



Study visit group report



Group No 247

Title of the visit Bolstering Education in Malta through Restructuring and Empowerment

Topic Reforms in national education and training systems

City, country St. Julians, Malta

Type of visit Study visit

Dates of visit 9th-13th May

Group reporter Dr. Holger Falk

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.

Introduction

The aim of the study visit in Malta was to show the participants the dramatic and significant reform of the Maltese education system since 2006. We were provided with the methodology used to devise an educational reform policy, cooperation between schools that form part of a college system, organizational skills involved in college management, the strengths

and weaknesses of implementing such a system and the quality assurance as a key competence in national curricula.

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.

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
COMENIUS Healthy children, healthy Europe, - Malta	Malta	Zajtun Primary school	Mr Brian Craus, head	Teachers, pupils	Breaking stereotypes, open minds, implementation of healthy customs.
“Sport nach 1”	Germany	Bayerische Landesstelle für den Schulsport www.laspo.de	Holger Falk	Schools/sports clubs	Good practice examples for the cooperation between schools and sports clubs to enable additional physical exercise.
“Schulsport-Mentoren”	Germany	Bayerische Landesstelle für den Schulsport www.laspo.de	Holger Falk	schools	Good practice examples for schools to enable/train students to take over the role of supervisors during additional physical exercise of students.
External evaluation	Czech Republic	Czech School Inspectorate	PetrDrabek	Inspectorates, SICI	The practise of inspectorate
Quality of Education	Czech Republic	Czech School Inspectorate	PetrDrabek	Heads, inspectors	Internal x external evaluation of school; criteria of quality, indicators
Pre-university plus	TheNetherlands	ISW www.isw.info	AadBom	schools	Compact curriculum for enhancing the potential; 24 instead of 32 lessons for these groups plus special projects. More challenge and less underperformance.
Future Challenges on VET in the green, agricultural sector	Poland	EUROPEA Poland	WieslawaGasiorowska	Teachers, stakeholders responsible for education in green sector	This partnership was planned to be a real “learning community” to integrate the European dimension into training activities and exchange good practices. National surveys, carried out among VET teachers, students and entrepreneurs, analyzed

					national situations
“Tudasdepo-expressz” Knowledge de po-express	Hungary	Nemzeti Fejlesztési Ugy nokseg	Zsolt Danos	Teachers, students, parents, stakeholders, libraries	This program was planned to empower the non-formal and informal learning methods by public libraries.
“Innovativ kutato iteamek” Innovative research teams	Hungary	Nemzeti Fejlesztési Ugy nokseg	Zsolt Danos	Universities, foreign higher education institutes, researchers, scientists	This program was aimed at international collaboration between universities in order to launch a new research program and complete unique scientific results.
“Cortolab” Movie lab	Italy	Liceo Scientifico Statale E. Segrè - Marano di Napoli www.liceosegre.it	Assunta Compagnone	Students, parents, stakeholders	This project was aimed to empower the non-formal and informal learning methods in the field of active citizenship, inclusion, healthy environment and intercultural.
“Marano Ragazzi Spot Festival”	Italy	Miur -Usr Campania- Network schools of Marano di Napoli, Liceo Scientifico Statale E. Segrè www.spotragazzi.it	Assunta Compagnone	Students, parents, stakeholders, schools of Italy	Good practice of school network in the same town to promote legality, social welfare, peace, healthy environment using social advertising
“Corti a scuola” Short movie lab	Italy	ITE e Liceo Linguistico GiulioC esare - Bari www.itcgiulioesare.it	Addolorata Armienti	Students, parents, companies, teachers stakeholder, Schools	The aims are: improving non-formal and informal learning, inclusion and promote active citizenship.
GC News Web Magazine ITC Giulio Cesare - Bari	Italy	ITE e Liceo Linguistico GiulioC esare - Bari www.itcgiulioesare.it	Addolorata Armienti	Students, parents, companies, teachers stakeholder, Schools	Good practice for schools to enable/train students to take their responsibility, empower non-formal and informal learning and to promote active citizenship
“Porte aperte in azienda” Practice firm, stage	Italy	ITE e Liceo Linguistico GiulioC esare - Bari www.itcgiulioesare.it	Addolorata Armienti	Students, parents, companies, teachers stakeholder, Schools	Learning by doing, transition school-world of work
“Trainingsinsel”	Germany	Wilhelm-Maybach- Schule in Heilbronn www.wms-hn.de	Andy Hoffner	Students, teachers	Good practice example to minimise disturbances by pupils during the lessons with sustainable effect.

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?

a) Restructuring and empowerment of schools by a college-system/ introduction of comprehensive school system:

Restructuring of the education system was one of the main topics of the visit. Six years ago, the Ministry of Education in Malta started bringing individual schools together to make them cooperate under one college and introducing a comprehensive school system. Until last year, an 11plus-exam at the age of eleven decided which schools students would go to. They were “streamed” into different schools (lyceum or secondary schools). Many of the participating countries, including the Netherlands, Germany and France have a similar approach. As of this year, in Malta there is no such 11plus-exam anymore. Instead, pupils are still benchmarked in three standardized exams after primary school but stay together in the same secondary school afterwards. Similar approaches are also to be found in other participating countries such as Denmark and the Czech Republic.

b) Inclusion:

Inclusion of students with special needs into the “normal” school system. Even though Malta has special schools where students with special needs go to and where they are differentiated according to their age, they want to integrate as many as possible into the regular school system.

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?

a)

- Difficulties in dealing with students with different abilities

The abolishment of the “streaming” practice has proved to be a challenge, which is obvious to both the host and some of the participants’ countries, as the manner of differentiating the teaching according to the students’ abilities is still a big question. There will always have to be some sort of separation.

- difficulties of transition from the old to the new system are a cause of concerns for everyone involved
- the creation of a whole new curriculum
- re-/allocation to certain colleges can cause disappointment of staff
- the teachers training

- convincing all stakeholders (parents, teachers, students, teacher unions) of the advantages of the new system
- the creation of new departments and councils, finding experts etc. and the allocation of certain responsibilities on them
- the creation of standards to assess the quality of the system
- balance the changes in a systematic combination
- the change from a more academic approach of education to a broader one

b) Inclusion

Organisational challenges:

- immense need for additional staff
- proper facilities

General challenges:

- dealing with the fear of regular students' parents that their children could face disadvantages in their education due to the inclusion of students with special needs
- finding appropriate means to measure the success of inclusion for the students with special needs
- finding means of accurately diagnosing the true needs of the disabled students

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.

a) In the host country (or at least in the college visited), this challenge is faced by offering mixed ability groups in certain subjects such as English, Maths, Maltese, Religion and social studies (“setting”).

Poland/Hungary: according to challenges we have too many exams after each level of education which leads to dividing schools into poor-performing (weak) and better performing ones without external assessment made by a running body of school. As a result, we have competitiveness instead of cooperation like in Malta. We have to minimize the academic approach in level 1 and 2. We started educational reforms 10 years ago and now we have obtained our aims. Now the big challenge is to make upper secondary education more attractive for students, especially in the vocational sector.

Denmark: The Danish Folkeskole is a comprehensive school covering both primary and lower secondary education, i.e. the first (grade 1 to 6) and second (grade 7-9/10) stage basic education.

In other words, it caters for the 7-16/17-year-olds.

Students must complete the following tests:

Danish, with a focus on reading • in form levels 2, 4, 6 and 8.

English in form level 7. • Mathematics in form level 3 • and 6.

Geography in form level 8. •Biology in form level 8. •Physics/chemistry in form level • 8.

The tests are computer based and adaptive, meaning that they are continuously adapted to the individual student. If a student answers a question incorrectly, then they are given an easier question; if the student answers correctly, they are given a more difficult question. In this way, it is assured that the tests provide a precise picture of each student's academic level. No two students receive exactly same test. It is therefore not possible to make internal comparative evaluations of the tests within a specific class.

The test is one of a number of pedagogical tools available to the teacher. Together with the results of the evaluation, which the teachers also make use of, these tools are to be used in the planning of the further programme of education. The results are also used in guiding the individual student and will additionally be beneficial in strengthening cooperation with parents.

Italy

The innovative solutions which we have identified are colleges permitting:

1. Better transition of students from primary to secondary levels
2. Differentiated learning possibilities for students
3. More effective management of curricular developments, sharing of resources, experience and good practice
4. Environment for innovations, team-spirit and college initiatives
5. Cost-effectiveness through economies of scale
6. Schools developing into community learning centres
7. Improved educational outcomes for all children
8. To ensure that students within the College receive their educational entitlement according to their potential in a full, continuous and smooth process of education from an early age to the end of compulsory education in the perspective of lifelong learning and inspired by the highest human values.
9. To develop the character and identify thereof and ensure the improvement of the quality of the educational provision in schools by promoting, achieving and maintaining high results and standards by all College members and students.
10. To ensure a professional development process for teachers and monitor the operation, administration and general conduct of the schools within the College.
11. To ensure that the National Curriculum Framework is translated into an appropriate curriculum for College students and that this is implemented in all its schools with the best methodologies, including an extensive use of the information and communication technology as a pedagogical tool.

b) Inclusion

Malta:

- some 1450 LSAs (Learning Support Assistants) for some 2000 students with special needs
- student and support service in the Department

- Inclusive Education Coordinator (INCO) for each college
- Individual Education Plan (IEP) for each student with special needs, reviewed every year

Italy:

SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORT IN ITALIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM

In Italy, disabled pupils have been integrated into ordinary schools for more than 30 years; therefore, there is not a separate education system for these pupils, except for some special schools that are still operating.

In the mid-seventies, integration started in nursery schools and primary schools and was progressively extended to the lower and upper secondary schools and universities. It was introduced first on an experimental basis and then regularly implemented.

Law No. 104/1992 establishes that 'handicapped children aged 0-3 are granted enrolment in day nurseries' and that 'the right to education is granted to handicapped children in the sections of pre-primary schools, in ordinary classes of every school types and levels and in the universities'.

Special measures for immigrant children and those from ethnic minorities.

Since the presence of immigrant children in Italian schools, especially in primary and lower secondary schools, has been increasing in the last years, Law 40/1998 includes dispositions on the education of foreign students who have the right to attend compulsory school and to take part in the school community being subjected to all regulations in force.

The linguistic and cultural differences are welcome as values which help students live in a multiracial environment where tolerance and respect are the basic principles. That is the reason why Italy promotes and encourages initiatives for the reception and protection of the language and culture of origin by carrying out common intercultural activities.

According to the Ministerial circular No. 24 of 1st March 2006, the 'Guidelines for the integration of foreign students' provide some suggestions for the organization and planning of the teaching activity at upper secondary level of education.

Denmark:

Denmark has signed the Salamanca Declaration, which calls on governments to facilitate Inclusive Education. This is reflected in the way special needs education is organized. In most cases, the student remains in a mainstream school class and receives special education in one or more subjects as a supplement to the general teaching. However, not all students benefit from remaining in the mainstream class. Therefore a student may receive special education that substitutes for the student's participation in the normal education in one or more subjects. A student may also be taught in a special class either within a mainstream school or within a special school. And finally a combination is possible in which the student is a member of either a mainstream school class or a special class, but receives education in both types of classes. Special classes may be organized for students with intellectual disabilities, dyslexia, hearing problems or the like.

The provisions of the Folkeskole Act (regarding aims, curricula, evaluations, tests, school leaving exams etc.) apply to all students. Accordingly, students with special needs are in principle met with the same expectations as any other student. Special needs education includes differential teaching, counseling, technical aid and personal assistance.

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?

With the reforms we witnessed in Malta, you always have to consider the fact that it is a small island with comparatively few students and easy accessibility of institutions. None of the participants' countries has comparable prerequisites.

Therefore, it is not a big problem to introduce inclusion on an island like Malta. Malta, playing a leading role EU-wide in this sector, has so far employed some 1450 LSAs (Learning Support Assistants) for some 2000 students with special needs. This leads to at least two teachers per class at primary level and in most cases to a one-to-one support of the students with special needs.

a)

- due to the size of Malta and number of school organizations, the inclusion is more effective and cheaper
- it is much easier to make and spread decisions
- 10 principals become members of wider management → mobility is not an obstacle

b)

- for the state it is very good investment to bring handicapped children into mainstream schools; special schools or institutes are very expensive
- it is a very good policy in the eyes of society
- the role of LSA (Learning Support Assistant) is crucial for this reform
- it is very important to have a good infrastructure
- money must follow pupils
- special equipment is necessary (notebooks, smartboards, special books, IT-equipment, laboratories etc.)

Germany:

In Germany, which has of course also the Salamanca Declaration, inclusion will be one of the biggest challenges in the coming years. Unlike in many other countries, there is currently a highly specified and well working system of special schools. Moreover, pupils with physical impairments are already well integrated and pupils with other impairments as much as the sort or degree of impairment allows. Thus, the transition from that system to an inclusive one would be by no means easy.

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.

- No, because it is not a project but a general reform of the education system and in most EU countries a political decision.

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?

- the idea of the educational reform “For all children to succeed” at any level
- heads and principles are given a contract for three years and will be evaluated before the contract is prolonged
- cooperation between all school types (primary, secondary, upper secondary) under one college (about 10 schools within one college) with regular meetings
- Malta has risen the expenditure on education to 5.3 % of GDP and is therefore above the EU average → e.g. the facilities and working conditions of teachers have been improved (e.g. smartboards, laptops for all teachers, computers in every classroom)

THANK YOU!