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Abstract (English)

RETAIN - Inclusive environments to retain new teachers

A Comenius 2.1. project aiming at creating a toolbox to be used by managers, head teachers, etc. to make the way from initial teacher training to the profession smoother. Tools to be used in schools are developed; they deal with the following topics: collaboration with the external world, differentiation and inclusion, stress, collaboration between teacher generations and professional identity.

Abstract (français)

RETAIN – Des environnements inclusifs pour garder les jeunes enseignants

Un projet Comenius 2.1. qui a pour objet de créer une boîte à outils pour les directeurs, les responsables de sections afin de faciliter l'accès à la profession et d'aplanir le chemin entre la formation initiale et le monde du travail. Différents domaines sont abordés : la collaboration avec le monde extérieur, la différenciation et l'inclusion, le stress, la collaboration entre différentes générations d'enseignants et l'identité professionnelle.

The RETAIN Project is a partnership between five partners of different educational backgrounds and cultures. It is coordinated by the South Denmark European Office and the member institutions are the following: University College South Denmark (DK), University of Exeter (UK), Haute Ecole de Namur-Liège-Luxembourg (B), Ramon Lull University (S) and Çukurova University (T).

Because stress, burn outs, demotivation and teachers leaving the teaching profession are acknowledged challenges in many European countries and because this does not only affect the individual teachers, the school organization but also the quality of the teaching of our children; the objective of the project is to propose tools for school authorities and managers to create inclusive and creative working environments in order to keep highly motivated teachers and to achieve the best possible learning environment in European schools.

We began our research with a review of the available literature around teacher retention in the different countries. On the one hand, some of the issues leading teachers to leave tended to be similar: workload, stress levels, pupil behaviour, relations with parents, integration, working conditions. On the other hand, some of the reasons mentioned were linked to a particular situation, or to a particular individual. Indeed, in some countries we face a shortage of teachers, whereas in others a teacher job is very much sought after and is a guarantee of a secure income, even when the motivation has disappeared. Moreover, some novice teachers considered a lack of autonomy and of initiative as a negative aspect and others described a lack of support as a difficulty at the beginning. As a result, the drop-out rate of novice

teachers can vary a lot depending on the school management, on the kind of school or the level. Elements mentioned as favourable for staying in the profession are the following: good social and working relationships, interaction with children or teenagers, a sense of vocation, being able to pass on knowledge and know-how and an interest in a subject area.

As a result of this preliminary analysis, we have defined five areas to enhance inclusive environments to retain new teachers: differentiation and inclusion; co-construction, co-design and collaboration; collaboration with the external world; stress management and co-planning, professional identity. Tools to be used in schools have been developed and tried out in relation with the five above mentioned themes. Although one tool at least is identified for each specific theme, most of them can easily be used in relation to the other issues and challenges as well. The suggested tools are bottom-up rather than top-down ones, requiring both a high degree of management engagement and a high degree of participation. They are designed for open-ended processes rather than close ended ones. Finally, they are all aiming at introducing changes through encouraging reflection and critical dialogue.

Here are some examples of the tools suggested.

- The **Inclusion Compass** (National Centre for Inclusive Research and Practice [www.nvie.dk](http://www.nvie.dk)) is a way of working with and shifting between different perspectives to gain new information on the basis of a team dialogue. For example, looking at a specific dilemma related to the cooperation with parents and once having reflected on and shared views about the pro and cons of the ideas and solutions put forward from a management perspective, the Inclusion Compass suggests a change of perspective, now using, for example, the teacher perspective to reflect over the same dilemma, but now of course from the teacher's perspective, and so on.
- **Reverse mentoring** is a way of working where new junior employees, senior teachers and managers are put together to discuss and share about one common question or issue, with all partners coming up with their experience or their new knowledge. In this case, participants from different generations understand and appreciate each other's strengths and their respective contribution to the solution to a problem.
- **Representations of one's professional identity** – Analyzing the similarities and differences in the representations of the teaching job at the beginning of the career and after some years of experience (<http://www.pipsa.be/actualite/formation-au-jeu-motus-sept2011.html> - pictures that can be used to stimulate the reflection).
- **SWOT analysis** – A tool to help novice and senior teachers to acknowledge that they have strengths and weaknesses and to identify opportunities and threats.
- **Role analysis** - Teaching being a profession that requires developing multiple and not always well-defined functions, it means continuously investing time on the team. In order to explicitly address this issue, the following factors should help first to reduce the stress that it is generated, and secondly to develop personal and organizational resources that allow the teaching in a healthier way.

All those tools and others will be presented at a conference in Brussels on April, 21, 2016. You are welcome to attend. More information : [chantal.muller@henallux.be](mailto:chantal.muller@henallux.be)

