

Report on Erasmus + Structured Educational Visit to Schools & Training Seminar - Stokholm, Sweden 23-29 September 2018



Date: Sunday 23 September 2018

The first meeting is in the auditorium of Hotel Birger Jarl in Stokholm where Edoardo and his staff have organized the first meeting of teachers coming from different European countries. What first strikes me is the convivial atmosphere and the shared will to communicate and getting to know one another. Then comes the pleasant feeling of being part of a community together with the curiosity of getting to know more about the others and to exchange ideas and experiences. The feeling of loneliness and isolation that sometimes seizes you when you work “at home” suddenly disappears making room for a feeling of joy and pride for your job and your “mission”. Eduardo then shows us the importance of building a portfolio, which turns out to be a very useful and valuable instrument to express the thoughts and reflections about our visit and training course. An added value to the portfolio is that having to present it at the end of the course pushes you to find the best way to show your point in order to make the others better understand your views and proposals.



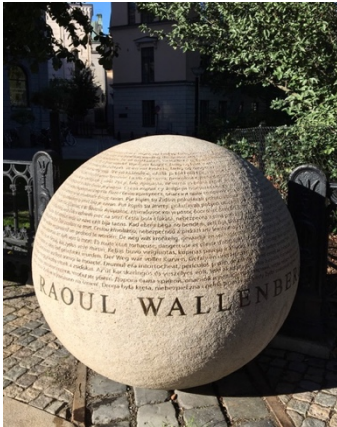
Date: 24 September

Today we involved in a field project in the morning and a seminar in the afternoon.

The morning field project today is about the Swedish Society, its Culture and Politics and includes a visit to the most important landmarks and areas of the city. There have been elections recently and as a result the most admired social democracy is losing ground and is now facing a political crisis not much

different from ours. Among the many interesting things I have come to know, one in particular has caught my attention, that there is now a moving-in-to-the-city trend due to the improvement of public transport and the environmental policies that have made the city of Stockholm greener and more attractive. Great importance is given to environmental issues and policies and this can be perceived wherever you go, including schools.

The city exhibits numerous statues and monuments commemorating its founder and father of the nation and the kings that ruled the country, but outstanding among them is the one in memory of Raoul Gustave Wallenberg, the hero the neutral Sweden is proud of, who saved the life to tens of thousands of Jews in Nazi-occupied Hungary.



The democratic system does not neglect the young generation and students sometimes take part in the Parliament debates and schools prepare them for voting before they turn 18.

The afternoon seminar is about the Swedish Education System and what is remarkable for me about it is that schools adopt of a kind of “scoring” system, which means that students get a certain amount of points or credits when they attend lessons. Then education is totally free and this is a guarantee of democracy as it implies that the country believes that a good citizen is an educated person.

There is also a highly politicized relationship between school and society.

Then the adoption of a system of national testing which requires the students to complete the tests simultaneously is highly remarkable in my opinion.

About the Swedish, it is also interesting to come to know that in general they are open and ready to adapt to the new and welcome changes in society this means that to be “unswedish” is considered a compliment



Date: 25 September

This is the day of our Educational visit to Skeppsholmen Folkhögskola (Adult Education), a small private school that gets public funds. Here the principal and vice principal are warm and welcome and very enthusiastic and so are the students. Drop off students and adults are given hope and the chance to play it again. In this school students believe that mixing up people of different ages is an added value to their experience; their motivation is raised by involving the students in the teaching learning process; education is a two way experience where it is not only the students that learn from the teachers but also the teachers that learn from the students as all of them are involved in the same process of creating a cooperative learning environment; they believe that cooperation and not competition can help you develop and grow and that being in a small class makes you feel closer and more cooperative. Some of the students that had abandoned school as they could not cope with the high competition among the students find this new learning environment far more stimulating and welcoming than ordinary schools and say that they feel now motivated and willing to reach their goals. The rationale of the school is that learning is a life long process and you must give people the chance to fulfil their dreams no matter what age they are.



Date: 26 September

Today our Educational visit is to Firedegardsgymnasiet has taught me that having a network of support for the students helps them improve and feel more confident; that the school is not only a place to learn about a subject but also a place where you can play, entertain yourself, socialize. In addition to that they believe that the school should be open to the community and not only to students and teachers. Living in contact with society also means adopting technology in class and making it available for free to anyone. Symbolically most classrooms have glass walls, which suggests the idea of wanting to break down all the barriers.



Date: 27 September

The Educational visit to Angskolan in the suburbs of Stockholm has helped me understand how a school should be managed if you want to make the students happy and proud of what they are doing and to make them feel protagonists and part of a community. Here the students feel free but they know that freedom means taking responsibilities: for example the bell does not ring but all the students must know at what time the lesson ends and move to another one or the doors are unlocked but they are aware of what going out implies. Counsellors and teachers help students solve their problems or go over topics or items they find difficult by providing special sessions for them or by helping them do their homework. There are immigrants in the school and they have to study the Swedish language before attending classes in other subjects.

It is also a highly technological school where all students have a tablet provided by the school for free which they should give back to the school when they leave or buy it at the end of your studies for a special price.

Classes are of different sizes depending on the subject and the teaching method in the English classes that I observed was usually based on the three Ps (presentation of the topic by the teacher, practicing by the students in order to learn and then producing in a more creative way)



Date: 28 September

The field work today is about the Vikings and we are having a tour to the places where there are some remains of that era, basically Runestones and Burial grounds in Gamla Uppsala. The Swedish are very proud of them although not much has remained of the time. The Vikings from Sweden went mainly to the eastern Europe differently from the Norwegian or the Danish ones. The landscape is outstanding. Lots of classroom work can be done on the Vikings using the photos taken and the information provided.



Date: 29 September

On our last day we present our Portfolios. Working on it has been a great stimulus for everyone as lots of ideas have come out. What is most interesting is to see how each group focused on different aspects of society and education and how much has been learnt and said. Discussing Dissemination strategies is of great help too as a lot of ideas have come out. The atmosphere is of great cooperation and excitement and we share the feeling of being on the same boat as we are all willing to learn from others and to come back home with our bags full of new seeds to sow.

To conclude, I can say that this educational and training seminar has been extremely interesting, a great opportunity to learn, to discuss, to share, to experience "Europe made real". All of us felt united by the same goals: taking up as much as possible, getting new ideas and stimuli and willing to adopt the "good" teaching practices and show what should be done in order to successfully manage a school and...ultimately a country. Then the opportunity to create an international network of teachers cannot be praised enough.

I thank you all those who made this possible in particular my colleagues of Liceo Machiavelli.