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Poland Study Visit

21 – 25 October 2013, Warsaw

A study visit was organised in Poland, Warsaw between 21 and 25 October 2013 in the scope of the Joint European Union and Council of Europe Project on Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education. Among the participants were the representatives of the Ministry of National Education and Board of Education, teacher trainers and principals of pilot schools. In order to ensure proper recording and documentation of the impressions during the visit, three people were held responsible each day to note down their observations. Daily accounts were brought together and presented below as a short report of the visit.

21 – 22 October 2013

Poland Education Development Centre

Polish Education Development Centre is an affiliated institution of the Polish National Ministry of Education. Its aim is to carry out activities that will improve the level of education at schools and to support the Ministry for the same purpose. In Poland there are approximately 600.000 teachers. There are 16 voivodships as administrative units and all together there are 72 training centres although their number may vary from one voivodship to another. There are three important institutions that support schools in education: the first one is the Teacher Training Centres, which are 495 in number. The second one is the Pedagogical and Psychological Support Centres, in Poland there are 772 such centres. The last vital institution is the Pedagogical Libraries, which offer services for everyone, but especially for teachers, meeting their needs for educational resources.

Both public and private training institutions provide in-service training to teachers. The number of schools is almost 30.000, majority of which are primary schools. The average number of students is 25 and 30 in primary schools and high schools respectively.



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In each school there is a students' council and they can influence and change the decisions related to the school. There are 9 education projects that have been implemented in Poland are four of these are relevant to our subject.

1. Session: A 3-step Project designed to support teachers and schools in Poland

Ms Marianna HAJDUKIEWICZ

The first one of these aims at developing mechanisms to support teachers and students. It is funded by the European Union and it was put in practise in 3 stages. The first stage was conducted by the Ministry of National Education and focused on the diagnosis of the current state of art by means of research and analysis. The second phase is being implemented by the Education Development Centre and it sets out to define where the system needs to be changed and how this change should be handled based on the findings of the first stage. The third stage is mainly the pilot implementation of the programmes developed in this framework. The aim of these efforts is not to grant the desired transformation; instead they are trying to establish a long-term life style.

The transition period will end in 2016 and the new system/approach in the legislation will become compulsory. In this process, the institution provides support in two ways:

1. To support schools by analysing the current situation at schools
2. Ensuring a sound network service among teachers and providing them with the opportunity for exchange of information and experience.

Change has to start from a specific small field because it is not possible to make a complete transformation all at once. The most difficult part of the process is to analyse the current situation and diagnose the problems. Once it is done, it is much easier to plan and deliver training. Still there are some challenges encountered:

- Defining the topic of the training,
- Monitoring the implementation,
- Teacher's resistance,
- Reluctance or incompetence of school principals,
- Training and motivation of the coaches (consultants)



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It was underlined that the key actor in this process is the school principal and that nothing would work unless the school principals cooperates and leads the process. Hence, they offer consultancy service to school principals and teachers. For this purpose, they cooperate with the Pedagogical and Psychological Consultancy Centres and “consultants/coaches” are assigned to schools. The consultant should have good communication with the school principal and teachers. They prepare an Annual Support Plan for the school and define what needs to be done throughout the year.

In order to ensure a change and transform the system in-service training is fundamental and inevitable. When designing an in-service training, the elements below should be taken into consideration:

- There should be a link with the school and the community and surroundings.
- It has to address the needs of the school.
- The potential of various institutions should be used.
- It has to help solve the issues at schools.
- It has to help increase the level of motivation of teachers, both individually and as a group.

In networking, communication between the teacher and other teachers, the teacher and students, teachers and the school principal, and the school principal with other school principals should be taken into consideration. For teachers, the most important thing is to meet each other. Instead of a one way flow of information, teachers should meet and interact on a regular basis. In that respect, networks are established among 15 – 30 people who are not too far from one another and these people meet at least 5/6 times annually. The coordinator had the most important role/task in this process.

Pilot Project as the final stage:

There are 6000 primary schools and pre-schools in the scope of pilot implementation. A 2-year period was foreseen for piloting. At the end of the process, there will be an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses.



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Question – Answer:

1. Where and when are the in-service training seminars organised?

Training seminars are usually organised in the schools and as an extra-curricular activity.

2. How does the coaching system work in 35 thousand schools?

In theory, a full-time coach/consultant is expected to serve 9/10 schools, but in practise they work part-time and they can only deal with 5 schools. There are 1500 coaches/consultants working for schools and they receive 14-day training.

3. What is the content of the education at schools?

Schools carry out their own annual evaluation. Moreover, an external inspection is done and a report is produced every 5 years.

4. What is the impact of politics on education policies?

This is a long-term Project. Even if there have been several governments in the process, the Project runs smoothly in accordance with its aims. It started in 2007 with the research phase. This research process lasted until the end of 2009. Pilot implementation is planned to be carried out between 2010 and 2015.

5. Is there any resistance at schools?

Yes there is resistance but this resistance has been overcome in time. In-service training is required by the teachers to advance in their career. However, as teachers can already reach the highest level in around 13 years, they usually acquire their competences by the age of 35 and this leads to a lack of motivation in coming years.

2. Session: Competences of teachers and school principals

Ms Emilia KOWALCZYK-RUMAK (School Principal – “Leader of Change” in the new system)

Teaching profession has 4 main steps in the career ladder. The first stage lasts 9 months and the teacher is in the position of an intern. At this stage, teachers are employed based on the school principal’s decision. Second stage is for the contracted teachers and this period lasts 33 months. These teachers are recruited by the local education units. The next step is called “nominated teachers” and in order to reach this level, teachers have to spend another 33 months. In the final stage, teachers become certified and in the same way they have to have worked for another 33 months.



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Being a school principal is a desirable position and there are some criteria to become one. In the selection and appointment of school principals, schools consider the competences and the field of specialisation of the candidates, and hence, there are some special courses and programmes for school principals. School principals are divided into three categories based on their level of experience and trainings addressing principals are also designed and organised according to their level and on a regional basis. The main aim is to guide the principals who are new to the profession and to give an understanding and habit of life-long learning to those who already have some experience in this post. Those who are very qualified and experienced work as school coaches or mentors. Still it is highly critical to give them different perspectives no matter how experienced they are.

Training seminars addressing school principals usually comprise modules on:

- leadership,
- quality education management,
- education policies,
- human resources management,
- personal development,
- practical management skills.

Question – Answer:

1. How are school principals selected?

A teacher has to be in the 4. Level of his/her teaching career in order to apply for a position of a school principal. They also go through a two-year course. Schools usually sign a contract for 4-5 years with the principals. Posts for school principals are announced by means of newspaper ads like all other vacancies. Applicants are asked to prepare an application letter and write down a draft mission and vision about school management. It is followed by an interview by a commission. The commission is comprised of the representatives of parents, students, local administrations, trade union and teachers.

2. Is there a single union for teachers and principals or do they belong to separate trade unions?



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Yes, there are separate unions for teachers and principals and usually school principals do not approve of unions.

3. How is the legislation organised?

By-laws are flexible. Implementation depends on the regional and provincial conditions. Schools are quite autonomous. However, since local administration provides funds, there is some room for manipulation.

3. Session: E-resources and e-learning project

Mr Krszysztof NIEROJEWSKI

A programme called “Scholaris” was developed in the framework of the “Digital Schools” project of the government. The aim is to create an internet platform which will support education system and it is used to reach e-learning tools and resources. It is financed by the European Union and the aim is to provide a resource bank and a database free-of-charge. They try to provide materials that are in line with the core curriculum. It is open to everyone, including schools, parents, teachers and students.

They are working on how to make links and attributions between the lesson / curriculum and multimedia tools. Lesson plans are not extremely binding and teachers can reshape them in accordance with their specific needs. It has been planned as a very effective service for learning. Its main features are being free-of-charge and reliable and being categorised in accordance with the aim of learning (based on subject / based on topic). A wide range of materials are offered including videos, lesson scenarios, caricatures, etc. All the resources that are published on the platform are checked by an expert. Regular market research is carried out to detect the hard-to-find resources and place them on the server. The ultimate aim is to encourage teachers to improve themselves rather than providing good and effective materials for all subjects. This system was initially established to improve communication among teachers, but now it serves as a database and a server.



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Teachers expect the system to be;

- easy-to-use and fast,
- in line with the core curriculum,
- compatible with mobile devices (phone/netbook/iPad, etc.).

There are more than 26.000 educational materials in the system and in order to increase their use, their accessibility has been improved to include the blind and the hearing impaired. Teachers can use this system directly on the internet or they can download the content on their computers and they can alter/adapt it according to their needs. The system also allows teachers to draft their tests and examinations in the system and they can process and analyse the results on the internet as well. At the moment, the materials in the system cover 75% of the curriculum. When teachers want to develop something, publishers give support to the teachers.

Some figures:

150.000 users

10.000 teacher accounts

Over 26.000 materials

75% of the curriculum covered

Existing cooperation with 40 NGOs

Question – Answer:

1. Is there any distance learning for teachers?

No.

2. Who develops the materials?

Usually it is outsourced to publishers and other institutions and it is financed by the government.

3. What is the proportion of teachers who use the system?

Like in the EBA system, it is hard to tell as the system is not solely used by the teachers.



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4. Session: E-book Project

Mr Krszysztof WOJEWODZIC

The aim is to support education with technology. For this purpose, several good and bad examples have been analysed. For instance, Norway failed in this process as a monopoly of publishers in this field emerged. In Portugal, everyone was provided with a netbook. However, as its content was missing, students ended up playing games. In order for such a system to work properly, three elements are fundamental:

1. Computer and internet connection
2. Resources
3. Teacher

Some examples for similar sites:

1. Saylor.org
2. CK-12.org
3. Cnx.org
4. Khan academy: It was developed by the M.I.T. An Indian person initiated the process with an aim to helping his nieces/nephews solve their mathematics and physics questions. He started by the videos he took with his mobile phone and/or camera. Now there are more than one million users/followers of the website and it was bought by Bill Gates for 25 million dollars.

The aim is not to leave the traditional notebook-pen approach behind but to encourage students to use electronic media as well. It is not sufficient to convert the normal paperback books to PDF format to ensure an electronic platform. In that respect, they analysed the example of South Korea, where the books were merely converted to PDF documents and offered to the students. It was observed that this system did not work as the materials did not meet their needs and did not serve their purpose.

In Poland, the e-book Project can be reached from the address “epodrecanikr.pl” and the format is compatible with computers, iPad, notebooks, laptops, and phones. In the videos, they avoided direct explanation of the subject/problem. Rather, students are encouraged to practice and try. For example, for questions in maths or physics, instead of making the



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student learn the formula by heart, the method is shown and the student is expected to understand the logic behind. In the system, The system also allows the production of numerous numeric questions.

Question – Answer:

1. In Turkey some private courses have developed similar applications, but they do not offer them for free, they charge the users. Although the students have to pay for the application and services, they do not make use of these electronic resources efficiently and they do not do any homework. What could be done to eliminate such problems?

It is not possible to force the student to study and work with electronic materials. The same thing may also happen in Poland, but the most important thing is to provide the students with the necessary infrastructure and give access. What the student does with these resources and to what extent s/he benefits from the system is his/her responsibility.

2. How do you prevent unwanted content when using the internet, do you think such content should be prohibited?

There are two main paths to follow. First one is to limit and even ban such content, but the new generation of students usually find a way to break down these limits. The second path is to allow the student access this unwanted content (games, porn, etc.), about which they are very enthusiastic at first, and wait for their enthusiasm to fade. Moreover, it is important to increase their awareness about the educational use of computers. The purpose is not to show several videos to the students but to make the students understand the learning process. In that respect, teachers are more in the position of guides / mentors.

5. Session: Centre for Citizenship Education

Ms Alicja PACEWICZ & Ms Sylwia ZMIJEWSKA-KWIREG

The Centre for Citizenship Education is a non-governmental organisation which was established in 1994. It was founded by three people almost 20 years ago and it is now one of the most prominent educational institutions in the country. They define their mission as strengthening young teachers, creating new resources and opportunities, and raising responsible individuals. They believe that while generations, societies, and knowledge



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transform so rapidly, it is not possible for education to remain static... For them, education in line with democratic principles is “good” education.

Although it seems that there is no problem with democracy in theory, it is a fact that in Poland the majority of young people does not vote. Therefore, it was agreed that something should be done to help the young people understand this responsibility at an early age. The course on democracy and citizenship was included in the national curricula as a separate course in 2008. It is taught for 2 years as a compulsory course in lower secondary and 1 year, again as a compulsory course, in high school. Students are responsible for this course in their final examinations, which has its pros and cons. On the positive side, the presence of exams makes this course important. On the negative side, both teachers and students focus on the exam and teach/study accordingly. When evaluating students' performance, Project work is also evaluated. In high school 20% and in lower secondary 10% of the overall score is based on projects.

Schools run a number of different projects;

1. Learning schools: A project aiming at changing the school ethos.
2. KOSS Project: It is about citizenship education. They provide educational materials to schools.
3. Young Entrepreneurs: Students act as real entrepreneurs and try to implement their projects.
4. Young People are Voting: Its aim is to pinpoint the importance of voting. Usually it becomes more meaningful and it accelerates when it is only one month before the real elections.
5. Students' Council: Students are involved in management processes. They vote in the elections.
6. An Evening with the Ombudsman: The project aims at providing information about fundamental rights and freedoms to the people living in rural areas. In regions they cooperate with the libraries.



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23 – 24 October 2013

Ms Olena STYSLAVSKA & Ms Marzena RAFALSKA

On the first day of Training for Trainers the following subjects were covered:

Adult Education:

- difference between pedagogy and andragogy;
- group process;
- group roles;
- trainer's competence to work with a group;
- training as a project;
- results, time and space management;
- quality factors and European trends.

Participants were involved in group work related to this content and they learned by doing. Moreover, the methods and techniques used in the delivery of training were designed according to the needs of adult education.

On the second training day, the group started with the evaluation of the previous day. Participants asked some questions concerning the EDC/HRE teacher trainings they will organise and they acquired some practical information about adult education.

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