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# ZEIT FÜR DIE SCHULE

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Mit diesem Arbeitsblatt entdecken Ihre Schülerinnen und Schüler Bildung und die Arbeitswelt von Morgen – auf Englisch.

In Zusammenarbeit mit:



VUCA and the Four Cs

## EDUCATION THAT MEETS STUDENTS' NEEDS

This material has been designed for learners of English as a foreign language (B1/B2): Gymnasiale Oberstufe, Realschule, Jahrgangsstufe 10-13, learners at German schools in English-speaking countries (Deutsche Auslandsschule) and learners at bilingual schools who are studying subjects such as 21st century skills, economics, social sciences.



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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2 Introduction
- 3 School and the journey onwards
- 4 From VUCA to PERIC
- 7 Questions and concepts
- 8 Key vocabulary
- 9 21st century skills
- 10 Building a dialogue
- 11 Education: our vision
- 12 Teacher's notes

## INTRODUCTION: CONTENT, GOALS AND COMPETITION

The following lessons will be about education that meets students' needs. The overall learning objectives will provide your learners with the following applicable skills:

- Knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of an educational model built around the Four Cs of 21st century learning (collaboration, communication, critical thinking, creativity)
- Recognition of what sets the Four Cs apart from VUCA and other business paradigms
- Evaluation of the learning that is currently happening at school
- Appreciation of 21st century learning

The teaching goals refer to the Kompetenzen in der digitalen Welt of the Kultusministerkonferenz, especially the following criteria: 1.1 (Suchen und Filtern), 1.2 (Auswerten und Bewerten), and 6.1 (Medien analysieren und bewerten).

ZEIT Sprachen publishes digital and print language-learning material for the following languages: English (Spotlight and Business Spotlight), German (Deutsch perfekt), Spanish (ECOS), Italian (Adesso) and French (Écoute). The article used in this material is taken from Business Spotlight magazine and is written in British English.

## SCHOOL AND THE JOURNEY ONWARDS

1. **As a class:** Run a survey on the statements A to F. To which degree do you agree to each statement? You can set up the activity as a classroom survey in which students can assume a spot between the two far ends of the classroom. One end represents "agree", one end is the place to "disagree". Students can either stand closely to one of the ends or assume a spot somewhere in-between. After each statement, a few students should explain their stance in the spectrum.

A. All knowledge we learn is useful for us.

B. I like memorizing facts and tests in which I have to reproduce knowledge.

C. Education should meet the needs of our future work life.

D. Instead of studying Shakespeare, Churchill and Hemingway, students should learn about the minds and ideas behind Apple, Tesla and Amazon.

E. Education shouldn't be about the challenges of the job world. Let students be youthful and not worry too much about the future.

F. Students should design the way that learning and relationships work at school.



## FROM VUCA TO PERIC

The VUCA leadership paradigm — volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity — was created in the late 1980s within a military context. The acronym articulated the reality facing leaders in warfare contexts, which are characterized by volatile change, uncertainty as to future outcomes, technical and political complexity, and deep-rooted ambiguity in terms of the available knowledge. These four factors made traditional analytical and predictive planning largely obsolete. We can now also see the VUCA paradigm as being influential in the birth of the agile approach in 2001. This views the world as manageable only by iterative and learning-based leadership processes. But VUCA is now 40 years old, and “agile” has celebrated its 20th birthday. The world has moved on. As we emerge from a health and economic crisis that has confronted us with serious new leadership challenges, it's time to identify a new leadership paradigm beyond VUCA. It's time to plan once again how we should lead.

### Towards PERIC leadership

PERIC leadership is not a strategy, technique or style of leading. It is a modern identity, a way of living your life, of engaging with others in a way that connects to core and compelling values in order to deliver something meaningful.

- 5 The five points — purpose, execution, relationships, imagination and communication — should serve as priorities when reflecting, interacting with others and taking decisions. But they should not be the exclusive determinants. Leadership is too complex for five guiding principles to cover every eventuality. Here, we look at these five factors, their importance and questions you can
- 10 ask yourself about your approach to them.

### 1. Purpose

One of the key things that has been brought into focus during the pandemic is the enormous power of purpose at work. Purpose signals a shift from shareholder to stakeholder capitalism. Profit cannot be the only point of doing business. There has to be a higher purpose connected to a global responsibility, both societal and environmental. The younger generations are demanding it.

- 20 The pandemic has confirmed the transformational and connecting power of purpose. Organizations were reconfigured overnight into entirely virtual operations. Radically new ways of working were invented to protect the lives of staff members from a deadly virus. Leaders suddenly found themselves compelled to work through remote communication channels to support people's psychological and physical needs.

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**VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity)**

- Volatilität, Unsicherheit, Komplexität, Mehrdeutigkeit

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**warfare**

- Kriegführung

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**outcome**

- Ergebnis

---

**deep-rooted**

- tief verwurzelt

---

**predictive**

- vorausschauend

---

**agile**

- agil, flexibel

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**iterative**

- iterativ, sich wiederholend

---

**emerge from sth.**

- aus etw. herauskommen

---

**engage with sb.**

- mit jmdm. interagieren

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**core**

- Kern; hier: zentral

---

**compelling**

- zwingend; hier: überzeugend

---

**purpose**

- hier: Sinn(haftigkeit)

---

**execution**

- Ausführung, Umsetzung

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**shift**

- Verlagerung

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**stakeholder**

- Interessengruppe

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**remote**

- hier: virtuell

Leaders will increasingly look for ways to leverage purpose to boost performance. They will find ways to show genuine commitment to running their businesses based on values of fairness and justice, with a strong desire to demonstrate sustainability. And they will need to do all this with a new sense of respect for the emotional needs of a diverse workforce.

## 35 2. Execution

The VUCA approach is not simply a description of external reality. It is a warning that things get more difficult to plan and get done. Indeed, when an environment becomes ultra-challenging, the incentive to do nothing at all can increase dangerously. Uncertainty can generate disabling anxiety and stress, which impacts negatively on performance. Doing nothing can quickly become a preferred option to doing something. Taking a decision carries so many risks these days that it sometimes seems better simply not to decide.

Organizations need to ensure that their leadership remains bold enough to take decisions — and to learn from these decisions in order to take more decisions. Organizations that fail to build a culture of courage and that delay the big decisions will gradually drift from market leadership towards a downward spiral of price war — and merger and acquisition — to retain efficiency of scale.

## 50 3. Relationships

Almost every organization has had to experiment with remote working as a result of the pandemic. And almost everyone now understands that traditional assumptions about the advantages of co-located organization and interaction were false. It is recognized that people can work highly effectively in remote-centric structures supported by teams in committed relationships based on trust.

This trust is not based on some blind belief that others will do what you need them to do. It is based on informed opinion that comes from investing time in relationships. This delivers the required confidence that others have the necessary competence, are reliable and will disclose rather than disguise uncomfortable truths, because they care more about common goals than self-interest. All leaders understand the importance of relationships. Yet, few commit enough time to developing the levels of trust that will allow them to cultivate the shared leadership culture that can deliver the performance levels they desire.

### leverage sth.

- etw. (wirksam) einsetzen

### boost sth.

- etw. steigern

### genuine

- echt, aufrichtig

### commitment

- Engagement

### sustainability

- Nachhaltigkeit, Zukunftsfähigkeit

### workforce

- Belegschaft

### incentive

- Motivation, Antrieb

### anxiety

- Angst(gefühl), Sorge(n)

### merger and acquisition

- Fusion und Übernahme

### retain sth.

- etw. beibehalten

### efficiency of scale

- hier: größenabhängige optimale Betriebsabläufe

### assumption

- Annahme

### co-located

- hier: an einem gemeinsamen (Stand-)Ort

### informed

- hier: fundiert

### disclose sth.

- etw. offenlegen

### disguise sth.

- etw. verschleiern

### commit time to sth.

- Zeit auf etw. verwenden

#### 4. Imagination

Business leaders tend to talk more about data analytics than imagination. Yet, data serves simply to provoke the imagination, to act as a trigger for creative ideas, and to stimulate the mind to create a competitive advantage via innovation.

Most leaders are not well schooled in imagination. They are far better trained in analytics, problem-solving, fault-finding and correction. Creativity and lateral-thinking skills should be given greater priority if leaders want to identify the opportunities lying embedded within all the unknown unknowns.

Can imagination be trained? Can corporate decision processes be redesigned to provoke alternative thinking? Can imagination be insourced through, for example, partnerships with practitioners from the creative arts?

Creativity begins with being open enough to ask questions and experiment with new ways of doing things. It requires the imagination to invest valuable time and resources in alternative ways of doing things, with no promise of return. It's slightly impractical and anti-analytical. But that's the whole point.

#### 5. Communication

In the end, work gets done when people talk to and listen to each other in a skilled and effective way. We cannot escape the centrality of communication to leadership success. Yet, leaders and team members typically underappreciate its complexity and are undertrained as communicators. They don't invest sufficient time in getting their messages across clearly or enough effort in fully understanding what others are saying.

Also, professionals are often paid to achieve their goals within their own roles and silos. They therefore communicate primarily to achieve their individual KPIs rather than to collaborate to achieve the best for the common good. Effective communication and commitment to collaboration are strongly connected. The former is very difficult without the latter. It is the role of leaders to inspire (and enforce) collaboration. To do so, they usually need to invest in external partners to develop world-class communication skills.

from: *Business Spotlight* 11/21, p. 28-31



#### lateral thinking

- laterales/unkonventionelles Denken

#### embedded

- eingebettet

#### insourced: be ~

- hier: als Input von außen kommen

#### return

- Rendite

#### underappreciate sth.

- etw. unterschätzen

## QUESTIONS AND CONCEPTS

2. **In pairs:** Read the questions A to J and briefly discuss them with a partner. Then, take notes on your personal answer to each question. Afterwards, label each question with one of the letters P, E, R, I, C according to the concepts they address. Each of the letters has two corresponding questions.

| Question   | My answer | Letter |
|--|-----------|--------|
| A. What are my communication strengths and weaknesses?   |           |        |
| B. What is my definition of a busy class that gets things done?                                      |           |        |
| C. How important is purpose to education?  |           |        |
| D. What is our strategy for managing relationships among students and between teachers and students? |           |        |
| E. How would I like to improve the way things get done in our class?                                 |           |        |
| F. How can I increase creativity in our class?   |           |        |
| G. Which areas of collaboration are my priorities for improvement in the class?                      |           |        |
| H. How can we give purpose to all students in the classroom?   |           |        |
| I. What more can we do to develop trust in our class?  |           |        |
| J. How important is imagination in the classroom?  |           |        |

## KEY VOCABULARY

3. **Individual work:** Complete the following summary of Bob Dignen's article. Use the words from the boxes. Do you remember the German translation for each of the words?

determinants  
eventuality  
execution  
purpose

Rather than being a strategy, technique or style of leading, PERIC leadership is a modern identity, a method of engaging with others in a way that connects to compelling values in order to produce something meaningful. The five points are (A) \_\_\_\_\_, (B) \_\_\_\_\_, relationships, imagination and communication. These five guiding principles should serve as priorities when reflecting, interacting with others and making decisions. However, they should not be the exclusive (C) \_\_\_\_\_, as they cannot cover every (D) \_\_\_\_\_ in leadership.

commitment  
shift  
sustainability  
workforce

During the pandemic, one of the key things that has been brought into focus is the enormous power of purpose at work. Purpose signals a (E) \_\_\_\_\_ from shareholder to stakeholder capitalism. Increasingly, leaders will look for ways to use purpose to improve performance. They will find ways to show genuine (F) \_\_\_\_\_ to running their businesses based on fairness and justice, with a strong desire to demonstrate (G) \_\_\_\_\_. And they will need to do this with a new sense of respect for the emotional needs of a diverse (H) \_\_\_\_\_.

embedded  
insourced  
redesigned  
schooled

Although most leaders are well trained in analytics, problem-solving, fault-finding and correction, they are not well (I) \_\_\_\_\_ in imagination. If leaders want to identify the opportunities lying (J) \_\_\_\_\_ within all the unknown unknowns, creativity and lateral-thinking skills should be given greater priority. Can corporate decision processes be (K) \_\_\_\_\_ to provoke alternative thinking? Can imagination be (L) \_\_\_\_\_ through partnerships with professionals from the creative arts?

from: Dagmar Taylor, *Business Spotlight Plus* 11/21, p. 9

## 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

**4. Individually and in pairs:** Read the following text and take notes on the strengths and weaknesses of the Four Cs educational model. Afterwards, compare your notes with a partner and try to agree on a summary of notes that include the most important points from both your notes.

According to the Four Cs educational model, 21st century skills education equips students with the following skills: creativity, collaboration, communication and critical thinking. These skills should prepare students for their professional future. In the 21st century, students are supposed to leave school as independent, social and creative thinkers. The model is controversial as it is largely informed by business approaches such as VUCA. Criticism towards the Four Cs model states that education should not be tailored to meet the needs of the job world. However, defendants of the Four Cs model say that it serves as a good framework to modernize education as a whole. With the right kind of activities, students can acquire certain skills besides memorizing facts and reproducing knowledge. The approach aims to strengthen relationships in the classroom and to improve communication among students and with their educators.

**5. In pairs:** What do you see as the most important skill of your future? Pick two of the Four Cs and explain to your partner why these skills matter to you. Does school focus enough on these skills?



## BUILDING A DIALOGUE

**5. In pairs (together with another pair):** You and your partner are part of a student task force that aims to improve how learning works in your school. Follow the PERIC approach and build a dialogue that introduces initial ideas on what to do next for better education. Use at least one phrase from each of the five key areas of the PERIC approach. Make it a full, logical conversation. Label the phrases you use and take additional notes. Don't write up the whole dialogue. Afterwards, present your dialogue and give peer feedback on another group's work. Use the feedback chart to rate their dialogue.

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <p><b>FOLLOWING THE PERIC APPROACH: A DIALOGUE BUILDING SET</b></p> <p>Here are some phrases you can use for your dialogue.</p>  | <p><b>1. Purpose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our main purpose is...</li> <li>• One of the most important values for me is...</li> <li>• I think we need to stand for...</li> <li>• What do you see as being most important here?</li> </ul>                                      | <p><b>2. Execution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need to make sure that we...</li> <li>• We can achieve this if we...</li> <li>• What will you do to make this happen?</li> <li>• What support do you need from me?</li> </ul>                             |
| <p><b>3. Relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I believe that relationships are important here because...</li> <li>• Could you tell me a little more about yourself?</li> <li>• What is most important to you at school?</li> <li>• So, what do you think about... ?</li> </ul> | <p><b>4. Imagination</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's happening in other education systems that we can learn from?</li> <li>• So, let's think outside the box. What if we... ?</li> <li>• What else can we do?</li> <li>• What's missing from our current approach?</li> </ul> | <p><b>5. Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To keep it simple, I think we should...</li> <li>• I'm saying this because...</li> <li>• What do others think about these ideas?</li> <li>• Based on what has been said, can we agree to... ?</li> </ul> |

from: *Business Spotlight* 11/21, p. 28-31

### Feedback chart

|   | very good | okay | could be better |
|---|-----------|------|-----------------|
| The group used enough phrases from the dialogue building set. |           |      |                 |
| They presented the dialogue without reading a script.         |           |      |                 |
| Their dialogue was a logical conversation on the topic.       |           |      |                 |

## OUR VISION ON EDUCATION

**7. In groups of 2 to 3:** VUCA, PERIC and the Four Cs are acronyms – words formed by combining the initial letters of a multi-part concept. In VUCA, the four words volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity describe the challenges of today's work environments. PERIC focuses on ideals and values: purpose, execution, relationships, imagination and communication. The concepts do not only read as a string of words — they unfold to be complex visions. One could speak for hours in order to present them. You are going to share your acronym with the class in a short presentation (up to 10 minutes).

Choose your acronym

Create your own acronym that represents your vision on education. You can combine words from different word types (verbs, adjectives or nouns) and include values as well as challenges of the 21st century.

Create a poster

Make a poster or design a shared document that you can make available to the rest of your class. Your visualization should include the letters of your acronym, the words they represent and some additional notes on your vision on education.

Present

Present your acronym to the class. Make sure that each member of your group is speaking during your presentation. Explain why you chose the words for your acronym and share your vision on education.

**8. Individually and as a class:** Review the tasks in this portfolio. Do the activities train 21st century skills? Label tasks 1 to 8 with either one or more of the Four Cs (creativity, collaboration, communication and critical thinking) or else write "none". Add notes on why you think the activities train (or fail to train) these skills. Bring your notes to a class discussion and give feedback to your teacher: Did you enjoy these activities? Are they beneficial for your learning and could they possibly be useful for your future?

