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Questionnaire for refugees based solely on images

Psychologists at the KU are developing a questionnaire that only uses pictures to help teachers of professional integration classes learn more about the individual characteristics and requirements of their pupils, young asylum seekers and refugees, despite language barriers. The three-year project, which is being led by Prof. Dr. Joachim Thomas (Psychological Diagnosis and Intervention), is part of the model project Perspektive Beruf für Asylbewerber und Flüchtlinge (career prospects for asylum seekers and refugees) and is being supported by the education foundation Stiftung Bildungspakt Bayern through funding provided by the Bavarian Industry Association.



These two images express fear of failure on the one hand and motivation to succeed on the other. (Image: Psychological Diagnosis and Intervention/Press Office)

The aim of the project is to develop a non-verbal computer questionnaire that collects information about the motivation and personal characteristics of young refugees: How resilient are they? Are they worried about failing? How do they experience social support and contact with fellow pupils and teachers? For each characteristic, the people completing the questionnaire are offered two pictures. They can then move a slider along a scale to indicate which image best applies to them. 'This should provide teachers with the initial information that they need in order to interact with the pupils appropriately and find out whether any form of intervention is necessary,' Professor Thomas explains. Particularly in cases where language barriers still exist, this procedure could show whether a pupil wants more support, for example. Using images is more practical than translating a questionnaire into a large number of different languages before validating and standardizing it. In addition to it being possible for young people to take the test regardless of their native language, the questionnaire can also be used with people who are illiterate.

The computer-based procedure allows a large number of young refugees to participate and its standardized sequence means that the people supervising do not need any special training. The

results are interpreted by school psychologists, counsellors, and social workers with previous knowledge of psychology who have been given special training by the project team. They then provide the participants with feedback.

An evaluation of existing image-based questionnaires showed that most of them could not be interpreted unambiguously. For this reason, it was not possible to ensure that each person understood the same 'question'. The challenge for the project team, in collaboration with a graphic designer, is to develop a pictorial language that cannot be misinterpreted. Another way in which the new questionnaire differs from existing models is that, instead of a single picture, participants are shown two contrasting images and can rate how they feel on a scale between the two. A pilot study carried out by the KU psychologists has shown that this allows the responses to be classified more clearly. The next stage of testing for the questionnaire will be carried out at vocational schools in Eichstätt and Kelheim in the coming summer semester.

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