Second medium-term programme of activities 2004-2007

Project A2 – ENSEMBLE

Whole-school language profiles and policies

Report of Central Workshop 8/2005

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The report is accessible in English and in French on the ECML website: **http://www.ecml.at**

The Executive Director of the ECML should be informed about any full or partial translation of the report and a copy of the translation should be sent to the ECML for information.

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Introduction

The Workshop was held at the ECML. Twenty-two head teachers from different states participated actively throughout the workshop. The workshop team consisted of experts from four member states and represented various areas of relevance: head teachers and their role in the management of language education across the curriculum (Elisabeth Fleischmann from Austria); minority languages in education and the development of languages and teaching material (Madlena Norberg from Germany); teacher training and research on language in education (Andrea Young from France and Antoinette Camilleri Grima from Malta). This was in line with the overall aim of the project: to support and further promote the idea that all the stakeholders have an important role in plurilingual education. The sub-title 'Ensemble' in fact denotes the need for the different partners within a school context (administrators, head teachers, teachers, parents, experts, etc.) to pull at the same rope, and to do so altogether!

Aims of the Workshop were:

- to provide a forum for participants to 'show and tell' about their experiences with whole-school language profiles and policies,

- to present the case studies and theoretical discussions surrounding the various issues,

- to disseminate the ideas and concepts contained in the Council of Europe's *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe*,

- to provide the opportunity for discussion among participants,

- to propose the setting up of network teams for a 'research and development' phase.

These aims were achieved. This was successfully managed by alternating plenary presentations with group work, by involving participants in activities like poster presentations, 'show and tell', and drama sessions. The Workshop also included presentations by the team focusing on case studies that served as real life examples of how to implement plurilingual education in diverse ways. Each presentation was followed by group work which gave participants the opportunity to develop further some 'tools' for use in schools, such as examples of processes and products for plurilingual education, examples of staff development activities, plans for managing whole school projects and material development.

Plenary Presentations

The first morning was the one most heavily loaded with plenary sessions, but it was well received since most presentations were visually aided by the use of PowerPoint, videos, and there were also two intervening 'fun' activities for team members and participants.

As a start to the workshop Susanna Slivensky, the Head of Programmes, welcomed participants to the ECML and explained the ECML's programme within the larger context of the Council of Europe. The project co-ordinator then introduced the theme of the workshop in detail and explained the whole project of which the workshop was a major constituent. She emphasised the role of participants at the workshop and invited them to commit themselves to further development after the workshop. Before lunch there was an introduction to the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe (*henceforth *The Guide)* whereby each of the team members focused on a specific aspect and amplified on its significance by relating it to day to day practice in schools.

In between the plenary sessions, there was an interlude when the team members introduced themselves using creative means such as hats, literature, pictures and music. The participants were also given space for self-introduction. This was carried out as an ice-breaking activity in the context of the workshop theme, such that each participant spoke their own mother tongue and helped their colleagues to identify the country they were representing through drawing. It was great fun to try to guess the country and the language…most of us had around sixty to eighty percent success! But we certainly learned enough about each other for the first half-day.

Dissemination of "The Guide"

One of the main aims of the Workshop was to disseminate *The Guide* among head teachers. This proved to be worthwhile since none of the participants had seen *The Guide* before coming to Graz. The co-ordinating team firmly believes that head teachers are key people in the implementation of language innovation. Being in the know-how, they can contribute by stimulating change, taking the initiative themselves.

Each participant was given a copy of *The Guide*, and on the first morning the team made a panel presentation about it. At various points during the Workshop reference was made to specific sections or pages. For example, each of the case studies presented by the team members was linked to one or more ideas in *The Guide*. The aim of these case studies, that were prepared in advance and distributed to the participants, was, in fact, to illustrate how the 'theoretical' ideas presented in *The Guide* were being put into practice in real life.

For example, Andrea Young explained how a multicultural primary school in Didenheim, France, took the initiative to invite parents to the school to share their various languages and cultures with the children. This was a very successful way of valuing all languages, and of promoting respect among the children. Madlena Norberg described the implementation of Sorbian immersion education, a minority language in a majority environment. She gave an account of the decisions involved, the preparation needed both in linguistic and pedagogic terms, and the role of applied linguistics in the development of material for using a minority language across the curriculum. Elisabeth Fleischmann gave a head teacher's perspective on the management of curricular innovation. She also showed participants around her bilingual

school in Graz which certainly gave life to theory. Antoinette Camilleri Grima focused on the importance of teacher preparation and 'inside the school' staff development.

Towards the end of the Workshop, participants were given a further opportunity to examine specific sections of *The Guide*. The results of this session were presented as drama simulations by the participants in four groups. This was a very enjoyable, and yet effective way of communicating the very basic ideas of plurilingual education as expressed in *The Guide*.

The team took the opportunity to hold a 'cultural evening' during which a quiz was given, further stimulating reflection about plurilingualism and intercultural competence. The cultural evening turned out to be one of the most successful parts of the workshop not only because participants shared food and customs, but also because it helped to break the ice completely and to help them form networks in view of the post-workshop development.

Participants' Contributions

i. Poster Presentations

Each participant was asked to bring a poster to the workshop describing their school, and focusing on one of the Workshop themes. On the first afternoon of the Workshop the participants presented their posters and there was an interactive session to summarize the information which was presented in plenary at the end of the day.

ii. Show and Tell

An encouraging number of participants gave 'show and tell' presentations which were run in two parallel sessions. Ten presentations were made in all, and most of them consisted of PowerPoint and video presentations. They also focused on one or more of the workshop themes such as staff development, bilingual education, material development, and valuing all languages.

ii. Group work

Group work was held in relation to each of the case studies presented by the team members as a way of helping participants air their views, further reflect about the topics, and produce more refined 'tools' for potential use in other schools.

Post-Workshop Development

i. Website

It is envisaged that the ECML website will post copies of all the plenary presentations and other work presented and developed during the workshop.

ii. Projects

A number of workshop participants committed themselves to networking. Together they pledged to work on a small number of projects such that they will share material and further promote plurilingualism in their school.

iii. Publication

This will consist of a short paper booklet including the more theoretical issues and models of good practice/case studies, and a CD-ROM with descriptions of all case studies produced by workshop participants and all the material created in the life of the Ensemble project.

Conclusion

The benefits reaped from this Workshop can be summarised in the following way:

1. Dissemination of the Council of Europe's policies, ECML contribution to language education, information about modern trends in the philosophy of language education.

2. Description of models of good practice in plurilingual education and the promotion of plurilingualism, provided both by team members and by participants.

3. Confirmation of the need for further dissemination among head teachers.

4. Giving life to a small number of network projects.

5. Creating and collating tools for use in other schools, with the aim of facilitating the development of plurilingualism and plurilingual education in as many schools as possible.