RAISING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ALL LEARNERS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Country Report: Slovakia

SLOVAKIA COUNTRY REPORT

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1. What reference is made to raising achievement in national policies? How is raising achievement defined?

The Government of the Slovak Republic approved the Government Programme for 2016–2020, a significant part of which is dedicated to education, particularly pre-primary education, with a special focus on:

- learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds;
- creating conditions for inclusive education;
- improving professional psychological and special educational counselling and diagnosis services;
- promoting vocational training in the system of so-called 'dual education'.

2. What national policies specifically target raising achievement?

The following objectives, among others, are specified in the Government Programme for 2016–2020 by the Government of the Slovak Republic:

- to improve the selection process of candidates for university studies focused on the teaching profession;
- to improve pre-service teacher training;
- to lead the learning process towards the development of innovation, creative experimentation, entrepreneurship and moral behaviour and respect for others;
- within the curriculum:
  - to provide teachers with more flexibility to add educational content according to learners' individual circumstances, assumptions and abilities;
  - to allow each learner to experience success at mastering the basic curriculum;
  - to meet the potential for the development of learners' individual skills;

- to develop quality indicators for school practice and model of school self-evaluation;
- to focus on the development of inclusive education as an effective tool for resolving social exclusion and supporting the fulfilment of the needs of learners with special educational needs.

The Government Programme resulted in the National Programme for the Development of Education, which was developed by a group of experts. The National Programme proposal is currently published and under public discussion.

3. What information/data are collected at national level on attainment and achievement?

Collected data and published information:
- the results of national testing of 9th grade (final year of lower-secondary education) learners in mathematics, Slovak language and literature. In schools with a minority language as the language of instruction, there is also national testing in the minority language of instruction;
- the results of the school leaving examination. This national testing is carried out by the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements and the results of school leaving examinations are published on the Institute's website;
- the summary reports from audit activities of the State School Inspectorate, which are published on the Inspectorate's website.

4. What information/data on attainment and achievement (including the wider areas outlined above) are collected at school level?

Each school publishes an annual report on educational activities, specifying the results and conditions. The report has a given structure by a specific regulation.

5. What information/data are used for school evaluation and quality assurance at national/local level?

At national level, the monitoring of quality education (of schools) is not carried out. The Government and the field of education intends to prepare monitoring by 2020.

6. Are there any specific initiatives in place to support/enable teachers and/or school leaders to raise the attainment and achievement of all learners?

No, there are not. Teacher training and education is focused on different educational areas and professional development. Among them, the training focuses on increasing the level of a particular group of learners (especially learners from socially disadvantaged backgrounds – learners from Roma communities). Individual programmes for increasing the level of education of all learners in a school are not carried out. Within the prepared National Programme for the Development of Education, such training programmes could be developed.

7. What other policies may influence levels of attainment and achievement for all learners?

- Accountability systems
- Support Services
- Organisation of schools and teaching approaches.

8. Please provide a short commentary/critical reflection on the main policy challenges

The main political challenges arise after the national parliament elections; the new government identifies priorities and implements them depending on the financial possibilities of the state budget (lower GDP in the field of education in the Slovak Republic).

ANNEX 1. EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE TO RAISE LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT

Example submitted by: PaedDr. Mgr. Viktor Križo

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1.   Location of school/learning community and short description of context

The urban school provides compulsory education for all learners at primary and secondary level. The school is located in the centre of Bratislava, the capital city of the Slovak Republic. It is near the city park, between villas and family houses.

2.   Summary information on school/learning community

The school has 270 pupils from 6 to 15 years old. The priority is to build an inclusive family school, with a focus on a strong triangle: learner – parent – teacher. The school tries to respect the individuality of every learner. All learners are educated in mainstream classes, including those with special educational needs (SEN), for example, learning disabilities, ADHD, behavioural disorder, autism, Asperger's syndrome, two deaf learners and socially and emotional deprived learners.

The school provides primary and secondary education (ISCED 1, ISCED 2). The school staff consists of: director, deputy director, 24 teachers, three special educators, school psychologist, art therapist and assistants for learners.

3.   Summary of key feature/strengths of current practice

The school practice is about building an inclusive team of experts for learners and their problems. This team co-operates closely and solves problems together.

The biggest strength is the art therapy lead by an expert (personally experienced, with art psychotherapy training from a British university). She provides a service for learners with traumas and problems, including group therapy and individual therapy. She also leads the art philetic class, which is a preventive programme with art elements for all learners in the class. The art therapist works in close collaboration with the class teachers and educates the art teachers and the special educators, too.

On the other side, there is the psychologist. She provides preventive programmes in classes, intervenes in work with learners and solves bullying issues. The special educators are in classes, helping learners with special educational needs, as well as other learners, and helping teachers to lead their lessons in a more inclusive way. The school counsellor,

together with the special educator and the class teacher, organises preventive activities such as:

- training;
- [intergenerational networking](#) ([young to older](#) – children and seniors);
- [extra-curricular activities](#) in nature focusing on harmonious development.

The important part of inclusion is mentoring. Teachers work together with a mentor. Therefore, learners are taught in a [special collaborative programme](#) and participate in variety of [creative projects](#) (with the opportunity to [invite parents](#)).

4. Data/information available

The results of school educational activities in the last three years are published on the [school website](#).

Twice a year, the school carries out [SWOT analysis](#) and [sociometry](#) as a simple and useful framework for analysing the school climate.

The school took part in the Erasmus+ [PRETTi project](#). The teachers participated in training and conferences for inclusion. Therefore, the school can be considered as an example of an inclusive school in the European Union. The project started in November 2016 and lasted for 24 months.

5. Focus of example/work to raise achievement

This practice is focused on resilience and resources of learners. A learner's self-awareness or self-confidence is crucial. Academic achievement is just a secondary result. If a learner knows their own resources and works in a good climate with great support, the learning process is easier. The school does not use tools very much and Wi-Fi does not always work. However, the school uses its personal approach to make an impact on learners, which they find more efficient. Everything mentioned above is carried out with great support from the director, who leads the staff in co-operation, democracy and subsidiary management.

6. Summary information about developments/current work in this area

- Inclusive trend – every learner is extremely important, every learner needs support
- Close co-operation with external experts to provide support for learners with SEN
- Building a professional team: not just networking, communication, co-operation or co-ordination, but also collaboration (art therapist, psychologist, special educators, teaching assistants)
- Self-assessment: learners take part in a 'community circle' every morning
- Building and monitoring a good climate in classes and school.

7.   Key learning points from this example

- Subsidiary management

- Focus on learner development (activities, projects)

- Art therapy (group and individual) directly at school

- Prevention work, art philetics with the whole class, led by a school psychologist and an art therapist

- Prevention training for class and learning projects (interdisciplinary learning)

- Regular screening by a special educator, consultations and mentoring by a school counsellor

- Education, training and mentoring for teachers

- Inclusive team research (psychologist, special educators, art therapist)

- Participation in European Union projects (Erasmus+).

8.   Supporting materials (web links, papers, presentations, etc.)

On the school website, there is a section entitled '*Odborný tím*' (team of experts) presenting the members who carry out and support inclusive practice.