

GOOD PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

Name of the good practice

Innovative approach for providing literacy and primary education to children from risk groups and application of art methods - Live and Learn Together

GENERAL INFORMATION

Country	Place (town, village, region)
Bulgaria	Village of Rusalya
Name of the Institution	Type of institution
Dimitar Ekimov Private Primary School	Private Primary School and a boarding house
Sector and Level of education according to ISCED (if applicable)	
Primary, 1	
Target Group	Stage of implementation
Children from preschool age (4-5 years old) until the completion of primary education (that never have been at school)	The school has a 7-year history. We can already see how our model works with a relatively greater independence of our graduates when they move to other schools and other cities. We find gaps, difficulties and this inevitably requires changes in the process. The idea is to be expanded to open a high school, ie. completion of secondary education at our community and become independent before going back to their families.

A brief background of good practice

The practice started in a frame of a project and funding from a Danish organization to open a private primary school of arts and crafts for socially disadvantaged children across the country. The idea arose after many years of working with children from homes for children deprived of parental care. The school has a boarding house / dormitory where the children live during the school year. The maintenance of the school and the boarding house is



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein. (Project N°.: 621535-EPP-1-2020-1-PT-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN).



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completely free for the children and their families. The maintenance is provided by the school. Since 2014, the school has been entered in the Register of Institutions in the system of preschool and school education and ensures the completion of primary education including a legal Diploma. The overall idea envisages the training to be carried out until the completion of secondary education, ie. to have training in the high school stage. This idea has not been realized so far due to lack of funding and support from the state. For the moment pupils after 7th grade study in other schools, but continue to be supported by the school and live in the dormitory.

Good practice description (aim and objectives; provided services – activities, approaches, methods)

According to Art. 24-27 / 37-41 of the ZPUO, the school is registered as a non-specialized primary school, and according to Art. 35-36 of the ZPUO - as a private. The aim here is to educate and bring up children from socially disadvantaged families who have difficulty raising their children for various reasons: low parental capacity, illness, lack of support, poverty. The goal is for children to come out of an environment that affects them - physically, mentally, emotionally, mentally - and to live in a different way, in a different model: caring, supportive, demanding, motivating. Therefore, the practice arises as a school with a boarding house / dormitory, which is free for families. This includes education, home, food, clothing, medical care, textbooks and supplies, toys and everything necessary for a child's normal life, including love. Only by immersing themselves in a different socio-cultural environment can these children feel the difference and be motivated to live a different way of life from their families. And continue their education.

Students are recruited in the following ways:

- ☑ Through the structures of the Agency for Child Protection - Social Assistance Directorates in places that provide the connection between the needy families and the school;
- ☑ Through independent search by the school and work with the families in order their children to enter the school;
- ☑ At the request of the parents.

The methods and technologies are diverse, but are aimed at the formation of competencies, ie. experience, formation of soft (behavioral) skills, emotional intelligence. Priority is given to arts and crafts as a form of testing and expression, as projective methods, as a means of developing fine motor skills and talents of children and last but not least to form a self-esteem adequate to the achievements and hence real self-confidence.

Results (developed skills and attitudes; good practice's impact on the participants' life, professional realization, health, self-confidence, motivation to learn, etc.).

For the moment we could report results connected with:
- Impact on the participants' life and motivation to learn - the lifestyle of children is changer

tremendously - from learning habits, need for knowledge through hygiene habits including eating with cutlery to dreams and plans for future life.

- Health - most of them start in school from under zero - accustomed to living in extreme poverty - in huts, outdoors, 12 people in one room, no heating, no shoes, etc. Most parents are sick, alcoholic, drug addicts or poor and illiterate. So the effect on their health and health habits is noticeable.
- Self-confidence - all children that have spent 2 years and more at school and not taken out from their parents want to continue studying, to obtain skills for a job, they believe they can live like others and achieve what they dream for.

Evidence of effectiveness of the practice

Most of our children complete primary education. We already have two students in 9th grade and three - in 8th grade, who are studying in High schools and are competitive to other pupils there. e.g. they are completely capable to complete Secondary education. (Having in mind that when they came to us in age quite higher for the beginning of primary education, they were completely illiterate.) All our children attend school regularly and learn around the clock through care, support and goodwill, which is quite different from results of other schools working on prevention of dropping out of school or not attending schools. On the other hand, children who leave our school for some reason, as a rule, drop out of the education system or remain at the bottom of their educational achievements in school. Some of them have already given birth at the age of 14.

Factors and conditions for the successful implementation of the good practice

We see our results and the big change in children's life style and achievements due to this type of "second chance". But the need in the country is immense. We think that legislation to establish this type of school should be provided as an opportunity for children with unequal opportunities. Specific characteristics in this legislation must be developed. For example: to be able to extend the study time for these children, i.e. one school year to be completed within 2 or 3 calendar years depending on the gaps. The state should finance these institutions in view of the uniqueness of their work with children.

Evaluation of the practice

Our work is controlled by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Regional authorities. We are the winners of "White Swallow" and "Ambassador of Good" - national forums for evaluation of innovative practices. According to the provisions of Art. 106 para. 1 in the ZPUO, the education for adults can be conducted in evening, part-time, distance form or through work (dual system of education) in all educational institutions. Thus, people who drop out of the education system because they do not enroll in it have to return to the same system and are expected to be motivated to "enroll".

Our understanding is that students should be treated preventively to avoid dropping out. On the contrary, we believe that the early periods of human development (preschool and primary school age) should be used, when children are susceptible to the formation of curiosity, volitional qualities, motivation, value-moral motivation. Therefore, we are adamant that working with children at risk of dropping out is done with specific methods, new forms, approaches and pedagogical technologies are constantly being sought. Each case here is unique in terms of the child's personal history and emotional experiences. That is why we believe that children at risk of dropping out should return / enroll in Second Chance School, because here the team will be prepared to work differently. In addition, the age period will be used, in which learning is the dominant activity and the chances of success are many times higher than in adulthood.

Resources

- I. Human resources - 23 people. From them:
1. Pedagogical specialists - 18, including:
 - ☐ Teachers - 11;
 - ☐ Psychologist - 1;
 - ☐ Educators / mentors - 6.
 2. Non-pedagogical specialists - 5.
- II. Material resources - two buildings - a school and a boarding house, a yard of 26 decares, equipment and furnishing of the classrooms in the school, including a computer room; furnished rooms in the dormitory (for 3-4 children in a room, each room has a private bathroom), furnished common study rooms and corners for activities of choice and activities of interest.
- III. Financial - mainly from private donors, a minimum part of the state budget for the activities of education and upbringing of children

Images, Videos, other documentation



Анимари Димитрова и Златко Златков - Сдружение „Русаля“

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Иновативно училище край Велико Търново се опитва да предложи социален модел за обучение на деца в риск



Мартин Димитров
СЛЕДВАЙТЕ

27 май 2016 11:18

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