

REPORT

European Community Exchange Programme (ACADEMIA) for Careers Counsellors in Luxembourg 25th – 29th April 2005

Placement undertaken as part of a group of 4 Guidance Counsellors, two of who work for the Norwegian equivalent of the Job Centre in the UK and the other in schools in France with 12-16 year olds. My own role is in a college of further education.

My main objectives in undertaking this placement were

1. To find out about a guidance service in another European country and see if aspects of good practice are transferable to the UK context. This has required quite a focus on the Luxembourg education system.
2. To investigate opportunities for employment in Luxembourg for British citizens.
3. To investigate educational and vocational opportunities for young people in Luxembourg.

Background Information on the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

Luxembourg has a population of 450,000 of which 38.6% are immigrants (predominantly Portuguese) It is a small country of 2586 square metres, situated between Germany France & Belgium. Like the UK it has a constitutional monarchy within a framework of parliamentary democracy. Luxembourg is a relatively affluent country its main wealth being based upon its banking system which operates a total secrecy policy.

Day 1, 2 & part of 3 Based at the Secondary School in Mersch

Purpose: Familiarisation with system of education in Luxembourg and the guidance service in schools.

There are 450 pupils aged 12-15 years. As in all Secondary Schools there is a Psychologist who has an educational and careers guidance role with pupils and works as part of a team with a Social Worker, Educational Worker and a Guidance Teacher. The Educational Worker focuses mainly on learning support and the Guidance Teacher is a teacher who is allocated some time to work with pupils, to arrange work experience and help with job search skills. The Guidance Teacher does not have any qualification or training for this role. The role seems to resemble in some extent that of the Careers Teacher in the British system.

Findings:

- Very Selective School System at 12 years old pupils go into one of three streams :

Classic – (who eventually study A levels) 35% in this stream nationally

Technical - 50% in this stream nationally
(within technical stream there are different levels)

Preparatory 15% in this stream nationally

Support to pupils is very well resourced especially the time allocation of the Psychologist. However, focus of guidance appeared to be on educational rather than careers guidance. This is due to the need to give a lot of information about the streaming system and being involved in the actual process. The Psychologist starts to work with pupils in last two years of primary education(at age 10/11) administering a number of psychometric tests(aptitude personality & intelligence) on a group and individual basis. A Guidance Board, of which the Psychologist is a part, takes the test results into consideration along with school performance to decide what stream a pupil goes into when they start secondary school.

- Multi lingual nature of the education system – pupils are taught in Luxembourgish for first 2 years and at 6 start to learn German at 7 French. Once in Secondary they start to learn English. Most lessons in Secondary are taught in either French or German.

Meeting with Action Locale pour Jeune – Carine Backendorf

Work with young people & adults 14-30 years old. Role to help young people move into employment or training, including offering assistance with job search skills. Mainly work with pupils in the technical streams, coming into school to see them. Also give support and help with personal issues. Carine's view of the educational system in Luxembourg is that it is restrictive and blocks students who improve being able to move into higher streams.

At 18 helps those who have done vocational training at college to find employment, however, employers will only take the best, difficult to place those of lower ability.

Discussed difficulty of knowing actual unemployment rate, currently 4.7%, however, pupils who leave at 15 (minimum school leaving age in Luxembourg) do not have to register with Job Centre so difficult to know actual unemployment rate of young people.

Discussion with Jean-Jacques Ruppert (Psychologist) on Guidance

Outlined his paper 'Does Guidance Really Matter ' – its main contention is that most guidance theories date back to a time when world of work was quite different. Young people today are making decisions on an opportunistic rather than a rational basis due to the complexity of the job market with job roles changing and creation of new jobs. This makes guidance even more important. Jean- Jacques believes guidance in future will have to be much

more directive and have a role in societal engineering. This paper will be delivered at Next Step Conference in London 27th June 2005. Discussed OCED study on Luxembourg, which evaluated careers guidance in a number of European countries. See www.oecd.org/edu/careerguidance This report stated that they wanted Luxembourg to adopt a more modern concept of careers guidance more focussed on the individual.

Day 3

Visit to National Centre for Continuous Vocational Training

Has 400 young people on 2 year vocational training courses in a number of the trades e.g. construction, engineering, hairdressing for 15– 24 year old on a full-time college basis. Most students are 17 years old. Mainly recruit from students progressing from lowest stream at secondary level e.g. preparatory. Unfortunately a lot do not get jobs afterwards in the trades because employers want a diploma level qualification, which these students are not able to achieve.

Day 4

Visit to Centre de Documentation et d'Information sur l'Enseignement superior

Discussion with M. Raymond Harsh

www.cedies.lu

–gives advice and information about choosing and applying to higher education. There is only one University in Luxembourg and it mainly offers postgraduate courses so virtually all students from Luxembourg study abroad. Many of who choose to come to the UK.

Similar to UK system of student finance combination of scholarships from Luxembourg government and student loans (interest rate 2%) depending upon family income. Average student debt at end of degree 10/12, 000 euros.

Visit to Administration de l'Emploi (ADEM) – (Labour Office / Job Centre)

Discussion with Jean Marie

Role -help in finding and placing people into employment and training –based in Luxembourg City and serves the whole of the country. Go into schools to work with pupils from 12 years old to deliver elements of careers education particularly focused on job choice and finding out about different jobs. Also have a placing service, last year canvassed 1500 employers and found 1256 apprenticeships. Normally apprenticeships are for 16-19 year olds who receive a training allowance of 400 euros a month at 16 and 500 euros at 17. Also receive apprenticeships for adults last year of the 426 placed approx 160 were given to foreigners e.g. French. Unable to fill a lot of vacancies partly due to the entry qualifications required, Jean Marie believes that in future apprenticeships will increasingly be filled by workers from France & Germany. Euro Guidance Service based here which offers advise and placing for Luxembourg citizens wanting to seek employment elsewhere in Europe.

European citizens wanting to work in Luxembourg can contact them for advice about working in the country but do not offer a placing service.

Day 5

Visit to Centre de Psychologie et d'Orientation Scolaires.

Psychologists who are based in schools are from this organisation. This Service also gives practical help and offers some therapy

Visit to Kindergarten/Primary School in Bertange

Tour of school including precece for 3 year olds. Very impressive premises and resources. Try to keep class sizes to 15/20 pupils and in each class have a teacher and educational worker.

Conclusion

Overall the placement was worthwhile, I particularly enjoyed having the opportunity to share with colleagues from other European countries and was very impressed by the quality of the facilities and resources of the schools and organisations we visited. As regards my first objective to identify good practice that is transferable to the UK context, my findings to some extent are limited. This is perhaps due to Luxembourg being such a small country. I did find, however, in terms of input young people receive from various organisations and professionals in the delivery of careers education and guidance Luxembourg is very well resourced. Currently, in the UK I feel it is accurate to say that the Connexions Service does not offer the same service to all students that its predecessor the Careers Service did. It offers a different service in various parts of the country and a number of schools are concerned that its focus on those that are at risk of exclusion has led to an inferior service being available to some pupils.

Key Findings

- Opportunities for Europeans to work in Luxembourg - 38.6% of the population is immigrant, there is also a large number of French & German workers who commute into Luxembourg on a daily basis. The main obstacle for UK nationals is the language skills required, needing to be fluent in both French and German. Another obstacle for British workers is that many employers that recruit graduates, including the Civil Service only accept degrees that of have been of 4 years duration, most British ones last for 3 years only. Furthermore to teach in Primary schools ones needs to also be fluent in Luxembourgish. As a result, overall opportunities for UK nationals is quite limited.
- In schools guidance is delivered by Psychologists. Seemed to be a greater focus on educational rather than careers guidance for reasons stated above. Also a psychological emphasis based on psychometric testing. In the UK psychometric testing is not used to such a great extent and I do not think it would be appropriate to do so. From my own experience young people often do not find it easy to use and interpret the results, however, I do feel that with some students it would be a

useful extra tool, for example. with those who either under-aspire or those who have very unrealistic career aspirations.

- Approach to delivering guidance seemed to be much more directive than in UK. Own approach much more client focused and problem solving based.
- No professional training for careers guidance in Luxembourg as there is in the UK
- Nothing similar to Matrix or as locally in Sheffield 'the Sheffield Standard' that measures the delivery of careers educational and guidance against quality standard
- Pupils experiencing social or personal problems seem to receive a lot of support but from a variety of sources. For example, in school from the Social Worker & Educational Worker, therapy from Psychologists from the CPOS and from staff from Action Locale pour Jeunes. This type of support is perhaps similar to the Personal Adviser role of the Connexions Service.
- All places we visited were very impressive being extremely well resourced. Public Services in Luxembourg were very well resourced due to the high rate of income tax paid.
- Educational System is highly selective and elitist; streaming takes place when pupils start Secondary School at 11/12 years old. Once placed in a stream can move to a lower one but very difficult to move up. This was especially the case when wanting to move from technical to classic. The reason being that once students enter classic the pace of learning is much faster, more abstract and has a greater focus on languages, hence pupils moving up find it all very hard to cope with.
- Approximately 25% of young people progress to University predominantly from classic stream and a small number from Regime technique(i.e. the highest level within technical stream) although normally progressing to courses within their vocational area.
- A lot of apprenticeships available, however, employers normally only want those who have done the theory part of the qualifications i.e. the 3 year courses, achieving the CATP & CCM, those obtaining CITP only do 2 years and most employers do not accept this. The students we visited at the National Centre for Continuous Vocational only obtain the CITP and so experience difficulty in obtaining apprenticeships
- Need to be multi-lingual in Luxembourg, unless one is a linguist very difficult to obtain a professional or semi professional job.
- Above works to the disadvantage of immigrant children, many of who are of Portuguese descent who speak this as a first language.(To try to address this immigrant children have the option to start school (precocce) at 3years old to learn the Luxembourgish language). Immigrant children are predominantly placed into the lowest stream in Secondary.

Of the 36% of children of foreign origin entering Secondary education
13% are placed in classic
37% in technical
60% in preparatory

This compares with the figures for all children at this stage:

35% are placed in classic
50% in technical
15% in preparatory

- Seemed to be little possibility of adults having a second chance educationally as many adults do in the UK. Luxembourg is a very small country and there is nothing equivalent to Access courses to enable adults who did not achieve academically at school to progress to University.

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Useful websites

www.cpos.lu

www.cedies.lu

www.careers-europe.com

www.oecd.org/edu

www.berufskunde.com

www.bif.lu

www.cnfpc.lu