

MODEL TEACHER TRAINING SCHOOLS IN POLAND – DIAGNOSIS OF TEACHERS' NEEDS IN THE LIGHT OF THE RESEARCH

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Purpose: The aim of the article is to present model Teacher Training Schools in Poland and to demonstrate conclusions from the diagnosis of needs of supported schools in order to specify the forms of support for teachers included in the project.

Design/methodology/approach: The article presents the assumptions of the Teacher Training School Model as an innovative system of supporting teachers' competences, which can be financed from EU funds. Selected aspects of the Teacher Training School functioning were presented for an exemplary project: "Teacher Training School in the commune of Barcin", implemented in the period from January 01, 2021 until July 31, 2022. The conclusions from the diagnostic research (CAWI and CATI) of 7 supported schools, 65 teachers and 10 principals and deputy principals, in terms of their expectations for the forms of support planned in the project, were indicated.

Findings: The results of the diagnosis of needs of supported schools allow to specify the forms of support for teachers and principals affected by the newly established Teacher Training School in the commune of Barcin.

Research limitations/implications: The assessment of the effectiveness of the impact of the Teacher Training School in the commune of Barcin presented in the article will be possible after the completion of the project.

Practical implications: The results of diagnostic tests, including the expectations of teachers and managers, allow for detailed planning of workshops and cooperation networks in the project "Teacher Training School in the commune of Barcin". At the same time, the results may constitute recommendations for the process of training and practical improvement of teachers in the field of developing key competences for students.

Social implications: The priority of educational policy in Poland is to ensure an effective system of education and continuous professional development of teachers which will respond to real needs of a school and will allow teachers to improve their professional competences and develop their workshop.

Originality/value: The implementation of the model Teacher Training Schools in Poland will have a social dimension directly affecting teachers' and indirectly pupils' key competences.

Keywords: diagnosis of needs, teachers, competences, project, training, workshops.

1. Introduction

The aim of the article is to present model Teacher Training Schools in Poland and to demonstrate conclusions from the diagnosis of needs of supported schools in order to specify the forms of support for teachers included in the project. The article presents the assumptions of the Teacher Training School Model as an innovative system of supporting teachers' competences, which can be financed from EU funds. Selected aspects of the Teacher Training School functioning were presented for an exemplary project: "Teacher Training School in the commune of Barcin", implemented in the period from January 01, 2021 until July 31, 2022. The conclusions from the diagnostic research (CAWI and CATI) of 7 supported schools, 65 teachers and 10 principals and deputy principals, in terms of their expectations for the forms of support planned in the project, were indicated.

The priority of educational policy in Poland is to ensure an effective system of education and continuous professional development of teachers which will respond to real needs of a school and will allow teachers to improve their professional competences and develop their workshop. Schools, as well as teacher training institutions, should develop towards learning organizations, and by undergoing permanent evaluation, improve their development (Hajdukiewicz, Wysocka, 2016, p. 7). At the same time, it is important to promote the self-education system of teachers (Fila, Matuszczak Rybińska, 2015, p. 43), and the principals of these institutions should play a key role in such education and training (Fischer, Taylor, 2012, p. 235; Kordziński, 2010, p. 10).

Professional development is a process of increasing employee qualifications, the knowledge of which must be constantly supplemented, developed and modernized at the workplace. The improvement of employees' workshop will serve to strengthen their competences more if it is of practical nature, based on observation and exchange of experiences among teachers (Wysocka, Hajdukiewicz, 2015, p. 2). The research results clearly show that high efficiency is built by a teacher not only through participation in training, but also through cooperation with other teachers and the opportunity to participate in joint projects at school (Main results of the research TALIS, 2013). In Polish schools, however, such activities are rarely undertaken on the school premises (Hernik, Malinowska, Piwowarski, 2014, p. 5).

The possibilities of co-financing the teacher education system from EU funds allowed for the formulation of a recommendation by the Ministry of National Education (MEN) in Warsaw for the needs of initiating a modern system of teacher education within the model Teacher Training Schools (Teacher Training School Model, 2019).

The authorities running schools may apply within the competitions announced by the Ministry of National Education and receive funds from the European Social Fund (ESF) for the implementation of projects within which Teacher Training Schools may be established based on the Model developed by the Education Development Center (<https://www.ore.edu.pl/2017/10/o-projekcie/>).

2. Assumptions of the Teacher Training School

The Teacher Training School according to the model is: “a set of planned activities of schools (training schools and cooperating schools) and institutions supporting the learning process of teachers and students (...), “a school where future teachers will experience practical verification of the theory learned during their studies, and working teachers can improve their work techniques in cooperation with other teachers (...), “in the training school, a student under the guidance of the teacher will face educational practice in areas of education and upbringing, and teachers will develop their workshop and share their ideas with other teachers” (Model szkoły ćwiczeń/Teacher Training School Model, 2019, p. 4).

The Teacher Training School cooperates with specialists and effectively uses the institutional resources of the local education environment (*Zasady współpracy szkoły ćwiczeń/Principles of training school cooperation*, 2019, p. 2):

- leading authorities (local governments),
- support centers (psychological and pedagogical counseling center, pedagogical library, teacher training center),
- universities (teaching schools).

The model Teacher Training School is a place for disseminating innovative activities supporting the development of students' key competences, with particular emphasis on teaching foreign languages, mathematics, science, information and communication technologies and sharing knowledge and skills by teachers. The principals and teachers of Training Schools are obliged to promote and implement the use of innovative didactics in other schools, as well as organizational and educational solutions in the scope of activities supporting the development of students' key competences.

The establishment of Teacher Training Schools depends on the involvement of the leading authorities because local governments together with teacher training institutions, pedagogical libraries, psychological and pedagogical counseling centers, and universities, initiate cooperation and plan joint projects for the development of local education (Gołowska, Soćko, 2015, p. 43).

Currently (31st December, 2021), 42 Training Schools across Poland were founded and financed from the European Social Fund as part of two competitions announced by the Ministry of National Education (MEN, POWR.02.10.00-IP.02-00-005/18; MEN, POWR.02.10.00-IP.02-00-003/19).

Activities that can be financed within the competition are (Competition regulations POWR.02.10.00-IP.02-00-003/19):

- diagnosis of needs of supported schools which will be affected by the established Training School,
- workshops for trainers (teachers) and teaching staff of Training Schools in the field of methods and forms of didactic work,
- conducting activities in the Training School, including training and practical development for professionally active teachers in the field of developing key competences for students; practical training of students from pedagogical studies with the use of didactic and methodological materials supporting the professional development of teachers; practical preparation of students within training schools and evaluation of undertaken activities in order to verify the goals and determine next possible actions.

The concept of an exemplary project within which the Training School was established is presented in the next section.

3. Support for schools and teachers in the project – a case study

Within the project "Teacher Training School in the commune of Barcin", the Jan Brzechwa No. 2 Primary School in Barcin acts as a Training School and carries out tasks in the field of professional development and teacher education, including the process of supporting 7 cooperating schools.

Teacher Training School, in accordance with the model, cooperates with local educational units, which is a significant manifestation of the regional policy initiated by the local government unit (Project Beneficiary) in order to create new forms of cooperation between primary schools and representatives of teacher training institutions and universities. Such cooperation is shown in the figure below (Figure 1).

As part of the project "Teacher Training School in the commune of Barcin", a number of activities have been planned, leading to the achievement of the main goal: "Improving the functioning of the school support system in the development of key competences and universal skills in the labor market by preparing, supporting and granting the status of a Training School – No. 2 Primary School in Barcin (...)". The key elements of the project are presented in the following table (Table 1).

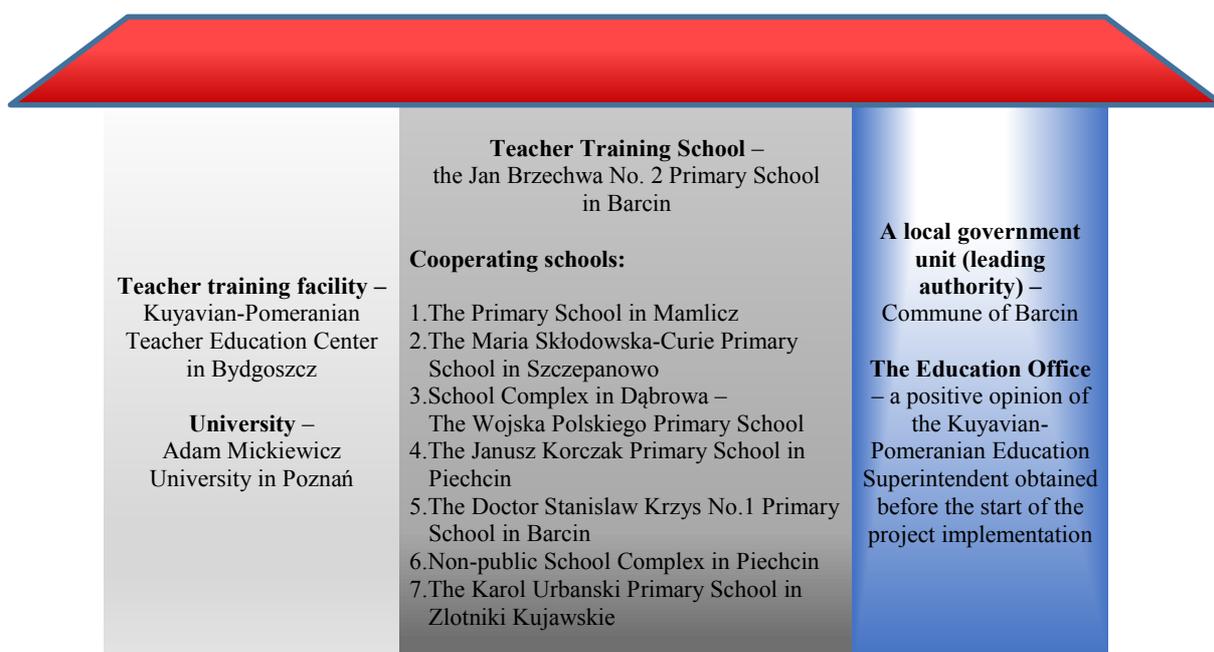


Figure 1. List of entities cooperating within the Teacher Training School. Source: own study based on the application for co-financing of the project "Teacher Training School in the commune of Barcin".

Table 1.

Characteristics of the selected EU project "Teacher Training School in the commune of Barcin"

No.	Description	Characteristics
	Operational Programme	Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development
	Priority Axis	Priority Axis II "Effective public policies for the labor market, economy and education"
	Action	Actions 2.10 "High-quality education system"
	Competition	POWR.02.10.00-IP.02-00-003/19
	Beneficiary	the commune of Barcin
	Partner	Euro Innowacje sp. z o.o.
	Task 1: Retrofitting subject laboratories with teaching equipment and teaching aids for the needs and functioning of the Training School	Retrofitting the didactic base of the Training School with teaching equipment and teaching aids for the purpose of conducting model demonstration lessons, methodological workshops and the organization of cooperation networks in subject laboratories: mathematics, ICT, natural science, biological, chemical, physical, geographic, linguistic (English and German).
	Task 2: Strengthening the competences of the staff and supporting the forms and methods of work of the Training School adopted for implementation	Support for 28 teachers of the Training School (trainers) in the scope of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – coaching trainings for the Training School principals, – workshop trainings for trainers of the Training School – substantive development of 8 sets of training materials for teachers, students and internship supervisors

Cont. table 1

	Task 3: Conducting activities in accordance with the diagnosed needs of supported schools in selected forms and methods of work of the Training School	Support for 50 teachers of supported schools in the field of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – diagnosis of needs of principals and teachers of 7 supported schools – coaching trainings of 14 principals – methodology conference for 50 teachers – substantive development of 8 sets of teaching materials for teachers, students and internship supervisors – production of 16 films complementary to teaching materials – creating 4 networks of cooperation and self-education (teaching mathematics, ICT, science and foreign languages) – methodological workshops for teachers on developing key competences – developing 96 lesson plans for demonstration lessons – conducting 96 hours of demonstration lessons – evaluation of activities undertaken in the project
	Budżet projektu (100% wkład EFS) Project budget (100% European Social Fund contribution)	Direct (task-related) costs - PLN 1,101,872 Task 1 - PLN 347,666 Task 2 - PLN 158 572 Task 3 - PLN 595,634 Indirect costs - PLN 220,374 Project value (direct + indirect costs) - PLN 1,322,246

Source: own study based on the application for co-financing of the project "Teacher Training School in the commune of Barcin".

The concept of supporting schools and teachers has been planned as part of three complementary tasks. The first task is to equip 9 subject laboratories in the Training School with modern equipment and teaching aids for the purpose of conducting model lessons. The next task is to strengthen the professional competences of the teachers (trainers) of the Training School as part of coaching sessions and workshop trainings, and to prepare model teaching materials for educators. The last, key task is to conduct activities in the Training School to support teachers of cooperating (supported) schools.

The nature of the planned forms of support, in accordance with the Model, must be preceded by a diagnosis of needs of supported schools, the results of which are presented in the next section.

4. The results of the diagnosis of cooperating schools for the purpose of detailing the planned forms of support in the project

For cooperating schools, the diagnosis of needs is preceded by participation in planned forms of support in the project. The intention of the project initiator was to provide adequate support, "tailored" in accordance with the diagnosed needs of schools.

The aim of the diagnosis carried out in the period from June to August 2021 was to identify the need for additional education of teachers of supported schools, in particular to specify and detail the planned forms of support:

- thematic ranges for two 6-hour classroom methodology workshops on developing key competences of students, using methodological and didactic materials supporting professional development,
- issues raised during the cooperation network and self-education for the teaching staff of the Training School and supported schools, within each of the 4 areas of education,
- identifying the conditions for maintaining the effectiveness of the changes introduced and strengthening the effects achieved within the project.

According to the concept of diagnosis, the study covered: 100% of school management (principal and deputy principal) and 70% of teachers in the subject areas: mathematics (mathematics), science (nature, biology, chemistry, geography, physics), ICT/(IT) and language (English, German). The diagnosis did not cover teachers from the humanities because, according to the competition regulations, they were not allowed to participate in the project.

Two methods and diagnostic tools were used in the diagnosis process CAWI survey – on-line survey consisting in completing an electronic questionnaire by teachers using the Microsoft Forms tools, and CATI survey – computer-assisted telephone interview conducted with the management according to a predefined script conversation.

The results of the research carried out on a group of 64 teachers (55 women and 9 men) employed in cooperating schools and 10 principals and deputy principals of these institutions allowed for the formulation of conclusions and recommendations for the needs of organizing forms of support in the project.

Teachers are interested in learning the following methods and techniques supporting the learning processes (ranked from the most to the least frequently mentioned): TOC (Theory of Constraints), Creative Thinking Techniques, Supervision, Formative Assessment, Neurodidactics, Visual Thinking in Education – Ruling, The Method of Developing Movement by W. Sherborne, The Project Method, peer to peer learning, IBSE Method, The Good Start Method by M. Bogdanowicz, Design Thinking Method, CLIL Method, Art Therapy Method, Beti Strauss Active Listening Method, Genius Hour, Drama.

Teachers indicated the willingness to learn the following tools and technical means supporting the learning processes (ranked from the most to the least frequently mentioned): virtual whiteboards, interactive whiteboard, e-textbooks/digital textbooks, on-line educational multimedia games, 3D printer, applications for sharing files, creating tests, games, quizzes, applications for creating multimedia presentations, infographics, movies and moving slides, applications for visual work, distance learning, 3D modeling, on-line surveys and tests.

Among all the forms of support assumed in the Teacher Training School Model, the surveyed teachers recommended the following: individual and group consultations, didactic materials, cooperation networks and self-education, and methodological workshops. The school management indicated: individual and group consultations, didactic materials, on-line work on the platform doskonaleniewsieci.pl, and methodology workshops.

In addition, the management staff indicated the following expectations and needs to maintain the effectiveness of the changes and to strengthen the effects achieved in the project:

- the support process must result from the needs indicated by teachers,
- it is necessary to integrate teachers' community allowing the involvement of all teachers in the project,
- support should be based on the practical application of new methods and tools that can be used directly in everyday professional work,
- training and cooperation networks should be conducted within unified groups of teachers teaching similar subjects, which will enable the exchange of experiences and improve the process of sharing knowledge between teachers from a given subject area,
- the trainer should establish a good rapport with participants, be an expert and authority in their field, which will have a positive impact on teachers' perception regarding the content of training,
- cooperation networks should encourage teachers to reflect and provide inspiration for further cooperation on the platform: doskonaleniewsieci.pl.

The following responses were indicated as concerns or barriers related to the participation of the teaching staff in the project:

- interference of forms of support with teachers' working hours, the schedule and hours of support for teachers should be provided in advance and adjusted to their preferences,
- the COVID-19 pandemic may prevent a stationary form of support, hence a hybrid formula should be considered.

5. Summary

The results of the research provided valuable information on teachers' expectations in terms of acquiring practical skills in the use of modern methods and techniques supporting learning processes, as well as tools and technical means supporting learning processes. At the same time, teachers' concerns and barriers related to participation in the project were recognized and the expectations and needs of the management staff necessary to maintain the effectiveness of the support were verified.

Assessment of the effectiveness of the created Teacher Training School in Barcin on other cooperating schools, with the use of integrated resources of local institutions will be possible only after the completion of the project. The planned evaluations of the newly-established school will allow to verify long-term effects, including the effectiveness, relevance and durability of the changes introduced in the process of professional development and teacher education.

The establishment of Teacher Training Schools across Poland should contribute to the change of the existing system of teacher education and training, as part of three functions of the regional policy:

- educational, understood as presenting students (as part of education) and teachers (as part of professional development) with effective forms and methods of working with pupils/students,
- promotional, by indicating exemplary solutions in the field of educational and organizational tasks in the local educational environment,
- integrative, implemented through the fusion of resources (knowledge, competences and activities) of institutions established to support the work of the school and teacher education.

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