



SOCRATES

ARION PROGRAMME GROUP REPORT

**JOB ORIENTATION – ROTATING
SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND TRAINING**

VISIT TO PADUA, ITALY

16th -20th October 2006

COMPULSORY KEY DATA OF THE GROUP REPORT

Title of visit	Job Orientation – Rotating School Activities and Training
Theme	Objective 3.1 – Strengthening the links with working life and research and society at large
Visit number	06016,03
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Venue	Padua, Italy
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Study organiser	Paola Melchiori
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NAMES OF INSTITUTES VISITED/INVOLVED IN VISIT (Table i)

Name of Institute	Type
I.T.A.S P. Scalcerle	E/S
Istituto comprensivo di Villa Estense Secondary School	E/S
Horticulture school (Istituto professionale per l'agricoltura)	E/S
Regional Education Officers of Veneto	G
EnoFrigo	B
Fonderia Anselmi	B
Kristallux	B
Piove di Sacco	E
Mayor of Villa Estense	G/S
Belzoni Institutes	E
Istituto di Istruzione Superiore Statale 'Sandro Pertini'	E
Istituto di Istruzione Superiore 'Isaac Newton'	E
Istituto de Nicola	E/S
Mayor of Sant' Urbano	G/S

E= Education Establishment

B= Business/Employer

G= Local/Regional/State Government Representatives

S= Sponsor of visit

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1. ARION PARTICIPANTS

Educationalists from seven European partner countries participated in the visit. An early opportunity was provided which enabled the participants to set the context of the visit within their home education systems and experiences. The group included current and former teachers, advisors and inspectors. Some members of the group had considerable experience in the provision of Career Guidance. All members had varying amounts of direct experience in the areas of technical and vocational education.

1.1 Pen portraits of participants

Dimitra Aggelou

I work as a career counsellor in a Career Guidance and Orientation Office in the prefecture of Karditsa in Central Greece. I support and provide guidance to young people to their educational and vocational choices. I support teachers who are involved with career orientation in secondary schools. In general I'm responsible for all actions (lessons, programmes, projects, teacher training etc) in my region which are connected with career orientation.

Karl Bartl

Teacher of Maths and Physics at the Fachoberschule and Berufshochschule in Erlangen in Bavaria and assistant to the Inspector.

Nieves Garcia Garcia

I'm a teacher's adviser who works in a Primary, Secondary and Vocational Teachers' Training and Resource Centre in Madrid. With a focus on learning, one aspect of my work is to support and advise about programmes, projects, seminars and courses for teachers in order to develop new ways of motivating students and teachers.

Nicolas Galdeano Garcia

I'm Inspector. I come from Catalonia.

Sylvie Lavigne

I taught Economics before becoming Director (Professor) in a vocational secondary school (Lycée Professionnel). I chose this sort of school instead of a secondary school because I was very interested in relations with the professional world, with firms.

Agnieszka Mikina

I am a Business Education Adviser for teachers and a Vocational Counsellor who comes from in Poland. I work in the Centre of Training and Vocational Education in Lodz.

Lyn Pender

I am a member of a team of Senior Officers in Liverpool, England. I coordinate the work of a large Learning Network of school of all phases, actively promoting innovation and exploring methods for identifying and disseminating good practice. With a focus on learning, one key

aspect of my work is to support the delivery of the curriculum for 14-19 year olds which requires strong partnership working between schools and the wider community including, most crucially, the business sector. I support the provision of high quality continuous professional development for school staff.

Richard Walsh

Teacher of English and Learning Support at Wexford Vocational College, Ireland. I am also a member of the National Executive of the Teachers' Union of Ireland (T.U.I)

2. CONTEXT OF VISIT

A number of schools in the Padua region have developed a strong partnership based around the international links which exist in the area. The visit was arranged by the host school, the ITAS Scarlere and focused on Job Orientation – Rotating School Activities and Training.

2.1 Programme for the visit

A well-structured and highly organised timetable of visits and activities allowed the group to consider the focus of the visit from both an individual and group aspect.

The programme enabled participants to seek the views of education leaders, teachers, pupils and local community partners including the mayors of several towns. Crucially, opportunities were made for the group to meet business owners and managers who offer work placements to students. *See table(i) above.*

2.2 Secondary Education in Italy

In common with many European Countries, the Italian system has undergone a number of changes in recent years. Currently, compulsory secondary education is divided into two stages known as Lower and Upper Secondary School. State and non-state funded schools exist. Unlike most other countries, when students move to the Upper Secondary School at the age of 14, they are required to select an area of the curriculum in which they wish to specialise. Students attend the state Licei which specialise in areas such the Arts, Science and Languages. Or they may attend the state Istituti Tecnico or Professionale which are technical and vocational colleges. It is unusual for pupils to move between subject areas once they have embarked on their study. Generally, students who attend the Licei would move on to University education and those in the Istituti would follow a more vocational route however there is an opportunity for students who attend the latter institutions to use a bridging unit to transfer on to the University route and vice versa. All schools participating in the Arion visit were experiencing high mobility of inward students who spoke little or no Italian. Many had limited experience of formal education.

The Arion participants visited a comprehensive school in the region. The definition of a comprehensive school in Italy is somewhat different to that in the UK where this term relates to a school which takes a mixed ability intake of students. In Italy the term comprehensive relates to a group of schools, in this case, two nursery, four primary and three secondary schools who are managed by one headteacher. More recently in the UK, the concept of school federation has developed in which more than one school is managed by one headteacher.

3. FOCUS OF VISIT

The focus of the visit was to consider the various ways that schools use work related activities to prepare students for the world of work. The Arion participants were able to meet with colleagues in the Padua region who are working on programmes which allow students to experience the world of work and make appropriate choices at transition points in the Italian education system.

3.1 Definition of 'Job Orientation – Rotating School Activities and Training'

All participants agreed that this type of activity takes a variety of forms in different education systems and is known by other names including Work Placement or Work Experience Opportunities. The group defined the activity to be:

'The opportunity for students in compulsory secondary education to experience and participate in the workplace and to receive training in specific skills required by employers.'

In Germany, at the Fachoberschule in Bavaria the students of the first year (11th form) have to take part in practical training which makes up one half of the school year. It is called Fachpraktische Ausbildung.

3.2 Types of Job Orientation – Rotating School Activities and Training' opportunities in Padua Region

A wide range of placements and experience are available for students including:

- Administration- accounting, general office work
- Technical-design
- Industrial- manufacturing, retail, service industries
- Professional- business management, entrepreneurial skills

3.3 Some of the common reasons given for promoting Job Orientation and Rotating Activities in Padua and within participants' countries include:

- helps to reduce student 'drop out' of schools by providing an appropriate curriculum which meets the needs and interests of young people
- young people gain experience of the world of work which motivates and informs future choice
- enables employers to identify future employees
- employers have the opportunity to contribute to their local community
- provides young people with a greater awareness of the industry in their local area
- having young people on placements motivates existing employees
- provides the work experiences necessary to deliver the vocational elements of applied qualifications
- enable schools and employers to work together to ensure that young people have the necessary skills set required in the work place

Students realise that they require not only technical knowledge, but also and perhaps even more importantly, the correct attitude towards employment. By this we mean the ability to demonstrate good attitudes towards punctuality and availability and most important to be fully adaptable to meet the needs of the employer.

4. OVERVIEW OF 'JOB ORIENTATION – ROTATING SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND TRAINING' IN THE PADUA REGION

Three case studies are shown below which detail the practice that the group heard and saw during their visit. A summary of the participants reflections on the visit can be found at the end of this report.

4.1 Case Study 1

Training Course Opportunities and Job Orientation for students in the Upper Secondary School which hosted the visit

Students have the opportunity to participate in training course which can be based either in Italy or abroad. The work placements generally match the curriculum strand that students are following.

Those based in Italy:

- Can last for 2/3 weeks in June or September
- Are with employers in fields such as:
 - Hotels, retailers, import-export firms, fair trade, tourist offices
 - Laboratories, hospitals, medical analysis
 - Catering, hotels, canteens
- Students are not paid and work no more than 6 hours per day – Monday to Saturday
- A school tutor is in charge of students' pastoral care
- A work based tutor maintains contact with the school
- An assessment of the students in the first term determines selection. The more able students are more likely to obtain a placement abroad
- Students complete a report during the placement
- The employer completes an assessment of the student and prepares a certificate of attendance
- Results of the placement are communicated during the class council and are published on the school website

Those based abroad

- Are financed through the Leonardo Project
- Can last 3 weeks in June or September for those held in the first year of Upper School or 8 weeks in July or August after the final exams held at the end of the second year of Upper School
- A connection is made with a school abroad
- There is constant communication between the school tutor in Italy, a tutor in the school abroad and a work based tutor in the firm where the placement is taking place

Preparation for the world of work through Job Orientation activities include: the development of a student profile stating interests and abilities, the use of personality tests and creation of CVs in the language being studied. The school website contains information about the job market and online registration forms and library materials are available. Past students are asked to validate the school job orientation processes a year after they leave and these findings feedback into the school systems.

4.2 Case Study 2

The following is an outline of a programme of work placements that has been developed in the Padua area. The Arion participants were able to meet with all those who participated in this programme including Regional Educational Officers, school staff, students and employers.

The aims:

- To create relationships between school and the workplace
- To motivate students in school and build self confidence in both work and school
- To teach students how to behave professionally including how to act responsibly and learn to work in a team

Education Policy Development in the Region

Education Officers from the Veneto region described a programme which is currently being delivered. Regional funding is provided and the monitoring and evaluation are being carried out by Regional Education Officers.

School staff

The teacher who prepares students for the placements and who visits them in the work place in the role of teacher tutor outlined the programme. Pupils generally attend the placement in their own time during the summer period although a few school days formed part of the programme last year. All pupils were from a single class last year and all teachers responsible for this group of students were involved in the programme. This year the school have decided to identify 2 pupils from each class. This will involve more complex liaison within the school but they feel that the students will benefit. A few issues occur as some students work for their family businesses or find paid employment at weekends or during vacations. Problems are presented as some young people fail to see the value of attending unpaid work placements. In addition to the programme, employers provide mock interviews for students to prepare them for the job selection process. The school felt that the students who participated in the programme matured more quickly than their peers.

The Employers' Viewpoint

We were able to meet three employers on site to hear their views. They were:

Furniture maker – design, admin manufacturing

Furnace – admin including accounts manufacturing in the future issues over gender, issues over the student preparation and attitudes to work

Bathroom manufacturer – admin, manufacturing – students reluctance to undertake low level tasks, preparation for work

All employers showed commitment to the process and were keen to make sure that they offered students worthwhile placements and not merely offer low level experiences (i.e. photocopying). All were keen to continue this type of support for students and would welcome greater feedback from the schools and more discussion about the expectations of them as employers.



Feedback from the Students

All felt that this was a worthwhile experience. For some students the placements confirmed their choice of future careers for others they were able to discover that they didn't want to pursue a career in the area that they had gained experience in. They all felt that they had learnt about the sort of personal skills they needed to develop to function in the workplace successfully. Some students had been able to gain experience in more than one placement throughout the year and all felt that they had been supported well by the school and the employers. Students felt that they needed to be much focussed and had to work harder than students not participating in the programme. All would do it again.

4.3 Case Study 3

Orientation – The process of selecting a secondary school

As mentioned above students in Italy choose the direction of future study at the relatively young age of 14 years.



The Arion Group visited a Lower Secondary Comprehensive School which is endeavouring to support the decision making process of their students to enable them to consider carefully the future options open to them. The funding was provided by the Veneto Region Education Board under a programme entitled 'Guidance – a plan for the territory'.

Amongst others the aims included:

- To foster a conscious and responsible choice about the kind of school or job that best fit the pupils' own attitudes, interests, expectations and skills
- To provide information and guidance for parents as well as pupils
- To facilitate the change from first to second grade school and vocational training

Ariadne's Thread

At the age of 14, the students in the comprehensive school face the choice of 13 different upper secondary schools with 144 different subjects. Research into conditioning factors which affect students' choice of career has been undertaken. The pupils involved in the programme were split into two groups – the group expected to attend the Liceo and those expected to attend the Insituto. The data revealed that no students consulted websites for information about the job market and that school and family context provided information on which their choices were made. Findings also showed that 78% of student felt that their personal skills were most relevant in the choice. 90% of students had doubts about their choice. The school ensured that the student's families were fully involved in the process and students were encouraged to consider their future employment aspirations when selecting their new school and were given early career advice. The school developed a programme to inform and reassure students about their choices and the move to the new school by developing and

implementing a number of continuity or transition programmes between the schools. The Arion participants had an opportunity to observe one of these visits in action.

5. REFLECTION OF THE ARION PARTICIPANTS

5.1 Context of education in the Padua Region:

- Strong partnership working exists between schools
- Complex choices face students at 14 years of age in an education system which includes state/non-state schools and secondary schools with different specialisms
- Funding is provided at Regional and State level
- Unemployment is relatively low but employers state that there is an increasing reluctance for recruits to accept perceived low status jobs
- A mobile population exists with a marked increase in the number of new pupils entering the education system with little Italian and limited previous school experience
- The area has a lot of small and medium size businesses many of which are family concerns employing 2 or 3 people. Many young people go into the family business when they leave school
- All schools visited had identified Job Orientation and Rotating School Activities and Training as a priority

5.2 Providing successful Job Orientation – Rotating School Activities and Training opportunities for young people

Using the information gained through the visit, the shared experiences of the participants and the context in their own countries the group have summarised the following which, if present, maximise the benefit of this sort of experience for all involved

- Employers and schools recognise that careful preparation of the student prior to the placement including expectations of the employer re dress, attendance, attitude is essential
- The timing and length of placement should be negotiated to ensure this meets the needs of the employer. This enables employers to offer well organised and supported placements for students.
- Employers, schools and students should have a clear understanding and agreement of their roles and responsibilities.
- For the benefit of student and employer, schools should aim to ensure there is careful match of student to placement
- The success of student placements rely on effective communication between school and employer
- Placements can help support the school curriculum. In Padua students have opportunities to develop their language skills and gain experience of the science curriculum in working life.
- Ongoing dialogue between schools and employers help ensure that the students feedback contributes to the development of the programme

5.3 Issues to be considered when organising successful work placements:

- The availability of sufficient employers able/ willing to participate in placements. This is especially an issue in rural areas.
- Timing of placements - in some countries work placements take place at set times of year which do not always coincide with convenient times for employers. Employers have busy times when they are unable to offer students' worthwhile placements. In addition, fixed school exam timetables may need lead to times when students are unavailable.
- Work experience placements in the school year - the timing of placements differ from country to country. In Padua the placements take place in students' own time whilst in the UK most work experience takes place during school time. Some schools suspend the timetable to enable all students to take up placements at the same time. This can lead to capacity issues as the number of employers able to host students is limited. Schools in

each geographical area have to ensure that they coordinate work experience blocks to avoid clashes.

- The provision of equal opportunities for all students should be considered. For example placements in a heavy industry which, due to the nature of the job and facilities available, may not open to women. Or students from low income families may need financial support with transport costs.
- Employers visited in Padua felt that the age at which this kind of placement is available is important. Some employers may wish to have older pupils who have greater maturity and have developed the necessary skills, knowledge or understanding required for a successful placement. This has implications in several countries. In the UK some placements take place in Year 10 when the students are under 16 years of age. Several of the companies visited provide work placement opportunities for university students.
- Student perceptions of relevance of placements - in Italy students attend during their vacations. Some of the students obtain paid low level work in these periods and don't see the relevance or importance of work placements which are unpaid. On the other hand, placements can lead to students gaining paid employment as a result of the relationship built up with employers. For example, in the UK some students who participated in a programme which was arranged between their schools and an international hotel chain were able to obtain weekend jobs, and full time employment when they finished school as a result of their work experience.
- The value of work experience placements seems to be very mixed with some parents seeing the placement as a positive experience for their child. Others feel that the time spent out of class, or the added workload experienced by their child as a result of placement undertaken in their own time is unnecessary as the destination after school is to University.

All participants feel that these sorts of experiences are essential for students. They do however need to be well planned, meaningful experiences which offer students an insight into the world of work. They should allow young people to understand the personal skills they will need to develop whatever career they choose to follow. They should benefit all students and not just those following a vocational curriculum.

5.4 Other issues which the Arion participants feel impact on this area:

- The role of educationalists is to provide an appropriate and relevant curriculum for all young people. This is increasingly important as most of the participants' countries appear to be facing an increase in the drop out of students. For example, in the UK government targets have been set to reduce the numbers in the NEET (Not in Education, Employment of Training) cohort. The introduction and/or extension of the vocational curriculum appears to be common as does the issues faced due to negative perceptions of this type of curriculum by some parents and young people.
- The rapid changes in ICT will present great challenges to schools in the next few years. As well as the financial pressures that schools will increasingly face in trying to provide up to date resources for staff and students a radical change in curriculum might be expected of our knowledge based society. Many are predicting that many of the careers our students will be seeking in the future have not yet been thought of. We will need to equip young people with the transferable skills necessary to function in the job market of the future.
- All of the above is set in the context of persuading parents and others that the vocational route is as important as the academic route. Historically young people seek higher education but the drop rate indicates that this is not always the most appropriate route for all. Perceptions across the countries of all participants appeared to be that these sorts of opportunities are available for the lower achieving, least motivated or problematic student. Most countries are attempting to change these perceptions. One example is the 14-19 route in the UK which will introduce a system of diplomas by 2013. These qualifications will offer routes into Higher Education for subjects such as Engineering.

6. OUTCOMES OF THE VISIT

All involved in the visit gained immensely from the opportunity to listen to and learn from colleagues. Links have been created to enable students and educationalists to continue to gain from the experience.

Thanks

The group wishes to thank our hosts for their careful planning and excellent organisation. We would particularly like to mention the arrangements which were made for translation when necessary. This was mostly provided by the language teachers in the schools, although students also undertook this role on several occasions. Their skills and expertise allowed for excellent communication and removed any barriers that might have occurred. We would also like to congratulate the organisers on the excellent idea of allowing students to act as our informal guides on several occasions. These opportunities allowed us to learn more about the schools and talk with the students informally during visits our visits around the local area.