

## **Project-Introduction-en**

### **1. Tasks and Objectives**

- **Background:**

Today's teachers face not only their changing role as managers of learning processes, but also the changes in social conditions, and as a result they are faced with radically altered demands made on them: heterogeneous classes, ever increasing educational work with and care of children with behavioural difficulties, integration of children with special needs, intercultural education, new technology and other factors are the challenges of today. These demands often result in enormous pressure on the teachers. In particular those who are highly dedicated may become physically and psychologically drained as a result of the constant lack of professional fulfilment, leading to symptoms such as burn-out, and many even opt to drop out of the system.

The phenomenon of burn-out does not only occur in isolated cases! A study on the pressures placed on teachers carried out by the German Association of Civil Servants showed that at least every second teacher feels excessively stressed at work. (C.f. Schaarschmidt, 2000) Nearly every third teacher shows significant burn-out symptoms. A further thirty percent endanger their own health by overdoing things, complain of a reduced ability to recover from stress, they can only take a certain amount of pressure and are generally dissatisfied.

A survey conducted in Austria in 1998 indicated a consistently similar state of affairs: in one group as many as 25% showed significant signs of physical, mental and health problems and the survey pointed at the tendency of such symptoms to be on the increase in the future. Approximately 25% of the teachers are in danger of resigning inwardly, and up to 10% are considering giving up teaching. (C.f. Stadler, "Steierische LehrerInnenstimme". Nr. 192, July 2000). Attempting to deal with these phenomena the Pedagogical Institute Salzburg has initiated this project in cooperation with the Pedagogical Institutes of Hungary, Luxemburg and Spain, organisations that have observed similar developments in their own countries.

- **Objectives:**

Among the most common pressures faced by the teachers are: the growing necessity to compensate for poor social circumstances, the high numbers of students in class, the increasing amount of children with difficult behaviours, the widening gap in levels of achievement and the disruption of lessons by students.

One approach in the prevention of burn-out is to give teachers back-up and support in coping with the new demands and the ever rising age of retirement, in other words, to implement training concepts for in-service teacher training that strengthen the personality and stabilise personal resources. Within the framework of this project the concept of a module for the prevention of burn-out was drawn up at the Salzburg Pedagogical Institute. Here are the main aims:

To reinforce the teachers' professional identity by working on their own (learning) biography and the discordance between their professional intentions and institutional reality. (Personality-oriented strategies)

Improving and extending skills in the area of communication, cooperation and teamwork with colleagues and other school partners. (Team-oriented strategies)

Improving and extending skills in the organisation of integrative and intercultural education appropriate to children, such as open learning, alternative teaching methods, new technology etc. Acquisition of basic theoretical knowledge and practical strategies for action in educating pupils in order to implement more effective and satisfactory results in daily school life. (Profession-oriented strategies)

For this purpose the project team made it their task to develop as a model four modules of teacher in-service training courses with common aims. These modules were to be adapted to the circumstances and needs of the individual countries, they were to be carried out within the agreed project time and their effectiveness evaluated externally.

These specific priorities of the EU and the Transversal (?) were integrated into the modules as seminar principles or in some cases were the explicit contents:

Women in particular are at risk of suffering from strain, often a double work load (work and family) or other especially demanding circumstances in life. More than 90% of those participating in the modules in the four countries were women!

The teachers were to be sensitised to the individual needs of people in the widest sense (children with special needs, handicapped children, children with behavioural difficulties, migrant children, highly gifted children, minorities ...). Priority was given to this principle during the seminars as a well as making it the specific content of the course, particularly in modules 3 and 4.

Through the use of a "Teaching Platform" (FC), not only was competence in handling new information technology promoted, taking into consideration the gender specific access to technology, but also the teachers from the different countries were encouraged to exchange experience and ideas across borders!

Considering the expansion of the EU which was being planned at the time, it was of particular importance to win a new member of the EU (Hungary) as a partner for the project. The current mood of change in Hungary and the commitment of the Hungarian teachers constituted an ideal point in time for establishing the prevention of burn-out in Hungary: after all deep commitment counts as one of the possible triggers of burn-out... .

## **2. Organisational aspects**

The project partnership consists of In-service Teacher Training Institutes from four countries (Austria, Spain, Hungary and Luxemburg) with the aim of designing a concept for the prevention of burn-out in in-service teacher training and for this concept to undergo a trial period in national pilot modules.

The Austrian Pedagogical Institute has the role of coordinator, the other partners are basically of equal status, whereby the project profited from the specific competences and resources of the four institutes.

Work took place during trans-national face to face meetings (about one per term) and computer networking. The detailed work specific to different countries took place in those countries.

### **3. Didactic Approaches**

For the acquisition of new competences, in particular in the area of personality skills, and their transfer by the target group in daily life at school, action oriented pedagogical methodological approaches were employed on three levels (of prevention) as the foundation of the concept of the four modules:

Personality oriented prevention strategies:

Some of the topics included were: self-awareness, self-analysis, self reflection, how to deal with ones strengths, weaknesses and resources, and time management...

Team / institution oriented prevention strategies:

Communication, cooperation (also via computer), team building, networking with participants (also via computer) and tandem building...

Profession oriented prevention strategies:

Facing new challenges and the demands of daily life at school; new methods of learning and teaching, coping with behavioural difficulties, handling and applying new technology, dealing with special needs and fringe groups...

### **4. Results**

Modules (seminar designs) for the prevention of burn-out

Instruments of evaluation

Results of the evaluation

Dissemination

The seminars designed and worked out in the different countries were able to contribute to the prevention of burn-out among participants in the pilot modules.

The instruments employed for the evaluation proved to be sufficient and pointed clearly to improvement. The topic of burn-out prevention and the introduction of more personality oriented seminars were successfully established in the in-service training repertoire of participating countries, particularly in Spain and Hungary.

The dissemination of the procedures and methods worked out for the pilot modules that were conducted, the "seminar designs", can only serve as an impulse, and therefore the team plans to offer an Arion seminar on the topic. A concept for this has been outlined and is to be worked on at the end of this project and then submitted by the Pedagogical Institute Salzburg.

### **5. Evaluation**

The evaluation of the products and results was conducted externally. The project process was evaluated internally. (For detailed results of the evaluation, see "Evaluation reports").

We thank the Socrates promotion for giving us the opportunity to work on this topic trans-nationally.