



NAPE

National Association for Primary Education

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March 2018

Media Release

Action Research

Six primary schools in Oxfordshire partnered by teachers from Belgium, Spain, Romania and Finland have completed a two year research project financed by Erasmus+. The project focused on the teaching of the European Competencies in Primary Education together with the related professional development of teachers and the evaluation of outcomes. There was an early decision to concentrate on four competencies. Two were related to the core of the curriculum, Communication in the Mother Tongue and Mathematical Competence. Two centred on wider aspects of child development, Learning to Learn and the Sense of Initiative and Entrepreneurship. Initially the children involved in the project were aged from eight to nine years.

The schools which represented the UK in this international project examined teaching and learning through children's experience gained through educational visits outside the classroom. The work was coordinated by the National Association for Primary Education and the approach to teaching and learning differed significantly from that of our European partners. There was early and unanimous agreement by representatives of the five countries that formal testing, either as a spur to learning or as a means of evaluation, should have no place in the project. From the outset there was complete confidence in the professional abilities of the teachers and heads to plan, carry out and evaluate the outcomes of the educational visits. It was appreciated that the principles and practice of the project ran counter to much current UK government policy.

Many useful insights were gained in the course of the research. The competencies were not taught in a specific manner but were subsumed within the school curriculum and assessment confirmed that children's individual learning needs were identified and met. All children gained both cognitively and affectively from the stimulus provided by the visits. However there was an indication that a number lacked confidence in directing their own learning. This was particularly true of vulnerable children and those who lacked parental support. Nevertheless the approach to learning through experience in the environment was found to be particularly valuable for such children. Teachers gained useful experience in exercising their professional judgement concerning pupil progress and teaching assistants enhanced and profited from their involvement outside the classroom.

The European competencies for the learning of conventional school subjects are covered by schools through the UK national curriculum and the wider school curriculum. It would be advantageous if the competencies could be listed as a more explicit element. The project clearly demonstrated that teachers and their schools should be allowed a considerable measure of freedom to exercise their professional skill and judgement. There was

tension between the work of the project and the UK government's requirement that core curriculum outcomes should be measured through formal testing.

A copy of the final evaluation of the project is available through the NAPE national office. Tel. 01604 647646 Email, nationaloffice@nape.org.uk.

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