

BERLIN: CASE EXAMPLE 1

Establishing the JBAs in Berlins' schools

Berlin has succeeded in developing a new Youth Career Agency (Jugendberufsagentur or JBA for short) made up of 12 individual JBA's one in each district of the city. It was created with the objective of reducing early school leaving and followed the example of Hamburg. Implementation steps took place over a 2-year period which pressurised the partners into moving quickly. The JBA does not introduce major new support services, but instead delivers existing services through a new more integrated model which combines all the services in a one-stop shop. All of the new one-stop-shops have an initial 5-year life, by which time they will need to demonstrate that they are more effective than previous methods of support in reducing early school leaving.

The key steps to setting up the organisations took place over 2 years starting in 2014 with the publication of a State working group feasibility study. This was legislated by the Select Committee on Employment which adopted the 'Berlin Declaration). By the middle of 2014 the project agreement had been signed and the project organisation established with a state collaboration agreement. In Early 2015 the Senate adopted a resolution to set up the youth career agency and made resources available. In autumn 2015 the implementation of the state programme for career and university guidance started. Soon after local collaboration agreements were made for each of the 12 district offices. These offices then opened in late 2015 and throughout 2016 each with its own board to manage coordination between services. One of the major difficulties has been how to establish a 'single team culture' within each JBA. Each structure had grown up separately, each with its own definitions of target groups, and its own culture of work based on different professional practices. Many partners had bad experiences of working with one another so combining them in a single function was beset with difficulties. There was also a tension between having local partnerships in each district and making a harmonised offer so that services are not superior in one place over the next i.e. avoiding the postcode lottery. There is a principle that the same level of service should be available regardless of location but this has not yet been fully achieved.

The Berlin example illustrates how difficult bringing together different services under a single umbrella can be. Integrated approaches in other fields such as health and care are likely to face similar challenges of how to get each team to respect different practices and work together for a combined objective and result. One key point is that the availability of additional budget can be important in encouraging teams to work together. In this respect the Berlin Senate had a key advantage over many cities because it combines the competences of a city and of a Land. Only the federal government is above it in the vertical chain.

How did it work?

For the efforts to reduce the number of school dropouts to be successful, it is essential that all secondary schools know who their students can turn to for advice if their continuing their school career at their current school is not a viable perspective to further qualify them.

Besides the internal structures of the JBA it is of great importance that the institution as a whole is integrated into the pre-existing (school) structures so students and/or their parents can access possible support service offered by the various support services.

The vocational schools with their various options for continuing the acquisition of new competences play a key role here. To maximize the benefits for the students a new path of cooperation, an ongoing work relationship between secondary and vocational schools was strived for. A core aspect was the continual collaboration characterized by mutual trust between the persons and institutions involved. It was determined that each secondary school would get a team for career and university studies orientation (BSO-team). Each of these BSO-teams has three members: a senior member of from a vocational school, a counsellor from the Federal Employment Agency and a staff member from a secondary school. These three persons are granted a time frame allowing them to spend one day per week during the school year together. On these days they are available for answering the students' questions as well as offering activities focussed on the question "what next after finishing school?". The experts in the BSO-teams offer individual counselling but are responsible for implementing orientation regarding career and university studies into the school programs of the secondary schools.

During the course of the project „stay tuned“ it was observed that the BSO-teams have very different approaches to their work and the effectivity on the individual and structural level is hardly comparable. The networking unit of the JBS therefore decided to get in touch with all BSO-teams on an annual basis during "forum days" to develop quality standards, to communicate these quality standards and to develop standard work structures focussed on the teams' goals.

Due to the large number of involved persons four „forum days“ took place in 2018/2019. Finding a time slot during the school year turned out to be a challenge as the vacation periods as well as the exam periods and training periods were not suitable.

From the example described above we have learned how vital the intensive communication characterized by a sense of partnership between the ministerial level/network agency and the district level is. Furthermore it became evident that external moderation is very helpful for making these processes work, particularly to avoid inflexible structures and behaviour resulting in hinderances impairing the project overall.

Due to the successful moderation and the multiple opportunities to communicate with each other the "forum days" were well-received by all persons involved. Therefore the evaluation carried out by the "networking agency" involving the moderators and the steering group of the "stay tuned" project includes the agreement to repeat these "forum days" annually in a similar way. The according funds in the Berlin state budget for the years 2019/2020 were provided.

<https://sites.google.com/view/stay-tuned-report/partners/berlin>