all respect for the school authorities. The teachers have accommodated themselves to living in a self-created world according to their own set of rules. Frau Grese leads like a lord of the manor. She regards the school as her personal fiefdom in which she rules as she sees fit.”

#### **4.6. The Conduct of the County Commissioner**

A letter from county council representative Gusenbauer to the county commissioner Vranitzky: “Superintendent Hundstorfer has no power over Grese. You are well acquainted with chapter and verse from the previous school committee hearings. We cannot let it come to the point where this domineering person sandbags Konecny. From the district government we hear that they would like to be rid of Grese, but they are at a loss how. She is viewed as obdurate. She always shows up with her lawyer. She shoots down any school law innovations by arguing protection of vested rights, insisting that she took the principal’s job three years ago on such and such conditions. Now she has given Konecny a completely miserable performance evaluation. If we give it a numerical grade it would be equivalent to a six. Now Hundstorfer wants to let Konecny take the fall. Vranitzky, if the school supervisory authorities fail so miserably here, then it is up to you to step into the breach!”

Vice-principal Konecny writes to teacher Poschner: “Today, district supervisor Hundstorfer handed me my certificate of appointment to vice-principal. Grese’s negative evaluation did me no harm, and I even sent a counter statement to the district government. Hundstorfer nevertheless advises me to get out of Schwarzegg soon and predicts new misdeeds on Grese’s part. In county politics and in the state government circles are a few individuals who are worried that principal Grese may drive this school totally into the ground. They are prepared to intervene in the proceedings...”

Konecny again writes to district superintendent Hundstorfer: “So now the false, destructive performance evaluation by the principal did not achieve its objective of preventing my appointment as deputy principal. Will they now go after my nerves, ultimately to wreck me totally? I would like to direct a school one day. I cannot and will not let my health be ruined at Schwarzegg. You told me that you could do nothing more for me, and that I should apply to leave the school as soon as possible. You said that you view Frau Grese as ‘evil.’ How right you were! I can only change to an open rector’s position, one which has to be advertised first. All I can do is adapt, just as I have done until now. I cannot go on the offensive either, because any overt conflict would be termed ‘disturbing the school peace’ and lead to my forced transfer. With this letter, I call attention to my dilemma, which for a long time has also severely burdened my private life and that of my family and appeal for your support.”

#### **4.7. The Struggle to End the Dysfunction at the School**

Neophyte teacher Poschner, when his own transfer had finally been effected, left the new vice-principal with this question: “How can it be that no one is able to stop this woman?” This indeed turned out to be a long road. The vice-principal next reported to district

superintendent Hundstorfer, who actually was well aware of the dysfunctional situation in the school. Konecny submitted two disciplinary complaints to the responsible district government. Dr. Wieshaider, the children's home director, did likewise. Both turned to members of the schools committee and the youth welfare committee and had conversations with youth welfare agencies in the vicinity, who time and again had objected to the many, overlong school suspensions and the heartless pedagogy at Schwarzegg. The higher school authorities started a formal disciplinary proceeding that dragged on and came to nothing. The district government ordered an external inspection of the school. The results of this inspection led to the principal being relieved of her position as rectress. The lower and mid-levels of district government had signed off on the firing. But then protection materialized from the very highest level, resulting in the dismissal being rescinded. According to the newspapers, due to alleged mistakes of form by the district government in handling the principal's derelictions of duty, she found herself restored to her position a few days later, thanks to intervention by her lawyer and a political network to which the state government's chief executive, a lawyer himself from the right wing of the party spectrum, also belonged.

Konecny reports to state parliament representative and member of the appeals committee Quirschmeyer: "I had endured for 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  years before the inspectors arrived. During an individual conversation, which actually was not a scheduled part of the process, but which I insisted on over the objections of the district government, I naturally pulled no punches. If the rectress had been present, I would never have been able to say anything... Suddenly, the inspectors' report was circulating everywhere. They had sent a pdf of it out with colorful graphics. The first thing that jumped out was all the yellow, i.e., the problematic, boxes. There were hardly any green ones, i.e., positive evaluations, and only one blue one, the highest grade, which the building's features received. This went to the credit of the county commissioner... And then there were the two red, highly problematic, boxes: 'leadership conduct by the principal' and 'participation in school life.' The report spread like a wildfire. The newspapers called the school board. The county commissioner Vranitzky expressed shock publicly and spoke of a 'shattering' result and renewed his demands for firing the rectress.

After the inspectors had departed, the vice-principal did not return to Schwarzegg. After his health conditions had stabilized about two months later, he was offered a post as temporary principal in a neighboring county. His chances for a regular principal's position were minimal. As a result of the second, equally destructive performance evaluation by the principal Grese, district superintendent Hundstorfer and district schools director Schwind had not given him the required top rating grade in the principals review that he needed to advance. Meanwhile, the inhuman pedagogy continued at Schwarzegg. The school secretary kept informing the former vice-principal Konecny of new incidents at the school. He eventually filed a criminal complaint for bodily harm against the rectress. Shortly thereafter, she received a summary order from the district attorney. The newspaper ran the story. The lower school supervisory authorities and the state superintendent put their hopes in the court proceedings that the rectress would be found guilty so she could then be fired. But it turned out differently at first.

After the disappointing outcome of the court proceedings, Konecny once again turned to the state parliament's appeals committee: "Judge Horvath, the district attorney and the accused principal's defense lawyer this morning had apparently agreed ahead of the proceeding that the accused would give me an official apology and that would put an end to

the proceedings. The proceedings started at 10 a.m. and ended at 10:15 a.m. The presiding judge cracked jokes, e.g., 'in what school would classes be cancelled today.' No witnesses were called, and neither was I... Rectress Grese's legal counsel presented a less than convincing apology strictly for tactical effect in the court room. He stated that the conflict was precipitated equally by both sides and had led to this situation. They regretted that it had ended up impairing my health. This was never intended (?).

Parents, youth welfare workers, teachers and individuals from the political committees were outraged. Newspapers and TV journalists conducted interviews. In the ensuing public discussion in the media, the young, inexperienced district attorney was criticized for caving in. The circuit judge was alleged to lack a sense of justice and to have been wheeling and dealing with the string pullers in the district government. For the first time, the hypothesis was publicly voiced that the state's chief executive must be behind the whole thing. The school secretary reported that they popped the champagne corks in the school after this court hearing. Even though the court in reality had determined the principal's culpability – otherwise, she would not have had to apologize to me – they viewed the result of the proceedings as a victory over critics and enemies... The societal damage that Frau Grese and the idle district government are responsible for is substantial, up to and including potential dangers of someone running amok that could emerge above all from the at-risk youths that Frau Grese has pushed into social exile. Unfortunately, the circuit court failed to recognize the implications of the total problem that I absolutely laid out in detailed fashion in my criminal complaint and also failed to meet its societal obligations and responsibilities."

In the meantime, Konecny had also sent a complaint about the inaction and the cover up attempts by the district government to the responsible ministry as the highest school administrative authority, with all documents that had been accumulated to date attached. In his letter, he pointed out the continuing dysfunction at the Schwarzegg School. Triggered by the appeals process, the state government began to review the entire case and to check each and every previous action. This resulted in a determination of the professional shortcomings of rectress Grese and a demand by the district government to initiate a renewed disciplinary proceeding. For this, only a few witnesses were called with the lawyer for rectress Grese present. Vice-principal Konecny was continuously interrupted by the lawyer when he tried to answer the few, quite narrowly-framed questions put by the officials. The lawyer tried to twist his words and keep him from speaking. This second disciplinary hearing also dragged out. It struck all those involved as a farce, as if addressing the state legislature's requirement was just a formality. By now the Schwarzegg School was the subject of unceasing critical reporting in the newspapers. Encouraged by the wide open public discussion, former parents and students took heart and faced the cameras or spoke with print journalists of their victimization at Schwarzegg. However, no one still at the school spoke up, for the district authorities kept the rectress in the position; even though they acknowledged her past failings, it was publicly suggested that by tightly "chaperoning" they had improved the situation at the school. All this time, ever since the poor inspection results had become known, the county commissioner Vranitzky had fought to have the rectress removed from her position, in the political committees, through the print media and interview segments on TV... At one point, the Schwarzegg faculty published a letter to the editor in the regional press in which they described rectress Grese as a leader "with heart and understanding." It stated that by now it had become clear at last that the previous proceedings had solely been negative campaigns waged by individuals.

Also participating actively in this image polishing was Frau Laechert, member of the schools committee, with comments she made during committee sessions, continual networking in her political cliques and through statements to the press. It had been Laechert who in the beginning had prejudiced the schools committee at the last second against a male candidate who had actually been proposed as Schwarzegg principal and instead pushed through her chosen candidate, namely Grese, for the rector's position. Laechert was herself a teacher, lived right in Schwarzegg and, having given up teaching for her family, hoped to make a career in politics. She now started to teach a few classes at Schwarzegg although she, like the majority of other teachers there, did not possess any kind of degree in special education or EBD. Laechert wrote in a public letter to the editor that the inspectors' report had only turned out bad because certain individuals had "thrown dirt at the school." Things dragged on like this for another three years.

Dr. Wieshaider filed a new disciplinary complaint against rectress Grese. She had forced students to listen to blaring pop music in the hallway in front of her office, where she on occasion dealt with students kicked out of class, so that they could not talk with each other while they worked in their lesson books. The rectress repeatedly insisted that the home's workers should pick up students from Schwarzegg when those would not follow her rules. As this once again did not happen on one occasion and Dr. Wieshaider over the phone instead demanded that she should at last develop a fitting EBD pedagogy, the rectress called the paramedics and had a boy committed to a psychiatric clinic. To break the boy's physical resistance, who naturally was fighting against his being taken away, she prevailed on the paramedics to inject him with a sedative.

Would that be straw to break the camel's back? Not just yet. The new schools superintendent, appointed after Herr Hundstorfer's retirement did not quite as routinely sign off on the frequent "eliminations" for reasons of "endangerment of self or others." So then rectress Grese had finally begun to falsify the student count. Supposedly, the school now had 30 percent more students than before. That enabled the rectress to requisition more teacher slots and so continue the old system of dual or triple manning in comparatively small classes and above all relieve her of her own class room duties. The "clearly elevated" student count now automatically meant that the building had to be expanded. Three classrooms had to be added. The school rebuilding was started, but then the entire scheme blew up. The newspapers wrote about a "thunderclap" that suddenly originated from the district government and which now had pulled the "ripcord." The real reason, however, was a change in the politics of the state concerned. As the leadership at the highest administrative levels changed hands, a new state chief executive took over. He saw no reason to continue protecting rectress Grese. The lower levels of the district government by now had accumulated plenty of incriminating material against Frau Grese.

Frau Laechert was finished politically when her double role and connivance were criticized in the political committees and the media. They held her responsible for the unnecessary building project and the wasted funds, imputed personal bias to her through her close association with the rectress and urged her to resign all political offices. The district attorney instituted proceedings against Frau Grese for fraud. A few journalists started looking for trails and in the end were able to finger a network of individuals who, on discrete political levels – district government, state parliament and county – had smoothed the way for the rectress and then stabilized her in office. But what motives did the former state chief executive have for protecting rectress Grese? As a politically right-leaning lawyer, did he in

fact sympathize with the misanthropic pedagogy at Schwarzegg? A journalist and her camera team confronted him unexpectedly during a break in the state parliament, and asked him this question. The president only gave evasive answers and then fled from the cameras during the live TV news broadcast. The fact that rectress Grese simultaneously officiated as a judge in equestrian competitions opened another trail for the journalists. Would individuals in the president's family or personal circle who were involved in equestrian sports have been disadvantaged, supposing the rectress had been officially suspended and he would then have been blamed by her?

At Schwarzegg, a temporary principal now took over. Breaking up the faculty suborned by rectress Grese entailed some difficulty because the personnel council backed them up. Frau Brandl, closest confidante of rectress Grese and a personnel committee member herself, apparently for years had served up false information to this committee about what was happening at the school. The head of the personnel committee had also reacted in a very negative way when vice-principal Konecny had sought her help. Gradually, however, some of the teachers were able to be removed from the school. Frau Krekow voluntarily requested a transfer and offered to testify in court against the principal. She had only conformed to rectress Grese's regime out of fear. Not long after, she became so ill that she was unfit for duty for a whole year. The temporary principal now in charge of Schwarzegg cleaned up the old system of privileges embedded in mini-classes and triple staffing. Colleague Ljubic was no longer able to keep up with the abruptly-raised professional demands and took a long sick leave, claiming burnout. It was very difficult to find new, professionally qualified personnel. Due to the strained work situation in the school, the temporary principals changed several times. The suspended rectress lost a case to be reinstated as principal at Schwarzegg that she brought before the responsible administrative court. Three years later, the district government announced that Frau Grese under civil service law would have to be installed in a school as a teacher. The Schwarzegg School district then took an official position of refusing to reemploy of Frau Grese in its jurisdiction. It then became known that the higher school authorities were in negotiations with a more distantly located district.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The story communicated to the outside by this principal is that she alone saw to it that law and order reigned in the district, that she was the one who made these students with emotional and social needs employable. In order to accomplish this, she simply had to shift into a harder gear than is usual with the standard pedagogy. This façade passed muster with the school supervisory authorities for at least a few years, with the political bodies and the public unwilling to second-guess her. Students had to be "folded up" or "eliminated," "the hammer is coming down," "somebody's going to bite the dust," the family is going to "have their hut turned upside down." But at this point one might ask along with Wittgenstein (2000, p. 38): "But why then describe the situation in this way?" Klemperer's (2007) notes on the "Language of the Third Reich" bring into focus "unceasing repetition" as the "main stylistic means" (p. 46), its "forms of accentuating the will and tempestuously pressing forward," (p. 92), "the LTI was a prison language," (p. 112), "a raw whipping up" (p. 75) and: "The LTI is totally directed to stripping the person of his individual being, to stupefying the personality,

to making him an unthinking and submissive part of a herd that is driven and harried in a specific direction, and to making him an atom in a block of stone.”

Inside the school, power is cemented by handing out privileges and by quickly relieving the teachers of difficult students through their effective, longer-term “elimination.” The faculty, on the one hand spoiled and on the other hand made submissive, lives in a small, mentally narrow, irrational world far removed from reality in which it succumbs to a wayward interpretation or suppression of the educational law in force. Instructions by the school administrative authorities are circumvented or ignored. Colorful ceremonies, like the one for the janitor’s birthday, are designed to give the school’s regime a friendly face; however, they have an untoward and bizarre effect. The principal’s megalomania and the resulting loss of a sense of reality are only enabled by the lack of resolve and aversion to action of the school supervisory authorities as well as by political protection from the top. The county commissioner responsible for the school’s general operation and buildings, while insisting tirelessly on firing the rectress lacks decision making power and administrative leverage. It has to depend on the action of the district government as the higher level school supervisory authority.

There are no cooperative networks in the Schwarzegg case. The school barricades itself like a circle of wagons against a supposedly hostile environment. Students and parents have no voice. All participation instrumentalities mandated by law are nullified. Students as well as parents describe the school as a “military camp” and as a “jail.” With regard to internal critics in the school, lying, spying, denunciation and intimidation can be observed daily (see Blase and Blase, 2003, pp. 69-92). This workplace aggression serves to sustain power and is experienced here in all its variations, active and passive, direct and indirect, verbal as well as physical, although subtly in this latter aspect. The techniques range from intentional abuse of teachers (Schnall 2009, pp. 79-130) through the politics of evaluation (Lindle 1994, pp. 51-70) all the way to blocking access to information (Lindle 1994, pp. 60-62).

Much of what happened at Schwarzegg recalls the infamous experiment by Zimbardo (1973); only in this case, the maltreated persons, here the vice-principal, could not simply opt out but had to endure 1 ¾ years in a cage until physical illness set in. This having to stay put is owing to the specific German civil service system. The teachers could not simply give notice and apply to another school. Simply relinquishing their civil servant position is not an option, as they would be left holding the bag without adequate provision for old age. Rectress Grese and her protectors take advantage of this structural peculiarity.

The other side of the coin is that although professionally incompetent teachers that are also not suitable human material may indeed be transferred, they are immune to being fired, which massively hampered an expeditious reform of the school. Once a principal is installed in his position as rector or rectress he or she is almost impossible to remove. Other factors deserving critical assessment are that the school personnel is duty-bound to keep to official channels with their complaints, even if it can be assumed that the higher-up official addressed will smother the whole thing. Furthermore, it seems problematic that the school personnel is required to keep silent about internal school affairs and events and that teachers who do take something outside can be prosecuted under civil service law. Vice-principal Konecny was summoned multiple times by the district government. He was accused of taking information outside. Also, the education authority’s lack of agency with respect to pedagogical and leadership questions turned out to be a problem. The county commissioner Vranitzky on several occasions went public with this dilemma.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Decision-making and responsibility of the county commissioner must be strengthened for the eventuality of such crisis situations occurring. Therapeutic support programs for the harassed teachers ought to be developed to help them deal with possible trauma. With regard to the permanently suspended and harassed youths, it is urgent to consider measures for a safety net and for reintegrating them into a school. The education sciences must take such an episode as a reason for raising questions: Rectress Grese apparently had a degree in special education. Where and under whom did she study? Exactly what were the contents of her studies, particularly in the EBD related fields? Do the universities also provide sustainable personality training? Are university students motivated and equipped especially for building good relationships with young people who act in a confrontational manner? Are they guided to humane behavior and good collegial dealings? Are the students in teacher education programs at university sufficiently grounded in ethical basics? Do the university curricula contain enough problems dealing with communications, relationship forming, constructive conflict management, dealing critically with power, designing processes, teaching leadership and operating the school as a learning organization?

Is it even feasible to learn all this in a lecture hall or simply by reading? Wittgenstein (2000, p. 28) raises doubts about this when he notes: "Knowing something is the type of thing where I have a piece of paper in my desk drawer on which it has been written." Is that not mostly the case when it comes to knowledge acquisition at the university level? Of what is written down, how much actually trickles deeper into the personality so that it can blossom from there? Seminar formats must be developed in which the required personality building of future school professionals can actually occur.

As Nietzsche observed, "In actuality, language is the first step in the striving for knowledge" (1994, p. 263). To find one's own language is therefore an act of self-assurance, a coming into contact with the self. Here is where to begin with the students already at university.

In a like manner, the universities should equip the students that want to become school teachers – and by no means just in the EBD field – with strategies for surviving school micropolitics (Lindle 1994), overcoming work-place aggression and mistreatment by recognizing bullying cultures in schools (Parsons 2005), by breaking the silence (Blase and Blase, 2003) and by taking action (Blase and Blase, 2003, pp. 148-152).

Next, forms of obligatory follow-on qualification for teachers who are, for example, lacking a special degree in EBD, must be found and implemented so that these teachers feel competent in their work and are able to work in their field with high expectations of self-efficacy. Only this way will they be protected against being compromised by a corrupt system like that at Schwarzegg and can they envision the chance for personal survival. However, it was at the same time a problem to recruit new teachers, especially ones with EBD qualifications, for the school – and not only because of the ruined image. It was located in the remote countryside, far from any university towns. This was also a causative factor for the problem of teachers often being hired at Schwarzegg who lacked specialist training in the EBD field. Young people or lateral transfers simply looking for a way into the school system found it easier to get a job out there in that very remote region where hardly anyone wanted to move.

In particular: school principals must be selected, educated and later also professionally supported so that they in fact bring out the best in teachers and students (Blase and Blase, 2004; Blase and Kirby, 2009). It is not only in the EBD field that we need resilient teachers and resilient schools (Day and Gu, 2014), in which all who are active in them feel secure and can develop well. The appeals committee in the state parliament of the relevant German federal state that the vice-principal petitioned also warned in its final report that the education law required changes to allow a professionally challenged or unsuitable management person to be removed from the position without all the difficulties chronicled in the report.

Also advisable would be psychological-psychiatric aptitude test for principals in order to weed out individuals who harbor psychopathic personality aspects if they apply for such responsible positions. Also worthy of research would be the question if and how societal conflicts between the sexes are expressed in a case like the Schwarzegg School.

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