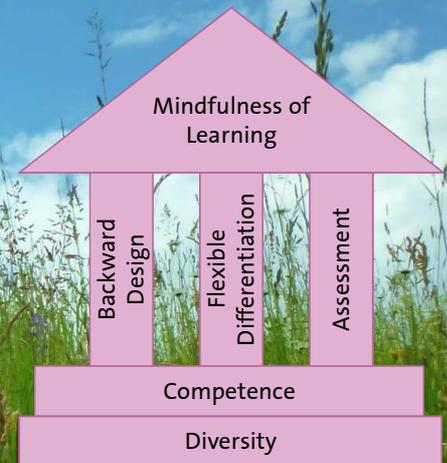




# Nationwide Qualification Upskilling and Reskilling for Teacher Leadership

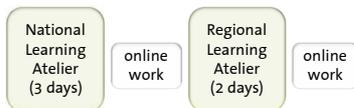
## Background

With the school reform in lower secondary that was mandated in 2012 (“*Neue Mittelschule*” / New Middle School), based on the implementation of standards in 2009, a nationwide transformation began that requires systematic support for both teachers and school principals. To foster a new middle school culture oriented to the overarching goals of equity and excellence, the heart of the CLS efforts is the upskilling and reskilling of teachers, who are prepared to act as teacher leaders at their schools. The key skills areas in the program are backwards design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), differentiation (Tomlinson, 2003) and assessment (Earl, 2013; Stiggins, 2008), as shown in the NMS House. The new teacher leadership role of the “*Lerndesigner*” proved to be a massive system intervention intended to provide leverage for school reform through change agents embedded in the teaching staff of each school. The rationale was clear and focused: school reform must be addressed on the school level to be effective, the focus must be on teaching and learning, and change agents require re-skilling, networking and a community of practice to ensure sustainable change and transformation. Culture change requires a comprehensive system strategy. As a result, the CLS also works with school inspectorates, teacher educators, school developers and teacher trainers.



## How it works

A teacher is nominated for the teacher leader role “*Lerndesigner*”, who attends a training course organised jointly by the Center for Learning Schools and local university colleges of teacher education (*Pädagogische Hochschule*). The programme is a blended learning concept, with 2 learning ateliers per semester:



Online work is conducted on the NMS Edumoodle platform ([www.nmsvernetzung.at](http://www.nmsvernetzung.at)), offering course materials, both a regional and nationwide discussion forum and news updates. Participants submit a portfolio to complete the course with certification (12 ECTS), qualifying them as *Lerndesigners*.

## Challenges

- Upskilling:** Old teacher education curricula which were in effect until 2015 did not include the latest knowledge and skills teachers need for the reform.
- Reskilling:** Reskilling involves not only new knowledge and skills but also changing habits of thinking and mindset from selection to fostering achievement for all.
- Age structure and career plans:** Approx. half of all practicing teachers are retiring 2010-2020; *Lerndesigners* move up as school principals.
- Resistance:** Not all teachers nominated for the role of *Lerndesigner* are convinced of the school reform.
- Lack of shared leadership dynamic:** Many schools still operate in the traditional flat hierarchy. At some schools *Lerndesigners* are over-burdened and met with resistance.
- Federalism:** While new in-service teachers have new labor regulations that foresee remuneration for key teacher leadership functions, remuneration for most *Lerndesigners* is regulated at the state provincial level and the policies vary.
- Lack of qualified staff developers:** One of the major challenges for programme directors is recruiting up-to-date staff developers with the right expertise for the NMS reform.

## Chances

**Shared leadership:** NMS policy fosters a shared leadership dynamic among school leaders: the principal, the *Lerndesigner* and other teacher leaders in the school – especially those responsible for leading school quality and achievement standards.

**Lerndesigners as expert professionals:** Due to their high-quality training, *Lerndesigners* are recognised experts who are also active as staff and school developers.

**Nationwide network:** From the beginning of the NMS pilot in 2008, *Lerndesigners* network nationwide online and at events. Their forum has grown into a strong community of practice.



*Lerndesigners* at a National Learning Atelier (Photos © Andreas Schubert)



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