

Stay@School
Second Workshop on Module 2 “Communication”
Liège (Belgium), 9 January 2013

Minutes

Participants

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Minutes

This workshop aimed at concluding the experiment of Module 2, dedicated to "Communication" issues.

Here are the topics that were successively addressed, in accordance with the workshop agenda.

Presentation of the participants

First the participants shortly introduced themselves. They all have different backgrounds (primary, secondary and higher education, technical and vocational schools, higher schools, school mediation services, youth aid services, research Institutes, training centres...).

Experimentation of the Training Course

During the previous workshop, INFOREF introduced **Module 2: "Communication"** using the website, highlighting the advantage of the many links to online practical tools or resources.

The participants were invited to further discover it and confront it to their own experience trying to answer the following questions:

- 1) Does this module echo in your personal experience and how?
- 2) What could (or should) be added to it?

They were asked to think about those questions and give answers before the transnational meeting dedicated to Module 2.

They were also asked to intervene in the Forum about Module 2 and in the transnational meeting scheduled on the 30th of November 2012 insofar as possible.

During the second workshop, INFOREF summarized the discussions of the Belgian working group, the discussions of the Forum and also the transnational discussion (virtual meeting about Module 2).

Conclusions of the Belgian working group about Module 2

1. GENERAL COMMENTS

Module 2 is interesting and well structured. Several concepts mentioned can easily be transferred to school life.

One regret: it is thought to be a bit too long and general. The authors could have addressed one point or another more deeply rather than skim through the whole subject. Obviously, the most practical aspects are expected by pedagogical team to be deepened so that they can be transferred to their everyday life.

This module is taken as a "*resource document*" that could be used as a base for work to create operational tools (such as a "manual of truancy at school", like the authors suggest) or for a group reflexion.

2. ELEMENTS OF CONTENT THAT SEEM CRUCIAL TO US

Chapter 1 - Prevention

Promoting a positive class and learning climate (§2) is for us a pillar of reschooling, as is **preparing lessons sequences on truancy and school refusal (§1)**, an approach that is little used in our schools.

Noting absences (§4) is a delicate mission: it demands a narrow collaboration between teachers and educators, as well as with parents and CPMS (psycho-medico-social centres). It must be based on computer tools to promote an efficient management of absences.

Chapter 2 - Early intervention

The headmaster is a team manager (§1). Their ability to recognise everyone's role and place will be an important asset to face truancy. It is useful that they show openness to innovative and stimulating projects such as intermediary classes, internal socialising, reschooling devices, external partnerships...

Truancy is to be addressed from a systemic point of view (§3). As it is emphasized in the document, it must not be considered as the problem of one person only. All the parts of a system contribute to maintaining or controlling such symptom. Therefore, sub-systems should be considered: student; parents; colleagues; any other relevant person who belongs to the system (grandparents, peers, sport club ...).

Chapter 3 - Getting prepared to discussion with students and parents

Basic principles of communication and tools (§1 et §2) such as transactional analysis, active listening, questioning techniques, systemic approach, neuro-linguistic programming ... demand indeed to be recognised and mastered by teaching staffs, for an efficient and good communication.

The question is whether the interview will be carried out by the teacher or by a school educator, especially a CPMS agent.

Should teachers be required to be able to carry out a family assistance task or school conflict? The teacher cannot and must not replace external expert but must be able to comprehend the social educational environment of the young to better know existing helps regarding school leaving.

Chapter 4 - Carry out conversations with the students and parents

The phases of a constructive conversation (§1) correspond to various practices that exist here: school coaching by educators or teachers "supervisors" or "guides", helping process to success or else the educational contracts. It can be efficient if a relation of trust is settled between the partners and if the meetings are regular.

In conflict management (§2), the internal school mediator seems to be a good resource, as is the CPMS agent. The educator can in complement be a good intermediary for the follow-up. The idea of a cooperative group to manage conflicts also seems relevant.

Regarding exposure to bullying, this issue was widely addressed in the previous action research and the synthesis document can be used as a reference.

Chapter 5 – After the conversation

Preparing and organising the pupil's return (§2) is often neglected. Yet, this is precisely the positive and constructive dynamics of a class that can lead to the pupil's reschooling. The returning pupil needs to feel welcomed and be quickly put back in dynamics of learning,

security and well-being. Therefore professionals need to acquire skills to work on the class-group dynamics.

All the teachers of the class must of course be made aware and be ready to play the game of successful reintegration.

Early support in network is necessary (§3) because decoding truancy is not an easy task. The causes tend to be multifactorial.

Therefore there is a need to cooperate and establish protocols with all the people involved in prevention either internally or externally: psycho-medico-social centres (CPMS), health promotion services (PSE), assistance in open setting (AMO), family planning, youth aid services (SAJ), youth protection services (SPJ), educational help and intervention services (SAIE), school mediators, legal criminologists, parental mediators, Public Centres for Social Welfare (CPAS) ...

It is very important that those protagonists work in trust and make sure to share useful information (while respecting professional confidentiality).

There also must be a good coordination between all the protagonists (how to organise it concretely on the field? who will lead it?) in order to achieve the process.