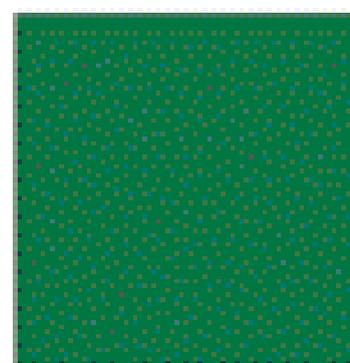
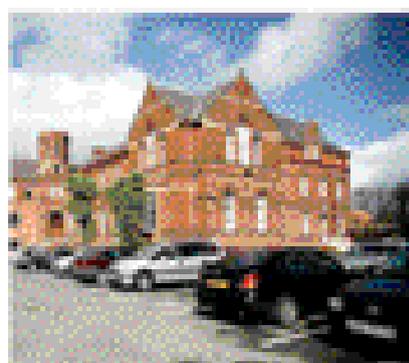
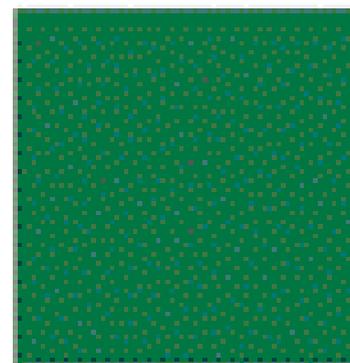
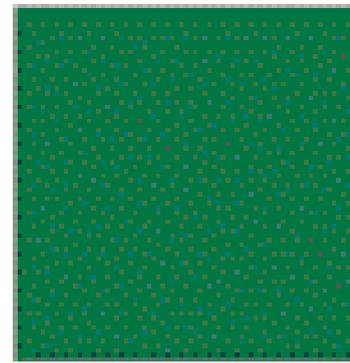
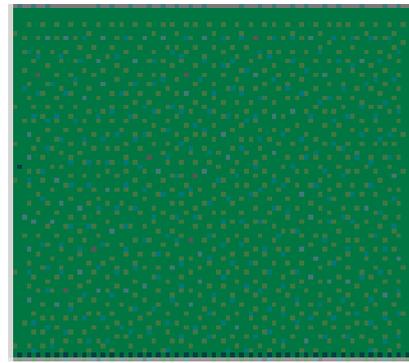
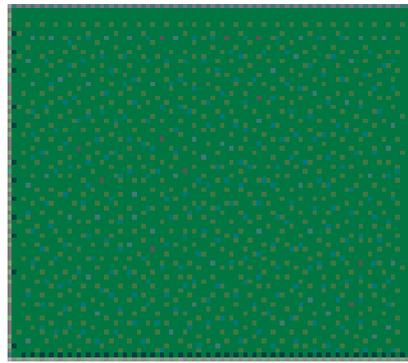




JOURNAL

of the **Comenius** Association
de l'Association





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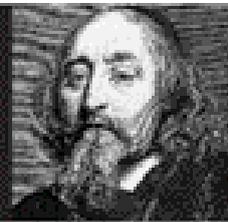
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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMENIUS ASSOCIATION LE MOT DU PRESIDENT DE L'ASSOCIATION COMENIUS



ROSICH PLA Celia

Vicepresidenta de la Asociación Comenius
FPCEE Blanquerna. Barcelona

Message from the vice-president

The academic year 2004-05 ends with a successful assessment concerning the figures and especially the quality of our exchanges. We made the evaluation during the meeting of May in which the group of the Comenius Association continued its work with enthusiasm. However, we missed our president Paul Gauthy a lot, who had recently had an operation. From here, we send our best wishes for his speedy recovery.

In this meeting we were pleased to welcome colleagues from three new institutions as possible future partners in the Association: Pädagogische Hochschule Schwäbisch Gmünd, IUFM of Melun and Timisoara Vest University. Thus Germany, France and Romania, three countries currently absent in our network, will probably be the next ones to join the Association.

One of the results of the May meeting in Klingenthal was the establishment of high-priority lines for the next years. We want to focus on teacher mobility, curriculum development and internationalisation at home

For more than fifteen years our group has been working to promote the intercultural dimension in teacher training in Europe. Although the last referendums in Europe brought clouds of certain pessimism and disappointment, we hold more than ever with the European spirit, which wants to link people by means of education and peace. In addition, the terrible attacks of 7th July in London after those of Madrid and New York, although have sunk us to great sadness, also push to us to work so that peace becomes a reality as a result of understanding between people

The philosopher Ramon Llull (1232-1314) worked a lot in Europe and the Maghreb to foment dialogue between cultures and civilizations. In the same way, Jean Amos Comenius, in the XVII century, continued in this line of social cohesion by means of dialogue between people, languages and cultures. Our association, which has the name of Comenius and the spirit of these two important people, is proud to facilitate the intercultural meeting to thousands of European university students. The future is in their hands.

Celia Rosich

Ramon Llull University
Barcelona



Saludo de la vicepresidenta

El curso académico 2004-05 acaba con un balance positivo en cuanto a las cifras y sobre todo a la calidad de nuestros intercambios. Tuvimos ocasión de evaluarlos en la reunión de mayo en Klingenthal, en el transcurso de la cual el grupo de la Asociación Comenius prosiguió con entusiasmo su trabajo. Sin embargo lamentamos la ausencia de nuestro presidente Paul Gauthy recientemente operado, a quien deseamos desde aquí una pronta recuperación.

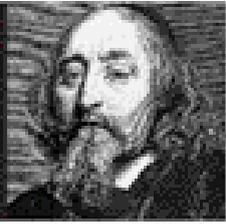
En esta reunión nos complació acoger colegas de tres nuevos centros, posibles futuros socios en la Asociación: Pädagogische Hochschule Schwäbisch Gmünd, IUFM de Melun y la Universidad de Vest de Timisoara. Así pues, Alemania, Francia y Rumania, países ausentes actualmente en nuestra red, serán probablemente los próximos a adherirse a la Asociación. Uno de los resultados del encuentro de Klingenthal fue el establecimiento de líneas prioritarias para los próximos años: Se acordó dar una especial relevancia a la movilidad de los profesores, al desarrollo de los currícula con el establecimiento de módulos comunes de formación, y a la internacionalización en el seno de las instituciones.

Desde hace más de quince años nuestro grupo viene trabajando por promover la dimensión intercultural en la formación de los maestros de Europa. A pesar de que los últimos plebiscitos hayan aportado nubes de cierto pesimismo y decepción, creemos más que nunca en el espíritu europeo que quiere unir a los pueblos mediante la educación y la paz. Además, los terribles atentados del 7 de julio en Londres después de los de Madrid y de Nueva York, aunque nos hayan sumido en una gran tristeza, nos impulsan también a trabajar más que nunca para que la paz deje de ser una utopía, y se convierta en el resultado del entendimiento entre los países del globo.

El filósofo Ramon Llull, (1232-1314) trabajó mucho en Europa y el Magreb por fomentar el diálogo entre culturas y civilizaciones. También Juan Amos Comenius, en el siglo XVII, prosiguió en esta línea de cohesión social por medio del diálogo entre las gentes, las lenguas y las culturas. Nuestra Asociación que lleva el nombre de Comenius y el espíritu de estos dos personajes, se siente orgullosa de facilitar el encuentro intercultural a miles de estudiantes universitarios de toda Europa. El futuro está en sus manos

Celia Rosich

Universidad Ramon Llull
Barcelona



Le mot de la vice-présidente

L'année 2004-05 se termine par un bilan réussi concernant les chiffres et surtout la qualité de nos échanges. Nous en avons fait l'évaluation lors de la réunion de printemps dans laquelle le groupe de l'Association Comenius a poursuivi avec enthousiasme son travail. Cependant notre président Paul Gauthy y a été absent par congé de maladie, donc il nous y a fortement manqué. D'ici on lui adresse nos meilleurs vœux de récupération rapide

A cette réunion nous avons eu le plaisir d'accueillir des collègues de trois nouveaux instituts, futurs partenaires potentiels dans l'Association : Pädagogische Hochschule Schwäbisch Gmünd, IUFM de Melun et l'université de Vest de Timisoara. Donc l'Allemagne, la France et la Roumanie, des pays absents actuellement dans notre réseau, seront sûrement les prochains à rejoindre notre Association

Un des résultats de la rencontre de Klingenthal a été l'établissement de lignes prioritaires pour les prochaines années : On a accordé donner une spéciale relevance à la mobilité des professeurs, au développement des curricula avec l'établissement de modules communs de formation, et aussi à l'internationalisation dans le sein des instituts

pessimisme et déception, nous tenons plus que jamais à l'esprit européen qui veut unir les peuples par moyen de l'éducation et de la paix. En plus, les affreux attentats du 7 juillet à Londres après ceux de Madrid et de New York, quoiqu'ils nous aient plongé dans la plus grande des afflictions, nous poussent aussi à travailler plus que jamais pour que la paix devienne pas uniquement une utopie mais le résultat de la bonne entente entre tous les pays du monde.

Le philosophe Ramon Llull, (1232-1314) a beaucoup travaillé en Europe et le Maghreb pour le dialogue entre cultures et civilisations. Semblablement Jean Amos Comenius, au XVII^{ème} siècle a poursuivi dans cette ligne de cohésion sociale par moyen du dialogue entre les gens, les langues et les cultures. Notre Association qui porte le nom de Comenius et l'esprit de ces deux personnages, est fière de faciliter la rencontre interculturelle à des milliers d'étudiants universitaires de toute l'Europe. Le futur est à eux

Celia Rosich

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The Way Forward?

At the end of our fifteenth year, the President urged us to look at the way forward, to project where should we be in another fifteen years. This exhortation must begin by examining where we are now, and what, if any, new directions we should take over the next few years.

According to Robert Burns, the Scottish Poet, the greatest gift that God can give us is to be able to see ourselves as others see us. So how are we seen by others? The Association as a network makes no real claims to be to the forefront of educational research, although one only has to look at the list of peer reviewed articles by previous contributors to this magazine to see that individuals have a proven track record in this field. Neither do we claim to be an international body for teacher education to whom others can look for advice and guidelines. There are other forums for this. Our philosophy and statutes limit what we can do. However, we do what we do, and we do it well!

The Comenius Association is a network par excellence of teacher educators which makes the movement of students and tutors under Socrates-Erasmus as seamless as possible. There is no attempt to interfere in pedagogy other than to try to ensure a multi cultural element in the education of our students. Should we go beyond this?

I put forward four areas for consideration and deliberation.

Firstly, we are faced with dealing with two initiatives in higher education; the Bologna Process, and the new Integrated Action Programme for Lifelong Learning, proposed by the European Commission which will run from 2007-13 and which will replace the existing Socrates programme.

As a result of the Bologna Declaration, a European Higher Education area will be established by 2010. The initial broad objectives of the Process are: to remove the

obstacles to the mobility of students across Europe; to enhance the attractiveness of European Higher Education worldwide; to establish a common structure of higher education systems across Europe and as a result to increase transparency and recognition of qualifications

The Commission proposals include targets for substantial increases in student and teacher mobility with the goal of reaching three million participants by 2010.

Both of these initiatives will impact on our work, and we should be beginning to address them immediately.

Secondly we have to look at the position of the journal. The structure has recently been reworked and we have to thank our former colleague Lazaro Moreno for that. Perhaps it is time to introduce an editorial board and at least have one section which is peer reviewed. With regard to the student contributions, it is gratifying to see an increase in submissions. The standard is undoubtedly high and all the articles are a great advertisement for student mobility, especially when the students are writing in a language which is not their first. Where we need to move forward is to introduce a greater level of critical reflection after the ERASMUS experience. I encourage my own students, both inward and outward to complete a structured reflective journal which is assessed and ECTS credits awarded. This I think focuses them to critically evaluate their experience abroad and help their academic and personal development.

Thirdly, the eastward expansion of Europe must be replicated in the Association. As Europe broadens its frontiers, so must we. Expansion will broaden our outlook and enable us both to learn from and teach our colleagues towards the eastern edges of the Union. Increasing membership may result in meetings only being attended by one delegate per

institution but this is a small price to pay in return for what we will get.

Fourthly, as discussed in Klingenthal, we need to ensure that the exchanges are more reciprocal. As you are well aware, my own institution has had to reduce our number of partners, due to the fact that we are taking in more students than we are sending out. We perhaps need to think more about introducing specific ERASMUS courses in English. This is happening with success in the Netherlands and Belgium.

I started with a reference to Robert Burns. I will finish with another reference, this time to Plato.

In Book VII of *The Republic*, Plato tells a story entitled "The Allegory Of The Cave." He begins the story by describing a dark underground cave where a group of people are sitting in one long row with their backs to the cave's entrance. Chained to their chairs from an early age, all the humans can see is the distant cave wall in front of them. Their view of reality is solely based upon this limited view of the cave which but is a poor copy of the real world.

We must never let ourselves be satisfied with the "safeness" of what we do. We need to accept challenges, move away from the status quo and hoist a flag which others can look up to.

I hope Association members and others enjoy reading the following articles as much as I did. There is a wealth of interesting and varied material in the following pages which should be of interest to everyone – tutors and students alike in the field of teacher education. I thank all the contributors for their support.



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Moving Forward – developing a shared framework of ideas for continuing professional development and the life-long learning of experienced teachers.

ABSTRACTS

Teacher Education both at initial and continuing professional development levels has been increasingly influenced by the concepts of globalisation and the knowledge-based economy. These ideas have presented significant challenges to those engaged with the professional training and development of teachers and trainers and now added to these concerns, is the demographic prediction of a need for one million teachers to enter (or be retained) within the workforce by 2015. So it is clear that there are significant issues that have to be addressed by all teachers and trainers, their authorities and governments.

Whilst policy initiatives within the countries of the European Union are sophisticated with regard to the recruitment of trainees to the education profession and are developing rapidly in the provision of career-focussed support for such ingénues, there is a clear need in the light of the Lisbon and Bologna agreements for attention to be focussed more particularly on those teachers in the post-initial training phase, who may be difficult to retain in the light of the complex curriculum demands of the knowledge-based economy and its subsequent bureaucratic accountability.

The loss of these teachers is more than a simple numerical loss. The sheer amount of lost experience to the teaching profession is incalculable. But what should make remaining in the teaching profession an attractive option for individuals at a time of rapid and complex change?

Not enough consideration has been given to the professional experience and expertise that teachers in the post-initial phase of career development bring to the theoretical and practical applications of pedagogy. There is a great need to consider how these experiences can be translated into activities which are useful both from a personal and career development perspective.

The establishment of a framework of teacher competencies which can be understood and shared across different members of the EU would make mobility of teaching staff much easier. The development and promotion of an evidence-based portfolio of teacher experience and expertise would allow the exchange of “value added” activities and make them more transparent with regard to credit transfer. Such sharing of information would allow teacher educators to promote teacher career development and to make mobility within the Union

a valued and accredited part of teacher’s working lives.

La formation des enseignants, qu’elle soit de base ou continue, est de plus en plus influencée par les concepts de la mondialisation et une économie qui dépend de la connaissance. Ces idées ont posé de véritables défis à ceux dont la mission est la formation et le développement des enseignants. A cela s’ajoute le fait que l’on estime à un million le nombre d’enseignants nécessaires d’ici à 2015.

Il est donc évident que les différents gouvernements aussi bien que le corps professoral sont confrontés à des défis brûlants.

Les initiatives prises par les différents pays de la Communauté Européenne sont à la hauteur du défi posé par le recrutement de nouveaux enseignants et leur développement de carrière. Néanmoins, à la lumière des accords de Lisbonne et Bologne, l’accent doit être mis sur la formation continue des enseignants qui peuvent s’avérer plus difficiles à retenir du fait de la complexité grandissante des curriculum dans nos économies basées sur la connaissance.

Le coût lié à la perte de ces enseignants ne se limite pas à une simple perte en nombre. Le coût en expertise et expérience peut en effet difficilement être évalué.

Mais dans un monde qui change rapidement, que peut-on imaginer pour retenir ces individus talentueux qui peuplent le corps professoral ?

L’on n’a pas considéré à leurs justes valeurs l’expérience professionnelle et l’expertise apportées aux domaines concrets et théoriques de la pédagogie par ceux qui sont dans une phase de développement de carrière. La possibilité de les concrétiser par des activités bénéfiques sur les plans personnel et professionnel devrait retenir toute notre attention.

L’établissement d’une « Charte Européenne des Compétences dans l’Enseignement » faciliterait grandement la mobilité des enseignants à travers la Communauté Européenne.

Un « livret des compétences » pourrait être un outil de promotion et d’échange les rendant plus transparents. Un tel partage d’information permettrait le développement de carrière et la mobilité des enseignants à travers la Communauté Européenne, outil de motivation puissant faisant partie intégrale de la vie des membres du corps professoral.

La formación de profesores, tanto a nivel de pregrado como de educación continua, ha sido progresivamente afectada por los conceptos de globalización y la economía basada en el conocimiento. Estas ideas presentan un desafío muy importante para quienes están involucrados en la preparación y formación de profesores, y se le suma a la preocupación de una predicción demográfica, que señala que se necesitaran un millón de profesores que estén (y se mantengan) en la fuerza de trabajo para el 2015. Esta claro que hay temas muy significativos que deben ser considerados y abordados por profesores, entrenadores y autoridades.

Mientras las iniciativas políticas dentro de los países de la Comunidad Europea, son



sofisticadas en cuanto al reclutamiento de formadores de educadores, y se están moviendo rápidamente hacia el desarrollo de apoyo a esta carrera, hay una clara necesidad – a la luz de los acuerdos de Lisboa y Bolonia – de poner el foco de atención a la fase post-inicial, pues quienes están ahí, pueden ser difíciles de mantener y retener por las altas demandas de currículos complejos llenos de una burocracia de información, propia de una economía basada en el conocimiento.

La pérdida de profesores es más que un simple problema de pérdida numérica. El valor de la experiencia perdida es incalculable. Que puede hacer atractiva la opción de quedarse en la docencia, en tiempos de cambios complejos y vertiginosos?

No se le ha dado el valor suficiente a la experticia y experiencia que trae un profesor en una fase de su carrera post-inicial, a la aplicación teórica y práctica de la pedagogía. Es necesario considerar como esta experiencia puede ser traducida a actividades que sean útiles desde una perspectiva de desarrollo personal y profesional.

El establecer un marco de competencias para profesores, que pueda ser entendido y compartido por los distintos miembros de la CE podría hacer más fácil la movilidad del cuerpo docente. El desarrollo y promoción de un portafolio de evidencia empírica de la experiencia del profesor permitiría el intercambio de actividades de “valor agregado” y hacer más transparente el proceso de transferencia de créditos. Compartir esa información, permitiría a los formadores de profesores, promover el desarrollo de la carrera de los profesores, y permitiría una mayor movilidad dentro de la UE, lo que pasaría a ser un aspecto valioso y acreditado en la vida laboral de los profesores.

“Globalisation” and “the knowledge-based economy” are two concepts which are becoming increasingly important in the vocabulary and culture of teacher education in all parts of the European Union and the rest of the world. Technological advances in communication and information sharing and the increased necessity and opportunities for mobility in terms of both economic and socio-cultural advancement raise both potential problems and potential solutions for all teachers and trainers.

21st Century Europe presents many challenges both for the initial training of teachers and, in particular for continuing professional development – the life-long learning of those teachers already in the workforce who sustain the young learners and citizens of the future.

Significant issues are arising throughout all countries in the European Union. Many of these have been highlighted by the Lisbon and Bologna discussions and agreements. Amongst these challenges are:-

The high number of early school leavers (retention of 18 – 24 year olds)

An inadequate supply of scientists

The need to encourage upper-secondary education

Updating of skills and competencies through life-long learning.

Acquisition of basic competencies still variable

Under-investment in human resources – particularly higher education.

Target of proficiency in at least two foreign languages to be met.

The need to attract and retain 1,000,000 teachers to the teaching profession by 2015

This last element demands critical consideration and in many ways it is the focus around which all the other areas of education concern revolve. Teachers and Trainers are pivotal in determining how educational systems evolve and how the needs of young learners can be met. They are the ones who provide information, inspiration and the capacity to facilitate the aim of the European Commission to make the European Union “the highest performing knowledge-driven economy in the world by 2010”.

Yet an increasing number of teachers in the European Union are aged 50 and above. In many countries, teaching is no longer seen as the attractive profession it once was, problems of recruiting and retention of quality teaching staff are real and severe. The estimate of one million teachers needing to be recruited or replaced in the period 2005 – 2015 is a challenge which individual countries as well as the European Commission are seeking to tackle in a variety of different ways.

Improved recruitment strategies are an immediate way in which governments are addressing this issue. Closer targeting of pedagogic activities and focused financial incentives in initial teacher training with an increased use of classroom-based practice, are showing some success in recruitment – but an increasing and critical issue is how to motivate experienced teachers to remain in the teaching profession. The loss of experience, competency and skill that goes with the withdrawal of an older teacher from the profession is one which is only recently being addressed as being both specific and significant.

“...Attracting and retaining well-qualified and motivated people in the teaching profession, which is faced with massive recruitment needs due to the ageing of the teaching population, is a short- and medium-term priority in most European countries”

The economic and social well-being of countries is now being seen as inextricably linked with the employment, training and retention of teachers and trainers and the development of initiatives to motivate and further sustain professional development.

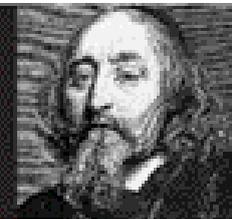
There has always been in-service development of teachers. It has always been accepted, (most often tacitly), that this is a necessary part of the professional lives of those who work in education. However until recently, the nature and extent of such life-long learning activities has never been structuralised or indeed actively encouraged.

In England over the past thirty years the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers has moved from a self-focussed, personalised agenda for learning, to one that is related to structured career progression (and pay!) and to the implementation of governmental educational objectives. Consequently there can be some tension between the meshing of “Personal” and “Professional” needs of Continuing Professional Development and the questions – “Who for?” and “What type?” and “Why?” are frequently being asked about the nationally and locally expressed need for engagement in life-long professional development.

The General Teaching Council in England (GTCE) and the (soon to be re-named) Teacher Training Agency (TTA) – two critical agencies affecting the professional lives of teachers – have been working to determine common principles of teacher’s professional development and the key competencies that teachers and trainers should be expected to exhibit over the period of, and at various stages of, their educational career. This is not an easy task and is by no means determined or finalised – particularly in the light of the emerging needs of the para-educationalists working in schools alongside teachers and trainers.

The output of these organisations in England also reflects activities that are being initiated within the European Commission.

Critical to all these ideas however is the recognition that there is a need to develop policies and initiatives that encourage more experienced teachers to remain in the profession and to “integrate them into the a dynamic of continuous professional development”



So for all teacher educators, particularly those who are working more with the experienced rather than the ingénue teacher, there are a series of challenges that need to be met which are generated by the search for the holy grail of the globalised knowledge-based economy.

General Principles for teacher and trainer education which will facilitate national policy development are being suggested by the EC Directorate for Education and Culture.

Based upon experiences common to the countries of the European Union, they include:

Teaching as an all Graduate Profession – with teachers being graduates from higher education institutions or their equivalents. (Thus reflecting the 1999 Bologna declaration with regard to the two cycle degree system and the Berlin conference of 2003 for a three cycle degree programme)

The training of teachers and trainers should be multi-disciplinary

Teaching should be a profession contextualised within life-long learning

Teaching should be a mobile profession - facilitating the development of the next generation of Europeans

Should be a profession based on partnership. Looking outwards towards all those contributing to the education of young people not simply within the orthodoxy of educational establishments.

Central to these principles is the desire to raise the status and attractiveness of the teaching profession, and to enable it to be seen by all as a key feature in the economic, cultural and social well-being of individuals and their countries. Such an enhanced view of educational professionalism allows greater potential for teacher retention and the development of increased internationalism to the curriculum.

If common principles (however skeletal) can be agreed as to what constitutes key competencies at different stages of teacher's career development (after initial training) then it must inevitably follow that the nature of teacher professionalism will become more transparent across and between establishments in different countries. If a teacher skill or competence has been identified and agreed upon (wherever that teacher has been trained) then it is feasible to determine the nature and range of the evidence that is acceptable for the exhibition of that competence in a variety of different contexts and for a variety of different career stages – thus making the importation of credit when working towards post-graduate qualifications an easier possibility.

Should a common set of approaches towards the identification of teacher and trainer expertise be developed for different stages of teachers' careers, then certain attractive propositions could flow from this and could provide an interesting focus for the Comenius Association.

A commonality of approach could be well-translated into the formation of a teacher's critical journal of professional development which could be coupled with a portfolio of evidence of the impact of their professional work (In England such a professional portfolio is becoming an essential part of teacher's career movement and progression). This Critical Journal / Portfolio might have two purposes

to help chart and make sense of teacher's professional lives to obtain recognition, acknowledgement and postgraduate credit for personal professional achievement

These two purposes could either be free-standing, with teachers choosing to focus on one or the other, or be complementary to each other. The emphasis in terms of the compilation would be on enhancing the teacher's experiences and joy in their professional expertise not an initiation of another set of hurdles which they have to meet and painfully overcome.

Outline headings (determined through consultative action and research) could provide guidelines for a commonality and systematisation of material thus promoting more effective communication of ideas and values.

"Successful" professional experiences would seem to be the obvious choice for inclusion in such journal / portfolios (and indeed for many of our teachers in England this would normally seem to be the most appropriate information for inclusion in such a recording tool) however even more important than "successful outcomes" is the inclusion of, and critical reflection on the ideas, schemes and plans which did not "work" and the analysis of why this might have been so and potential plans for the future.

Such a journal/portfolio therefore could provide an on-going record of teacher self-evaluation, achievement and professional experience which could have significant European currency. Experienced teachers could be encouraged to include a wider range of activities in terms of their continuing professional development and through the recognition of commonality and differences of experience be encouraged by liaison with others (either directly or indirectly) to value and

extend their life-long learning. The development of such a journal / portfolio structure could bring other benefits.

Mobilisation could be made more attractive for teachers if they felt that this was a valued part of their teaching development and one which could be reported and credited in their portfolio. (Particularly if this contributed towards a needed Post Graduate qualification)

Mobilisation could be made easier by a closer matching between experiences "required" from such a mobilisation event and the personal and professional needs of the participant already or currently being identified in the teacher or trainers portfolio.

The reporting, sharing and professional reflection on experiences via a critical evidence-based professional portfolio could form the basis of networked learning communities (either rooted in the face to face reality of teacher exchange or a virtual e-learning environment)

Provide a review of practical evidence that is more easily shared with the other partners involved in the education of young people (e.g. those working in classroom support in all its different forms)

Facilitate the awarding of ECTS. (It might also shift the focus from "time spent" to "effort expended" in order to achieve learning outcomes!)

Currently in England, continuing professional development for teachers and trainers includes both formal and informal activities. Kolb's work on professional educative expertise has allowed a focus on practitioner research to become increasingly prominent in various formulations.

This has led to a greater willingness amongst Universities and other Higher Education establishments to recognise the value and importance of critical articulation of such professional practice as part of Masters level work.

Kingston University School of Education's Continuing Professional Development Programme provides an illustration of this. We have incorporated such an approach into our Post Graduate Award Bearing programme. Teachers and Trainers can identify critical professional experiences drawn from their professional development portfolio and using practitioner research principles place them in a critical academic context through the submission of written work.. These experiences do not have to have taken place within the



“formal” taught setting of the University. Teacher exchanges / policy development within the school context / project management within schools / leadership activities or other practical / professional activities undertaken by the course participant can constitute the subject matter of assignments for assessment. Once the choice is made, this professional experience is contextualised with the appropriate academic literature. The University supplies tutorial support either through distance and / or on-site provision and the submitted work is assessed against appropriate Masters level criteria – central to which, in this area, are the ideas of critical reflection, creative conceptualisation and analysis of action and experimentation and problem-finding. (An increasingly key feature of such identified reporting relates to the ways in which the analysis of and reflection on the chosen professional activities has influenced and impacted upon the candidate’s own “personal learning” life and that of the learning experiences of the young people with whom they work.

Developed as a response to the escalating and complex time pressures on teachers in their everyday lives, this approach to post-graduate professional development in the context of the two-degree cycle, has become a popular vehicle for educational professionals in the area, to extend their academic skills whilst rooting them firmly in their professional practice and values.

In conclusion it is clear that the continuing professional development of teachers within Europe and beyond requires shared understandings, shared approaches and shared objectives if Europe is to maximise its contributions to the knowledge-based economy.

Mobilisation of teachers and trainers provides one of the major vehicles for such sharing, but to maximise these professional experiences some common framework of recording and expressing these shared ideas is needed. There is a clear developmental role here for organisations such as the Comenius Association to take a lead in promoting

internationalism and life-long learning for all educational professionals (of whatever level of operation, institution or country)

The demands of globalisation and a knowledge-based society require many things which can be greatly enhanced by:

The generation of a common format (journal / portfolio) for charting and recording the professional lives of educationalists – one which can be acknowledged and regarded as transparent by participant communities. This could also take the form of an e-portfolio.

and also arising from this,

The generation and sustaining of inclusive learning communities of professional educationalists and their partners. This may be in the form of “virtual” or “real” communities, or combinations of both and which may be rooted in the experiences, ideas and values identified in a journal / portfolio charting of activity:

Initiatives such as these if arising from well established communities of national co-operation such as the Comenius Association could well change the rhetoric of “the European teacher” to a highly valued reality.

Commission Staff working paper - “*Progress towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training*”; Brussels; March 2005

Draft Common European Principles for teacher and Trainer Competencies and Qualifications - 03-02-05 European Commission

Detailed work Programme – European Commission

Progress towards the Lisbon Objectives Universities Council for the Education of Teachers - May 2004

As above



ROSICH PLA Celia

Vicepresidenta de la Asociación Comenius
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Comenius y las lenguas

The Comenius Association, after sixteen years of intense intercultural activity in the European university field, reflects on its linguistic policy and proposes that students and teachers participating in exchange programmes should have an easy access, through the webpage of the Association, to the new on-line tools to learn languages.

The Utopian desire of having a shared language, without renouncing to the richness of preserving the different languages in the world, has been a constant dream throughout the history of mankind. And even John Amos Comenius himself shared this desire in the 17th century. He promoted Latin teaching, convinced as he was that the knowledge of Latin would make it easier to study European culture and to lead peoples closer. Comenius was sure that there was a more efficient way than the one used then to teach that language. He backed the "natural method," that is, learning about things, not just grammar. To this end, he wrote *Janua Linguarum Reserata* (Gate of Tongues Unlocked), a textbook that described, in Latin and in Czech, a set of interesting topics; students could compare both languages and associate the written text with images. The book was soon well-known in all Europe and was translated into sixteen European and Eastern languages.

The analogy between the role of Latin in the past and that of American-English at present is obvious. As Esperanto has not managed to be a universal language, evidence suggests that English is going to replace it as lingua franca of scientific, business and virtual communication in the world, similarly to the role of Latin in its time. Nevertheless, within the group of most spoken languages, Chinese is still the most widespread language in the world nowadays in number of speakers: 1,200 million, against 478 million speakers of English. They are followed by Hindu, with 437, Spanish comes fourth with 392, Russian (284), and Arabic (225). Portuguese comes seventh with 184, followed by French with 125 million speakers. All these data are according to the UNESCO, which observes that data on speakers vary very much depending on the recount methods.

The Comenius Association has, then, among its members, four of the most spoken languages in the world: English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French, in this order. However, we do not intend to classify languages either according to their number of speakers, or their business use, or their greater or lesser presence in Internet. There is no such a thing as a first-class or second-class language. Each language is valuable in itself, as every human being is unrepeatable and with equal dignity to any other. We consider that all languages have universal value, because every language implies a certain vision of the world, a particular way of thinking, creating, communicating, and assessing life and existence. Only one language would lead us to a unique thought, and would move us away from the intercultural richness that plurilingualism involves.

The member institutions of the Comenius Association share the idea and desire of promoting multilingualism, which they value as a great cultural richness. The ambition of these universities is to offer exchange programmes where the language used is that of the host country. Therefore, they would like to have foreign students with a sufficient level of linguistic competence that allowed them to follow studies in the vernacular language. However, in the practice of international exchange, this desire often clashes with the reality that some students and teachers do not know the language of the host country. For this reason, it is more and more frequent to opt to establish a unique language of communication, which is usually English. The number of institutions from non-English-speaking countries that offer Erasmus exchange programmes and courses, Intensive Programmes, thematic modules and the traditional Comenius short exchanges exclusively in English, is increasing.

Although the formula All Erasmus courses in English has some practical and organisational advantages, it also implies the paradox that it limits foreign students to a unique multicultural group, with students from different countries, but monolingual group, which tends to be

logically closed, with the danger that the young students are isolated, as in a ghetto, and do not open to the society and culture of the host country. Consequently, the objectives of interculturality proposed by exchange programmes, with the aim of approaching and getting to know the society, language and culture of the host country, can hardly be reached.

Taking advantage of Internet

Since the beginning, the institutions in the Comenius Association have promoted and facilitated the learning of languages for the exchanges. Now, apart from still offering the traditional language courses in classrooms, we can go a little bit further as we have that powerful means called Internet at our disposal, non-existent a few years ago. With regard to language teaching, there are already different on-line methods to learn languages, designed by experts, with e-learning programs where native teachers guide students in their interactive learning process.

The proposal to enhance the learning of languages on-line from the Comenius Association would represent to use e-learning methods as a supplementary support to linguistic preparation courses in classrooms that students and teachers carry out in their country of origin before going on the exchange programme. The idea is that every institution, or every country, would include in their website within the Comenius Association the necessary links so that students and teachers could have easy access to the best language e-learning programmes and use them as a preparation for their exchange stays.

Old Europe has a rich cultural and linguistic heritage that has to be protected, cared for and preserved. The spirit of Comenius and the philosophy of the Association named after him share this intercultural feeling. The big challenge for educators in the 21st century is to put this into practice.



La Asociación Comenius, con dieciséis años de intensa actividad intercultural en el ámbito universitario europeo, reflexiona sobre su política lingüística y propone que estudiantes y profesores de programas de movilidad puedan acceder fácilmente, a través de la página web de la Asociación, a los nuevos medios on-line de aprendizaje de idiomas.

“Os convoco para amar el lenguaje y para amar y defender las lenguas, su unidad profunda y el abanico magnífico de su diversidad. Porque tal vez no somos sino lenguas y, cuando se pierde una de ellas, se pierde una parte esencial de nosotros mismos. Y cuando alguien maniobra para borrar todas las lenguas excepto la suya, busca convertirnos en menos humanos y se encamina directamente, por un camino sin retorno, hacia el mundo inhumano del silencio.”

Jesús Tusón, profesor de la Universidad de Barcelona. El lujo del lenguaje, Barcelona-Paidós, 1993, 2ª ed., prólogo

El fascinante tema del desarrollo de las lenguas en nuestro planeta, pero también el de la falta de entendimiento, la división y los conflictos entre humanos por causa de las barreras lingüísticas, aparece ya en el relato del Génesis sobre Babel, cuya torre fue inmortalizada por el genial pintor flamenco del siglo XVI Pieter Broeghel. La historia narra que el castigo divino consistió en crear confusión lingüística y dispersión a los habitantes de la torre. Sin embargo, gracias a ello, la Tierra cuenta en la actualidad con un inestimable patrimonio lingüístico de cinco mil lenguas diferentes, a pesar de que otras miles han desaparecido en los últimos siglos.

El deseo utópico de poseer un lenguaje compartido, sin renunciar a la gran riqueza que supone preservar las diferentes lenguas del mundo, ha sido un sueño constante a lo largo de la historia de la humanidad. El propio Juan Amós Comenius compartió este deseo en pleno siglo XVII y por este motivo promovió la enseñanza del latín, convencido de que su conocimiento haría más asequible el estudio de la cultura europea y el acercamiento entre los pueblos. Comenius tenía la certeza de que existía un modo más eficaz que el usado entonces en la enseñanza de esta lengua.

Defendía el “método natural”, es decir, aprender sobre las cosas, no sólo gramática. A este fin, escribió *Janua Linguarum Reserata* (La puerta de las lenguas abierta), un manual que describía, en latín y en checo, una serie de temas interesantes de modo que los alumnos podían comparar las dos lenguas y asociar el texto escrito con las imágenes. El libro pronto adquirió fama en toda Europa y fue traducido a dieciséis lenguas europeas y orientales.

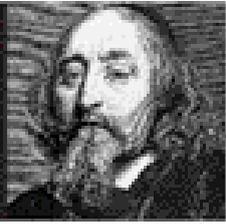
La analogía entre el papel jugado por el latín en tiempos pasados y el del angloamericano en la actualidad resulta evidente. Ya que el esperanto no ha alcanzado estatus de lengua universal, todos los indicios apuntan a que el inglés va a ocupar su lugar como lengua franca de comunicación científica, comercial y virtual en el mundo, un papel similar al que el latín desempeñó en su época. Sin embargo, en el conjunto de las lenguas más habladas, en la actualidad el idioma chino sigue siendo todavía el primero del mundo en número de hablantes: 1.200 millones, frente a los 478 millones que hablan el inglés y los 437 del hindú; el español ocupa el cuarto lugar con 392 y le siguen el ruso (284) y el árabe (225). En séptimo lugar aparece el portugués con 184, seguido del francés con 125 millones. Todo ello según datos de la UNESCO, que advierte que las cifras sobre hablantes varían mucho según cuál sea el método de recuento.

Así pues, la Asociación Comenius cuenta entre sus socios con cuatro de los idiomas más hablados del mundo: inglés, español, portugués y francés, por este orden. Sin embargo, no es nuestra intención clasificar las lenguas en función del número de sus hablantes, ni por su uso comercial, ni tampoco por su mayor o menor presencia en Internet. No hay lenguas de primera ni de segunda categoría. Cada lengua tiene valor por sí misma, de igual forma que cada ser humano es irreplicable, e igual en dignidad a cualquier otro. Consideramos que todas las lenguas tienen valor universal porque cada una de ellas implica una determinada visión del mundo, una peculiar manera de pensar, de crear, de comunicar, de valorar la vida y la existencia. Una única lengua nos llevaría a un pensamiento único, y nos alejaría

de la riqueza intercultural que conlleva el plurilingüismo.

Los expertos calculan que actualmente se hablan unas cinco mil lenguas diferentes en el mundo, la mitad de las que existían hace pocos siglos. La exposición titulada *Voces* que se presentó en el Forum de las Culturas 2004 de Barcelona mostraba gráficamente la diversidad lingüística del planeta, valorada como un tesoro universal que es preciso conservar a toda costa. Y, sin embargo, de la misma manera que cada año se extinguen especies de fauna y flora en todo el mundo, lamentablemente desaparecen también muchas lenguas. Diversos autores se duelen de este hecho, entre ellos George Steiner, quien a lo largo de toda su obra no ha cesado de alertar sobre la urgencia de preservar las lenguas. En uno de sus últimos libros, *La idea de Europa*, insiste en el hecho de que “Europa, sin duda, morirá si no lucha por sus lenguas, sus tradiciones locales y sus autonomías sociales. Si olvida que Dios está en los detalles”.

Las instituciones socias de la Asociación Comenius comparten la idea y el deseo de promover el multilingüismo, que valoran como una gran riqueza cultural. La aspiración de dichas universidades es ofrecer programas de intercambio en los que la lengua vehicular sea la del país que acoge. Por consiguiente, desearían recibir a los estudiantes extranjeros con un nivel de competencia lingüística suficiente para poder seguir la enseñanza en la lengua propia del país. Sin embargo, en la práctica de la movilidad internacional, ya sea en intercambios largos Erasmus o en moviidades más cortas, este deseo choca a menudo con la realidad de que algunos estudiantes y profesores no conocen el idioma del país receptor. Por esta razón y cada vez con más frecuencia, se opta por establecer una única lengua de comunicación, que suele ser el inglés. Y, como resultado, aumenta continuamente el número de instituciones de países no anglófonos cuyos programas y cursos de intercambio Erasmus, programas intensivos, módulos temáticos y tradicionales intercambios cortos



Comenius se imparten única y exclusivamente en lengua inglesa.

Si bien la fórmula All Erasmus courses in English comporta ventajas prácticas y organizativas, restringe también, paradójicamente, la actuación de los estudiantes extranjeros al marco de un único grupo multicultural, ya que incluye a estudiantes de diversos países, pero, a la vez, monolingüístico, por lo que tiende por lógica natural a cerrarse en sí mismo, con el consiguiente peligro de que los jóvenes queden aislados, como en un gueto, y no se abran a la sociedad y a la cultura del país de acogida. Como consecuencia, resulta difícil alcanzar los objetivos de interculturalidad propuestos por los programas de intercambio consistentes en un acercamiento y conocimiento de la sociedad, la lengua y la cultura de la sociedad receptora.

Aprovechar las ventajas de Internet

Desde sus inicios, las instituciones de la Asociación Comenius han promovido y facilitado el aprendizaje de los idiomas para los intercambios. Por una parte, se han ofrecido cursos de diversas lenguas a los estudiantes que preparaban sus estancias en el extranjero; por otra, en las universidades receptoras se han organizado programas lingüísticos de refuerzo para estudiantes Erasmus incoming. Estructurados a veces con un formato de cursos intensivos para estudiantes recién llegados, estos módulos han sido muy bien valorados tanto por parte de los estudiantes como por las propias instituciones y sus profesores.

En la actualidad, además de continuar ofreciendo los tradicionales cursos presenciales de lengua, se dispone ya del poderoso medio que llamamos Internet, inexistente hace pocos años y que constituye un gran avance. La red ofrece hoy oportunidades excepcionales de acceso a la información, el conocimiento y, también, el aprendizaje de idiomas; oportunidades inimaginables hasta hace poco y

cuyo desarrollo parece no tener límites. Respecto a la enseñanza de lenguas, existen ya en la red distintos métodos on-line para aprender idiomas, diseñados por expertos y con programas e-learning, en los que colaboran profesores nativos, que guían a los estudiantes en su aprendizaje interactivo. Por otra parte, los estudiantes pueden acceder a través de la red a otros soportes para complementar el aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera: diccionarios on-line, periódicos, artículos, medios audiovisuales de todo tipo, correo electrónico, chats, foros, etc.

La propuesta para favorecer el aprendizaje de idiomas on-line en el seno de la Asociación Comenius consiste en el uso de los métodos e-learning como refuerzo complementario de los cursos presenciales de preparación lingüística que estudiantes y profesores realizan en su propio país antes de desplazarse. Se trataría de que cada institución, o cada país, insertara, en su propio sitio web de la Asociación Comenius, los enlaces necesarios para que estudiantes y profesores pudieran acceder fácilmente a los mejores programas e-learning de idiomas y utilizarlos como preparación de sus estancias de movilidad.

He aquí, a modo de ejemplo, algunos enlaces que permiten acceder a métodos on-line para aprender las lenguas española y catalana:

www.auladiez.com

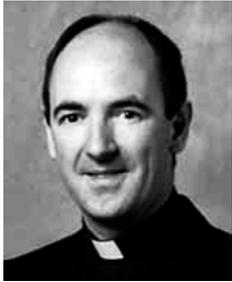
www.elcastellano.org/gramatic.html

www.rae.es

www.ave.cervantes.es

www.intercat.gencat.net

La vieja Europa posee un rico patrimonio cultural y lingüístico, que se ha propuesto proteger, cuidar y conservar. El espíritu de Comenius y la filosofía de la Asociación que lleva su nombre participan de este sentir intercultural. El gran reto para los educadores del siglo XXI es llevarlo a la práctica.



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CRISIS IN EUROPE? A MOMENT FOR DECISION

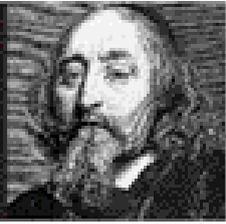
The European Union faces a moment of crisis. The events of May and June 2005 have focused attention on a range of critical issues, and the decisions or actions taken by the leaders of the Union in the coming months will, in the opinion of many commentators, determine the future direction and development of Europe. Declarations of this type have become commonplace in the media, so common that we need to be suspicious of them. They are designed to startle, to unsettle and to create a sense of impending panic. These are emotions that we associate with a crisis. They are emotions that do not facilitate clear thinking, however. So to begin, let us remember what a crisis really is.

The Greek word, which lies behind 'crisis', derives from the verb *krinein*, 'to judge'. A crisis, properly speaking, is a moment of judgement or decision-making. It is a moment in the life of an individual or community when our ability to shape our destiny becomes much more apparent. We are faced with choices and are asked to decide. Or we face the consequences of past actions and are asked to pass judgement, and in doing so we will close a chapter of our history and simultaneously commence a new one. A crisis is not a moment of disaster but an opportunity to exercise our freedom to choose, to act and to shape our history. A crisis is to be welcomed as an opportunity to be truly human, and to create a more humane society. The present crisis for the European Union should be considered not in a panic but with enthusiasm and hope.

I do not intend to discuss the wider issues of EU politics and policies. My aim in this article is to suggest that the wider context in Europe calls the members of Association COMENIUS to seize the moment as an opportunity to renew the Association's sense of purpose and direction. I would suggest that the wider context provides a useful horizon against which we can interpret our own development through crises.

Like the European Union, the Association has expanded rapidly by enthusiastically seeking new members across the full geographical range of what we call Europe. As a result the Association has changed. Its biannual meetings are no longer small, intimate gatherings where differences in language and custom were not obstacles to holding efficient business meetings. Everything happens on a larger scale now, and with that increase, there has been fragmentation. There are more languages in which to carry on simultaneous discussion. There are many more types of activity, each of which requires a separate co-ordinating group to meet and plan actions. There are older and newer members, and dare one say that the Association now has its inner and outer circles with different degrees of co-operation and harmonization. In so many ways, the problems of enlargement which we see at the level of the European Union are being experienced within the Association at institutional and personal levels also. And like the European Union, the Association needs to review its procedures to ensure smoother and more efficient business.

But I do not wish to focus our attention on matters of business alone. It is true that the Association will flourish if it is efficient and productive. If it is not effective, then it will not conduct itself well and provide the extra dimensions for teacher education which is its primary rationale. The function of the Association is a key matter. The Association was founded by a number of institutions coming together to provide opportunities to develop the intercultural dimension of teacher education in ways that we could not do alone, or through other channels. That is our function but those actions arise from a prior set of beliefs and values. Firstly, we believe that intercultural education is essential within the contemporary European classroom, no matter which country we come from. Secondly, we believe that teacher education should have an intercultural dimension. Thirdly, we believe that 'one learns what one does' and so we seek to provide experiences for students and tutors to engage in intercultural education and practice. These beliefs are not idealistic but are made concrete in our European setting. We seek to encourage what we call a European spirit – tolerance of others, openness to different cultures and experiences, celebration of diversity, respect for democracy, willingness to sacrifice self-interest for the common good, and so on. It is at the fundamental level of beliefs and values that the Association finds its distinctive identity and utility for the member institutions.



The European Union is facing a moment of decision and that decision has been confused in its presentation and in its essential nature. Debates about the budget, enlargement, voting procedures and the composition of the institutions of the Union have clouded the key issues. The complexity of the new treaty or constitution does not help. The people of Europe are being asked to consider the future direction of this European project. They are faced with a decision about the values that underlie this project. In a recent address to the Ambassador of Macedonia to the Holy See, Pope Benedict XIII gave his support for the expansion of the European Union, saying, "Europe needs the Balkan nations, and they need Europe". But he warned against a merely functional or economic vision of Europe and, echoing the words of Pope John Paul II, he stated that it is "of capital importance to remember that it will lack substance if it is reduced to merely geographic and economic dimensions. Rather, the union must consist above all in an agreement about values which find expression in its law and in its life." He went on to mention explicitly values such as the transcendent dignity of the human person and the values of reason, freedom, democracy and the constitutional state.

If Europe is in danger of losing its soul through an over-exclusive focus on matters of economy and administration, the Association COMENIUS can learn from its particular crisis. The Association has much to offer its members and their tutors and students. But it will do so if it rediscovers its soul. It must reaffirm its core values and ensure that these are clearly expressed and incorporated into its activities, both at meetings of the representatives and in separate actions which take place under the aegis of the Association. A shared vision and sense of identity will become the bed-rock on which the activities of the Association are based. The distinctive value of belonging to the Association will become clearer and more attractive to existing and prospective members.

Every moment of crisis is a moment of opportunity. The present moment opens more clearly to past and future, so that we can retrieve and renew what is precious in our history, and can then begin the process of shaping that history towards a better, more human future for all. A crisis is a moment of choice, and that can instil panic and fear of making the wrong choice. But, to the extent that we are rooted in our history and its values that have served us well, we are equipped to make a fruitful choice for the future.



Maité Cabié

Professeur de Sciences de la Religion à la Faculté

PCEE

Blanquerna.

Antenne GERFEC, Espagne

Nouvelles sorties sur l'autoroute Comenius, construite à partir de nos petites routes nationales...

Paul Anthony invites us to write some article about « new movements/trends for the Association” First I thought I had nothing to do with this, now .But then I realised that I have a lot to tell you after having shared so rich and friendly time with all of you. We spent some many hours preparing our students’ programs and exchanges! But I can’t forget the nice time we had singing, drinking, dancing, going to excursions... Really all build Europe and feel friends all together. Thank you for all these moments this help to spent with you, thank you for your friendship. We formed a long network and I still feel member of the association for the lovely souvenirs I have. Thank you for everything! Keep this network strong, this is the new trends I wish for our Association.

Comme à vous tous, P. Anthony m’a rappelé à l’ordre pour envoyer des articles pour le journal. Tout d’abord j’ai pensé que ça ne me regardait plus, mais tout de même je reconnais que je suis partie « a la francesa !!! » comme disent les espagnols, et il est vrai que j’ai « filé à l’anglaise » comme nous disons en France. (C’est toujours le voisin qui prend !!!) Alors ce mot est pour vous tous pour vous dire que je garde un souvenir sensas de nos réunions, aussi bien à Klingenthal que dans les diverses Facultés ou Ecoles qui nous ont accueillis et je me suis énormément enrichie auprès de vous tous.

Nous avons travaillé dur, c’est vrai, je me rappelle des tableaux sur du papier d’emballage que nous faisons pour les échanges avec des colonnes de toutes les couleurs ... et des noms, des chiffres, des points d’interrogation... !!! Uff. Heureusement après il y avait l’apéritif !!! Raoul menait ça de main de maître, et tous, armés de ciseaux, colle, feutres, crayons, gommes... nous partions à l’attaque. Plus tard le système a changé et nous allions à la chasse pour « marchander » les rencontres de nos étudiants... Qui se rappelle les heures supplémentaires, après souper, au fond de la cave sous le régime de Joan Maria !!!! A l’heure espagnole !!! Heureusement qu’après il y avait la discothèque en face pour certains d’entre nous ... et ça y allait !!! Ce n’étaient pas les plus jeunes les plus mordus !!! Puis les

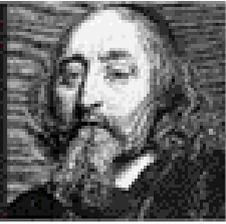
visites des caves, organisées, ou non, mais on s’échappait... De temps en temps quelqu’un manquait à l’appel, mais l’Alsace est si belle et nous offre un si bon vin que ce serait dommage de ne pas en profiter. Vous rappelez-vous la promenade que nous avons fait un après midi, car Madame nous avait invité à profiter un peu plus de son accueil. Ce jour là le groupe hispanique a eu des problèmes pour acheter du vin, notre caractère si chaud choquait les gens et ils ne voulaient plus nous vendre, nos fous rire les déroutaient... et le souper au restaurant d’Aubernay ! Et les chauffeurs belges toujours si dévoués pour nous amener à St Odile ou à Aubernay pour faire nos achats..

Mais puisque le thème de la revue est « New moviments/trends for the Association », oui, ouvrez de nouvelles bretelles à l’autoroute mais surtout je vous conseille de ne pas abandonner ce qui a été construit avant et les soirées dans la cave et les soupers européens. C’est là que nous faisons l’Europe et nous faisons de l’interculturel... et surtout nous construisons une chaîne d’amitié qui dépasse toutes les frontières et en dit plus long que tous les discours que nous pouvons prononcer, écouter ou publier ! Bien que je ne vienne plus aux réunions je ne me suis pas détachée de cette chaîne et je n’ai pas l’idée de le faire. Les liens d’amitié sont trop solides .

Merci pour ces moments, merci pour l’amitié et merci pour nos jeunes à qui nous voudrions communiquer ces valeurs qui sont pour nous si importantes.

Pour moi une nouvelle étape commencera l’an prochain, car je prendrai ma retraite. Je continuerai encore avec le GERFEC pour former une équipe en Espagne. Hé Valencia, Madrid, « cuento con vosotros ! » Et je continuerai travaillant dans la recherche pour l’interculturel et l’interreligieux !

Bien affectueusement, je vous embrasse,
Maité



Wim Friebe
Treasurer



Aspects of the Future of the Comenius Association

Experiences in Belfast

This has been the third consecutive year in which it was my honour to act as External Examiner for the European Outreach Modules of Saint Mary's University College, belonging to the Queen's University of Belfast and a long-time member of the Comenius Association. It is my duty to inspect the procedures that accompany the Erasmus periods of study for students at the Faculty of Education and those at the Faculty of Liberal Arts. The students at these faculties aim to become a Bachelor of Education (BEd) and a Bachelor of Arts (BA) respectively.

My work concerns examining the documents that are needed, for example: Application Forms, Learning Agreements, and Transcripts of Records. Are they available and have they been used correctly? But I also have to look at other things, like papers about School Based Work and Work Based Learning. So far, the International Board, consisting of Paul Anthony, Feidhlimidh Magennis, and Dermot McCartan, have come up with something to improve student evaluation every year. This year, for example, the Reflective Journal, in which students look back on their studies abroad, has been introduced. This yields intelligent, carefully considered work; and because it is also an excellent evaluation tool for the faculty, it works both ways.

My activities result in a meeting with the Internal Examiners, the aforementioned International Board. And that is the reason for me to start this article, in which several aspects of the Comenius Association will be held up to the light, with my experiences in Belfast.

Every single year a striking fact re-emerges. The institutes at which students from Belfast carry out their studies abroad, still do not apply the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in an unambiguous way; if they use it at all, that is. And yet...the majority of them are members of our very own Comenius Association! How many times have we all discussed this before?

Granted, in most of the cases there are no problems, but how can it be that something still does go wrong from time to time? It can be annoying to the faculty, but it can also be a problem for students, because results cannot easily be converted to the credit system of the university, the so-called Queen University Belfast Marks (QUBMs). A situation in which a student receives lower grades than he or she deserves can arise.

Therefore, I raise the question of what goes wrong. There are three situations that can cause problems:

The institutes do not return the documents mentioned above, or do not do so in time. To minimise this problem I do not travel to Belfast until the second half of June. One could say that by then the partner institutes must have had enough time to finish their administrations, as the students have already returned to Belfast mid-April. It is self evident that students can be put at a severe disadvantage by differences in credit distribution. How, for instance, can it be that one institute grants a maximum of fifteen credits for a trimester that lasts fifteen weeks, when another institute employs a maximum of twenty, and yet another sets the maximum at more than twenty-five? How is that possible when all those institutes use the ECTS? According to the ECTS the workload of one week of study should be 1.5 credits. A student who returns to Belfast with less than twenty-two credits after an exchange of fifteen weeks has to take part in additional studies. However, when a student has too little credits because he or she could not acquire enough points at the guest institute, and not because of study failure, that is at the very least peculiar. In such a case the student is put at a disadvantage compared to students who visited other institutes. Because some institutes do not grant grades alongside the credits, a situation of legal inequality arises. Logically, the Belfast University value grades highly,

mainly because it reflects the quality of a student's work. For some of the partner institutes, however, this is not as logical as it seems. These are institutes from countries in which usually only a Pass or Fail mark is indicated in the credits system. However, when institutes from those countries apply the ECTS they assume the responsibility for evaluating students in grades as well as credits by definition. Credits and grades are both inextricably bound up with the ECTS. The guest institutes, therefore, have to adapt their assessment procedure for foreign students only, while retaining their Pass or Fail evaluation of regular students.

I assume that other members of the association are confronted with similar problems, and it would therefore be useful to devote extra attention to these difficulties during one of our meetings.

Familiarity with the Comenius Association

The Comenius Association currently has a membership of twenty-one European institutes. Naturally, they know the association well, but how well do non-members know it? I assume National Agencies, schools where foreign students go for their teaching practice, management teams of faculties and departments concerned, and the executive boards of our institutes are all familiar with it. However, when you try finding the Comenius Association on the Internet simply by typing in "Comenius" or even "Association Comenius" at a search engine, you will find all those beautiful programs that Brussels named "Comenius," but you will not be referred to our own association. That does not happen until you use HYPERLINK "<http://www.associationcomenius.org>" as a search term. And when you go to Brussels and visit the offices that manage the Socrates grants, it is very improbable they know the Comenius Association.

And yet we all would like the



association to become better known by outsiders. Not because we have to have many new partner institutes; that is not our policy. We want to remain a small, clearly arranged association, which ensures member's interests are attended to, mainly through mutual personal contact. Then why do we want to become better known? That question, I think, is hard to answer.

Being better able to apply for funding once people are familiar with the association would warrant an answer, but have we tried those funds? We still have not applied for a Comenius 2.1, and although we have been philosophising about cooperation for an Erasmus Mundus, a lot of work still has to be done before that happens. Many of our partner institutes have succeeded at acquiring money to fund their Intensive Programmes and Erasmus Mobility. However, the applications are not submitted on behalf of the association, but instead on behalf of the institutes themselves. If we were to add a short explanation of the activities of our association to every application submitted, we would automatically generate more familiarity.

I cannot really think of many other reasons to increase familiarity with the association, because it is not flatter our egos and to show others how important we think we are, is it? Perhaps I do not see this the right way at all. Would it not be a good idea to ask ourselves thoroughly why we want to achieve more familiarity and with whom? It appears sensible to me to include the Journal of the Comenius Association in this as a means of public relations. Through the years its style, but especially its content have changed dramatically. To whom do we want to send it every year in order to make clearer what inspires our organisation?

Growth of the Association

It may seem inconsistent of me to start writing about growth right after I have mentioned that we want to remain a relatively small association with a clear arrangement. However, we have been discussing expansion, be it on a small scale. There is a candidate member from Middle-Europe, the institute from Timisoara in Rumania, about which we are very pleased. There is another candidate member from France, the

IUFM Créteil, site de Melun, which is a welcome enrichment of our association, especially after we have unfortunately lost the small, but enthusiastic Centres de Formation Pédagogiques. And we really hope to finally be able to include Germany in the form of the Pädagogische Hochschule from Schwäbisch-Gmünd.

The international coordinators of these institutes have attended the conference in Klingenthal last spring. Institutes from Rome and Clermont-Ferrand have expressed interest in becoming acquainted with the Comenius Association as well. When all these candidates join our organisation, we would have five more institute members at once, which is an expansion of nearly 25%.

So should we try to slow down growth? Aside from the aforementioned wish to remain small, there is one aspect that I think is important when we consider whether or not further expansion of our association is advisable. I will elaborate this idea.

The process of European unification is at a crisis. The dissension became clear when France and the Netherlands rejected the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe. Conflicting interests about subsidies for agriculture and about higher contribution because of new members; fear of Turkey joining and of the European Union meddling with more things every day. These problems seem insolvable. Do education facilities have a responsibility in this regard? In my opinion they do, especially teacher training institutes. We can contribute towards letting our students look at European integration in an unprejudiced way. With "unprejudiced" I do not mean an uncritical view of every plan that is served up by Brussels, but rather an attitude that displays respect for opinions of others, empathy with others, and receptiveness towards other cultures. Through that differences can be overcome. It is our students' duty to propagate that open-minded attitude to their pupils, the future of our society. Like Jeanine Bardonnnet, former principal of the École Normale in Paris-Batignolle, said: "L'Europe doit être une Europe de l'Éducation si l'on veut qu'elle ait des perspectives d'avenir." In the Journal of the Comenius Association of 1995 it is

described as follows:

"L'association Comenius veut développer la dimension interculturelle dans la formation des futurs enseignants en Europe à travers les domaines relationnel, pédagogique et méthodologique."

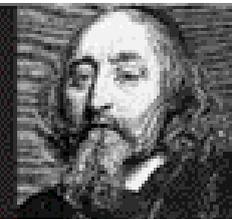
We will have to look critically at the expansion of our association.

Particularly considering whether or not new institutes can contribute towards fortifying the intercultural goals of our association.

Intercultural. It is about differences as well as similarities

When, long ago, we developed the first short exchanges and Intensive Programmes, there was a lot of good will, but in practice everything was not so easy. Students created lessons to teach at foreign institutes that were often superficial and focused mainly on cultural differences. To explain this I include a quote by Michel Solonnel in the article *"Les enjeux et les composantes pédagogiques d'un projet d'éducation à la citoyenneté européenne"*

"Il faut .. signaler un écueil auquel se heurte la plupart des activités pédagogiques visant à connaître les autres cultures. Sous prétexte de susciter l'intérêt et l'implication des élèves, les enseignants s'appuient sur une démarche comparative. Les activités les plus fréquentes consistent à étudier la façon dont certains aspects de la vie quotidienne sont réglés dans d'autres pays européens en prenant comme référence et comme point de comparaison son propre mode de vie. Les thèmes les plus prisés concernent la nourriture, les loisirs, les habitations, les principaux monuments et les lieux symboliques de chacun des pays concernés. Le travail mené dans ce cadre aboutit la plupart du temps à mettre l'accent sur les principales différences qui peuvent être ainsi mises en lumière. Cette manière de faire pose problème, car la focalisation sur les différences s'accompagne quoique s'en défendent les enseignants, de jugements de valeurs plus ou moins conscients et implicites. De la perception des différences, on passe de façon insensible et sans vraiment s'en rendre compte à une hiérarchisation des traits culturels qui débouche parfois sur des attitudes de rejet ou d'adhésion sans nuance. La différence est la plupart du temps perçue, soit comme une étrangeté ou même une menace – auquel cas elle suscite une réaction de défense ou d'agressivité; soit comme un mirage ou une réalité idéalisée – auquel cas elle entraîne une admiration béate et une disparition de l'esprit critique. C'est là, en



définitive que réside le principal danger des activités centrées sur le repérage systématique des différences, elles coupent court à toute tentative de compréhension véritable et aboutissent en fin de compte à une approche superficielle des autres cultures. Comprendre une autre culture, passe nécessairement par la mise en oeuvre d'une réelle démarche comparative se préoccupant autant des ressemblances que des différences. Cette démarche n'est malheureusement que très rarement pratiquée dans les classes."

What is the situation now? In view of the multitude of themes the Intensive Programmes have addressed over the years, I think we have progressed quite a bit. But would it not be nice to compare several lessons about intercultural dimension made by students at different institutes on content and instructional format?

Staff Mobility

Our association excels at organising short exchanges, intensive programmes and long periods of study for students abroad. This year we have made it our goal to increase the quality and quantity of staff mobility. The conference in Klingenthal last May was devoted to this goal for a large part: why is it important, which obstacles can come into play, how can we make it happen? The minutes of the meeting include an excellent summary of exactly what was discussed. This can serve as a starting point for further discussions. I would like to make two recommendations:

The stimulation of staff mobility will only succeed if management recognises its importance and is prepared to invest in it. We will have to convince management! If we accept the offer, made by the Fondation Goethe, to come to Klingenthal an extra time, we could organise a conference for the management teams of our institutes about staff mobility.

In that conference we will have to develop a strategic plan that emphasises the importance of staff mobility and which analyses the organizational conditions and determines which facilities can offer support. And regarding the facilities, we will have to make clear that supply of money and especially time will have to be

unconditional. There will have to be time for teachers to take part in language courses aimed at teaching in another language, time to establish contacts with institutes and colleague-teachers, time to prepare programmes and, eventually, realise staff mobility. It really has to be possible, therefore, to free time for a visiting lectureship. One cannot continue to expect that teachers keep regarding it as an agreeable leisure activity. Management will have to make promises and keep them as well.

Another condition for the stimulation of staff mobility to succeed is that the international coordinators, meaning us, have to be prepared to work as hard at this as we needed to work at the start of the internationalisation process when we were trying to increase student mobility. This can only work when we are genuinely convinced of the importance of staff mobility to generate an international attitude in teachers, of the importance of staff mobility as a booster for student mobility, and of the influence of increased staff mobility on education as such. In short, we cannot stop at the conference in May. We have to turn this into a long-range plan in which we will have to invest a lot of energy.

Finally

For sixteen years now, students and teachers have been able to benefit from the activities of the Comenius Association. Therefore, we can look back on our work gratefully. Even after all this time I am still very enthusiastic about the association. We have achieved a lot, but that has never kept us from looking at our work critically. What I am most excited about are the possibilities to act swiftly and adequately, which our association offers. For the largest part that is due to the fact that we have formed solid personal relations thanks to the face-to-face contacts. When you need someone in Madrid, you know where to go. But that goes for Kingston, Haderslev, Vienna, and all those other partners as well.

This works predominantly because of the two meetings we have a year. The Fondation Goethe and its president, Prof. Dr. Marie-Paule Stinzi, offer us the possibility to meet each spring in Klingenthal. We use this opportunity mainly to debate about our motives and the future of our association. The autumn conference, held at one of the partner institutes, focuses on the more practical side of matters: short exchanges, Intensive Programmes, Erasmus mobility for students and teachers. However, the personal contacts that come into being during those conferences are of inestimable value to the way in which our association functions.

I sincerely hope that we can continue to exploit these personal contacts. Every institute benefits from it, which in turn ensure that our association flourishes.

Wim Friebel
Treasurer

Summary

This article looks critically at several aspects of (our work at) the Comenius Association concerning the future. I have discussed the use of the ECTS, the increase of familiarity with our association, the wish to grow on a limited scale, the intercultural character, and staff mobility. Finally, it contains an ode to the good personal contacts we have established. So it is about everyday aspects, which are nevertheless important to the future of our association.

In: Wim Friebel ed. *Éducation à la Citoyenneté européenne, Approches théoriques et pratiques*, Freiburg 1996



Met het oog op de toekomst

Ervaringen in Belfast

Voor het derde achtereenvolgende jaar viel mij de eervolle taak te beurt op te mogen treden als External Examiner voor de European Outreach Modules voor Saint Mary's University College, behorend tot de Queen's University van Belfast en al heel lang lid van de Comeniusvereniging. Het is mijn taak de procedures te controleren die gepaard gaan met de Erasmusstudieperiodes van de studenten aan de Faculty of Education en aan die van de Faculty of Liberal Arts. Zij studeren respectievelijk voor een Bachelor of Education (BEd) en een Bachelor of Arts (BA). Het betreft het nalopen van de benodigde documenten zoals de Application Forms, Learning Agreements, Transcripts of Records. Zijn ze aanwezig en correct gebruikt? Maar ik dien bijvoorbeeld ook werkstukken gewijd aan School Based Work, respectievelijk Work Based Learning, te bekijken.

Elk jaar heeft de International Board, bestaande uit Paul Anthony, Feidlimidh Magennis en Dermot McCartan, wel iets nieuws bedacht om de beoordeling van de studenten degelijker te laten verlopen. Dit jaar werd het Reflective Journal geïntroduceerd, waarin de studenten een terugblik geven op de buitenlandstudie. Dat blijkt intelligent en weldoordacht werk op te leveren, maar omdat het ook een uitstekend evaluatie-instrument is voor de staf, snijdt het mes zelfs aan twee kanten.

Mijn werkzaamheden monden uit in een vergadering met de Internal Examiners, oftewel de zojuist genoemde International Board. En dat is de reden waarom ik dit artikel, waarin een aantal facetten van de Comeniusvereniging tegen het licht gehouden worden, begin met mijn ervaringen in Belfast. Wat blijkt namelijk elk jaar weer? Een opmerkelijk feit. De instituten waaraan de studenten uit Belfast hun buitenlandstudie verrichten, passen nog steeds niet eenduidig het European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) toe, als ze het al toepassen. En toch....het zijn voor het merendeel leden van onze eigen

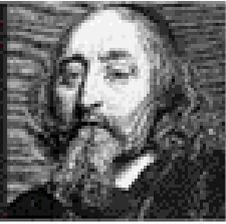
Comeniusvereniging! En hoeveel keren hebben we daar niet al met elkaar over gepraat?

Weliswaar gaat het in de meeste gevallen goed, maar hoe kan het toch dat het ook nog wel eens mis gaat? Dat levert irritatie op voor de staf, maar het kan ook in het nadeel van de studenten zijn omdat resultaten niet goed kunnen worden omgerekend naar het puntensysteem van de universiteit; de zogenaamde Queen University Belfast Marks (QUBM's). Het kan dus voorkomen dat studenten op hun cijferlijst lagere beoordelingen krijgen dan waar ze eigenlijk recht op hebben. Wat gaat er verkeerd? Het kan drie zaken betreffen:

1. Instituten retourneren eenvoudigweg de bovengenoemde documenten niet of veel te laat. Om dit ongerief tot een minimum uit te bannen, reis ik pas in de tweede helft van juni naar Belfast. Je zou zeggen dat er dan toch genoeg tijd is geweest voor de partnerinstituten om de administratie uit te voeren. De studenten zijn immers half april alweer in Belfast teruggekeerd uit het buitenland.
2. Het spreekt ook voor zich dat studenten ernstig benadeeld kunnen worden door het verschil in honorering. Hoe kan het bijvoorbeeld dat het ene instituut voor een trimester van vijftien weken een maximumaantal van 15 credits toekent, terwijl andere een maximum van 20 hanteren, weer andere zelfs meer dan 25? Hoe kan dat als al die instituten het ECTS toepassen? In het ECTS staat een werklast van een studieweek toch immers gelijk aan anderhalf credit. Een Belfaststudent die met minder dan 22 credits terugkeert na een stage van vijftien weken moet een aanvullende studie verrichten, maar als dat komt omdat hij aan het gastinstituut te weinig studiepunten kon verwerven en niet vanwege falende studieresultaten, is dat toch op zijn minst merkwaardig te noemen. De student wordt erdoor benadeeld ten opzichte van zijn collega's die naar een andere hogeschool of universiteit gingen.
3. Doordat sommige instituten naast de credits geen grades toekennen, ontstaat

ook rechtsongelijkheid. Logischerwijze wordt in Belfast aan de grades veel waarde gehecht. Het is immers een maatstaf voor de kwaliteit van het geleverde werk. Voor sommige van de partnerinstituten is dat echter veel minder logisch dan het lijkt. Dat betreft instituten uit landen waar in het studiepuntenstelsel alleen van voldoende of onvoldoende wordt uitgegaan, oftewel van een Pass of een Fail. Maar als de gastinstituten uit die landen het ECTS toepassen, nemen ze het per definitie op zich ook een beoordeling in grades te geven. Credits en grades zijn immers onlosmakelijk verbonden aan het ECTS. Het is dus aan die gastinstituten om een aanpassing in hun beoordelingsprocedure van studieresultaten te bedenken voor de buitenlandse inkomende studenten en niet aan het thuisinstituut. Ik veronderstel dat ook andere leden van onze vereniging met deze of soortgelijke problemen geconfronteerd worden, vandaar dat het me goed lijkt er nog eens extra aandacht aan te besteden op een van onze vergaderingen.

Bekendheid van de Comeniusvereniging Eenentwintig Europese opleidingen voor leraren zijn momenteel lid van de Comeniusvereniging. Zij kennen de vereniging uiteraard goed, maar is de vereniging ook buiten eigen kring bekend? Ik veronderstel in elk geval wel bij de National Agencies, bij de scholen waar de buitenlandse studenten stage lopen en bij de directies van de betrokken faculteiten of departementen en Colleges van Bestuur van onze hogescholen of universiteiten. Maar als je op het internet, bijvoorbeeld via Google, eens uitprobeert of je naar de Association Comenius verwezen kunt worden als je alleen Comenius of zelfs Association Comenius intikt, dan kom je wel uit bij al die prachtige Europese programma's waaraan Brussel de naam Comenius heeft gegeven, maar niet bij onze eigen vereniging. Dat gebeurt pas als je [HYPERLINK](http://www.associationcomenius.org) <http://www.associationcomenius.org> als verwijzing hanteert. En als je in Brussel bij de burelen aanklopt die de



Socrate subsidies beheren, denk je dan dat ze de Association Comenius kennen?

Waarschijnlijk niet

Toch willen we allemaal graag meer bekendheid aan de vereniging geven, niet omdat we zo nodig veel nieuwe partnerinstituten willen. Daar voeren we immers beleid op: we willen een kleine overzichtelijke vereniging blijven die door onderlinge vooral persoonlijke contacten zo adequaat mogelijk de belangen van de leden wil waarborgen. Waarom dan wel bekendheid nastreven? Ik vind dat een vraag die moeilijk te beantwoorden is.

Als het erom gaat dat je gemakkelijker fondsen aan kunt boren als je bekend bent, dan is het duidelijk, maar proberen we die fondsen dan wel uit? We hebben nog steeds geen Comenius 2.1. aanvraag ingediend, we filosoferen weliswaar over de mogelijkheden tot samenwerking voor een Erasmus Mundus, maar er is nog zeer veel werk te verzetten voor het zover is. Nogal wat partnerinstituten van de vereniging zijn succesvol in het verwerven van gelden voor het uitvoeren van Intensieve Programmes en ook voor de Erasmusmobiliteit. Maar we doen die aanvragen niet onder de paraplu van de vereniging maar onder die van de universiteiten of hogescholen. Als we bij al onze aanvragen een korte toelichting geven over ons netwerk levert dat automatisch naamsbekendheid op. Eigenlijk kan ik niet veel andere redenen bedenken waarom we naamsbekendheid nodig zouden hebben, want het is toch niet om onszelf te strelen, om te showen hoe belangrijk we onszelf vinden? Misschien zie ik het wel helemaal verkeerd. Zou het niet goed zijn om ons eens terdege te gaan afvragen waarom we bekendheid willen verwerven en bij wie danwel?

Het lijkt me verstandig daarbij ook het Comeniusjournaal te betrekken als middel voor public relations. In de loop der jaren is dat immers niet alleen van vormgeving, maar vooral ook van inhoud veranderd. Aan wie willen we dat jaarlijks toesturen om bekendheid te geven aan wat onze vereniging bezielt?

Groei van de vereniging

Misschien wat inconsistent om over groei te praten, als ik hierboven net gezegd heb dat we vooral een kleine, overzichtelijke club willen blijven. Toch voeren we discussie over uitbreiding, het zal duidelijk zijn, uitbreiding op kleine schaal. Er is een kandidaatlid uit Midden-Europa waar we erg blij mee zijn, de opleiding uit Timisoara in Roemenië. Er is weer een kandidaatlid uit Frankrijk, de IUFM Créteil, site de Melun, een welkome verrijking van onze vereniging nadat helaas de kleine maar enthousiaste Centres de Formation Pédagogiques zijn weggevallen. En eindelijk hopen we ook Duitsland te kunnen verwelkomen in de vorm van de Pädagogische Hochschule uit Schwäbisch-Gmünd.

Internationale coördinatoren van deze instituten hebben dit voorjaar de bijeenkomst in Klingenthal meegemaakt. Ook een instituut uit Rome en een uit Clermont-Ferrand willen graag kennismaken met de Comeniusvereniging. Als al deze kandidaten toetreden, zijn we in één klap vijf instituten rijker, een groei van bijna 25%.

Moet de rem er dus op? Naast de al genoemde kleinschaligheid die we graag willen behouden, is er één aspect dat ik met name van belang vind bij onze overwegingen of verdere groei van de vereniging raadzaam is. Ik zal het nader uitwerken.

De Europese eenwording verkeert in een crisis. De verdeeldheid kwam sterk tot uiting bij de afwijzing van het Verdrag tot vaststelling van een Grondwet voor Europa door Frankrijk en Nederland. Tegengestelde belangen over subsidiëring van de landbouw en over hogere bijdragen van de lidstaten in verband met de nieuwkomers; angst voor de toetreding van Turkije en voor een Europese Unie die zich met steeds meer zaken wil bemoeien. Het lijken onoplosbare problemen.

Heeft het onderwijs een taak in dit opzicht? Naar mijn mening wel; de lerarenopleidingen in het bijzonder. Wij kunnen er mede toe bijdragen dat onze studenten onbevooroordeeld leren aankijken tegen de Europese integratie,

waarmee ik niet een kritiekloze houding bedoel tegenover alles wat ons door Brussel wordt voorgeschoteld, maar een houding van respect voor de mening van de ander, van inleving in de ander, van open staan voor andere culturen. Daardoor kunnen tegenstellingen overbrugd worden. Het is aan onze studenten om in hun werk die open mind weer uit te dragen bij de jeugd, de toekomst van onze maatschappij. Het is zoals Jeanine Bardonnat, oud-directrice van de École Normale van Paris-Batignolle, al zei: "L'Europe doit être une Europe de l'Éducation si l'on veut qu'elle ait des perspectives d'avenir." In het Comeniusjournaal uit 1995 staat het zo omschreven: "L'association Comenius veut développer la dimension interculturelle dans la formation des futurs enseignants en Europe à travers les domaines relationnel, pédagogique et méthodologique."

We zullen de uitbreiding van onze vereniging kritisch moeten bekijken. Met name de vraag of nieuwe instituten een bijdrage kunnen leveren aan een versterking van de interculturele doelstellingen van onze vereniging moet de doorslag geven.

Intercultureel. Het gaat om verschillen maar ook om overeenkomsten. Toen we lang geleden de eerste korte stages en intensieve programma's ontwikkelden, was er wel de goede wil, maar de praktijk bleek weerbarstig. De lessen die studenten maakten om in het buitenland aan de collega-instituten te geven, waren vaak oppervlakkig en vooral gericht op cultuurverschillen. Ik haal daartoe een citaat van Michel Solonnel aan in het artikel "Les enjeux et les composantes pédagogiques d'un projet d'éducation à la citoyenneté européenne"

"Il faut .. signaler un écueil auquel se heurte la plupart des activités pédagogiques visant à connaître les autres cultures. Sous prétexte de susciter l'intérêt et l'implication des élèves, les enseignants s'appuient sur une démarche comparative. Les activités les plus fréquentes consistent à étudier la façon dont certains aspects de la vie quotidienne sont réglés dans d'autres pays européens en prenant comme référence et comme point de comparaison son propre mode de vie. Les thèmes les plus prisés concernent la nourriture, les loisirs, les habitations, les principaux monuments et les lieux symboliques de chacun des pays concernés. Le travail mené dans ce cadre



aboutit la plupart du temps à mettre l'accent sur les principales différences qui peuvent être ainsi mises en lumière. Cette manière de faire pose problème, car la focalisation sur les différences s'accompagne quoique s'en défendent les enseignants, de jugements de valeurs plus ou moins conscients et implicites. De la perception des différences, on passe de façon insensible et sans vraiment s'en rendre compte à une hiérarchisation des traits culturels qui débouche parfois sur des attitudes de rejet ou d'adhésion sans nuance. La différence est la plupart du temps perçue, soit comme une étrangeté ou même une menace – auquel cas elle suscite une réaction de défense ou d'agressivité; soit comme un mirage ou une réalité idéalisée – auquel cas elle entraîne une admiration béate et une disparition de l'esprit critique. C'est là, en définitive que réside le principal danger des activités centrées sur le repérage systématique des différences, elles coupent court à toute tentative de compréhension véritable et aboutissent en fin de compte à une approche superficielle des autres cultures. Comprendre une autre culture, passe nécessairement par la mise en oeuvre d'une réelle démarche comparative se préoccupant autant des ressemblances que des différences. Cette démarche n'est malheureusement que très rarement pratiquée dans les classes."

Hoe staat het er nu mee? Gezien de veelheid aan thematieken die in de Intensieve Programma's in de loop der jaren aangesneden zijn, denk ik dat we een stuk verder zijn. Maar zou het niet aardig zijn eens een aantal lessen van studenten van verschillende instituten, gewijd aan de interculturele dimensie, met elkaar te vergelijken op inhoud en werkvormen?

Stafmobiliteit

Onze vereniging is goed in het organiseren van korte stages, intensieve programma's en lange studieperiodes voor studenten in het buitenland. Dit jaar hebben we onszelf tot taak gesteld de stafmobiliteit op een kwantitatief en kwalitatief hoger niveau te brengen. De mei-conferentie in Klingenthal was er voor een groot deel aan gewijd. Waarom is het belangrijk, welke hindernissen spelen een rol, hoe kunnen we het van de grond krijgen? In de notulen van de besprekingen is een prima samenvatting gemaakt van wat aan de orde is geweest. Het kan als vertrekpunt voor verdere discussie dienen. Ik wil twee aanbevelingen doen:

1. De bevordering van stafmobiliteit lukt alleen als het management er het belang van inziet en erin wil investeren. Wij zullen het management moeten overtuigen! Indien we op het aanbod van de Fondation Goethe ingaan om een keer extra naar Klingenthal te komen, zouden we een conferentie voor het management van onze instituten kunnen organiseren, met als thematiek stafmobiliteit. In die conferentie moet een strategisch plan ontwikkeld worden, dat het belang van stafmobiliteit verwoordt en de organisatorische voorwaarden en facilitaire ondersteuning analyseert. En wat dat laatste betreft: de conferentie zal moeten onderstrepen dat facilitering met geld en vooral tijd onvoorwaardelijk zijn. Tijd voor docenten om talencursussen te volgen gericht op het lesgeven in een andere taal, contacten te leggen met instituten en collega(vak)docenten, programma's voor te bereiden en uiteindelijk de stafmobiliteit te realiseren. Er moet dus echt tijd vrijgemaakt kunnen worden voor een gastdocentschap. Je mag niet blijven verwachten dat docenten het als een aardige vrije tijdsbesteding beschouwen. Het management zal toezeggingen moeten doen die ook waar gemaakt worden.

2. De bevordering van stafmobiliteit zal ook alleen maar lukken als de internationaal coördinatoren van onze instituten, wijzelf dus, er een aantal jaren net zo'n krachtsinspanning voor willen leveren als in de beginjaren van de internationalisering nodig was voor het van de grond krijgen van de studentenmobiliteit. Dat zal alleen lukken als we zelf echt overtuigd zijn van het belang van de stafmobiliteit om een internationale attitude bij docenten te kweken, van het belang ervan als aanjager voor de studentenmobiliteit en van de invloed ervan op het onderwijs als zodanig. Kortom, bij alleen de meibijeenkomst kan het niet blijven. We zullen er een meerjarenproject van moeten maken en er heel veel energie in moeten steken.

Tenslotte

Zestien jaar hebben studenten en docenten geprofiteerd van de activiteiten die de Comeniusvereniging ontwikkeld heeft. We kunnen dan ook dankbaar terugkijken op ons werk. Na al die tijd ben ik nog steeds zeer enthousiast over

de vereniging. Er is veel gepresteerd, maar dat heeft ons niet belet ons werk telkens met kritische ogen te bekijken. Enthousiast ben ik vooral door de mogelijkheden die onze vereniging biedt om snel en adequaat te handelen. Dat is voor een belangrijk deel een gevolg van het feit dat we goede persoonlijke relaties hebben opgebouwd, dank zij de face-to-face contacts. Als je iemand in Madrid nodig hebt, weet je bij wie je moet zijn, maar dat geldt ook voor Kingston, Haderslev, Wenen en al de andere partners.

Vooral dankzij de twee meerdaagse bijeenkomsten per jaar lukt ons dat. De mogelijkheid die de Fondation Goethe en haar presidente, Prof. Dr. Marie-Paule Stinzi, ons elk voorjaar biedt om in Klingenthal bij elkaar te komen, benutten we in hoofdzaak voor het debat over de bestaansredenen en de toekomst van onze vereniging. De najaarsconferentie bij een van de partnerinstituten staat al vanouds vooral in het teken van praktische zaken: de korte stages, de intensieve programma's, de Erasmusmobiliteit voor studenten en docenten. Maar de persoonlijke relaties die tijdens deze conferenties ontstaan, zijn van onschatbaar belang voor het functioneren van onze vereniging. Ik hoop van harte dat we die persoonlijke contacten kunnen blijven uitbuiten. Elk instituut vaart er wel bij en dus ook onze vereniging.

Wim Friebel Penningmeester Samenvatting

In dit artikel wordt een aantal aspecten van (ons werk in) de Comeniusvereniging kritisch overdacht met het oog op de toekomst. Het gaat over het gebruik van het ECTS, het streven naar bekendheid van onze vereniging, de wens om op beperkte schaal te groeien, het interculturele karakter en de stafmobiliteit. Tenslotte bevat het een lofzang op de goede persoonlijke relaties die zijn opgebouwd. Het gaat dus over alledaagse dingen, van belang echter, nu en straks.

In: Wim Friebel ed. *Éducation à la Citoyenneté européenne, Approches théoriques et pratiques*, Freiburg 1996



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“Intercultural contacts in a European context, time and place” International programme at KHMechelen – Belgium

Introduction

In the Comenius journal of September 2003, it was announced for the first time: the Katholieke Hogeschool Mechelen organises an International course. It has been set up to accommodate Erasmus students from the different study areas of the KHM (business management & commercial sciences, interior design and teacher training & nursing). Next academic year, the international co-ordinators of the KHMechelen will welcome almost 40 students from all over the world. It will be the third edition.

Why an International programme?

The KHMechelen-philosophy on internationalisation leads to the creation of a learning environment where people with different backgrounds can meet each other. The international programme makes this intercultural encounter really happen. Students and teachers from all over Europe/the World spend a semester together and learn to understand each other and to cooperate in a practical and professional context. In this way, the KHMechelen becomes a multicultural learning environment and Internationalisation@home becomes reality.

Teachers and students at the KHMechelen experience the diversity and get the opportunity to learn in an international context. Through the contact with the participants of the International programme, they become interested in internationalisation. Sometimes these contacts create possibilities to go abroad and to have an international experience.

The Programme

The Content

To make this intercultural learning process possible, the programme is divided into two main parts: the general ‘intercultural encounter’ module for students from all departments; and a specific part, organised within each department.

The general module aims starting a reflection process on their international experience by the students. The particular Belgian context is a starting point to think about and discuss interculturality, being a European Citizen and living abroad. The mixed group of business, architecture and teacher training students offers the opportunity to reflect on different aspects of society, from a different point of view.

The Intercultural encounter module contains three courses:

Language is an essential aspect of culture. To live in Flanders and to know the Flemish way of life, you need to be able to understand and to express yourself in Dutch. Therefore the Survival Dutch course is organised.

Mechelen is only 15 minutes away from Brussels, the Capital of Europe. Europe’s role is becoming more and more important. Being a European citizen has a lot of consequences and implications. Within the second course of the general module, European Citizenship students gain knowledge in those aspects.

The last course of the general module is Cross-cultural issues: from different points of view, teachers try to show that interculturality is a central concept in today’s society. Religion, Economics, Education, and Communication: living together with people with another background is important. Through this course, students will talk and think about interculturality and its advantages and difficulties.

Within the departments, specific modules are offered. These courses are most of the time given to mixed groups of international and Flemish students. In this way, we attempt to create an intercultural environment for the KHM-students. The subjects taught in these courses depend on the interests of the students.

Teaching methods

At the KHMechelen, we offer practically oriented education: theory is necessary, but to support practical training. This means teachers give lectures to start their course, but students often have to cooperate to accomplish an assignment which is embedded in a realistic context. For example after a visit of an organization, a company... Last years’ students visited the European parliament, the ethnic minorities in Antwerp, they learned Dutch in a supermarket ...

Classes are always for small groups: interaction between students is an important advantage for their learning process and for their intercultural understanding. Within those small groups, interaction becomes possible.



Facts & Figures

The programme has already been organised two times. Each academic year, the international programme starts in September and ends in December (20 credits) or in January (30 credits). Students are welcomed during the first week. The international co-ordinators organise activities to get to know each other and make sure all administrative aspects of the students' stay are arranged. Student Services support the students during this week and during their stay in Mechelen: students can do their laundry at Student Services, they can rent a bike, ... Also cultural and sports activities are organised by Student Services. Through all these activities, they can learn about the Flemish culture. At the end of their stay, a farewell evening is organised where all people involved are invited (international students, Flemish students, teachers, co-ordinators and directors).

As a proof of the very international environment at the KHMechelen during the international programme, some figures on the diversity of the participants can be found in the table below.

	2003-2004	2004-2005
Students	14	25
Teachers from abroad	4	3
KHM-teachers	14	22
Countries of origin	6	11

What's so special? Point of view of a young International Co-ordinator

In September 2004, 25 students from all over Europe (and even from the RSA), were welcomed in Mechelen. Since they were my first group of international students, I believe I felt as uncertain as they did. I first noticed this during the summer holidays. My mailbox was filled with emails from students having questions about their accommodation, their study programme, their stay at the KHMechelen in general. I tried to answer every question as clearly as possible, but the uncertainty kept on.

And then they arrived in Mechelen. Most of them were very shy, but during the first day some ice-breaking activities were organised. It was great to discover the very different backgrounds of the students. During the programme, this diversity of students became the most interesting part of the programme. Just by being at the KHMechelen and participating in course activities or extra curricular activities, you could smell Europe's differences. The programme helped the students to put their intercultural differences into perspective; and they became a close group where everybody could be himself as well as fulfil its part when they have to collaborate. At the end of their stay, both staff members and students really needed to celebrate their goodbye. Therefore a fare-well evening was organised.

An important advantage, which we need to exploit more in the future, is the integration of the international group of students with the KHM-students. This year, it was the privilege of a select number of students. Only in a few courses KHM-students were involved. An important problem is the living habits of our students: most of them return home every night, while the international students live in Mechelen. We have to deal with this problem and make sure, especially for the extra curricular activities that the international students are mixed with the KHM-students.

As a very new international co-ordinator, I was impressed by the dynamics that a group of international students could create. I hope we can extend this international feeling during the next editions!

And the students, what do they think?

For an inexperienced co-ordinator it is important to obtain significant feedback to improve the organisation of the international programme. Therefore we brought together all people who were involved: students, teachers and co-ordinators. We obtained for a face-to-face evaluation talk. During these talks, the strengths and weaknesses of the programme were discussed. The most important strength appeared to be the good contact and the good organised welcome by the co-ordinators. The students appreciated the efforts the co-ordinators did to make them feel at home. On the other hand, it seemed very difficult to attune the different parts of the programme. This will be focused on during the organisation of the 2005-06 edition.

Some of the students wrote down their impressions in a quote, which are nice to read:

Thanks to everybody who took part in this interesting project. Special thanks to international coordinators for their care and time, to the teachers for their patience and approach. It is undoubtedly a priceless experience. I wish you all the best in the following exchange programmes!
Thanks again,
Dusan, Slovakia

"If you want to meet very friendly people, get new knowledge about different cultures, find new friends, then I advice to choose the Katholieke Hogeschool Mechelen, because there you can find this and a lot more!"

Evita Laudama, student from Latvia

"Thank you Europe"
"United in Diversity"
It's probably the beautifulest experience in my whole life.
To be an Erasmus student is an experience which is really worth to be lived.

Yannick Satré, France

Dear international coordinators,
Thank you for wonderful time we have spent here in Mechelen and for everything you have done for us. I wish you all the best and a good luck in your beautiful work and a lot of patience with the other students who are coming after us, as well as Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I hope we see you once again here in Mechelen or anywhere else in the world.
Thank you so, so much.
Tot ziens.

Katarina, Slovakia

Conclusion

The major advantage of the international programme at the KHMechelen is the diversity of the students and teachers involved.

Or, as Izabela put it:

Studying at KHMechelen, that's the whole world in one room.
(Izabela, Poland)



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Towards a Better Connection between Teacher Education and Induction Year

Introduction

This article discusses a new project that is dealing with the problem of getting a better connection between Teacher Education Programme, especially in the Teaching practice and the Induction year. The aim of the project is to achieve a more effective Teacher Education, especially in the Teaching practice, in order to reduce the shock that newly qualified teachers (henceforth NQT:s) might experience when starting to practice. The Teacher Education Programme has been late in responding to the needs of the NQT:s as they have been presented in the Induction projects (Induction I: Support to NQT:s, Induction II: Support to NQT:s by Mentors).

The Initial Teacher Education is approximately three and a half years in Sweden, and there is a substantial element of optional courses. The freedom of choice this involves is considered to be difficult. What has to be presented during the Initial Teacher Education and what can be postponed to be dealt with later on in Professional Development? There is a need for a new discussion about the basic content in the perspective of results from the Induction I and II projects.

We argue in this article that there is a need for a stronger connection between the Initial Teacher Education Programme at the University of Gavle and the schools in the Municipalities in the Region of Gavleborg. The need for connections is expressed in a paper presented at a conference in Gavle Concert Hall on February 18, 2005 and the work has slowly started.

Program Structure

To understand the article, it is necessary to say something about the structure of the Initial Teacher Education Programme but also something about the Teaching practice. The Swedish Teacher Education Programme gives the student a possibility to choose courses and content up to a certain point. There is also a difference how many weeks they will spend in schools practising. To compare the Swedish

Teacher Educational system with other foreign systems Sweden has a rather short period of practising. A teacher trainee may for instance spend a total of about 30 weeks out in a school, including 15 weeks of teaching practice and 15 weeks of fieldwork. The educational code is that theory and practice should be integrated but still there are problems.

Teaching practice

Newly qualified teachers' experiences put light on the initial teacher training and especially the school-based part of it. The Initial Teacher Education Programme did not take measures to mentally include school supervisors and concern for helping new members into the teaching team was lacking. It was regarded as extra paid work for one teacher in conflict with the ordinary work and was often limited to the specific teaching part of the teacher's complex work. The introduction of NQT:s was often short and taken care of by a colleague as a mentor.

The Renewed Teacher Training Programme gives the Teaching practice an increased responsibility for giving the student a picture of the complexity of the work as a teacher. The task is common and negotiated between the

University and the Municipality. It is included in teachers' work and a natural part of the school development process. In opposition to the former programme, parts of the employment introduction can be exposed to the students during the teacher education. Responsible for this part will be the Municipality.

The Induction project and especially future process stress the need of highlighting both the academic education, and the practice in order to make the Initial Teacher Education period more effective.

NQT:s and the Induction Year

This part of the article is built on a summary of the result from six years of research on the Induction year in the Region of Gavleborg. The Researchers in the Induction group have summed up their main results and in this part of the article some results are presented. What is presented is only what the researchers can agree on. The induction group has found that there is a need for a change of attitudes in the teacher trainees to the personal opportunities of being an efficient and professional teacher. The findings from Induction II discussed in the Induction group in February 2005 are

Changed attitude towards the students' own possibilities to handle being a teacher. It is necessary to increase the self-esteem and the faith in the students' conditions to manage the teacher task. The school-based educators have to hand over more responsibility to the trainees. This means increased responsibility for groups of pupils.

Examples and models for managing the work in the preschool and in schools are not common at the start of the first employment. The shock of praxis can be less painful through continuous critical reflection and discussion of examples and models in the school-based part of the teacher training.

3. *Matters pertaining to the care for pupils with special needs must be given more attention during the school based training. The new teacher has to know how to handle different types of pupils' problems and how to get help and what to do to manage them.*

Young teachers have great difficulty in managing the balance in fostering versus education between the parents and the teacher. In the cooperation with the parents what kind of demands can new teachers raise? These issues need to be discussed during the whole teacher training period.

5. *New teachers blame themselves for failures. Frame factors need to be discussed. The new teachers need help to analyse and discuss their real prerequisites.*



The new teachers need help to "be in possession of" their own training and their demands on professional development. . The tendency is to be passive in relation to the mentors.

7. The view of the basic teacher training has to be developed and changed to be a platform for further training. Teacher trainees must acknowledge from the beginning of their teacher training that professional development is a life long process.

8. The teacher task needs to be discussed in a holistic perspective during the education. The construction of the teacher training in different parts and in different subjects is atomizing. What is it like to be a teacher? What does a teacher's life look like? What is the combination like of work, spare time and family life?

9. De-dramatize changes in career plans. It is no catastrophe to leave the teacher profession after a few years.

Arrange good meetings with older colleagues during the education. Prejudice does not gain teachers' team work.

Real working teams make new teachers become better socialized into the profession.

The teacher trainee needs to get experience of working in teams during the education.

To sum up there is a lot to be done in close cooperation between the University and the Municipalities.

Discussion on areas of cooperation

The main ideas are that NQT: s should be better prepared to start working in the field after the Initial Teacher Education Program. This discussion, out of the areas above, is just to be started. We are in the very beginning of the project but we still want to share the ideas behind it. Cooperation between the University of Gävle and The Municipality of Gävle as well as other Municipalities is of great importance to many aspects of raising quality of the Initial Teacher Education. Teacher trainees will get a better education with this approach. The effects of the Conference for the Municipality result in looking upon the education period as a whole teacher introduction period combined with the courses run at the University.

The Teaching practice needs to meet the students with openness, in working teams with a local work plan which will promote the ambition of the students to continually increase

their knowledge and experiences. This local work plan has to describe the teacher's work in a holistic perspective and ways to combine the student's own planning with local introduction goals.

A local plan for fulfilling the aims of introduction with different seminars during the education period can contain

School organisation and framework

National and local policy documents and their local implementation and realization

The teacher and the working team Values, leadership, learning management and pupils with special needs Leading learning and didactic deliberations for the pupil's learning Quality description, school development and the student's examination papers The near future – recruitment, employment, introduction and further development

To sum up, the introduction to the professional carrier starts during the Teaching practice, on the students' very first day. It is very important to use every possibility to prepare the teacher trainees for their important task in schools. This is a mutual responsibility for academics and practitioners.

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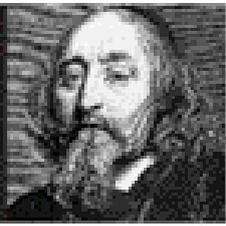
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Being an ERASMUS Mother!

Having worked in St Mary's University College as an Administrative Assistant for 22 years, I was delighted 4 years ago to be given the opportunity to work with the team in the International Office, a position that I relish and thoroughly enjoy.

My function within the office is to offer administrative support relating to incoming ERASMUS students. This includes processing application forms, setting up personal files for each student and communicating with members of staff (coordinators) and students alike.

I book accommodation for the students and ensure that pick-up arrangements have been made for their arrival. Most of the accommodation is in Bostock House, a former nurses quarters within local hospital grounds. It is just across the road from the College and only 10 minutes walk from the city centre. Rooms are basic but a generous size with a bed, wardrobe, bedside cabinet and sink. Heating, electricity and laundry services are included in the price and each floor has a toilet and bath/shower block. There is also a communal kitchen that houses lockers and is fully equipped with crockery, cutlery etc. It is inexpensive and the students enjoy living together during their stay in Belfast. They have special evenings when students from each country take over the kitchen and make their traditional dishes. This evening seem to bring the students closer together and helps them to extend their culinary skills.

As a mother of 2 children in their early twenties I find that I can relate to the students on a personal level. The way I look at my position is that, if my children were to be away from home in a foreign country, they would have someone who they could talk to if they had any problems. Coordinators look after the academic needs of the students but I help resolve other issues ie doctor's appointments, travel arrangements, accommodation problems or any other difficulties that may arise. I also help to arrange ERASMUS functions including Eurovision Contest, End of Term lunch, Euroquiz and many others throughout the year.

My experience working with the students has helped me gain knowledge of how European students live and how much their ERASMUS experience rates so highly in their lives. It is amazing to see the change in each student as the time goes by; from being a bit shy and introvert on arrival they grow into mature, outgoing adults who have gained a wealth of experience and knowledge by living with students from all over Europe. By looking through the 'reflective journals' and feedback forms which they submit before leaving it gives me great pleasure to know that I have played a small part in their ERASMUS experience.

I am proud of the fact that our past students have called me their "ERASMUS Mother!", a title that I will cherish forever!



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Belfast

Student Mobility – Perspective from an Administrator

I am now in my seventh year operating as an Administrative Assistant in the International Office at St Mary's University College, having started working here in Sept 1998. I feel I play an important role as a member of a highly motivated team of staff who are dedicated to the ERASMUS experience at St Mary's.

My function is to give administrative support in International related business. My areas of work include processing Bilateral Agreements with other partner institutions (we have agreements with 42 institutions), providing assistance in relation to completion of contract documents to the European Commission (Brussels) and UK SOCRATES ERASMUS Council (Canterbury), processing documentation in relation to the placement of outgoing ERASMUS students to partner institutions (OMS) and staff who are participating in Teacher Mobility (TM), assisting with arrangements for visiting staff and students from other institutions, helping with arrangements for Intensive Programmes and attending and taking minutes at our regular International Office meetings.

My favourite responsibility in the International Office is the support I give in relation to outgoing ERASMUS students. I gain great satisfaction in assisting the students from the very beginning of the process when they apply to participate in the ERASMUS Programme right through to the end of their placement in another European institution. It involves a lot of paperwork including storing their application forms and learning agreements, arranging Study Abroad Insurance, Student Mobility Contracts, Grants and Evaluation Questionnaires. The result is a dossier of each student—an administrative record of their participation in ERASMUS. On a human level, it is lovely to see the change in the students when they return from their placement. They return home happy, confident, fulfilled young adults who have really enjoyed the ERASMUS experience. Their enthusiasm really shines through in their evaluation questionnaires and in their conversations with me. When I read comments like "My ERASMUS experience was everything I wished for and more ... The whole experience has made me a lot more confident and I would strongly recommend that all St Mary's students apply for ERASMUS", I feel proud to be part of the team that helped make it happen.



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International cooperation perspectives?

We live in a globalized world and it is our belief that students exchange program is more important than ever. We will give them the opportunity to take part of different culture, the education system in different countries and of course to learn more about them selves and about others. Our society is a part of the big world with a lot of mixed culture and each student need a lot of knowledge about the new world. Each teacher has to coop with a lot of complex and mixture questions in a school for all children. So what is so special about Sweden?

Mostly we have incoming students and teachers from January to April. The first question we get is about the snow, but Sweden is more than snow. What will the Erasmus student explore? What we see when we meet Erasmus students and incoming Staff is that they get surprised when they visit our compulsory school. The first thing is about the contact between teachers and the pupils. They realize that the relationship is more open and warm compared to their own school system. " *When we first got confronted with that connection between teachers and pupils it really amazed us. It was something that really touched us.*" (a student from Belgium 2005) The second thing is about the freedom pupils have in our school system. They can choose a lot and take a big responsibility about their own learning and the work is more individual. " *Freedom. I would like children to have more freedom in everything for they could learn and understand what responsibility is and to take up responsibility on them. Also freedom helps to develop imagination. If they not are free the imagination can't grow or develop.*" (a student from Lithuania 2005) But isn't the differences the reason why we exchange?

When we change we get a possibility both to see a new idea of another teaching educational school system and at the same time have a possibility to compare with our own system. A teacher standard in Europe isn't possible, we are different and have different experience and educational systems. But what is standard or what could be a standard? We look at students in different ways, this is something our Erasmus students attend when they are here both with the lecturers at the University and with teachers at the practice school." I was more like one of them, more like a friend. At the school we were seen as colleagues of the teachers and not as teacher trainees." (a student from Belgium 2005) Another experience for incoming students is to explore that we have a lot of older (between 20-55 years old) students in our teacher training programme. Some of them have been working with other occupations before they decide to become a teacher. They often have family houses, families with children and because of that it is difficult for them to go on an Erasmus exchange programme. This is possible one of the reasons why we have a problem to sending students.

Something else that we really think is important for them to see, is the inclusive education. In the new teacher training programme all teacher student need to have knowledge about the variation among children in a school for all (inclusive education). Children are different and not only because they might have some sort of disability, we also learns in different ways. This is big challenge to assess the environment to meet all children and of course the teacher student must get involved in this during the time of education.

We also have some teacher student with disabilities, with special needs at the University, for example Dyslexia or Asperger Syndrom. One challenge for us as lecturer is to assess our education to those students. One question to discuss further can be how students with special needs can go into an exchange program. Other issues are how we can create courses who suits both for incoming students and for our own. So, finally our incoming exchange students will see a different level both at university and in practice schools. They will also explore the different weather, our culture, get new friends and hopefully learn something for their lifetime.

Further we will open up a discussion about how we can cooperate in the field of research and how the students can get involved. This is important when we will continue to compare our systems. Our resources have decreased and how can we continue with the international work and exchange without losing quality? Because we are different we might see things differently. This should be the power instead of being the problem. We all come together and exchange experience and of course give inspiration to each other.



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Building research networks in intricate subjects. Experiences and reflections from a research project on equity in education

Introduction

The complexities and challenges of the work in research networks are remarkable when we are to deal with intricate subject areas. However, in the conditions of our times where increasing accumulation of knowledge has become a main feature networking and cross national research is a need in the field of education as much as in any other academic field. There is, possibly, no need to argue much in favour of cross national research work and cooperation in the field of education.

The myth of the solitary scientist in search of truth is a romantic notion whose continued existence serves as a major barrier to progress in bringing the collective weight of the sciences to bear on the problems of humankind. And the idea that all scientific progress takes place within the boundaries of current disciplines is historically invalid and currently counterproductive. (Cahan & Pagner, 1994, p. 1)

This perspective will be particularly useful when we later on analyse the different research approaches to equity. This article tries to briefly analyse the process of international networking that has been carried out within one of the studies of the project "What about equivalence? The concept of equivalence and its different interpretations in different contexts, in different educational policy levels and school practices". This three years' project was funded by the Swedish Research Council and has been carried out by a research team from the Department of Education, Örebro University, Sweden. A main aim of the article is to call the attention of the various problematic arising from the common work of educational experts having different research backgrounds and traditions. It also attempts to highlight that despite the complexities and various kinds of obstacles the outcomes of such an enterprise can be extremely positive. The article might also serve as ground for deeper analysis about the structure and work content of cross national research networks.

This article is finally the short 'story' of a network that started just as many others; a dialogue between three educational researchers, in this case from Belgium and Sweden, on the idea of exploring together a particular issue, namely present trends, challenges and impact of current decentralization and centralization policies in education in Europe. This might appear to the reader an intention with a rather broad focus, to say the least. So was also the feeling of the initial small group, which included the author of this article, trying to find a common ground to work together. It is important to remark that the initial small group or 'cell' as we might call it, was largely concerned with different trends in the education development in the respective countries and the impact this was having in educational practices, particularly in the pupils in different levels of compulsory education. The problem was then, where to start a joint, cross national, research effort! International workshops as a forum to 'sharpen' joint research intentions

Further discussions among the experts who are here referred as the original 'cell' were held during the spring meeting, 2001, of the Comenius Association of European Teacher Educator's Institutions in Klingenthal, France. A common concern was to identify what will be the subject in focus within a variety of factors that appeared to be both constraining and supporting in relation to the problem to be dealt with. There was also a need to have an exchange about our methodological, theoretical and conceptual approaches. Organizing a research workshop was considered to be the most appropriate way to proceed. Here the intention was not just to present the perspectives of the different scholars participating but having a particular content frame; the ambition was to present contributions which might serve to illustrate the different methodological, theoretical and conceptual constructs we were using in the analysis.

With this background the international research workshop "Decentralisation and centralisation policies in education in Europe. Current trends and challenges" was held at Örebro University, March 21-23, 2002. A starting point for the discussion was the shared notion that decentralisation and centralisation in education is an issue with consequences both for the current academic discourse and for policy making. A preliminary assumption that was to be further discussed in the workshop was the existence at European level of what could be considered two main forces having a major impact in educational policies. First: the ideal of a common European identity, an economical and social community, which claims for common goals, unified policies, that is centralization. The second group of forces can be related to the importance of the individual and local level to be involved in decision making in education, the diminishing of the role of central authorities and the partnership market & education. This was assumed to claim for decentralization in educational policies (Moreno Herrera, 2002).

Questions to be further discussed in the workshop were: In which ways this apparently 'opposite forces' could strive towards the same goals? Which criticism could be put forward to the approach presented above? Are there other perspectives to consider when scrutinising decentralisation and centralisation in education?, and finally, what is possible to do in terms of research to approach this problematic? These central questions, together with the presentations from a few keynote speakers and the papers from the experts interested in the network were expected to provide the grounds for the further work. It was also expected to reach an 'agreement' about the focus of the research work. In summary the workshop searched to be a forum to:

- *Present and discuss the main features of the decentralizations processes taking place in education at various levels in different European countries.*
- *To discuss and reflect upon the*



challenges that decentralisation is posing to education in various respects, e.g., teacher training, educational leadership, and quality of public education.

• To discuss and outline a research project and establish the bases for further networking.

The workshop indeed reached the expected goals in terms of 'familiarization' with the different methodological, theoretical and conceptual perspective of the possible network members (cf., Moreno Herrera & Francia, 2002). The final discussion within this workshop, the so called "Where to go from here?", was valuable in indicating best path for research and networking. First, the discussion of the various presentations showed that within the different impacts of decentralization and centralization policies in education there was one of particular concern to all the experts' participants: the implications for equity. Again the differences in conceptual and language background of the participants brought forward for discussion another problematic, i.e., conceptualization. Issues that for some participants were associated to equity, others will relate it to equality or equivalence; this was the case both for the analysis of educational policies as for the analysis of practices (for a deeper discussion on conceptualization see Moreno Herrera, 2003). The methodological approaches of the different contributions became some how the "Pandora box" in the process of continuing the network; very different and contrasting methodological positions were presented. The question "Where to go from here?" had then another dimension to consider, i.e., what kind of research 'tools' will be used to approach the problem.

Re-sharpening in order to continue advancing

The different issues and questions arising from the first research workshop lightened the path and suggested the need to continue sharing our different perspectives, this time with a narrower focus. While the first workshop allowed having an initial knowledge of the different methodological, theoretical and conceptual aspects we were handling, a second meeting should help to re-sharpen it. This time the intention was not just a 'familiarization' exercise but a detailed inquiry which will help the network to decide the specific line to follow. It is worth remarking here that the whole networking was made within specific frames established in earlier mentioned project. What about equivalence? In other words, the networking, the possible changes in focus, could be done as long as the

specific frames and aims of the original project will not be jeopardized.

The international research workshop "Educational policies in Europe. Implications for equity/ equality" was held at Örebro University, October 9-11, 2003. With the earlier presented background in this occasion the workshop was aimed to deepen the discussion about the implications of the current educational policies for equity/equality. Similarly in structure to the first workshop the keynote speeches as well as the papers from participants were expected to bring forward current perspectives and discussions on the issue at national and European level.

The specific aim was to make the workshop a forum for:

- *Presenting and discussing main issues concerning the implications for equity/equality of the current educational policies in different countries (mainly European).*
- *Discussing what concepts, theoretical grounds and indicators are used to approach the subject at issue.*
- *Discussing the extent to which the current discourse on equity/equality in other European educational systems relates to the Swedish discourse.*
- *Continuing the networking for further research on the subject.*

The various presentations and final outcomes of this second research workshop largely matched the expectations concerning the re-sharpening that was due of the joint effort of the network (cf., Moreno Herrera & Francia, 2004). Aspects highlighted in the contributions to this workshop by Englund (2004), Gewirtz (2004) and Pepin (2004) became tenet for the further enquiry and indeed for the advance of the networking surpassing the "obstacles" from the differences in methodological, theoretical and conceptual approaches. So far the main aspects can be summarised as follows:

- *The need to understand the concepts, equity in this case, considering their context of interpretation and enactment.*
- *The need to have a historical-evolutional perspective where the specific contextual political and educational discourse will be considered.*
- *Finally, the importance to consider that it is not enough to seek equivalence in comparative research design, perhaps not even entirely possible in intricate topics such as equity.*

The contributions of this second workshop were also a valuable material to conclude an identification of three main approaches to equity that started to be slightly visible already in the more general discussions of the first workshop. The first approach to be practices, where the focus of the enquiry is mainly on what is possible and implemented in specific settings and the tensions associated. A second is curriculum theory, where notions of equity are analyzed using discourse and text analysis following an historical perspective on curriculum and education's development. Finally, a third approach where the focus of attention is on indicators used to argue whether specific policies and practices are equitable or not (Moreno Herrera, 2004).

With an understanding of joint research work as an activity where different methodological, theoretical and conceptual approaches could coexist and complement each other, a call for a symposium and research workshop was then issued. The author of this article, who was one of the convenors, viewed this third meeting as a possibility to explore the kind of outcomes that could come out from concentrating the focus of the scholar in the network on a very specific issue within the various dimensions of equity. This specific aspect to explore was equity practices.

Rolling on paved road – consolidation of the research network

One of the main agreements of the mentioned second workshop was to develop further the joint research by contributing with national analysis on a very specific dimension of equity. With this background a symposium followed by research workshop was held with the heading

"Enacting Equity in Europe: Towards a comparison of equitable practices in different local contexts",
Crete, September 22-25, 2004.

In line with the mentioned intentions to concentrate on a specific aspect, the aim of this symposium was to explore, compare and evaluate the different ways in which equity is realized or enacted in different European contexts. The rationale was that whilst much research on equity actually focuses on inequity, one of the distinctive features of this symposium was that it was focused on positive attempts to achieve equity in education. Another distinctive feature of the symposium was the ambition that in evaluating these attempts to realise equity the participants will take seriously what is possible in specific local contexts, rather than just what is desirable.



The network members, representing five European countries were requested to examine a concrete case of education policy makers or practitioners attempting to achieve a more equitable educational policy or practice. These cases were then to be used to form the focus of a comparative discussion about the ways in which practical dilemmas relating to the enactment of equity are experienced and negotiated in different local contexts and with what consequences. The outcome of the symposium was expected to be a more detailed analysis of the different understandings of equity, the different constraints on equity and the different possibilities of enacting equitable practices in education in different European contexts. This understanding could then be used to inform more sophisticated comparative theories and evaluations of equity in education. The symposium was expected to be a substantial contribution to the further joint research exchange that has been carried out so far.

The symposium was underpinned by an interest in how equity can be achieved in real world situations and by a conceptual framework which: views equity as multi-faceted, appreciates that different facets of equity may be in tension with each other, is concerned with the mediated nature of equity practices and their level and context dependence. The symposium was followed by a research workshop. Whereas in the symposium the papers and cases from the different countries were presented, the research workshop session was aimed to investigate the ways in which we could actually compare the different equitable practices across regional, national and cultural boundaries, in particular considering methodological issues.

A central tenet in the workshop was the acceptance that there are different notions of social justice, and within those notions likely to be different facets, and between those facets likely to be different tensions, then it is important to taking these into account when considering methodological issues and the research design. The expectations was then to find, or create, methodological ways and tools to adequately 'measure' those different facets of social justice and the tensions between them. How can this be realised in a study of equitable practices in classrooms in different countries, was a central question of discussion.

In the first part of the research workshop the convenor outlined the potential strengths and weaknesses of comparative work in methodological terms, and related the issues raised to the study of comparing 'enacted

equity' in different European contexts. In the second part the authors (network members) were to raise and discuss particular issues connected to their individual contribution, and how these could be dealt with. In the third part the audience was encouraged to contribute and work interactively with the research team, in order to develop a deeper understanding of the comparative and theoretical issues. The following questions were discussed:

In which ways is it possible to explore equitable practices in different countries?, Is the classroom a suitable setting?, To what extent are the identified ways methodologically (and practically) 'sound'?; What are the different conceptions of equity in play and how can we understand these differences?; What are the features of the different contexts and levels that appear to make some things possible and others not?

The Research Workshop was of interactive nature and included contributions from five different European countries. A main intention was to highlight and discuss methodological issues involved in comparing equitable practices across European settings and cultures.

The outcomes from this symposium and research workshop indeed proved the 'maturity' of the network. It was a concrete example that different positions could not simply coexist but also complement each other in the research process regardless of how intricate the subject could be. The symposium and research workshop became at the same time forum were the ground of a new research project were discussed.

New targets and ambitions – Excellence in the network's activity

The above mentioned symposium and research workshop strongly suggested that what has so far been a network built on the bases of a research agenda designed within research project which has primarily a national focus could be broadened and become in itself a cross national project. A review of the experiences and the process gone through by the experts cooperating showed that the conditions to work with such a research design were already created. The network has reached a level of excellence in its overall functioning and was ready for new and more demanding challenges.

With this background on March 2005 the research project "Fighting educational inequalities: national and international

analyses" was submitted with an application for funds to the Socrates Program of the European Commission. After a period consultations within the network Professors Marc Demeuse, University of Mons-Hainaut, and Vincent Dupriez, Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium, assumed main responsibility with coordinating the planning process.

In terms of the contents and the development of the research focus there was an agreement within the network with the assumption that fighting inequalities in education requires a thorough understanding of the causes of the important differences among students, schools and countries shown by international databases. Some characteristics of the school organisation have a high relation with indices of school equality. Especially it appears that three forms of differentiation of pupils' trajectories have a strong influence: the use of grade retention, the length of a common-core curriculum (opposite to a tracking system) and the intensity of differences between individual schools in terms of social and academic composition. In other words, the more a school system is implementing a logic of differentiation between pupils, the more one finds inequality of opportunities (measured through a high dependence of school achievement to familiar resources) and high level of underachievement. But quantitative analysis constructed through secondary analysis of international databases are only a step for the comprehension of this issue (Application 2005).

The main aim of the research project which the network is expected to carry out is to deepen the analysis of the contribution of school systems to equality of opportunities and to high achievements for most pupils. More specifically, this study will be conducted:

To identify the policies and programmes set up at age 14/15 for pupils with low achievement (the 10 % of pupils with lowest achievement, excepting children with diagnosed disability moved to special education programs): In which grade do we find them? In which schools and classrooms? In a specific track? In a context of special programmes? With specific resources? To identify who are the 10 % students with lowest achievements, in terms of sex, social class, nationality, parents' qualifications and professional occupation (when data are available).

To select in every school system three groups of pupils (within three classrooms) at age 14/15 with low achievements and to describe



and analyse:

Their specific position with reference to the wider school structure and school curriculum (choosing the groups in reference to the usual situation of lowest pupils). Educational practices in these pupils' classrooms (3 language lessons to be observed in every classroom) in terms of social interactions, cognitive stimulations, teachers' feedback and time on task. Pupils' perceptions about their school experience Teachers' conceptions of school role in terms of equality and equalisation of opportunities. (Application, 2005, p. 23-24)

The formulation of the aim and specific areas that will be explored is perhaps the best expression of the significant advance in quality of the network cooperation. It is worth stressing here that in this new research design scholars representing the three earlier mentioned main approaches to equity has been involved. The possibility for and convenience of this joint work of researchers with different methodological, theoretical and conceptual background but who shares a common concern and understanding of the problem has here an excellent practical expression (cf. Moreno Herrera, 2004).

Concluding remarks

One the first aspects as a conclusion to this article is to ask the question, does every project or cross national network has to go through the process of sharpening, re-sharpening, consolidation and excellence that has been presented here? The answer is definitely, not! The different stages of the process of development followed by any research network will always depend, among others, on the subject matter, the research background and interest of the participant scholars. One can perhaps not wrongly assume that scholars from different contexts dealing with more structured subjects or research problems will have easier to draw a common research platform. In intricate areas such as equity this story, possibly with variations in the content of the different stages, is likely to be repeated.

A learning experience from this 'story' is that many of the challenges that educational researcher and practitioners are facing today can best be answered by long-term coordinated efforts by international scholars working together. The outcomes make the effort to be worthy. The result will always be a much deeper and more sophisticated understanding of the complexities of the problems we are dealing with.

Educational research can provide not just professionals but all concerned with learning, knowledge creation, the politics of knowledge, and cultural studies with a means to adopt a critical stance and formulate strategies [...] that lead to real changes in practice. (Schostak, 2003, p.1)

This is particularly the case with the efforts in networking and cross national joint studies of equity in education.

Acknowledgments

My gratitude to the colleagues from Belgium, Finland, France, UK and Sweden who from the very beginning participated in the activities of the network and never loss the confidence that we will find a solid ground to work together!

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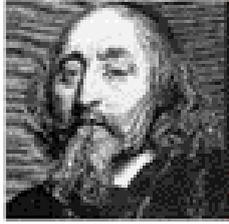
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The proposal of the symposium and research workshop was a result of joint work of Professor Sharon Gewirtz, Senior Lecturer Birgit Pepin and the author of this article. Professor Gewirtz made the original draft, Senior lecturer Pepin and the author are responsible for the final structuring of the symposium and research workshop as presented here.

The research workshop session was lead by Senior Lecturer Birgit Pepin, Oxford Brooks University, UK. The formulation and decision of the contents of the research workshop is a result of joint work of Pepin and the author.

A proposal of special issue for a research journal which gathers most of the contribution of this symposium/research workshop has already been submitted to the European Journal of Education (05-06-20).



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COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

As the title of this text indicates, I have borrowed a concept that educationists often use. I found this concept valuable when trying to elaborate on my experiences as a participant in the Erasmus Programme on Teacher Mobility.

Here is a little background information. I lecture in Pedagogy, a Greek-inspired word that roughly translates as Educational Theory in the English language. I also teach students who are studying Special Education. I am an assistant professor in the Department of Education at the University of Stavanger, in Norway. Last year (2004), I was offered a teaching staff mobility grant and I visited InHaarlem University in Haarlem, The Netherlands. I found the visit so rewarding and educative, that I applied for a new grant this year (2005). This time I was welcomed at St.Marys's University College in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

The concept "Communities of practice" can in many ways, be used to describe the educative experiences that I had participating two years in a row in the Erasmus programme through the teaching mobility project. In that context, I make use of the concept in a very restricted way, but to me the notion of "Communities of practice" awakens many ideas and thoughts that apply to this situation. I have borrowed the concept from Wenger. He describes communities of practice as both long lasting, passing from generation to generation, as well as more temporary but sufficiently intensive enough communities to support a local practice and thus change the identity of the involved (2003). Wenger focused on learning as 'a characteristic of practice' and described practices as 'ways of negotiating meaning through social action', as stated by Ainscow et al (2003: 227).

As a participant in the Erasmus Programme on Teaching Mobility, I have had the chance to participate in different communities of practice, only temporarily, but nevertheless in ways supportive and challenging to my own personal and professional identity. Participating in these practices has been, as I see it, a way of negotiating meaning through social practice. Coming from one cultural background, meeting another one (even though Norway /The Netherlands/Northern Ireland are not the most different ones) "forces" one into negotiating meaning. That is meaning in the sense of becoming aware of our experiences at home and how these experiences relate to similar experiences in the visiting countries. As John Dewey, once said "Communication is sharing experiences until they become common experiences". This is not to suggest that we necessarily have to agree with each other's different views, but that we become aware of different ways of seeing. Some important issues related to my field have been questions such as:

How do we understand the theory and practice of education?

What is the main agenda in our schools?

What are the most important issues to be dealt with?

How should we deal with these issues?

What areas are especially important in teacher education at InHaarlem and St. Mary's, compared to teacher education at the University of Stavanger?

What things are common and what things are different?

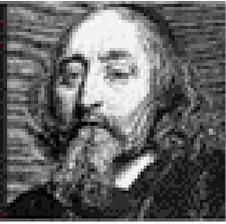
What can we learn from each other's experiences?

How should we prepare future teachers for future classrooms?

I work within the area of inclusive education. The Salamanca Statement (1994) underpins the right of all children to a common education in their locality regardless of their background, attainment or disability and emphasises how important it is to provide good quality education for learners and a community based education for all (Vislie, 2002). In Norway, inclusive education is a guiding principle, and, increasingly, a growing practice.

To cite White Paper 30, Culture for Learning (2003-2004:85): 'Equal, inclusive and adapted education are overall principles in school. This means that education must be accessible to everyone, and that everyone shall be offered good opportunities to learn, achieve and develop'. In Norway, inclusive education has a history longer than the Salamanca Statement. An important decision was made in 1975, when the Special Education Act from 1951 was revoked and Special Education was made part of the General Education system. All children are now offered community-based education, but there is still a constant debate on how to understand the concept of inclusive education and how to organize our schools so they can develop into inclusive schools for all students.

This debate is going on in both The Netherlands and Northern Ireland, and I was invited into different schools, to see and discuss how they worked on this issue. Some of the dilemmas that inclusive education represents can be illustrated through two of these visits. In The Netherlands, teachers at a school for



children with speech and language problems were concerned, because an increasing community-based education in many ways disintegrated the expertise that had accumulated at this school and the solid learning environment they felt they had to offer to these children. The question arises as to how society should include children with special needs in mainstream schools, and still give them the extra support they need and at the same time develop an inclusive practice in the mainstream setting. The Northern Ireland school system, as I understand it, is different from the Norwegian one, because children are often placed in different classes or schools according to ability. In Norway, all children have the right to attend their local school, irrespective of ability or background. In Belfast, a principal at a Catholic secondary school in a working class area said ‘...we don’t believe one size fits all. To me inclusive education is making these boys come to school, and to stay here...’ They way he did so, was to organize the pupils in different ability groups in some important subjects. He also adjusted the teaching, content and methods to the different needs of his students. ‘These boys need competences that help them in their daily life, out on the streets and this is what we at our school aim to give them. What we have experienced, is when we have organized ourselves this way, more of our pupils stay on in school’.

Meeting colleagues from different countries can shed new light on important issues and challenge one’s perceptions. How do we perceive the concept of inclusive education? What theoretical foundation is linked to the area? What kind of research is carried out in relation to this field at the different teacher colleges? I also was involved in discussing questions related to inclusive education with undergraduate students, through giving lectures on the issue.

What made both my visits educative was the chance they offered me to participate in various communities of practice, and thus to make meaning through social practice. Returning home, I brought ideas and thoughts that I am still working on and struggling with. Some of my experiences have been passed on to my students, in teaching and discussions, and, in this way, those experiences have become part of my more continuing community of practice. Being a visiting lecturer at a non-Norwegian university has also made me become more aware of how important it is to invite visiting teachers into my own teaching.

As I said at the outset, being a participant in these communities of practice has supported and challenged me both professionally and personally. The challenge is there, clearly, when you go somewhere for the first time, teaching, visiting, socialising in a different culture and in a different language than your mother tongue. The support, I found, was also there in the way I was met and invited in, and how things were well taken care of and organized for me. As Paul Anthony, the International Coordinator at St.Mary’s University College describes it, it is more than just a visit, we are talking about ‘The Erasmus experience’!

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Internationalisation in Higher Education. Reflections and Visions after the first year on the job as international coordinator

Manuals on organisation management prescribe that developments should be strategic and focussed. But what happens in reality? Maybe an organic and broad-spectrum approach is more efficient?

This is a suggestion for a new applied research project.

CVU Sønderjylland is a merger of four former independent institutions for undergraduate studies – teachers, social educators, nurses, and visual designers.

Each of the institutions has their own culture and history.

The college of teacher education (formerly Haderslev Statsseminarium) is the oldest and the largest and still plays a predominant role in the CVU.

In the 90's the college of teacher education was an active partner in the RIF network (Reseau d'Institution de Formation). The RIF was a large pilot project prior to the Comenius programme. Some of the other members of the Association Comenius were also partners.

In Haderslev Intensive Programmes took place almost every year. We had teacher exchanges and some students took part in Intensive Programmes or had periods of teaching practice in other countries.

In 1998 a departmental order prohibited teacher students to undertake parts of their compulsory teaching practice abroad. This caused a sudden fall of mobility, not only in Haderslev, but also at all other colleges of teacher education in Denmark.

In Haderslev the international activities were cut down for several years.

A few projects between Nordic partners, supported by the Nordplus-programme, were running at the School for Nurses and at the college for social educators. The students for social education were still allowed to practice abroad during their studies.

An Erasmus charter was achieved in 2003. However, the number of Erasmus bilateral agreements was kept to a minimum. International coordination was left to the administration, and only Gudmund Tybjerg maintained the membership of Association Comenius during the years of stagnation.

This was the case when I took over in February 2005 as international coordinator.

The conditions and the context had changed in between.

- In the spring of 2004 the Government launched a strategy boosting internationalisation in higher education and in education in general – at least this was the intention.

Especially mobility of students and teachers is to be increased.

- Furthermore the 16 Centres of Higher Education in Denmark have been invited to apply for a "University college" label, which among other demands imply that we should increase international activities.

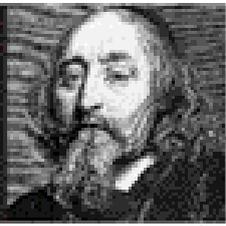
- The management of the CVU Sønderjylland is positive and supportive. Our International department has got its own budget, including a part-time assistant and myself on half-time basis. At each of the departments international coordinators are responsible for the practical implications of student mobility.

I got free hands to develop the area. No commission was made, nothing was written down, no procedures, no strategies. For me as a new coordinator this was a wishful way of starting. From my PhD study on internationalisation in schools I had learned that practising is more important than planning. An elastic vision is better than a narrow strategy.

The process towards internationalisation should be organic, rather than focussed. Some institutions might choose to select a few skilled and devoted teachers to undertake international activities – on the contrary we would like to involve as many teachers as possible. Therefore, we would like to take part in many, also smaller, activities, rather than a few large projects.

This somehow anarchistic sort of organisation development demands support and trust from the management and "fertile soil" – the organisation culture should be ready for change. In order to measure this readiness I sent out a questionnaire to all employees at all departments inclusive technical-administrative personnel. The respondents were asked about their experience with international activities and their interest in taking part in the future. They were also asked about their language proficiency and whether they would like to improve.

About 60% of all members of staff have returned the questionnaire. This shows a wide interest. It does not matter if 30-40% are lazy or even against internationalisation as long as the management and the majority are proactive.



As a result of wishes in the investigation an English course for the teachers was offered which was very soon oversubscribed. The course will be repeated in the autumn and also a course in German will become offered.

Based upon practice and reflections on practice during the first year we have now launched a vision. The vision is to improve the quality of education and to develop intercultural competence in teachers and students.

We believed that quality rises automatically when colleagues meet across the borders and observe how similar tasks can be solved differently. You become aware of the strengths and weaknesses of your own system when you are exposed to other ways of teaching and learning. We have realised from the PISA-investigations that our school system is not at all the best in the world (which some of us have thought for years), so we have to learn from other countries.

The concept of competence is well defined in the EU's Memorandum on Lifelong Learning from 2000: The Capacity to use effectively Skills, Knowledge and Experience. Personal experience on cultural encounters is crucial for the development of intercultural competence.

Intercultural competence is according to OECD's DeSeCo project one out of three meta competences for the future: The capacity to join and work in socially heterogeneous groups. For the teachers the challenge is to plan programmes where the students can achieve sufficient skills and knowledge to join and work in social heterogeneous groups. The rest is learning through experience.

Internationalisation of the institution means that the Centre becomes geared to cooperate internationally.

In our vision we have stated four criteria of success:

Impact, Continuity, Visibility, and Professionalism. Many teachers and students are to participate, the international activities should tie the various departments together, and activities should have a long lasting impact. Information and outcomes are disseminated internally and externally as well as at national and international conferences. Professional refers to communication and accounts and making no mistakes. NO – we have not succeeded! We are just at the very beginning of the internationalisation process.

We are happy to be a member of Association Comenius. The association is a well-functioning framework for exchanges and projects.

We ought to invite new members in the association, especially from new members states of the EC.

My suggestions is that we should extend cooperation on international projects, also in terms of applied research-projects. We should exploit the excellent opportunity that international coordinators meet twice a year to investigate how internationalisation can take place in institutions for higher education. What are the incentives and what are the barriers? How can we as international coordinators stimulate the process of internationalisation, pooling and analysing our own experiences? This short article can be taken as a first contribution.



Travelling - Experiencing - Learning



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Semana Coménius, Uma janela para a Europa!

A participação em algumas semanas Comenius, em diferentes locais (Santarém, Barcelona e Valência), foi de extrema importância para minha auto-formação pessoal, como para a minha formação académica, foi como que uma janela que se abriu na minha vida para novas culturas e novas pessoas, foi uma janela para a Europa! É uma forma de aproximar jovens, culturas e educações diferentes com o objectivo de enriquecimento pessoal dos participantes. Neste artigo vou relatar as minhas experiências muito enriquecedoras, que vivi durante as 5 semanas Coménius em que participei.

No início do ano lectivo 2002/2003 através do Professor George Camacho fiquei a ter conhecimento da Semanas Coménius, sendo esse o começo de algumas experiências que tiveram muita importância na minha evolução como pessoa e como futuro profissional, experiências essas que serviram alargar os meus horizontes e ter uma visão mais elaborada e crítica da sociedade em que estou inserido.

A minha primeira experiência foi na Semana Comenius em Santarém, em Abril de 2003, e foi de tal forma interessante que nunca mais parei! E esse é o grande aliciante deste tipo de programa, ficamos sempre com vontade de repetir no ano seguinte, ou até partir para um Erasmus!

A primeira vez que participei, fora do meu país, foi, em Fevereiro de 2004, em Valência, uma cidade que me encantou e à qual pretendo voltar, um dia! A família que me acolheu foi fantástica, tendo-me mostrado todas as qualidades humanas do povo valenciano. Durante a semana contactei com uma realidade diferente e conheci estudantes de outros países (Espanha, Holanda, Bélgica, Áustria, Estónia, entre outros). Esta aventura despertou em mim a vontade de voltar a participar no programa, mas desta vez na cidade dos meus sonhos, Barcelona!

Participei, novamente na semana Comenius em Santarém, em Abril de 2004, tendo conhecido pessoas muito interessantes e com culturas diferentes.

Mas o meu grande sonho, só se iria realizar em Março de 2005, com a participação na semana Comenius na grande cidade Conda, Barcelona! Uma cidade linda, cheia de cultura e mística. A qual sonhava visitar há já alguns anos, mas a qual, só tive essa possibilidade de visitar através da participação na semana Comenius, a semana funciona também como um meio para irmos a locais, a que desejamos ir, mas que de outra forma, nos são inacessíveis. Esta semana, foi uma das semanas mais gratificantes da minha vida, pois além de ter conhecido uma cidade maravilhosa, conheci pessoas fantásticas, que nunca irei esquecer, confirmando-se tudo de bom que pensava da cultura catalã. Para mim, Barcelona será, para sempre, a cidade do sonho! Tive a possibilidade, uma vez mais, de conhecer estudantes de alguns países da Europa

(Espanha, Holanda, Bélgica, Noruega, entre outros), e trocar experiências e conhecimentos, no programa da semana pode conhecer o sistema educativo espanhol e alargar os meus conhecimentos. Foi, sem dúvida, uma semana inesquecível! A última semana em que participei, foi em Abril de 2005 em Santarém, sendo esta, uma vez mais, muito interessante e tendo conhecido pessoas que nunca irei esquecer!

Através da participação nestas semanas pude conhecer pessoas fantásticas e fazer amigos que ficam para toda a vida, tornando-me mais que um cidadão de Portugal, um cidadão do Mundo!

Por isso, penso que todos os estudantes deveriam participar neste tipo de programas, para que possam conhecer novas realidades para poderem ver as qualidades e os defeitos da sua realidade. E não esquecer, que o conhecimento não ocupa espaço, e que todas as experiências são importantes para a nossa formação como pessoas e como futuros profissionais.

Espero que este tipo de programa se continue a realizar, se possível com mais destinos, pois são de grande importância para os estudantes que desejam conhecer o Mundo!

Muito obrigado, por tudo o que me foi possibilitado conhecer!



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The ERASMUS Experience in Nijmegen

I have been studying at university now for nearly four years and throughout these years I have lived at home in Belfast with my parents. By living at home I felt that I had missed out on a great opportunity to be independent and truly experience student life. In my first year of study in St Mary's the Erasmus programme was presented to me and I believed that this would be a great opportunity. I thought that through the programme I would be able to not only experience student life but also student life in another country. I also felt that it would broaden my horizons and introduce me to other cultures. I did however have to think very seriously about whether or not I wanted to live away from home. It would be my first time away from my family, my boyfriend and my friends and this would be in a foreign country for three months. However the positive reasons outweighed the negative and I decided to be brave and join the Erasmus experience. When I first arrived in Holland I really did not know what to expect, from the college, the way of life etc. I was extremely nervous and frightened but this changed very quickly.

I had many thoughts at what studying in Nijmegen would be like and some of these made me feel nervous. I was frightened that I would find the work difficult and that it would not be interesting or relevant to what I am studying at home in Belfast. However my experience in Nijmegen was the opposite of this. Pabo the university at which I studied at in Nijmegen was very similar to St Mary's. The university was around the same size with similar class sizes. Teaching methods were also very similar, we even did curriculum studies. I felt although, there was a more relaxed atmosphere at the Pabo and lecturer/pupil relations were better. I found it easier in Nijmegen to approach lecturers to ask for advice. Whilst studying in Nijmegen I did two days teaching practice in a Dutch school and two days in the college at classes. Whilst on teaching practice I taught English and Irish culture. This gave me great confidence and has introduced me to new methods of teaching. At the start it was difficult teaching children whose language was not the same as yours but soon I developed the ability to communicate with them, not always through words. I discovered

that a direct look at a child who is misbehaving is better than scolding them. My two days of classes at the Pabo were made up of curriculum studies, Intervention and OWG. Intervention is where you discuss in a small group and with a lecturer how you are doing in your teaching practice. This gives you an opportunity to discuss problems, get feedback but also to offer your advice to others. This was a great opportunity to hear other people's opinions and point of view on problems you were having. OWG was a problem solving session. At the beginning of the class a situation (problem) was presented. As a class we then had to solve this problem and do some research. The problems presented were normally problems faced by teacher in every day life in a school. These sessions were extremely relevant to me as a student teacher. It gave me the opportunity to discuss problems that I would face as a teacher such as discipline and seek the advice of others. This generated many differing ideas especially in a class with so many people from different countries. We were able to hear the opinion and experience of other people, cultures and countries. This was something that I really enjoyed and felt my education in St Mary's lacked.

My main reason for taking part in the Erasmus experience was to experience a different culture and way of life. Whilst in Holland I had plenty of opportunity to do this. In the first week of arriving in Holland a trip was organised for international students to the west of Holland. On this we visited the windmills at Kinderdijk - typical Dutch scenery, the Hague, Delft and Rotterdam. This was a brilliant experience, we saw around Holland as well as got to know each other better however the weather was terrible and most of the time we were freezing. Out of these places my favourite was The Hague so much so that in my last week when the weather was better I visited it again. I feel that this city especially the Peace Palace and the Houses of Parliament is a must see when visiting Holland more so than Amsterdam. I did however visit Amsterdam more than once but was not overly impressed. I feel that there are other cities in Holland nicer than Amsterdam to visit although the museums in Amsterdam especially the Van Gogh and the

Anne Frank house are a must see.

You could spend hours walking around the Van Gogh museum. One of the main cultural events that took place when I was in Holland was Carnival. This is a festival that takes place before Lent. There are parades, people dress up in fancy dress and children are given sweets. We had to travel to a nearby village to see this but it was definitely worth while. People put such a lot of effort into their costumes and the atmosphere was amazing. It was a great day!

The social life that I experience whilst living in Nijmegen revolved around the student accommodation in which I lived in. In Vossenveld it is very difficult to get one minute's peace away from the buzz of people coming in and out. Very often at night there were up to twenty people sitting in the living room. This however was extremely welcoming and comforting when I first arrived in the Netherlands. I rarely found myself bored in Nijmegen. We went disco bowling, had themed parties, had country evenings where we would eat food from a particular country, we went out to bars and clubs, went to the cinema, shopping and of course we cycled! I found living in Nijmegen very enjoyable. Nijmegen is of similar size to Belfast so it was very easy to settle in and how I entertained myself there was also very similar to what I do in Belfast. However there was one main difference. We cycled everywhere, even out to night clubs and bars which is very difficult in stiletto heels. This would often result in a long journey home. I really enjoyed the social life in Nijmegen but I think this was enhanced by the people that I met. I met some wonderful people I became extremely close to three girls from Poland. For me this was the best thing about Erasmus, meeting people from other countries and cultures.



Guidelines for future students (going to Nijmegen)

Do's for Erasmus in Nijmegen

Bring warm clothes – very cold in winter
Watch the weight of your suitcase – very expensive if over weight

Have internet banking – useful to keep track of money
Bring photographs of home – useful to decorate blank walls
Have your own money apart from Erasmus money- shopping is good and you will want to travel.
Buy a bicycle – easiest way to travel and taxis are expensive
Buy a train discount card – get tickets half price.
Bring things from home – saves your family trying to post anything out to you.
Buy a sim card for your mobile phone. Only 10 euro to buy and text messages home are only 3 cents
Travel – very central to everywhere in Nijmegen.
Experience Carnival in a typical Dutch town
Bring a puncture repair kit – very useful
Try to sell your bike when finished with it or buy one in a shop that will give you some money for it after three months.
If you have a lap top bring it with you – rooms in Vossenveld have internet access.

Don'ts for Erasmus in Nijmegen

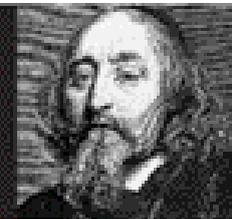
Pack too many dressy clothes or stiletto heels
Expect your accommodation to be like your home – it will be basic!!!
Bring too much cash – bank link card works in Nijmegen
Expect to be able to get food from home – try new types of food.
Go with your best friend – you will not meet as many new people
Forget to buy your train ticket – charged an extra 21 euro on the train.
Drink too much then try to cycle home – very dangerous.
Expect it to be a holiday – you have lectures every day and work to do for them.
Use your mobile from home when there – very expensive
Go to Amsterdam at the weekend – very busy and queues to museums are very long.
Let people visit you in your first couple of weeks – it can upset you when you are just settling in.
Use taxis by yourself – very expensive unless the taxi is full
Leave booking flights to the last minute – very expensive
Leave work to do for St Mary's before you go to the last minute. You will have a lot to organise.

I had some expectations as to what I wanted to get out of the Erasmus experience. Erasmus for me was about having the opportunity to be independent, meet people from other counties and being able to experience a different culture. I expected that while I was in Holland I would experience Dutch culture, become familiar with the Dutch educational system and meet Dutch people. I wanted to become more open minded as a person and mature as a teacher. My experience in Holland fulfilled most of these expectations however I was not in contact with as many Dutch people as I would have liked. This was due to the fact that I lived and studied with international students. This experience definitely taught me how to be more independent and gave me a taste of real student life with money constraints, parties etc. I had never experienced this in Ireland as I live at home. I did however really enjoy the student life in Holland and having to fend for myself has given me a much more mature outlook on life. I now appreciate the little things at home much more.

Overall I feel that the Erasmus programme was extremely worthwhile and I would definitely recommend Nijmegen to any student who is thinking of going on Erasmus. The programme in Nijmegen educational, social and cultural was full and varied. We had plenty of opportunities to travel and see around us and lectures were worthwhile and relevant to studies in Belfast.

In fact I feel that my experience in Nijmegen has developed me as a person but also as a professional. It has given me confidence and courage to not to be afraid to try out new things or travel to other places but also has given me the experience of different more relaxed methods of teaching. I really enjoyed the Erasmus experience and if I had the choice now I would go on Erasmus again.





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Comenius Week CVU Sønderjylland, February 27 to March 4, 2005

Language across borders

Abstract

Students and teachers walking down the corridor outside the kitchen of home economics at Haderslev Teachers' College on a winter's day in the beginning of March heard a lot of noise and became quite hungry from the smells of food coming from the kitchen. If they had looked in they would have seen about 14 young people speaking in different tongues – but mostly in English – some dancing and rehearsing to loud music, others peeling potatoes or cooking vegetables, and still others discussing what clothes to wear for the fancy dress party at the college later that night. What they would have seen was our international guests from Belgium, Germany, Spain and Holland cooking and preparing a nice farewell party for their Danish hosts on the last day of the international week in Haderslev, Denmark.

CVU Sønderjylland (Centre for Higher Education in Southern Jutland) in Haderslev has been a "sleeping" partner in the Comenius Network for a couple of years; however, after a process of reorganisation we have woken up again! As one of the first steps towards more internationalisation in our college we planned an international Comenius week in the Spring of 2005 with a programme connected to the topic: language across borders.

Our institution is situated in the southern part of Denmark, very close to the German border. There are minority groups on both sides of the border, and therefore the language situation across the border puts focus on the connection between language and identity.

In our study week 2005 we wanted to look at languages and language learning as an essential element in building our students' and school children's intercultural competence.

The programme started on Sunday February 27th with a get-together dinner at the college and an introduction to the week and our programme. We had some difficulties finding enough hosts, because none of our own students were planning to go abroad this year; however, we wanted to start our short exchanges anyway and thanks to our international assistant in the college office, we managed to find a place for all our visiting students.

Monday was dedicated to learning some Danish, hearing about bilingualism in Denmark and the history of our region from some of our colleagues at the CVU. The Danish lessons were a success – Danish students taught our guests a few important words and phrases to "survive" and be able to get into contact with the Danes in Haderslev. Late afternoon there was a tour of the old renaissance town of Haderslev, and our visitors were delighted about the white snow falling (and also happy that we had warned them that it could be very cold in Denmark in February!! – they had all brought winter boots and heavy coats. . .).

Thus having been introduced to the region, the language and the town it was time for the international group to start working on "language learning", esp. early language learning. On Tuesday we were so lucky to have a lecture on Early Language Learning by Professor Maria Felberbauer from our partner college in Vienna, "Pädagogische Akademie der Erzdiözese Wien". We had invited her to

come during the international week on a teacher exchange programme. In groups the European students visited schools in Haderslev to see how English was taught to young children in Denmark. It was a shock to some students to experience how much freedom of movement and choice the Danish children had in the classroom – for better and for worse?! On the same day one of our lecturers at the college made use of the nursery rhymes, chants, children's songs brought from the students' home countries in a session dedicated to working on the learning potential of songs and rhymes. There were performances and new songs learned across cultures and languages.

Both Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon there were workshops to attend – either in music, dance or crafts. These were very popular, and at the end of the week we all saw the result of the dance workshop – our international students made a wonderful jazz dance performance in the students' café!

Wednesday morning saw more school visits – to an international class of 16-year-olds who told our exchange students about Denmark in English or German. By now we think our guests had got a fairly good impression of what it is like to go to school in Denmark. Later that day Maria Felberbauer introduced the European Language Portfolio to everyone interested, and it is a project that could be relevant for more Comenius programmes! One of the most popular events for our visiting students was probably the evening in the students' bar at the college. It opened especially for our visitors to be entertained, and there was live music, played by student bands, and a great atmosphere in the basement club, while the world outside was becoming



white and quiet from more snow falling. Excursion day was Thursday. A bus took everyone to our southern neighbour, Aabenraa, for visits at the college of social educators and Højskolen Østersøen— a Danish “Highschool”. At the college everyone made a short video film, a great success!! Also Friday started with a visit to a school, this time the German minority school in Haderslev. This visit was really very demanding linguistically to everyone involved, and it proved the necessity of knowing more languages. Again the link was made between language and identity in an intercultural environment. Now our guests thought they had Friday afternoon off!! But no, we kept them in a tight programme, so they went back to the college to cook and prepare the farewell party mentioned initially in this account. Recipes had been brought from home, and the rest of us enjoyed a very exciting and interesting meal of many dishes (most of these consisting of potatoes in various editions), and there was a good, international atmosphere. Many of the hosts and guests went to the fancy-dress party afterwards, arranged by the Students’ Union at the CVU College, and that was the very last event of a tough schedule in week 10. Tired but happy we all said good bye with the hope of seeing each other again - in Haderslev or at one of the other Comenius Network institutions.

Here in Haderslev we realised after the busy week that we have to revise the programme somewhat for next year. We had prepared a rather full and academic programme, which had hardly left any room for spontaneous social activities, getting a closer look at Haderslev and its surroundings, or spending time with the host families; all activities that would have called for the students’ intercultural competences.

Most importantly though, all the visiting students, the hosts and the staff involved were satisfied with the week, and we are going to stick to the idea of a topic for the exchange week. Next year, we also hope to send out a lot of Danish students to our partner institutions. Now they know more about what wonderful cultural, social and personal experiences they are missing out on by not going abroad on a short – or long – exchange programme. See you, Europe!



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Comenius Exchanges between Barcelona and Haarlem

The Comenius Association facilitates exchanges at a university level in Europe in order to get to know in detail the educational system of another country, as well as some cultural and tourist aspects. The program has two parts: one consisting of a one-week stay at a university student's and you take part of the activities that the university organises, and another when roles are swapped, and we take in our international friend.

The exchange took place from 7 to 11 of February, 2005. It had two parts: one to live together with a family from the country, who we would share many moments with; and another more academic part, where we were taught about the educational system in the Netherlands.

The experience started some time before we left when, through Internet, this wonderful invention that allows us to communicate with the entire world instantaneously; I got in touch with the person that was to take me in. We explained things to each other, asked about our lives, our families, about the place we were to live for a week... It is funny to talk about my environment with someone you don't know but, at the same time, it is exciting to get to know things about what will be your home and your family for some days. Thus, what with questions, exchanging information about arrivals and exits, conversations dealing with doubts at a cultural level, and asking for words in our mother tongues, days went by.

Finally, D day arrived. The first part of the exchange started: take the plane, travel, collect luggage, and meet the family and a friend of my Dutch friend, who was my first guide around the city.

I spent the weekend with the family, going sightseeing and visiting new places and friends of the family. It was an amusing weekend, with many surprises and new things, and with many, many memories to keep. After the weekend, Monday was there and with it a week full of activities organised to cover all levels: cultural, social, leisure, and entertaining.

he week started with full energy, with a very complete program including: tourist and cultural visits in the city of Haarlem, where we saw the historical streets of the old Flemish city, the medieval churches, sculptures of very important characters in Dutch history, museums that depict through their paintings the artistic years that the city lived; a guided visit to the city of Amsterdam, where we discovered many buildings that have a long history of meaning and memories, the museum-house of Anna Frank, known for the diary she wrote while hiding from Jewish persecution during the Second World War, streets and markets with many flowers...; a whole day in the practice school of our exchange student, something that meant a great experience, and a big change for me, because Teacher Training studies are planned very differently depending on the country; finally, it is worth mentioning the workshops and lectures that the university organised for all of us, all the international students that were together for a week. Workshops were very varied, aimed at promoting global education, based on experimentation and favouring diversity of levels inside the classroom. With this point of view as the main objective, we attended to lectures about music language as a source of expression at different levels. We took part in a workshop where they explained the importance of manipulation for learning and consolidation of what we acquire as new, and we carried out an activity along the streets of the city to put this into practice. It was really interesting, and even more, to see how people from different countries were trying to reach an agreement, everyone with their own particular English accent. Also all the explanations about the Dutch educational system, with the diverse possibilities it offers, both for special educational needs and for the intervention of parents and their role in the relation family-school, were compared among the different countries.

In Haarlem, there were students from six different countries: Belgium (students from the French area, and from the Flemish area), Turkey, Sweden, Norway, and Spain (from the cities of Madrid and Barcelona), with cooperation from Dutch students. In total, seventeen students from different countries took part in the program; besides, in some occasions, students in the Erasmus program joined the international group, leaving their classes to participate in the lectures specially organised for us.

Despite the diversity of countries, the quantity and variety of accents, the cultural differences (time habits, meals, different tastes...), we were very soon a very close-knit group, with a good atmosphere among us, which helped in the active participation in all activities. And although we lived far from each other, the relation that developed during those few days overcome that distance and was no obstacle to go on excursions and parties. From Barcelona, there were only two of us, but this did not mean that our participation was poor.

At a general level, I would like to insist on the positive assessment I have of this exchange through the Comenius Association program, because I think that it is a big chance to get to know another country, another culture, another system, people, a different way of doing things... in short, it is a huge chance to discover many things that we don't know and to get a closer look of another world, with many surprises and people willing to teach us many things. Taking advantage of such an opportunity is taking advantage of a different way of training at the personal level and in a quite global manner, as there are many aspects that can educate us both at a personal and professional level.



HELENA ALFAIATE

Helena Alfaiate

Escola Superior de Educação de Santarém/Portugal

Era uma vez...

Era uma vez.....duas jovens estudantes portuguesas que acordaram numa terra muito distante da sua: Mechelen (Bélgica). Com expectativa continuaram a explorar o local, aí depararam-se com uma vasta diferença cultural, e embora possuíssem formas de pensar diferentes, reuniram-se apenas com o único objectivo: o de tratar a violência e alargar a representações acerca do conceito da mesma. Nessa noite tiveram a oportunidade de se conhecer e perceber como tinham ido ali parar. Partiram, então, em busca de uma nova visão acerca da violência em meio escolar e pelo caminho adquiriram uma nova identidade – a identidade europeia. Identidade essa que cada vez faz mais sentido numa comunidade aberta e flexível como a União Europeia.

Faziam parte de um Programa Intensivo Erasmus, que tinha duas vertentes. A primeira semana passou pela parte teórica e a segunda semana pela prática. Desta forma, no primeiro dia procurou-se descobrir quais as faces de violência e qual a sua origem, tendo-se elaborado, através de equipas multiculturais, um esquema representativo do que era a violência, suas causas e formas. Uma das causas apontadas para o despoletar da violência foi a distribuição das riquezas e assim, foi-lhes proposto um jogo que consistia perceber a repartição da população mundial pela riqueza, sendo cada cadeira representava uma parte da riqueza. Este jogo possibilitou compreender os desequilíbrios demográficos, económicos e ecológicos entre os diferentes continentes. Ao anoitecer foram surpreendidos por um festival Eurovisão preparado pelos representantes de Madrid, em que todos participaram, tendo as representantes portuguesas ficado no honradíssimo terceiro lugar, representando o grupo musical “ Los del Rio”.

No dia seguinte, caminharam todos para a universidade, dispostos a trabalhar mais uma vez as questões acerca da violência. Assim, foi traçada uma linha que dividia a sala em partes iguais, e à medida que a monitora nomeava acções cada um posicionava-se conforme considera-se se estas eram actos violentos ou não, permitindo ver as diferenças de opinião baseadas nas diferentes culturas. Posteriormente, tiveram oportunidade de aprender a “linguagem da girafa”, que baseava-se na comunicação não violenta de factos, sentimentos, necessidades

e desejos, mostrando a importância de um mediador que teria como funções promover o conhecimento do grupo, uma boa forma de comunicação entre os membros e a gestão dos conflitos. Nesta noite, houve a animação dos representantes da Holanda, que consistiu em diversas dinâmicas de grupo que poderiam vir a ser utilizadas juntos de crianças.

No terceiro dia intensivo, foi-lhes proporcionado a desconstrução do conceito de violência, através de oradores privilegiados, levando a uma alteração das concepções que cada um possuía no início do programa. Chegada a noite, as representantes da Suécia deram-lhes a provar um pouco da sua comida e bebida, assim como a aprendizagem de uma música e de dinâmicas de grupo típicas suecas.

No quarto dia, partiram rumo a um local cuja história transmitia uma violência extrema – Campo de Concentração Brendonk. Aqui foi-lhes permitido reviver o sofrimento daqueles que deram a vida para que todos fossem livres. Tratando-se de um local que a todos causou tristeza e angústia, o que levou a pensar que a prevenção da violência é algo prioritário junto de crianças, na medida, em que estes são os homens e mulheres de amanhã. À noite as representantes Irlandesas prendaram-nas com a oportunidade de provarmos a sua famosa bebida – a cerveja. Chegado o fim-de-semana, partiram à descoberta de Bruxelas. Ali puderam observar a construção das casas, as ruas, os agrupamentos urbanos, as lojas e os monumentos, vendo estes como factores que podem contribuir para a violência.

Depois de um merecido descanso, voltaram a encontrar-se e em grupos de dois elementos foram visitar escolas primárias da cidade de Mechelen, com o objectivo de observar o comportamento dos alunos e professores e perceber o funcionamento da escola. À tarde, foi-lhes apresentado o projecto “Linkedness” que se baseava no princípio de religar as crianças para prevenir a delinquência. Religar no sentido de voltar a ligá-las a elas próprias, aos outros, ao ambiente e à sociedade. Esta nova visão, permitiu-lhes perceber a realidade da delinquência numa outra perspectiva. A animação desta noite partiu dos

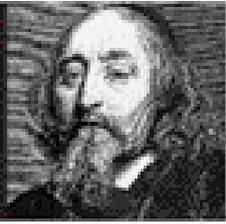
representantes de Valência e Barcelona, que os levaram a conhecer Espanha, através de música e gastronomia diversificada.

Os dois dias seguintes foram inteiramente dedicados a workshops práticos onde lhes eram fornecidas pistas acerca das estratégias a utilizar na prevenção da violência junto de crianças. Assim, passaram pela experiência da educação física, da educação musical, do treino da inteligência emocional e do exercício de artes marciais. Na primeira noite foi a oportunidade das portuguesas darem a conhecer o seu país, organizando uma gincana que se intitulava “Viagem a Portugal”.

O momento seguinte foi a construção, em grupos multiculturais, de um projecto de intervenção que pudesse responder à necessidade de combater a violência em meio escolar. No entanto, e apesar das estudantes portuguesas se terem empenhado bastante na concepção deste, sentiram que através das técnicas em Educação Social teriam ido mais além e criado algo com mais substância. Para além disso, ainda existia o factor língua, que dificultava a expressão das suas ideias. A última animação coube aos representantes belgas, que lhes proporcionaram dois Workshops, acerca das duas coisas mais típicas do país: chocolate e cerveja.

Chegou, assim, o dia da apresentação dos projectos. Todos aparentavam algum nervosismo e apesar das expectativas das representantes de Portugal não serem muito positivas, alguns dos trabalhos apresentados possuíam bastante qualidade técnica e científica. Na noite da despedida, todos os participantes e professores foram jantar a um restaurante típico de Mechelen, onde receberam a confirmação de que o seu sonho estava a chegar ao fim: o certificado de participação.

No dia seguinte quando acordaram estavam de partida para o seu país Natal, levando na sua bagagem novos amigos, uma visão mais alargada do que é a violência e acima de tudo uma identidade europeia muito mais demarcada.
“Vitória, vitória acabou-se a história!”



BATES Maeve

ERASMUS Student
St Patrick's College
DUBLIN

"Approaching Violence in order to avoid it, a European Challenge"

From the 14th to the 25th of February I attended a 2 week, European Intensive Programme in Mechelen, in north Belgium. The programme was entitled "Approaching Violence in order to avoid it, a European Challenge". The programme was enriched beyond measure by the international presence of 30 international students who travelled from disparate parts of Europe. Students from Spain; Sweden; Ireland; Portugal; Holland; Belgium and The Congo gathered together with Mechelen Hogeschool as our hub. Animated and intricate discussions erupted thanks to this cultural diversity. Contrasts and comparisons between systems in place in different countries and attitudes towards violence according to cultural values, broadened the scope and context of our study of violence in society. One such instance involved a workshop where statements were made such as:

- A teacher being frequently delayed at the beginning of a lesson
- Sexual harassment on a girl by boys from another class
- The strongest students claiming as their own the only tennis table available
- Supplying haschisch inside the school
- A too small canteen for a large number of students
- A teacher's brutality towards a provoking pupil
- A fight among pupils
- Damaged car of a teacher (scratches on the body)
- Exaggerated attention for well-known trademark clothes
- Cans left on tables or sills
- Smoking a joint as a group at the end of a corridor

Each person then had to display his opinion by standing either far left from the "neutral line" to indicate his opposition and far right to display his agreement. This activity, followed by group discussions proved to be a revelatory display of cultural differences in values and attitudes to violence.

In addition, cultural evenings reinforced the celebration of our international group. Mouth watering, Belgian chocolate; beer; Swedish vodka; cheese and bread tasting as well as traditional dances, games and songs filled up our evenings!

The programme itself was steeped in pedagogy in that the activities and workshops were interactive, challenging and were often applicable to classroom settings for those involved in teaching. Examples of these dynamic workshops and activities include a guided tour of Breendock Detention Camp, a Sociological study in Brussels on the impact of town planning on behavioural violence, and music and drama workshops.

The most striking features of the programme which have resonated with me are the friends that I made and who I have already visited since the programme. I was also haunted by the visit to Breendock. Harrowing scenes of torture and despair echoed through the empty torture chambers and rooms. An image which is imprinted in my mind is that of one inmate's lasting legacy - a painting of the radiant face of Jesus in his cell.

In conclusion, the programme has deconstructed my concept of violence and revealed how one's values are culturally specific and are informed by the media as well as by one's social group. In my opinion, violence and power are inextricably linked, the only way to break the cycle of violence is for people to use their power in a democratic, non-aggressive manner through discussion, mediation and through analysing the source of violence and the goal of the person in the seat of power.



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How the Other Half Live (and are educated, work etc.....)

Having been interested in travel and study abroad for as long as I can remember, the opportunity to become involved in the Erasmus Programme at St Mary's University College seemed too good an opportunity to pass up. Grateful to survive my first full academic year teaching at third level, I approached Paul Anthony, the International Officer within the college, to register my interest in becoming a co-ordinator on the programme. As a result, I am looking forward to taking up my new position in the next academic year with responsibility for students visiting Leeuwarden in the Netherlands. As part of my welcome 'on board', I was invited to consider submitting a short article to the Comenius Magazine on a topic of my choice that would have relevance to those participating in study or work abroad. What follows is a brief reminiscence of my own education-related travels overseas with some words of encouragement especially for those unsure as yet if they should avail of such an opportunity.

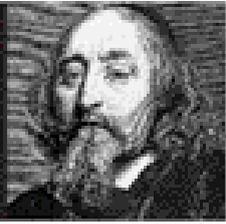
Seizing the Chance to Go Abroad

Having graduated from St Mary's University College in the summer of 1991, I knew I had finally reached a point where I was ready to explore beyond Northern Ireland and for that matter the United Kingdom. Unlike many of you reading this article, I did not look initially to Europe but to North America. I have had a long-standing love affair with the United States and visited it quite often over the years.

Therefore, it seemed only natural to pursue my wish to experience life and work there, if only for a year. However, without finances and limited professional experience I realised quickly that I needed to secure a job and procure sufficient funds to support myself wherever I should end up teaching overseas. Fortunately I managed to obtain employment in a single-sex, inner Belfast city primary school. This gave me the much needed professional experience I required if I seriously wanted to present myself as a potential candidate for a work placement abroad. I was cognisant of the fact that any agency I might apply to for consideration would most likely be inundated with applications of all kinds...good...very good...and excellent. This meant that I really needed to gain expertise in an area of my choice. In my case this happened to be early years' literacy/reading instruction. Therefore, I made a point of reading diverse literature on the topic and attending as many in-service seminars and conferences as my school's budget would allow. In the meantime, I contacted the Central Bureau Agency and set the wheels in motion. Thankfully, I was successful in achieving a Fulbright Scholarship on the Teacher Exchange Programme for the academic year 1996/97. As I geared myself up for a great time in New York City, my exchangee notified me late in the process that she had decided to withdraw from the programme. Disappointed but undeterred I applied again but this time I nominated a potential exchangee – the colleague of a family friend. This time it worked!

The Reality of Living and Working Overseas

Taking up a placement in a second grade class (7-8 year olds) in Oceanside California was, in many respects the dream you might imagine it would be. A complete change of climate (some of the children had never seen snow before), scenery, culture and education was breath-taking. In fact, I believe that this experience marked the turning point in both my personal and professional development. I met people of different colours, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, religious persuasions and family units and this served to refresh and broaden my mind especially having been raised and educated in a largely white, English-speaking, religiously-segregated society. I had the good fortune to be invited into the homes and to experience the various cultural and religious celebrations of many of my students and their families (Cinco de Mayo [celebration of Mexican victory over the French at the Battle of Puebla], 4th of July [American Independence Day], Jehovah Witness Information Meeting etc.). One family actually took me on holiday to Lake Tahoe, Nevada as a personal thank you for teaching their son! I supplemented this travel with journeys to Yosemite Park, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Las Vegas, and the Grand Canyon, with a final trip to Hawaii.



In professional terms, it enabled me to participate in a range of pedagogical practices that at that time were only beginning to emerge in Northern Ireland, especially in my field of interest – early years’ literacy/reading instruction. Although I had so much to learn despite my previous years of classroom experience I found it exhilarating and challenging...the way I felt teaching should be. I got to attend stimulating in-service courses that were given by motivated practitioners who were equally as interested in my ‘Irish’ perspective as I was in theirs. This gave me a gateway into providing professional development courses for my own staff and other colleagues within my Education and Library Board area on my return home.

I also experienced a different kind of staff culture that I hadn’t previously known and this was a welcome bonus to my year abroad. I was given the opportunity to serve on various councils and committees with responsibility for an array of professional and recreational matters within the school and wider district. Many of my colleagues regularly arranged fun activities and evening get-togethers after school as a means of strengthening staff relations.

Lessons Learnt Along the Way.....

As I look back with hindsight, perhaps one of the most valuable outcomes of this venture has been the rich and unique opportunity it presented me with in order to achieve my PhD...another long-standing, hankering ambition of mine. In a sense, I felt that by putting the culmination of my international experiences together with my interest in early years’ literacy/reading instruction in the form of a doctorate, I had solved a curiosity in myself that brought with it a feeling of satisfaction and completion.

If I could offer any words of advice, they would be simply...go for it! I had all the same apprehensions and worries that perspective Erasmus students have when faced with the decision to avail of this programme or not. Yes, I did feel lonely and overwhelmed at times but I also felt extremely privileged to be chosen for such an endeavour. It is only for a short period of time but the possibilities for personal and professional growth are real and worthwhile. I have no doubt that participating in such programmes will leave an indelible mark on your life forever. My parting thought to you is that as the years roll by your life moves to a new place and often with this shift comes greater family and work-related responsibilities. Therefore, to take up this sort of opportunity in the future may be less easy depending on your circumstances. Whatever you choose to do...I wish you well.



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ERASMUS in St. Mary's University College, Belfast

Gdansk. September 27th. 5.00 am, 2004. I am standing in a line of passengers at the airport, waiting for my turn to have the ticket checked. I am wondering what Belfast is going to be like. I have never been to any English-spoken country before so my fear of being not understood or not understanding others is almost paralysing. Apart from that I will be there on my own with no one I really know and no one who really knows me. I am absolutely scared. This feeling is so overwhelming that bottles up the excitement and curiosity of what awaits me in the other end of Europe.

And now I am here in Belfast. Hours are ticking away, only two weeks left to see my country again. It is time to look back on those almost three months I spent in the capital of Northern Ireland.

As far as academic study is concerned I chose subjects that would help me not only develop my skills as a future teacher but also my general knowledge and myself. It was quite hard to choose subjects that would overlap with those Polish ones as in Poland English is taught as a foreign language while in Northern Ireland it is a mother tongue for most people. But finally despite all difficulties I signed for English Curriculum classes which I enjoyed. It was a wonderful opportunity to learn about education in Northern Ireland, techniques used during lessons, ways of assessment etc. (some of them are being introduced in Poland, like for example holistic approach toward teaching). I found also many ideas very useful in my further teaching like for instance 'Literacy Hour'. And although it has many opponents, I will definitely take several elements of this method back to my country and make use of it during classes. The teacher was very supportive and her classes were one of my favourite. By using various resources like videos, transparencies, handouts and others, she presented the material in a very comprehensible and interesting way. The most precious topics for me concerning teaching language by using literature were also included and discussed in the classroom. Writing about English Curriculum classes I have to mention

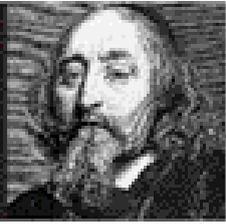
my School Experience at St John the Baptist Boys' Primary School which lasted three weeks and gave me a great opportunity to experience school life personally. I have to admit that before the Teaching Practice I had been very sceptical about teaching children and even a bit afraid of their spontaneity, energy and liveliness. Even in Poland I preferred to do my Teaching Practice at Secondary School not Primary so imagine when I was confronted with children that did not even speak my language at all. But the very first day I just fell in love with Primary 6C that I kept company through next three weeks. Their enthusiasm and fresh view on the world won my heart immediately. I spent also two days with Primary 4 as my teacher was sick and could not come to school (that is why I joined another class for some time). I was amazed at how quickly boys started to chat with me and almost treated me as one of them. We played 'Hide and seek' at the schoolyard during Lunchtime and had fun. Even boys from other classes, although they did not know me, did not feel shy or intimidated and talked to me or shouted 'Hi' every time they saw me (it was really sweet and flattering for me to be noticed by them). I should not forget about the teacher Mr Sam Murray who reminded me of Santa Claus with his pupils as elves?. He was a wonderful man who found a balance between being a respected teacher and a friend with whom you might have a good laugh. I think boys adored them. I would like to find one day this golden mean and become such a teacher. In the end of my School Experience we had a little farewell party with sweets, songs, role-plays and others. I took some pictures and promised to send them together with a postcard from Poland. I should also mention that I liked the classroom very much, it was well equipped, colourful and student-friendly. I will definitely take back to Poland methods and ways of managing the class that I could see. And although it might be difficult to putting it into practice in Poland where the education system is different from the one here, I will at least try to adapt some of them to the Polish reality. To sum up I think it was the most enjoyable part of my stay in Belfast and I really mean it. I think I did not

enjoy anything here as I did at St John the Baptist.

Moving further, lectures on Anglo-Irish literature were another subject I chose. Thanks to them I managed to overcome my fear of reading James Joyce. The lectures covered the most influential and towering figures of twentieth century Anglo-Irish literature. Some of them I knew only by name heard on TV or radio. Here I could learn something much more about them, get to know their biographies, cultural and historical background of their works. Although I found some pieces quite difficult to understand due to their tight connection to Irish history and mythology I could get through this layer with a help of lectures' content and books available in library.

Classes on 'Europe and its neighbours' helped me to understand the world around me, especially Europe. Poland is a fresh member of European Union so those classes were very useful for me. I have never been interested in politics, especially recently due to the myriad of affairs involving leading Polish politicians revealed by mass media. The classes made me realise that I should not turn blind eye on it or switch off TV while news because it is – the society – that should take interest and care in the world we live in.

Apart from academic study I took part in several cultural activities organised by St Mary's University College. I had a wonderful opportunity to meet people from Islamic country during Irish Evening, which was meant to introduce a delegation of students from the Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia into Irish culture. It was followed by a spontaneous lesson of traditional Irish dancing. Some of Erasmus students and students from Saudi-Arabia also presented their national dances which met a very loud applaud. On the next day thanks to presentation about the Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia I learnt more about lifestyle, culture and education of a very exotic for me part of the world. The formal part of presentation was followed by a friendly chat accompanied by original Arabic coffee spiced with cardamom



(tasted well... different), served with biscuits and dates (that was yummy!). It has been the first time I met people from Islamic country and I really enjoyed talking to them. Experiencing culture (I knew mainly from books or TV) which is so different not only from Polish but also European was an amazing feeling. And I still remember that 'Shukran' means 'thank you' in Arabic. Speaking about college activities I have to mention Eurovision Night. Believe me, the mere idea of singing in front of people makes my knees jelly-like and shake. So it took me long time to pluck up the courage and perform knowing there are people watching me. Although it was a huge challenge I can say I enjoyed it. Apart from that I enjoyed my first match ever which happened to be 'The International Rules – Ireland v Australia' and took place in Dublin. The atmosphere, the excitement of thousands supporters dressed and painted, shouting and crying was absolutely stunning. I have to admit that I found Gaelic football really interesting and believe me that is something because I hate sports, especially football so if I say I enjoyed it I must have gone mad or I really had fun! I also discovered my dark side as I felt the thrill of excitement watching players of opposite teams fighting, kicking and banging each other every fifteen minutes (not to mention the famous dog that ran into the pitch!). I should also mention the trip to Giants' Causeway which was impressive and I have to say that it felt a bit funny standing in the place that I knew only from postcard or photos. Also mural trip all over Belfast organised by Mr Peter Collins was unforgettable (what a pity, it was so short!), it helped me to understand the idea of murals and the conflict itself, it made me realize how easy is to start almost a regular war that spread all over streets of Northern Ireland and how the spiral of violence and vengeance turned into a vicious circle that people got trapped in. Thanks to my co-ordinator I also visited Belfast Castle, Giant's Ring and graves of Polish soldiers at the local cemetery – it all contributed to building my own picture of Northern Ireland with its painful history, marvellous landscapes and cultural heritage.

Regarding entertainment... Well... I am a typical loner and introvert so the whole idea of socialising and meeting new people always fills me with fear. Perhaps that is why my list of 'party-stuff' will not be very impressive although it does not mean that I did not enjoyed myself. Rather than parties and discos I prefer other ways of spending my free time. I have to admit that I got a bit discouraged after the Mystery Tour. I thought that Poles drink a lot but it showed me how wrong I was. I do not mind people drinking but looking at students falling down on the floor, getting stripped or doing really silly things did not belong to the most pleasant views (rather pathetic) and actually spoilt the whole evening. Instead of partying every night I walked a lot around Belfast. Those lonely walks gave me the opportunity to look at the city from a different, non-tourist point of view. On many occasions I spoke to people, even in shops (especially those small ones) I had some friendly chats, which was a really nice surprise for me because I do not experience it in Poland very often. Even such tiny things like asking for the way usually turned into a conversation and what I need to say is that people here would do anything to help you - they are really doing their best and are extremely polite. It is so different from my country where people more and more turn their back on you when you try to get some help. Moving further, I should mention visiting Botanic Gardens. I regret that I could not see it in spring or summer when all the flowers were blossoming and the plants were lush and vivid green. Straight from Botanic Gardens I went to Ulster Museum to see the exhibition 'The Art of Gardens' which was absolutely fabulous. I just fell in love with J.W. Waterhouse's and A. Hughes's paintings. The colours and the way they built the magical atmosphere on canvas were fantastic, marvellous, gorgeous (I am running of adjectives?). Those paintings trapped me and kept glued to them for a pretty long time as I just could not go further. Although I found the rest of works fascinating as well I could not resist the feeling that my heart belongs now to those two painters. Apart from exhibition I walked around the whole museum and had wonderful time admiring

contemporary art of glass, Egyptian mummies and thousands more. I have always associated museums with boring school trips and squeaking voice of the guide but Ulster Museum was far from that, actually miles, miles away. It was just so enjoyable! The knowledge was presented in such interesting, attractive and 'digestive' way that I would recommend it to everyone.

And I am not saying that you should go there only in educational purposes but just for sheer pleasure.

Another place I should mention is Colin Glen. I went there as boys from St John the Baptist said that it was a must?. And they were not wrong. The forest park was beautiful and much bigger than I thought in the beginning, I was wandering around it till (of course) I got a bit lost (congratulations, Daria!) but soon thanks to my scout skills (just kidding?! I found my way back. I really liked it, it reminded me a bit of home as I live near forest and often go for a walk there. I should not forget about St George's Market that I had an opportunity to visit both on Friday and Saturday I was stunned by delicious smells of bread, cheese, fresh fruit and vegetables and many many more surrounding me from every side. Speaking about food I should at least mention the way of beating calories so it is time for sports. I was really surprised to find myself playing volleyball or going to the gym because I am a typical couch potato and a famous opponent of moving limbs, especially if they are mine?. It gave me a lot of fun and thanks to volleyball trainings I met Valerie to whom I own a lot. She and her family not only invited me and Caroline for dinner to their house in the country but also kept cheering me up when I was really down and homesick. I have no words to express my gratitude. They did for me so much. I think thanks to them I experienced Irish hospitality in the purest form. Just to sum up, although my night life was not as diverse and glamorous as other students I do not regret those perhaps a bit quiet but interesting months. Trips (including the one to Derry – the place I knew only from U2 song 'Bloody Sunday')



which is one of my favourites), walks, going to the cinema (finally, I had no choice as to watch the film without the tempting option of switching on Polish subtitles ? which I practice at home. Here I was confronted only with English and believe me or not I improved my listening skills which belonged to my weak points) gave me the opportunity to not only enjoy myself but also to experience different culture.

As far as tips for new comers are regarded. Firstly, I should warn you about the sockets. Forget about those two-pins, here the ones that rule are three-pins so you had better have one with you. I spent really long time looking for a perfect plug? (Noel Grimley's staff might say something about it). It reminded a quest for Holy Grail, I was looking for it and looking for it and could not find. So if you want to spare yourself trouble, get this 'islandish' plug now! As a conclusion, I can say that 'looking back over my shoulder' as one group used to sing, I see those months spent in Belfast as... well... Perhaps I should put it this way. It was a tough lesson of life for me. I have never left home alone for such long time. It was a very drastic way of cutting this umbilical cord between me and my family and although I can feel I grew stronger I cannot say that those months were easy for me. I enjoyed some moments but to be honest I struggled not to give up myself to

despair. During my stay here I had this persistent feeling that I simply do not fit here, that this is not my place, that it is too big for me, too scary, too overwhelming. I know that I had a lot of people around me but it was not the case – actually I was trying to avoid people as much as I could because I felt so lost and did not want anyone to know about it. I know that when I come back home I will be more self-reliant and independent. I had to take care of myself here, prepare meals, wash clothes, think ahead about everything – I am glad about that, this is my little success. I wanted also to write something about studying here. I was not prepared for such relaxed and pleasant way of studying. I am used to discipline, frequents tests, assignments and exams and here I could forget about it. On one hand I was glad to have three months off Polish way of studying but on the other I got a bit lazy. I was also surprised with the relations between students and teachers in the college. I have been always taught that there is a border between those two and I should respect teachers and never cross this thin line. It might sound strange but I treat teachers as some 'above', someone I look up to. I am not able to chat with a teacher or joke or say things I say only to my peers. That is why I was surprised at very relaxed and friendly relationship between students and teachers. I think I failed as far as this matter is considered. I could not overcome my old habits and often remained

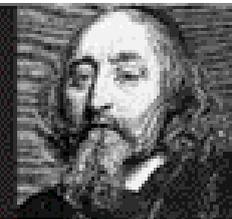
silent in presence of teachers which they could see as impolite (but believe me I did not mean that, that is just the way I am, the way I was taught). The other thing I found interesting was the attitude towards life. I have the impression that people here (at least those I met) live from one party to another, from one weekend to the next one. Even in magazines I could read long articles evolving round just having fun, fun and fun. Well... Perhaps I am getting old ? because I am talking like my own grandmother. All in all, I regard time spent in Belfast as a precious experience (even though living in Bostock House seemed impossible in the beginning). It gave me the opportunity to meet people from various parts of Europe, to get to know their opinions, views, thoughts and colourful personalities?. It was a good lesson while which I could confront many stereotypes about other nationalities with the reality and find out that people are much more than just a bunch of fixed views in our heads.



Dr. Marie-Paul Stinzi,
Chair of the Goethe Foundation



Klingenthal Castle in Alsace France, property of the Goethe Foundation which generously holds the Spring meeting of Association every year.



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