

Navigating Dyslexia Assessment in Austria: Policy, Practice, and Barriers

Abstract

This presentation explores the current situation regarding the definition and assessment of dyslexia in Austria, with a particular focus on the role of dyslexia therapists. It highlights the contributions of dyslexia therapists to pedagogical diagnostics, their collaboration with schools, and the barriers they encounter in promoting inclusive education.

Current Policy and Legal Framework

In Austria, the definition and assessment of dyslexia are primarily shaped by the medical paradigm, which mandates diagnostic procedures to be carried out by external specialists, such as psychologists. This approach often sidelines the expertise of dyslexia therapists in pedagogical diagnostics, despite their direct involvement in educational interventions. Recognizing dyslexia therapists as key actors in the diagnostic process could foster a more holistic approach, bridging medical and educational perspectives.

Assessment Processes in Practice

Dyslexia therapists play a critical role in identifying reading and spelling difficulties through pedagogical diagnostics. Their assessments often include qualitative analyses of reading and writing performance, learning behavior observations, and informal diagnostic tools. However, their contributions are frequently undervalued due to the prevailing reliance on external psychological assessments. Enhanced collaboration between dyslexia therapists and schools could strengthen early identification and tailored support for students with dyslexia.

Strengths and Successes

Close cooperation between dyslexia therapists and teachers has shown positive outcomes in supporting students with dyslexia. Dyslexia therapists provide individualized interventions, share pedagogical insights, and contribute to the development of inclusive learning environments. Such interdisciplinary collaboration enhances the consistency and quality of support services.

Challenges and Barriers

Despite their essential role, dyslexia therapists face several challenges. These include limited recognition of their diagnostic competencies, inconsistent collaboration with schools, and a lack of formalized frameworks for interdisciplinary cooperation. Additionally, insufficient teacher training in pedagogical diagnostics, inclusive pedagogical methods, and school law exacerbates the disconnect between educational and medical approaches. Addressing these barriers requires greater investment in teacher training and the establishment of standardized protocols for collaboration between schools and dyslexia therapists.

Conclusion

By emphasizing the role of dyslexia therapists in assessment processes and interdisciplinary cooperation, this presentation aims to stimulate discussion on how their expertise can contribute to more inclusive educational strategies in Austria. Strengthening the recognition of dyslexia therapists' diagnostic competencies and fostering collaboration with schools could significantly improve access to timely and effective support for students with dyslexia.