



GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Teachers' replies to the questions

Have the training sessions during these two school years been sufficient? Explain.

Yes. The training was provided in the first year, when we needed it most, when we felt most lost. Perhaps we would have benefited from a session in the third term of the second year.

Did the training fulfil your expectations? Explain

Yes. We have left each session with new ideas and changes that we have applied on our return to the school; these have improved our way of teaching. The reflective practice has been very beneficial. The sessions have been very intense, but useful.

At first we found it difficult to see the relationship between the theories that were explained and the use of the Portfolio, but shared reflection during the session has made it clear to us. Indeed, our English classes in the upper cycle have seen a 'before' and an 'after' the training.

To what extent do you feel that the training during the two years of the project is applicable in the classroom?

- It is completely applicable; it derives not from theory but from practice.
- It requires a change of mentality, of the way of working, on the part of the teachers.
- The results have shown that a definite qualitative improvement is possible.
- We have been provided with a point of reflection between the pupils and the teacher.
- With the Portfolio, the classroom activities are more meaningful. It is a good way to incorporate self-assessment into the classroom.



What has it meant for you professionally?

- A radical change in our way of working, of presenting topics and of guiding the pupils towards the goal. A change in the teaching methods used in the classroom.
- A new view of our profession.
- An improved professional attitude in our work.
- The buzz of trying to involve the other teachers in the learning of languages.
- The realisation of the importance of sequencing teaching-learning activities in order to lead to a good final product.
- Recognition that the quality of doing, understanding and reasoning is more important than the quantity of activities.

From a professional point of view, what have you gleaned for the future?

- The principles of the Portfolio are applicable to all the languages that are studied at school as well as to other subject areas.
- A broader view of language learning. With the Portfolio everything is better linked.
- Heightened interest, resolution to continue in this way: awareness of being active learners, realising the knowledge that we have, reflecting on what we learn and why.
- I intend to prepare activities more closely related to the descriptors.

To what extent has it led to a change in the methodology of the subject area?

- Some teachers at the same level have taken an interest in the Portfolio. For the coming year, we want to set up a common project based on our pupils' experiences and knowledge. We will strive to show them that they can learn in many places and with different sorts of resources. We will try to build slowly, without any rush, making sure that the pupils learn and are conscious of what they learn.



- I have changed certain aspects of the way I work, mainly how I explain the activities to the pupils and also how I assess them. Reflective practice focuses the attention on the teaching-learning activities and outcomes and therefore entails an improvement in the teaching.
- I have introduced variation into my way of working in the upper cycle especially in relation to previous knowledge and self-assessment, which I recognise that I treated only superficially. I have also realised the importance of the pupils understanding what they do and of the gradual construction of their base in English, rather than rushing to finish the syllabus.

Have the dynamics of the school been affected?

- I would like to think so, but probably not. Changes don't come easily, but I think we will begin to notice small ones.
- Some of the other teachers have realised the need to get the pupils to reflect on what and how they learn. They have also shown an interest in learning more about the Portfolio and its usefulness. We are considering using it throughout primary school and even starting it with the infants.
- Sadly I think not. The other teachers have viewed it as a project involving me and my subject, and when I told them what it implies for language learning, they felt that if I did it in English lessons, that was enough. Perhaps I didn't know how to get the idea across to my colleagues.



REFLEXIONS

Personal and professional reflections

- The Portfolio is not exclusive to the teachers of foreign languages.
- It involves a change in the teaching approach.
- It is somewhat worrying to see that it takes longer than previously to complete a unit and, although we are convinced that it is not the aim, there is the fear of not being able to finish the textbook.
- The pupils are made more autonomous by focusing some of the activities on reflection about other cultures and by providing them with reference material where they can look for information.
- The teacher's role is clearer: to provide tools and models to help the pupils to construct their learning process. However, it is essential to guide and orientate them and – most important – to set up objectives that are attainable.
- A very specific objective focuses the teacher's task.
- It turns out to be easy to make objective what is often subjective.
- The training for this project has provided us with many novelties.
- It has been a great experiment that has had a direct influence on our teaching.
- Reflection on languages and on our day-to-day activities has been a very positive experience.
- All this enriches everybody: teachers and pupils alike.
- I have been very happy with all the colleagues on the project and with the people from the Department who have guided us. The working atmosphere has been fantastic and everybody has learnt from everybody. I feel that my work is appreciated. I have felt privileged to have received such training.



- In-service training focused on reflexive practice could help teachers to carry out their teaching role and could lead to a significant personal and professional improvement.

Reflections on the pupils

- Out of a total of 110 pupils in my school who have taken part in the Project, I have failed to interest only two.
- I managed to make the majority of my pupils – 25 out of 28 – into active learners. This was the best reward.
- This way of working relaxes the pupils and makes them aware of their own learning process.
- The pupils' final products are a good means of assessment both for the pupil and the teacher.
- The pupils' contributions were interesting and curious. I am aware that this year I have listened more to their comments and concerns than in previous years.
- The pupils liked putting the stickers against the descriptors that they had attained. Much better than a cross or tick. The reason was that they hadn't used stickers since infants school!
- When we worked on the Biography, everyone remembered trips or summer camps where there was someone who spoke differently. There was a competition to see who had met the most people who spoke another language.
- When we wrote the Passport or the Biography, even the pupils with difficulties or with little interest tried to write neatly.
- At the end of the course, the 6th year pupils were proud to take their boxes home. Some even said they would keep adding things when they were in the Secondary School. The ones in the 5th year left the boxes at school for the next course, but they weren't too happy about it.



- Some pupils commented that the fact of having to show the teacher what they were capable of doing helped them to be more realistic and to see things a bit more like the teacher sees them. Other pupils said that making them realise what they already knew and/or what they still needed to do to catch up with the more advance pupils goaded them into making an effort. Slower pupils are also capable of producing if one respects their working pace.

Things that I've done that have produced a good result

- Work with different materials to get across the meaning of new words, (picture dictionaries, reference books, readers, flashcards...).
- Work with different text types in English starting from what they already know in their own language.
- Work in small heterogeneous groups so that everyone can participate.
- Always start from a clear objective that the pupils understand.
- Ask the pupils to look at the descriptors in the Biography and encourage them to discuss which competence and which aspect of it are involved in the activity that they have done.
- Never assume that something has been done or is useless. Sometimes activities that I thought were difficult and too much for the pupils didn't actually cause them any problems.
- Always start from what they know.
- Get them to think, note down what they know, make a sketch of what they want to do, intuit, guess, etc. They love to see things work out well!
- Reflect with them on how to do activities and why; they don't usually stop to think because they're not used to that.
- Use the small white boards as a record of what they have done.
- Provide guidelines for the selection of work that they want to keep in the box.



ADAPTATIONS

- The pupils were so happy with their boxes that we decided to use them to save all the work that they considered most important. The activities that were used to indicate the descriptors were also saved in the box.
- Instead of using star-shaped stickers as had been decided in a training meeting, the pupils preferred to use green stickers for descriptors well completed, yellow stickers for those not very well completed and red ones for those that were uncompleted. The reason for the colours was that they are used quite widely in other subject areas.
- In one group we spent several days talking about who had been on a distant journey, what language they spoke there, if a relative was married to a foreigner. Where were the neighbours from? In what language did they greet each other? I also asked them what music they listen to, what they use the Internet for, which television programmes they watch, whether they use the dual system (to listen to the original language), what language they choose when they watch a DVD?

COLLEAGUES' COMMENTS

- Some colleagues have shown a certain interest and have said that foreign language teachers are privileged to receive this innovative material.
- At the beginning of the school year, I showed the box in a staff meeting, and in the third term a colleague who came into my classroom asked me what that pile of blue boxes was doing on that table.
- In a staff meeting when I told everybody about a meeting that I had attended in Barcelona, most of them appreciated the work involved. They have also shown interest in seeing the Project continue.