

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. FOREWORD

Primary Education is a stage which has specific and essential characteristics both from the educational as well as from the teaching and learning process point of view.

Primary Education is the first educational stage within **compulsory education** and aims to nurture **all kind of students**. It should fulfil particular school purposes that may not all in other alternative contexts including the family or other institutions.

The **basic objectives at this stage** are to provide all students with a useful common frame in order to develop social and discovery skills within a suitable physical and affective environment taking into account their characteristics and previous experiences.

On the other hand, the school views **parents and families as partners** in the educational process.

Like many other industrialized countries, Spain has a federal Educational system, although **Catalonia** has the responsibility for the self education in the Autonomy. The **Catalan system** reflects then, its **particular region, history and culture**. The autonomous Department of Education (**Departament d'Educació**) sets standards, draws up curricula and gives grants to educational institutions.

On this basis, I therefore introduce this project as a result of a paid study leave granted by the Catalan Department of Education established by the Royal Decree DOGC 5671 – 15th July, 2010.

Since education aims to give individuals the opportunity to develop themselves as well as to provide society with the skills it needs to evolve its best interests as main goals and, bearing in mind that Catalan's educational system is based on finding a coordinated approach to the pursuit of these sometimes conflicting goals, the project implementation that follows will achieve its ultimate aims when it is conceived as a resource which offers room for teaching reflection, updating and revising work. Therefore, the project attempts to provide the information about **what, when and how to teach and assess**. Should it be used, the development in the classroom is the responsibility of each school and each teacher.

1.2. ABOUT THE PROJECT

1.2.1. GENERAL OVERVIEW

The didactic materials have been designed to meet the educational needs of students who attend **grade 6**, that is to say, students who are in the second school year within the second Cycle of Primary Education in Catalonia.

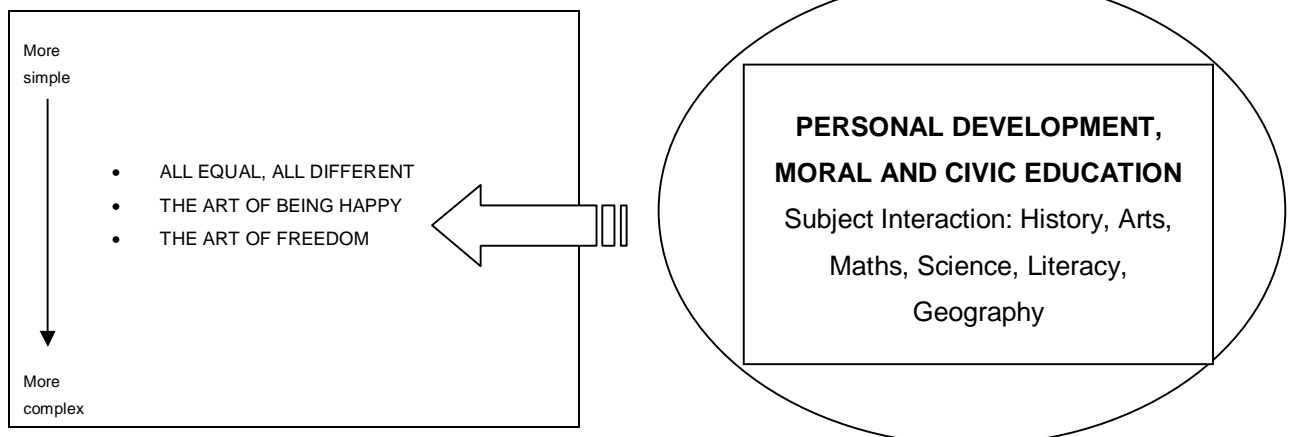
The process of learning the contents will be based on the compulsory subject **Personal Development, Moral and Civic Education** (education for citizenship) which, at this level and at the end of the school year, attempts to achieve the following outcomes:

- Learning to be and to act in an autonomous way.
- Learning to live in harmony with others
- Learning to become good citizens in a globalized world.

These goals include to know and to accept self identity, its affective possibilities and its opportunities to make relationships, and to show progress in personal autonomy and initiative. The goals develop participation and solidarity in a responsible way whereupon learners will respect the moral, social and ethical values and will get to know the value of peace and the principles of coexistence.

As far as the project is concerned, the units that follow will predominantly be focused on the achievement of the second learning outcome shown above: **learning to live in harmony with others**. In this sense, the units have been divided into three main sections all of them to be implemented during the second term of the school year (1 hour session per week, 15 sessions although the project includes over 25 hours of teaching):

- All Equal, All Different
- The Art of Being Happy
- The Art of Being Free



1.2.2. RATIONALE

Life would not be tolerable if we did not follow at least some conventions and common practices. Of course, some practices such as those labeled as matters of etiquette are sometimes mocked for being rather quaint and old-fashioned. Other conventions can easily disappear simply because cultures seem to manage reasonably well without them. One might claim that such instances of 'good manners' help keep the world moving on in a relatively civilized and bearable way. But it could be suggested that breaking some of the rules is particularly offensive. Other practices, though, are definitively more serious. The car driver who stays on one side of the road is a mere convention (in the sense that there is no logically correct side), but all car drivers need to follow the pre-established rules if many people are not to die. Social life depends on and assumes, thus, the acceptance of a complex set of conventions. Without them, humans would have to resort to negotiating every new situation and would run the risk of social break-down. So it seems reasonable to argue that **children need to learn the conventions of their social setting**. In fact, it is almost inconceivable that they could grow up in the middle of a family, within a neighborhood, within a culture without being influenced by their **values, rules and beliefs**.

After the family, the school is probably the primary context in which children are socialized. Students spend tens of thousands of hours at school during the period of development when most values and social behaviors become established. And, of course, without rules, regulations and routines, school itself would be chaotic. There are bound to be times when the values promoted by schools are questioned. There might be family practices that conflict with those of the school. Or even young people might object that the values presented to them are out-of-date and irrelevant for their generation. Overall, though, there is no inherent reason to deny that **children should be deliberately socialized into the expectations of the wider society** and that schools have a role to play in this process. So socialization is inevitable and it seems desirable in principle. Very few parents or teachers would question this, even if they reject certain forms.

However, it has commonly been argued that human nature is basically selfish and to expect human beings to be social is an uphill task. Thus, if human nature is considered to be negative, then selfishness, conflict and violence will be seen to be deeply embedded in human consciousness, and educative and other socializing influences will have no role to play in changing patterns of behaviour and social relations. Lawton and

others (2000, p. 23) refer to this open issue by concluding that there is as yet insufficient evidence to allow such statements and that human nature needs to be seen as neither good nor bad. Thus, through this project the **establishment of a healthier balance between the self centred behaviour of children and social influences** will be promoted. This means that the project materials aim to develop the emergence of young **thinking citizens** who will be less likely to seek solutions to conflicts through violence. **Understanding relativism of life** and the fact that **reality can only exist in the way every one represents it** (which is always subjective) is also a good example.

The basis for implementing a coherent rationale and for bringing the project into practice will only be meaningful if the teacher assumes the **complexity of the issue** and is placed within the **fluid concept of life**. As well, the teacher needs to conceive the use of this project as an **integral part of an entitlement to education** and from a **holistic point of view**. Accepting that there are **numerous ways of encouraging people to understand and accept views** is also necessary. Ultimately, the purpose of this project is not to indoctrinate, The consequences of indoctrination are incompatible with the **principles of open-mindedness and autonomy** and, therefore, with the way of representing these principles in terms of what Feinberg (1992, p.82) calls 'child's right to an open future'.

1.2.3. BACKGROUND

To achieve the aim which is proposed for English language learning at Primary Level, that is to gain **communicative competence**, the development of the three sections will adopt, mainly, the communicative approach. Within this general principle the whole project addresses the process of content achievement taking into consideration the following philosophy: **the language is learned when it is used**; thus, the classroom will not be a place of language analysis, but a place for using language in a creative way using **an interdisciplinary approach** and ensuring that children learn the **language through the content** and benefit from this.

The unit follows educational tendencies within the **European framework**, where **CLIL** and **interdisciplinarity** play a big role and become an important factor in the modern day classroom.

The key aspects outlined below therefore consider how the didactic materials created will go about gaining particular insights into language acquisition through interdisciplinarity and the process of learning the content:

➤ **Balance between the different disciplines.**

Interdisciplinarity complements or transcends disciplines, and its purpose is to provide the learner with integrative concepts and methods and an integrative framework. Through this project there is a balance of the different subjects involved during the process of teaching and learning.

➤ **Relation between curriculum design and curriculum application.**

The Catalan curriculum is not based on an interdisciplinary approach but it is very flexible, which means that the combination of subjects is possible as long as the general objectives are able to be achieved. This is also reflected all along the project.

➤ **The teaching content cannot be described in detail in a rigorous and logical sequence, as the subjects taught can be.**

The only remedy has been a precise definition of the objectives to be attained and an ongoing evaluation, which provides feedback for both teachers and pupils.

However, the lesson plans show exactly what the teacher can do and what the students have to have attained at the end of the studies.

➤ **Teaching Methodology and Attention to Diversity**

Everywhere in the world it is recognized that there is too wide a gap between school and real life. Experience shows that in general, the average pupil is unable to transfer what he has learned in one subject to real-life situations on his own. The pupil's approach should be specific to the situation and should lie within the operations and methods specific to his body of knowledge. Therefore, the project goes through the following methodological principles (based on Gibbons, 2008):

- The three main sections that cover the project are linked, so that new knowledge is connected to previous knowledge, prior subject knowledge is activated and the aim is to assure constructed meaningful learning.
- Comprehensible input will be provided.
- Students will be encouraged to become autonomous. Thus, they will learn to learn.
- The tasks the students are asked to undertake will be challenging and will include enough support, so that the students will be engaged in meaningful learning.
- Interaction between the teacher and the pupils as well as among the students themselves will be enhanced. In this sense, making interchanges possible will help create reflection and critical thinking.

In addition to this, **attention to diversity** is taken into account across the whole project. In fact, teachers can find these didactic programme materials especially useful when having to deal with less able children. For some children the social component of school is as important as the academic aspect. Skills such as getting along with others, making friends and developing a pleasant personality are life-long endeavours for many students. Some students have a lot of difficulty following rules, remembering them or even being aware that these exist in certain situations. Yet, these are all part of fitting into society –for all people, not just special students. Children that lack some of these social skills are often the target of children who are intolerant, who tease and who demonstrate poor social manners. But experience shows that many times this is the consequence of an emotional state. **Ultimately, the choice of behaviour will be up to the student, but creating an awareness of the skill and the opportunity to practice it are both steps towards the likelihood of the student using the skill appropriately.** There are, consequently, a few strategies that the teacher should bear in mind when bringing this project into practice:

- **Recognize any biases or stereotypes.** Try to interact with students in ways that do not manifest double standards (gender, social background...)
- **Treat each student as an individual, and respect each student for who he or she is.** Any group label subsumes a wide variety of individuals-people of different social and economic backgrounds, historical and generational experience, and levels of consciousness. Try not to project your experiences with feelings about, or expectations of an entire group onto any one student. Keep in mind, though, that group identity can be very important for some students.
- **Rectify any language patterns or case examples that exclude or demean any groups.**
- **Try to be sensitive to terminology, especially if you are part of a school where there are students from all over the world.**
- **Get a sense of how students feel about the cultural climate in your classroom.** Let students know that you want to hear from them if any aspect of the course is making them uncomfortable. During the term, you might need to invite them to write you a note, even if it is in Catalan, so they talk about how comfortable they feel participating in the class/particular session or reasons why a particular aspect becomes easy/ difficult for them.

Ultimately, the teacher should take into account the following aspects when putting the project into practice:

- **Emphasize the importance of considering different approaches and viewpoints.** One of the primary goals of education is to show students different points of view and encourage them to evaluate their own beliefs. Thus, the teacher should help students begin to appreciate the number of situations that can be understood only by comparing several interpretations, and help them appreciate how one's premises, observations, and interpretations are influenced by social identity and background.
- **Make clear that all comments are valued.** Students need to feel free to voice an opinion and empowered to defend it. Try not to allow your own difference of opinion to prevent communication and debate. Step in if some students seem to be ignoring the viewpoints of others.
- **Encourage all students to participate in class discussion.**
- **Speak up promptly if a student makes a distasteful remark even jokingly.** Do not let disparaging comments pass unnoticed. Explain why a comment is offensive or insensitive. Let your students know that racist, sexist, and other types of discriminatory remarks are unacceptable in class.

The project planning encompasses the use of ICT. However, the lesson plans do not dedicate the whole teaching process to the use of these resources. It is understood that new technologies are just another way to achieve knowledge as well as to get a better understanding of the world, but they are not unique. The user should notice that the best resource for teaching English through the use of this project will be mostly based on the teacher's enthusiasm towards educating and helping students in a **safe, tolerant and happy environment free of mistrust, racism and discrimination.**