

Joint staff training mobility

Intermediate report

Clara Poblth (Einstein-Gymnasium)

Training Mobility in Rush (Co. Dublin) 6th-17th March 2017

Teachers involved: Claire and Ide (Irish hosts); Ken, Finn and Elisabeth (Norway), Manuela (Spain), Peter and Eva (Belgium)

1. Please compare the German system in general and the Einsteingymnasium organization in particular to the situation in your country and your school.

In general, I learned about St. Joseph's Secondary School in Rush (Ireland) that it holds 55 teachers and 700 students.

Regarding the timetable, school takes place 08:45-03:35 and every lesson lasts 60 minutes. There are 6 periods per day, however there are 4 on Friday only. Breaks generally last 15 minutes at 10:45 and 35 minutes at 13:00. There are no breaks between lessons and no double lessons.

The rooms are organized in such a way that students don't have a room but teachers do and students move from room to room. The bell would ring to begin and end lessons.

Assemblies are conducted once a week for every year group at a different day and time. Every form class meets with a mentor teacher once a week, too. Additionally, a semi-informal class "SPHE" takes place once a week, which is about social, personal and health education.

The teachers' work comprises 22 hours a week and they must be available for 4 hours supervision for teachers who are sick. Normally, teachers would have 1 lunch and break supervision per week. Staff meetings would be 33 hours a year but haven't taken place in year 2017 yet, due to industrial action. There are individual parent-teacher meetings once a year (student-teacher meeting starting with year 3). St. Joseph's is equipped with one staff room.

At St. Joseph's all teachers attend the classes they teach and VSWare is used as electronic role book for attendance and grades. Teachers make use of "schoolology" as student-teacher platform for assignments.

Regarding technology, all students buy iPads when entering the school. However, 5th and 6th form use paper books. All rooms are equipped with projectors and computers and students generally work with a school journal.

The school is organized for students in such a way that year 1 to 3 are junior classes, which graduate with junior certificate. The year 4 is an optional transition year including community work, work experience and supposed to provide insight into professions. The year 5 and 6 are senior classes and end with a leaving certificate which allows students to enter university.

The school's extra-curricular programme is called "student's voice" and enhances the students' self-confidence and communication with other students and teachers.

Strip to Identity

St. Joseph's also employs the JCSB (Junior Certificate School's Programme) for students with special needs.

In comparison to that, the Einstein-Gymnasium comprises a similar amount of students and teachers.

School starts and ends approximately an hour earlier and lessons last 45 minutes in Potsdam. Often a subject is taught in a block of two lessons. There are 5-10 minutes breaks between all lessons and there is a 20 minutes breakfast break at 9:30 and a 30 minutes lunch break at 12:25 o'clock.

At the Einstein-Gymnasium there are no assemblies with a form teacher. A form teacher has to deal with persona, social and health issues within his or her lessons with the form class.

Teachers in Brandenburg work 25 hours in a full-time job. There are additional teacher assemblies once a month and parent evenings twice per year. There is also an evening for parent-teacher meetings twice a year, but realisation of the meeting depends on the parents'/students' demand.

Regarding technology, Einstein-Gymnasium would similarly be equipped with computers and projectors in nearly every class room and owns 2-3 smartboards in school. Students work with their books but generally do not use tablets or phones in the lessons. Some teachers use a moodle platform to communicate and share with the students.

In Brandenburg, schools are organised in such a way that students enter secondary school at the age of about 12 years. Secondary school starts with year 7 and either ends after year 10 or 12 or 13. There are two different types of public secondary schools: main schools (Gesamtschulen) and grammar schools (Gymnasien). To enter the grammar schools students need to have a good average on the reports from their primary schools. Year 11, 12 and 13 are senior classes in Germany.

The Einstein-Gymnasium has no school programme as such and there is no inclusive teaching.

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

The training consisted of lectures and presentations on the structure and organisation of the school, as well as information about recent activities and school programmes. These were held by students and teachers of the school.

The training mobility also included a cultural program of Ireland, visiting popular museums and sights of Dublin city.

Furthermore, guest teachers were shadowing lessons of local teachers in various subjects, getting an insight into the classroom management and lesson plan. Thereby, I was able to learn about new teaching methods and tools.

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

I liked that St. Joseph's are offered prepared material to teach students with special needs and record their learning progress. Such a programme is not applied at schools I know of in Berlin and Potsdam. I like it because it is based on positive feedback to the students, which contributes to their self-esteem.

Moreover, I liked interactive activities including learning websites such as menti, kahoot and quizlet, which are also still rather uncommon at the Einstein-Gymnasium. I like because they offer a quick method to gain an overview of a certain topic or motivate to memorize items.

Strip to Identity

I enjoyed the cultural program very much and believe it helped to build a shared identity of all participants involved in the training mobility.

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

I could not say that I found any activities not useful.

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

Maybe parent evenings could be introduced, where all parents come together to meet the form teacher and also get to know the other parents of their children's class mates.

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

I only met personal obstacles such as problems with the public transport system and not knowing the foreign locking systems for doors. They were solved by contacting the hosts and receiving advice.

7. *To what extent did the training mobility correspond with your expectations? Have you been able to take initiative, which contributed to reach the aims of the mobility?*

The training mobility corresponded with my expectations, because I was able to get an insight to the structure and organisation of an Irish school. Furthermore, I was able to exchange about classroom activities and school programmes with all the participants from Norway, Spain and Belgium. It was good to be able to compare the foreign school system to the native one. All participants were able to take initiative to contribute to reach the aims of the mobility.

8. *Did you get a good look at the different project levels (comic book creation - use of SharePoint - learning and teaching mobilities - special educational needs teaching)? How will you inform your colleagues at your school about these levels?*

I got a good look at the various project levels, because they were well explained and shown to me by local students and teachers. The colleagues at the Einstein-Gymnasium will be informed about the training mobility by a report in the school magazine.

9. *How would you assess your training mobility? Think of the combination pedagogical / social activities - communication - information - work load - timing etc.*

I very much enjoyed the combination pedagogical and social activities. It was a well balanced programme and the host teachers did their best to give us an insight into Irish culture as well as the schools organisation and the progress of the "strip to identity" project. It was always possible to talk to the hosts, ask them questions about the school or request to join specific lessons. The timing of the training mobility was suitable enough, although the timetable at the Einstein-Gymnasium would be very busy at the time of the mobility training, the training still takes place well ahead of A-level exams and times for report writings.