

MONITORING FRAMEWORK FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW CURRICULA IN SCHOOL PRACTICE

Introduction

New curricula are introduced into the vocational education and training system far more frequently than the overall educational system is reformed. This segment of education undergoes constant changes, caused by technological development, the development of the labour market, as well as the economic development of the country.

When the labour market imposes the need for new knowledge and skills, whether for traditional professions or the new ones, it is necessary to design relevant curricula for a particular educational profile that serves as a basis for a new profession. New curricula can be tested through a pilot before their implementation.

To enable the development of professionals for a certain profile within the educational system the following preconditions should be met:

- A relevant curriculum is needed;
- Schools have to be prepared for implementation of the curriculum in respect of adequate space and equipment;
- Competent and trained teaching staff at the school are needed;
- Teachers and teacher assistants have to be adequately prepared for the implementation of the new curriculum;
- A monitoring and evaluation system for curriculum implementation at the levels of school and the Republic should be defined.

Meeting all the above mentioned preconditions leads to the expected results.

Monitoring of the curriculum implementation process is one of the crucial links in this chain. If this process is well thought of, then during the implementation of the course itself, the answers related to the planned curricula, contents and methods will emerge. The level of achievement of the planned professional knowledge and especially skills and working competences can be estimated in the final grades, i.e. upon the completion of the educational process for the profile. Observed shortcomings of the curriculum or its mode of implementation, can be, in that case, removed during the implementation process - which presents an advantage and the most characteristic rationale of pilots.

Conditions for Curriculum Implementation

The curriculum is adopted at republic level and presents the standard for all schools.

The implementation of a new curriculum requires that the school meets certain conditions, in respect of: premises and equipment, and the qualifications of teachers and teacher assistants, delivering teaching according to the curriculum.

However, practice shows that schools are not standardized in respect of equipment and the working competences of teaching staff are not even as well.

The new curriculum brings not only new teaching contents but some organizational innovations and new teaching methods as well, including assessment methods. VET teachers have not graduated from teacher colleges – they are just engineers, doctors, lawyers, economists. Therefore, they need further training in the field of pedagogy, particularly in the sum of teaching methodologies of the school subject in question.

Apart from problem identification, the monitoring of curriculum implementation also enables the identification of needed training for the teachers – in the field of pedagogical knowledge and skills and in their basic profession as well.

Pilot Monitoring

Pilot implementation is monitored at different levels:

- School level;
- Sector level – the Association of Schools;
- Republic – the VET and Arts Centre.

At each of these levels the overall educational process is monitored and the following elements are evaluated:

- Quality of the pilot curriculum;
- Implemented teaching methods;
- Needed training for teachers;
- Usage of teaching aids and learning materials;
- Teaching organization;
- Student achievements.

The monitoring process itself also presents a kind of pilot; the process of monitoring the pilot implementation is aimed at designing a role model on monitoring and evaluation of the curricula, schools, the monitoring system and the overall educational process.

Pilot Monitoring at School Level

The complete picture of the quality of pilots is created during their implementation in school practice. Permanent monitoring is necessary to enable a successful implementation process - in order to conduct prompt changes of all elements – teaching plan, teaching timeframe, teaching contents, teaching methods, training of teachers delivering the pilot curriculum. Hence, each school where the pilot is realised is obliged to form a **School Commission on Monitoring of the Pilot Implementation**.

The Commission consists of the following members:

- The Principal;
- A representative of the general education school subject teachers delivering teaching in pilot class;
- A representative of the general VET school subject teachers delivering teaching in the pilot class;
- A representative of the VET school subject teachers delivering teaching in the pilot class;
- A representative of the professional support staff (pedagogue, psychologist);
- A class teacher of the pilot class – in case he/she is not already a member of the Commission as a representative of one of the above mentioned categories.

The school forms separate commissions for monitoring of the implementation of each pilot (hereinafter referred to as: School Commission). In case there are more pilots in the school, within one or more sectors, the school is allowed to form a joint school commission, but it must include one representative of teachers delivering teaching of VET school subjects - for each pilot.

Tasks of the School Commission on Monitoring of the Pilot Implementation

- Coordination of the activities of the teachers who are delivering teaching in the pilot class;
- Monitoring of the correlation of the teaching contents - providing achievement of the prescribed knowledge and skills outcomes (hereinafter referred to as: teaching contents) within different school subjects;
- Monitoring of the correlation of adopted knowledge and skills across modules, thematic areas, i.e. school subjects;
- Identification of problems emerging during teaching;
- Collection of questionnaires on qualitative analysis of the curricula;
- Establishment and updating of data base;
- Analysis of student achievements at the end of each classification period;
- Preparation of report for the Commission of the Association of Schools and the VET and Arts Centre.

Tasks of School Commission Coordinator

- Coordination of both school commission members and teachers' working activities - in each pilot class;
- Collection of questionnaires on qualitative analysis of the curricula;
- Data base updating and evidence of school subject files;
- Communication with the VET and Arts Centre on identified problems;
- Preparation of report for the Commission of the Association of Schools and the VET and Arts Centre.

The successful implementation of the curriculum is possible only when the **coordination of all activities of the teachers** delivering teaching in a certain class is achieved. The curriculum means the **correlation of teaching contents**, but such a correlation is fully achieved during the teaching and learning process itself. On the contrary, if each teacher delivers the teaching programme (curriculum) of his/her school subject disregarding the delivery by his/her colleagues teaching the same class, it will result in a fragmented teaching and learning process. Hence the students will not adopt the knowledge as a whole but as a series of separate fragments.

Unfortunately, in the present school communities, such things happen more or less often. One of main objectives of the pilots is the reestablishment of closer links between the teaching contents and the teachers delivering teaching.

The teacher's operational plan represents the first step in operationalisation of the curriculum in practice. No matter whether it is the operationalisation of a theme or the module that is in focus, it is important for the teacher to determine the time for presenting a new teaching unit, as well as the time for its revision or systematisation.

For instance, if knowledge tests from different school subjects are not properly harmonised it can cause stress and problems among student population. As a rule, nowadays more knowledge tests for students are organized at the same time, and a number of students, supported by their parents, avoids attending school classes. In order to prevent such problems it is important to compare the operational plans of all teachers and make a balanced time plan for teaching new units and their revision.

Teaching programmes of school subjects (the curricula) are based on knowledge and skills' outcomes to be achieved by students upon completion of a particular theme or module. Joint working activities of teachers who deliver teaching in a pilot class, on the operationalisation of outcomes into teaching contents surely

contribute to creating a correlation between teaching contents and teacher activities.

Teaching contents, presented through various school subjects, are connected and provide development of knowledge and mastering of relevant skills, creating the basis for achieving relevant working competences. The harmonization of teaching contents, their functionality and linkage with other teaching contents are tested in the process of pilot monitoring.

During each teaching and learning process, even pilot teaching and learning process, certain problems emerge: misunderstanding of educational outcomes, insufficient methodological knowledge and skills of teachers, insufficient experience in the use of modern technologies, organisation of teaching, etc. Some of these problems require external help - outside of the schools, but some of them can be resolved at school level.

A school commission is responsible for the **identification** of such **problems**.

Professional support staff (pedagogues, psychologists) can help teachers to expand their methodological knowledge, in test preparation or identification of training seminars needed to enable teachers to accomplish their tasks successfully.

Speaking of problems related to interpretation of the curricula, in order to provide the effective solution of a problem, a school commission coordinator informs the VET and Arts Centre and a coordinator of the working group on curriculum design.

School coordinators of all schools where the pilot programme for the same education profile is implemented should keep in touch constantly, because it often happens that the problem identified in one school does not emerge as a problem in some other school. Their permanent communication enables the effective connection of schools, exchange of experiences and further improvement of the teaching and learning in process in all schools.

It is necessary to open a separate file for each school subject in order to enable effective monitoring of the pilot implementation. The file can be kept in the form of folders, no matter whether the files are kept in paper or electronic format.

Upon the completion of a theme or module, each teacher is obliged to fill in the **Questionnaire on Qualitative Analysis of the Curricula: B1** (modular curriculum of school subject) or **B2** [thematic curriculum (*disciplinary approach*) of school subject]. The coordinator takes care of timely filling in the questionnaires and one copy is stored in a file, and another is submitted to the Association of Schools, i.e. to the coordinator for the relevant school subject, appointed at the level of the Association of Schools.

The school subject files contain:

- General plan and operational plans of teachers delivering teaching of the school subject in question;
- Questionnaires B1, i.e. B2;
- All copies of knowledge tests conducted during the school year.

The data base on the school, where the pilot is realized, is significant in respect of monitoring curriculum implementation during the whole schooling period. It includes the following elements:

- School ID card – basic data on the school that are updated every year;
- Data on teachers delivering teaching in each pilot class - classified per grade.
- Data on students of each pilot class - classified per grade;
- School subject files – per profile and grade.

The Excel document: "Pilot School 2004-05" presents a part of the electronic data base and encompasses all the elements except school subject files. The school must provide a PC that should be available to the members of the school commission in charge of monitoring. The document should be stored in the PC and renamed to contain the title of the school and its location. The data base must be protected with a password to ensure data security and prevent unauthorized access. All the data should be stored in it and put into adequate sheets.

The deadline for submitting the data on teachers delivering teaching in the pilot class to the VET and Arts Centre is: November 15. It is planned that the segment of the base referring to students should include monitoring of the students after the completion of schooling. In this way the school will be able to monitor the further professional development of its former students.

At the end of each classification period¹, the analysis of student achievements is conducted at sessions of the Class Council. In case a class in the same educational profile is enrolled in the same school year, where the teaching is delivered according to the traditional curriculum – the student learning outcomes of both classes, pilot and traditional one, can be compared.

The following are the new pilot educational profiles: Plastic Block Fitter, Automotive Electrician, Mechanical Processing Operator, Masseur, Park Keeper, Transport Safety Technician, Cosmetic Technology Technician and Graphic Products Design Technician. In schools where these pilot curricula are implemented, they should be compared with the class of with the same educational profile.

¹ Classification period – trimester - encompasses the period of three months during school year. Each semester is divided into two trimesters.

At the end of each classification period the school commission fills in the relevant questionnaires: A1, A2, A3 or A4 and submits them to the Commission of the Association of Schools.

Apart from these questionnaires, at the end of each classification period, the commission prepares a **report** for the commission of the Association of Schools and for the VET and Arts Centre.