

Organisation: Schweizerischer Verband für Weiterbildung SVEB

Meeting: Second partner meeting

Host organisation: NRDC

Date: 27/28 February, 2012

Location: London

Reflections:

What were the most useful experiences

David's presentation on the analysis of the challenges of the partner countries which was followed by group discussions was very useful. The presentation showed, that although professionalization of basic skills teacher training is at a different stage in all partner countries, the challenges (such as funding and setting national standards for teacher training) are similar. In my opinion it is important that we continue the discussion on the challenges in the partner countries every time we meet.

It was very useful, that the methods and instruments used for teacher training in England were shown explained in a very practical way. We as participants were involved directly as we'd be trainees, which was both challenging and impressing.

What can be considered as examples of good practices?

All the teacher trainings presented at the meeting can be considered as good practice. It became very clear that there is a long tradition of training basic skills trainers in the UK. The trainings are at a high level what content, methods and instruments is concerned.

If I have to pick one example that especially impressed me, I would choose the method of observing and learning from peer teachers, which is used already at an early stage in teacher training. It was shown that it's vital to get teaching experience already in the early stage of the training and that it's important to learn and get constructive feedback from peer teachers and also the learners.

What did you learn that is similar or different from policy and practice in your own country?

I learned that there exist national standards for the training of basic skills teachers and BS teacher training is taught at university level. Both is not the case in Switzerland. What is similar, it seems, is that funding in general and the part-time and temporary status of the current workforce remain to be a problem in both countries.

What conclusions can be drawn from the experiences of the meeting?

When I reflect on the presentations at the meeting I can note the following key learnings:

- UK research found out, that the level of numeracy of a numeracy teacher is relevant for the success of numeracy teaching. Therefore, when recruiting numeracy teachers, their level of numeracy should be a relevant issue.
- It became very clear, that initial training of basic skills teachers is not enough. There's a need for continuous professional development (CPD) of the competencies of the teachers. The problem is, that CPD does not just happen. It must be organised and funded. NRDC presented some interesting methods to organise CPD, such as peer teacher observation and mentoring. It was specifically interesting, that in the peer teacher observation method the group of learners perfectly accepted the method, as they felt, that their teachers are learners as well.
- Filming trainee teachers teaching is used as an innovative method for CPD and initial teacher training.
- Teaching numeracy, literacy and ICT need special subject-specific competencies. Thus, there is no such thing as a basic skills teacher (generalist). What is needed, is specifically trained literacy teachers, numeracy teachers and ICT teachers.
- Teachers that are able to create "context-specific" learning offers, will also be able to create basic skills offers for the workplace.
- In the UK, a lot of teachers do not have a job when they start their training.

What recommendation can be made based on the experiences and discussions of the meeting

Based on what I have learned at the NRDC I can make the following key recommendations for further developments in Switzerland:

- CPD of basic skills teacher should be a key aspect of the train the trainer policy in Switzerland. Various methods for CPD should be taken into consideration.
- Specialist BS teachers are needed rather than generalists. Specialists should nevertheless be able to teach both in an integrated way that takes into consideration other basic skills and also context-specific.

Thanks again to Helen and David and the whole NRDS team for organising such an inspiring visit!

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