



The Pestalozzi Programme Council of Europe Training Programme for education professionals

Report on the seminar in Doboj on 20 and 21 September 2012

A seminar on the subject of “Inclusion in Teaching” was held in the vocational training school in Doboj in the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 20 and 21 September 2012. The seminar was organised by the head of the school, Predrag Pasic, in co-operation with the director of the Pestalozzi programme, Josef Huber, and with the support of the programme’s National Liaison Officer in the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was conducted jointly by Josef Huber and Christian Laner from South Tyrol in Italy (see programme).



There were 25 participants: mostly teaching staff from the school, three educationalists, a psychologist and the chair of the parents’ association. As the seminar instructors do not speak Serbian, two German language teachers acted as interpreters. It was a major challenge to organise the seminar actively in that it was not possible to respond immediately to comments made, which changes the dynamics in the processes.

The key objective of the seminar was to address local circumstances and respond to them, while also giving examples from other countries and thereby showing ways in which schools can develop if they treat inclusion as a fundamental component of their own educational culture. However, the idea was also to produce concrete measures which could be put into effect in the coming weeks and months and perhaps set in motion a process which ultimately leads to inclusive teaching.

The key aspects of the seminar were:

- approaches from other countries, with examples from Austria and South Tyrol (Italy),
- procedures for developing common concepts using the example of inclusion,
- the meaning of active learning,
- steps and activities already undertaken in the participants’ own school,
- the strategy of small steps with binding commitments,
- presentation of the Pestalozzi programme.





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To introduce the participants to the subject, the seminar was started with a short video, “In my language” (YouTube). The idea was to highlight that there are different views and that people with special needs have a part to play, and also perhaps help us to develop understanding.

Short films and a presentation were then used to show the approaches adopted in Austria and Italy. Italy in particular has a long tradition in the area of integration and certain aspects are now totally accepted, for instance the fact that every child and young person has the right and a duty to attend ordinary school classes. The networks which have developed play a central role here: parents, schools, psychological and therapeutic services, municipalities and state authorities are required to co-operate under an agreement signed in 2004 and all parties are aware of their responsibilities.

A video was used to show what inclusive teaching should look like. The participants then considered their impressions in small groups and compiled questions which were discussed in the next phase. The instructors were surprised by the number of questions. However, it was very important to them to answer all questions, not to avoid certain issues and also to reply to any additional queries.



Many processes in schools often take place without the clarification of concepts. It is tacitly accepted that everybody means the same thing. This is a false conclusion, however. An entire module was therefore devoted to introducing the participants to an approach that can be useful for the joint clarification of concepts. This approach employs metaphors rather than definitions in order also to illustrate subjective didactic concepts.

It was applied to the central concept of the seminar, “inclusion”. The participants began by clarifying the concept for themselves using metaphors. The results were short descriptions and also wonderful drawings which left great scope for interpretation. The participants then presented their own perceptions of inclusion in small groups and were able slowly to get to the heart of the concept through additional questions. It was less a matter of looking for differences and more one of highlighting common ground.

They then attempted to cluster the concepts. The idea here in the groups was to find out what consequences this had, for instance in terms of the role of the teaching staff and the children and perceptions of learning, etc. This was intended to enable the participants to develop a common approach and language and thereby overcome many misunderstandings and ambiguities. This is also an important element in terms of developing teaching or schools themselves. The aim is not to produce quick results; instead, it must be ensured that all participants take an active part in forming a consensus, which means that everybody must contribute.

In order to show that the objectives and educational and didactic concepts of the seminar were in line with those of the Pestalozzi programme, a brief presentation of the latter then





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followed, illustrating aspects of learning, inclusion and changed views. This produced a link on the metalevel for the participants.

In the next phase, great emphasis was placed on teamwork, collective approaches and problem-solving, with active learning being the key here. The participants began by carrying out planning relating to an assignment in small groups. They were then asked to build the tallest possible tower using straws. Exercises of that kind enable various aspects to be discussed because the group members themselves experience how complex processes develop, how teams organise themselves in an unstructured manner and how roles are assigned to all individual participants. It could also be seen, however, that active approaches of this kind have a positive impact on the atmosphere in the group and that there are tasks which every individual can cope with.

The subsequent discussions were then used to show what had already been done in terms of inclusion in the participants' own school and on a personal level. There is a very widespread tendency among teaching staff to focus on things that are not working well. However, it is vitally important, including from the angle of occupational health, occasionally to look back and consider things that have been successful and where steps and measures have already been taken. The group had the impression that they were only starting out, but these discussions showed that a great deal had already been done and there was a good basis for further progress. They were surprised themselves by the steps which had already been taken.

What was particularly striking was the positive basic attitude to the subject and the children who can benefit greatly from it.

A seminar can only be successful if the participants do not just go back to their work and get swallowed up again by their daily routines. The instructors were therefore very keen that the participants give consideration to what they intended to do in the immediate future, either on their own or as a group. The relevant measures had to meet the following criteria:

- one or two measures which could be checked;
- they had to be implemented in the next fortnight and in the next two months;
- they had to be put in writing.

This meant that they were easy to grasp and measurable and were binding.

The experience of working with the interpreters was very positive. It forced the participants to reflect more in their own language and, although there were language barriers, they were very motivated and committed on both days and we had the impression that the discussions had fallen on fertile ground and would definitely lead to progress in the school. This was demonstrated by a small episode:

For the seminar, we had rearranged the desks from the usual rows into groups. At the end of the seminar when we left the room which one of the participating teachers used for her classes, there was a notice in Serbian which read: Please leave the desks as they are. That was a small but important signal. We can only wish those committed and highly motivated teachers and the head all the best for their future work.

