



Researchers' Roles and Areas of Conflict in Politically Charged School Projects

Sabrina Bacher, Christian Kraler, Claudia Schreiner

sabrina.bacher@uibk.ac.at, christian.kraler@uibk.ac.at, claudia.schreiner@uibk.ac.at

University of Innsbruck (Austria)

Department of Teacher Education and School Research



EARLI SIG 10, 21, 25
September 11-13, 2024
University of Bari (Italy)



Introduction

- Reign of sovereignty
- Formal power
- Ideologically loaded
- Donor

Society & Politics

- Tradition (Stability) & Innovation (adaptability)
- State driven/controlled
- Bureaucracy
- Didactic triangle
- Ritualised

(Formal)
Education

Research

- Independence
- Objectivity
- Specific methods

Educational Research



Introduction

School ... as an ongoing **project** of preservation, adaption and development

School "Projects" {
← established school ✓
← new school ← **politically charged**

Different interest groups → **Areas of Conflict**

Educational **Research** as a scientific partner accompanying a project

- Scientific method & objectivity
- Research mandate
- Involvement



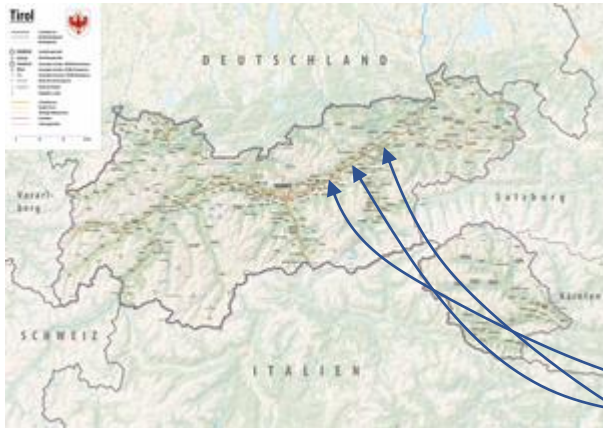
"Researchers' Roles and Areas of Conflict
in Politically Charged
School Projects"

Project and Context

3 Aspects:

- **Necessity** (economical)
- Euregio (political)
- Solution concept (operational)

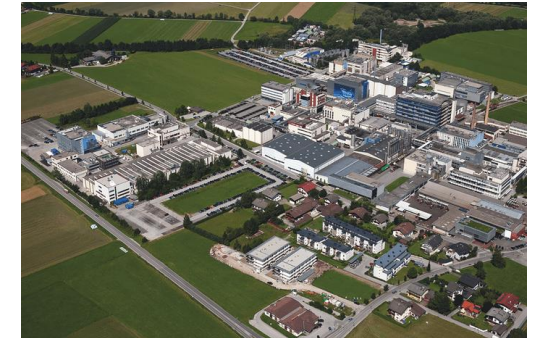
Necessity: economy driven (international companies operating in Tyrol), to establish an international school for highly qualified expert-employees and their families



Swarovski (Wattens):
Jewellery, optics and
glass production



Innio Jenbacher:
Gas and hydrogen
turbines



Sandoz GmbH
Kundl (Novartis):
Antibiotics

Project and Context

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Tyrol–South Tyrol–Trentino Euroregion



Location of Tyrol–South Tyrol–Trentino in Central Europe

Office(s)	Bolzano and Brussels
Official languages	German, Italian, Ladin, Cimbrian, Mocheno
Type	Euroregion
Membership	 Tyrol  South Tyrol  Trentino
Leaders	• President Arno Kompatscher (SVP)
Establishment	1998
Area	• Total 26,254 km ² (10,137 sq mi)
Population	• 2011 estimate 1,755,186

- Euregio:
- Tyrol –South Tyrol – Trentino (1998)
 - The boundaries of the association correspond to the former Princely County of Tyrol
 - Visible political sign of collaboration in the area of education as an important societal field





Project and Context

3 Aspects:

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Pathway:

- 1. International school**
2. European School
 -> Accredited European School
3. AES-Tyrol

International school criteria checklist:

1. Transferability of students' education across international schools
2. A moving population (higher than in national public schools)
3. Multinational and multilingual student body
4. An international curriculum (i.e. IB – DP, MYP etc.)
5. International accreditation (e.g. CIS, IBO etc.)
6. A transient, multinational teacher population
7. Non-selective student enrolment
8. Usually English (or bi-lingual) as language of instruction

IASL (2009). How to Define an International School. International Association of School Librarianship.

Project and Context

3 Aspects:

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Pathway:

1. International school
- 2. European School**
-> **Accredited European School**
- 3. AES-Tyrol**

Background of European Schools (ES):

- Founded by EU member states since 1953
- Aim: Provide multicultural, multilingual education and an EU-recognized diploma



Expansion to Accredited European Schools:

- 2005 EU decision to extend ES curriculum access to national schools
- Accredited schools adopt ES teaching models and the European baccalaureate
- Currently, 23 Accredited European Schools exist

Austria's First Accredited European School (AES-T):

- Implemented in Innsbruck (Tyrol) in 2023/24
- Research partnership with the University of Innsbruck for planning and implementation



Project and Context

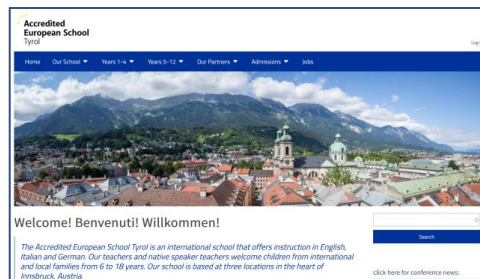
3 Aspects:

- Necessity (economical)
- Euregio (political)
- **Solution concept** (operational)

- Not set up from scratch
- Builds upon existing expertise
- Public schools involved

Pathway:

1. International school
2. European School
-> Accredited European School
3. **AES-Tyrol**



Our campuses

The accredited European School Tyrol consists of three locations in the heart of Innsbruck. The different language sections and age groups are taught here:

Years 1-4
English | Deutsch



Volksschule
Saggen

Years 1-4
Italiano



Volksschule
Altwilten

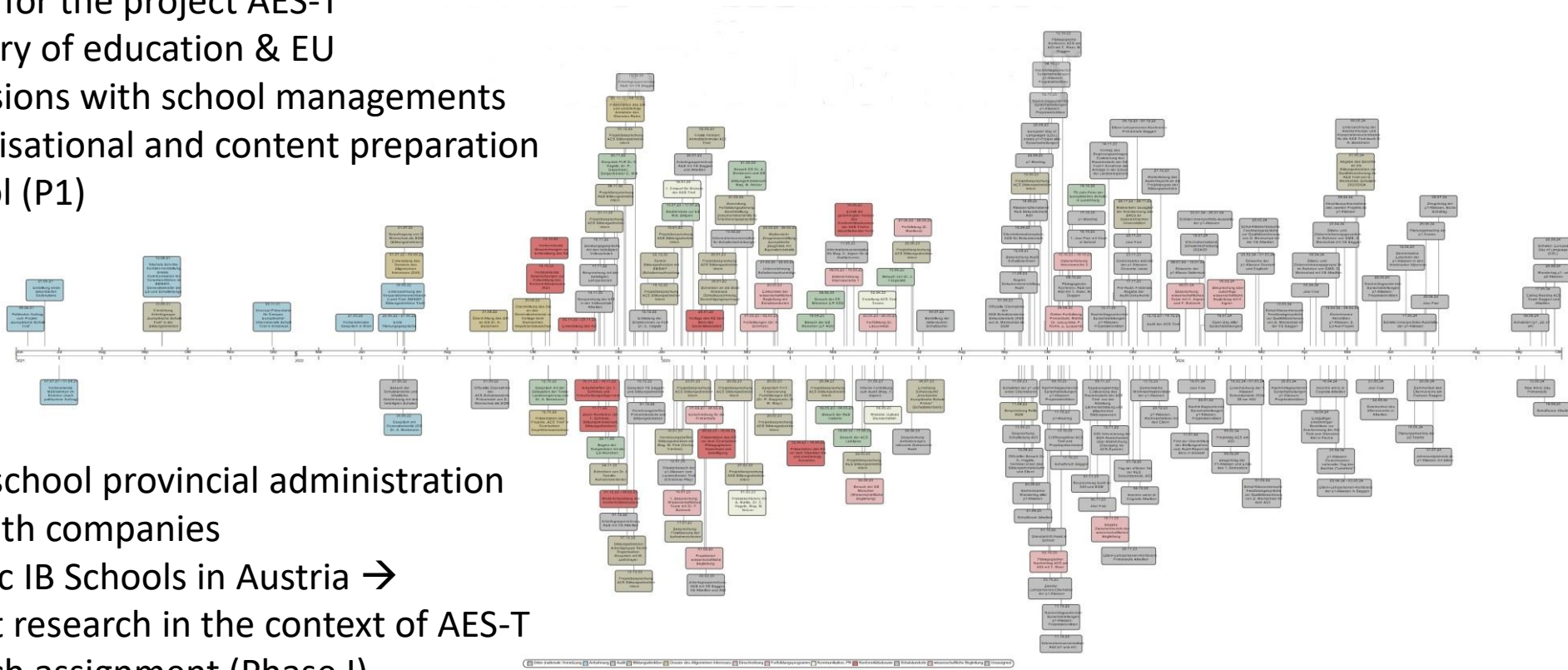
Years 5-12
English | Italiano | Deutsch



Akademisches Gymnasium
Innsbruck

Implementation

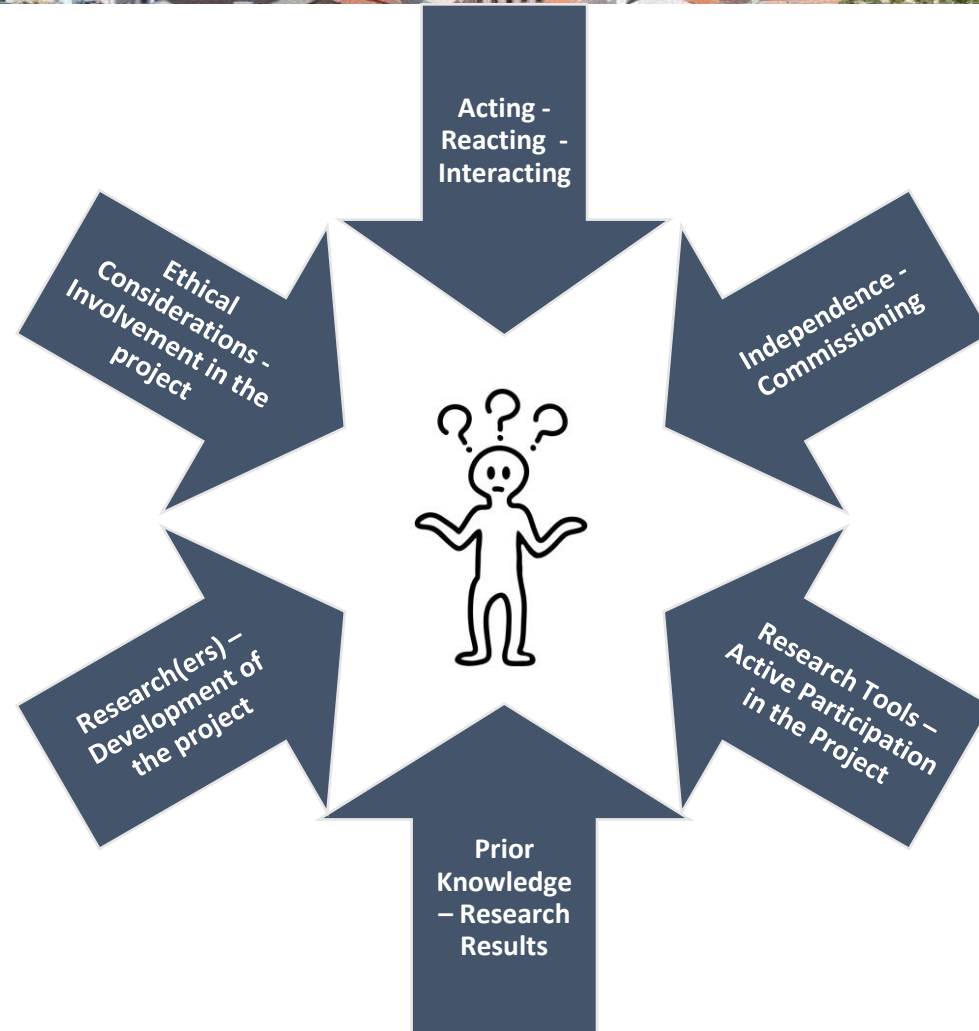
- Considerations since 2014
- June 2021: Political mandate for the project AES-T
- Sept. 2021: Contact to ministry of education & EU
- June 2022: Dossier & discussions with school managements
- June 2022- June 2023: Organisational and content preparation
- Sept. 11, 2023: start of school (P1)



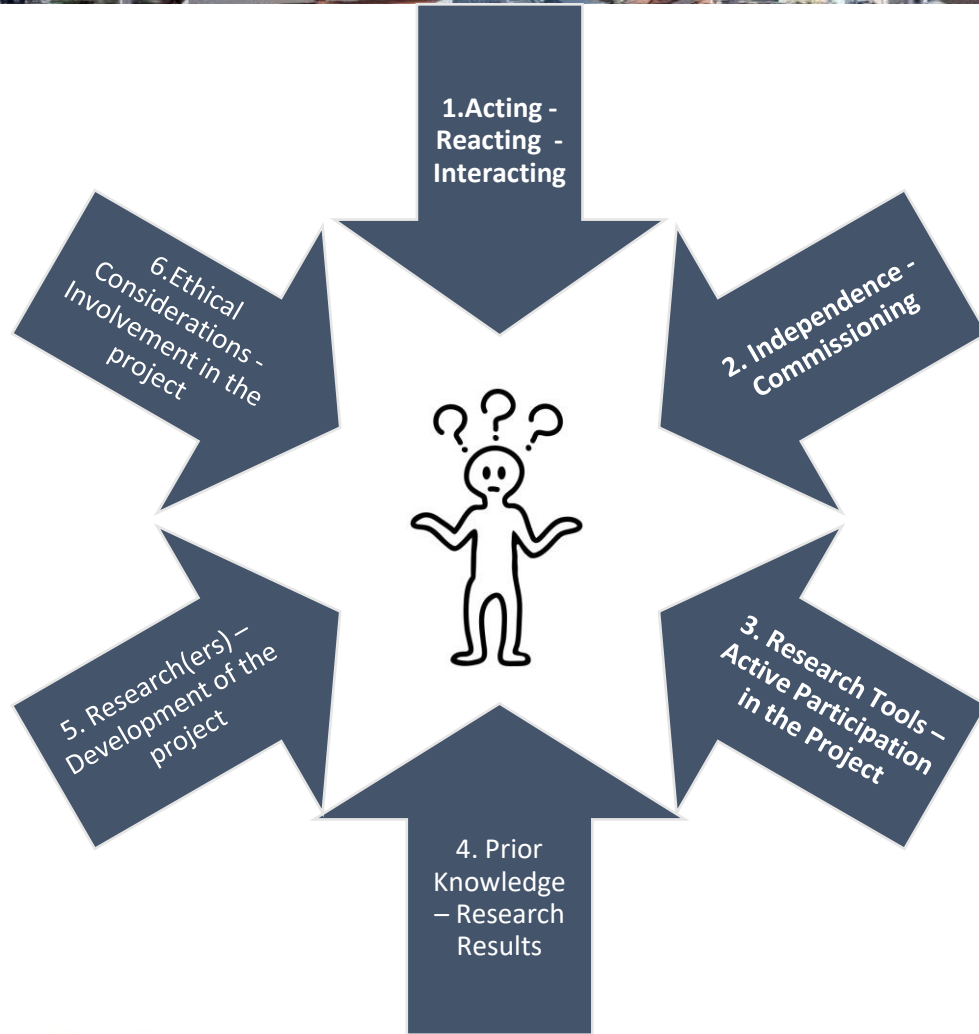
- Ongoing collaboration with school provincial administration
- May 2014: Joint meetings with companies
- 2019/20: Evaluation of public IB Schools in Austria →
- 2020: First discussions about research in the context of AES-T
- 2023: Accompanying research assignment (Phase I)
- Sept. 2024: Accompanying research assignment (Phase I)

Areas of Tension

Role of the research(ers) ...

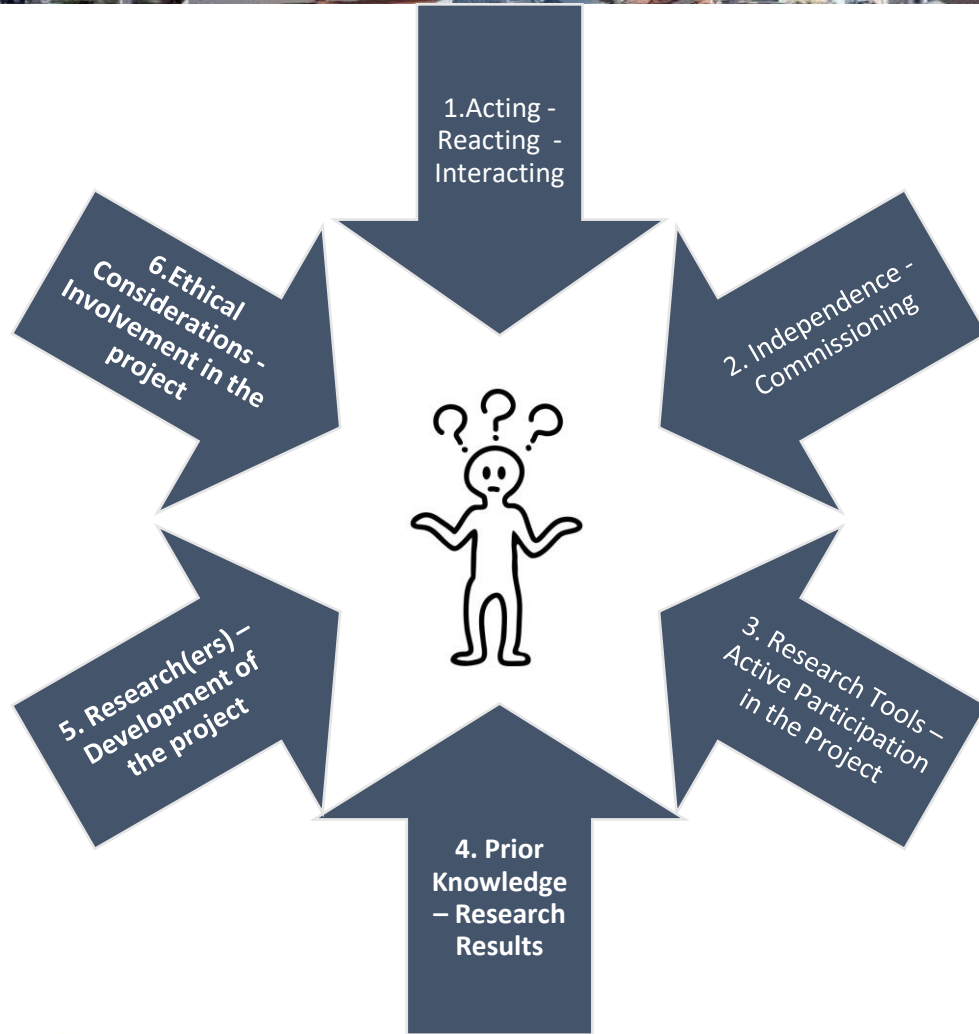


Areas of Tension



1. Between acting, reacting, and interacting, where does research position itself, and how does this influence the researchers' role in the project?
2. The researchers are independent (by contract), but are commissioned to support the project. What areas of conflict arise from this arrangement?
3. How can researchers effectively utilize the special set of tools, which is at their disposal (objectivity, neutrality, reliability, inter-subjectivity, validity), while actively participating in the project?

Areas of Tension



4. What role does researchers' prior knowledge from other projects in the field play in shaping specific perspectives that have an impact on the "stories" that are told based on the research results?
5. What effects are being generated by the fact, that feeding research results back in to the project, the research(ers) influence the development of the project under research?
6. What ethical questions arise from these circumstances surrounding the researchers' involvement in the project?



Conclusion and Outlook

- ✓ The dual role of researchers as independent experts and project contributors presents specific challenges.
- ✓ Research in politically influenced educational projects involves navigating complex areas of tension.
- ✓ Understanding the interplay between politics and research can enhance the integrity and effectiveness of educational initiatives.

Outlook: Project phase II: Sept. 2024 – Sept. 2027
 Project phase III: Oct. 2027 – Dec. 2028



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Thank you for your attention!

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