Deliverable 2.4: Piloting Reports for SWPBS Tiers 1, 2 and 3 training manuals

Romanian Report

Erasmus+

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LAPPEENRANTA   ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑΚΗ ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΣΗ Α/ΘΜΙΑΣ & Β/ΘΜΙΑΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ ΚΕΝΤΡΙΚΗΣ ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΑΣ   INSPECTORATUL SCOLAR JUDETEAN ARGES

The present report was issued by University of Pitești (UPIT) for the piloting of the SWPBS Tiers 1, 2 and 3 training manuals in Romania.

The piloting was implemented through a combined approach:

- Tier 1 training manual was piloted (utilized) during the training activities with school teachers and school teams, organised in the second year of project implementation (first level of the PBIS intervention);

- Tier 2 and 3 training manuals have been piloted (within an initial phase) through application of questionnaires plus implementation of an online Focus Group organised with 3 primary school teachers, 1 school principal and 2 external coaches; it follows that these manuals to be piloted more in depth during the activities under Tiers 2 and 3.

As an important note, although Tier 1 training manual was piloted through direct training activities, feedback on it was also requested through questionnaire and with the occasion of the Focus Group organised to pilot the Tiers 2 and 3 manuals.

The Focus Group was organised by UPIT on 18th of February 2021, via Skype. Argeș County School Inspectorate (ISJ) selected 3 teachers and 1 school director from Group A schools to attend the Focus Group (they belong to the following schools: School „Nicolae Iorga" Pitești, School „Virgil Calotescu" Bascov and School" Adrian Păunescu" Pitești); UPIT selected 2 of its coaches to participate in the Focus Group.

Prior to the Focus Group, invited participants have received a questionnaire on strong and weak points regarding project implementation in schools and also regarding the Tiers 1,2,3 training manuals, which they filled in and returned to UPIT. The role of the Focus Group was to deepen discussion and provide more insight to UPIT on the aspects envisaged, by the help of additional questions and discussions that have been achieved.

The findings from both the questionnaires and Focus Group are rendered below.
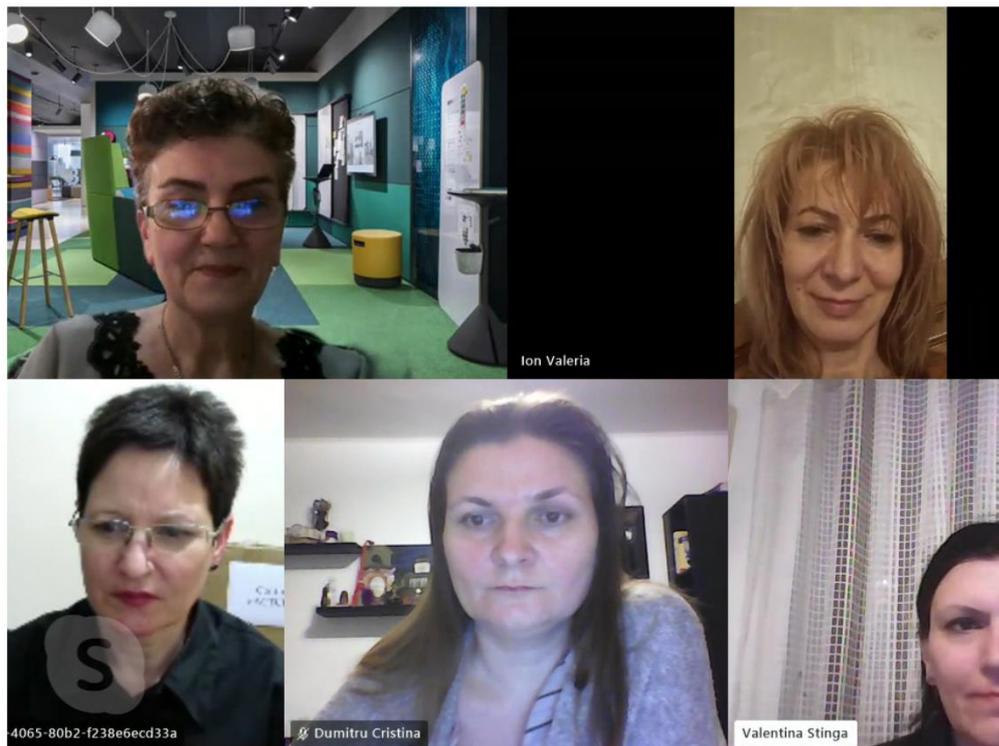
1. Regarding things that worked well during the project implementation in schools

(a) the teaching and school leading staffs' opinions:

• Elaboration of the school's vision in a concise way, explained simply and clearly for a common goal made known to teachers, students and parents, and then displaying it on the school lobby, has triggered a sense of team spirit and belonging, shaping the new pro-social culture of the school.

• Teaching social skills was the most effective and promising way to achieve a positive school climate.

• Teamwork, both with school colleagues involved in the project and with UPIT and ISJ representatives when they came to schools and gave us support when we had difficulties managing the related documents.

• The students were receptive to the challenges of the project and appreciated the approach focused on positive things.

• Receptivity of teachers and students.

• Respecting meetings' date, as planned.

- Collaboration with school staff (especially with auxiliary and non-teaching staff);
- The fact that students embraced the proposed values and adapted to the routines, in order to obtain well-being in school;
- The meetings with the project team were productive, finding solutions to the problems that arose during the implementation of the project.

(b) the coaches' opinions:

- Willingness and seriousness of teachers to participate in the project and to engage in project tasks.
- Teachers' effective communication with the project team from their school and the creativity they showed in carrying out the required activities.
- The collaboration with the project teams from the schools took place in very good conditions.
- There was a visible interest shown by teachers in schools towards the ideas stated in the project.
- There was an obvious preoccupation of the teachers towards the elaboration of the requested materials.

2. Regarding challenges faced during the project development and implementation (excluding COVID-19)

(a) the teaching and school leading staffs' opinions:

- The elaboration of the lesson plans for each rule / social behaviour and routine were received at the beginning with a certain reluctance by some teachers.
- The management of minor inappropriate behaviours was initially difficult for teachers.
- They were considering that finding solutions for these it is under the responsibility of the school management not of theirs.
- Identification of implementation measures.
- Observance by students of the measures that led to the implementation of the project.
- Developing a common strategy at school level.

- Implementing evidence-based strategies to support student behaviour.
- Activating the whole group of students and directing the energies in the direction of the student's well-being in school. Periodic information and deadlines were needed, which overlapped with the period of adaptation to online learning/schooling.
- Finding ways to reward online the positive behaviours.

(b) the coaches' opinions:

- The availability of time and the distances between the schools - the schools being at considerable distances in the Argeş county (from Piteşti), the meetings and visits in the schools were thus a challenge.
- Difficulty in finding a common interval for organizing training sessions, due to the busy schedule of teachers.
- Occasional technological challenges generated by the inadequate quality of the Internet connection, weak signal, etc.

3. Regarding other aspects/issues that should be covered by the SWPBS_D2.1_Training manual_V5

The teaching and school leading staffs' opinions:

- Presentation of activities for parents and their involvement in the project.
- The manual effectively addresses the behaviours that need to be passed on to the community.
- A set of concrete examples from similar activities in other countries, including some visual support should be added to the manual.
- More details / examples, regarding the tasks of each member of the SWPBS Whole School Team.
- Adding a video support with good practice examples, to complete the training manual.

4. Regarding other aspects/issues that should be covered by the D2.2-Tier2 CICO training manual

a) the teaching and school leading staffs' opinions:

- I did not notice other issues that would be necessary.
- Again, concrete examples from other countries would be needed and also supported by visual support.
- Real examples of the effectiveness of support in other schools.
- A set template-forms to be used during the current situation of pandemic when (1) the collaboration between CICO support members is very limited and (2) the intervention itself on children who need the support of the team of teachers for correcting inappropriate behaviour can be done online, by e-mail or by communicating with students' family/relatives via WhatsApp.
(b) the coaches' opinions:

- Checklists, procedures for identifying challenging, difficult behaviours and mechanisms, strategies for managing them.
- Procedures for identifying problem behaviour's and strategies for managing these behaviours.

5. Regarding other aspects/issues that should be covered by the training manual D2.2-Tier 3 CICO Plus_Program overview

(a) the teaching and school leading staffs' opinions:

- I did not notice other issues that would be necessary
- I have not identified other issues that need to be covered.
- Real examples regarding the implementation of interventions.

- There are no examples of exercises adapted for this period, which greatly limits the teacher's intervention, but also the implementation of exercises for improving inappropriate behaviours.

(b) the coaches' opinions:

- More concrete examples for the section - Social skill training.
- The manual has a solid theoretical foundation, but it would be desirable to provide more practical examples of how social skills are formed.

6. Regarding the additional support that teachers need, beyond the training manuals

(a) the teaching and school leading staffs' opinions:

- Organizing professional development workshops for school staff on classroom management, aiming at concrete activities of working with students, to manage situations of chronic inappropriate behaviour.
- Customized "How to react" role-plays / exercises for when we encounter the X problematic behaviour.
- Quality printed materials, to popularize the project.
- Translating Tiers 2, 3 manuals into Romanian, so that they can be easier to adapt in schools.

(b) the coaches' opinions:

- The creation of a resource centre in the county, the permanent contact with specialists in the behavioural approach can represent support elements in the implementation of the program. Opportunities for the exchange of good practices between schools, exchange of experience between them (because they are actually working in the implementation of the project, they can support, inspire, motivate each other).

• Training manuals are a clear help for schools, but they would also be helped by the constant collaboration with a specialist in the field of behaviour (and more precisely a specialist in problematic behaviours). Schools can also be a support for other schools by exchanging best practices in this area of preventing behavioural problems by creating a positive environment.

7. Regarding the additional support the coaches need, they opined:

• More time to fulfil project responsibilities (to provide real support to schools in implementing the program). Because for example in March we'll have many trainings (meetings with schools in Group A, etc.). After the training with teachers, they will do the training with their colleagues and then UPIT coaches will come again with trainings to teachers – so the scheme is overcrowded!
• External coaches receive constant and sufficient support from the project coordinators. Additional documentation resources on cultivating social behaviours would be also beneficial.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSIONS

1. What effects did you notice after the elaboration and display of the school's vision, what characteristics can you identify now to the new pro-social culture acquired by the school through the project?

• Better mobilization of teachers and students to remedy inappropriate behaviours, better identification of the students of these behaviours and better understanding of the need to correct them and also of displaying positive behaviours.

2. Before the project, before using the teaching of social skills the way you were trained in the project, in what other ways / methods were you trying to achieve a positive climate in school?

• The school counsellor was observing these behaviours and through class / school level counselling, s/he advised how to remedy them. There were also lectorates in the school (a doctor, a lawyer, a priest came to the school and presented certain case studies for understanding inappropriate behaviours and teaching solutions to correct them). Not all schools have a counsellor (e.g., the ones in rural areas). For all schools (with or without counsellor) the project was beneficial.

3. Can you give 1-2 examples of how students have shown their receptivity to project activities and to building a positive climate? From what exactly or how exactly did you realize the interest or desire of students to have a positive climate in the classroom and school?

• The teachers applied questionnaires during the counselling school orientation classes from which it has resulted that there is changed (positive) attitude of the students towards the language used by the students in the school, both towards each other and towards their teachers. The vision of the school was displayed in a visible place and the students' behaviour changed for the better, for example, by displaying in school a message that invites / stimulates students to have a positive pro-social behaviour (e.g., elimination of inappropriate academic language and use of respectful language).

4. Do you think that the receptivity of students and teachers has been higher or lower in relation to the activities of this project, compared to other projects that you have implemented with your school?

• We appreciate it is the same receptiveness at school-wide level compared to other projects, maybe due to the fact that young students (grades 1 to 4) are keen to get involved in all kind of new activities, they respond well to task especially if the tasks imply using or designing posters and graphic images; but one can see a difference of receptiveness between students in primary

education and those in secondary (the first ones are more interested and receptive). This is good, because is desirable to cultivate appropriate social skills and positive behaviour at the youngest possible age, in order to have appropriate behaviours at an older age (adult age). The sooner we start, the better!

5. Why do you think the students adapted to the routines, what made them adapt?

- The attractiveness of the routines, their necessity, the novelty. But also, the project objectives and the fact that objectives have been repeatedly disseminated in each classroom. But of course, not all classes displayed the same level of receptiveness.

6. If we were to try to explain the reluctance of some teachers regarding the elaboration of lesson plans for each rule / social behaviour and routine, which do you think there have been the causes?

- The lack of time and getting out of comfort zone, given the new practices. Any change may be positive or negative and teachers have perceived differently the changes brought by the project. Especially the elderly teachers showed a certain level of reticence, due to the 'routine' of the teaching practices they were accustomed with. But the compensation came from younger teachers, who were highly interested and motivated by the project, they want to change their class practices and obtain positive climate at a school wide level.

7. How did you overcome the challenge of developing (first) and then implementing a common strategy at school level? What did you do, specifically?

- The challenge was that these behaviours were to be implemented both by students AND teachers. The students, when they saw that their teachers have to apply same behaviours and implement same positive changes, were highly motivated and felt like being one team with their teachers. These 'positive' competition between teachers and students was the solution, the key.
- Regarding another challenge – the one of finding adequate rewards, the solution was to adapt rewards to age groups (grades 1 to 4 and grades 5 to 8, respectively).

8. What methods have you found to reward positive behaviours online? (for the f2f approach you had chocolate coins, medals, paper stars, tokens, etc.)

- We replaced the tokens, stars, bonbons, etc. with stickers and emoticons. And the students adapted, they have been satisfied with the online rewarding system…

9. With regard to the involvement of parents in building a positive school environment, would you agree that they should spend more time in school and participate actively and directly in activities in this regard? What kind of school activities do you think parents can contribute to? But outside the school environment?

- Parents involvement would be beneficial – they are our partners in the educational act! By attending from home together with the children the online classes (staying behind their children during the classes), the parents became more aware of the value of their children. And reciprocally, we the teachers have discovered our students as being more efficient in the presence of their parents (paradoxically, somehow!). Also, parents would contribute positively in conflict solving – calmly solving the conflicts (many times conflicts between school and parents may occur due to insufficient or inefficient communication school-parents). Parents participation in school activities (except the didactic ones) is needed. Their presence in school areas (library, halls, canteen) would help, positive contacts with parents would help a lot.

10. In the idea of organizing professional development workshops for school staff on classroom management, more specifically on managing chronic, inappropriate behaviour situations, what would be your availability? How many hours would you be willing to invest, how many hours could you attend such courses?

- Around 4 hours per week (eventually in 2 sessions) would be optimal, taking into account teachers' time availability. Many of the teachers, when the school plan for training was designed, showed high interest in attending these trainings!

11. As external coaches, how did you perceived the trainings is schools, which were the challenges, what can we change (for coaches, for teachers, for the project itself)?

We learned a lot from the project regarding how to manage my time and tasks…

The obstacles are linked to technology (as we implemented online all trainings): low quality of our access to technology (it was an objective obstacle).

A challenge was the time availability of teachers: they are very busy and project activities are additional to their daily tasks; in pandemic online, project activities are overlapping to their regular ones. We got teachers help to surpass these obstacles; they participated, they involved, they performed their tasks excellently! So, we are optimistic for the next activities in the project…We will synchronize with the teachers in the future as well.

CONCLUSIONS

- The feedback received from participants regarding the results and effects of the project, through the training activities with school staffs and through the activities implement by the trained teachers with their students, is a very positive one.

- Both the students and the teachers are motivated by the results and positive changes obtained so far and they are keen to continue with the PBIS intervention.

- The intervention effects so far made schools to be optimistic in what concern the macro-effect at the school scale, especially after more years of applying PBIS continuously and after reaching Tiers 2 and 3.

- The support provided to schools so far was efficient, both in terms of training the teachers and through the support materials provided (like the Tier 1 manual, example lesson plans and other documents); however, more practical examples and more materials on how to treat inappropriate chronic behaviours would be beneficial (A/N.: teachers have been explained that they will receive in Tiers 2 and 3 more concrete and practical support for management of difficult classes and for the management of chronic inappropriate behaviours).

- Main challenges and obstacles occurred so far were linked to teachers' time availability, their overloaded agendas and technical issues during the online activities of the project (quality and stability of the Internet services, not enough digital devices in certain rural remote schools).