



STAY TUNED

BOOSTING THE FREQUENCY OF QUALIFICATION

Solution Story // Implementation Journey Tallinn

The journey for the implementation team in Tallinn has been one of testing out a new approach across schools, learning from the initial implementation and then refining their model accordingly to improve results.



01. WHAT WAS THE STARTING POINT?

The starting point for the team in Tallinn was the lack of support for specialists in their schools to carry out preventive work and support parents, teachers and students in need.

They found that there was a general lack of knowledge, skills and resources for the teachers because the number of students with additional needs had been increasing all the time. They had also observed that specialist staff had been moving out of the education

sector and into the health/medical sector, where the salaries are often higher and the pressure/stress at work lower. Tallinn typically has had a relatively low rate of drop-out from compulsory school, but their ELET rate (regarding upper secondary qualifications) is still a challenge at around 10%.

The team also wished to address the issues of uncooperative parents, which had been a problem as well in many areas.

02. WHAT WERE THEY WORKING TO IMPLEMENT?

The action plan for Tallinn was built around the creation of a new body – the Tallinn Education and Counselling Centre (TECC). TECC was set up 2 years ago in 2017 to support parents and teachers and students with both social and educational needs and to offer educational guidance and career counselling.

The additional plan for the team in Tallinn was to work with teachers in a number of schools with the aim of enhancing personal and professional development within the schools. The plan was to set up a system where small groups of school teachers regularly meet with specialists from the TECC to discuss and explore key topics relating to relevant professional issues and challenges, with the aim of jointly looking for solutions.

The team were certain that early leaving from education and training (ELET) is a multi-faceted and complex problem, requiring a holistic approach. Therefore, their measures to tackle ELET at school level couldn't only be addressed to students who are considered to be dropping out.

Supportive measures for teachers and other school staff should also be highlighted and include continuous professional development of staff with a focus on the knowledge and skills needed to properly help students' educational disadvantages as well as to improve the psychological well-being of teachers. This was the basis of their plan.

Key Policy Themes for Tallinn:
Training and Development of Teachers
Career Guidance

03. WHAT WERE THE CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION?

One challenge was simply setting up such an institution and establishing it within the city as a new body that provides support. Aside from the logistical and technical aspects of creating all the rules, policies, ways of working etc. for this unit, there was a challenge to ensure that schools and teachers understood the role of

TECC and what it could offer. There was then the subsequent challenge of helping the stakeholders to work out how to work effectively with TECC, as this was a new approach for the city.

Key Implementation Challenges for Tallinn: Stakeholder Engagement

04. WHAT WAS THEIR DELIVERY APPROACH? HOW DID THEY TACKLE THE BARRIERS?

The team started with a small number of pilot schools, which were also members of the project's local stakeholder group. By starting with a small number, the approach could be refined and adapted more easily than trying to roll it out across the whole city straight away.

It also allowed for easier communication and a greater chance of buy-in, as the schools were part of the local group already and familiar with the project and its aims.

The intention was to initiate regular meetings, to carry out work in a groups with the teachers and TECC professionals to discuss the professional challenges they were experiencing. They would explore the difficult cases and look for new interventions and solutions collaboratively within the group. The idea was that by working collaboratively, using

essentially an open innovation type approach, they would be able to bring forward more ideas and experience regarding the specific problems they were trying to tackle.

Furthermore, by looking at the genuine, real-world problems that individual teachers were facing, the process would not just be purely theoretical, but would enable the teachers to develop their skills and experience by working on actual scenarios. This would make it more tangible for them and also hopefully help to solve some of the challenges being faced at the same time.

This was designed to be more engaging than a pure one-way "training" session, where the teachers are just given methods and examples of good practice. This would be "learning by doing" and therefore more effective.

Key Implementation Themes for Tallinn: Open Working and Stakeholder Involvement Project Monitoring, Evaluation and Decisions

05. WHAT WORKED? AND WHAT DIDN'T?

What transpired was a difficulty in communicating the role of TECC and of the supervision process to teachers. The team did not anticipate the potential misunderstanding and mismatch in expectations from the teachers. At first, teachers expected to participate in thematic “training” –they expected to be “taught” new knowledge and methods, in a largely one-way fashion. They weren't prepared for discussions about specific cases.

In addition, as TECC was in the phase of development, the specialists had insufficient information and experience with the method. Besides, the objectives of the teachers' group meetings were also unclear among the specialists of TECC. This meant the supervision meetings with the teachers did not work as hoped. However, the supervisions and meeting with parents and students was great and well received.

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06. WHAT DID THEY LEARN?

The team established that communications with the teachers hadn't given them the correct understanding of the purpose and nature of the supervision meetings. They also realised that the composition for the specialists in TECC was not what was required for the current situation.

reshape their offer. They realised that they needed to work even more closely with the various stakeholders in order to get the design of the programme right and to ensure a shared understanding of what was required and how the programme would work.

This meant a mismatch in approach between TECC and teachers, partly due to the expectations of teachers, and to the TECC staff not being able to respond to the teachers' situation in quite the right way. The team used the feedback and the experience of the early supervisions (positive and negative) to

The collaboration needed to be about tackling both the design and the communication challenges. However, the team did establish that the testing of this peer group supervision method with parents and students showed that this approach is effective with this group.

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07. WHAT DID THEY CHANGE AS A RESULT? WHAT DIFFERENCE HAS IT MADE?

As a result, TECC was restructured and new experts were employed to fill the gaps. New experts started to facilitate the peer group supervision meetings among teachers. The objectives and expectations of the group meetings were reconsidered by the Tallinn Education Department, TECC and school teams.

The process and structure of peer group supervision were introduced more clearly. The meetings became well-organised and productive; the teachers' motivation to participate in group meetings increased as

during the group sessions they found new professional solutions to their problems/cases, which was the actual expectation in the beginning.

This new approach is now improving coordination of activities and meaning the experience and knowledge is being actively shared between schools and teachers. There is also an emerging network of special educational needs coordinators that is being developed as a result of the connections being made between TECC and the different institutions.

08. WHAT DO THEY PLAN TO CHANGE IN THE FUTURE?

The team in Tallinn are observing that the peer group supervision method is becoming a very productive and successful tool in dealing with professional challenges and difficult cases. As a result, they plan to implement this method across the city and roll it out to all schools in Tallinn.

There will be training sessions for teachers to learn about how to moderate peer group supervision sessions, building on the experience of the pilot schools' teachers, who were the first and only ones to be offered this method by TECC's specialists so far. In the future, TECC plans to offer peer group supervision sessions as part of its core services to schools and communities.

