**Study visit report (SV4) – Wales, March 2018**

The aim of my study visit in Wales was to observe the way in which welsh schools and teachers work, to get to know teaching methods and materials that are used in teachers’ everyday work. During the visit in welsh schools, I paid particular attention to the organization of work with talented children. I was mostly interested in first language classes, because I teach polish in Primary School no. 36 in Cracow, but the possibility of observing other lessons and talking to the headmaster and the rest of the teachers was also very inspiring.

Prior to the visit I prepared some research questions, which were to be my guidance in Wales. The questions were:

* In what way are the activities and classes for talented children organized?
* Are those classes extra paid (eg. by the students’ parents), or are they the part of each teacher obligatory work?
* How many hours every week are intended for working with talented students?
* Are those extra classes held by teachers or are there other specialists hired to work with gifted children?
* How is the agenda for skilled students chosen? Do children choose subjects according to their interests, or are those traditional school classes?
* How big are the groups while working with talented students (only the student and the teacher, small groups or bigger groups)?
* How and how often are those classes evaluated?
* What is the relation between the student and the teacher? What is the teacher’s role (master, partner, mentor, coach, tutor)?

Those questions apply to different areas. Some of them concern the overall background of the subject, others require further exploring of the subject, examining it and taking different perspectives into consideration to describe it and set it in conditions of polish schools. While in Wales, I discussed the subject with headmasters, teachers and students from two different schools. I learnt that classes for talented students differ and depend on the schools policies. In catholic school, the teachers often and willingly stayed in school (after their job hours) to held classes with talented students. They did not get extra salary for most of those classes. The types of classes answered the needs of students. Extra classes of almost every subject were held, during which students could broaden their knowledge and develop their skills, do things that are not in their curriculum and prepare to take part in various competitions.

The situation is different in schools which are not catholic, schools where go children of different cultures, races and religions. In those schools classes finish at a set hour, usually 3 p.m., and no one, neither teachers, nor students stay in school after that time. So, parents have to organize extra classes for their children. They also have to pay for those classes.

After coming back home, I decided that I should focus more on this subject and recognize the conditions of working with talented children in Poland. I used both quantity and quality methods (according to the division of pedagogical methods). I used in-depth interview from the quality methods. By in-depth interview I understand several discussions with gifted children I worked with this year in Primary School no. 36 in Cracow and with their parents. I also asked students’ parents to fill in the questionnaire. Even if their children do not attend extra classes for skilled children I wanted to get familiar with their opinion on what classes would be attractive for their children. I am now in the process of analyzing the results of the survey (I did not expect such a huge parents’ involvement). I also used observation as a research method on my extra literature classes and while working with students preparing to take part in competitions. Out of quantity methods I was interested in individual cases. I focused on one particular student that I worked with this year.

The results that I have collected so far are optimistic. However, a lot of areas of working with talented students in our country (and in my school) needs to be improved. A lot of children want to attend extra classes which equip them with new knowledge, skills and experience, and help them develop. Those classes are held by our teacher as well as by hired specialists (eg. chess). The problem is that those classes are still held in big groups (not as big as regular classes, but still too big). Students who attend those classes still need guidance, they do not take initiative, they cannot recognize their passions, interests and skills. Quite often students prepare for competitions, they declare that they are highly interested in the given subject, but the moment the competition is finished, their interest in the subject ends as well. In my opinion, we should teach gifted children to plan their actions and to set their goals which are precise and possible to assess. We should set obligations which they can fulfill, let them know the rules of your cooperation and work methods and techniques. They should know where to find information. Now, when we work with students after the changes in the educational system we should emphasize self-reliance. Those are not the children who need to be constantly guided (especially the talented ones). We should give them space and time to recognize their own interests and follow them.

After collecting data I planned my next steps. I decided to rethink and reorganize my extra classes for skilled students that I hold in Primary School no. 36. I believe, that I have done much so far. I encouraged students to additional work, to take part in various competitions, festivals and tournaments. I would like to have the opportunity to work with talented students one on one. I also think that it is necessary to take psychology into consideration while working with gifted children. We should notice that talented students can have difficulties with social adaptation and their talents can face their classmates disapproval. These students are often left alone with these problems, because there is no one to help them and advise what to do.

In conclusion, working with talented students is still a challenge both for students and teachers. I believe that we can change a lot in terms of organization of working with those children. That will not only positively affect the image of the school, but it will also bring a lot of satisfaction and successes. It will also make everyone aware of their strengths and the areas which they should develop.

Sylwia Kondek, School no. 36, Cracow