



Study visit group report

Group No 118

Title of the visit Education for the future - Developing autonomy in the formal education system

Topic Reforms in national education and training systems

City, country Gdansk, Poland

Type of visit Mixed

Dates of visit 2nd - 5th Oct 2012

Group reporter Lynne Andrews

I FINDINGS

This section summarises the findings of the group while visiting host institutions, discussing issues with the hosts and within the group. You will be reflecting on what you learnt every day. But to put them together and give an overall picture, you need to devote a special session to prepare the final report on the last day of the visit.

In this section, it is important that you describe not only things you learnt about the host country but also what you learnt about the countries represented by group members.

1. One of the objectives of the study visits programme is to exchange examples of good practice among hosts and participants. Cedefop will select well-described projects/programmes/initiatives and disseminate them to former participants and a wider public, including potential partners for future projects. Therefore it is important that you identify and describe all aspects that, in your view, make these projects/programmes/initiatives successful and worth exploring.

In general, we have really enjoyed the study visit, and learning together as a mixed group of people. We found that our countries share many problems and challenges - and it was instructive to share what is happening in different countries, and find examples of approaches and solutions.

- Academies in Great Britain are interesting, because it's way of introducing autonomy in non profit schools.
- Relationship with Chamber of Commerce is a good example of developing vocational education to meet employment needs (Polish model).

- Autonomous schools (Bulgaria, Germany) have the financial resources to train the teachers in skills; this is essential for a good education system.
- Positive management and support can change the quality of teaching and learning (PROREKO Germany).
- Italian system for allowing School to plan their timetable and length of day and week is positive (within standard number of total hours).

Describe each of the good practices you learnt about during the visit (both from the hosts and from one another) indicating the following:

title of the project/programme/initiative	country	name of the institution that implements it (if possible, provide a website)	contact person (if possible) who presented the programme to the group	whom the project/programme/initiative addresses	what features of the project/programme/initiative make it an example of good practice
Polish Vocational Training	Poland	Pomorskie Szkoły Rzemiosł w Gdańsku - http://psr.gda.pl (Pomeranian Schools of Crafts)	Head Teacher - Jolanta Błaszczak	Craft and Technical Education and Employment	The close working relationship with The Chamber of Crafts for Small and Medium Enterprises both in education, skills and financial involvement ensures acquisition of skills and standards for employment and local employment for young people.
Academies	UK	Department for Education http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies	John Myers – DfE	Schools and school leaders	An example of extending significant autonomy to schools in a non-profit context.
Proreko	Germany	http://www.proreko.de	Henning Gerlach	Vocational schools at upper secondary	A way of establishing centres of excellence that seek to spread good practice in vocational education
School administration	Italy		Francesco Berti	School administrators and local policy makers	How autonomy is given to Italian schools in relation to non-teaching resources, and how this is managed
Gifted Students	Pomeranian regional self-government, Poland	DEiS UM WP (Department of Education and Sport, Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship Office) http://www.pomorskie.eu	Adam Krawiec	Schools and local policy makers	Approach to supporting gifted students, and developing them with a particularly connection to local issues such as the Marine environment.
Social Media Project	Poland	Zespół Szkół Ogólnokształcących nr 6 w Gdańsku (general junior and senior secondary	Head Teacher: Tomasz Zbierski -	Students in general education	This project used different methods to engage students in understanding the impact of using Social Media and the choices they can make when sharing information or

		schools), www.zso6gda.v24.pl			communicating via social media enhancing their understanding of responsibility.
Polish Academy of Children	Poland	Stowarzyszenie Polska Akademia Dzieci (NGO), http://akademiadzieci.wordpress.com	Agata Hofman PhD	ngo's, universities	This project was a good example of engaging children in learning (when very young) and how they can learn of each other through lectures and workshops supported by involving universities and professors.

* You can describe as many good practices as you find necessary. You can add rows to the table.

2. The study visits programme aims to promote and support policy development and cooperation in lifelong learning. That is why it is important to know what you learnt about such policies and their implementation during your visit. You are invited to describe your findings concerning the following:

2.1 APPROACHES TAKEN BY PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES (BOTH HOST AND PARTICIPANTS') REGARDING THE THEME OF THE VISIT. ARE THERE ANY SIMILAR APPROACHES/MEASURES IN PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES? WHAT ASPECTS ARE SIMILAR AND WHY? WHAT ASPECTS ARE DIFFERENT AND WHY?

The group noted overall there are more similarities than differences in the education systems in participating countries. The current economic climate is having an impact; often education reform and implementation is motivated by the need to save money rather than improve quality. The similarities and differences are outlined below:

Similarities:

- Most participating countries are prolonging education, making it compulsory to age 18. Great Britain is raising the school leaving age to 18 by 2015. Some Participant countries are lowering the age for starting education (Kindergarten).
- All of the countries represented are concerned with creating schools with autonomy to improve standards; although there may be variations within this - see differences below.
- There is a trend to integrate students with learning difficulties or disabilities into mainstream education across the countries represented on the Study Visit.
- Poland, as with countries represented, are reducing the core curriculum to key competencies. All Government education departments in participating countries determine the core curriculum.

- There is a general theme that young people's social and employability skills need to be improved. This is being incorporated into the curriculum.
- There is an increased emphasis on working to meet local employment needs and providing study to support this.
- Measuring competencies, both in determining what these are and how and when these should be assessed is still a challenge across all participating countries.
- Student academic results determine whether a vocational or academic path is taken. This is usually determined between age 14 -16.

Differences:

- Some participating countries employ teachers centrally (Greece, Cyprus and Italy), this makes it difficult for Head Teachers to manage and remove less competent teachers. Also causes delays in recruiting teachers.
- Poland has more control of its education providers in the Province (devolved from central government).
- Autonomy in Great Britain devolves power to Academy/Free School rather than to local government; although the latter was the case until education reforms introduced recently have allowed for more development of autonomous schools.

2.2 CHALLENGES FACED BY PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES (INCLUDING HOST) IN THEIR EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT POLICIES RELATED TO THE THEME OF THE VISIT. WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES? ARE THEY COMMON CHALLENGES? IF SO, WHY? IF NOT, WHY NOT?

- Sweden and Great Britain carried out several reforms over last 10-15 years but are still on downward trend (PISA). Poland and German carried out similar reforms, but are on an upward trend. It's hard to tell what kind of reform effects what kind of progress.
- All countries face the challenge of promoting equal opportunities for all of their students, and ensuring that 100% of all young people mature as good citizens and can make an effective contribution to society. In many countries this is in the context of less funding for education, schools or teachers.
- You can do whatever you want in reforms but if you don't know what/how to measure then you can't be sure of success.
- How do you measure employment sustainability and where does this start - primary, secondary? This is a challenge for all participating countries.

- Schools in many countries face practical challenges of being able to effectively coordinate all the resources around the whole child, in a holistic and effective package - including teachers, well maintained school buildings and other resources. In some cases this is an issue of control, with municipalities controlling some resources - sometimes involving bureaucracy or other difficulties - and with other aspects left to the school or national government. For example there is a difference in recruitment of teachers i.e. schools in some countries don't get to select or release their teachers, some can select but not release. There are difficulties for schools in some countries with funding allocations which did not always support autonomy in schools - sometimes allocations were made only for a year at a time (for example in Sweden) or were changed (for example in Italy).
- There are challenges in many countries having the right data or robust evaluation that enable fair comparisons between the quality of teaching in different schools.

2.3 NAME AND DESCRIBE EFFECTIVE AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED THAT PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES (BOTH HOST AND PARTICIPANTS) APPLY TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES MENTIONED IN QUESTION 2.2. PLEASE MENTION SPECIFIC COUNTRY EXAMPLES.

Reforms in Great Britain are allowing more autonomy in schools giving them the opportunity to develop their own priorities within the framework of the national curriculum. Schools can manage their finances to develop a programme of study that raises standards to meet the needs of the students; this includes extending the school day to provide extra lessons. The financial involvement of the Chamber of Crafts in Gdansk ensures training and employment for students in the locality and maintains standards in vocational and technical skills through the involvement of local industry. The programme for gifted children in Gdansk and Pomerania ensures such students are stretched and challenged through extra classes, mentoring and contact with professors in universities. Annual meetings and forums that gather together representatives from schools, universities and the regional economy facilitate discussion on issues connected with the quality of education from stakeholders and assist in the development of curriculum to meet the needs of the local economy.

In Italy devolved curriculum management allows schools to meet the needs of the local context.

To address the problem of quality and currency of teaching we thought that part of the solution in many countries could be funded in service training - perhaps with regular, maybe even compulsory annual training, for teachers in how to teach their subject i.e. incorporating changes and developments.

Further examples of interesting good practice are given elsewhere in this report.

2.4 ASSESSMENT OF THE TRANSFERABILITY OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES. COULD ANY EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE PRESENTED IN THIS REPORT BE APPLIED AND TRANSFERRED TO OTHER COUNTRIES? IF SO, WHY? IF NOT, WHY NOT?

It is necessary to vary the models of autonomous schools to adapt to different social and geographical contexts. However, we thought that many of the examples of good practice we saw were interesting for other countries to learn from.

We discussed whether it might be possible to build on the European Qualifications Framework to introduce clear common quality standards (in addition to tests like PISA) that enable comparisons of the quality of education in schools in different countries, and to support the mobility of families and citizens across Europe and between education systems. This approach should even enable EU to identify best practices and eventually share them through the various countries.

3. Creating networks of experts, building partnerships for future projects is another important objective of the study visit programme.

Please state whether and which ideas for future cooperation have evolved during meetings and discussions.

We're keen to stay in touch and continue learning from each other. Also to share information on systems as they develop to ensure both successes and challenges are reflected on.

TO SUM UP

4. What is the most interesting/useful information that the group believes should be communicated to others? To whom, do you think, this information will be of most interest?

Gaining an understanding of autonomy in education both in Poland and other countries has given us the opportunity to evaluate practice across the range of participating countries. Within this we are aware that the implementation of systems from other countries should be done with care as noted above in 2.4.

THANK YOU!