

## **CZ – Jiří Bureš, teacher**

### **Report on teaching visit – Sucy-en-Brie, France – 1.12.-5.12.2008**

#### **Contacts with the hosting teacher**

The preliminary (e-mail) contacts with the local head of the teacher training staff Yves Alvez, and the hosting teacher Yves Renaud were very friendly; they met all the expectations.

##### *Before the visit*

Except several changes of the date of the visit (due to both parties involved), the contacts helped very much to organise the visit (Y. Alvez found a hotel for me, sent me an extract of the curricula of the collège in France and Y. Renaud sent me his timetable and answered all my questions about the pupils).

##### *During the visit*

The French colleagues did their best to help me during the visit - they helped me with the transport and they answered all my questions concerning teaching mathematics in France and others.

#### **Comments on my observations**

I observed 8 lessons of mathematics in four different classes. Every lesson was very well organised by the teacher, all in almost the same way:

1. checking homework (20 min) – pupils went to the blackboard and showed their solutions to their colleagues,
2. exercises from lists of exercises (almost no textbooks used) - individual or whole-class work, common correction of exercises (Their teacher gave them many copies and instructions which, in my opinion, may reduce some skills of the good pupils - they weren't used to work and think independently),
3. giving homework for the next lesson.

The teacher was very good in organising the lessons, using mathematical terminology and explaining things to the pupils. The pupils were calm, most of them worked during the lessons; those who did not, were sometimes ignored. There were big differences between the pupils in the comprehension of mathematics.

The teacher used the blackboard in a systematic way, everything was clear and legible. He also used an overhead projector.

He did not let the pupils write anything incorrect on the blackboard, they were always asked to say what they wanted to write and, after correcting, they could write it on the blackboard. It seems to me that he might have exploited some of the mistakes more as a kind of remedial work. Often, the Topaze effect occurred.

According to school curricula, he did not use almost any formal mathematical writings - most of things were described in words.

## **Comments on my teaching**

### *The atmosphere in the classroom*

The atmosphere in the classroom was really good; most pupils worked or tried to work. They were used to some comfort from the teacher so they did not pay sufficient attention to my instructions which may not have been as clear and simple as the instructions of their teacher. In my teaching, I am used to some independence of pupils.

### *Pupils' reactions to my presence and the language used*

Their reaction to my presence was positive – they tried to participate, some pupils who did not work during the lessons of their teacher, worked during my lessons. But also some pupils participated less than usual.

The French language used during the lessons wasn't a problem, neither for me nor for the pupils. There were some problems with mathematical notation – different notation for the length of the line segment (they don't use  $a = 5$  cm, they need  $BC = 5$  cm).

### *Impact of the language on teaching*

I think I didn't have problems with explaining things due to my frequent use of the foreign language. Sometimes, I had problems to understand pupils' reactions in the colloquial language.

### *Mathematical content chosen for the lessons*

I think that the Pythagoras theorem is a good subject to teach because there is a large variety of classroom activities which can be used.

### *Self-reflection on lesson planning*

I am not very happy about my lesson planning. I made a plan for 4 lessons before the visit. When I realised that I would teach only 3 lessons, I had to change the plan. That was not a problem. Normally, with my classes, I do mostly everything that I planned before. Here, I expected maybe too much from the pupils and I didn't do a half of what I prepared to do. One of the reasons may have been the subject – geometry. I wanted them to construct the triangles and squares and it took them a lot of time. Next time, I would give them a sheet with the constructions to glue into their exercise books. My idea was that the pupils should “live through” all the steps of the process of discovery and prove the Pythagoras theorem, but they spent too much time in the preparatory steps and there was a lack of time for the main activities.

### *Necessary rearrangements during the lessons*

I hardly did a half of what I had expected to do during one lesson. I had to re-explain many things several times – sometimes successfully, sometimes without any success. First, I didn't construct any figures on the blackboard (only the sketches), but after, I had to construct everything in order to help the pupils understand what I wanted them to do. I think that the problem was not the language, but that they were used to the procedures where the teacher told them really everything.

### *Comparison of the way the topic is presented when teaching at home and in the visited school*

I never taught Pythagoras theorem in the Czech Republic so it's difficult to compare. In the French textbook, the topic is presented in an inductive way (more guided discovery, the stress is put on pupils' independence) there are more tasks including manipulation and the use of Cabri and there are fewer exercises. In the Czech textbooks we use in our school (Odvárko, Kadleček), the chapter starts with the Pythagoras theorem and then, there are many exercises. I prefer the discovery part of the French textbook and then, some of the exercises.

### *What I would have appreciated in the toolbox*

- A list of mathematical notations for the topic.
- An extract of the school curriculum (programs) containing the subject to teach – eventually the French colleagues sent it to me before the visit.

### *What I have learned from the experience*

- The mobility of the teachers is feasible and it is an excellent experience.
- I have to determine better the most important parts of the lesson and give them priority to other activities.
- The visit has been yet another proof of real importance of learning foreign languages.
- It has enabled comparison of different curricula, textbooks and approaches to teaching mathematics which will help me in my teaching.
- I had to prepare the lessons in a much more detailed way than I am used to because I was not able to improvise as much as usual, however, the lessons were not so good in my opinion.

### **Other comments**

- For the next time, I would suggest teaching more than 3 or 4 lessons in order to have time to explain, do exercises and assess the pupils.
- It would be better to teach the whole unit than just an extract.
- I would also recommend making video-recordings of all lessons for the post-analysis.