Improving the use of evidence in prevention practice
Lessons learned from violence prevention in Austria

universität wien

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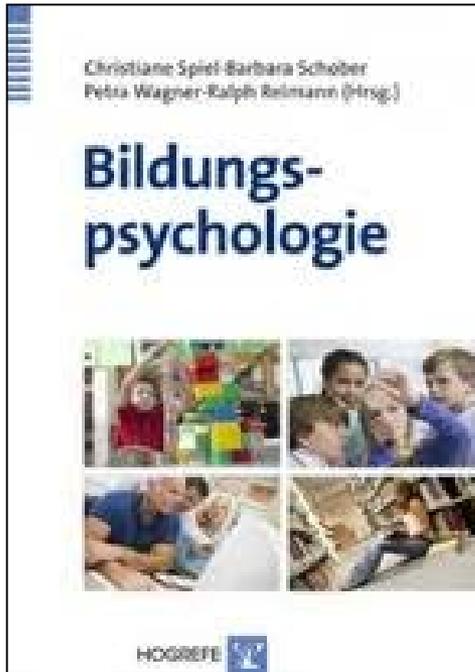
Evidence in policy and practice?

(Spiel, 2009a, 2009b; Spiel, Lösel & Wittmann, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Spiel, Schober, Strohmeier & Finsterwald, 2011; Spiel & Strohmeier, 2012; Spiel & Schober, 2015, 2016; Schober & Spiel, 2016; Spiel & Schober, 2017; Spiel, Schober & Strohmeier, 2016)

Evidence in policy and practice

> *Evidence-based policy and practice is an approach that "helps people make well-informed decisions about policies, programs and projects by putting the best available evidence from research at the heart of policy development and implementation."*

(Davies, 2004)

Evidence in policy and practice

However, the transfer of research findings is so far poorly established, in particular in the field of education.

Reasons for poor transfer

**Researchers**   **Practitioners**   **Policy makers**

Reasons for poor transfer

**Researchers**   Practitioners   Policy makers
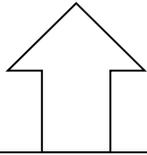
- **Focus on general mechanism than on practical actions in concrete situations**

- **Neglect of translational research in comparison to basic research (impact in scientific community)**

- **Lack of knowledge about field conditions**

Reasons for poor transfer

**Researchers**　　　　**Practitioners**　　　　**Policy makers**
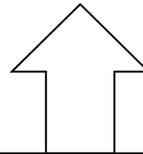
- **Poor knowledge about standards, criteria and methods of research ➜ difficulties in communication**

- **Low motivation to increase knowledge in this field**

- **Low interest in research findings**

Reasons for poor transfer

Researchers   **Practitioners**   **Policy makers**
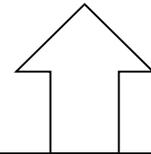
- **Poor knowledge about standards, criteria and methods of research**

    ➔ **difficulties in take up research results**

    ➔ **difficulties in communication with researchers**

- **Research results might contradict political programs and ideologies**

# Successful and sustainable transfer

Researchers   Practitioners   Policy makers

Successful and sustainable transfer

Researchers   Practitioners   Policy makers

⬆
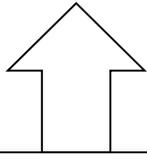
- **Research according standards of evidence**

Successful and sustainable transfer

## Standards of Evidence – basic criteria:

- **Theoretically based**

- Evaluated using **state-of-the-art methods** (randomized controlled trial) under **real-world conditions**

- Showing **consistent positive effects** (including one long-term)

- **Carefully documented** (manuals etc.)

- **Clear information** about target groups and costs

- **Monitoring and evaluation tools**

Successful and sustainable transfer

Researchers Practitioners Policy makers
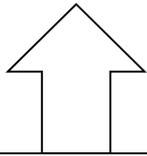
- **Research according standards of evidence**

- **Communication of research findings in the language of practinioners and politicians**

- **Using respective building networks for successful transfer (including people from the media)**

Successful and sustainable transfer

Researchers   **Practitioners**   Policy makers
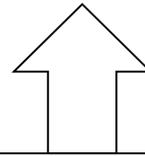

- **Making themselves and their institutions ready for prevention**

- **Understanding the necessity of interventions**

- **Knowledge acquisition about research in general and research findings**

- **Readiness for engagement**

- **Establishment of working teams (high acceptance in the institutions, administrative support)**

- **Activation respective establishment of local networks**

Successful and sustainable transfer

Researchers   Practitioners   **Policy makers**
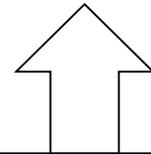
- **Advocation** for evidence in policy and **controlling** by evaluations

- **Assessment** of **cost-benefits** of transfer

- **Establishment of support and incentive systems** (to force transfer in institutions)

- **Implementation of evidence based education** (for teachers etc.)

- **Promotion of acceptance in the public**

Evidence in policy and practice

How successful and sustainable transfer can be established?

Cooperation and communication
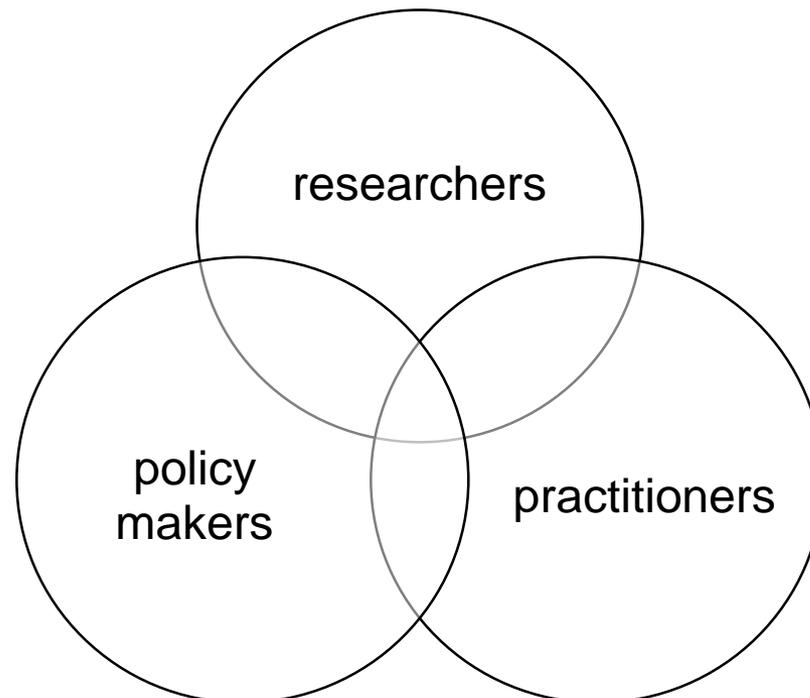
How successful transfer can be realized?

Violence prevention in Austria as an example

Background in Austria

Since 1997: broad public and media attention on violence in schools

1997: *Ministerratsvortrag* (a joint statement issued by four federal ministers): **intention to set initiatives to prevent violence in several social domains**

2003: Report on violence in Austrian schools (EU-project; Atria & Spiel):

- only single activities

- no theoretical base

- no evaluation

➔ **Standards of evidence are lacking**

Background in Austria

Beginning of 2007:

- quick succession of several spectacular events in schools

- public discussion of the high rates of bullying and victimization (HBSC survey)

Consequence

Mandate from the Federal Ministry for Education to develop a national strategy for violence prevention in the Austrian public school system

How to develop such a strategy?

Challenge

PROBLEMS
—
TAKE A NUMBER

93

SOLUTIONS
—
COME RIGHT IN
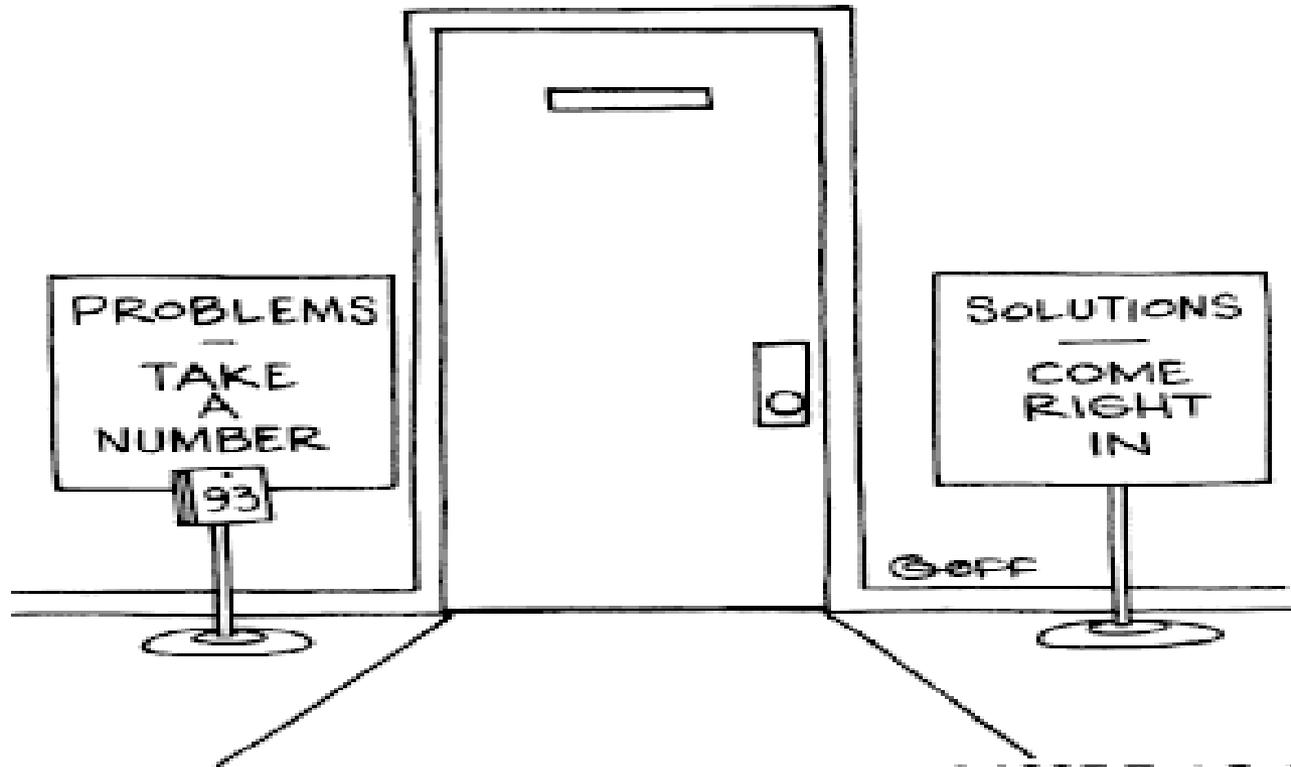
Goff

© 1997 Ted Goff

Objectives and Procedure

Integration of the various stakeholder groups in Austria already involved in violence prevention in school and kindergarten (➔ partners)

Objectives and Procedure

Identified stakeholder groups

- politicians
- members of the federal ministry (bureaucrats)
- teachers union
- national parents committee
- students representatives
- school psychologist
- school medical doctors
- social workers
- police
- child and adolescents psychiatrists
- pedagogical universities
- universities (with teacher training)
- scientists
- NGOs
- media and public relation

Objectives and Procedure

Integration of the various stakeholder groups in Austria already involved in violence prevention in school and kindergarten (➔ partners)

Exchange with international experts in the development of national strategies

Application of theoretically based and evaluated preventions programs

Continous exchange with the responsible administratives of the Federal Ministry for Education, Arts, and Cultural Affairs

Stakeholders
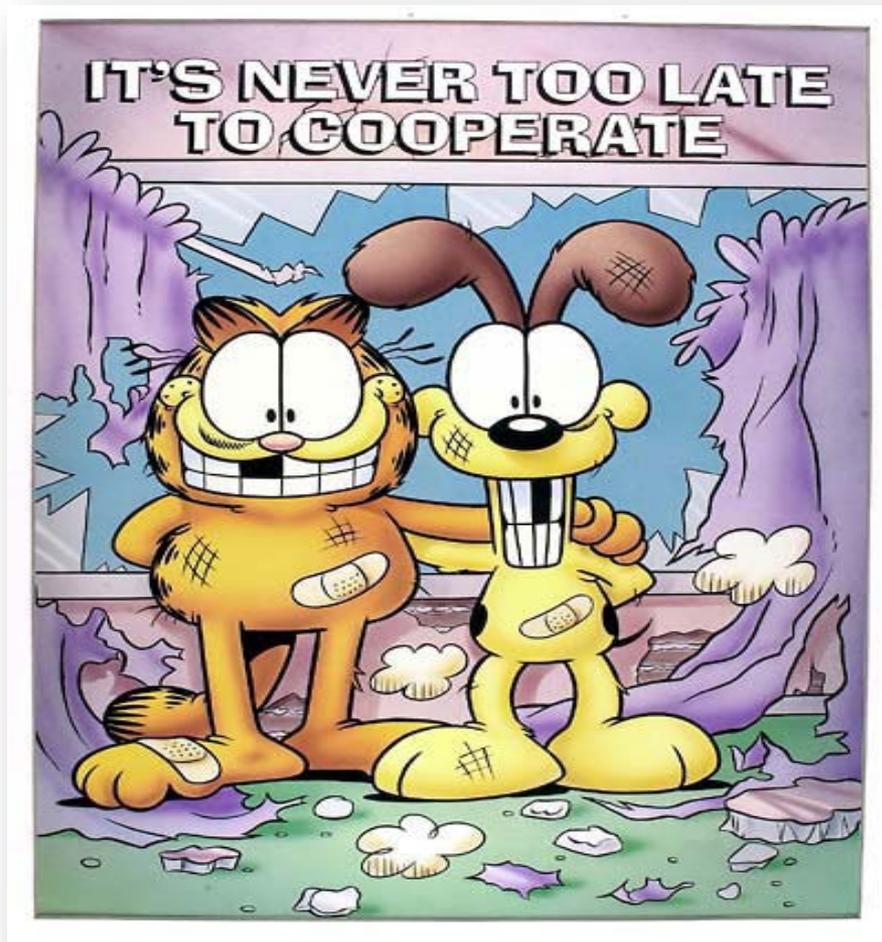
„Together against violence"

extended later on to

# „Weisse Feder – Gemeinsam für Fairness und gegen Gewalt"

(Spiel & Strohmeier, 2011; Spiel, Schober, Strohmeier & Finsterwald, 2011; Spiel, Salmivalli & Smith, 2011; Spiel, Wagner & Strohmeier, 2012; Spiel & Strohmeier, 2012; Spiel & Strohmeier, 2013)

Main goals

1. Increase awareness and knowledge about violence:
      I know, we know

2. Increase social competence skills and strategies to cope with violence:
      I can, we can

3. Increase responsibility and civil engagement:
      I do, we do

   in students, teachers, parents but also in the whole society

Inspired by the KiVa computer game (presented by C.Salmivalli, 2007)

Activity domains (contents)

- Policy and Advocacy
- Evaluation and Research
- Information und Public Relations
- Activity Domains
- Prevention und Intervention
- Networking and Cooperation
- Knowledge Transfer and Education
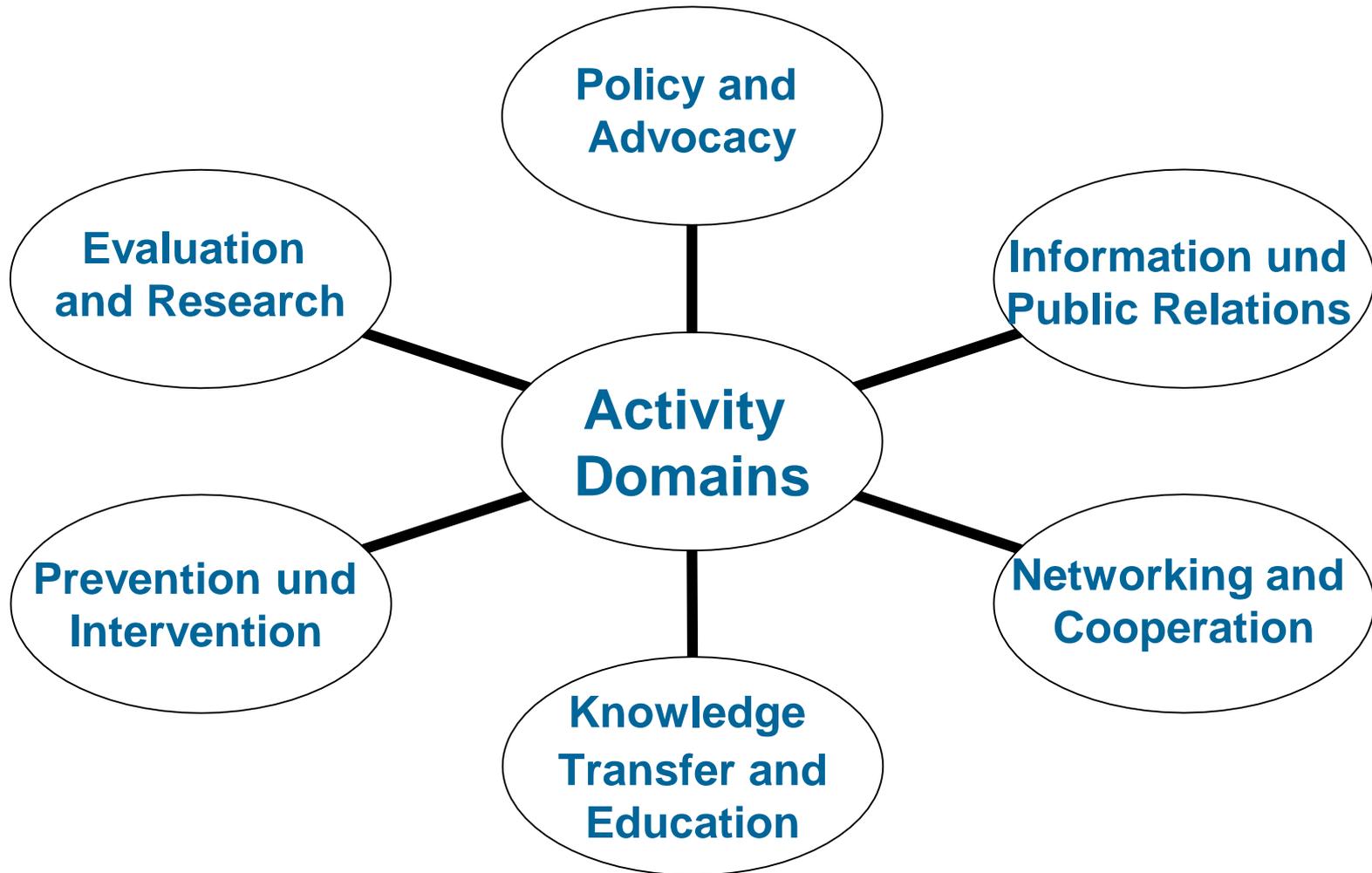
Time table

November 2007: **Presentation of the Strategy at the Federal Ministry**

December 2007: **Presentation of the strategy at a media conference** (together with the Federal Minister Dr. Claudia Schmied)

2008: The topic of violence prevention (national strategy) became **part of the coalision contract between the two governmental parties**

2008 – 2013: **Implementation of the national strategy**

2014 - : **Continuation on a lower level**

Implementation 2008-13

Activity domain	Projects
Policy and advocacy	• The national strategy is an integral part of the Austrian government program.
Prevention and intervention	• Increase the number of school psychologists (ÖZPGS) • Pilot projects by school social workers • Implementation of "Behavior agreements" • Implementation of the "Faustlos" program • Implementation of the Viennese Social Competence Training (ViSC) program • Implementation of "Peer mediation" • Nationwide|Theatre|Initiative
Knowledge transfer and education	• Violence prevention and social competence promotion as obligatory components of basic teacher education • Train-the-trainer course for teachers • Train-the-trainer courses for "ViSC coaches" • Information workshops for schools and kindergartens
Information and public relations	• Establishment of a national internet platform • Organisation of events • Press conferences • Media reports • Information material
Networking and cooperation	• Establishment of a steering committee • Joint conferences among the stakeholders (= partners) • Cooperation with national television networks
Evaluation and research	• Documentation and evaluation of the implementation of the national strategy • Evaluation of the prevention and intervention programs • Development of online self-assessment instruments for classes and schools

Homepage

Evaluation activities

Interviews with Stakeholders (ex ante) → Supporting the development of the national strategy

Representative data collection in schools: PISA → Providing baseline data

Subprojects organized their evaluations e.g., ViSC RCT → Checking implementation quality and effectiveness of the subprojects

Evaluation of the implementation of the national strategy – contribution of the single projects → Providing information about the implementation quality of the entire national strategy and possible optimization

Self-Assessment-instruments for schools → Ensuring evaluation tools for sustainability

Lessons learned for Policy and Practice Impact from Research and Interventions

(Spiel, 2009a, 2009b; Spiel, Lösel & Wittmann, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Spiel, Schober, Strohmeier & Finsterwald, 2011; Spiel & Strohmeier, 2012; Spiel, Schober & Strohmeier, 2016; Schober & Spiel, 2016; Spiel & Schober, 2017)

Integrative/ holistic research approach

(Spiel, Schober &
Strohmeier, 2016;
Schober & Spiel, in
press; Spiel &
Schober, in press)

Problem recognition

Integrative/ holistic research approach

Problem recognition

Problem recognition

Focus on significant and widespread problems in society

➜ Researchers must not be only curiosity-driven but also **mission-driven**

➜ combining the quest for fundamental understanding with a **consideration of practical use**

Integrative/ holistic research approach

Problem recognition

Availability of evidence base

Fundamental precondition for intervention and implementation

➔ Researchers have to be experts in the **relevant field**

➔ with **excellent knowledge** of theory, methods, empirical findings, and limitations

Integrative/ holistic research approach

Problem recognition

Identification of starting points for action

Researchers need

➔ high expertise in the **relevant scientific field**

➔ knowledge and experience in the **relevant practical field** with its contextual conditions and culture

➔ including knowledge about **potential problems and limitations**

Integrative/ holistic research approach

Problem recognition

Establishment of a cooperation with policy makers

Researchers have to consider that there are other influences on government and policy beyond evidence

These include

➔ **values, beliefs, and ideology** – driving forces of many political processes

➔ **habits and traditions** – important and cannot be quickly changed

➔ **media, lobbyists and pressure groups**

➔ **researchers' experience, expertise and judgment**

Establishment of a cooperation with policy makers

Researchers have to keep in mind that

➔ policymaking is highly embedded in a **bureaucratic culture** and is forced to **respond quickly** to everyday contingencies

➔ policymaking is always a matter of **what works at what cost** and with **what outcomes**

Consequently, researchers have to

➔ find ways to **integrate evidence** with these many factors

➔ **raise their voice** – in some cases, they have to be very insistent

Integrative/ holistic research approach

Problem recognition

Coordinated development
of intervention and implementation

**Centerpiece = a long process rather than a step**

The **coordinated development** has to be performed in a theory-driven, ecological, collaborative, and participatory way

Researchers have to

➔ **include** practitioners, policymakers, government officials, public servants, and communities in this development process

➔ **communicate** in the language of these diverse stakeholders and meet them as equals

Implementation model of the ViSC school program
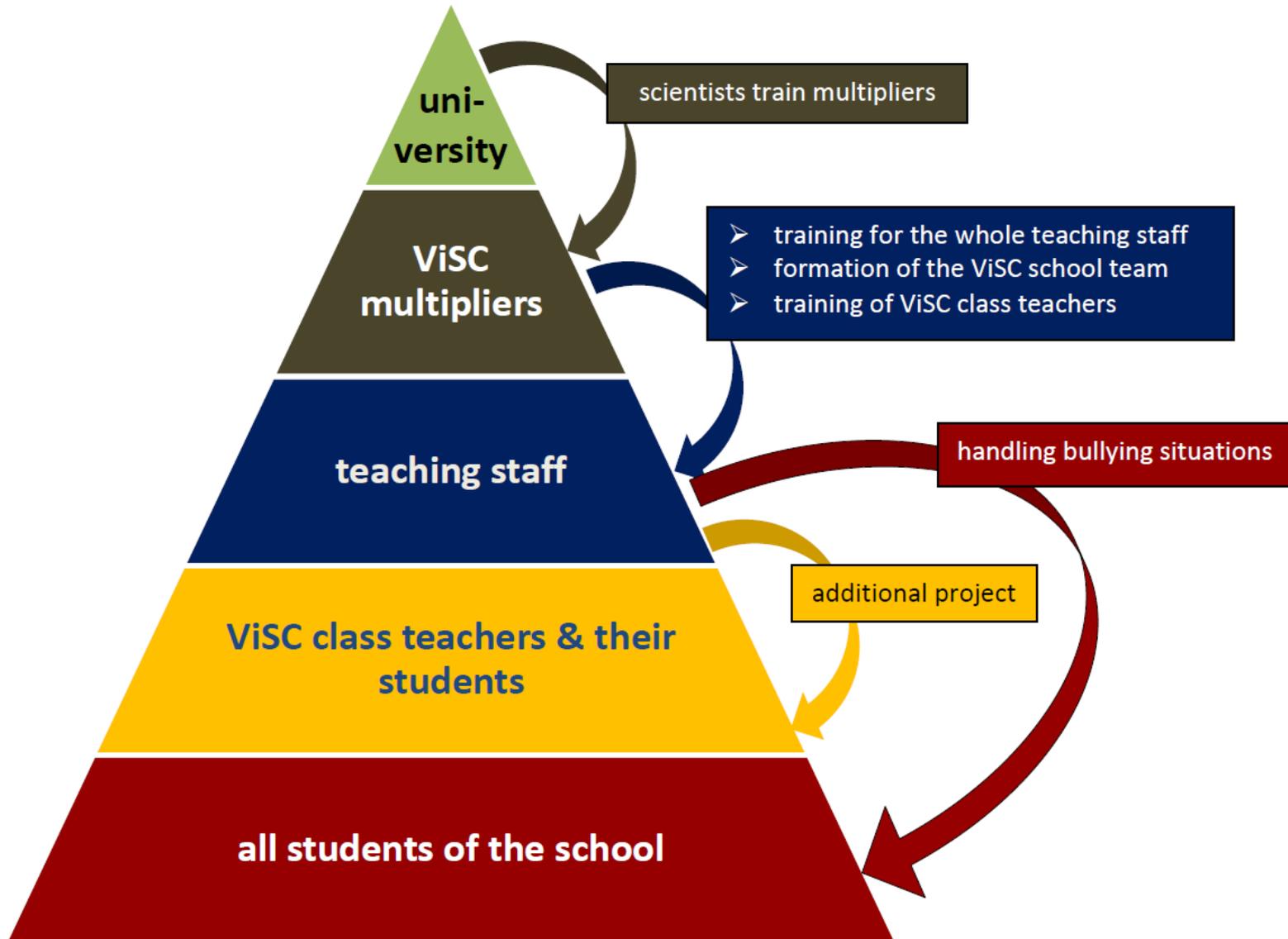
Coordinated development
of intervention and implementation

Consequently, researchers need to have

➔ all of the **knowledge**, **competencies** and **wisdom** described before

➔ plus **theoretical knowledge** and **practical experience** in intervention and implementation research

Integrative/ holistic research approach

Problem recognition

Transfer of program implementation

Implementation =

the "specific set of activities designed to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions" (Fixsen et al., 2005, p.5)

Implementation science =

"the scientific study of methods to promote the systemic uptake of research findings and evidence-based practices into professional practice and public policy" (Forman et al., 2013, p.80)

I³-Appraoch
Integrative Intervention and Implementation Research

PASCIT

(Spiel, Schober & Strohmeier, 2016, Prevention Science)

Pyramid levels from top to bottom:
- **T**ransfer of programm implementation
- **C**oordinated development of **I**ntervention and implementation
- Establishment of a **C**ooperation process with policymakers
- Identification of **S**tarting points for action
- **A**vailability of evidence base
- **P**roblem recognition

Fulfilling all these demands

The researcher has to be a *jack of all trades device*

… or has to work in teams together with colleagues with complement experiences and competencies

Violence Prevention Research Team

University as supportive context

Given the growing social, economic and societal challenges there is an increasing demand for universities to use their knowledge from research and teaching to fulfil their
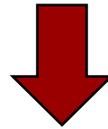
Third Mission

➔ **Responsibility for society** – targeted use of scientific knowledge to deal with diverse social challenges

➔ **Transfer of knowledge, technology, and innovation** and cooperation with economy

in accordance with research and academic teaching with the aim to further strengthen theses essential university pillars

Thank you for your attention!