

Report of the Flemish Round Table Education for pupils with a migrant background in Flanders.

1 Context

The Vlor has written this report at the demand of the 'European policy network on the education of children and young people with a migrant background' (Sirius). Sirius is a European platform where policy makers, researchers and practitioners exchange ideas, insights and practices on national and European policy in the field of education and migration. This platform is granted by the European Commission.

2 The Vlor commission on diversity and equal opportunities approved this report

3 Introduction

On 4 October 2013 the Vlor¹ organized for Sirius the Flemish round table on education for pupils with a migrant background, in cooperation with the Center for Migration and Intercultural Studies of the University of Antwerp² and Payoke³.

The round table brought together the same partners as the Sirius network at the European level. The Flemish Education Council invited 90 policy makers, practitioners and researchers. 64 effectively participated at the round table. Amongst them a number of participants with a migrant background who play a role in the education policy or in education in Flanders.

The Flemish Education Council took the opportunity of the round table to launch its publication 'Another view on diversity', which is the result of a series of seminars organized during the past two years. During consecutive seminars speakers from very diverse backgrounds and viewpoints presented less evident and sometimes controversial visions on diversity and education. All the participants at the round table received a copy of this publication.

¹ The Vlor (Flemish Education Council) is the strategic advisory body for the policy field of education of the Flemish Community. In the Vlor, all stakeholders in education from the Flemish Community come together. The Flemish Education Council produces advice on all important decisions by the Flemish Authorities that are related to education.

² CeMIS is the Center for Migration and Intercultural Studies of the University of Antwerp. The Center gathers the expertise in this field from different disciplines in order to understand the complexity of migration and interculturality.

³ Payoke is a non-governmental organization that fights against the transaction and exploitation of people. After first line aide, guidance and protection of victims, they uncover, together with services of justice and police, national and international networks, with the final aim to prosecute the delinquents.

'De Morgen', one of the leading newspapers in Flanders, published, the next day, at the occasion of the round table and of the publication, an interview with one of the moderators of the discussion tables and with a director of a secondary school who, in the framework of a project of the Antwerp city government, focuses on prevention of early school leaving.

In her introduction, Mia Douterlungne, secretary general of the Flemish Education Council, presented the Sirius network at the participants at the round table, and she explained the objective and structure of the day.

The aim of the round table is to collect proposals that work effectively and that contribute to more successful school careers for pupils with a migrant background (based on good practices and scientific research).

In the morning, the participants discussed, in five groups, the five themes that are important to prevent early school leaving and/or that contribute to the qualification chances of youngsters. These themes have been distilled from the Vlor publication 'Another view on diversity'⁴ and the Vlor recommendation from 2012 on 'Address early school leaving by an active qualification policy'.⁵

1. Identity development
2. Supporting networks
3. Teachers who make the difference
4. Study choice processes
5. The attractiveness and dynamism of alternative learning pathways

In every group, a researcher gave an introduction including a proposal based on scientific research and several practitioners presented proposals that they motivated based on their practice. After every series of proposals, the participants had the opportunity to reflect or to present proposals themselves, also based on own practice or scientific research. They had the possibility to add proposals related to other policy domains; education is not the only policy domain responsible for the qualification chances of youngsters.

In the afternoon, the participants have worked on three discussion tables related to the level of policy making:

1. Class and school level
2. Regional and local level
3. Level of the Flemish Community

The level tables have discussed the proposals of the morning relevant for their policy level and they have clustered the proposals in order to come to coherent sets.

At the end of the afternoon, Noël Clycq from CeMIS has presented a synthesis of the proposals.

⁴ Active qualification policy', Vlor recommendation, 2012

⁵ Another view on diversity, Vlor, 2013

Finally, the Flemish Minister for Education, Youth, Equal Opportunities and Brussels has reflected on the proposals.

4 Programme

10.00 h – 10.25 h	Welcome and introduction
10.30 h – 12.30 h	Thematic discussion tables
12.30 h – 13.30 h	Lunch
13.30 h – 14.30 h	Level discussion tables
14.30 h – 14.50 h	Conclusions
14.50 h – 15.15 h	Reflections by the Minister
15.15 h – 16.00 h	Reception

5 Thematic discussion tables

5.1 Identity development

The discussion table has worked based on proposals by

- Ward Nouwen and Noël Clycq (CeMIS)
- Nele Hugaert, trajectory counselor at N.P.O 'Jong', Ghent
- Karin Nelissen and Nicky Raeyen, community work N.P.O. 't Lampeke' and child work 'Fabota', Louvain
- Karin Goosen, Expertise Network Teacher Training Antwerp (Elant)

After discussion and adjustment, the next proposals have been withheld:

Proposal

Provide curricula that take into account the different social identities in a class. Those kinds of curricula enhance the sense of involvement of all the pupils and influence positively the learning performances and the society.

Motivation

Research shows that the Flemish education is still based on the ideas and viewpoints of the 'autochthonous middle class'. Youngsters from working class and/or with a migrant background have difficulties to connect to an education system that problematizes implicitly and sometimes explicitly the fact that they are different.

Research emphasizes the importance of an education system that is adapted to the new demographic and social reality in society and in the school. A curriculum, and the implementation of that curriculum, with more (positive) attention for other languages, other cultural backgrounds and practices, without problematizing diversity, is closer to these youngsters and will enhance their involvement. It leads to more congruence between the school and the home environment, and can enhance the involvement of the parents.

Additional proposal: screen the final learning objectives systematically if they take into account diversity.

Proposal

Appoint more teachers with a migrant background. They have a positive effect on the wellbeing and on the self-confidence of pupils with a migrant background. Policy and schools should strive for a composition of the staff that reflects the composition of the pupils' population. Barriers for applicant teachers with a migrant background have to be removed as much as possible.

Motivation

Research related to 'stereotype threat effects' shows that only the presence of teachers with a migrant background has positive effects on the educational performances of pupils with a migrant background. Youngsters see that 'people like them' can be successful in the context of the Flemish education, whilst they are often seen as youngsters at risk.

Those teachers who are, of course, in the first place teachers, can coach other teachers in the way they deal with pupils with a migrant background. There is the risk that they are seen as 'intercultural mediators', because their presence in the schools is still limited, so that they become the only contact point for pupils, teachers and parents.

Proposal

Have an open mind for the cultural and linguistic identity of the pupils and explicitly discuss processes of identity construction. Wellbeing at school is a constant focus for schools.

Motivation

Research shows that language is a key element in identity construction. This is the case for the 'Flemish' parents, but even more for 'parents with a migrant background', since they have to transfer themselves the responsibility for the 'own language' and cannot rely on education and much less on media. Through this language, stories, images and background information is transferred over the generations. The question is how to take those processes into account in a school context.

Teachers often have too little instruments to rely on; they don't have the tools to deal with this challenge. This has an impact on how youngsters feel at school. Speaking another language is an asset, not an obstacle. Parents who speak another language can be very competent in their 'own language', but are often seen as parents who lag behind.

Proposal

Provide more flexible learning pathways based on talent and interest by introducing domain schools and by breaking down the walls between the different types of education in secondary education. **Revalue vocational and technical education and training.**

Motivation

Research supports the proposals for the reform of secondary education. An important aspect, that is not often put forward, is the impact that the existing walls between the types of education and the very negative perception of vocational (and technical) education have on youngsters. Youngsters in vocational education and training have the feeling that vocational education is a kind of container of even trash can for youngsters with too little competences to succeed in the 'better' types of education.

This stigmatization does not only have effect on the youngsters – they are very conscious of these stigmas – but also on the teachers who teach in vocational (and technical) education. These stigmas also affect their sense of wellbeing and self-confidence.

Proposal

Reform teacher training and provide continuous professional development

Motivation

Research shows that teachers sometimes struggle with the diversity in their classes. They have the feeling that they cannot control this diversity. Teacher training could put stronger emphasis on this point and work more on developing competences on how to deal in an open way with the society that is becoming more and more diverse.

Dealing with diversity in an open way implicates that the teachers are convinced of the talents of every child and that they dare to put the bar high enough.

Teacher training cannot solve everything. Learning by doing is crucial. Teachers need to be stimulated even more – possibly with financial incentives – to learn constantly. They need room for this learning during their professional career and in the policy plans of the schools. The culture of the schools has to evolve in this direction. Schools have to become learning organizations.

A lot of teachers know that teaching is so much more than technically transferring knowledge. Teaching is, in fact, the exchange of emotional, cognitive and behavioral elements between people, adults and youngsters. Teachers don't always have the possibilities, the time and the tools to realize this.

Proposal

Give teachers and school teams the opportunities, time and guidance to acquire insights in the way of living of their pupils

Motivation

Get to know the home culture of the youngsters. What are their values and norms? Which place does school take in their lives? For the parents? Get to know each other. It is important to get close to the youngsters and their way of life in order to understand them better. The research by Kylie Pinceel (University of Antwerp)⁶ shows that the etnical background of the pupils plays a more important role in their performances that their economical background. The research revealed different reasons why pupils with a migrant background don't feel at home in our schools.

Proposal

Provide respectful and intercultural communication, with permanent attention for the risk on stigmatization.

Motivation

Youngsters with a migrant background live in two cultures. For a lot of them, this means an enrichment. For some of them, it can lead to problematic personality development. They are quickly agitated in case of racist remarks. This often leads to conflicts with people of the same age or with adults. Too often discriminating remarks are made. Respect remains important.

Proposal

Use counsellors in educational trajectories and 'bridge people' in secondary education

Motivation

A problematic school career can have a negative impact on the identity development of youngsters. They get the feeling that they are not able to change anything to their situation and loose the self-confidence to put their school career back on the right tracks. A counsellor or 'bridge person' can give the extra support and guidance and provide the necessary stimuli to persevere.

Proposal

Make time, listen, watch and feel

Motivation

Those who work with children – in education or in child care – have to love children. Teachers and youth workers not only need to love their job in order to succeed. Really loving children is a prerequisite to build a good relation and to build confidence.

Loving children means taking them seriously, making time to listen to them and to work at their rythm. Only then, when the basic attitude is ok, methodologies make sense.

⁶ Pinceel, K., (2013). Waarom 'Wij' naar de B-klas en 'Zij' naar de A-klas

Proposal

Create space in teacher training to work on attitudes such as dealing with diversity in intake modules, learning groups... Only start the development of skills and knowledge afterwards.

Motivation

At the end of their studies, teachers need to have a basic attitude towards diversity. If teachers only can look at parents, colleagues and pupils from their own reference framework, this has catastrophic consequences for those pupils. Teachers have to believe in the teachability of their pupils and have to see the added value of diversity, for instance the asset of multilingualism in a class. In a lot of teacher trainings, the accent in evaluation is on knowledge and competences. Evaluation of attitudes is still difficult to document.

Proposal

Believe in children

Motivation

Identity is multiple. Children have different characteristics, and don't coincide with their behaviour. Supporting children in their development, implies encouraging the positive things, the strong points, without neglecting the less positive aspects, but always with the accent on the positive things, so that the children can build confidence and grow.

Proposal

Provide applicant teachers first with a role as communicator in society, then in the school, and only after that as a teacher. Use optional internships, interdisciplinary internships, equal opportunities internships, guidance of study choice processes, guidance of newcomers speaking another language, participation at parents' evenings, internships in school community work, ...

Motivation

Those activities prepare the future teacher to go into a dialogue with different partners and to learn more about the environment of the school and the context of the pupils. The future teachers need time to learn to communicate and to learn to work together; that's why this should be included in teacher training from the beginning. The future teacher needs to have the space to get to know the school culture in a large sense. Insight in different school cultures contributes to a more conscious career planning.

In order to support best the identity development, teachers have to communicate with parents, colleagues, partners from outside the school and, of course, the pupil. A lot of problems with pupils from a migrant background are the consequence of prejudices and bad intercultural communication.

Proposal

Build the curriculum from the viewpoint of the pupil, not from the teacher. Work from the beginning of teacher training on evaluation and differentiation. Use techniques such as teamteaching, educational assistants, internships in loft classes and workshops.

Motivation

Teachers learn most from experiences. Differentiating is a very complex competence that is in fact at the

heart of good teaching. By differentiating and by developing language during teaching, the teacher gives pupils the opportunity to further develop their talents and to work this way on the development of their identity. A personalized learning environment can be an appropriate intervention to provide early school leaving.

Proposal

Stimulate mobility of teachers within and between schools

Motivation

Mobility enhances learning and contributes to the dissemination of expertise.

Proposal

Focus on the relationship with parents and create opportunities for parents to deliver positive input

Motivation

Parents thinkg that it is important that their children do well at school. Moreover, the loyalty of the children towards the parents is very big, even if things are not always easy at home.

5.2 Supporting networks

This discussion table has worked based on proposals by

- Sarah Braeye, Interculturalism, Migration and Minorities Research Centre (IMMRC)
- Hans Vanmarsenille, Director 'De Buurt' (Primary Shool), Brussel
- Lode Draelants, International Committee, Hasselt
- Mark Laquière, IQRA-project of the Federation of Moroccan Associations, Antwerp

This table didn't discuss every proposal separately, but clustered them according to the themes. The participants at this table did not support all the proposals.

5.2.1 Supplementary education

Proposal

Reduce the polarisation between the immigrant civil society and the Flemish education system and move towards learning 'in' diversity instead of learning 'about' diversity.

Motivation

Proposal

Build a structural cooperation between etnical supplementary schools and Flemisch schools.

Systematically involve etnical supplementary educational institutions or different migrant civil society organizations for the monitoring of the school career of pupils with a migrant background. Teachers from etnical supplementary educational institutions are potential bridge persons between etnical communities and the Flemisch education.

Motivation

Etnical supplementay schools reach a big group of children and parents from the own community and seem to be able to work together constructively on the basis of trust. The Polish and Chinese schools function as a 'safe' environment, where the own etnical identity isn't problematic and where teachers function as an important support and trust persons for some pupils and parents. Parents can feel more safe and can develope trust because at these schools they are adressed in their own mother tongue, there are teachers with a good knowledge of the

The elaboration of a structural collaboration between the immigrant civil society and the Flemish education system offers chances to understand the cause of persisting inequality in educational opportunities of pupils with a migrant background in spite of a variety of measures to reduce the gaps and to enhance their school success and the implementation of multi- or intercultural programmes in education.

Flemish educational system and they have good relationships with key persons.

Research⁷ shows clearly that some teachers in Polish and Chinese schools take up a very motivating role in the school careers of their pupils. Especially youngsters who are not in the right type of education, because of their limited knowledge of the Dutch language or because of other reasons, benefit from a supplementary educational institution to stimulate and motivate them. Supplementary educational institutions can be an important source of information about the real skills and competences of pupils, more specifically of youngsters from the first generation of migrants. This favours a better orientation towards study options in the Flemish education. Nowadays pupils are often only partially followed up. That's why schools only have a limited view on the broader socio-cultural context of the pupil and the possible causes of and solutions for difficulties during their school careers.

Proposal

Organize training for the staff of the supplementary educational institutions on the functioning and the objectives of the Flemish education systems

Motivation

A lot of teachers in supplementary schools say that they need more training on the Flemish education system in order to broaden their limited knowledge and to be able to inform better their pupils and guide them in their school career in regular education. Often, parents and pupils ask questions about study and school choice. They don't always know the right answer.

Proposal

Recognize, in the elaboration of structural cooperation with etnical supplementary schools, the parents as full partners in the learning process of their children

Motivation

A lot of Polish and Chinese parents say that, sometimes, they are not able to support their children with home work, but that they can take up this supporting role for the supplementary education. Barriers are less high in the field of language or content. This way parents acquire insights in the learning methods of their children, their talents and weaknesses, learning attitudes and characteristics. The perception of the parents by the children changes. Children are going to recognize their parents as actual sources of knowledge. This has positive consequences for the relationship between parents and children and contributes to the self-esteem of the parents. Schools can use this to build structural cooperation with the migrant civil society.

Proposal

More resources for etnical supplementary educational institutions

⁷ Oprit 14

Motivation

In order to further develop the bridging function of self organizations, and more specifically of ethnical supplementary institutions, they need more resources. Today a lot of these institutions depend for their functioning for an important part on the inscription fees and donations; school staff works on a voluntary basis. If schools want to cooperate structurally with these supplementary schools, they need more resources. An example: schools can put rooms at their disposal on Wednesday afternoon or during the weekend. This can only optimize the cooperation.

Remarks

Participants at this table formulated the following remarks related to supplementary education:

- A good definition of ethnical supplementary education is very important. We have to distinguish clearly ethnical supplementary education and education aimed at religious objectives, for instance Koran schools.
- We expect a lot from children/youngsters: do well at the regular school, do well at the supplementary school, participate in the cultural life..
- The authorities don't have impact on the content that is taught and cannot impose conditions at the supplementary education. This is only possible if the authorities also support financially supplementary education. In some cases, such as in the Chinese and Polish schools, there is a certain openness to cooperate in the field of learning content.
- How can a school with an important and diverse population organize a network with the different ethnical supplementary schools? This could be done, for instance, by cooperating with the 'Minderhedenforum' (Forum of Minorities).
- The stronger the mother tongue is developed (rich language knowledge is important), the broader the own identity is developed, the broader the personal development... the more chances of success in regular education.

5.2.2 Supporting networks from the school's viewpoint

Proposal

Build a good and supported network between the school and the parents.

Motivation

Parents are crucial in the realization of the pedagogical project. It is thus very important to build a strong and supported network between the school and the parents. The school has to have a clear vision on parental involvement, on effective communication and consultation possibilities

and explicitly formulated expectations from the parents to the school and vice versa in an engagement declaration. Clear communication on what a school expects from the parents and on what their tasks are, is crucial.

Proposal

Use an engagement declaration for agreement on the school-supportive behaviour that the school can expect from the parents and on what the parents can expect from the school.

Motivation

The background characteristics of the children can be very different from school to school. Schools with a lot of children that are well supported by their parents, have better results. In order to reduce these differences, it is important that schools from a school community can expect the same engagement from the parents of their pupils. This should be laid down in a document.

Proposal

Make the school a pivotal partner in the network of external social partners

Motivation

Next to the parents, the external social partners are an important network with a coordinating role for the school and the parents. From consultation moments with those social partners, schools learn that they see the schools as working partners and tend to impose to schools what they have to do. Often, they don't take into account the capacity of the schools. At a certain point, this capacity reaches its limits. Schools and parents have to remain the main players in the prevention of early school leaving. The supportive offer of the social partners has to be determined in close consultation with the schools and the parents. The authorities subsidize a lot of fragmented initiatives and organizations that cooperate insufficiently and all have a different vision on what is best for the school results of the pupils. Schools have to take the lead pedagogically and streamline the different external social partners in this field.

Proposal

Organize moments of consultation between the school and the 'bridge persons'

Motivation

It is important to link persons and/or organizations that have regular contact with parents and that are trusted by parents, to the school, for instance by involving them at the occasion of mothers' groups, extra muros activities, school parties and sports activities. The school can optimize its bridging function by involving regularly these key persons at consultation moments.

Proposal

Make use of extra communication channels for school-supporting parental behaviour

Motivation

A lot of disadvantaged parents and parents with a migrant background don't offer the support that the school expects from them. This has to do with basic expectations, such as care for their children, and with specific expectations, such as home work support. It is best to inform and motivate the parents also through other channels. This way, they receive a clear message from different sources about what the school expects from them as far as supporting their children in their school career is concerned.

Written communication by the Flemish Community Commission does not have the desired effect because written communication is not the best channel to reach the target group of parents with a migrant background speaking another language. It is important to discuss well with the school the information given by others, as well as the way this information is transmitted. Parents need to receive always the same information related to topics such as home work, school career guidance and healthy nutrition. Organizations such as Femma⁸, community centers and self organizations can play an important role here.

Proposal

Focus on the competences of the parents

Motivation

In some schools, the majority of the parents does not have the competences that the school expects from their child. They don't speak Dutch, for instance, they are not able to ride a bicycle or to swim, they have no digital skills, they are not able to plan. Schools can try to teach these competences to their pupils, but pupils need to have the opportunity to practice. External social partners can play a role here by offering accessible opportunities to train knowledge, competences and attitudes such as reading, speaking, listening, swimming, cycling, counting, social skills, working attitude, healthy nutrition, hygiene, safety in traffic, knowledge of the world, motivation for school, planning, environmental education, self-reliance.

Proposal

Make use of meeting places in the neighbourhood of the school

Motivation

Informal contacts and exchange of information between parents about the school are an

⁸ Femma is an organization by and for women. Femma organizes recreational, training and cultural activities for and with women from diverse cultural backgrounds. The meetings are easily accessible and respond closely to the needs and demands of the participants.

effective way of supporting the school careers of their children. There is a need for sufficient places where parents can meet. The school cannot take up this task. External partners who organize activities for children and youngsters, should also foresee space and exchange moments for parents, so that they can talk and network.

Remarks

The participants at this table formulated the following remarks on the proposals for supporting networks from the viewpoint of the school:

Parental involvement contributes to the improvement of learning results. A school with very limited parental involvement can become the pivotal partner for initiatives that enhance parental involvement.

- What's the reason why parental involvement is not a success story? How to build a policy of parental involvement? Which levers are at the disposal of the school? At this moment, there is an engagement declaration building on four pillars: care, presence at school, engagement to learn Dutch and parents' evenings. If parents don't respect these engagements, the school cannot do anything.
- There is a tension between the demand of the schools to remain the pivotal partner in activities to enhance parental involvement and the adagio that educational chances for pupils with a migrant background are a shared responsibility.
- Parental involvement can only improve if the school is included in a broader network with a lot of deliberation.
- A repressive system will not be effective.
- Schools have to learn to think from the perspective of the parents.
- The school has to become a community school and a meeting place for parents. This way parents can get to know the school better.
- Experience of success is important. Experiencing success out of school can lead to success inside the school.
- Secondary schools also need this kind of networks.

5.2.3 Supportive networks from the viewpoint of an intercultural federation of self organizations.

Proposal

Work with (qualified) volunteers

Motivation

Former teachers and other people in the broad environment or in the network of the school can guide children and parents with the home work and provide educational support to parents.

The quality of their support will improve thanks to good guidance and thanks to clear expectations.

Proposal

Reinforce the parents. Work with the parents, not on behalf of the parents.

Motivation

Show parents how they can support their child with the home work, even if they don't speak the school language. Involve the parents of the children who go to the home work classes. Volunteers can guide this process.

Creating a learning home environment is also possible in the home language. A strong home language is not a barrier for learning Dutch, on the contrary.

Proposal

Reinforce the teachers so that they can work in diversity, work on parental involvement, on participation...

Motivation

Provide good training for teachers on the environment of children and youngsters with a migrant background. Teachers have to acquire insights in the cultural differences and in the processes of socio-economic disadvantage. Insight leads to understanding, and offers help in the pedagogical process and in the contacts with the parents.

In the past, teachers used to go to the home of their pupils for a visit before the start of the school year. This asked a lot of time investment, but proved to be valuable. Give teachers the time and the space to visit the home of their pupils.

Proposal

Give room at school for the home culture and the home language

Motivation

Children from a migrant background often live in two separate and very different worlds: the home culture and the school culture. This leads to confusion and has consequences in the field of motivation, identity building etc. Those two worlds need to grow towards each other. Attention for and recognition of the home culture and the home language in the pedagogical process by the school can create a bridge.

<p>Proposal</p> <p>Involve civil society organizations and associations from the neighbourhood</p>
<p>Motivation</p> <p>Every community has its formal and informal leaders. These people have the power to motivate parents and to confront them with their responsibilities. Contact the socio-cultural organizations in the neighbourhood.</p>

<p>Proposal</p> <p>Foresee structural means to embed qualitative volunteering locally in the schools</p>
<p>Motivation</p> <p>Well supported volunteering can create a multiplying effect, with a minimum of investment.</p> <p>Foresee central knowledge and training systems that can guide schools through effective volunteering.</p>

Remarks

The participants at this table formulated the following starting points related to the proposals for supporting networks from the viewpoint of the intercultural federation of self organizations:

- Parents are, per definition, concerned by the future of their children.
- Schools are sometimes desperate.

And the following remarks

- Home visits are only succesful under certain conditions, and the follow up calls for respect and discretion.
- Early school leaving has many causes and calls for an integrated, well coordinated approach, involving the fields of education, welfare, socio-cultural networks.
- The approach has to enhance the competences of the parents. Others can't take up their tasks. However, it isn't always clear what exactly schools expect from parents. Do parents have to support their children, or do they also have to remediate? Does the school expect a content support from the parents? Or does the school rather expect that the parents offer structure, support such as reading the school agenda, prepare the swimming bag?

5.2.4 Supportive networks from the viewpoint of a federation of self-organizations.

<p>Proposals</p> <p>Undertake actions to know better the living environment of the youngsters and their parents, to map the initial situation of the pupils/parents.</p>

Respect the ethnical-cultural and the socio-economic background and the characteristics of the pupils and their parents. Show this respect in your daily school and teaching practice.

Recognize the value of the mother tongues of children speaking another language by approaching them in a positive way. Allow them to speak their language on the playground. Make didactical use of their language during the lessons. Make use of translators and whispering translation during sessions with parents

Opt for an experience-oriented and integral approach.

Stimulate formal and informal pupils' and parents' participation. Treat pupils and parents as equal partners in the discussion.

Make concrete engagements with the parents and the pupils in the beginning of the school year based on the policy plan on 'Equal opportunities'. Work with real mutual engagements and not with unilaterally imposed obligations.

Motivation

The federation motivates these proposals based on its own experiences with sessions after school time. During those sessions children do their home work and afterwards they work on learning gaps and on enhancing trust and self-respect. Pupils work in small groups (two or three pupils) under the supervision of a volunteer. Those volunteers focus on the strengths of the children. The federation states that it is important that the children like to join the sessions. The parents have their say in the choice of the themes for the sessions.

Before the pupils participate, the federation and the parents sign a contract with their mutual expectations. The parents sign the contract after having been informed about the offer and have had the opportunity to formulate their own expectations. The parents have to see the added value of the contract. This presupposes trust in a very broad community. The demand for a contract came from the community itself.

The partners in this project are: the family, the school, the leisure environment and the neighbourhood.

Remarks.

The participants at this table formulated remarks related to the proposals of supporting networks from the viewpoint of a federation of self-organizations:

- Respect for the parents has to be the starting point for every intervention. The home culture is an essential element to start from.
- Building a relation of trust is a critical condition to do good work with the parents. There is a tension with a repressive approach.
- There is a need for a supported vision by different schools.

5.3 Teachers who make the difference

This table discussed based on the proposals by

- Reinhilde Pulinx, Steunpunt 'diversity and learning', University Ghent
- Luc Claessens, Forum drop out prevention, city of Antwerp
- Luc Denie, teacher coachwork, Technicum Antwerp North

After discussion and adaptation the group withheld the following proposals

Proposal
Create strong learning environments for learning in diversity
Motivation
<p>Teachers and teams of teachers have at their disposal different tools to create strong learning environments. Often, pupils find the content of the subjects and the didactical methodologies dull. This lack of involvement with the subject and what happens in the classroom can contribute to processes of drop out and early school leaving. Strong learning environments enhance the involvement of pupils and allow more active participation by the pupils in the learning process. Connecting the school and the class with the living environment of the pupils enhances the relevance of what they learn. The connections, the applications and the 'use' of the content becomes clear and thus more understandable. There is more space for processing and for using other competences and talents. The teachers who work interdisciplinarily get a broader view on the pupils because they see them act and interact in another context than the context of their subject.</p> <p>For pupils from a migrant background it is necessary to make use of their multilingual competences in the learning process, whatever the status of the home languages may be. At this moment, acquiring the knowledge of the Dutch language is too much presented as a condition for successful participation in education. Acquiring a second language is a long and unpredictable process that is not linear. A good knowledge of the Dutch language is thus more the result of participation and not so much a condition to participation in education.</p> <p>In the context of strong learning environments with attention for the broad spectrum of pupils' competences, a broad assessment of the pupils is important. Today's practice of testing at a specific moment and of isolated evaluations of the different subjects separately at pivotal moments in the school career, leads to often wrong or less good study orientation and study choice.</p> <p>An enthusiastic teacher is still more important than a safe and strong learning environment. The most important task of a teacher is to bring over enthusiasm for his subject. In order to make the difference, a more interactive didactics is a critical tool for the teacher. This has to be stressed during teacher training. New teachers often have problems when they want to put in practice the didactics they learnt at school. They are not always able to adapt to the class group. In order to support them, initial guidance is crucial.</p>

Proposal
Enable teachers to play a crucial role in the continuous process of orientation and study choice

Motivation

Orientation of pupils is more than advising parents and pupils at the end of the school year or at pivotal moments at the transition from Kindergarten to primary education, from primary to secondary education, and from secondary education to higher education.

Orientation and study choice guidance are not only the task of the pupils counsellors of the staff from the CLB (Cel Leerlingen Begeleiding = Pupils Guidance Centers). Teachers play a very important role in this process. The Flemish education system is complex; some choices, very early in the school career, often have irreversible consequences for the future of a pupil. Parents and pupils have to be sufficiently informed about the education system, the consequences of study choices, the curriculum of some study options, the possibilities of those options as far as transition to higher education and to the labour market is concerned. Teachers play a crucial role because of their specific relationship and direct and continuous contact with their pupils. An open and clear communication and interaction between teachers, parents and pupils is needed in order to guide pupils in a study choice that is perfectly adapted to their competences, expectations, interests and talents.

In order to be able to play this crucial role, it is important that they

- know the study offer in compulsory education and after compulsory education. This knowledge is insufficient at the moment.
- have more insight in the weaknesses, talents and aspirations of pupils, based on a broad assessment.
- know what their role is in school career guidance. This is often not clear now.
- are aware that study choice is a continuous process that not only takes place in the sixth year of primary and secondary education, and pay attention to it from the first year.
- help pupils to make conscient choices and guide them by motivating them and treating them as adults, by approaching them positively, linking success experiences to challenges, by having sufficiently high expectations for all the pupils; by addressing them individually and by differentiating the approach.

Proposal

Find teachers with an open and reflective basic attitude towards learning in diversity.

Motivation

In every school and in every class there are differences between pupils: differences in the field of ethnical, linguistic, cultural and religious background, socio-economic situation, learning styles, learning difficulties, fields of interest, talents. All the teachers have to be able to deal with these differences. They have to be conscious of their own reference framework, often the reference framework of the white middle class, and be able to reflect on it. They have to be aware of their own perceptions and presuppositions, reflect on it and be able to empathize with the reference

frameworks of their pupils and their parents. This open basic attitude encompasses a sincere interest for all the pupils, their family, background, fields of interest, and talents, in the school and outside the school. Mutual respect is much more important than learning 'about' diversity.

Teacher training has to train teachers who are able to function in all contexts. Future teachers don't need to learn more about diversity, but in diversity, and have to question themselves constantly.

A teacher that is competent in diversity has the following competences:

- Learn from each other
- Multi perspectivity
- Cooperation in dialogue
- Non discrimination, no prejudices
- Flexibility

The evaluation of future teachers has to encompass this competence in diversity. All new teachers have to be capable of developing these competences further, potentially. Initial guidance can contribute to this.

Proposal

Work at a positive climate as a basis for change.

Motivation

A positive climate is a basic condition for change. Direction and teachers are key figures in a school policy. Their approach and guidance are decisive for the learning and living climate at school. Mutual respect, trust and tolerance will grow in schools with an open, participative climate, clear and supported agreements and a transparent and planned policy on themes that are important for the pupils such as bullying, truancy, exams and homework. Schools that work this way see more pupils leave the school with a degree or a certificate.

Today, racism still exists in schools. Teachers have to learn to deal with it. In the class, the teacher makes the difference, but what happens outside the school? This has also influence on the choices pupils make.

Proposal

Make use of cross-sectoral, cross-level, tailored support.

Motivation

Schools and centers for pupils guidance build more and more networks with partners from youth care to guide and support youngsters at risk of drop out. These networks have a lot of know-how that can help teachers to guide their pupils better. Partners from the network can propose an integrated training offer to make teacher (teams) more competent in dealing with the pupils and

their context.

Proposal

Work together on professionalization.

Motivation

Dealing with diversity, an adapted guidance attitude, interactive and cooperative work, starting from the strengths and the context of each pupil, permanent follow-up, dealing with transboundary behaviour,...

Guidance of young teachers and self-reflection by teachers, together with colleagues, can offer a lot of support to develop further these competences.

The beginning teacher and the more experienced teacher can benefit from more support and from good practices. By (project) cooperation between schools in the country and abroad, with professional partners from other sectors, directed and supported by the (local) authorities, a lot of experience can be shared. This can create support for innovative content and approaches to address and reduce early school leaving.

The following proposals have not been discussed at the round table (time pressure).

Proposal

Support the teachers. They are on the first line!

Motivation

Teachers are key persons to detect problems with pupils and to deal with truancy and other types of transboundary behaviour. They can refer to colleagues, pupils guidance or the center for pupils guidance. Teachers not only need professionalization in order to be able to take up their role well, they also need a school organization that allows them to effectively take up their guidance role. Taking over the follow-up and remediation policy (too soon) by the second line, threatens to undermine the position of the teachers. They cannot sufficiently focus on recovery, and conflicts are not really solved and risk to come back. The pupil often unhooks himself, and final exclusion becomes unavoidable.

Proposal

Provide intensive school career guidance for youngsters at risk of early school leaving, with the teacher as a crucial agent.

Motivation

Youngsters at risk of unqualified early school leaving have to be followed up closely. A Personal Development Plan can be developed with the school, the youngster, the VDAB, the OCMW (Public Center for Societal Wellbeing) and the school career guidance at school. The school, the

youngster and the guidance make an agreement, in which they lay down the efforts to reduce barriers and the mutual expectations. The aim is to prevent early school leaving. If youngsters drop out, they are followed up and actively guided towards a realistic trajectory.

5.4 Study choice processes

This discussion table has worked based on proposals by

- Simon Booone, Faculty of Sociology, University Ghent
- Johan David, umbrella of the free centers for pupils guidance
- Pat Kussé, general education policy, city of Antwerp

This table did not always discuss every proposal separately. They did formulate comments to the proposal after the presentation of each speaker.

5.4.1 Proposals based on scientific research

Proposal

Try with all possible means to reach all the parents and to inform them about the study choice their child will have to make. Make, if needed, extra efforts to inform parents with a migrant background. If language is a barrier, make use of interpreters or bridge persons.

Reduce the barriers faced by parents when they have contacts with education professionals, so that they address more easily teachers, CLB staff (pupils guidance) and if needed school leaders. A community school can offer a good framework.

Make all the information given in the class as accessible as possible, so that all the parents can understand.

Motivation

Scientific research⁹ shows that the orientation process at the transition from primary to secondary education is different for parents of pupils with a migrant background. More often, they exclusively ask advice to family, friends and parents of other pupils at school. They indicate more often that they did not receive information on the transition from primary to secondary education. And those who indicate that they did receive information, more often indicate that they received this information from family, friends and parents of other pupils at school. It appears that parents with a migrant background receive less often concrete study advice from teachers and assist less often to information sessions organized by the primary school on the transition to secondary education. Parents with a migrant background more often did not decide in June which study option their child would choose at the start of the next school year.

⁹ Boone, S. & Van Houte, M. (2010). Sociale ongelijkheid bij de overgang van het basis- naar het secundair onderwijs. RUGent, OBPWO-project 0703 commissioned by the Flemish minister for education and training.

These constataions seem to indicate that the initiatives taken by schools and education professionals such as teachers, CLB staff and school management, in order to prepare the transition from primary to secondary education, don't reach part of the parents with a migrant background.

Comments on these proposals by the participants:

- These are good proposals. The center for pupils guidance doesn't always looks actively enough for ways to reach all the parents. There are good practices. The authorities could promote these proposals.
- The staff of the centers for pupils guidance don't always feel competent enough to use certain methodologies, or they don't know the methodologies. The staff should ask for more support. It is important to evaluate constantly their way of working.
- Not only the parents need information. A lot of teachers have insufficient knowledge of the context. They share for instance the perception that there are already study options in the first degree, whilst the first degree is common and there are only choice options.
- School directors and school teams have to develop a vision on the support of study choice processes.
- For all the proposals, we have to realize that the impact of the socio-economic background is bigger than the impact of the etnical background.
- Reduce misconceptions in schools and amongst parents, by creating a close relationship with the parents at school level, by stimulating trust towards the center for pupils guidance, the teachers and the school, and by promoting accessible contacts. Make room for 'good news' on the pupils. This leads to a different mentality and a better follow-up of the advice by the school and the teachers.
- Make use of civil society organizations and bridging projects, start partnerships. Partnerships don't take away the responsibility of the school. 'Supplementary education' is an example of a good practice.
- Further explore possible cooperation with the 'houses of the child' and 'Kind & Gezin' (Child and Family). 'Kind & Gezin' is well known in the migrant community. An integrated policy (child, youth, education, social affairs, local authorities) is a success factor.

5.4.2 Proposals based on the practice in the centers for pupils guidance

Proposal

Make more use of promotional teams and teams of ambassadors composed by pupils from a migrant background. They provide information sessions about higher education for pupils with a migrant background.

Motivation

Identification with role models is for youngsters a critical building stone to be able to make

confident choices.

Comments by the participants

- Making use of role models has to be part of a more encompassing approach
- Partners have to understand each other in order to be successful. The information provided by the promo team has to match with the information provided by other partners such as teachers and the center for pupils guidance.
- Are these extra efforts possible without extra support to work on cooperation?

Proposal

Build a first degree that is transparent and that offers a deep exploration of all possible study and professional possibilities.

Motivation

The exploration of the Flemish study offer and of the labour market calls for a broad first degree with an explicite orientation function.

Comments by the participants

This proposal is in line with the former set of proposals. Transparency is absolutely necessary, as well as tailoring the information to the different target groups. Information has to be accessible and correct.

Proposal

Organize regional deliberation between the different types of education in order to allow meaningful choices by pupils and parents.

Motivation

Percentages of early school leaving in Flanders show important regional and even local differences. Solutions thus also have to take into account the local context, and be the result of close deliberation between the local/regional partners.

Comments by the participants

- This works very well in Antwerp, where there is deliberation and cooperation between the education providers, the school communities and with other organizations such as those involved in the education for newcomers speaking another language.
- Cooperation has to focus on vulnerable groups.

- Orientation within the school network instead of orientation based on interest and talent remains a challenge.

<p>Proposal</p> <p>Build strong information centers, without splitting up the information centers for adults and the information centers for pupils in compulsory education. In Flanders, there is not too much expertise in career guidance. Information will be richer if there is cooperation between the partners from education, socio-cultural sector, career guidance and employment.</p>
<p>Motivation</p> <p>Bringing in-depth information to pupils, parents, students, adults looking for guidance in education calls for expertise.</p>

Comments by the participants

The starting point of this proposal is important: in Flanders, there is too little expertise for study career guidance. That's why investments have to be made in the professionalization and in cooperation, including the idea of lifelong learning.

<p>Proposal</p> <p>Reinforce 'fair diagnostics' by installing a Centre for diagnostics.</p>
<p>Motivation</p> <p>Where diagnostics can be useful as a clarification of the self-concept, it has to fit into an action-oriented diagnostics trajectory that makes use of tools that fit in the concept of 'fair diagnostics'.</p>

Comments by the participants

- This proposal supports other proposals about professionalization.
- It fits in the trajectory of action-oriented diagnostics.
- Methodologies and tools have to be finetuned.
- It could also lead to more transparency in the amount of 'providers' of diagnostics and the trend towards over-diagnosing.

- The users have to build competence in dealing with data and figures.

<p>Proposal</p> <p>Reinforce the choice competences of pupils and parents by introducing an effort obligation with adapted goals (competences).</p>
<p>Motivation</p> <p>Who or what is decisive for the final choice, and on which basis? Is the 'ecology' of the choice process clear for the pupil, for the parents, the teachers and counsellors?</p>

Comments by the participants

- Participants are not sure about the proposal to introduce an effort obligation. We can work at the reinforcement of the parents.
- The necessary competences that are linked with the concept of school career guidance are not enough present in the curriculum.

<p>Proposal</p> <p>Reinforce the possibilities for continuous career guidance during primary and secondary education and allow corrections by making more transitions possible.</p>
<p>Motivation</p> <p>Intermediary evaluation of the choice is necessary. Those involved have to evaluate whether their choice corresponds to the expectations.</p>

Comments by the participants

- This is a task for the centers for pupils guidance and for the teachers (see further).
- In the projects on 'talent development' in primary education, pupils learn how to look at themselves and to use this during the choice guidance.
- The effectiveness of methodologies for school career guidance depends on a career conversation. Without this conversation, methodologies don't work. A portfolio or a choice dossier are not sufficient on themselves. In order to work with these methodologies, not only the people from the centers for pupils guidance, but also the teachers need support and development of expertise.

General comments by the participants on the proposals from the practice in the centers for career guidance

- Research shows that parents from a migrant background only ask for advice at the very last moment, contacting experts such as the school, the teacher or the staff of the center for pupils guidance.

- Pupils from a migrant background often make their choices themselves.
- The proposals are based merely on the structure of secondary education, which tracks very early in the school career, with negative choices for 'technical' options based on experiences of failure during primary education, and non-funded recommendations, such as the advice to go to the B-stream based on the results in primary education. The proposals for the reform of secondary education contain a number of elements of change, such as remediation and the reduction of the number of options. The debate on those proposals for reform makes believe that those proposals, in the end, will not lead to more transparency or later selection. The importance given to the certificate of primary education for access to secondary education will not contribute to a later selection for the most vulnerable pupils.

5.4.3 Proposals from general education policy in a big city

<p>Proposal</p> <p>Learning how to choose is done by choosing</p>
<p>Motivation</p> <p>How to choose is something one learns step by step. Young children choose an activity; primary school pupils think about why they make a specific choice; in secondary education pupils try to find their way in the broad offer of study or profession offer. School has to be a choice-rich environment. By making choices continuously, you learn how to make the best choices at pivotal moments.</p>

<p>Proposal</p> <p>No, these pupils are not lost</p>
<p>Motivation</p> <p>Trust is fundamental in a relationship with pupils. Trust is the basis for self-confidence. Self-confidence is needed to be able to make positive choices. Successful study choice processes develop in a school environment with room for the individual and attention for the positive aspects.</p>

<p>Proposal</p> <p>Know your customers!</p>
<p>Motivation</p>

The majority of the teaching staff belongs to the middle class and has no migrant background. Education is strongly determined by this point of view. A better understanding and more attention for the environment out of the school is important. School becomes an environment where the children and youngsters feel respected. This contributes also to the self-confidence and a positive self-image.

Proposal

Don't forget the parents

Motivation

The parents play a crucial role in the study choice of their child. They have expectations, dreams.. and try to estimate the possibilities of their child. Their influence on the school and study choice of their child is often very important. That is why an information moment for the parents on study choice is not sufficient. Study choice, fields of interest, talents.. are subjects that have to be discussed during parents evenings. Involve the pupil during the contacts with the parents: let him/her talk about his strong and/or weaker points, let him/her present his/her portfolio, ...

Comments by the participants

- The relationship between teachers and parents is difficult. The communication competences of teachers don't always include the competence to build relationships and strong contacts with adults. Communicating with parents calls for specific competences. The teacher has give a placet to their experience of value in a very short period of time. Here also, the participants refer to the role of teacher training.
- The factor of mutual trust plays an important role. Research¹⁰ shows that the perception and the practice of teachers is more oriented at keeping the parents away. Teachers think that contacts with parents are an extra task.
- Schools still realize too little the positive effect of a good relationship with the parents.
- Working on the self-esteem of teachers can have positive consequences for their relationship with the parents.
- A possible challenge is the fact that parents don't know their children sufficiently and have a different image of their children than the teachers.

Additional comment by the participants: Teachers and staff of the centers for pupils guidance need professionalization and competence development for continuous career guidance. This has to encompass methodologies and tools, communication competences, preparedness for innovation, policy making capacity and vision development. Career guidance can take place at different levels: at school, at local and regional level, at the level of the Flemish Community.

¹⁰ Oprit 14

5.5 The attractiveness and dynamism of alternative learning pathways.

This table discussed based on the proposals by

- Inge De Win, Second Chance Education, Antwerp
- Ellen Goovaerts, Training Centers for youngsters Arktos, Louvain
- Peter Van Haeverbeke, Flemish employment service (VDAB)

The comments of the participants at this table have been integrated immediately in the proposals. Participants made a comment before the discussion: they think that the discussion on the attractiveness and dynamism of alternative learning pathways should not be limited to demotivated youngsters. A lot of the proposals are also applicable in the broader education field.

Proposal
Use the pupils follow-up system in a positive way
Motivation
In the centers for adult education that offer second chance education, applicant students feel it is an advantage that the center does not know their history. It remains a challenge though to map their learning opportunities and difficulties based on an extensive initial assessment.

Comments by the participants

Let the learner participate in the content of his dossier. Focus on elements that are relevant for instance to obtain exemptions. Don't focus on a negative history, for instance in the field of attitude. Foresee a sufficient closure of the content of the pupil follow-up system for third persons.

Proposal
Don't think in a linear way, work in a modular way.
Motivation
Having parts of the curriculum acquired in a learning pathway is motivating and stimulating. In order to obtain a qualification in adult education, a student, in a way, has to collect points on his savings card. A full savings card delivers the qualification of secondary education. In some centers, students already acquire their first point in November, when the first modules come to an end. Once a student has obtained part of a qualification, no one can take it a way from him.

Comments from the participants

- Modular learning pathways offer students the freedom to combine study with a job or a family. The freedom to put together a time schedule is stimulating. The feeling to be 'at the right place' for different courses, is motivating.
- It is also possible to work with flexible learning pathways for secondary education. Secondary school rarely do this in practice. This is a missed opportunity.

Proposal

Make creative use of teaching hours, use them where they pay most

Motivation

Research shows that more than 50 % of the students general education in the adult education are seriously at risk of not achieving because of extreme forms of performance anxiety, procrastination, perfectionism and lack of self confidence. Some centers for second chance education use an adapted scientific tool to screen this with all the applicant students and to refer them to internal training to help them to deal with these issues. The working hours of the psychologists (screening, reporting, individual training) are taken from the teachers hours. The activities of the psychologists make teachers conscient of the signals, so that they can transfer effectively.

Internal research demonstrates that students who follow the training have more chances to be successful.

Proposal

Differentiate educational standards

Motivation

In the additional general education, students can choose between modules with minimum standards or more elaborated standards, depending on their interest, talent and perspectives. Those modules are interchangeable and equivalent. Students who are weak in science, can choose the minimum module for science. Students who want to continue in higher education, choose as much more elaborated modules as possible.

Proposal

Turn the cascade into a salmon principle

Motivation

Sometimes, pupils are excluded from a certain training or section without reason. One out of five students in adult education opts, with success, for a 'higher' education option than what they reached in secondary education.

Proposal

Dive into intercultural communication

Motivation

To which extent do teachers understand the environment of their pupils – and this remark is not restricted to the pupils who speak another language? What is the culture the pupils live in? How do they deal with information? Which learning tools do they have at their disposal? What are their values and norms?

What is my position as a teacher towards this context? And as a team of teachers?

Only by being conscient of the differences, teachers can learn to deal with the differences respectfully. In centers that focus on intercultural communication, students explicitly mention that they feel they are addressed respectfully.

Proposal

Take the environment of the pupils into account in order to enhance involvement

Motivation

Education and training are linked to language. It remains a constant challenge to make the pupils learn with less or without language. Even pupils who have been in a reception class for newcomers not speaking the Dutch language, don't sufficiently know Dutch to be able to follow the lessons. Constant attention and language support is needed. Moreover, schools and teachers have to be aware of the fact that our values and habits are not always evident for the pupil. That's why they have to make explicit what they expect from pupils and parents.

They also have to show respect and interest for their culture. Visiting the home of the pupils offers a good view of their environment and reduces the barriers for parents to go to the school.

Proposal

Involve the personal and professional network of the pupil

Motivation

Working in context can involve a broader target group in a change process: the individual pupil, the class group, the teachers, the parents.

Addressing and supporting teachers, schools, centers for pupils guidance and the personal and professional network of the pupil directly, enhances their involvement in the care for the pupil.

This way of working leads to a better anchoring and avoids drop out in the long term. Looking for creative ways of parent participation offers an added value.

Proposal

Widen the social safety network of the pupil and the parents by a network approach of the home environment. Give attention to bridging persons such as neighbourhood workers and involve them actively in the pathway of the pupil.

Motivation

Youngsters and their parents often dispose of a small and often foreign-language network. Their network can be widened for instance by involving the neighbourhood worker in their pathway. This can create a supporting network, on which they can rely.

Proposal

Work in an integral way

Motivation

In order to stimulate in an optimal way the progress of a pupil, a holistic view is needed: have an eye for the integral person of the pupil, including his context and the diversity of challenges the pupil is confronted with.

Pupils from a migrant background are integrated in the society through the school. Often the school language is different from the language in their environment. Their parents don't speak the language of the school, and don't understand the messages from the school, or not sufficiently. Pupils translate these messages, as well as other messages, for their parents. This way, pupils have a lot of responsibilities, in and outside of the school context. Sometimes, they have to help their parents for handling administrative matters, they are absent at school, get punished, and this reduces their link to the school. Next to this, often the values, norms and convictions are different. It is important to be aware of these differences, to look for solutions together with the pupil and the network (the parents in the first place). This is a way to prevent early school leaving.

Proposal

Reinforce the capacity of schools

Motivation

By supporting schools and teachers, they acquire more expertise and knowledge. This is a way for schools to reinforce their support and their capacity to deal with pupils at risk of early school leaving.

Proposal

Make pupils part of their pathway.

Motivation

By encouraging pupils to take their lives in their own hands, by making them co-responsible, by involving them in decisions related to their learning pathway, their motivation becomes stronger and new perspectives open. Belief in the power of each pupil is a condition.

Proposal

Make teachers conscient of the importance of language and support them

Motivation

Language is and remains an important barrier for youngsters with a migrant background. If you don't understand the language used to explain sometimes complex concepts, you hook off quickly. Next to that, attention is needed for the 'language behind the language'. The teacher is often not enough aware of that.

VDAB (Flemish Employment Service) offers NODO+. Through, amongst other things, a language tool, simple language suggestions and techniques are presented, in order to support the written as well as spoken communication with youngsters from a migrant background. The same tool can be used for mentors, who guide youngsters during workplace based learning. The NODO+ project goes further, and stimulates to have a 'language coach' in the school, for the intercultural communication for all the teachers.

Proposal

Keep youngsters motivated with a qualifying learning and working pathway

Motivation

It is difficult to motivate youngsters, tired of school, to remain in the classroom for five days per week. Education has at its disposal a number of possibilities that allow to alternate learning at school with other ways of learning.

Through 'Individuele Beroepsopleiding Deeltijds Onderwijs (Individual professional training part time education), a project in Antwerp, employers can offer training to youngsters who still are at school part time, for three days per week. This way, the youngsters not only stay within a qualifying pathway, but they also have work guaranteed after finishing school. All the individual professional trainings include the obligation to engage for the employer.

Proposal

Don't give up on demotivated youngsters, and make use of trajectory guidance and 'warm transition'.

Motivation

When a youngster indicates that he/she wants to quit school, it is important to offer an alternative immediately.

The cooperation with trajectory guidance staff of the VDAB can provide an immediate

alternative trajectory, tailored to the youngsters' needs. A fluent transition from school to the work environment is crucial if we want to optimize the employment chances of the youngster. If you leave these youngsters alone for a few months, it appears extremely difficult to reach them afterwards.

Possible alternatives for school: a training at the VDAB, an internship, guidance within the 'Wij' project with an initial apprenticeship, ...

The experiment in Beringen, where a trajectory guide is present at school, has been welcomed positively and contributed to a successful transition from school to work.

Attention is also needed for a warm transition for motivated youngsters.

Proposal

At school, youngsters are well prepared for the transition to the labour market

Motivation

The VDAB has elaborated a package that can guide youngsters, including those with a migrant background, to take the step to the work floor. All aspects of this transition are present: choice of the profession, occupational shortages, employment chances per profession, techniques for job application, administration related to entering the labour market.

In some study options, pupils in the last year, can have a 72-hours practice training in the competence centers of the VDAB.

Proposal

Foresee a tailored approach in the trajectory of the school leaver.

Motivation

As soon as the youngster has left the school without a qualification, in spite of all efforts, there are adapted trajectories towards work for every youngster looking for a job.

Some examples

- The pre-training 'social profit' for newcomers speaking another language. The newcomers are given more time to go through the first years of higher education, so that they can learn the language and thus drop out less often.

- Support by a coach. The youngsters discuss their labour market competences, work attitudes and experiences during job applications with a coach. The coach deepens these competences, if needed.

- Inform youngsters about the arguments employers can use to hire them: individual professional training with language support, job coaching, ...

- 'Wij' apprenticeship

- An first internship is possible from 6 months after inscription at the VDAB.

- Education Qualifying Pathways are possible after an interruption of the studies for two years.

6 Discussion tables per policy level

6.1 The class and school level

6.1.1 Class policy

1. Work in an experience-oriented and integral way.
2. Create strong learning environments for learning in diversity.
3. Give constant attention to wellbeing.
4. Take children and youngsters seriously, take time to listen.
5. Believe in the possibilities of youngsters and children and challenge them constantly to go further.
6. Have trust in children and youngsters. Trust is the basis for self confidence.
7. Make pupils owner of their pathway.
8. Make room for 'good news' about the pupils.
9. Take diversity into account in the curriculum.
10. Have an open mind for the cultural and language background of the pupils.
11. Give a place at school at the home culture and language.
12. Use the home language in the teaching process.
13. Support processes of identity construction.
14. Take care of a respectful and intercultural communication, with constant attention for the risk of stigmatization.
15. Understand and pay attention to the out of school environment.

16. Adjust the education to the living environment of the children and youngsters in order to enhance involvement.
17. Undertake actions to learn to know better the environment of the children, the youngsters and their parent, and try to map the initial situation of the pupils and their parents.
18. Make orientation a continuous and interactive process.

6.1.2 School policy

1. Work on a positive climate at school as a basis for change.
2. Make school a choice-rich environment. Children and youngsters learn how to choose well at pivotal moments, if they are used to having to make choices constantly at other moments.
3. Use pupils' follow-up systems in a positive way. Give the learner the right to have a say in the content, and stress what is already acquired. Protect the data sufficiently.
4. Give pupils exemptions for the competences they have already acquired.
5. Be creative with teachers' hours, use them where the return most.
6. Develop a vision on school career guidance and support of study choice processes.
7. Make more use of promo- and ambassadors teams of youngsters with a migrant background in a more encompassing approach of study choice and school career guidance. Adjust the information they give with the information they receive from other partners.
8. Prepare youngsters well for the transition to the labour market.
9. Never let go on demotivated youngsters. Make use of trajectory guidance and warm transition to the employment service.
10. Recognize the value of mother tongues through a positive approach and allow the mother tongues at the playground.
11. Strive for a teachers team including teachers from a migrant background.
12. Give room to new teachers.
13. Stimulate mobility of teachers within the school.
14. Recognize ethnic, supplementary educational institutions (such as Chinese and Polish schools) as essential sources of social and cultural capital for pupils with a migrant background.
15. Stimulate formal and informal participation of pupils and parents.

6.1.3 Parental involvement

1. Build a well supported network between the parents and the school.
2. Recognize parents as full partners in the learning process of their child.
3. Focus on the relationship with the parents and create opportunities for parents to make a positive contribution.
4. Make an engagement declaration with mutual engagements.
5. Treat the parents with respect, give them the feeling that they are welcome at school.
6. Reduce the barriers for parents with a migrant background to contact education professionals, so that they address more easily teachers, counsellors and, if needed, school leaders. Community schools can offer a good framework.
7. Use all possible ways to reach all the parents, including the parents with a migrant background. Inform them about the study options of their child. Where needed, make

extra efforts to inform parents from a migrant background. Consider using bridge persons or interpreters if language is a barrier.

8. Use whispering translation during parents evenings.
9. Involve pupils during parents evenings.
10. Make use of meeting places in the neighbourhood of the school

6.1.4 Professionalization

1. Try to have teachers with an open and reflective basic attitude. This is a timetaking process that requires structural changes in the school policy, and that has to take place in interaction and discussion.
2. Take care of permanent professionalization, competence development and career guidance for teachers and school leaders.
3. Work on intercultural competences for the entire school team.
4. Make teachers conscious of the importance of language and support them to effectively teach to pupils with a different home language.
5. Support teachers in the development of the competence to use mother tongues in the educational learning process.
6. Give school teams the time, the opportunities and the needed guidance to acquire insights in the living environment of their pupils.
7. Work together on professionalization with other schools in the country and abroad.

6.1.5 Cooperation with other sectors and organizations

1. Work together with other services and organizations, such as organizations from the migrant civil society, that guide and support pupils with a migrant background and their parents.
2. Make use of educational trajectory counsellors and bridge persons, who can offer extra support, guidance and stimuli to the youngsters, so that they can work and persevere.
3. Make the school the central point in a network with external partners.
4. Organize deliberation moments between the school and the key actors.
5. Make use of extra communication channels for school supportive parental behaviour.
6. Complete the competences of the parents, in cooperation with other organizations.

6.1.6 Specific recommendations related to youngsters who already left school.

1. Never let go on demotivated youngsters. Take care of good trajectory guidance and a warm transition from school to employment services.
2. Tailor your work on the trajectory of the school leaver to his/her needs.
3. Work in a modular way.

6.2 Regional and local level

1. Support schools
 - 1.1 Support community schools projects, that reduce the barriers that are experienced by parents with a migrant background in their contacts with educational professionals, so that they address more easily to teachers, counsellors and school leaders.

- 1.2 Reinforce the schools by contributing to the professionalization of school teams and staff of the centers for pupils' guidance.
 - 1.3 Support actions undertaken by school teams in order to learn better the living environment of the pupils with a migrant background.
- 2. Stimulate professionalization
 - 2.1 Stimulate learning networks about the approach to pupils with a migrant background, within the education sector, between the education sector and other sectors, between the education sector and the migrant civil society.
 - 2.2 Stimulate professionalization and competence development of teachers and staff of the centers for pupils' guidance for continuous career guidance: dealing with methodologies, tools, communication competences, preparedness to innovation, policy making capacity and vision development. Adjust this professionalization to the local context.
 - 2.3 Organize training for the staff of supplementary schools about the functioning of the Flemish education system.
 - 2.4 Stimulate working with qualified volunteers within the organizations in the network around the school.
- 3. Stimulate the cooperation and deliberation between schools
 - 3.1 Stimulate cooperation between schools so that school teams and staff of the centers for pupils guidance have the opportunity to share expertise.
 - 3.2 Stimulate regional deliberation about the study offer between different educational types and networks, in order to allow meaningful choices by pupils and their parents. Focus on the transparency of the offer for the most vulnerable groups.
- 4. Stimulate cooperation and deliberation between schools and other organizations.
 - 4.1 Enlarge the social security network for pupils with a migrant background and their parents through network approach in their living environment.
 - 4.2 Stimulate cooperation with the migrant civil society.
 - 4.3 Stimulate cooperation between schools and the supplementary education.
 - 4.4 Promote the synergy between different local initiatives.

6.3 The level of the Flemish Community

- 1. Work on structural measures to prevent early school leaving
 - 1.1 Build curricula that take into account the huge diversity in the Flemish school population. Screen the educational standards systematically in this respect.
 - 1.2 Reinforce the possibilities for continuous career guidance during primary and secondary education. Make orientation a continuous and interactive process.
 - 1.3 Make, in secondary education, a first degree that is sufficiently transparent and that includes a deep exploration of study- and profession possibilities.
 - 1.4 Make corrections during the school career possible through flexible learning pathways and permeability.
 - 1.5 Ensure strong information centers for study and professional career guidance that bring the existing expertise in Flanders together.
 - 1.6 Remove the barriers that exist today to attract more teachers from a migrant background.

- 1.7 Recognize etnical supplementary education institutions as essential sources of social and cultural capital for pupils with a migrant background.
2. Support schools
 - 2.1 Support community schools projects, that reduce the barriers that are experienced by parents with a migrant background in their contacts with educational professionals, so that they address more easily to teachers, counsellors and school leaders.
 - 2.2 Support school teams that undertake actions to learn to know the living environment of the youngsters and their parents.
3. Stimulate parental involvement and provide parents with accessible information
4. Work on professionalization
 - 4.1 Try to have teachers with an open and reflective basic attitude towards diversity.
 - 4.2 Create space to work, from the start of teacher training, at attitudes such as dealing with diversity, learning groups and supervision. Start only afterwards with other competences and knowledge.
 - 4.3 Give future teachers first a role as a communicator and only afterwards as a teacher.
 - 4.4 Build the curriculum of teacher training from the viewpoint of the pupil. Focus from the start of teacher training on evaluation and differentiation.
 - 4.5 Reinforce the attention for communication with parents in the teacher training and the professional development of the teachers.
 - 4.6 Reinforce the attention for continuous professional development, competence development and career guidance for teachers and staff of the centers for pupils' guidance.
 - 4.7 Empower teachers to work in diversity, to work on parental involvement and on participation.
 - 4.8 Empower teachers to play a crucial role in the continuous process of study choice and orientation.
 - 4.9 Stimulate mobility of teachers between schools.
 - 4.10 Work on a center for diagnostics.
5. Stimulate cooperation and deliberation between the policy fields
 - 5.1 Support the professional network around the pupils with a migrant background and the parents in their living environment and enlarge their social security network.
 - 5.2 Facilitate support beyond sectors and levels.
 - 5.3 Support parents with a migrant background in supporting the school career of their child.
 - 5.4 Foresee structural resources to allow civil society organizations of etnical cultural minorities to take up fully their bridging function.
 - 5.5 Explore possible cooperation with the 'Houses of the Child' and with 'Kind & Gezin' (Child and Family).
 - 5.6 Further elaborate cooperation with the Flemish employment services in order to allow a warm transition to alternative learning pathways for all the youngsters who leave school unqualified.

7 Conclusions

Early school leaving has causes at three different levels:

1. The structural level, a.o. the education system and the socio-economic context.
2. The institutional level, a.o. the lack of social networks and social capital.
3. The individual level, a.o. the resilience and the engagement of the pupil.

During the round table participants have formulated proposals related to the three levels and related to the following themes:

- support identity development
- develop supporting networks
- teachers who make the difference
- study choice processes
- the attractiveness and dynamism of alternative learning paths.

At the structural level participants formulated proposals that have to lead to

- A secondary education with less walls between the educational types and more possibilities to postpone an irreversible study choice.
- A teacher training and a continuous professional development for teachers with a lot of attention for dealing with diversity and communication.
- A structural enhancement of the means for supplementary education in the language and the culture of the land of origin.
- Enhance the possibilities for pupils who left school early to obtain a qualification anyway.

At the institutional level proposals have been formulated aiming at the mobilisation of social and cultural capital in order to support school careers of pupils with a migrant background:

- Elaboration of more networking and cooperation between schools, social organizations, civil society and organizations from ethnical and cultural minorities.
- Elaboration of more networking between schools.
- Facilitation of networking between parents with a migrant background and other parents.

At the individual level participants formulated proposals to support the individual learning pathway of the youngsters. They plead in favour of a continuous support of informed and motivated study choice throughout the school career, and not only at pivotal moments.

All the proposals have been clustered based on the policy level that should take initiatives to realize them:

- School and class level
- Local and regional level
- The level of the Flemish Community

The proposals are not limited to the policy domain of education. Participants also have formulated cross-sectoral proposals, based on the vision that early school leaving is not only the responsibility of education, but of the whole Flemish Community and the federal government.

For more information we refer to the annexed translation of the slides of the ppt presentation.

8 Reflections by the minister

During the past years, benchmarks have been determined for reducing early school leaving, both at Flemish (Pact 2020) and at EU level (EU2020). The EU2020 benchmark foresees a reduction of the number of early school leavers to less than 10 %. Flanders, in Pact 2020, is more ambitious, and formulates the objective to reduce the number of early school leavers to half of the current number. This means a reduction of the number of early school leavers with 8,6 % (according to the EAK-indicator) to 4.3 % in 2020. In order to realize this objective, the action plan 'Prevent early school leaving' has been launched.

By now, the Flemish Government has approved an action plan to prevent early school leaving. Early school leaving is a complex problem and requires a multidisciplinary approach. It is closely linked to other dossiers such as the reinforcement of 'Learning and Working', the action plan grade retention, the reinforcement of work based learning en the development of a personal pupils dossier.

The plan includes six main action lines, amongst others:

- Further elaborate and facilitate qualifying profession oriented trajectories for youngsters who leave compulsory education early, in cooperation with adult education, compulsory education, higher education, the Flemish employment services, the Central Exams Commission, enterprises and organizations.
- The elaboration of a roadmap as a commitment framework for schools, centers for pupils guidance, the Flemish employment services and other actors who can be relevant in the actions to prevent early school leaving.

The reforms that we are planning also have to contribute to the reduction of early school leaving. We work on a stronger primary education for a better transition from primary education to secondary education, amongst other things through focusing on learning Dutch, technics and science. In secondary education we postpone the study choice until after a broad and general first degree with a lot of attention for personality training, in order to allow all youngster to make a positive study choice afterwards. We demolish the walls between general secondary education, vocational education, technical education and arts education. We create schools with a finality to lead to further education and labour market oriented schools. This is the way to avoid the waterfall system and to make sure that every youngster is at the right school bank, based on his/her talents and interests.

Teachers are crucial for the school success of youngsters. That is why I emphasise the importance of excellent teachers. Excellent teachers develop their own talents continuously. That's why professionalization has to become an integral part of the teaching task. Excellent teachers stimulate the talents of their colleagues. That's why we need to promote team work even more. We will attract to education people from outside the world of education (coming from welfare, health, youth) who are familiar with youngsters from a migrant background, offering

them better conditions. This way we bring expertise from outside into education. This is not only refreshing, but enhances the quality of education and thus the performances of youngsters.

Excellent teachers are 'top teachers', able to work with differentiation. It has been demonstrated several times that youngsters need a tailored approach, in order to prevent early school leaving. Their talents have to be discovered, recognized and valued.

Excellent teachers are the results of excellent teacher training. The policy evaluation of teacher training is finalized. The policy recommendations are presented to the public during a conference on 5 October 2013. One conclusion is: teacher training has to focus more on the diversity of their input and of their output. This has been demonstrated today: the presence of teachers with a migrant background has positive effects for the learning performances of pupils with a migrant background.

ANNEX: TRANSLATION OF THE SLIDES

Focus on protective actors and factors

- Crucial role for education: cohesion and social mobility
- Need for a holistic approach
- Emphasis on the construction of overlapping contexts
- The importance of people, beyond formal roles and categories
- The importance of structures as opportunities
- Prevention/intervention/compensation

Three levels with impact on early school leaving

- Structural level (education system and socio-economic context)
- Institutional level (social networks and social capital; cultural capital)
- Individual level (educational trajectory of the pupil)

Macro-level and education policy

- Structural reforms in the Flemish education system

Breaking walls between types of education

Transparent broad first degree and deep exploration of study- and professional options

Salmon principle

Modular work

Differentiation in educational standards

Adaptation of the pupils' follow-up system

- Reform of teacher training

Open and reflective basic attitude of the teacher

Space to work on attitudes, not only knowledge and competences

Strong support on interculturality

Continuous professional development

Broader training, not only knowledge transfer but also building trust and communicating with parents and pupils

Curriculum built from the pupils' point of view and not from the teacher's point of view

Structural enhancement of the resources for ethnical supplementary educational institutions.

Congruencies at meso-level

- Overlap in mutual expectations and aspirations through dialogue:

Self-reflection on middle class vision

Learn to know the living environment of youngsters and their parents

Reinforce the parents (work with them, not in their place)

Focus on formal and informal pupils' and parents' participation with concrete agreement with pupils and parents (mutual engagement declaration)

Focus on reaching and informing parents about study choice and options: accessibility

Educational trajectory counsellors and bridge persons in secondary education

Civil society as a bridge

- More space for congruency in the curriculum and the didactical approach

Curricula that are culturally relevant enhance the sense of involvement of the pupils and have positive effect on learning performances.

Openness of the school for cultural and linguistic background of the pupils and explicit attention for processes of identity construction

Place for home language and home culture in the school

Trust is fundamental in our relationship with children and pupils. Self-confidence!

- Cooperation with migrant civil society of ethnic cultural minorities

Stronger focus on community schools: reduce barriers that parents face in their contact with education professionals so that they address more easily teachers, counsellors and school leaders.

Recognition and use of expertise in the ethno-cultural civil society, supplementary education

Deliberation between school and key players

Meeting places in the neighbourhood of the school

Support of individual learning trajectories

- Support of informed and motivated study choice

As a continuous and interactive process starting from the pupils

Promo and ambassador teams

Reinforce choice competences of pupils and parents through an effort obligation (adapted educational standards)

Reinforce possibilities for continuous guidance during primary and secondary education and make corrections possible (more permeability)

Keep youngsters motivated through a qualifying trajectory 'learning and working'

- Make use of cross sectoral tailored support

Make strong information centers without splitting up adults and pupils from compulsory education

A counsellor from employment services at school can propose immediately an alternative trajectory for demotivated youngsters

Foresee a tailored approach for the school leaver

Prepare youngsters at school for the transition to the labour market

Summary

- Evidence based methodologies
- Competence development and support

- Create trust
- Vision development for school leaders
- Local partnerships
- Cooperate beyond the policy levels