



CEDEFOP

European Centre
for the Development
of Vocational Training



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

END-OF-VISIT REPORT

Group Number: 69
Theme: Actors of Education: pupils, teachers and parents.
Title: In which way is the teacher to be supported in the 21st century?
City, country: Kielce, Poland
Dates: 7th April – 11th April 2008
Group reporter: Geoff Tew

Introduction

The group that visited Kielce from 7th – 11th April 2008 was composed of five participants from four countries. The group consisted of a Head teacher, two teacher trainers and two professional development advisers.

Name	Position	Country/Region
Emin Aydin	Assistant Professor – Teacher Training	Turkey - Istanbul
Katya Schader	Teacher Trainer	Germany - Hannover
Peter Gartner	Head teacher	Germany – Darmstadt/Hessen
Juan Baptista Garcia Laredo	Teacher Professional Development Adviser	Spain - Granada
Geoff Tew	Teacher Professional Development Adviser	United Kingdom - Devon

The European dimension of the visit was very successful in bringing together a group of educational professionals from different countries. There was general agreement that we all face similar challenges in preparing and supporting teachers for the 21st Century in our countries even if the focus and pace of change varies between systems.

Our hosts were extremely generous both with their hospitality and with their time. The group would wish to extend our sincere thanks for the kindness, time and trouble that were taken to ensure that the visit was successful.

Overall impressions

[How satisfied were you with the study visit? *Please indicate the number of participants for each category.*]

Very satisfied Satisfied 5 Fairly satisfied Dissatisfied

The visit was well planned by colleagues in the Swietokrzyskie Centrum Doskonalenia Nauczycieli (SCDN). A detailed programme was provided and the visit was supported by excellent organisation and interpretation from specialist staff from the Institute. Despite the need to transport the group in and around the area of Kielce, the activities took place according to the programme and included a range of opportunities to listen to presentations, observe teaching in the classroom and professional development in the training centre.

The agenda of the programme contained a variety of activities, visits and experiences that helped the group to develop an understanding of the ways in which Polish teachers are currently supported and developed in their roles.

The activities on the visit started with a detailed briefing on the work of the institute and its staff along with the opportunity to meet the Director and senior staff. The group was also able to hear about the role of the Education Inspectorate from the Swietokrzyskie Province. This was followed by a range of visits to schools and institutions. Some of the activities made a limited contribution to the development of the theme. We feel that future visits would benefit from the SCDN reviewing the balance of these activities and we have made recommendation for this later in the report.

Programme content

The programme title reflects the priorities of all members of the group. However, some activities had limited impact on the development of this theme. For example, the conference on the Monday, 'My school is a school of enterprise' was of interest but raised limited issues for the future development of teachers. We found that there were fewer opportunities than we would have liked to have discussions on practice with smaller groups of practitioners. There were no opportunities for members of the group to identify their individual areas of interest and pursue these with individuals or small groups of Polish education professionals.

The programme provided a balance between presentations and the opportunity to observe and take part in practical sessions and the organisers had clearly organised a diverse programme. The group would have liked more opportunities to work in practical contexts and identify and explore issues in more depth through conversation and debate. The group recognise that language is a significant barrier to working in this way, however, by working in smaller groups and using the excellent translation services provided it would have been possible to explore in more detail the issues around the training and development that lie at the heart of the preparation and support of teachers for the 21st Century.

The group developed an understanding of the Polish educational system from a wide range of inputs. A clear picture was provided of the work of the Institute in providing training courses for teachers, the work of the inspectorate in supervision of the system, the development programmes in schools and how the University is supporting the recruitment and training of the teaching workforce.

There was significant discussion during the visit on the role of collaboration between organisations and schools in the training and professional development of teachers although limited examples of this were seen in practice in Poland. There was also discussion among the group on the organisation of schools, the recruitment of teachers, their training and the development of school leadership and how these areas might be developed to support teachers in the future.

All group participants recognise the need in their individual countries to encourage and develop reflective practitioners in education. Whether developing their knowledge of specialist curriculum content or of pedagogy it is necessary for teachers to be able to reflect on their learning and classroom practice in order to continue to develop and to provide adaptable classroom responses to the changing needs of the young people they teach.

In response to the need to develop reflective practitioners the group identified the need for high quality in-service professional development to support teachers. New approaches to teaching in the 21st Century will require new approaches to teacher professional development and all countries involved in the visit are developing aspects of their practice in response to this.

The question of the balance and timing of training for teachers in content or in methodology within their professional development was identified by several members of the group as a common issue.

There is an issue of the consistency of training and development of teachers. In the countries of the visit, teachers are not required to engage in professional development, although some countries have more significant incentives. Lack of engagement with professional development is recognised as a barrier to the implementation of new learning and teaching methods.

The following issues could be further explored:

- How can we demonstrate the impact of professional development on teachers, and through this focus future work on strategies that help to develop the quality of learning?
- How can we encourage teachers to be reflective practitioners, and through this embrace change leading to improvements in the quality of learning?
- How can the right conditions for effective professional development be created by school leaders, educationalists and politicians?

The group members feel that there were limited opportunities within the programme for members to share the current educational priorities and developments within their countries with the host country. The session devoted to this was short and limited time was available to extend the discussion. None of the participating countries has solutions to all of the challenges of teacher professional development; however all of the countries taking part would have been able to make contributions to a discussion on the development of local strategy within Poland if the visit had a more specific focus on development for the future.

The group observed some examples of skilled and effective classroom practice. During these sessions we found that pupils were cooperative, motivated and interested in their lessons. Teachers were well prepared in relation to the structure of their lessons. It was clear that pedagogy and practice were developing in the classrooms that we visited. The group had an opportunity to discuss some aspects of these lessons with the teachers after the observations but not enough time to put the classroom observations in the context of a developing strategy for new approaches to learning.

The group saw a variety of interesting and thought provoking activities in institutions and schools. The programmes centred on developing enterprise in schools and the teacher training approaches to assessing pupil's work in the classroom embody key principles in the development of learning that all participating countries are focussed on.

More time would be needed to gain a better understanding of the practices currently in place in the participating and host countries before the group would be able to suggest which policies from the host country had the potential to be transferred. A possible exchange of materials and future contacts among the participants may result in individual approaches being explored further.

Networking

The group have exchanged contacts and we believe that there are some future opportunities to establish collaborations between schools and institutions in the member countries. The group has noted an interest from Polish schools to develop contacts with other schools across Europe. The group have the opportunity to exchange education materials relating to specific aspects of the study visit.

There has been an offer to group members from the University of Kielce to take part in a conference to be held in the area in the autumn 2008 around the theme of 'Programmes, Methods and Learning in Europe'.

Excellent support was provided to the group by the organiser. This support has gone beyond the expectations of the group and we would like to recognise the commitment of the organiser to making this visit a positive experience for the members.

The programme was received in advance by most members of the group, although information from national agencies varied. Good opportunities for prior briefing were provided in the host countries.

The group consisted of a Head teacher, two teacher trainers and two professional development advisers. The breadth of expertise and experience in this grouping was appropriate to the theme of the visit and brought a range of useful perspectives to the discussions. We believe that the size of the group was appropriate for this visit; a larger group would have not been suitable due to the needs of interpretation at meetings, school visits and conferences.

There were limited opportunities within the programme for discussion and reflection. The group strongly advise that future programmes should have opportunity for group discussion included in the daily activities. While this will inevitably reduce the scope of the programme it will significantly increase the potential impact of the visit across the participants and the host organisation.

Suggestions

The group would like to make five recommendations for the development of future study visits.

1. There should be an opportunity for the participants to contribute their individual needs in advance of the visit in order to shape some activities of the programme.
2. In order to meet the needs identified above there should be some sessions that offer differentiated activities and options within the programme.
3. The programme should include a daily scheduled opportunity for group discussion.
4. The visit should end with a structured outcome activity such as a review meeting, plenary discussion or conference input.

5. It is important to offer as many opportunities as possible for the group to work with education professionals in the working language of the visit to avoid the limitations of translation.

The group would like to extend their sincere thanks to the staff of the SCDN, Inspectorate, University, the schools and pupils involved in this visit. All members of the group thoroughly enjoyed their visit to this historic and beautiful area of Poland and have many memories to take away.