



Comenius 2.1. Project: Burnout-Prevention for Teacher

# Guidelines for seminars on the prevention of burn-out with teachers

Experience with the topic of burn-out in the different countries participating in the project confirms that in spite of the varying framework conditions and approaches, nevertheless a set of core **guidelines** may be defined:

1. **General recommendations**
2. **Recommendations for the different topic areas (modules)**
3. **Recommendations for the implementation of a learning platform**

## 1. General Recommendations

### 1.1. Recommendations on content

Following the stock-taking in the countries participating in the project and current scientific research, it is recommended that the following levels are considered when dealing with the topic of burn-out:

- Personality oriented prevention strategies
- team oriented and institutional preventative strategies
- profession oriented preventative strategies

These levels can be fully dealt with, during the course of four modules, by considering the following main focuses:

- Personal and Professional Identity
- Communication and Cooperation
- New Ways of Teaching and Learning
- Dealing with Difficult Behaviours
- It is of utmost importance that the particular and individual needs of the participants be taken into consideration and discussed. If necessary, these topics must be given priority!
- Women in particular are in danger of suffering from burn-out because of the double work load they carry and the specific stages of their development. Thus special attention should be paid to gender specific prevention approaches.
- The emphasis of the work should always be on the daily life and work of the participants, to which any theoretical input must to find an immediate link and provide starting points for personal development.

- Although every module focuses on its own specific topic, links should be established to subject matter that has already been dealt with, in order to increase consolidation.

## **1.2. Methodological recommendations**

- An atmosphere of trust and mutual respect should be created.
- The participants need to identify with the topic by choosing their own tasks, discussing them with the others, even between modules (in tandems, peer groups..) with the obligation to hand in their results.
- For this purpose approaches taken from Action Research and the keeping of a diary are recommended: good results are achieved through the keeping of a personal diary in which the most important points of the seminar are recorded every day and new developments occurring between modules are reflected upon.
- A balance between theory and practise: short, concise theoretical input, tailored to the target group, alternating with consolidation by means of various creative methods and exchange in a variety of social forms.
- An inductive form of procedure (the theoretical background is explained only after the practical experience of the workshop).
- Allow sufficient time for reflection and exchange during and between group work.
- Cross references to the individuals' personal everyday areas of life definitely need to be found, even in the professionally oriented modules (e.g. New Ways of Learning, Dealing with Difficult Behaviours) in order to safeguard the special character of the course of seminars.
- Include a variety of creative and physically oriented approaches (Drama Pedagogy, Gestalt Pedagogy, Music Therapy, various imagination techniques, clown teaching, Qi Gong, Bioenergetics, Autogenic Training...).
- Accept the participants as experts in their fields, and allow their resources to contribute to the success of the seminar.
- Part of the "warming up" period of each module should consist of an opportunity for participants to share their experience in the application of the subject matter of the previous module.
- Each module should close with a qualitative evaluation of the seminar together with a personal reflection as to ones own personal aims and means of achieving them.
- Sufficient time and space needs to be allocated to the specific and individual needs and interests of the participants (flexible planning).
- "Being a model": it is valuable and of prime importance for trainers to set an example, and actually demonstrate by their behaviour any subject matter that is being treated theoretically. (An appreciative manner of speaking, the trainer team as a model for team work, expressing ones own feelings and sympathy for others, application of a variety of methods in the seminar and so on.)

## **1.3. Organisational recommendations**

### 1.3.1. Time structure:

- The modules should be offered within a foreseeable stretch of time. (At least one per term).

- Meetings between the modules (face to face or virtual) help to keep the subject matter topical and remind participants to put resolutions into practise.
- A good support in this is the formation of work groups, tandems, peer groups, etc. and the use of a virtual learning platform.
- If a virtual learning platform is applied, then it needs to be tactically intelligently installed (see point 3). Good support can here too be given with the accompaniment of peer tutoring, peer teaching...
- It is recommendable to make cross references to subject matter and methods in other modules.
- A preliminary meeting ("module 0") organised to inform the participants about the objectives, subject matter and framework of the course of seminars are useful.

#### 1.3.2. Venue:

- Ideally the seminar facilities should be in a place with accommodation away from both ones own teacher training and in-service institution, as well as participants' school and home area.
- The seminar venue should also offer the possibility for outdoor physical activity, preferably in a pleasant area with meadows, forests, lakes, all of which help to restore body and mind.
- The seminar room should offer space for many different social forms, the application of creative media and relaxation techniques (flexible arrangement of furniture).
- It is particularly helpful to have a second room for occasional group splitting or individual coaching.

#### 1.3.3. Participants

- An utmost heterogeneous constellation of participants is recommended: Experience shows that predominantly women sign up for the seminars, however the inclusion of both sexes furthers discussions and the group process. The presence of both men and women reflects more clearly the duality of life.
- Registration to join the course of seminars should be on a voluntary basis. Delegation by school authorities can impede success in attaining goals.
- On registering it is obligatory to be present at all modules, in this way ensuring that the group remains consistent.

### **1.4. Choice of trainers**

- In order to work on personality in depth, the establishing of trust towards the trainers is essential. Thus it is an advantage to have a consistent trainer team leading the group through the process of all four modules .

- Competences necessary to trainers:

- Being in contact with the domain of school life
- Experience in adult education, psychological, psycho-therapeutic and supervision training
- Having credibility and the ability to convince the group. This increases in proportion to the authenticity in the way the subject matter is dealt with.
- For certain topics (e.g. New Ways of Learning) additional experts may be invited, however at least one person should accompany the group consistently.

## **2. Recommendations on topic areas**

### **Guidelines Module 1: Personal and professional identity**

#### Special content recommendations

- Taking a close look at one's own identity and finding one's own opportunities and chances to develop.
- Basic information on burn-out in the teaching profession, empowerment, self sufficiency.
- Analysis of one's own professional situation in regards to burn-out and convincing oneself of one's ability to be self sufficient and effective.
- Using creative means to analyse one's own personal situation.
- Analysis of what originally determined one's choice of profession.
- Tracking down those who give us support and the resources we need, within our own social network.
- Bodywork as a prevention strategy.
- Using the BO-SE-test (burn-out self efficiency test) as a possibility for self reflection.
- Introduction to ICT wherever networking through a platform is planned for the participants during the course of the modules.

#### Special methodological recommendations

- Build up an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect and "lightness of being" (Kundera) through appropriate group dynamic activities.
- Use creative processes to induce a closer look at oneself as a person and teacher (e.g. drawing one's individual life line; painting one's present situation in life; modelling the "Pillars of one's Identity" in clay (Petzold); giving advice on personal and professional life circumstances with the help of "Kitchen consulting"; laying the "cross of Life" (Riemann) and linking it to an analysis of one's self image and the image others have of one; "The "who's who?" in my life"; "Guided Autobiography";...
- A resource oriented rather than deficit oriented procedure: emphasising positively mastered stress situations and extending one's own repertoire of action through the experience of other participants.
- Applying various relaxation techniques (drawing mandalas, autogenic training, fantasy trips, nature meditations).
- Practising various movement forms with different levels of exertion (walking, jogging,...) and sequences taken from yoga for everyday practise.
- Forming tandems, tridems, and peer groups to give support, have exchange with, and promote the work between modules.

### **Guidelines Module 3: Communication and Cooperation**

#### Special contents:

- Basic information on communication and rhetoric.

- Practising and applying different forms of communication (active listening, rules for feedback, first person messages, killer phrases, door-openers, helpful questions,...)
- Regarding conflict as a special challenge in communication; processing current conflicts.
- Communicating with the aid of new technology (working with a learning platform and if necessary imparting basic knowledge on how to handle it).
- Analysing the cooperation amongst one's own staff or team.
- Taking a look at the different forms of cooperation between participants and amongst staff (peer groups, tandems...).
- A closer look at the forms of cooperation with parents, pupils, school administration.
- Team development, the different roles in a team and team dynamics.

#### Special methods:

- Establishing links to module 1 by means of different forms of discussion and settings ("Talking Circle", "Ball Bearings" (Wahl), "Partner-Interview", "Fish Bowl", "Snowball System",...)
- Practising the communication techniques in small groups with an observer or through video feedback, e.g. "Giraffe language" (Marshall Rosenberg); role-playing explosive situations,...
- "Sculpting" using various materials in order to depict the team dynamics.
- Recognising one's own strengths and weaknesses and one's own role in the team, as well as the role of others in the team, e.g. "Team personality tests" (Haug, Belbin,...).
- Recognising the dynamics of a team e.g. "The Cross of Life for Teams" (Riemann, Schley,...).
- Levelling out image and self image ("Johari-Window", "Hillmann-Model",...).
- Experimenting playfully with conflicts.
- Offering the possibility of conflict supervision or individual coaching.
- Bodywork and relaxation techniques as in module 1; breathing and voice training exercises.

## **Guidelines Module 3: New Ways of Teaching and Learning**

#### Special contents:

- Here the wide range of alternative and reform movements in education may be offered: "Montessori Education", "Freinet Education", "Dalton Plan", "Waldorf Education", "Toyfree Nursery Programme", "Cooperative Learning", "Outdoor Learning", "Experiential Education" ,...
- The choice as to which of these approaches will be included depends on the latest developments in the different regions and nations, as well as the experiences, needs and expectations of the participants.

#### Special methods:

- It is meaningful to concentrate on a few, or even better, one single approach rather than introducing many "new" aspects, and by giving an example enable the teachers to experience it by actually doing it (learning by doing).

- Although the contents of this module are didactics and methodology, the main focus on the personality of the teachers is not to be neglected, as in previous seminars.
- The teachers should not run the danger of being even more under pressure by trying to apply a “new” didactic method. In fact the newly learnt methods should facilitate the teachers’ lessons as an effective and resource oriented way of putting into practise what was taught in the seminars.
- The design of the seminar is oriented towards the educational reform movement that has been chosen (e.g. task-based learning at a seminar on project teaching, open learning as a seminar designed on Montessori education, ateliers with Freinet pedagogy, corresponding sequences outdoors with Outdoor pedagogy,...) – thus the seminar acts as a model.
- Care is to be taken that sufficient time is allowed for the participants to prepare and implement the new ideas and build them into their lessons. This guarantees a sure and economical transfer into participants’ teaching.
- In the follow up and more detailed planning, the different forms of cooperation, such as peer groups, tandems and tridems can offer valuable support to individuals.
- Participants should be encouraged to share their experience and ideas on how to implement (or experiment with) new approaches via a learning platform, as well as using it for the exchange of materials .
- The seminar should take place during the school year when still sufficient time at school is left for implementation in class (during the autumn or winter term, or at the beginning of the summer term).
- Do not forget bodywork! (See module 1)

## **Guidelines Module 4: Dealing with difficult behaviours**

### Special contents:

- Taking a closer look at one’s personal and professional development over the previous few years in view of the impending end of the course.
- Wherever relevant: reflecting on the role of ICT for one’s own developmental process.
- Analysing one’s own motivation to achieve good results and those of the pupils. (Kretschmann).
- Transferring the insights from the teacher’s level to the pupil’s level.
- Brushing up on the basic needs of the child (Redl) and reflection on the aims of disruptive behaviour.
- Gathering successful, well tried strategies in dealing with children with difficult behaviours. “Coping Strategies” (Mutzeck, Tietze...).
- Summarising the various psycho-therapeutic schools in order to have a clearer orientation for oneself and be able to advise parents.
- Giving a survey of the various psycho-social institutions offering help, counselling and care of children with behavioural difficulties.
- Dealing with frequent phenomena such as aggression, fear and hyperactivity as well as situations resulting from globalisation like migrants, minorities, etc..
- Introducing the concept of vulnerability and resilience and suitable development programmes that strengthen the resilience factors.

- Experimenting with one's own voice to express one's personality.
- Consolidating bodywork as in the previous modules.

#### Special methodological recommendations

- Place at the centre of the seminar the personality of the teacher and develop all subject matter from this level, that is, allow participants to reflect on their own behavioural difficulties, potentially disruptive behaviour, and sensitivities as a basis for understanding the child's or young person's difficult behaviours.
- Work in varying social forms.
- Work on case studies or case supervision.
- Refer to the professional experience of participants who were successful in dealing with children with behavioural difficulties.
- Show up to date video documentations on successful work with children with behavioural difficulties.
- Work on one's own aggression potential in a playful way ("Bambeba-Ritual").
- Consistently use relaxation techniques and integrate movement (at different levels) during the course of the seminar.
- Offer guided experimentation with voice, in order to show a new level of burn-out prevention.
- As a follow up carry out the BO-SE (Comparison).
- Give mutual feedback on successful developmental processes.
- Provisionally conclude the personal diary by reflecting individually on what has been achieved and write a preview of the future.
- Leave sufficient time for exchange between the group members in view of the end of the course.
- Introduce intervision methods, such as "Collegial Counselling" (Mutzeck, Tietze) for an on-going process after the end of the course of seminars.
- Invest plenty of time in the parting ritual.

### **3. Recommendations for the use of a learning platform in courses of seminars on the topic of burn-out prevention:**

- The application of ICT and E-learning belong to the basic competences of all citizens of the EU. It is recommendable in particular for teachers who have already been working for a long time (also in view of one's longer working life) to become computer literate. ICT should not lead to burn-out! Therefore the most basic skills in using E-learning should be taught in the profession oriented prevention strategies if necessary. (If needs be, beginners' courses should also be offered).
- The use of a learning platform is recommended to aid E-learning competences within the framework of the course of seminars on burn-out.
- First and foremost, ensure that all involved have access to internet (either at work or at home)!
- When using a learning platform, decide which of the contents will be suitable for discussions via the platform; some topics, especially the personality oriented subject matter, can be highly confidential.

- Use the platform right from the start, and ensure that all involved, irrespective of their varying experience with it, receive a thorough training in how to handle it.
- Nevertheless take care that E-learning remains purely a tool and is not too much at the fore.
- The technical support of a learning platform will be limited to a minimum with the systems currently on the market. However it will be absolutely necessary for one or more persons to assist the participants as regards contents in the platform, in addition to the regular virtual “presence” of the seminar trainers.
- Consequently it is recommendable to also give the trainers a special training! They must ensure that the participants are willing to work on the platform by allocating suitable and concrete tasks in their seminars, and then continue to accompany them afterwards.
- Diverse means such as peer coaching, peer tutoring can also be offered.
- In the case of trans-national projects: agree on a lingua franca.
- Based on the results of the evaluation of the platform in the project, we would recommend the following tools in a learning platform for future projects of this kind:
  - **Course documents** (including seminar programme, publications to go with the seminar...; photos taken during seminars and particularly apt for motivating participants to link in).
  - **Discussion forums** on individual modules with concrete (compulsory) tasks from the modules, the results of which could also be of interest for other participants, if they are suitable for discussion in the semi open space of a learning platform.
  - An **open discussion forum**, without any limit on topic, where participants can chat in a kind of virtual “café”.
  - A **list of links on the topic**, which may be added to by the participants (e.g. links to online burnout tests).
  - **Theory briefs** with publications and links to the topic, for those who wish to become even better informed on the subject.
  - The possibility of participants **e-mailing** to each other via their usual mailboxes, irrespective of the platform (provided every participant has a private e-mail address).
  - **National rooms** (with trans-national projects) for anyone to take part who feels inhibited communicating in a foreign language.
  - A **chat room** is suitable only for a very large number of participants and is rarely used.