

Action research from the study visit in Wales

11th March - 16th March 2018

There were six aims of my study visit in Wales. First, to exchange experiences with other participants, second, to observe good teaching practices used by Welsh teachers, third, to explore methods of studying outside the classroom, fourth, to discover how Welsh teachers deal with difficult pupils, fifth, to learn about educational system in Wales and sixth, to observe whether Welsh teachers use technology during lessons.

During my stay in Wales, I had a lot of opportunities to talk to other teachers about the methods of coping with difficult students. I was particularly interested in techniques used by schools in Port Talbot and Cardiff. For instance, I noticed a separate room for rude pupils in the school in Port Talbot. The rule is that pupils who misbehave are sent to the isolation room and they are not allowed to talk to each other in there. Additionally, they need to stay in there under teacher's supervision as long as they have lessons on that day. If this method doesn't work, a headteacher of the school makes a decision to suspend the troublemaker for a few weeks. If there is no improvement, ultimately, the pupil is expelled from the school.

Misbehaviour of pupils is sometimes caused by the lack of communication skills. Children behave badly because they cannot solve problems peacefully. I was positively surprised by a fact that parents come with their kids (aged 3-7) to primary school (foundation phase) to learn how to communicate effectively with their children. Furthermore, while I was visiting one of the schools in Cardiff, I had a chance to see how pupils are taught to respect others and to express their own opinions– to agree and disagree with their classmates. The idea of teaching communication skills to very young learners and their parents seems to be really useful because it may prevent a lot of misunderstandings among pupils and between pupils and their families in the future.

During the study visit in Wales, I attended a lecture on philosophy of teaching. I found the following concepts useful:

- ✓ learning environment affects pupil's learning,
- ✓ teachers should be facilitators of learning process,
- ✓ motivation, safety and technology may increase effectiveness of teaching,
- ✓ new strategies and innovations should be implemented in teaching process.

While I was visiting a school in Cardiff, I could see how the first principle listed above was followed. Firstly, there were several areas on school premises for outdoor lessons—the learning environment. Each area was designed for a different purpose i.e. they had an area for maths lessons, a bilingual area for language lessons, an area for planting flowers etc.

As far as the second principle listed above is concerned, I observed that the Spanish teacher acted as a facilitator of the learning process. Which means that the pupils' task was to discover knowledge by themselves following some basic instructions from the teacher. The children worked in groups and collectively drew conclusions. During the lesson, the teacher advised them only in case when they had problems in understanding some issues linked with a topic of the lesson.

Technology in the classroom is the key to success. While watching the science lesson I observed that pupils were provided not only with some theory but also equipment to put theory into practice. There was a significant rise in their engagement. The same impression I got while I was watching a lesson for 3-7 year-olds. At first, kids watched a cartoon. Then they joined in singing. Finally their task was to emulate characters from the cartoon, namely, sing and dance.

In conclusion, the study visit helped me to modify my teaching styles and visions. Especially, I focused more on using technology (interactive whiteboard) during my lessons. Now I can already see my pupils achieving better results than they used to. Furthermore, I emphasise communication skills during lessons because I think that it is a good practice which may help my pupils to solve problems peacefully. What is more, I decided to change somewhat my professional role into the role of a facilitator of the learning process. When possible, I provide my pupils only with basic instructions and I allow them to have more freedom to discover knowledge independently bit by bit.

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