

## JOB SHADOWING MOBILITY IN SANDNESSJOEN, NORWAY

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1. Please compare Sandnessjoen school organization in particular to the situation in your country and your school.

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During the time I spent in Sandnessjoen Videregaende Skole I realised that our educational systems differ a great deal. Mainly in the following aspects.

1. **Staff members:** they are 80 teachers and 20 people in charge of administration whereas in our school there are 66 teachers and only 8 people in administration and maintenance.

2. **Timetable:** They have 45 minutes lessons (although most of them are double lessons) and there is always a 10 minutes break between lessons. In Sandnessjoen school, they start school at 08.30 and end at 14.50. This is because some of their pupils have a long way to travel home, some by boat or bus. They have 20 minutes lunch break.

In Norway the pupils usually spend their breaks inside the school building, either in the canteen, in the corridors or in the classroom. They often play games on the computer and surf the internet. The Spanish students usually go out to get fresh air during the breaks.

3. **No bell:** To change from one lesson to the other there is no bell. Sometimes, students warn the teacher that the lesson has finished. According to one of the coordinators, students should take their own responsibility to arrive to the lessons on time. Students move freely and everything seems very organized, there is much silence, everything is clean.

4. **Free breakfast:** They offer a free breakfast at school from 8:00 to 8:30.

5. **Public schools:** Most schools are public and the government should guarantee that the schools offer the same quality standards.

Their main educational principle is that "everyone is equal" and "no drop outs". They are putting a lot of effort and resources to try to reduce drop outs to 75% from 16 to 18 years.

6. **Exam coordinator:** They have a person in administration who coordinates the exams procedures. There are tests at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year but they do not sit an exam for every of the subjects. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of May the exam coordinator assigns the exams each student will be sitting on the last week of May.

On the first and second years, students only have an external examination on one subject which may be oral and written (they do not choose); on the third year they do two or three written exams (one has to be compulsorily oral).

7. **School trip:** At the beginning of the year, the school organises an excursion for the entire school. The goal is that every member of the staff and every student at school socialise (especially the new students in year 1).

8. **Drop out reduction programme:** The number of drop-outs has been increasing in the last years so they are taking steps to reduce the number of students dropping out from the educational system. They have employed a social worker, called KEN. He "looks after" the students welfare and organises different activities that help students to socialize. One of the popular activities he organises is called "**open school**". On Wednesday evening from 6pm to 9 pm the school is open to the students and teachers. They can go to school to have dinner, to play different games, to study, etc. ... it is a very quiet and relaxed atmosphere. Everything is open, there are students in the classrooms, in the library, etc. There is also a group of students, called **mentors** who help other students with their tasks. The mentors get paid by the school.

In the morning, Ken is also in charge of checking everyone is in class, especially students who do not live with their parents because they live in remote islands and have to stay in Sandessjoen. They have to share apartments with other students so they don't have any parental supervision.

9. **Teachers:** almost all teachers teach more than one subject more or less grouped by scientific subjects and other social blocks (languages and social sciences), the P.E teachers also tend to teach other subjects (scientific ones).

10. **Special needs department:** it is a big and very well organised department . They also deal with severe cases, even high disability students such as those who suffer cerebral palsy. They've got a lot of resources to look after these people.

11. **Books and classroom materials:** the extended trend is that students do not carry book, they work your computer on an educational platform called "It's Learning". All students have access to internet at school. In Norway all pupils and teachers are issued with their own computers. The librarians organise ICT courses to teach students how to use and deal with information, print, save, edit, etc ....

Regarding classroom, they all have a computer and an overhead projector. The students have ergonomic office chairs so they feel more comfortable in the classroom.

The classes also have a mobile box where students leave their mobile phones during the lessons.

12. **School rules:** Students are given absolute confidence and assume that they must "manage" responsibly. Everything is open, no guards, doors are open, students come and go. Some teachers told me that it is very important that they are autonomous and responsible. In fact, when they finish high school almost all of them will do a trip outside Norway on their own.

From 18-19 years all students must be emancipated, if they study at university the state pays tuition and give them a loan (40% non-refundable if they pass and 60% that they have to pay back once they start working).

2. Please describe what your staff training mobility consisted of. Which activities did you do?

The activities organised by the school could be divided into three main blocks:

- 1) **Lessons observation:** I attended English and Spanish lessons and I also teach two Spanish lessons one morning. In those lessons, I introduced myself, my school, the Spanish educational system and my hometown. The students showed a lot of interest and they make a lot of questions. I followed different teachers both in A-levels studies and also in Vocational training.
- 2) **School organisation:** I had a lot of meetings (formal and informal) with the coordinators of the mobility. I had an interview with the headmaster which was really enriching. I attended a teachers-staff meeting. I visited a primary and secondary school.
- 3) **Cultural life:** the coordinators made a great job and I could enjoy many different aspects of Norwegian traditions. I visited museums, markets, went hiking, fishing, sightseeing. I must admit I did and see as much as possible and I didn't really have much "free time".

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3. Which activities did you find most useful and why?

Every activity the coordinators organised were appealing to me. I especially enjoyed the informal talks with the teachers as they explained to me their different points of view regarding education. I also enjoy attending to the lessons and experiencing everyday life at first hand.

Besides, it was thought-provoking meeting Knut, the headmaster. He is sixty seven and he's retiring this year. He's a highly experienced teacher and headmaster. We were talking for almost two hours and he explained to me all the insights of their school.

I also enjoyed visiting a rural primary and secondary school because I am very curious about the organization and administration of learning institutions.

4. Which activities did you find least useful and why?

I don't think I can point out any useless activities. It is true that some of them were more exciting than others but none of them was not enriching. They all contributed to get a quite detailed picture of the Norwegian educational system.

5. Which recommendations would you make to improve your school's infrastructure and organization?

The main aspects I would recommend my school would be:

- 1) **Timetable:** to introduce a break between lessons so the students can relax for a while and be a bit fresher for the following class. Besides, I would consider double lessons for certain subjects.

- 2) **Books and classroom materials:** students should have free books and also free laptop computers. I'd like to implement an online educational platform (as It's Learning) so students would need free Wi-Fi to be able to use internet as an educational tool.
- 3) Regarding **classroom facilities**, I would try to make the classes a bit more comfortable so the use of comfortable office chairs for students sounds like a good idea.
- 4) As far as **school rules** are concerned, we may try to be a bit more flexible with certain rules. In Norway, it seems that less "strict" rules make students more responsible and they manage their responsibility in a positive way.
- 5) The use of mentors is also a very good idea so other students will be helping those with difficulties. I think it's a good idea to promote cooperative learning.

## 6. What obstacles have you met during your mobility and how have they been solved?

During my stay I didn't find any obstacles, I only experienced certain discomfort when travelling as Sandnessjoen is a quite remote island in Norway and communication is not easy. Norway is a very expensive country so we needed to adjust the budget and obviously it affected the stay. I was living in a hostel that was very old and not very comfortable, but, obviously that has nothing to do with the school.

## 7. To what extent did the training mobility correspond with your expectations?

I had the plan of the mobility beforehand so everything they organised was perfectly scheduled. It completely fulfilled my expectations and I even do more things that expected. Besides, I expected to find inspiration for my lessons and I did. I have started to work on an online platform with my students. In Spain most of the lessons are teacher-centered and from my point of view and thanks to this online teaching, students learn how to develop their own skill and they learn how to learn autonomously.

## 8. How would you assess your training mobility? Think of the combination pedagogical / social activities – communication – information – work load – timing etc.

I must admit that I enjoyed every minute of the training mobility, especially the time I spend talking with my colleagues, not only with the Norwegian ones but also with the two other Italian teachers as we could also comment on the Spanish and the Italian educational systems. It was a very satisfactory and enriching experience personally and professionally speaking.

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9. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for improvement of future staff training mobilities?

I think it is a very good idea to organise mobilities for different countries at the same time as the experience is double enriching. In that way, we do not just learn from the country we are staying at but also from those teachers from other countries attending to these meetings.