

NO report after Zürich

Organisation: Vox

Meeting: Third meeting, Zürich

Host organisation: SVEB

Date: 21.-22.06.2012

Location: Zürich

I. Reflections

What were the most useful experiences?

When we talk about training in languages and in literacy we actually have a vocabulary which enables us to talk about it. We also think about the everyday use of the language. Where math is concerned, we don't have the vocabulary to talk about it in the same way, and we tend to go straight to academic math. The terms for talking about math are very much linked to academic math. This may be one of the reasons why many people think of math as something difficult and alienated from their daily life.

What can be considered as examples of good practices?

We realised that there is more focus on integrating the basic skills in courses in Switzerland (and England as well, as far as we understand). An interesting question for us is whether literacy teachers also can teach everyday math? In Norway there is a lot of focus on finding teachers of everyday math instead of looking for the good pedagogues who also are aware of the special didactics of basic skills and the needs of adults. Maybe we should try to think differently. On the other side, this may be quite demanding as the teachers also will have to be trained in the different didactics. They will also have to be skilled in mapping the learners level in the different skills and also in identifying reading and writing difficulties (dyslexia etc.), and math difficulties.

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

Teacher training:

In Switzerland there is teacher training available in literacy, numeracy and language. The training is non-formal and leads to private certificates.

The system available for training the trainers in Switzerland is quite similar to the system in Norway. Like in Norway there are no formal requirements for teachers

teaching adults. There is no national strategy for adult teaching in general, and there is no framework for training teachers. There is a debate going on in Switzerland whether basic skills teachers should be generalists or specialists.

Basic skills:

Basic skills at the workplace are one of the hot topics in Switzerland. In Norway we are experiencing increased focus on basic skills at the workplace, especially through the Basic Skills at the Workplace programme which is administered by Vox. There is a discussion going on about what competencies teachers teaching at the workplace need to have. In Norway the focus is rather on how to relate to adults, how to root the training at the workplace and how to cooperate with the trade unions, the management and the professionals at the workplace.

In Switzerland there seems to be a stronger focus on integrating the different basic skills in courses than in Norway. There is also an on-going debate on whether one should offer modularised or integrated courses. In Norway we offer separated courses in basic skills to a greater extent, although there are courses that combined digital competences and reading and writing.

We also recognise the practical approach in teaching numeracy from courses in everyday math in Norway.

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

There are some topics that need to be discussed more:

1. Is there really a difference between teaching adult and teaching children and young people?
2. Is it a better solution to have teachers trained in teaching basic skills in general? Or should the teachers be specialised in one single skill - like teaching literacy, numeracy or digital competence?
3. Which competences should a teacher in basic skills have – only in the didactics in each single skill, or also in different approaches in teaching adult in general?

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

- at EU and at national policy making level;

Teachers in adult basic skills should have a qualification, or at least more possibilities to get a formal qualification as a basic skill teacher. Working on learners' motivation should be a more important part of the teacher training.

- at institutional level

We should encourage a discussion on whether a basic skill teacher should be trained in all basic skills in order to teach the basic skills integrated instead of separately.

