



Developing Local Objectives and Strategies (ZiWi Method)

Brief Description

The ZiWi method serves to clarify the objectives and strategies for a project. The method was developed with reference to the “Theory of Change”, which has been used in the English-speaking world since the 1990s for project and evaluation planning. The method allows for the visual representation of a project’s objectives and strategies and the development of indicators for measuring the extent to which the objectives have been achieved.

The strength of this method lies in its capacity to clarify what is to be achieved. It makes implicit knowledge explicit, i.e. the knowledge that is often taken for granted in daily practice acquires a new quality through being clearly articulated. One’s own assumptions about the origin of and solution to a health problem (i.e. the “local theory”) become clear and can therefore be examined. The ZiWi method can be used for conceptualising new projects as well as for the evaluation and quality assurance of existing prevention and health promotion activities.

Applications

- Developing and planning projects
- Adapting prevention and health promotion interventions to local or specific target group needs
- Evaluation planning
- Continuous learning and improvement of practice
- Developing funding applications

Prerequisites

- Sufficient time
- The option of forming a working group
- Preparedness to reflect on one’s work on a conceptual/theoretical level
- Patience, willingness to learn, ability to compromise and critical thinking - the method only works if people are interested in discussing content and prepared to negotiate the process as well as important principles and objectives as a group. It helps if members of the group already know and trust each other.



Process Overview

1. Forming a working group (making time, organising regular meetings)
2. Preparation: reviewing relevant materials (e.g. concept notes, previous funding applications, mission statements)
3. The ZiWi method step by step:
 - What is it all about?
 - Who is the audience?
 - What is the goal?
 - What will lead to its achievement? (Strategies and milestones)
 - Developing a project chart
 - Developing indicators for measuring success
 - Turning the project chart into a written document (descriptive summary)

Resources Required

Time:

The ZiWi method is time-intensive. Several meetings are necessary. It is recommended to allocate time between meetings for research, brainstorming, documentation and reflection. Developing the descriptive text, whether this is done in stages for each step or at once, also takes time.

Personnel:

It is preferable if the working group is made up of those people responsible for the planning and implementation of the (envisaged) project. It may include paid staff as well as volunteers. If possible, target group representatives should also be involved as the experts on their own lived experience. The method should under no circumstances be applied without consultation with those who are involved in planning and implementing the project. Where appropriate, external facilitation could be invited to assist.

Materials:

Tools for visual representation:

- Flipchart
- Coloured cards
- Thick felt pens
- Glue/sticky tape
- Digital camera to record the results (i.e. to take photographs of the flipcharts)

Materials for written documentation

- Writing Paper
- Computer

Existing concept notes etc. as background information



Other Costs:

Establish a budget for the costs of a literature review and other research where required.

Working Steps

1. Forming a Working Group

Colleagues are recruited to a working group, which will meet regularly for a certain period. All those who contribute to planning and implementing the (envisaged) project should be part of the process. Not only paid staff, but also volunteers as well as target group representatives should be considered. A prerequisite for participation is the willingness to reflect on and discuss practice.

Regular meetings of at least two hours' duration each should be organised. The time required and the frequency of meetings depends in the main on the complexity of the (envisaged) project. An alternative to a series of working group meetings would be a single block of meeting time (e.g. a planning day or -weekend).

2. Preparation: Reviewing Existing Concepts

It is helpful to review existing concept notes, funding applications, mission statements and similar documents at the beginning. This will assist the group in clarifying the principles and direction of their practice before it embarks on using the ZiWi method to plan or evaluate a specific project.

3. Going through the ZiWi Steps as a Group

What is it all about?

First it must be clarified to which (planned or current) project the ZiWi method shall be applied. It is a good idea to describe the target group (Needs Assessment) and the local conditions as accurately as possible.

Who is the audience?

The audience should be defined before starting the process: "for whom are we doing this?" The answer to this question influences the design of subsequent steps. If it is, for example, about a funding application and the intended funding body is known, the project chart may look different than if the method is applied for the purpose of internal quality assurance only. Different audiences have different needs or expectations of the rationale for a project and of the indicators for its effectiveness.

What is the goal?

The overall objective (or goal) of the project or intervention is articulated first. It is recommended to use the SMART criteria for this purpose to ensure that the goal is specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic and time-bound. This means that the task is to determine an overall objective (or goal) that is high-level and long-term, yet still appears achievable within a certain period. Participants' views on which goals are realistic often differ. This step is about reaching agreement based on a balance between ambition and realism that everyone can support. In formulating the goal it can be helpful to refer to the differences between Vision, Mission and Goals.



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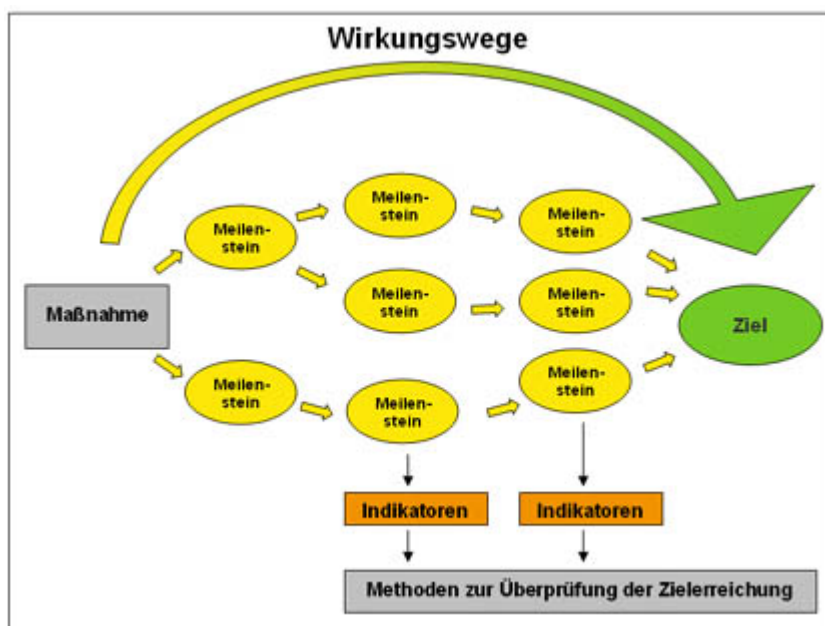
What will lead to Achieving the Goal?

As soon as the overall, long-term goal is determined, both short- and medium-term objectives are clarified, i.e. the milestones on the path to achieving the goal. Hypotheses are developed about how objectives may be linked and how and why they contribute to the goal. The following questions can assist with the development of (proposed) strategic pathways:

- Which conditions and prerequisites are necessary to achieve the overall goal?
- How does the intervention contribute to mitigating the target group's health problem?
- Why does the intervention contribute to mitigating the target group's health problem?
- How are objectives linked to each other and to the long-term goal?

These strategic pathways can be developed *forwards* (from the intervention to the goal) or *backwards* (from the overall goal to the intervention). If they are developed forwards, the question "What has to be achieved next?" is used. If they are developed backwards, the question is: "What is a necessary prerequisite?"

The model can be illustrated vertically instead of horizontally, in which case strategic pathways are developed from the bottom up (or, if using the backwards direction, from the top down). Diagram: The ZiWi Model



(Wirkungswege = Strategic Pathways)

Maßnahme = Intervention, Meilenstein = Objective, Ziel = Goal

Indikatoren = Indicators

Methoden zur Überprüfung der Zielerreichung = Evaluation Methods)



5. Developing a Project Chart

Often there is more than one strategic pathway. Individual strategic pathways and objectives are integrated into an overall chart. Where the ZiWi method is used for developing a new project, the concept for a prevention or health promotion activity is deduced from the overall goal, the objectives and the strategic pathways.

6. Developing Indicators for Measuring Success

At this point, indicators for the achievement of the overall goal as well as the objectives are developed. These indicators are necessary and helpful for evaluation (checking effectiveness).

Indicators (from the Latin *indicare* = to show, point out) make it possible to follow and evaluate processes. Indicators are measurable. Good indicators fulfil the following criteria:

- Central (meaningful for the objective)
- Economical (data can be collected with a reasonable amount of effort)
- Simple (easy to understand and interpret)
- Timely (results are available within a reasonable time frame)
- Accurate (measurements are reliable and specific)

For example, indicators for the target group's acceptance of a prevention event could be audience numbers, applause and positive feedback. Data on these indicators could be collected, for example, through documenting or estimating audience numbers, using observations (e.g. of the vigour of the applause) and a Rapid Assessment survey of the audience (e.g. "How did you like the event?").

7. Documenting the Project Chart (Descriptive Summary)

The project chart (including the indicators) is summarised in a written document. Developing this detailed description offers an opportunity to reflect on individual components and how they work together. All participants in the process should confirm the description as an appropriate representation of discussion outcomes.

Please Note:

- The ZiWi method requires a lot of effort. Compared with other methods, a lot of time must be available so that a detailed exploration of the situation, the underlying problem and the project as a possible strategy for solving or mitigating it can take place.
- The process should be conducted in a working group. It can be overwhelming for an individual, and valuable discussions may be forgone.
- The discussions encouraged by the ZiWi method may trigger conflict among those involved. Such conflict stems from different perceptions of the target group's situation or different views about the value and purpose of activities. Appropriate conflict resolution processes (perhaps using supervision or external facilitation) are an important prerequisite for the successful application of this method.
- The ZiWi method serves to articulate and examine the internal logic underpinning a project. Often the method makes implicit (unspoken, not readily articulated)



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assumptions about the activity visible (explicit). Accordingly, an important indicator of a successful application of the method is the extent to which already existing hypotheses about the work can be made apparent.

- Members of the working group should be inquisitive and keen to shift their thinking from the practical level of daily routine to the conceptual. Otherwise the process will stall, or worse, fail.

Further Advice

- If an overall descriptive summary seems too difficult, sections of text can be written for each step and collated at the end.
- It is necessary for someone to be responsible for facilitating the working group. This person will ensure that the method is applied step by step and is also responsible for recording results. It is recommended to use external facilitation, which can assist the working group to critically reflect on their work and to resolve differences of opinion among its members.
- It is possible that a project has already clarified its approach and overall goal but does not yet know how one will lead to the achievement of the other. The ZiWi method can also be used in this case. Here, the emphasis will be on describing objectives and strategic pathways.
- Ideas for suitable interventions can be found in specialist information sources. Good Practice Examples, Practice Guidelines and relevant scientific literature (from the fields of social science, social work, psychology etc.) could all be considered.
- The descriptive summary is a good foundation for funding applications, project descriptions and similar documents used to make the work of a project transparent and comprehensible.

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Further Reading and Links

Examples for the practical application of the ZiWi Method: [DROBS Magdeburg](#), [The Homeless Colony \(Obdachlosensiedlung\) Mainz](#), [Prevention Team for Child Protection \(Präventionsteam Kinderschutz\) Berlin](#) and [Guardian Angels \(Schutzengel\) Flensburg](#)

SMART Objectives in quint-essenz (Switzerland): <http://www.quint-essenz.ch/en/topics/1133>

Wissenschaftlicher Text über die Erstellung eines „Programmbaums“ für eine wirkungsorientierte Evaluation:

Beywl, W. (2006). Demokratie braucht wirkungsorientierte Evaluation - Entwicklungspfade im Kontext der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe. In Projekt eXe (Hg) Wirkungsevaluation in der Kinder- und Jugendhilfe: Einblicke in die Evaluationspraxis. München: Deutsches Jugendinstitut.

(Academic text on developing a “program tree” for outcome evaluation:

Beywl, W. (2006). Democracy needs outcome evaluation - Paths towards its development in the context of children's and youth services. In Project eXe (Ed.): Outcome Evaluation



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in Children's and Youth Services: Insights into Evaluation Practice. Munich: German Youth Institute. (In German)

Overview over the "Theory of Change" <http://www.theoryofchange.org/about/what-is-theory-of-change/toc-background/>