A roadmap for schools to support the language(s) of schooling

Overview of the ROADMAP

Aim of the ROADMAP

The ROADMAP focuses specifically on the language(s) of schooling. It is intended for (pre-)primary and secondary schools wishing to support all their students to access the curriculum and develop their potential in all subjects. Language(s) of schooling is/are the language(s) used for teaching the various school subjects and for the functioning of the schools. Insufficient proficiency in the language(s) of schooling may make it difficult for students, irrespective of linguistic or socio-economic background, to access knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary for everybody working in the school to be aware of the importance of the language(s) of schooling and to take into account the language dimension in all subjects in order to find ways to support students´ learning.

Key concepts

Language(s) of schooling

The language(s) used in teaching the subject. It is the dominant language of instruction in school which is normally the main national or regional language.

Based upon Beacco, J.-C., Fleming, M., Goullier, F., Thürmann, E., & Vollmer, H. (2016). *The language dimension in all subjects: a handbook for curriculum development and teacher training*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Language dimension in all subjects

Language is as much a tool for conceptualising content and knowledge as it is for expressing oneself accordingly in a rational, "academic" style, based on subject-specific conventions and registers.

Based upon Vollmer, H. J. (2006). *Language across the curriculum*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Stakeholders

The ROADMAP involves five stakeholders: head teachers, teachers, non-teaching staff, students and parents.

The terminology used for some of the five stakeholders may not fit in some contexts. In such cases headteacher can be replaced with i.e. a group of managers or any other kind of person or team who has the function of leading the school. Parents are not necessarily biological parents. These can also be step-parents or legal guardians. Non-teaching staff may include a range of people in the school; from janitor to the librarian, depending on the organisation of the school, even if they work part-time at the school. Please note that non-teaching staff can also be working outside school, but cooperating with it.

A whole-school approach should include all stakeholders; however, some stakeholders can be selected in the online survey to receive, for instance, a more specific feedback.

Students' participation in the survey

Parental consent for students' participation is compulsory. Please make sure you collect the consent forms from parents so that their children can take part in the survey. A sample letter is included in the coordinator's package. It can be adapted and used for this purpose. For younger students, it is recommended that they are assisted either by their teachers or parents/guardians when taking the survey. The school should decide whether the young students should take the survey at home under the guidance of their parents/guardians or at school under guidance of a teacher. The students should be given sufficient space, so that they do not feel pressured into giving "nice" answers.

Resources provided by the ROADMAP

The ROADMAP includes three resources:

1. **The self-assessment tool** is to be used by the school to identify and reflect on the way the language(s) of schooling is/are effectively taken into account with an identification of strengths as well as levers for making progress. It offers:

   – an online survey with statements adapted to the five different education stakeholders. The statements address nine thematic areas, according to which the results of the survey are organised;
   – a customised evaluation of the survey results in order to identify possible gaps between the points of view of different stakeholders and to initiate a reflection upon the situation in the school.

2. The **Promising practices** are gathered from all over Europe and organised in a searchable database. In response to the individual results of the school, the ROADMAP offers a range of promising practices which can be adapted to specific contexts. The purpose of the promising practices database is to both inspire and help the school plan a whole-school strategy according to the needs identified in the context of the self-assessment process.

3. **The coordinator's package** contains a whole set of documents in order to support the implementation of the ROADMAP:

a) **Overview of the ROADMAP**
How to get a general understanding of the ROADMAP (presentation of the tools, essential definitions, steps to be taken to set up a project, etc.)

b) **How to choose a coordinator for the ROADMAP?**
A few elements to take into account when choosing the coordinator (team)

c) **Coordinator's step by step to-do list**
Things to do for a successful implementation of the ROADMAP

d) **How to engage key partners**
Ideas for introducing the ROADMAP project to the school community

e) **Model PowerPoint presentation for promotion**
Key ideas of the ROADMAP project and benefits for the school

f) **Model letter for parents**
A letter which can be adapted to your context in order to present the ROADMAP to the parents and ensure their collaboration

g) **Structure and content of the self-assessment tool**
Overview and explanation of the structure and content (areas and dimensions) of the self-assessment tool

h) **Survey statements**
List of the survey assessments for the headteacher, teachers, non-teaching staff, students and parents

i) **Customised report**
Example of a customised report issued once the online survey is finalised

j) **Promotional leaflet**
An user-friendly leaflet enabling you to present the ROADMAP to all the stakeholders (headteacher, teachers, non-teaching staff, students and parents)

k) **Behind the project**
Theory-based description of the ROADMAP and its rationale

Structure and content of the self-assessment tool

The ROADMAP is organised around 112 statements from 32 dimensions which are categorised in nine thematic areas. These areas are partially overlapping, and above all interrelated:

- *Awareness of language dimension* means putting an emphasis on language learning in general, understanding the importance of being language models (for the whole staff), and giving the students challenging activities.

- *Developing language knowledge and skills* means that the teachers focus on the specificities of language in their teaching, increase the students' awareness of spoken and written language, and improve constantly their speaking/writing and listening/reading skills.

- *Metalinguistic awareness* means taking into account the language dimension in subject teaching and exploring/learning language-related concepts, whatever the subject.

- *Role of languages in learning* means that the importance of language in subject teaching is recognised, and students' language development is promoted. It means also using the advantages of plurilingualism during lessons, bridging languages for learning, and building upon students' previous knowledge and experiences.

- *Attitudes towards languages* means valuing students' languages, and tracking their individual literacy development. Attitudes are visible when promoting plurilingualism, and can be displayed in the school environment.

- *Promoting informal language learning* means supporting the opportunities for students' informal language learning and their language development at home.

- *Language resources at school* means knowing about the languages of the students, staff and families, and knowing when and how to use them to facilitate the students' integration.

- *Orienting newcomer students and families* means supporting the newcomers by using the language resources of the school environment, including both the professional and community resources for communication. This could be, for example, producing the necessary key documents in different languages.

- *Professional development* means having the structures for planning and reviewing the teachers' competences, developing their awareness and cooperation, and creating and supporting professional learning communities inside the school. This area can, for example, include action-research, collaborative learning, etc.

Assessing the statements in the online survey

The self-assessment tool uses the following colour-coded rating system to assess the degree to which each statement is evident in the school:

- Red: *Very little evidence or none at all*. This means that the approaches and practices for supporting the students' competences in the language(s) of schooling need urgent attention.
- Orange: *Evident to a certain extent*. The approaches and practices are being developed, but will need targeted support to improve further.
- Yellow: *Evident to a satisfactory extent*. The approaches and practices have achieved a high level of implementation and need only a little additional work.
- Green: *To a great extent*. The approaches and practices are well-established and evident in the day-to-day work of the school. They can be used as an example for other schools.

The customised report

Based on the survey results, the school receives a customised report highlighting its strengths and areas to develop, both as an overview and with respect to specific language-related areas.

The results are calculated according to the mean values within the stakeholder-groups and are displayed in the form of a spidergram. It also checks for the difference of means in order to calculate a possible discrepancy between the stakeholders groups. Therefore, the more people who participate in the survey, the more the results are reliable.

This process helps starting a reflection upon the language situation within the school.

Data protection

The ROADMAP developed by the ECML seeks to comply with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR); therefore, all data entered will be strictly used for the self-assessment of your school and is for internal use. It is possible to use the real name of the school or alternatively a fictional name. The administrators or coordinators only have access to the data on the school level and not to the data of the individuals.

Accessibility of the promising practices and the videos

Some practices might be in languages that are not spoken in your local context. When you use Google Chrome as a browser, you can use the automated translation function of the browser to understand the contents of the promising practices.

In order to understand the videos you can change the subtitles in a language you understand using the automated translation function of YouTube.

After using the self-assessment tool

Sharing the results of the self-assessment tool should enable a fruitful discussion in the school. It is recommended to set up meetings, and discuss the results among all stakeholders, if possible.

Here are a few sample questions that can be used to launch discussions and help in planning strategically:

- ✓ Do your own reflections about the school language strategy match the survey results?
- ✓ If not, what are the biggest differences? What are the reasons for these differences?
- ✓ Is there something that needs to be tackled immediately?
- ✓ Which are the areas that function well? Why?
- ✓ Which are the areas that do not function so well? Why?
- ✓ What should be changed in the short-, medium- and long-term?

Following the discussions an action plan (with goals set for certain dates) should be implemented.

A second assessment is recommended, for example a year later, in order to be able to follow up the changes and become aware of the progress made by the school and its stakeholders regarding the importance given to the language(s) of schooling.