

Example of good practice in a Czech school

Methodological sheets for foreign pupil education at school P: example of an internal teacher network supporting inclusive education

Topic and aim of the network

The topic of the internal network at school P is quality improvement in the education of foreign pupils and support for teachers across the school in this field.

Motivation (starting points)

Attended by 680 pupils, school P is a big school in a large city. Among these pupils there are 40 foreigners (Ukrainian, Slovak, Vietnamese, Russian, French, Polish, Croatian, Jordanian, Romanian, British and Syrian) and approximately 20 more Vietnamese pupils with Czech citizenship from families in which Czech is not spoken so that they have bigger or smaller problems using the language. Limited knowledge of Czech is manifested during the learning process in all subjects. When working with these pupils, so far teachers had to rely on themselves and their own intuition and experience. They used available support measures (teacher assistants, alternative ways of testing, extra time allowed for task solution, adapted evaluation of results, and so on). There was no methodological manual available in order to make their work easier.

The number of foreign pupils in this school is rising as the Czech Republic also opens its borders to European as well as non-European countries, therefore the subject matter of foreign pupils is increasingly appearing in discussions at teacher meetings and there is need to create at least a basic framework to facilitate their education.

Teachers/schools involved and the role of the headteacher

With the support from a European project within the operational programme *Prague — a pole of growth*, the leaders of the school established a group of teachers whose aims were to create a methodological aid for teachers of foreign pupils and create functional support for pupils with different mother tongue. The following members of the group were involved:

- a school psychologist
- a special educator (project guarantor)
- two teachers (authors of the methodological material)
- four assistants for foreign pupils (4th and 5th year students at a faculty of education)
- the deputy headteacher
- the assistant of the headteacher
- teachers in the school club/library

The setup of the team was planned during the preparation of the project. Its members held regular monthly meetings during the whole project, i.e. two years. The members of the team played roles that were clearly defined. The project was guaranteed by the special educator, who was responsible for the professional part of the project, report writing, observance of the deadlines, etc. The administrative and economic part of the project was managed by the assistant of the headteacher. The two teachers in charge of the professional part of the methodological manual were supported by practical experience of the assistants, the school psychologist and the special educator. All of these members of the group co-wrote the manual and verified the recommendations in practice. Teachers working in the school club, library and study centre were in charge of supportive leisure activities meant to integrate pupils with

different mother tongue. They helped them to prepare for lessons and gave them recommendations for reading in Czech.

An important role within the network was played by the deputy headteacher, who looked at the project from the viewpoint of school leadership and created conditions for teamwork. The role of school leaders can be described in three stages:

- Stage one: together with teachers, school leaders identified the need for pupils with different mother tongue to be supported by teachers; they discussed the options of this support with the members of the school counselling centre (school psychologist, special educator), then initiated and, in fact, wrote the project, looked for suitable financial resources and composed the starting setup of the team.
- Stage two: once accepted the project, school leaders maintained contact with the team (through the deputy headteacher mainly), created conditions for project implementation and saw to the administration support, hire of personnel (student assistants) and the dissemination of information about the work of the team to other teachers and people outside the school.
- Stage three: when finalizing the methodological manual, school leaders planned to sustain and develop the outcome of the project, monitored the use of the methodological manual inside the school, created conditions for its further development and made it possible to disseminate the outcome elsewhere (by means of the web site of the school).

Benefits

The outcome of the cooperation is a methodological textbook for work with foreign pupils. It contains methodological sheets describing various activities for children with different mother tongue, designed to support social integration in a new setting and facilitate the learning process (working sheets, didactic aids, diagnostic material, games, suggestions for social activities, and so on). It is a methodology used by teachers, assistants and special educators. It is available in Czech at

<http://www.zskunratice.cz/ucitele/projekt-oppnr/metodika-integrace-zaku-s-odlismym-materskym-jazykem-omj-10895>

http://www.zskunratice.cz/files/items/10895/files/metodika_integrace_zaku_s_omj_2018-02-16_final.pdf

The manual is now in pilot use in classrooms where needed. It is continuously updated according to remarks made by teachers and assistants. Due to the short period of use, the impact on pupils has not yet been evaluated, but the material is alive and the network of cooperating teachers keeps existing, collecting experience with the manual and developing it.

The outcome of the project is meaningful for both pupils and teachers. Teachers started reflecting on the problems of foreign pupils from a wider perspective and accepted a wide range of potential support. The coordination between teachers and assistants, as well as between teachers and school counsellors, has been enhanced. Various school leaders' supervising activities such as methodological support from the deputy headteacher to assistants have been developing since.

The school succeeded in gathering a group of motivated university students who became assistants supported by the school psychologist, special educator and deputy headteacher. Also, these assistants collaborated intensely with class teachers who had pupils with different mother tongue in their classes. Therefore, the project was also important for these students, who became a prospective potential for the school.

Applicable in wider contexts beyond this school, the methodological manual is freely available. The whole team has had a good experience and people in the school have

convinced themselves that their expertise could be successfully offered to other schools in this and other forms.

Limits

Each new project and work in a network of teachers has its risks. When intensely working on this project, heavy workload was perceived by both the members of the school counselling centre and teacher assistants and class teachers, who had to cooperate closely.

Difficulties arise when a working and intensely cooperating network loses one of its members. During this project, one of the assistants finished her studies and left the city, so it was necessary to redistribute her work among the remaining assistants. This was one of difficult situations.

Another risk, rather unforeseeable, is the attitude of parents. Thanks to enhanced public awareness and education of parents (the school is a regular school in a location inhabited by middle and higher class families, not a socially excluded place) they can understand and support the processes taking place in the school. They perceive the improved individual support their children with different mother tongue receive. They are satisfied with it and, rather paradoxically, leave more care and responsibility up to the school. So it became a challenge for the school to maintain the cooperation with the parents of pupils with different mother tongue.