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*NAOS- Professional capacity on Diversity*

***Handbook of Good practices in Initial Teacher Training in Secondary Education***

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***Introduction to NAOS purposes and Handbook for Secondary Education***

Through a network of i) centers of expertise, ii) teacher training colleges and iii) schools, the objective of NAOS is to develop the professional skills of teachers in dealing with cultural/ethnic diversity as well as diversity related to migration. The project, in which ten partners from nine different European countries participated, ran for three years and was comprised of numerous happenings, all of which emphasized within the scope of exploring good practices in the field of professional development with regards to diversity. Among other activities, each partner country organized study visits in a primary as well as a secondary education school, was interviewed on courses that pertain to diversity in primary schools delivered by institutes within their country, and created a video introducing a novel effort or emerging initiative that has been put to action. Relevant to this report, each partner was also requested to describe a *good practice* utilized with the goal of facilitating impactful improvement in student teachers’ competences.

As part of the latter activity, we are happy to present you a synthesized handbook of good-practice in initial teacher training for enhancing professional development in ***secondary education***. We are confident that this handbook will prove to be interesting, beneficial and transferrable to teachers and teacher trainers looking to improve their educator capacity in *instructing* as well as *gaining a better understanding of* diverse groups of students. As this handbook only serves to briefly introduce these good practices, interested readers can gain a more elaborate view of the specific practices that interest them via the NAOS website:

http://naos.risbo.org/teacher-training-in-education/teacher-training-in-secondary-education/

***Focus on Five Areas of expertise***

Not all teachers face the same challenges in reaching ethnically diverse students. Depending on one’s own experience or skills, the context and geopolitical trends of the country where they reside and teach, as well as the diverging necessities among neighborhoods within the same city, teachers and future teachers express different needs. This is certainly reflected in the framework which we have elected to use throughout the NAOS activities; Severiens, van Herpen, and Wolff (2014) advocate that to be an effective teacher in diverse classrooms, one needs expertise in five areas: a) language development, b) pedagogy/didactics, c) social interaction and identity, d) parental involvement and e) school community relationships. To that end, and in an effort to target each area more specifically, each country’s good practice example will be introduced under the area of expertise it is most closely related to. Parental involvement and school community relationships will be merged as one theme as the approach taken by institutes and schools to tackle them most frequently involves similar targets. Evidently, it will become apparent that a number of these practices will fit the scope of more than one area, however, for the purposes of structuring the handbook to address the interest of each particular teacher they will only be mentioned under one. As some of our partners struggled to find a pertinent example that can strictly be categorized as initial teacher training good practice, their examples were mentioned separately in the end.

***Method***

As aforementioned, the participating NAOS partners came from nine European countries and were: 1) Risbo and 2) The Faculty of Social Sciences from Erasmus University from **the Netherlands,** 3) Forum for Freedom in Education from **Croatia,** 4) Public Policy and Management Institute from **Lithuania,** 5) Tartu International School from **Estonia,** 6) Pedagogical Institute of **Cyprus**, 7) University of Patras from **Greece,** 8**)** University of Antwerp from **Belgium,** 9**)** University of Porto from **Portugal**, and 10) Hogskolen i Ostfold from **Norway.**

In choosing their good practice example the NAOS partners were offered a set of guidelines: a) that it focuses on learning to teach in diverse classrooms, b) that it is innovative and creative in its content or approach, c) that it is transferrable, perhaps replicable, to different contexts and d) that there is a theoretical underpinning of how and why this example would be of impact. The good practice was of course meant to tackle an existing issue within the country in question and provide valuable knowledge to teachers and future teachers.

It is our hope that offering an empirically sound argument behind the creation of these good practices, together with their generalizability to other contexts will elucidate practices which the readers of this handbook can confidently put to use in their own classes/seminars.

***Results and Takeaways***

Language development:

Adequate language acquisition is perhaps the most vital step in the acclimatization, pursuit of work opportunities, and the more general social inclusion of migrants. Despite the fact that foreign language teachers often tend to work with culturally/linguistically diverse groups of students, the old Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) approach to language teaching is still highly prominent.

The good practice example from the **Greek partners** involved an effort to shift from PPP to Task Based Language Teaching (*TBLT*) based on Information and Communications Technology (*ICT*) tools. The project in action is called PETALL and was first advocated for use throughout Europe by Lopes (2014). The initiative was undertaken by New York College of Athens on the student teachers of the English Language and Literature program. The teacher trainers have been introduced to easily accessible ICT tools, and asked to merge them with TBLT existing tools. After evaluating such samples, teacher trainers are asked to design tasks on their own, based on the perception of their student needs and topics that they would personally find motivating as well as engaging. The superiority of TBLT outcomes, especially within an ICT environment, over PPP are numerous for both the learners as well as the teachers’ development (Ellis, 2009), something which the student teachers themselves reflected on after only briefly experimenting with the approach.

Firstly, the language utilized and lessons that are created arise from students’ personalized needs rather than a predetermined selection by the teachers; students use language resources as they go based on their own relevant experience. In addition, students’ exposure to language is much more diverse in the sense that they get a range of lexical phrases, language forms, associations and patterns. Importantly, the student-oriented nature of TBLT requires a great deal of communication and cooperation (including arguments and debates) between students. In regards to the teacher competences developed, the technology-mediated character of PETALL instigates digital competence and a more in-depth understanding of TBLT. Through this training teachers get to improve their pedagogical methods, become introspectively superior about their instructing, and come closer to tackling the theory-practice gap. Of course, the ICT character also essentially implies the opportunity for teachers to collaborate at both a national and an international level with other teachers employing the program. The ultimate hope is that regional networks for the expansion of ICT-based tasks will be developed.

Moreover, the **Lithuanian** partners introduced us to their University of Educational Sciences’ course termed Russian Philology Pedagogy and Intercultural Communication. This course is especially important; it is tailored towards teachers developing competencies to cater to the needs of Russian students, a large minority (over 25%) within the country as with all the Baltic nations. The course comprises extra language courses in Russian, with another component focusing on Russian history and culture. In addition, students have the opportunity to gain additional experience by going to Moscow for a few months, giving them the chance to learn the language in a local environment and better be embedded into the Russian reality, which student teachers have claimed to be extremely crucial in their classroom-communication with Russian students later in their lives.

Pedagogy/Didactics:

According to Severiens et al (2014), the expertise theme of pedagogy and didactics involves: i) enhancing the ideas held by teachers on diversity as well as ascertaining teachers’ positive feelings towards it, ii) delivering training courses to teachers about the cultural and historical background of their students, in addition to courses accentuating on educational equity, iii) classroom differentiation based on multiple competences and divergent social skills of students, and iv) creating discursive classrooms where students in minority positions are especially urged to contribute and participate.

The partners from **the Netherlands** employed an example from the vocational track of teacher training in Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. Two of the seven vocational assignments of the entire program place focus on preparing future teachers for urban diversity. The first track deals with processes in the classroom, and more specifically with searching for student strengths rather than deficits; student teachers here learn to differentiate by sticking to a method and employing strategies according to a pre-designed plan. The way this can be achieved is through using valid instruments to first identify and then address relevant pupil characteristics. The second assignment delves into the themes of urban education, educational innovation and the pedagogics’ role. The assignment accentuates on achieving an understanding of the societal, parental and school-wide impact on diverse students, as well as on creating evidence-based recommendations for implementation in their own instruction. A particularly interesting and constructive such assignment is the student teachers designing their own observational tool to take with on a field visit. Another valuable task is the “dialogue as citizenship instrument”, which prescribes a step-by step method of carrying on dialogue with students in regards to extra-sensitive topics, while monitoring student needs throughout and after the process.

Moreover, the **Portuguese** partners sent us an examples of novel university courses within initial teacher education which have only recently been introduced in an effort to combat diversity challenges based on a general resistance to teach diversity in the recent past. The Portuguese new course is Multiculturalism and Intercultural Dialogue and is offered by the Faculty of Humanities of Coimbra University for all students in initial training. The course introduces students to different models of teaching diverse ethnic groups, gives them an overview of adjusting and differentiating in the classroom together with original methods of contact for foreign pupils. It places large emphasis on cultural dynamics and the historical contextualization of multiculturalism along with the policies that have shaped it and continue to do so.

Social interaction and identity:

This area of expertise concerns fostering healthy social relations between students and teachers of the host culture and migrant students, but importantly, also places emphasis on teachers’ knowledge of social psychology issues such as stereotype threat, deficit thinking and more. As we will see in the good practice examples here, there appear to be two different types of challenges with regards to tackling social interaction issues between diverse groups; one is faced by countries that have not been traditional migrant destinations and are characterized by homogeneity (as we will see in the case of Lithuania), and another is countries that, due to their geographical location, have in recent years attracted a significant number of asylum seekers and migrants, meaning that ethnic prejudice is faster to form and ameliorating racism becomes a priority (as in the case of Norway).

The **Lithuanian** partners have put forth a number of new courses scattered in universities throughout the country, though developing multicultural competence is largely a responsibility that has fallen on lecturers preparing specific study modules rather than teacher training. These courses vary largely in scope, looking at different aspects of inclusive teaching. Good examples include a Social Pedagogy course, Social Educational Work with migrants, Applied Linguistics and Intercultural Communication, and Ethnic Minority and Migrant Integration Course. A “Cultural Diversity” Course has commendably started their own *journal on diversity* calling on students to contribute their own pieces based on the topics that interest them. Their involvement and piece writing on the journal actually constitutes part of their grade for the course. What is similar across these courses is the urge for society as well as the student teachers themselves to engage in a topic (educational diversity) which is still often neglected and little discussed in social circles due to the low number of ethnically diverse migrants. With efforts such as these, the country is making a substantial effort to prepare for a soon-to-be national issue that is yet to arise.

In their recognition of an inherent group thinking (us vs. them) and unconscious stereotype creation as still prevalent in most contemporary contexts, **Norway’s** University College of Ostfold developed an activity for student teachers called *Design Your Neighbor.* In it, students are to explicate their own social values; they specify the requirements that a new neighbor must satisfy utilizing a variety of geographical, sociological, moral and political concepts. Through this lesson they are to discern how stereotypes form and solidify, with the ultimate expectation to “demystify” cultural differences, in addition to establishing a connection between one’s personal life and society. Students are hoped to become more mindful in their attitudes in terms of co-existence, communicate their convictions and values to others, as well as draw parallels between abstract concepts and their appearance in every-day visible interactions. In using this activity, the partners have observed that though the carrying out of the lesson is exceptionally easy, the debriefing and bridging section at the end is the most challenging, and indeed the most fruitful part of the process.

Parental involvement and school-community relationships:

Fostering contact between a school and the parents of migrant students is often difficult due to either i) parents’ weak familiarity with the local language when they have only been in the host country for a brief time, or ii) the fact that these parents often work long hours to make ends meet meaning they have minimal time to devote to their children’s education, much less getting to know their teachers. Similarly, establishing connections between the students’ school environment, home environment and the community/neighborhood they reside in is often neglected with many schools proclaiming that managing the school environment itself is already a complex task on its own.

**Croatia** was the lone partner who offered a good practice example pertaining to this theme. The country offers very minimal academic expertise on tackling diversity, meaning that the weight primarily falls on civil society organizations. The project *Start the Change* is a non-formal education initiative with the primary objective to encourage democratic values, avert radicalization of low SES students and stimulate active intercultural citizenship in young people. The core principle that characterizes the project is comprising work with disadvantaged students and volunteering in the local community as a vital part of teacher education. Teachers are to be educated by experts on teacher-training and diversity with prime focus on leading young activists and volunteers, deconstructing prejudice, resolving conflicts and enhancing creativity. Teachers from a large number of schools are meant to come in contact with each other and collaborate to make a plan to implement for the local neighborhood. Teachers are assisted by volunteers with good knowledge of the surrounding area with its potential diverse character. In addition, every school is assigned a mentor who is busy working them for the entire year.

The project will actually take place in three more countries and is a great effort both for the professionalization and further learning of teachers, as well as a great way to show the migrant communities that their integration is a priority, rather than a neglected facet of every-day life. Teachers get to learn more about how ethnically diverse students in disadvantaged neighborhoods spend their extracurricular time and develop real human bonds with them that extend out of the classroom. If relevant, it may also serve to diminish the prevalence of close-minded attitudes or deficit thinking from the side of the teachers. With the help of the volunteers and mentors, there is also potential to identify problems within families, instruct parents on how to best cope with children, even help these parents with their own acculturation. It is hoped that teachers who get a more varied look at the life of their students, instead of making assumptions solely based on their academic achievement, will not only be better able to create better rapport and relationships, but also identify multiple competences and help them with choosing their next professional steps as a mentoring figure.

Other Interesting Initiatives that do not fit the scope of Initial teacher Training

A commendable initiative which seemingly tackles all of the pedagogical subthemes was presented by the **Belgian partners,** via teacher trainers’ rather than teachers’ education. It was noticed that despite the main teacher institutes in the city of Antwerp all offered courses on diversity, aspiring teachers in their vast majority evaluated these poorly in virtue of not being appropriate to apply in their real classrooms. Part of the challenge can be attributed to the city’s superdiverse demographics as well as a significant number of underprivileged minority population. To that end, four of the main teacher training institutes in Antwerp collaborated to completely redesign their curriculums and re-conceptualize their mission in an effort to deliver teachers with real diversity-related skills.

*University of Antwerp* embarked on a plan to raise awareness of social disadvantage and provoke teachers to not only adopt a positive attitude towards changing it but actually acting towards mitigating its effects. Students are free to choose their evaluation/assessment methods. Opportunities comprised but were not limited to: doing a work-placement for social non-profit organizations that support underprivileged adolescents, tutoring migrant secondary education students on specific subjects, and preparing a team report on touching culturally-controversial topics in the class. At *Karel de Grote* University, student teachers have been called on to engage in a learning path over their 5 years at the institute. Throughout their time there, they are required to attend diversity conferences with colleagues, do job shadowing in a school or organization for a few days, interview an organization which deals with ethnically-diverse disadvantaged families, write a literature review with coursemates, as well as take part in an internship at a super-diverse school. *Center for Adult Education HBO5 Antwerp* emphasized on superior coaching of teacher trainers to student teachers, especially during their end of training internships in schools. They established additional quality time was spent between the two parties in an effort to better identify the strengths and weaknesses in these students’ skills, so that weaknesses can be better incorporated through the curriculum. Finally, *Centre for Adult Education CVO Crescendo* called on students to delve deeper into diversity. In their observing of classrooms, where previously student teachers were only able to note the basic characteristics of students such as learning disabilities and gender representation, teachers were called on to employ the *Universal Design for Learning Checklist*. This empowered them to gain a deeper understanding of diversity and how it sometimes manifests itself in less conspicuous manners.

The Pedagogic Institute of **Cyprus** shared a few diversity-relevant activities they fulfilled throughout the last academic year. One such activity was afternoon seminars with tutorials on dealing with identities and diversities, and implementing an antiracist policy in school which teachers were fully familiar with and all parents within the school had to approve. Consequences for students or employees of the school that do not comply with this code have become clear-cut. Teachers have also been called upon to attend a number of conferences and workshops which focus on current issues; this year’s topic was “Sensitization of students against racism and intolerance and promotion of equality and respect in the context of the No Hate Speech Movement of the Council of Europe” as endorsed by the MOEC. All of these initiatives provoke the school environment to reconsider prejudiced attitudes and holds those with inappropriate discriminatory behavior accountable

The partners from **Estonia** presented us with their “Supporting and Adapting Newcomers to the Schools” project. It is a 34 hour-long training course which involves numerous stakeholders within each school team; a member of the schools’ leaders (principal), two teachers, a member of the school’s support system (for instance a counselor or psychologist), a representative of the school owners, and a parents’ representative. Within the training, participants get to elaborate on widely held attitudes towards migrants, approaching *value conflicts* within the school environment, and addressing frequent problems and even legal issues related to students of varied cultural backgrounds. It is hoped that through this training more knowledgeable and more tolerant schools will be created, and the relevant stakeholders will be in better position to communicate with diverse students and attempt to gain an understanding of the cultural baggage they bring with them. They also hope to adopt a more culturally-considerate viewpoint, as well as be taught about non-verbal behavior manifestations and improve their psychological contact skills.

***Conclusions and Suggestions***

The NAOS partners have collected resourceful, innovative good practices in initial secondary teacher education. As aforementioned, the nine countries all face diverging issues within education of diverse ethnic groups. Some, like the Netherlands, Belgium, and Greece have considerable expertise with super-diversity historically and demonstrate a more-in depth understanding of the collaboration necessary from various stakeholders to confront the challenge. They are already putting forth evidence-based suggestions for migrant students to rapidly grasp the local language and stimulate more inclusion and better participation within the classroom. Others, like Estonia and Lithuania have considerably lower numbers of diverse migrants within their borders but exhibit considerable sensitivity to the promotion of tolerance and are already teaching the relevant stakeholders about the situation and historical baggage of such students. Countries like Cyprus, Portugal and Croatia are in a geographical position particularly susceptible to a large number of arriving asylum-seekers at a time of global unrest and are largely concerning themselves with preventing the formation of discriminatory practice and prejudice that is prone to happen in these cases. The instance of the Norwegian example displays an enthusiasm for experimentation and activity building that seeks to instigate critical thinking and introspective/metacognitive learning in students, rather than forcing ideas on them through regurgitating the same old concepts.

Another potential contrast we may take note of is a dichotomy of innovation vs. tradition. Some practices can be understood to be more experimental, while some are more culture-tested, with a smaller amount of pressure or demandingness to change instruction from the side of the teachers. This is also reflected in the fact that about half of the practices focus on courses (and so are chiefly theory-based), whereas others seek to combine practice and theory, usually falling into the more novel, experimental type. Finally, a number of these good practices are largely about developing *expertise*, whereas a few are more relevant to prompting a change in *values* for the teachers. To a great extent, these conceptual as well as practical differences go back to the aforementioned “agenda priorities of countries”. A lot of these dichotomies can be partly explained by the degree of centralization within a country’s educational system. For instance, Greece, Cyprus and Croatia are highly centralized; Norway, Netherlands and Belgium permit their schools and teacher institutes a lot of independence; Lithuania, Portugal and Estonia would fall somewhere in the middle, with state and private institutions each playing their role on the professionalization of teachers.

The institutes’ cooperation in Antwerp and the Dutch vocational assignments offer great examples of enhancing teachers’ understanding of the background and funds of knowledge of their potential students, as do the Bachelor courses introduced by Portugal and Lithuania. They accentuate the need for teachers to become more careful and incisive observers of students’ different capabilities and challenges, perceive the importance of keeping everyone engaged and involved, as well as ascertain that teachers view diversity in the class as an asset rather than as a disruptive force which they get to deal with. In the Antwerp case, they also get to become familiar with relevant organizations within their neighborhoods that seek to help migrant students.

Critically, one thing that is relatively prevalent among many of the practices is the education of student teachers about the histories of migrants and diverse cultural groups. This is of course a key to delivering good teachers as it serves to transfer to all facets of knowledge and expertise of teachers. Learning about migrants’ history informs teachers about the potential difficult conditions of different groups historically and contextually, provoking them to be more caring and sensitive. In addition, it helps them comprehend similarities in the challenges faced from a social viewpoint that they themselves can relate to depending on their national or familial history. By developing an interest in these stories, teachers can then also become interested to learn more about their students on their own, and are better able to perceive the advantages of differentiating in the classroom.

It is of course important to keep in mind that one example of good practice in initial teacher training within a country does not necessarily reflect the majority of efforts made there on the scope of diversity. The partners had complete freedom in selecting their own examples, so it is possible that there is a number of initiatives with emphasis on language acquisition or community/parental involvement despite their apparent lack of appearance here in comparison with pedagogy and social psychology.

However, if we are to draw any comparative conclusions from the entirety of our work within NAOS, it would certainly be that European countries should address the area of community and parental involvement to a greater extent. For instance, the handbook prepared for primary education back in 2015 looked at courses/activities offered relevant to diversity by two institutes from each country. From a total of 109 number of courses obtained between the nine countries, only 11 were related to parental involvement and a meagre amount of 3 were related to community relationships. When talking about secondary education, we are referring to adolescents who are volatile, warm-blooded characters building their identity who are just starting to become truly involved in their societies. Especially considering that migrant populations are frequently secluded in particular low SES districts within cities and their out-of-school environment at times involves segregation in their friendships and interactions, a more consistent effort is crucial. The school environment only constitutes a small part of a student’s holistic education. In professionalizing teachers to reach migrant populations more adequately, we require more initiatives that seek to merge school environment with street and community. Only then can a teacher be thought to have a true understanding of the condition of their disadvantaged students.

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