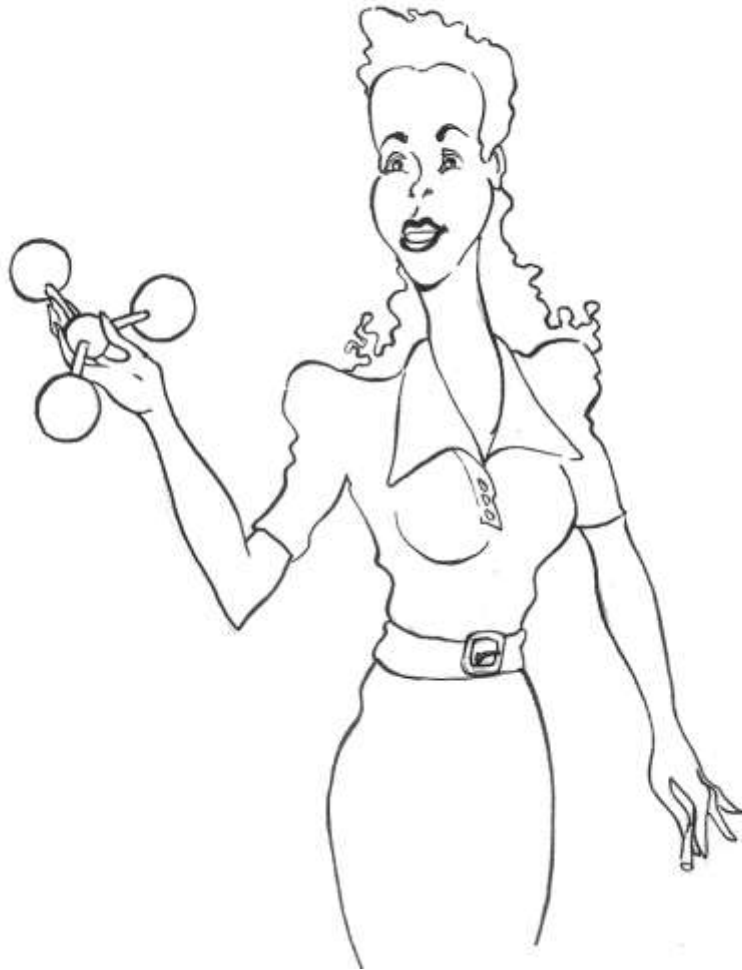**MObility framework and STandard for Teacher Trainees**

Publication 1

Contents

In search of a European Standard: the methodological journey[i]
Julie De Ganck

The aim of MOST, a three year Comenius 2.1. project, was to develop a European standard of competencies for the beginning teacher. The development of this standard was based on *action research* by the *mobility of teacher trainees* for the purpose of teaching practices and a joint evaluation for the recognition of it. Intensive efforts were made to develop *a structural framework to facilitate future mobility of student teachers and teacher trainees* within Europe. The application of the common system of credits (ECTS) and academic recognition was therefore implemented (see article *European Mobility of Teacher Trainees,* by Walter Baeten). Organising exchange programmes between different partner institutions is an important incentive to develop a shared understanding of the similarities and differences between the school systems of different European countries and to identify the key competencies a beginning teacher should possess to function in a European context.

In order to meet these objectives, every partner institution provided in a five weeks programme of modules and practice for the student teachers each project year. During preliminary meetings it was agreed that all project partners would contribute to the development of a framework for mobility of teacher trainees by sending 3 teacher trainees to each partner and by welcoming a total of 15 incoming teacher trainees for a five week period. Each partner was supposed to organise a five weeks' training

programme for a mixed group of 15 incoming and 15 local students (= internationalisation@home). Due to organisational factors not all nationalities were presented in each host country and divergence on the agreed number of incoming students occurred. Only in Belgium and Lithuania the incoming teacher trainees functioned in mixed groups with the local teacher trainees of the receiving institutions.

The mobility programmes for teacher trainees had a similar structure in all partner institutions; (i) two weeks of intensive training and education about the school system, culture and didactic vision of the partner institution, (ii) two weeks of practical training in secondary schools – pupils aged 10 to 18 year – and finally (iii) one week of evaluation, assessment and reflection.

1. The first project year: in search for a common language

The different mobility programmes were used to identify key teacher competences, in order to draw up a standard for the beginning teacher in a European context.

In the first project year the main focus was (i) the development of a building stone for comparative analysis of the existing national teacher standards and methods of assessment, and (ii) the confrontation of the different national assessment methods of the teaching training inside the exchange programmes.

In the first project year every partner institution had the autonomy to develop their own assessment criteria and to prepare independently self-reflection documents for the exchange students, since all participating countries had their own evaluation strategy and vision on which key competencies a beginning teacher must reach by the end of his teacher training programme. All these documents can be found on the Dokeos platform, which was constructed as a digital learning environment within the project and which is now replaced by the website www.most-comenius.eu.

In *the exchange programme of the Dutch speaking part of Belgium* assessment of the practice period of teacher trainees was based on the translation of key teacher competencies as formulated by the Flemish government and consisted out of 4 areas: (a) preparation, (b) communication, (c) attitudes and (d) realisation. Special self-reflection documents for teacher trainees

were developed and covered 5 domains; (a) 'my ups and downs' of the week, (b) retrospection on 'basic competencies of a good teacher', (c) retrospection on 'my attitudes', (d) action plan and (e) review of the training period as a preparation for a supervision meeting.

In *the exchange programme of Lithuania* assessment of pedagogical practice skills was based on 3 main competence requirements, (a) learner competence, (b) beginning teacher competence and (c) social competence. During the practice period students prepared a portfolio of competencies containing their own written self-assessments, mentor assessments, direct and indirect confirmations and evidence of competencies. They had to evaluate themselves as beginning teachers, learners and community members. During the practice period students kept a practice journal, based on Berthoff's method of double diary[ii].

In *the exchange programme of Malta,* assessment of teacher trainees' practice was based on 5 areas and corresponding assessment criteria; (a) professional knowledge, (b) the teaching and learning process, (c) management skills, (c) use of resources and ICT and (d) monitoring pupil learning. The exchange students had to write a final evaluation report, covering their opinions and feelings as to the various components that they experienced during the five week exchange programme. Each teacher trainees' group was given time to reflect on the various engagements, whether at the university, in schools or elsewhere and to critically address each one in the whole group. No special reflection documents were available for this purpose.

In *the exchange programme of Norway* teacher educators decided to focus on two assessment criteria for competence requirements; (a) teaching competence and (b) social competence. The mentors at the secondary schools used these criteria for assessment, making a summary through SWOT-analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), and wrote reports on fixed assessment sheets. During the training period, teacher trainees prepared portfolios containing a reflection on the exchange programme and comparative analysis of the different educational systems. No special reflection documents were available.

In *the exchange programme of Sweden* a combination of own evaluation documents (VFU[iii]-report) and assessment documents of partner institutions (Belgian guidelines for assessment) were used. Teacher trainees had to prepare portfolios covering self-reflections on the own teaching practice and a comparative analysis of the own educational system with the Swedish one.

In search of a shared language on beginning teacher competencies a grid or template was developed to map and to compare the similarities and divergences between the different national systems. This grid[iv] was used as a tool to develop the first draft of a European standard. It consists of 5 domains within which the different key competencies eventually were categorised; (a) teacher, (b) learner, (c) school community, (d) society, (e) means of assessment.

	BELGIUM	LITHUANIA	MALTA	NORWAY	SPAIN	SWEDEN
Teacher						
Learner						
School Community						
Society						
Means of assessment						

Figure 1: Grid for comparative analysis 1

During the first practice period teacher educators recorded lessons of the exchange students on video. This material could be viewed on the Dokeos learning platform. In this way the different partner institutions could independently assess these lessons from their own point of view. Afterwards all these lesson assessments were screened on teacher competences. These identified competences, together with the competences as formulated in the different national standards were translated according to the 5 levels of the grid. The result of this comparative analysis can be found in the document *In search of a shared language: from grid to a first draft of a European standard* on the project's website (www.most-comenius.eu). Only the skills, attitudes or knowledge requirements that were mentioned by more than half of the participating countries[v] were retained to draw up a first draft of a European Standard. In total 22 items (attitudes, skills or knowledge) were mentioned by 3 or more of the 5 countries which participated in the first project year. During a work seminar in the course of the transnational meeting in Ghent (October 2005) these 22 items were rearranged

according to 3 domains of competences: (a) competences on class level, (b) competences on school-community level, (c) competences on society level. This first draft of a European standard (Figure 2 & Figure 3) for the beginning teacher was translated into an assessment document for the second mobility programme by Christopher Bezzina (see the article *In search of a shared language: from grid to a first draft of a European standard* on the project's website*).* Compared to the first draft of the European standard slight changes on the level of language and content occurred in this assessment document.

**FIRST DRAFT OF A EUROPEAN STANDARD
FOR THE BEGINNING TEACHER**

1. Competences on Class level

1.1.   Language of instruction

- ❑   Shows proficiency in the language of instruction

1.2.   Lesson planning and preparation

- ❑   Designs tidy, orderly and clear lesson preparations which mention correctly the references of the used material and which are based on students knowledge and understanding
- ❑   Uses a range of resources
- ❑   Provides differentiated learning activities for individuals and groups on the basis of pupils' varying attitudes

1.3.   Implementation

- ❑   Shows mastery of subject content
- ❑   Demonstrates the capability to think out a functional organization and classroom arrangement
- ❑   Sets about the lesson personally and creatively
- ❑   Is able to teach in an enthusiastic, relaxed and inspiring manner
- ❑   Demonstrates willingness and ability to use and try out a variety of assessment methods and types of examination

1.4.   Learning environment

- ❑   Alongside pupils, contributes to a productive learning environment and good learning experiences

1.5.   Communication

- ❑   Communicates and works together with children and young people
- ❑   Demonstrates willingness and ability to understand and contribute to conflict resolution among pupils

1.6.   Assessment and evaluation

- ❑   Demonstrates willingness and ability to use and try out a variety of teaching and organizational methods
- ❑   Demonstrates ability to critically reflect on own and others' teaching
- ❑   Develops professional knowledge by reflecting upon subject knowledge and knowledge of teaching with different persons in the practice arena

Figure 2: First draft of a European Standard – Competences on Class Level

FIRST DRAFT OF A EUROPEAN STANDARD FOR THE BEGINNING TEACHER

2. Competences on School-community level

2.1. Communication

- ☐ Demonstrates willingness and ability to listen to, understand and take account of other people's views and perspectives
- ☐ Demonstrates willingness and ability to understand and contribute to conflict resolution among adults

2.2. School organization

- ☐ Alongside colleagues, contributes to a productive learning environment and good learning experiences'
- ☐ Participates actively in school life and participates constructively in subject meetings and class councils
- ☐ Plans, carries out, assesses and reflects on teaching and learning with different persons in the practice arena

3. Competences on Society level

3.1. Educational system

- ☐ Demonstrates willingness and ability to participate in discussions concerning various views of teaching and learning
- ☐ Bases teaching decisions on national and local curricula and on legal requirements

Figure 3: First draft of a European Standard – Competences on School – community and Society Level

2. The second project year: are we speaking the same language? The reality test.

The six participating countries used the assessment document they developed and agreed upon. The standard and the assessment document became useful instruments for teacher trainees to discuss the meaning of different standards from each country's point of view. It also gave us the opportunity to test and assess the validity and rigour of the first draft of the European standard through its use during the teaching practicum and through the discussions that were held with both students and teachers in the secondary schools. The application of the assessment document allowed the teacher educators and teacher trainees to appreciate the art and science of teaching. Whilst competencies allow us to note whether a student teacher possesses a particular skill, attitude or quality as manifested in particular classroom situations we also acknowledged that teaching and learning goes beyond such acts. Teaching is often based on a series of spontaneous acts that the teacher trainee engages in with others. It is here that we also learnt to appreciate the importance behind 'dialogue' between mentors and beginning teachers or teacher trainees. It is here that a lot of learning takes place. It is here that the mentor, the teacher trainee who has given the lesson and the other student teachers engage in a critical review of the various components of the lesson and the assessment document. This helped us to appreciate that such a template needs to be seen as a dynamic, living document in which the interactive component of the teaching process should be highlighted. It is

this discourse that allowed us to review and recommend changes to the assessment document and the European standard in the third project year. Another tool which contributed to the aim of standard development was the *Professional Development Portfolio* (PDP). The PDP was developed by Dr. Anton Cardona (Malta) both as an instrument for assessment and as a tool to promote reflection on teaching competencies a beginning teacher should possess. The template of *The Professional Development Portfolio,* as presented in this publication, was designed according to different activities offered in the second Maltese mobility programme. The other participating countries modified the Maltese template of the PDP to the reality and cultural context of their mobility activities. In most of the exchange programmes the portfolio played a critical role in motivating teacher trainees to appreciate the practical component behind teaching. Teacher trainees were encouraged to reflect on the various and varied experiences they engaged in. As the students stated, this was not easy for all of them. Some of the students came to this experience already fully aware of the importance behind the use of portfolios, the importance behind reflection and the need to develop into reflective practitioners. Those who did not have such an understanding (due to the fact they didn't have any prior teaching experience) found this hard to relate to, especially in the initial stages. However, as the days unfolded, most of the students took the exercises seriously and gathered insights to improve.

In the second year Prof. Dr. Christopher Bezzina developed an additional tool *'the visualisation exercise'* (presented in the article *Skilful Class*

Management on the project website*)* to reflect on and to identify beginning teacher competencies. Through this exercise teacher trainees were encouraged to visualise teachers that had influenced them in various ways –both in positive and negative-. Who are those teachers? What qualities and competencies did they possess that teacher trainees could relate to when they were young? And are such teachers inspiring to become teachers themselves? Those were the kind of questions we asked to the teacher trainees.

3. The third project year: looking back to the future

During a transnational meeting in Lithuania (September 2006) the validity and the relevance of the different documents used in the second exchange programmes were assessed. Different teacher educators as well as teacher trainees argued the assessment document was too detailed (41 competencies) compared to the more compact draft of the initial European standard (22 competencies). Too much focus on the teacher as an instructor and lecturer and too little on the relationship between pupils and teacher (trainee) was another remark. Different participants in the MOST project also postulated that those competencies a beginning teacher needs in order to include all pupils (also those with special needs) were lacking in the first draft of a shared assessment document. It was also argued that the duration of the mobility programme was too short to profoundly evaluate the competencies of the teacher trainees on the society level. After lengthy discussions during the transnational meeting,

and based on the feedback of teacher trainees and mentors, the assessment document and the first draft of the European standard have been reviewed. The results of this discourse can be found within this publication: *The molecular model of a European standard,* by Julie De Ganck. In the third mobility programme teacher trainees' work was assessed on the basis of the criteria mentioned in *our molecular model* of a European standard for the beginning teacher. For this purpose, the mentors or teacher educators used a corresponding assessment document, which protracted all the teacher competencies mentioned in the molecular model. This assessment document is offered on the project's website (www.most-comenius.eu). The project partners who worked with *The Professional Development Portfolio* agreed that the use of the portfolio helped the group of teacher trainees to develop collaboration skills as they engaged in various sessions of reflection. It was argued that the portfolio helped the people involved in the project to review the importance of 'reflection-on-action' and 'reflection-in-action'. Because of the positive feedback in relation to the use of the portfolio, only slight adaptations were made to make the document ready for the third exchange programme. Examples of students' portfolios in the third project year were put on the Dokeos learning platform and some examples of good practice are now presented on the project website (www.most-comenius.eu).

The experiences with the visualisation exercise were divergent. Some of the teacher educators warned quite rightly that this exercise only can be done within the context of a safe learning environment, as the recall of

old (sometimes less pleasant) school memories can be to some extent confronting for the participants. One of the significant points that came out through the results of the students' visualisation exercises and through discussing these results in the mobility groups was that a shift in perception can occur. Whilst we may relate to different teachers in positive or negative ways when we were young, our opinion can change when we grow older, mature and are able to identify with particular competencies expressed by significant teachers. This observation helped the participants to appreciate the complexity and delicate nature behind teaching. In the third project year all participating countries[vi] used a refined version of the visualisation exercise as presented in the article *Skilful Class Management: an introductory visualisation exercise.*

To promote a shared frame of reference with respect to the teaching practicum we also developed different classroom observation and evaluation sheets for the use of: (i) teacher trainees observing each other during the practice period in the secondary schools, (ii) teacher trainees observing lessons of secondary school teachers, (iii) pupils in the secondary schools observing teacher trainees in the mobility programme and (iv) secondary school teachers observing teacher trainees. All these classroom observation sheets can be found on the project's website (www.most-comenius.be).

4. The final evaluation: how do we feel about standards? Reflections and recommendations.

The third mobility programme demanded much of the people involved in the project; teacher trainees, teacher educators and mentors in the secondary schools. It wasn't always easy to run the varied research activities (visualisation exercise, observations and assessment tasks, portfolio, …) within a short period of time. The tasks identified were laudable and should be encouraged in future research and mobility programmes, but we also need to recognise that some of the documents need to be reviewed. In general the different observation tasks were welcomed positively by teacher trainees, mentors in the secondary schools and pupils observing student teachers. Although the time was limited, teacher trainees had some opportunity to both observe teachers in secondary schools and each other and to discuss the lessons afterwards. This helped students to reflect on basic teaching competencies and the various aspects of the teaching practice; preparation, implementation and review of the actual lesson. Different teacher educators and teacher trainees found the idea of observation and evaluation by pupils innovative and laudable in respect to identifying teacher competences. On the other hand some points of criticism should be taken into account. In Spain it is considered that an evaluation by pupils is based on an emotional feeling more than on pedagogical criteria, therefore it was not possible to let pupils observe and evaluate teacher trainees. The observation sheet for pupils was also too elaborate and we

also had to handle some language constraints. The classroom observation sheets need to be reviewed in this respect.

As was the case with the observation tasks, the major problem we had in using the assessment documents was the constraint of time within the school to be able to engage with all the competencies that we had identified. As the molecular model of the standard and the assessment document is divided into three main levels (class level, school-community level and society level) we were convinced that the best way to handle these documents was to practically spend quality time in the secondary schools where the mentors, teacher educators and teacher trainees could engage in different ways and not only centre on classroom activities. During the mobility programme at times it was impossible for the school-community and society level of competencies to be assessed since they could not easily be observed within the short time span of the exchange programme. To some extent the teaching practicum within the MOST project was far too short to allow for the in depth experience we had originally conceived. We are confident that with more time we would have been able to relate more profoundly with all levels of our European standard for the beginning teacher.

In general we can conclude that the final molecular model of a European standard and the corresponding assessment document proved to be useful and qualitative. Useful in the sense that it allowed a group of teacher educators from six different nations to come together. Given the diverse range of beginning teacher standards and assessment documents we came up with at the beginning of our project, we were able to develop

a shared European standard we could work with. This was the result of a long and intensive three year expedition in which teacher educators searched for a shared language in a mutually respectful attitude for each other's views on education. The documents were useful since we created reflective and pedagogical opportunities to use the standard in different socio-cultural contexts. We succeeded in developing a framework and possible standard for beginning teachers which cuts across different boundaries. The documents helped mentors to structure their reflections and to make final conclusions with respect to minimum competencies a beginning teacher should posses. We are convinced that the standard can serve as a valuable tool for comparative and pedagogical purposes within international mobility and research programmes.

A conclusion we have drawn in our intense discourse is that teaching and learning is a lifelong experience and we are confident that our discussion as to what competencies are needed for the beginning teacher in a European context doesn't end with the development of our molecular model. At the end of our project we still have unfinished debates on the meta-narrative behind the concept of 'standards'. Is an engagement in standard development congruent with a social-constructivist view on education? We enter more deeply into these kinds of discussions trough reflective journals of the different teacher educators we present in this publication.

In the reflective journal *A MOST interesting experience* the project partners of Sweden elaborate critically on the standard debate. In this article the writers principally make an inspiring description of the learning *process*

(from the perspective of both teacher educators and teacher trainees) that went with the development of a standard for the beginning teacher. Secondarily, the authors make an evaluation of the molecular model of the standard as a *product*. In an intelligible way the relevance of all documents and texts developed within the project is discussed. The authors argue that the standard suggested in the project doesn't pretend to be universal, but should be seen as one possible model to be used in a critical constructivist way.

In the article *Observations about the MOST project programme in Barcelona* the project partners of Blanquerna Ramon Llull University start with an overview of the different activities undertaken in the mobility programme. The writers continue their reflective journey with an etymological inquiry of the word 'education' and formulate some interesting research lines to promote a shared understanding on education in Europe in the 21st century.

In the reflective journal of the Norwegian partners the authors bring their narration of the MOST project by presenting the story of what they point out as the protagonists in the project; the teacher trainees and the mentors in the secondary schools. The writers present us a detailed and comprehensible essay in which they describe how the MOST mobility framework and the variety of project activities were translated to the Norwegian reality. Furthermore they describe the complications –given the differences between school systems both on a national and international level -that go with the process of standard development. The writers conclude that challenges in the education of tomorrow

probably cannot be solved by using methods and standards created in the past, but that the molecular model represents a *framework* which is flexible enough for each country to adapt.

In the article *A MOST interesting journey: some reflections from Malta* the contextual embeddedness of the project and the process of standard development is discussed. Each participant in the project has been influenced by his own past and present: his family background, the educational programmes that he has followed, and his own social and educational experiences. All these variables determined the perception of the participants on the project engagements they were directly involved in. People do react and reflect differently even when they are in fact going through the same experience. The authors argue that this, in itself, helped to understand the complexity of the project's goals we often took for granted. The fact that "*Learning is complex, contextually bound and historically formed*" (Arfwedson, 2002) highlights how difficult it is to try to understand teaching and learning trough a competency-based approach.

A critical analysis of the project process and organising mobility programmes in an international context is the core contribution of the article *Future Teacher – a reality and seek point,* offered by the Lithuanian project partners. The writers start their report with a straight and sincere reflection on how initial teaching training programmes in Lithuania are organised. They critically consider the present reformations in the Lithuanian educational system and express how international exchange programmes can serve as a source of inspiration in this respect.

In the final article *Reflective thoughts about a MOST unique mobility programme* the writer gives an anatomy of the evolution in the implementation of the Belgian mobility programme. Regardless the fact of a united Europe, there are major differences between educational systems in Europe. Through the method of 'learning by doing' the Belgian project team became conscious of the importance of implementing activities which allow foreign students to contextualise these alternative educational systems. It is argued that the impact of the MOST programme is situated to a large extent on the domain of stimulating personal growth and opening-up views on education. The author concludes with the results of a small-scale survey on beginning teacher competencies, which was conducted in the Belgian programme of the project. The writer uses these results to make a case for an alternative approach of the development of standards, in which one doesn't only focus on the professional identity but also on the personality of the beginning teacher.

Each project is a system that organises itself. New questions emerge from the environment and serve as kinds of perturbations. The way in which these perturbations become incorporated, will determine if a project will either continue or not. We hope this publication is inspirational for everyone involved in the educational field to continue the process where we have put a provisional punctuation We hope this publication can inspire everyone involved in the educational field to continue the process where we have put a provisional punctuation by a European standard,
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The Professional Development Portfolio – A Journey
Anton Cardona

This paper presents the Professional Development Portfolio (PDP) in the MOST project. It gives an overview of the PDP designed for a group of student teachers in March/April 2006 in the Maltese context. It attempts to expose the aims of the PDP within MOST as an assessment document and as a reflective tool to enhance the competencies in student teachers.

1. An Introduction

One of the MOST project's sections at the Class Level deals with Assessment and evaluation (Appendix 1). The Class Level aims to develop the necessary skills, competencies, in a European student teacher no matter to which member state he/she belongs to. The skills are mainly three: assessment strategies, feedback and critical reflection. To address this level a Professional Development Portfolio (PDP) (Appendix 2) was designed for the March/April 2006 group of student teachers originating from two participant countries, Belgium and Lithuania. The portfolio covered the 5 week stay of the student teachers in Malta.

2. The Portfolio

Portfolios are becoming the buzz word or rather the 'thing' in educational circles especially in teacher training programmes (Klenowski, 2003). The problem is that it is not always clear what is meant by a portfolio especially in the context of portfolio assessment. Arter and Spandel (1992) admit that their definition clearly acknowledges the developmental nature of the assessment process of the portfolio and stresses the importance of the student's role. The integration of assessment with teaching and learning and the recognition of the purpose of student reflection on the learning processes involved in the work accomplished are also highlighted in their definition:

> (…) a purposeful collection of student work that tells the story of the student's efforts, progress, or achievement in (a) given area(s). The collection must include student participation in selection of portfolio content; the guidelines for selection; the criteria for judging merit; and evidence of student self-reflection. (Arter and Spandel, 1992, p.36)

One reaction of disenchantment with assessment procedures originating from a qualitative tradition has been the development of portfolios. Portfolios are being used in a variety of areas ranging from teacher training to the training of medical staff and industrial personnel. The use

of portfolios has the ability to make clearer the paramount relationship between curriculum, assessment and pedagogy (Klenowski, 2003). Portfolios can be used for different purposes. They can be used as a compilation of evidence of learning achievements for prospective employment (Andrews, Ducharme & Cox, 2002); as an avenue for reflection on individual strengths and weaknesses leading to personal growth and development (Klenowski, 2003); to learn about their own teaching through the documentation of their experiences and actions (Loughran & Corrigan, 1995). Portfolios encourage reflection and self-evaluation on classroom practice and school practices (Mosely, 2004) and can also be used as an effective learning tool to help student teachers understand their strengths and weaknesses and set targets for themselves (Richert, 1990).

There is conflicting evidence in the literature about the positive effects of portfolios on the learning process of student teachers. There is evidence that supports the claim that portfolios have the potential to promote learning (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000).
Even Vavrus and Collins (1991) claim that the use of portfolios in teacher training make student teachers more critical and reflective "particularly in terms of critiquing the effectiveness of instructional methods in addressing individual student's needs" and Kilbane and Milman (2003) go as far to claim that when student teachers reflect on their work during and after the creation process they can remind student

teachers of their achievements, enhancing their self-esteem as competent learners.

3. An Assessment Document

The compilation and development of the portfolio takes it for granted that the student teacher in MOST engages personally with the tasks and the learning process of the PDP. It is an opportunity for the student to reach a certain kind of accomplishment (Klenowski, 2003). The evidence in the PDP can show how much the student has learned throughout the compilation of the artefacts, testimonials, reflective writing, video-tapes and photographs. The collection of all the materials provide insights into what knowledge and skills are required for the student to move forward and can also indicate what has been achieved (Klenowski, 2003). The student teacher must be aware of the assessment element of a portfolio so as to be able not only to assess his/her own work but also to use the skill of assessment in his/her teaching profession. The PDP cannot be assessed like a written essay or any other piece of student's work because it is developmental in nature and so a baggage of assessment skills must be adopted. The PDP is a more 'expansionist' form of assessment as it incorporates a different number of materials which reflect the student's development (Klenowski, 2003).

4. A Reflective tool

Lyons (1998b, p.12) considers the portfolio in initial teacher education as a "powerful reflective tool of professional and personal teacher growth and development". According to Lyons, (1998a, p.5) she sees portfolios as a "scaffolding for reflective teacher learning" where the student teacher "finds in conversation an opportunity to look at and reflect on her experiences, to go beyond the entries of her portfolio, to see and make connections about her teaching, her student teachers' learning, and the growth and development as a reflective practitioner" (Lyons,1998c, p.104). To define reflection Lyons relies on Dewey (1933). He believed that reflective thinking involves "first, a state of doubt, hesitation, perplexity, mental difficulty, in which thinking originates and second, an act of searching, hunting, inquiring, to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of perplexity" (Lyons,1998c, p.106). According to Lyons, reflective thinking for Dewey is "deliberation".

According to Dewey (1933) "reflective action" involves a willingness to engage in constant self-appraisal and development. It implies flexibility, rigorous analysis and social awareness. It involves action as that which involves active, persistent, careful consideration of any belief or practice in light of the reasons that support it and the further consequences to which it leads.

5. The Setting

The six student teachers on the 5-week MOST project were equally distributed between two participant countries. They were four females and two males. Most of the student teachers had some teaching experience in a classroom especially through their teaching practice in their respective country. The participants had to teach for two weeks in a Maltese Secondary school (Ages 11-16). The schools taking part in the project were two Church schools, both Catholic, a girls' school and a boys' school. During their practicum the student teachers were visited by university tutors from the University of Malta, from the Faculty of Education who provided feedback, suggestions and reflective tasks.

After the successful introduction of the professional development portfolio within the Faculty of Education, University of Malta in 2001 (Chetcuti, 2007) and the positive experience of its outcome it was decided that a portfolio (Appendix 2) will be designed for the MOST student teachers.

The PDP was mainly designed for two reasons. The first reason being to provide a summative assessment tool within the context of the MOST model. And the second reason was to help the student teachers on MOST become reflective practitioners (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1991). It was envisaged that in compiling and developing their portfolio the student teachers will make the link between theory and practice through

reflecting on their experience in a Maltese context. The portfolio was designed within the model of a Journey, which has a beginning but no end (Cardona, 2002a, 2002b, 2005).

6. The Journey

The experience of the student teachers on the Journey lasted five weeks in March/April 2006. The introduction of the Professional Development Portfolio (PDP) makes it very clear what the portfolio is all about when it says:

> Your Professional Development Portfolio is a cumulative record of your experience/accomplishments during the Journey on the MOST project. It is a unique record that will provide a comprehensive picture of your growth and professional development throughout the Project. Your development will include meetings, lectures, school visits, teaching experience, cultural visits, and whole group/individual reflective meetings. The portfolio belongs to you and though there are tasks to carry out yet it is you who decide what to include in it and leave out. It is a very personal document because it tells your story on a journey, the way you experienced it. (Appendix 2)

The PDP is developed over a 5 week period with a different section for every week focusing on issues related to practical tasks with a strong

emphasis on reflective practice leading on to competencies a student teacher must acquire.

The five sections in the portfolio are:
(a) The Journey begins
(b) A few meetings and lectures
(c) School Placement
(d) The Last week of Teaching Practice
(e) The final stop on the Journey

7. The Beginning

The Journey started from a very personal point of departure, the autobiographical aspect and each participant was asked to write his/her autobiography which set the portfolio in a timeframe for each student. It also set the student to think about his/her expectations from the Journey.

A student teacher said that she

> (…) would like my teachers to think when I come back: Waaauw, she got really fluent in English.
> I would like to explore the island and the surrounding islands as much as possible.

I also would like to learn more things about education, things I didn't know already, things that will enrich me and give me extra baggage to stand in front of a class.

I want to try and grab new things, grab opportunities with both hands and enjoy every moment of my time in Malta.

And another student teacher said that he

Wants to make new friends in a total new environment.

Wants to learn about the culture and the people in Malta.

Wants to discover new ways of communicative approach, how people interact with each other.

Wants to know how it feels to be away from home.

Wants to become a better teacher.

The Beginning for the two student teachers was full of hopes and expectations focusing mainly on travelling to a new country and learning and discovering about it as much as possible. They seemed to be eager to enhance their language and communication skills. Becoming a better teacher was on their agenda even though the Island and its culture seemed very exciting.

8. The Weeks

The first week of the student teachers' journey was spent at the Faculty of Education, University of Malta who hosted the student teachers. The student teachers met the Maltese lecturing staff on the MOST project and were given a tour of the University of Malta, introduced to the Maltese Educational system, made a presentation about their respective educational systems and were even taken on a tour of Malta's capital city, Valletta.

Malta's history and its climate are highlighted by the following student teacher who wrote that:

> I liked the building(s) from the first moment I set foot on the university. It looks beautiful and big and the sun(shine) makes it even prettier. Another advantage you have, when you look outside of one of your windows, you have a terrific view of the sea and of old beautiful buildings and churches.

The student seemed fascinated by the University buildings since it is much bigger and spaced out than she own university back home. Even looking out of the lecture room window was an experience of fascination for the student because she could see the blue sea since Malta is a small Island compared to the country of origin of the student.

The PDP started off by inviting each student on the Journey to be personal, to make connections with his/her own life history and reflect on the new surroundings. It was meant to launch the student on the Journey which he/she will never forget through the experiences and reflective tasks included in the PDP (Cardona, 2005). The experiences on the Journey started to broaden up the student teachers' perspectives in the second week so that links and different considerations could be achieved (Loughran & Corrigan, 1995).

During the second week the student teachers were exposed to a group of school children who were on fieldwork at one of Malta's Neolithic temples. The following student teacher was not impressed with what she saw:

> Personally I expected much more from the Tarxien Temples. I thought that they would be in the country side, surrounded by nature and presented in a more attractive way. What I do like is the initiative that has been taken to make sites like this more accessible for students.

But the fact that the historic site was included in a fieldwork activity and the students were fully enthralled by the majestic historical significance of the temples see to have changed her impression and in fact she wrote that:

Although I must admit that it was impressive that they were older than Stonehenge and that you could imagine yourself what certain things were meant for. I think it became more interesting when the school/class entered.

The Journey of the PDP afforded the student teachers the experience of walking into the school of their field placement for the first time. The student teachers were asked to reflect and keep a reflective diary on a daily basis. The initial reception at the assigned school wasn't as welcoming as expected as this student teacher wrote:

My impression was one of disorganisation. The secretary didn't know of we were coming and she said that we were here at a very inconvenient time because it was parents' day.

Before leaving we all took a look in the staffroom. While we were leaving one of my colleagues noticed that there was a notice on the bulletin board with a welcoming message for the three of us. It was very heart-warming and I realised that they hadn't forgotten us.

What started out as a very cold, unfriendly reception was changed into a very special event at the end because the academic staff was in fact informed of the foreign student teachers' visit on a particular day through a notice on the teachers' notice board in the staff room.

9. Reflective Tasks

The reflective tasks in the portfolio became more demanding from the third week onwards where the student teachers were invited to reflect on planning, preparation and lesson delivery, classroom management skills, communication skills, questioning skills, motivation/self-directed and independent learning and assessment and feedback. The third week asked the participants to reflect on three competencies through a series of questions (Appendix 2). The reflective work of the student teachers reflected their commitment to the tasks assigned which according to one student teacher at the end of the Journey "was very demanding but found it highly relevant".

In relation to the second competency which was classroom management the following student teacher harboured some strong views about being a democratic teacher when she wrote:

> I think I'm more of a democratic leader. I listen to my students and they have a right to have an opinion and speak it out. I respect them as long as they have respect for me and that's something I want to teach them. I also want to teach them something very important I learned which is that you achieve more in life by being democratic than by using your authority or by letting people walk all over you.

She is adamant in teaching her students respect. To her the 'give and take' model is applicable. Her views on mutual respect in the classroom are very strong and she intends to implement her notion of democracy in the classroom by stressing the point that a democratic stance works, in fact is the best.

In the fourth week the participants were asked to reflect on another three competencies through a list of questions (Appendix 2). The questions focused on questioning skills, on the skill to motivate students and the ability to promote self-directed and independent learning and finally, on assessment and feedback. A student teacher writing about her questioning technique wrote:

> Questions also make students feel interactive. It gives them the feeling that the lesson depends a lot on their answers and that their input is of high importance. So yes, I definitely promote questions in my lessons.

The student teacher believes in an interactive approach which is the basis of effective questioning skills. She is set to adopt questions in her lessons.

The final stop on the Journey was week 5. The last week invited the participants on the MOST project to reflect on their whole experience and especially on some significant, unforgettable event. As one of the participants wrote:

> I simply can't forget when we were landing and I looked out of the window of the plane. I just couldn't believe my eyes. I could see the whole Island from north to south.

And another student teacher was highly appreciative of his MOST Journey and seems that he has acquired a lot of skills besides fulfilling the PDP's main objective, that of becoming a reflective practitioner when he wrote:

> My experience on MOST has been highly positive. I have increased my self-confidence, my language skills and my communication skills. The reflective tasks were too much at times especially after a day at school but at the end I think I have become a reflective teacher. I can honestly say that I am reflecting a lot.

10. Conclusions

This paper attempted to present the portfolio as a tool to develop reflective practice in the participants of the MOST project. Student teachers can become reflective practitioners as the portfolio designed for MOST shows. It was developed as a highly prescriptive document to be able to make clear the designers' expectations and to encourage active participation and commitment from the student teachers' part. The

reflective writings in the portfolios reveal the doubts, dilemmas, inadequacies and the updating that each student teacher had to carry out during his/her field placement and the whole Project. It is evident that the portfolio can be a highly relevant tool for the development of student teachers to be able to make rational and ethical choices about what and how to teach and assume responsibility for those choices (Goodman, 1991; Ross,1989; Zeichner & Liston, 1987).

Appendix 1

MOST 2006 – Assessment Document

1. Class Level

1.1 Language of instruction

Does the student have a mastery of English?
Does he/she make himself/herself clearly understood in class?
Does he/she communicate effectively with his/her students?
Is he/she able to explain any difficulty the students have?
What kind of feedback does he/she provide to students?

1.2 Lesson planning/preparation

Is Scheme of Work available in File?
Does student have all lesson plans for current week in file?
Are the lesson plans closely linked with the Scheme of Work?
Are lessons based on students' knowledge?
Are the main characteristics of a lesson plan clearly indicated?
Are the desired learning objectives clear?
Are the desired learning objectives attainable?
Are the desired learning objectives closely linked with the other components of lesson?

Do the lessons indicate the assessment indicators?

Are resources used?

Is there a range of resources?

Do the lessons provide a variety of differentiated learning activities?

1.3 Implementation

Does the student manifest a mastery of the subject content?

Is the student able to convey what he knows?

Does the student demonstrate the skill to teach according to the level of his/her students?

Is the student capable to teach in a creative way?

Is the student able to motivate his/her students?

Is the student capable of managing his/her class effectively?

Does the student able to manage a classroom?

Is the pacing of the lesson adequate?

Are the transitions in the delivery adequate/smooth/sequential?

Does the student manifest enthusiasm in his/her teaching?

Does he/she manage to convey his/her enthusiasm?

1.4 Learning Environment

Does the student capable of organising learning?

Does he/she sustain a teaching/learning activity?

Is the student capable of contributing to productive learning outcomes/environment?

Do the students experience positive learning experiences during the student's lessons?

1.5 Communication

Does the student communicate effectively with his/her students?

Is he/she able to work with his/her students?

Is he/she capable to listen to he/she students?

Does he/she demonstrate the willingness and ability to understand and contribute to conflict resolution among students?

Does he/she use his/her voice effectively?

Does he/she use verbal communication adequately?

Does he/she use non-verbal communication?

How does he/she transmit his/her voice?

1.6 Assessments and evaluation

What assessment strategies does he/she adopt in class?

Does he/she demonstrate the ability to use and try a variety of assessment methods?

Does he/she provide feedback to his/her students?

What kind of feedback? And how?

Is he/she capable of critically reflecting on his/her practice?

Is he/she reflecting after each lesson on a daily basis?

2. School-community level

Does the student demonstrate the willingness and ability to listen to, understand and take account of his/her colleagues?

Does the student demonstrate the willingness and ability to listen to, understand and take account of his/her administration team?

Does the student demonstrate the willingness and ability to listen to, understand and take account of his/her tutor/s?

Does the student demonstrate the willingness and ability to listen to, understand and contribute to resolution of conflict among his/her colleagues?

Does he/she interest himself/herself in school matters?

Is he/she aware of school policies in relation to discipline code, dress code, code of ethics?

2.2 School organisation

Does the student contribute to a productive learning environment and positive learning experiences?

Does the student participate actively in school life/activities/meetings?

Does the student plan, carry out, assess and reflect on teaching and learning with different persons in the practice arena?

3. Society Level

3.1 Educational system

Does the student demonstrate the willingness and ability to participate in discussions concerning various views of teaching and learning?
Does the student base teaching decisions on national and local curricula and on legal requirements?

Appendix 2

Your Portfolio

Your Professional Development Portfolio is a cumulative record of your experience/accomplishments during the Journey on the MOST project. It is a unique record that will provide a comprehensive picture of your growth and professional development throughout the Project. Your development will include meetings, lectures, school visits, teaching experience, cultural visits, and whole group/individual reflective meetings. The portfolio belongs to you and though there are tasks to carry out yet it is you who decide what to include in it and leave out. It is a very personal document because it tells your story on a journey, the way you experienced it. Though it is a personal document yet it is a public document because it is accessible to the Project coordinators and colleagues. Nevertheless the responsibility for the development, format, presentation and completion of the portfolio is solely yours.

1. The Journey begins (Week 1: 6th – 10th March 2006)

The MOST project is a Journey with a beginning and no end. You started this journey when you were contacted for the first time to be part of the Project and you accepted to embark on the Journey. The end of the Journey is never-ending because what you experience on the Journey will be part of your development. On the Journey you will be asked to

observe, collect artefacts, read and reflect on the experiences you go through.

You are responsible for all that is collated and written down in this portfolio. Start with writing about yourself.

1.1. Write your autobiography.

Some tips might be the following: Where do you come from? What is your story? How did you arrive at this stage in your life?

1.2. What are you expecting from this Journey?

For the first week on your Journey you will be hosted at the University of Malta at the Faculty of Education. You will meet the Maltese coordinator and be introduced to the various educational systems which make part of the Project. You will be asked to write about the lectures you attend, collect artefacts and even reflect on your learning experience.

1.3. Write about your initial impression of the University, the Faculty of Education.

1.4. Make a list of the main structure of the Maltese Educational System.

1.5. After your first lecture on Citizenship, list five main points.

1.6. What are the main characteristics of a Reflective Practitioner?

1.7. Write the main points of the Belgian/Lithuanian Educational System.

1.8. Compare and contrast the different educational systems you have heard about in you lectures.

1.9. Collate photographs of your visit to Valletta. Include any artefacts which you might have collected.

1.10. Write your reflections about your visit to Valletta.

2. A few meetings and lectures (Week 2: 13 – 17th March 2006)

In the second week you will observe students on a field trip, have a meeting with heads and teachers in schools and attend lectures. You are expected to observe and reflect on this part of the Journey.

2.1. Collect artefacts of the visit at Tarxien Temples.

2.2. Write your reflections about the Tarxien Temples visit.

2.3. What are your impressions of the schools you visited?

2.4. After your lesson/s observation sessions discuss the following points:

    a.   How did the teacher/s communicate with his/her students?

    b.   Where the students cooperative?

    c.   Did the teacher/s manage to achieve his/her objective/s in the lesson/

    d.   Did the teacher/s use any resources?

    e.   Was the lesson observed structured in any way? And if yes, how?

    f.   How did the teacher/s manage the students?

    g.   Was it a successful lesson? Why?

    h.   What would you have done differently? Why?

2.5. Write a reflective paragraph reviewing your classroom observation sessions.

2.6. Select one or more lectures that you attended this week and list five main points which you regard as important.

3. School Placement (Week 3: 20th – 24th March)

During this week you will start your practicum in schools. You will plan and prepare lessons, organise learning, video-tape a lesson or two, reflect on your practice and collect your best work to include it in your portfolio.

After each day of teaching reflect on all your lessons. Reflections should focus on all aspects of classroom practice even the highly personal and autobiographical dimension must be considered. The main areas of concern to be considered could be planning, preparation and lesson delivery, classroom management skills, communication skills, questioning skills, motivation/self-directed and independent learning and assessment and feedback. You should write a daily reflection throughout the whole week.

3.1. As a start reflect on your planning, preparation and lesson delivery. To facilitate your reflection answer the following questions and then write your reflective task.

3.1.1. Analyse a lesson or a set of lessons and focus on its three basic components. Ask yourself the following questions:

a. Was the introduction motivating?
b. Was the flow of the lesson adequate?
c. Did you manage to tackle all the teaching points in the development?
d. How did the students react to the conclusion of the lesson?
e. Was the time factor adequate?
f. What could you have done better?

3.1.2. Select a lesson that you have delivered and ask yourself these questions:

a. Did you envisage any change/s at the planning stage?

b. Did the lesson fit with the rest of the curriculum?

c. Did you change anything whilst delivering the lesson?

d. How did the students react to the lesson content?

e. Were the learning outcomes achieved?

f. Did the resource/s facilitate the learning process?

3.1.3. Select a lesson that you have conducted. Reflect on the decisions you made when you were planning the lesson relating to:

a. instructional objectives

b. teaching materials/resources

c. selection and sequencing of activities

d. assessment of student learning.

3.1.4. Focus on the resources of a lesson that you have delivered and reflect on:

a.   Are the resources intricately linked to lesson?

b.   Was the time invested in preparing the resources worth it?

c.   How many resources did you prepare?

d. Was the timing of the resources appropriate with the flow of the lesson?

e. Did the resources facilitate teaching and learning?

f. If the lesson was void of resources would learning have taken place just the same?

g. How far would you say that the resources were the determining factor/s in the success of the lesson?

3.2. As a second competency which you will be asked to reflect on this week is your ability to manage a classroom effectively. The following should set you reflecting on your classroom management skills. There is no word limit to your reflections so make sure you reflect on all aspects of your management skills.

3.2.1. Focus on your style of classroom management and try to fit it in one/more of the following role models. When you do, reflect on it.

a. strict disciplinarian
b. democratic leader
c. laissez-faire leader
d. poor organiser
e. inconsistent legislator
f. incessant critic.

3.2.2. The effectiveness of any class management depends on a teacher's attitudes and practical intelligence. Reflect on these basic principles:

a. Have you established a friendly relationship with your students?

b. What did you establish the relationship on?

c. Do you consider yourself to have established a supportive and trusting relationship?

d. What is your regard towards disruptive student/s?

e. Can you honestly say that you have a positive regard towards disruptive student/s?

f. Do you consider your approach to be optimistic and no-nonsense approach?

g. If you do, how did you set about establishing it?

3.2.3. One of the positive ways of establishing classroom control is by promoting a positive classroom environment. Ask yourself these questions:

a.   Have you managed to create a routine in class?

b.   How did you set it up?

c.   Do you feel you are committed to an organised work routine?

d.   Have you managed to engage your students in meaningful learning activities?

e.   Do you consider that you can maintain a certain amount of momentum and smoothness in the direction of class activities?

3.2.4. Inappropriate behaviour is bound to occur in class from time to time. Reflect on it in the following questions:

a. Did you experience unacceptable behaviour during your T.P.?
b. What form of unacceptable behaviour? Describe.
c. How did you deal with it?
d. Was/were your strategy/ies effective?
e. What were you concerned with in your approach?
f. What did you feel at the time of dealing with the behaviour?
g. What was the final outcome of your strategy?

3.3. As a third competency which you will be asked to reflect on this week is your skill in communicating effectively.

3.3.1. Non-verbal communication is a useful tool in class. Basically it refers to the use of space, movement, gestures, facial expressions and posture in communication. Keep this in mind and reflect.

a. Are you visible in class?
b. Is there eye contact between you and the students?
c. Do you use facial expressions to communicate with your students?
d. Do you vary the tone and pitch of your voice?
e. Do you drop your voice at the end of an utterance?
f. Do you have voice modulation?

g. Do you think that you are audible from all corners of your class?

h. Do you think you can project your voice effectively?

i. Do you use non-verbal gestures? If yes, what for?

3.3.2. Reflect further on whether you are communicating effectively in class by replying to the following:

a. Are you making yourself understood?

b. Is your English a problem?

c. Are you clear in your pronunciation?

d. Do the students understand what you say?

e. Are you logical in your arguments/reasoning?

f. Are you interesting?

g. Have you managed to bring down the material to the level of the students?

3.3.3. A competent teacher has proficient communication skills. The first of these skills are the 'personal qualities and attitudes of a teacher'. Reflect on these skills:

a. Are you friendly and patient with your students?

b. Do you deliver your lessons in an open, calm manner?

c. How would you define your classroom climate?

d. Do you think that the students feel comfortable in your presence?

e. Do you think that the students feel threatened in your presence?

f.   Do you ever talk down to your students? If you do, why? When?

g.   Are you a good listener?

h.   Do you respond to your students' queries?

3.3.4. The third set of proficient communication skills concern 'learning'. Reflect on these questions:

a.   What are you planning to enhance communication skills in your students?

b.   Do you train your students in active learning?

c.   Do you use group discussions?

d.   Do you teach your students how to verbalise ideas?

e.   Do you train your students in how to make a point without being aggressive or demanding?

3.4. Select one of your lessons and video-tape the lesson. You can ask one of your colleagues to record the lesson. Focus on all aspects of the learning process during the recording. You are expected to bring in the recording of your lesson for group discussion in the last week of the Project. Write your reflections about the recording.

3.5. Select one or more of your best lessons this week and include it in your portfolio.

Write your reflection about it/them.

3.6. Include one of your tutor's reports and reflect about it.

4. The Last week of Teaching Practice (Week 4: 27 -30th March)

This is the last week of your teaching practice. Continue with your daily reflections like last week and to help you reflect further the following questions focus on questioning, motivation and assessment and feedback.

4.1. Start this week by reflecting on your questioning skills.

4.1.1. Select a lesson from your T.P. File and focus on the questions in the lesson plan. Reflect on the following:

a. What kind of questions have you asked?
b. Give examples of high-order questions.
c. Give examples of low-order questions.
d.   How many questions did you ask?

4.1.2. 'Questioning is effective for promoting classroom interaction.'
Keeping this statement in mind, reflect on these questions:

a. Do you use questions to promote interaction in class?
b. Do you think that questions promote interaction?
c. How is it possible?
d. What happens as a result of the interaction?

e. How do you, as a teacher, take up the cue and use the stimulus created to enhance learning?

4.1.3. Sometimes students are inhibited from asking questions by the threat of criticism from their classmates, because they feel that their question might not be relevant or due to the negative reaction of the teacher. Keeping all these issues in mind and others which you might think of, reflect on the following:

a. Do you create 'question time slots' in your lessons?
b. Do you invite students to ask questions?
c. Do you wait, patiently, for questions or is eager to get on with the lesson?
d. Do you welcome questions when they are asked?
e. Through your strategies, do you encourage students who show a degree of perplexity?
f. Are your questions concerned with prompting students' thinking abilities?
g. Are your questions directed at confident learning and high motivational objectives?
h. Do you focus on the vocabulary and syntax of your questions?
i. Do you match your questions with the ability of your students?

4.1.4. Now you must reflect on how you ask questions?

a. Have you ever rephrased questions? Why?

b. Do you create an order (from easy to difficult) in the questions you ask?

c. Do you match the sequence of questions with the series of specific objectives in your lessons?

d. Are you questions formulated in a proper logical order?

e. Do you allow students to formulate an answer before asking them another question?

f. Do you allow the pace of question-asking and wait-time to suit the questions being asked?

g. Do you distribute questions to all the students in your class?

4.2. The second competency you are asked to focus on this week is your skill to motivate students and your ability to promote self-directed and independent learning:

4.2.1. Getting students motivated to take part in learning and to maximise on the expectancy, value and emotional of motivation is important. Reflect on these issues:

a. Are your objectives realistic, relevant and attainable?

b. Do you use reinforcers to help students achieve learning goals?

c. In your lessons do you encourage co-operation among students to achieve common learning goals rather than stressing competition?

d. Do you provide challenging, novel, and varied learning activities and experience to motivate students to high levels of achievement?

e. How far do you ensure that your students experience success and feelings of competence?

f. Do you provide on task assistance to promote motivational success?

4.2.2. One way of getting students motivated is to provide extrinsic incentives. Reinforcements, if used effectively are highly motivational. Focus on some here:

a. Have you ever juggled up with potential reinforcers for different students?

b. Do you use popular classroom activities as reinforcers for less desirable learning activities?

c. What kind of verbal encouragement and praise have you used in your teaching?

d. Have you ever used negative reinforcers when positive reinforcers have failed?

e. Do you use continuous reinforcements in the early stages of learning?

f. And if you have, what were the effects?

g. Do you use intermittent reinforcements when learning has been established?

h. Do you use punishments?

i. Why and when do you use them?

j. What are the short and long term effects of punishments?

4.2.3. Self-regulated and independent learners have a repertoire of learning strategies for selection and implementation according to the demand of tasks. They constantly monitor and update their strategies. Reflect on these strategies:

a. Do you expose your students to a range of strategies for various learning tasks?
b. Is the teaching of studying skills part of your repertoire?
c. If yes, how do you use it?
d. Do you encourage your students to produce their own representations of subject matter?
e. Are you a teacher who demonstrates strategies that promote self-directed learning?
f. Are your students capable of monitoring their own learning?
g. Do you encourage students to believe in their own cognitive worth?
h. What kind of support do you provide?
i. Do you devise co-operative learning activities in your classroom?
j. Are your instructions for working in groups clear and precise?
k. Do you reward acceptable individual behaviour for whole group members?
l. Do you use pair work in your class?
m. How, when and why do you use it?
n. Do you encourage social skills?
o. How do you do it?

4.3. In this final focus you are asked to reflect on assessment and feedback.

4.3.1. There are different types of assessment procedures. Reflect on initial assessment procedures:

a. List the different types of assessment available.
b. What form of assessment do you use in class?
c. Are the children in your class aware of 'your' assessment procedures?
d. Are they compliant with the procedure?
e. What is the reaction of the parents to 'your' procedure?

4.3.2. You are requested by a parent to provide a profile of his/her son's/daughter's performance in your class. Consider what you would write:

a. Where would you start from?
b. How would you set about compiling evidence of your claims?
c. Do you base your assessment on factual data?
d. Do you use the child's work to put across a weakness or success patterns?
e. What conclusions would you arrive at?
f. What is your evidence to support your conclusion/s?

g. Is the evidence based on your impression/s or on actual samples of the child's work?

h. Do the assessment and comments provide a 'complete' picture of the child?

4.3.3. Feedback is highly important for all the stakeholders in your classroom. Reflect on feedback through these questions:

a. Do you set standards for performance on learning tasks?

b. Are the students aware of the set standards?

c. If yes, do you give feedback according to achievements measured against your standards?

d. Do you use your feedback to inform your students of the stages achieved in reaching learning goals?

e. What kind of feedback do you provide?

f. Does your feedback assist learning?

g. Would you consider your feedback as accurate?

h. Why?

4.3.4. When to give feedback is an essential dimension in classroom practice. Reflect on such issues:

a. When do you provide feedback?

b. At the beginning of a learning task or the end of it?

c. When do you use partial feedback?

d.   How much are you available to provide feedback?

e.   What approach do you adopt when you provide feedback?

4.4. Select one of your lessons and video-tape the lesson. You can ask one of your colleagues to record the lesson. Focus on all aspects of the learning process during the recording. You are expected to bring in the recording of your lesson for group discussion in the last week of the Project. Write your reflections about the recording.

4.5. Select one or more of your best lessons this week and include it in your portfolio.
Write your reflection about it/them.

4.6. Collect any testimonials from the administration team at your school.

4.7. Collect a sample of students' work and reflect about them.

4.8. Include one of your tutor's reports and reflect about it.

5. The final stop on the Journey (Week 5: 3rd – 7th April)

You have finally reached your final week in the MOST project. You must surely have learned a lot from the experiences on your Journey. In this last week you will be asked to reflect on your last 4 weeks and even look to the weeks and months ahead.

5.1. Reflect on a significant event during your Journey. An event which you will never forget.

5.2. Look back on your initial auto-biography on page 1 and reflect on your weeks and months to come.

5.3. Reflect on your whole Journey and reflect on your whole experience by attempting the following questions:

What did I do right?
What did I do that I will never do again, never?
What will I change from now on?
Did I achieve my original objectives?

6. Articles which can be used for reflective tasks:

DeSchon Hamlin, K. (2004). Beginning the journey: supporting reflection in early field experiences, *Reflective Practice,* 5(2), 167-179.

Glazer, C., Abbott, L., & Harris, J. (2004). A teacher-developed process for collaborative professional reflection, *Reflective Practice, 5* (1), 33-46.

Newton, J. (2004). Learning to reflect: a journey, *Reflective Practice, 5* (2), 155-166.

Pedro, J.Y. (2005). Reflection in teacher education: exploring pre-service teachers' meanings of reflective practice, *Reflective Practice, 6* (1), 49-66.

Ryken, A.E. (2004). A spider and a fly in a web: seeing myself in the details of praxis, *Reflective Practice, 5* (1), 111-123.

Skilful Class Management: an introductory visualisation exercise
Christopher Bezzina

I am sure that we all recall as children taking on different roles –the role of doctor, father, mother, and teacher. At the beginning of this time-honoured fantasy game a common ritual followed. One child will step forward and say: "I'll be the teacher", and from then onwards that person is assumed to be in charge. It is fascinating to see what happens next. Some children role-playing as a teacher will immediately move centre stage and start ordering everyone else around, "Right, you sit here, you go over there." "Now, look at me, pay attention.", "Don't look back." It seems to be the element of control that attracts. Others mimic a more kindly style. In this mirror of classroom life, where the players know better than anyone else what the reality is, some children will start to misbehave and then maybe told off or even sometimes whacked about the body or head in a way that would have a real teacher up before the nearest magistrate.

Control over the behaviours of others, however is only one aspect of class management. Every day, busy teachers will find they are planning lessons; choosing topics, searching information, developing tasks and resources; making judgments about what they as teachers should determine and what children should be encouraged to decide or choose for themselves; supervising movement around the classroom or school;

organizing often a variety of activities undertaken by individuals, small groups or the whole class; praising good work or reprimanding pupils who misbehave; making sure the right materials and books are available; selecting from a range of possible teaching strategies. All these are aspects of class management and the list could go on (see Capel, S., Leask, M. & Turner, T. (1997). Becoming a teacher. In S. Capel, M. Leask, & T. Turner (Eds.) *Learning to teach in the Secondary School* (pp. 6-35). London: Routledge, 1997).

One of the features of research into classroom behaviour is that there are many ways of teaching effectively. In the nineteenth century, teacher training institutions were known as 'normal' schools (Wragg, 1974). The assumption was that there was some agreed 'norm', some single approved way of teaching that all must copy. It led to Charles Dickens describing M'Choakumchild in *Hard Times* as like "some one hundred and forty schoolmasters [who] had been turned at the same time at the same factory, on the same principles, like so many pianoforte legs." The tendency in teacher training in recent times has been to encourage a variety of approaches to teaching generally and to class management in particular.

Inability to manage classes skilfully is often the single most common reason for failure on teaching practice and for failing the probationary or induction period. Fear of being unable to control a class is often the greatest anxiety of student-teachers before teaching practice. The

management of people, time and resources is right at the heart of human skill in a variety of occupations, not just teaching. Those who waste resources, fritter away time or alienate their workmates or their customers are often a source of intense irritation. In teaching, the ability to use time skilfully, to win the support of children and to make effective use of what are often scarce resources lies at the heart of professional competence. Time devoted to improving class management is time well spent (Wragg, 1994).

I shall, therefore, adopt the following two principles in what follows:

1.   Class management is what teachers do to ensure that children engage in the task in hand, whatever that may be.
2.   There are many different ways of achieving the state where children work at the task in hand.

In order to help clarify your own or your colleagues' views of what constitutes effective class management, the following exercise can be undertaken. It is based on, though not identical to, techniques developed in personal construct theory (Kelly, 1970), which allows people to examine their own thinking and constructions by comparing and contrasting individuals and concepts.

1. Activity

Step 1:

Think of two teachers who taught you in primary school (or else of two teachers whose teaching you know well). The first teacher (Teacher A) should be someone in whose lessons you felt pupils learned a lot and enjoyed being present. The second teacher (Teacher B) should be a different teacher, one in whose lessons you felt little was learned and which pupils did not seem to enjoy. To refresh your memory, picture Teacher A and Teacher B as clearly as you can in your mind's eye. Without exaggerating, write a brief descriptive paragraph about each in the spaces provided on the next page. There may be quite ordinary things that stick in your mind, such as "This teacher always had the patience to explain things clearly to you, even if you did not understand first time. I remember feeling really frustrated about a maths problem once, and she just sat and did it with me until I understood the principle", or, "This teacher was sometimes unfair in her use of punishments. Once she kept the whole class in at lunchtime just because one boy had knocked someone's gym kit over and everyone deeply resented it."

Write your own descriptions in the space provided.

Figure 4: Task for step 1

Step 2:

Look at your descriptions and assemble a set of dimensions, using adjectives and phrases that are opposite of each other like 'tidy – untidy' or 'turned up on time – was often late'. It is not essential that Teachers A and B should be the exact opposite of each other on each dimension: for example, they might both have been strict or neither might have been. It

is important that you pick out *in your own way* aspects of teaching, especially where class management is involved, and write these down in your own words. For example, your first four pairs might be:

1. Interested in students as individuals   - Not interested in students as individuals

2. Is strict but fair   - Lets children do what they like

3. Has a sense of humour   - Has no sense of humour

4. Well organised and prepared   - Is disorganised

5. Enthusiastic   - Disinterested

Task for Step 2

Write up to ten pairs of opposites in the grid below:

01		
02		
03		
04		
05		
06		
07		
08		
09		
10		

Figure 5: Task for step 2

1. Interested in students as individuals	1	2	③	4	5	6	7	Not interested in students as individuals
2. Is strict but fair	1	②	3	4	5	6	7	Lets students do what they like
3. Has a sense of humour	1	②	3	4	5	6	7	Has no sense of humour
4. Is well organised and prepared	1	2	③	4	5	6	7	Is disorganised
5. Enthusiastic	①	2	3	4	5	6	7	Disinterested

Figure 6: Grid of opposites - example

Step 3:

Now think of your 'ideal teacher', someone who has left an impression on you and maybe even influenced you as a person. This person might be similar to Teacher A, but not necessarily so, since no one is perfect. You should attempt to define what is for you the ideal teacher on a seven-point scale, using your own list of ten pairs of opposites. For example, suppose you think that your ideal teacher would be highly enthusiastic, slightly strict, have a good sense of humour, is well organised and interested in students, then your grid might look like the example illustrated in figure 7.

Now write your own pairs of opposites in the grid below and rate the ideal teacher by circling the appropriate number on each seven-point scale.

1.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
9.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
10.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Figure 7: Grid of opposites

Step 4:

The next stage is to think once more about these attributes, but this time to give an honest appraisal of yourself, either as you think you are, if you are already teaching, or as you think you will be when you start. With the thought '*myself*' put a cross through the appropriate number on the seven-point scales above. You should do this as honestly as you can, being neither too severe nor too generous with yourself. When you have finished you can compare your self-appraisal with your own ideal. For example, if you saw yourself as enthusiastic, as fairly permissive, with a sense of humour, slightly disorganised but interested in students as

individuals, then your grid would look something like the grid below. This would show that you are close to what you perceive to be the ideal teacher on three of your dimensions, enthusiasm, humour and interest in individuals, but some distance away on strictness and being prepared and organised. The benefit of this analysis is not that it tells you exactly what kind of person you really are (you would need comments from other people to have a better idea of that!), but that it allows you to compare yourself with your ideal on your own set of criteria.

1. Interested in students as individuals	1	2	③	✗	5	6	7	Not interested in students as individuals
2. Is strict but fair	1	2	③	4	5	✗	7	Lets children do what they like
3. Has a sense of humour	1	②	✗	4	5	6	7	Has no sense of humour
4. Well organised and prepared	1	2	③	4	✗	6	7	Is disorganised
5. Enthusiastic	①	✗	3	4	5	6	7	Disinterested

Figure 8: Ideal set of criteria

Step 5:

There are several possible follow-ups to this exercise.

As *an individual* you can ask yourself:

- How do I compare with my ideal teacher?

- Will / Should I change on any of these dimensions?

- What must I do in order to develop in the dimensions I am rather weak in?

In a group you can consider:

– How do group members' views of ideal teachers differ from each other (the circled numbers)?

– What features are common?

– How different from each other are individual members of the group on their self-ratings (the crossed numbers)?

– Can the group members help and support each other to grow at the individual and professional level?

– Who else can help us?

Step 6: Action

The final stage is to translate analysis into action. First of all, work out what each of your conclusions means in terms of *classroom behaviour*. Reflection on characteristics means little unless you decide what you must do to improve practice. Here are two examples of conclusions based on the examples above and how someone might translate these into action.

Conclusion: Need to be a bit stricter

Think about this first. Why do you need to be stricter? If children are misbehaving it may be because the work is boring, unsuitable, over- or under- demanding, rather than because you are too soft.

Possible action includes:

– Review class rules.

– Clarify classroom rules about movement, talking, setting out of work, etc.

– Deal with misbehaviour as soon as it occurs.

– Make fair use of punishments when appropriate, but also praise good behaviour.

– Review lessons so that they are based on students' knowledge and understanding.

– Make sure that lesson objectives are clearly set out and attainable.

– Make sure tasks are suitable, clearly defined and children know what they are supposed to be doing.

– Discuss with pupils what sort of misbehaviours is not right, and what steps children should take to be responsible for their own good behaviour.

What does this list of 'possible actions' bring to mind? What does it tell us about class management? Are there other issues that determine what happens in the classroom? Would you add further questions?

Conclusion: Need to be better organised and well prepared

If you decide this, then you need to ask yourself why and also what you understand by 'well organised' and 'well prepared'. Do you have a sound knowledge of the content that needs to be learnt? Do you dedicate enough time to prepare appropriate lessons that take note of the varied

abilities of the students under your care? Are tasks creative, motivating enough? Do they challenge the students to enjoy and seek further learning? Do you forget to bring the right materials and books? Are your instructions to the class clear enough? Do you monitor and record children's work effectively? These and other questions need to be addressed.

Possible action includes:

– Prepare lessons more carefully.

– List requirements such as books, materials beforehand and make sure they are available.

– Work out in advance which are the key points you wish to stress when you give instructions or explanations.

– Improve the organisation of the beginnings (i.e. the introduction) and endings (i.e. the closure) of lessons.

– Take note of the pacing of the lesson.

– Look at the layout of the room and how appropriate it is for the activities taking place.

– Review the students' work to check for understanding.

Again, what does this list of 'possible actions' tell us about the role of the teacher well before he/she goes into the classroom? What are the implications that need to be borne in mind and acted upon? How can a teacher handle such issues? What does it tell us about the process of

learning for you as a beginning or experienced teacher and the students we are teaching? What wheel of learning do you need to create for yourself and the students?

What other questions would you raise?

2. Concluding note

This initial encounter with class management is meant to help us review the perceptions we may have developed over the years – since we were children! It encourages us, at this particular stage of our journey to becoming teachers, to review some of these perceptions and see if and how these perceptions have changed over time. The initial 'visualisation' exercise should also help us to appreciate whether or not the perceptions we held of particular teachers when young – that is what we liked or disliked about them – are still seen in the same light given that today they are on the other side of the fence! Does maturity help us to gain insights about what it takes to be a good teacher, whilst at the same time possessing so many traits and attributes? Does maturity help us to change our opinions? Does such an exercise help us to appreciate (or otherwise) qualities that teachers who taught us may have and which we would like to emulate?

The varied activities are also aimed at helping us to start appreciating the varied and complex roles and responsibilities that teachers have to address. They also challenge us to take note and directly experience the

views that others may hold and how these can influence our own reflections and thought processes. This, in itself is part of the wheel of learning that is so essential for life.

The molecular model of a European Standard for the Beginning Teacher
Julie De Ganck

The aim of MOST was to develop a European standard of competencies for the beginning teacher. The development of this standard was based on *action research* by the *mobility of teacher trainees* for the purpose of teaching practices. The molecular model as illustrated on the leaflet represents the final European standard of beginning teacher competencies as developed within the course of our project. With the particular design of the standard, a molecule, we wanted to reflect and concede to the complexity of the concept of competencies.

> A competence is the (cap)ability of a person to engage in an interdependent cluster of knowledge and skills, in association with personality characteristics, to execute tasks effectively and efficiently in a complex, particular work situation. These tasks belong to the core tasks of a profession (Dekker & Zijlstra, 2003, translation by author).

Our molecular model consists of all competencies a teacher trainee should have achieved at the end of his teaching training programme to engage effectively and efficiently in the core tasks of a teaching profession within a European context.

The standard is represented as a molecule consisting out of 3 surrounding atoms, connected by one core atom.

The three surrounding atoms represent three domains or contexts in which the beginning teacher should be competent:

- The group level

- The school community level

- The society level

These three domains are represented as similar atoms within one molecule, as all levels are equal in importance to function as a competent beginning teacher within a European context. When one atom is lacking or not complete, the molecule breaks down.

Within each domain one or more interdependent clusters of competencies (unities of knowledge, skills and attitudes) are defined as shown in the following box:

Domains	Clusters of competencies
Group Level	• Competencies connected to *Activity Planning* • Competencies connected to Lesson *Implementation* • Competencies connected to Classroom *Communication* • Competencies connected to *Assessment and Evaluation*
School Community Level	• Competencies connected to *Communication* • Competencies connected to the *School Organisation*
Society level	• Competencies connected to the *Educational System*

Figure 9: Domains of competencies in the molecular model

The three surrounding atoms (which represent the three domains in which a beginning teacher should be competent) connect with the core atom of the molecule, which is defined as the 'emergent identity of a beginning European teacher'. This connection symbolizes:

(a) that all domains of competencies are equal in importance

(b) the complexity of the teaching profession

(c) that being a competent beginning teacher means that one engages in an *interdependent* cluster of knowledge and skills, in association with *personality characteristics* of the person involved. The whole of skills and knowledge a beginning teacher engages in connects with the particular personality of the beginning teacher in question. It is in this unique combination that the identity of a European teacher emerges or appears as a new level.
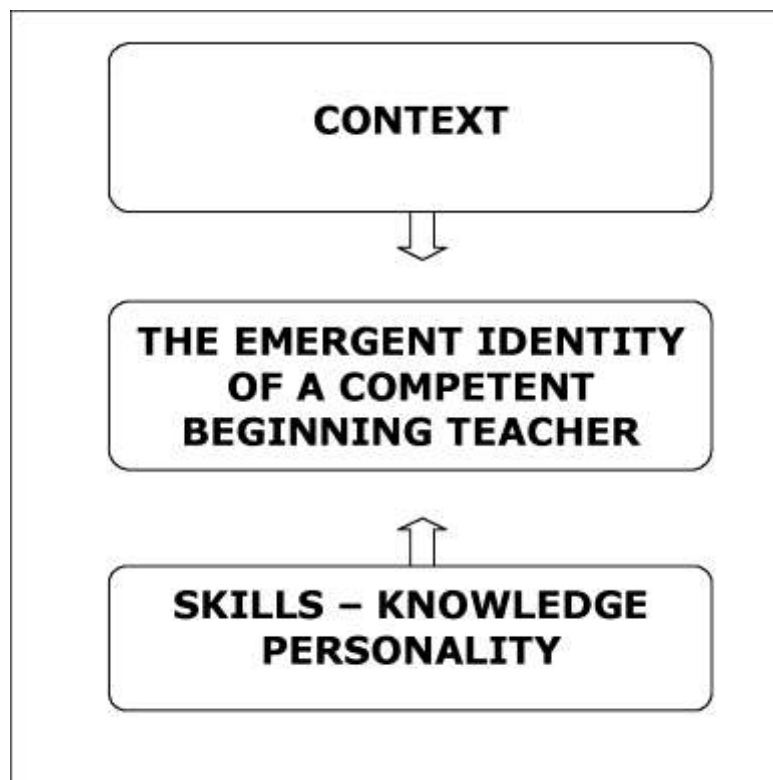
Figure 10

In this way the molecular model offers a common language to define a competent beginning teacher in a European context, allowing enough space for cultural and personal differences and a variation in teaching styles.

Reflective Journals

Illustration by Ivan Boeckmans 1

A MOST interesting experience: Some reflections from Gävle, Sweden
Camilla Gustafsson, Kia Kimhag and Bengt Söderhäll

Is there a meta narrative in this project we are in, a narrative that we have not been aware of? Or is there in ourselves a narrative, a quest for an essence, as a result of a very strong positivistic impact on our thinking? Do we carry within a figure of thought, that there is a standard to be found somewhere, a true standard? Are our pretensions to find a standard of general scope, or is it a modest project aiming at contributing to a conversation about 'MObility framework and Standard for Teacher trainees'?

These questions have been our partners this last year of the MOST project and we hope that they contribute to a critical discourse on the matters in focus. All our work over the three years show that there is no standard to be found, but that the dialogue on it, is important in a world of big change. We dare say that we can not afford not to talk across the different borders about what competencies and knowledge, attitudes and skills that are required and need be invented for a continuous development of the arts of learning and teaching. In this ongoing dialogue, we believe that each single experience is important.

In retrospect and reflecting mood some months after the final school practice, comparing the standard with the memory - or boiled down result of the doing and the thinking, the writing and the talking and

rationalising this into remembering (and let us not complicate this with the introducing of reminding and reminiscing, though I am sure this could be very productive to our will to explain and understand the complex aspect and totality of teaching-learning) – we would like to not conclude, but articulate the standpoint of today, end of June 2007.

1. Comments on three years of projecting

The first moment in this project is related to a small castle in France. I (Kia) had no idea what my first talk with Walter Baeten should give me and my colleagues or my students. He talked with me about the idea of a Comenius project to find standards for evaluating exchange students practice abroad. We discussed the difficulties we actually had experienced about it, and finally I agreed that I and my department was interested do be involved. I always look back to that day for remembering myself what it is about, we need each other to develop and to try new ideas. I know that each country and each school in one way or another always struggle about questions like this. Each time I meat a teacher from the compulsory school we talk about how they should evaluate the students. They ask for what I as a teacher educator should remark, should look at etc. In the beginning of the project I worked alone and tried to find documents from each subject at my university just to find out what assessment document and evaluation document we where using in each subject. I had two colleagues that after a year also where involved in the project that made the workload more reasonable. During these years I

realized many times that the developing part of the project is central, because we are from different countries and we do have as a participant different experience and different ideas of what the result should lead us to. The reflections are in different levels and some of them are reflections on the single work that has been done and some of the reflections are discussed during or in the end of the project.

Maltén (1995) discusses that it is a need for teacher education that teacher students gives possibilities to reflect about teaching in the classroom. He means that reflections are a bridge between practice and theory. Teaching is complex and to find the competence a teacher need to have and to find his or her role as a teacher, you have to include identity, personality, values, social skills, relation skills, pedagogical skills, understanding, respect, sensibility etc. Even if the list of competences a teacher might or do need, the social functions are important. To reflect on this project is really about the social connection we had and have with each student but also to see development in each student during or after their exchange.

2. Practical

To be involved in a project, teaches you to be more effective when the workload is turning up around the corner. The practical parts in this project have sometimes been very difficult. The constant changes in the teacher education became problematic. First we needed to find a course we could offer students to participate in. But when we found the right

course and got the permission, we found our selves sitting hour by hour just to find a mailing list to teacher students in these courses. It could be easy, but to mail 257 students, one by one, that can take a while. This was the only possibility to inform all students. We did also go out to different classes and spread flyers, but most effective was the mail. We found out that the problems we had/have in this project was about the structure at our University. So, instead of using hours to find out the standards we had to use it for the practical work.

The conclusion could be that in the start of a project we have to structure more closely and also set up a plan B. Even if we worked very hard, planned and arranged around the project, it always turned up things we did not calculate. We also thought that we could use the experience from the year before, but we could not. Every year the structure around the course changed, every year we had to find new ways for the students. The change was both good and bad. One positive thing was that the International Office started to help us find accommodation for our incoming students. The most negative was that the modules of courses changed places so the practice period suddenly was in the wrong course. This became problematic in many levels and we had to find new ideas to inform the new lecturers about it and also how to adapt this in to each course. Some students that studied in our distance programme had big problems because of the period for the exchange. We had to create new documents and assessments to make them pass after the exchange. We also had to give them individual support if needed in their work. All reporting and the need of information to students and our colleagues was

anyway successful in the end and the conclusion we found was that if we are generous to each colleague the work became much easier.

The reporting and administering work of the project has taken a lot of time and resources. Maybe an optimal situation is that all the work around the projects was not the work of the teachers working with the education. Some of our problems have been the communication about reporting and costs between us and the central administration of the project, when physical meetings have not been possible. One dilemma is when new persons enter late in the project and another, difficulty to get the whole picture of the project. We have experienced problems understanding the way things should be reported. It is not easy, when economy and administrative systems are so different in the countries involved. The positive thing is that we as partners get experiences and knowledge working in an international project.

Notes to some of the standard: Group level
"To be sensitive and responsive to students different ability level" is a general idea that we can agree to, but the practice has shown that the connotations of 'sensitive' and 'responsive' can differ, according to our different backgrounds and historical forming of the local, regional and national contexts, contexts that are on the move and not patternized in a way so that they do not let new things in. Words we use thinking about this are receptivity and reciprocity and this connected to the over all democratic objectives of the curriculum and also our internationally

agreed declarations such as the 1994 Salamanca declaration on inclusion and the United Nation Charta of Children's Rights. Also, it seems as if a more social constructivist attitude in the seeking for a standard could be productive.

3. Notes to some of the standard: activity planning

When we arrive at the 'activity planning', it is obvious that there is a clash and/or meeting between instruction and construction, focus on teacher/focus on pupil/focus on the-in-between. During the practicing weeks at Älvboda Friskola, we could observe a frustration from the visitors, as the instructive, scheduled, framed-in every day work was not explicit in plans on paper. The beginning was tough for the teacher students, but the adapting was very quick and at the tutors desk this ended up in a conclusion that hope is at hand, hope for the understanding of differences and recognition of the other, and instead if judging taking in and understanding that many roads lead to Rome.

The more practical moment of planning and teaching showed a wide range of means, a repertoire necessary to meat different competencies and if a conclusion is needed, I guess that, in spite of language difficulties, the assessment aspects should be more of a seminar work before and after the lessons. To assess a cut out sample from a section, two weeks or a semester is somewhat embarrassing to go on with. In the seminars and eye-to-eye talks, the teacher student knowledge developed from the

lessons over reflections, talks and writing journal of competence is what should be focused on. The single act in an isolated lesson or part of a lesson is too little for a nuanced assessment. Also, the defining of a teacher student is an issue worth elaborating upon. Recognition and responsible-making might deepen the education.

At Älvboda Friskola frontal education is not performed often. The work is more thematic and pupil activity oriented. This made it difficult to use the standard we have produced in the MOST project and the comparison between our different schools shows that we ought to hesitate when offering a standard in detail. Maybe focus should be more on the way teacher students articulate the meanings they put into planning, performing and evaluating their teaching.

4. Time span of the project

Our experience of student exchange is a whole semester, the three months Erasmus visits, the two weeks intensive programmes and this five weeks we have had in MOST. It seems as if five weeks is a good time span for all involved: at the practice school there can be a concentration thematically on international issues and the English language, at the university tutors and others involved can focus on the project on a defined time and the students do not experience to great an interruption in their academic studies. Many students and pupils have been asking why the project does not continue, questions witnessing about positive experiences from the MOST work.

5. Notes to some of the standard: communication

'Communication' is not only language as such. More than once during my visits to Älvboda Friskola, we had a feeling that there was something more than the language that was needed to communicate, and now, when months have passed, I remember that we at seminars often talked about religion and culture and that an 'induction' of the tongue is not enough. There is also an induction to cultural behaviour and tradition needed, references taken for granted to be deployed and this might give the meetings between students-pupils deeper understanding of what education is, can be and ought to be.

We did not use the standard in detail, as we figured that they did not fit the situation at the practice school; there the work is more team-wise and not focused on the individual teacher and when writing team, this has relevance to all involved in the educative actions, i.e. teachers, other employed, visitors and pupils.

Some mentors - and tutor and children - thought that the standard was a bit too much and that focus should be more on the action than the behaviour of one of the persons involved.

Also, it has become obvious in seminars and talks that the figure of thought behind the word 'standard' is not suitable for a social constructivist position, a position explicit in the situation we've had in Sweden these three years corresponding to the duration of the project.

The meta narrative behind the concept of 'a standard' ought to be scrutinised to deepen the understanding of the complexities of education.

Partly we used the document, i.e. we used it when it was suitable and/or when we remembered to use it. The sharp situation in the school, with hundreds of transactions every day, makes it difficult to hold a standard document in front of you. The use was more after teaching sessions, in seminars and table talks - and the document opened talks about differences and likenesses in the different national school systems as well as in different schools and even classes, rooms and subjects.

The quality of the document is more that it can function - together with other texts - as an agenda for the elaboration of the how, the what and the why in institutionalised educational situations and contexts.

The document opened for dialogues on religious matters as well as cultural, i.e. the back ground radiation from the history of the different schooling systems, the embeddedness not obvious in the here-and-now situation.

The seminars in the practice school and at the university were worked through from the idea that the participant brought there questions for the elaboration of them. The agenda was not set by tutor or mentor exclusively, in an effort to work more in line with citizenship education.

One thing we used was the before published "On a scale" (De Ganck, 2007), which showed to be productive and it was used not to find 'the

right answers' but to open for questions and articulation of ideas, prejudice and understanding, opening for questions more than answers.

Instead of the visualisation suggested, we used a story-telling way of getting to grips with our ideas about teaching (and learning), about education. The quality of the telling and the stories told and the many aspects on our subject and nuances was way beyond my expectations and for the future we believe we will use this method more.

Also, the listening level was very high and as tutors our work was qualified and qualifying, as we were not leading the seminars. When one student had told her/his story and we had talked about it, the teller did send the word to the next teller.

The most positive notion from the altogether fifteen weeks over these three years with the thirty two visiting teacher students has been the willingness to both understand our system and to work in it fully. This notion is something teachers, pupils and even parents at the practicing school also have talked about and the in a European perspective this is something to ponder about more deeply.

To finish this part of a reflection, we would say that the talk about a standard - as that about a canon of texts in our national as well as European schools - is very productive to our different school systems and maybe we in these talks can foster the edu-care tradition, where both academic studies and fostering are in focus for all involved.

If we do not talk and write about a standard, we are afraid an implicit code of no transparency will occur, so, let us go on articulating and elaborating these matters.

6. Reflections on in coming students by tutor

You might say that the responsible person for this reflection stumbled into the project, and I could never have imagined the amount of time and work I was going to spend on it. Neither could I imagine the frustration of not really understanding the objective of the project and of having a feeling of not doing what was expected of me, a feeling still within and now also on the outside, articulated in the few words just read. On the other hand, the every day work with the visiting students from Belgium, Catalonia, Lithuania and Malta and the aftermath, showed to be productive in the long run. The work with MOST has changed my planning, lecturing and teaching and helped to build out the educative repertoire. The most obvious result is that I no longer have and doubts when it comes to teach in English and the second most obvious is that ideas of a more collaborative, reciprocal and community-wise way of dealing with the academic work is beginning to find forms.

The first year I only took part in the organizing of the practice for the eight MOSTers arriving and I had no possibility to get into the objectives and forms of the project in depth.

In the second year I was involved almost full time in the project during the five weeks the ten MOSTers visited us and we really worked together to accomplish as many nuances of the complexities of teaching-learning as possible.

During the third and last year fourteen MOSTers were in Sweden and even if I could not put as much time into the project as in the second year, due to other commitments, a considerable amount of time was spent in seminars, tutoring, school visits, practice evaluation, reading of students' texts, planning, organizing together with headmaster, staff and pupils of Älvboda Friskola.

The first time I heard about the project on a Mobility framework and Standard for Teacher trainees, was when a colleague and friend in need asked me if I wanted to join the project, and this was almost a year after the start of the project. My first task was to organize the practice for eight students and my first reflection when I began to think about the contents of the project, was that I almost rejected it when I read the words 'Teacher trainee', which had and still has a negative connotation for me. The second reflection was: - Why? Why produce a standard for something that is so embedded in culture, language and tradition? Is this an analogy with the production of children's books for the whole continent, taking away all the details of the complexities of life, rejecting the capillarity?

After the first meeting I attended, in Arteveldehogeschool in Gent, with colleagues from the six partners, I came to a conclusion in analogy with

that of a canon of literature in our national school: the talk and elaboration, the contrasting and comparing, the articulation and communicating of our systems and ideas make sense and is needed if we are to cope with the big issues of future, related to sustainability, nutrition, health and ways of solving conflicts - and here the project came to support my stand point that education can be a project of peace and have an important role to play for the future.

I also understood that the standard suggested by us in the project had no pretensions to universality and should be seen as an example to be used in critical constructive modality for all those interested in the area.

In the project we have worked with documents presented in the MOST Handbook (De Ganck, 2007) and in the activities in Sweden these documents have been more of a background material, as a result of my interpretation of the task: to adapt to the situation of the practice school and try to be active members of that 'community of interpretation'. The use of the documents has been limited, as the situation in the work with preparation for the practice as well as the practice at Älvboda Friskola emphasized more on collaboration, community work and reciprocal attitudes towards the complexities of teaching-learning, and the theoretical background to this are ideas founded in socio cultural and social constructive ideas, where individuals as such are seen not as personally responsible and those that should be assessed.

From a journal of competence we read:

> The comments here and the feedback are always in a positive way. The weaknesses are discussed together with the students not written down in the report. I asked Bengt why and he told me that the tutor cannot know if the lesson was a ruin because of what. Maybe it was a bad day or moment. So he prefers the way that after lesson he will discuss everything with the student rather than writing the report and fail the student. Even the assessment way of doing it from the tutors' side, it is different. They interact with the students and with us teachers during the lesson, they do not stay away or at the corner taking notes and make the student teacher fell more awkward and in a difficult position. This all helped me to appreciate more my profession, and I am seeing it more as a vocation rather than as a job.

The Assessments documents, the Portfolio, the Observations in the 'classroom(s)' and the Lesson planning are reported on the DOKEOS platform by the students and to summarize this can be said:
The Assessment documents were seen as the most difficult, or rather most time eating task for mentor and tutor, as they were too detailed, too individual-oriented and in opposition too the school code, where dialogue and teamwork, and not too much frontal teaching is being performed.

The Portfolio was seen as a task of the student to keep and from the portfolio reflection were elaborated in seminars, talks and texts to tutor and the Observations in the 'classroom(s) became more of observations on the premises, as the classroom is a place that is a cultural construct and at the practice school teaching-learning takes place in places that might not be called classrooms.

When we think about lesson planning, many of the students told me they thought it strange that there was no exact planning, hour by hour, subject by subject. Being used to precise structure down to minutes in some cases, this made the first days at the school difficult, but soon the students had taken in the 'code' of the place and planning more to the situations occurring took over.

At a seminar we talked about these documents briefly and the idea of a questionnaire arrived and we agreed on this question:

What three competencies, what knowledge/knowing do you find most important for a teacher? Which is the most important? The fourteen answers can be summarized as:

Most important for a teacher	Second most important for a teacher	Third most important f or a teacher
• Able to give autonomy to students and guiding through learning process • Knowing to use the taught • Knowledge of the group learning • Effective=open-minded listening (2) • Knowing yourself and what you want • Emphatic • Knowledge of subject (2) • Create curiosity and good atmosphere • Knowledge of pupils interest • Socially competent (2) • Authentic	• Good classroom management • Knowledge of the subject (4) • Understanding the children (2) • Respectful (2) • Patient • Making it possible for children to learn • Knowledge of transforming curriculum into teaching • Adapting to different situations • Creating friendly atmosphere	• Add a personal touch to lessons • Cooperate with staff (2) • Experimenting in teaching • Subject knowledge (4) • Innovative methodologically (2) • Help children to build self confidence/-esteem • Flexible • Knowledge of the group learning • Having fun with the children

Figure 11: Important teacher competencies

As seen, the answers are quiet different and all together they take in a lot of professional skills as well as skills asked for in our every day lives. It is striking how emphatic the answers of the students are on human qualities that are difficult to assess. The instrumental sides of the teaching profession are maybe expected to be at hand already. This fact might be interpreted as if the ideas of quality of learning are implemented among, at least, these fourteen students. Of course, we can also interpret it as if these students are in front line of educative ideas and we do not know if

these ideas derive from education or from other sectors of life. (Cf Biggs, 2003.)

Instead of analysing the answers I will let part of a text by professor, poet and Nobel Prize laureate of chemistry in 1981 Roald Hoffmann (2006) stand as a comment and also the poem at the end of this reflective journal can be read as a comment to our educative discourse, a poem written by Miroslav Holub (Czeck poet and immunologist, 1923-1998), "The Door" (The title in Czeck is "Jdi a otevri dvere". The English interpretation is by Ian Milner and by George Theiner (1967).

The choice of letting more symbolic language arrive in this reflective journal, might give us some light on phenomena within fields of tacit knowledge and phenomena not yet possible to describe and understand, using a scientific language.

> Now make a jump to chemistry. Imagine a table. On it are vials with four white powders. One is salt, the next one is sugar, and the next one is cyanide (the salt sodium cyanide). The fourth one is penicillin. The substances all look alike. In fact, 95 per cent of all chemicals are white crystalline powders. But it's a matter of life and death - and on a trivial level of taste - that these four substances are different from each other, that they are alike or not alike. The fundamental tension is one of identity.

Hoffman is writing about chemical stuff, complicated, yes, but compared to our discourse I would suggest in a forced humble mode, simple, and in

our strife to arrange education we sometimes do not observe the differences between - not white powders of different values, tastes and use, but - the persons asking for education, the persons in charge of education and the complexities of the learning-teaching situations. We sometimes do not understand that induction to the discourse, the class, the subject, the atmosphere, the whys, the whats, the whens, the hows - to the community of the specific tradition or culture we take for granted; the taste of schooling is not always sweet as that first powder mentioned by Hoffmann.

One task we were asked to carry out I could not do. It was a visualisation exercise and the students were asked to go back in time to call to mind memories from their school days. Maybe I took this too seriously, but I had a feeling not being able to take care of the things that could be awakened over the exercise. In fact, I found it more of something for a psychiatrist to deal with. Instead of the visualisation exercise I asked the students to recite a story from their school days, but not necessarily something they had experienced. It could be from a book, a film or a story from someone else. This exercise was dealt with in our first seminar with all fourteen MOSTers. Two handfuls of Erasmus students also participated. The idea was on the surface that the stories should get us to know each other, the name, country and a bit of each person's background. At a deeper level the task was to take out examples that we later on could refer to, when talking about, reflecting upon and analysing

likenesses and differences in schooling and also experiences being made at the practice school.

The stories we got showed a map of beauty, negative experiences, funny memories and great seriousness, and yes, the stories opened windows for talks later on.

One story was about a grandmother who had removed a portrait of a dictator and replaced it with a picture of a goat in a hat. Another was about a boring teacher of French always standing on the platform in front of the blackboard. A third was about a flute playing teacher who was at least one hundred years old. A fourth was about a math teacher who also was a magician and one day when magic was the subject, the headmistress entered the classroom. A fifth was about someone who wanted to become a teacher and practiced a lot teaching her dolls.

I cut a paragraph from a letter from one of the MOSTers, saying something about this task:

> I also think this was a really nice lesson and a good way to know one another. At least, that's what I think now because when I was sitting in the lesson I couldn't remember all the stories and you said you already knew us because of our story. I couldn't believe that. In the evening, however, my roommates and I talked about all the new people and I could remember them because of the stories. So now I believe you when you say you can know people from hearing their stories.

Well, I did not 'know' the students from listening to the story, but I had a story to refer to in future talks and meetings. We might say that this proved to be an important aspect of the construct of our community of interpretation.

Two students wrote in their journal of competence about the story telling seminar as follows:

> From the first seminar I was surprised. Of course in a positive way. To tell the truth, I expected the seminar to be very boring, some theory about something but it was completely different. There were other students both from MOST and Erasmus programmes and we were sitting in a circle, discussing. We had to tell a story from our schooling and it was really interesting. We counted that there were people from 8 countries in one class. I think that it is a very good way of working because you can know something about other cultures and people. In the end of the seminar we sang some Swedish songs and it made us feel even more comfortable.

> Thus, a circle 'technique' having embarrassed me a little at first went out perfect last of all. Asked to tell a story of our school, university, or practice experience, I was struck how important storytelling could be among people with different cultures. What the process of storytelling showed was the fact that everyone of us is unique coming from different cultural environments yet all

unified by one particular means of communication - language which, in that case, was English. What power does the storytelling have!! I found those stories as the creative conversion of life into a more powerful, more meaningful and clearer experience. In other words, it is not a day, a month, a year, or a lifetime that has no plot but our experience that is the only raw material of stories. More than this, storytelling seems to form the basis of our educational systems. Knowledge that is not passed through the heart is dangerous: it may lack wisdom. So what if our educational systems were to insist that teachers be poets and storytellers? What changes would follow, I wonder?

Who is telling in our schools? Who is responsible? Who is acting? Who is talking? Who is in charge of memory, history and oblivion? These questions refer to the concept of 'homo capax' by Ricoeur (1990, 2000). If we really want education to make a positive difference, the results of this project show that students show great willingness to take part in the conversations, to be responsible, to tell, to act and to deal with what time is doing to us and what we can do in and with time.

So, what do we mean when we talk about competences for a good European teacher? If we agree that:

There is a need for qualitative intensive studies within the complex didactic domain of research, where it constantly is

shown impossible or problematic to make generalizing conclusions. Didactic approaches to problems concerning teaching – learning are always 'complex', 'contextually bound' and furthermore 'historically formed', which make intensive studies necessary. (Arfwedson, 2002, p.7)

How can we go on to understand more about the differences and likenesses of our education systems? I look for support in extensive reading for an overwhelming sense of that too much of conclusive elements - and a standard might be recognized as such san element - when it comes to the complexities of learning-teaching, will diminish. Peter Kemp (2005) is writing:

The good pupil in the era of globalization wants be a citizen of the world and wants to imitate the best he or she has learned about power, community and hope and do it at least as good, maybe better. The good pupil always carries into effect mimesis. But this formation is not simply and solely repetition, or a lesson learnt by heart or recapitulation of ideas and formulations without considering the context of today. It is rather what John Dewey has called a "constant reorganization and reconstruction of experience" that "not only is a formation of innate /natural activities but take place by virtue of them. (….) The good pupil of our time has a feeling for the world community and is at the

same time free to criticize the state when it fails as educator, as he or she is more than a citizen of a state" (p.233).

About education he writes:

> The philosophy of pedagogy has the pedagogy as its object, and the pedagogic is according to a classic definition "the theory of education". Raising (uppfostran) or bringing up (fostran) is the Swedish word that is corresponding best to the English *education* and the French *education*, derived from the Latin *educare*, "take a great responsibility", "have care for" (and not the Latin *educere*, "lead out", "taken away"): *education* is care of long duration. But the word /uppfostran/ is marked by the use in times when the father and the teacher were authoritarian figures. Raising and discipline have been associated with each other. Therefore it is not used much and has been replaced by two words that state two sides of /uppfostran/: liberal education (German *Bildung* /bildning/ and instruction /utbildning/. /Bildning/ makes the human being a cultural person, while the instruction makes her a knowing person. /Bildung/ has a moral aim, while instruction is aiming for competence. (Ibid, p.145)

Kemp goes on elaborating upon the meaning of education and pleads for the idea that both 'Bildung' and instruction are needed. The quotation shows one of the difficulties we have in the European context, when

some of us have other words than the majority. It was my meaning to go on for a bit to ponder about emphasis on what and why and when in our educative domain, but I rest this case.

Before ending with the Holub poem, a metaphor that arrived some time ago, working on this journal, a metaphor that is irritating, as I am not sure of its meaning.

Often 'conclusions' are asked for in papers and a conclusion is often needed for the continuation of the developing of the topic. But, sitting with heaps of papers and notes from this project, arrives a picture of 'conclusion' also possible to understand as a 'dead end'. The word 'conjunction' might be more what I am looking for, trying to describe and understand what happened in the MOST project of high complexity and immense amount and qualities of transactions. At this conjunction we can choose to walk the standard refining road, but we can also choose roads formed differently by history and in diverse contexts. Also, we have the possibility to have some standard that we agree upon, as with the Human Rights of the United Nations and at the same time let the unique develop without the interfering of a standard produced far away from where the action takes place. Obvious is that, standing at this conjunction, its is generative to keep on talking over the borders, through open doors about what we believe teaching competences are and can develop into.

As mentioned above these reflections will end with a poem and it is chosen because to me it tells something that my school language and my scientific prose cannot. Poems as well as stories, though, can, and doors can be opened.

The Door by Miroslav Holub

Go and open the door.
Maybe outside there's
a tree, or a wood,
a garden,
or a magic city.

Go and open the door.
Maybe a dog's rummaging.
Maybe you'll see a face,
or an eye,
or the picture
of a picture.

Go and open the door.
If there's a fog
it will clear.
Go and open the door.
Even if there's only
the darkness ticking,
even if there's only
the hollow wind,
even if
nothing
is there,
go and open the door.

At least
there'll be
a draught.

Poem by Miroslav Holub

7. Positive outcome

The most positive thing in this project has been the meeting and work with colleagues and students. They all gave something new to our minds. We developed ideas from what they have thought during meetings and exchange. We also had the opportunity to discuss with colleagues about important questions around this topic of standards. But it is when you have a group of student in the classroom you realize how much the exchange affects the students, mostly in a positive way. Incoming student development is mostly about how they feel that they become equal as a colleague and that this changes them to be more open. The second reflection is about how they relate to pupils during practice, that they are more like friends in the relation and also learn how to work differently in a pedagogical way. The outgoing students reflect mostly about how much they have developed and that the exchange makes them see their own system in a new way and they feel more open minded. Later in other courses this is really clear that each student has developed and become more serious in their studies.

8. Negative outcome

One of the problems we had to deal with was how to explain for colleagues at our University about the outgoing students' work. Even if we showed the specific documents of the project, there where always one or two colleagues that we had problems with. None of them wanted extra

work so that was the first step to deal with. If we did help our colleagues they where more positive, but still one or two had negative opinions. It is really sad that international experience seems needed among colleagues, before they are going to accept abroad experience even if the policy document and the curricula show that we have to work with internationalisation and be positive to exchange studies.

9. Practice school

The first year eight student visited Sweden in our project, and four of them did practice at Älvboda Friskola. The second year, due to practical reasons, we had to have all ten students at Älvboda and evaluating this with students, mentors, head master, pupils, tutor and even parents, we decided to have all fourteen students at Älvboda the third and last year of the project. This has shown very productive, as the school is trying to continue to work in this international line and some of the pupils at the school keep on corresponding with the 'visiting teachers', the MOST students. Pupils from Älvboda Friskola have invited one of the tutors of the project, to be in a dialogue about 'the next step', an expression generated from one of the talks students, mentor, pupils and tutor had in March. 'The next step' is a metaphor for how to be self motivated and how to think to study successfully.

We would like to conclude with expressing our gratitude for being on the project. We have learned a lot and we have been challenged to develop

our thinking about the complexities of teaching and learning, and thus also started to integrate and develop international issues more explicit in our courses and seminars than before, as a result of all the work in and the dialogues about the project.

Observations about the MOST project programme in Barcelona
Sara Figueras and Lluís Cumellas

1. We never learn alone

Given this premise, we formulated a project that gathers different contents, which we considered to be the most appropriate to carry out the objectives of the MOST project.

Giving our students the appropriate support and tools to develop their own learning in a cultural context absolutely different from their usual reality was one of our main objectives.

In this programme, we subdivided the two student exchange periods into five sections:

The first section, very important in our opinion, is that of welcome. In this first contact with the group of students, it was considered important to have a preliminary session to introduce and welcome students to the MOST project in a dynamic manner, through a series of games to discover the environment around our faculty building (Tamarita Park), where personal interaction with the other group members was essential to achieve the game goals. By grouping students from different origins in small groups, a warm, friendly personal contact was quickly established, in a playful and relaxed manner.

Also in this section, a guided visit around the faculty building and an approach to the reality that would be their home for 15 days were carried out, ending with a little welcome lunch in the faculty.

A second section, basic to understand the reality where they would live during their in-service training, was the different sessions devoted to getting to know the social and political, cultural, and educational reality of Spain and Catalonia, thanks to the collaboration from different faculty members:

– *Spanish and Catalan political, cultural, and social reality* by Cèlia Rosich, PhD.

– *Spanish Educational System* by Professor Ann Marie Holm-Nielsen

– *Educational Psychology: The reality of our schools* by Professor Pilar Dotras

– *What kind of methodologies do we use in our school?* by Professor Anna de Monserrat

– *How do we prepare our school classes?* by Professor Carme Flores

– *How do we evaluate our school students?* by Professor Ann Marie Holm-Nielsen

What we learn is a personal consequence of the social progress where we are during learning and, for this reason, we tried to build a project addressed at understanding the reality where students would be immersed in at different levels (political, educational, cultural, language, etc.), at understanding and getting to know the child and the adolescent from Barcelona, and at finding out new strategies to communicate with this environment, while also attaching importance to the exchange of ideas between the project participants' different ways of doing and thinking.

We should consider that, even though ours is the communication and information society, nowadays rewards are not for the knowledgeable person, but for the person with the capacity to get involved in the students' different learning processes in a constantly changing and mobile state. This is where we find teachers that, besides having wide professional knowledge, know how to be autonomous and look for, acquire, and update new content. Without forgetting the capacity to act responsibly, freely and with commitment as citizens.

In the third section, there are discussion sessions, with all those issues studied in the MOST project, through discussion forums:

−   *The different Educational Systems in Europe.* Professors Lluís Cumellas & Sara Figueras

−   *The Standards.* Professors Lluís Cumellas & Sara Figueras

−   *Teaching in Europe.* Professors Lluís Cumellas & Sara Figueras

−   *Visualization exercise.* Professors Lluís Cumellas & Sara Figueras

−   *Personal assessment and personal work.* Professors Lluís Cumellas & Sara Figueras

In the different discussion forums, the significance of an open debate in the group was noticed. Understanding some ways of doing and being is not always easy, particularly when we don't know the social, cultural, and educational reality of the different countries in the group. These small conversations allowed us to enlarge our own visions of education a little more, at all levels, and to be more objective about what every educational system from the different participants' countries contributes with.

Many times, we observed the tendency to believe that what one knows is the best. Only the capacity to listen, understand, and contrast made it possible to enrich one's own knowledge even more, giving rise to the creation of educational projects with wide intercultural meaning. Appraising different points of view and being able to enrich them with new contributions made these debates a working tool highly appreciated by students.

In the fourth section, in-service training was developed in teaching centres. This was undoubtedly the most enriching setting for students, where they lived an unforgettable professional experience, with everything implied. There were also some moments of frustration and disillusionment, but most experiences were of joy and personal and intellectual growth.

> The objective of this project was to learn and get to know different cultures through English... In this last session, we clearly realized the project's complete success... The experience was fantastic, both for teachers and students. We all have taken advantage of this new project, and we hope it will be repeated next year. (Núria Farré, student from Barcelona, 2006)

> I like the way of teaching in Barcelona (…). You also have a closer relationship with the pupils and the other teachers (…). I think we learned from each other's way of teaching. During the

two weeks of practice I observed different classes and I learned a lot of new games and activities which I will take back home (…). At the end of the practice I really felt at ease with the students which made it even harder for me to leave the school (…). The experience was very nice! (Sylvie Schaumont, student from Belgium, 2006)

The last part of the programme was the presentation and assessment of assignments carried out in the different teaching centres. In this section, the tutors from the different centres were invited to participate actively, with a joint assessment session where the task carried out at schools was deeply noticed. The conclusions and reflections on the experience allowed the entire group to enrich even more with the MOST project's objectives.

2. Reflection Journey

The chance of collaborating with the MOST project meant a challenge, which was taken on from Blanquerna Faculty of Psychology and Educational and Sports Sciences (Ramon Llull University) with responsibility, enthusiasm, and joy.

For these two years, our institution has welcomed 20 students from the different nationalities represented in the project, with the aim of providing them with the chance of carrying out their in-service training at three schools in Barcelona: Escola Pia Sarrià, Escola Virolai, and Escola

St. Ignasi; and of actively participating in the definition of some European standards to assess in-service training. On the other hand, 11 students from Blanquerna FPCEE have taken part in the project, going to other European countries with the same objectives as their peers.

Below, we aim at presenting a series of difficulties we have come across throughout these years of project development from the viewpoint of students received in our institution (incoming students), and also an analysis of assessments at the end of the project.

3. Difficulties on the way: The project's best assets

3.1. Arriving in a foreign country

Carrying out a placement in a foreign country always implies an important change of context, with some time of adaptation. Differences in climate, language, food, timetables, local customs, may result in a state of confusion increased by the distance from the loved ones: family and friends.

Quickly putting MOST students in their new reality was a priority for our Blanquerna team, as we understood that, to prepare some quality educational interventions based on the MOST standards proposal in Barcelona schools, students had to understand the reality of our country at least a little.

In some cases, acclimatization was not easy: the Mediterranean climate, abundant and heavy lunch, long afternoons, friendly character, particular to our land, put our incoming students to the test.

3.2. Educare or educere?

The different basic educational concepts have also caused some difficulties when reaching agreements on the standards to assess prospective European teachers' in-service training, as the interpretations of the different criteria under analysis depended on very different and often unconscious educational concepts. Thus, each of our incoming students took a stand on one of the two etymological visions of the word 'education', that is, *educare* or *educere*. The former refers to education based on 'feeding' or 'filling', therefore, education based on transmitting knowledge. The latter refers to education with the aim of promoting students internally, that is, taking students' knowledge out in order to build from their own meanings.

Helping them to be aware of the social origin of their concepts, as well as to observe, understand, and value other educational possibilities, became a key or basic challenge to engage in any discussion about assessment standards for educational interventions.

3.3. Different levels of teaching experience

Every European university proposes a different and equally interesting Teacher Training syllabus. In this sense, the diversity among MOST students' teaching experience was obvious, with some having a wide teaching experience and others dealing with the preparation and implementation of an educational intervention with a class group for the first time. This gap in practical background promoted cooperative work among MOST students, so that those with more teaching experience helped and guided those with less experience to prepare and assess practical sessions.

3.4. From strictness to flexibility or cognitive complexity

At some moments in the programme, some MOST students showed some strictness when claiming their closest teaching experience, that is, from home, to be the most appropriate. Awareness of this fact, together with the presentation and argumentation of other points of view, resulted in making the different positions more flexible and, consequently, an important step towards reaching an agreement on assessment standards.

3.5. About the European Standards

We find out that trying to use a stick and close list of standards divided in three levels: class level, lesson planning/preparation level and society and

community level, was interesting but at the same time difficult to work with. As we mention before, the meaning and the importance of each one of the criteria was different depending country's culture represented. So the assessment and evaluation of the standards were very hard to face in a realistic way, since not all the MOST students attributed the same value to the same categories developed in the standards.

4. Contributions from the MOST project

4.1. A rich in experiences exchange

In spite of not being the main objective of the MOST project, some consideration has to be given to the fact that student exchange promoted getting to know different cultures. Joint placements and the theoretical and practical classes encouraged their shift from cultural strangeness to comprehension and appraisal of the different realities represented in our project. Exchange of different educational systems and assessment about the differentiated treatment of different pedagogical variables taking part in an educational process opened a new world of pedagogical possibilities for every MOST student.

4.2. A semi-inductive research in relation to standards:

Although partners started from a prearranged list of different standards to assess teachers' in-service training, our research has made a parallel

inductive research process possible. In many cases, the incoming students from different countries involved themselves, and even the classroom teachers in charge themselves (mentors), have proposed to introduce different assessment criteria and/or have redefined the prearranged meanings. In this sense, criteria have emerged from the research participants' own discursive practice and, for this reason, final data have emerged not only from deductive processes but also from inductive processes, which in our opinion makes our study on assessment standards for teacher in-service training more real.

4.3. The need to create standards in relation to educational in-service training

The implementation of the MOST project has highlighted the need and difficulty to create some assessment standards for teacher in-service training. This difficulty has emerged together with an awareness process about the need to go ahead in this issue, widespread among the university, schools and MOST students.

Although this research is only a first step, it may be used a guide in the process of future European projects that may be developed in this line. Thus, both our institution Blanquerna FPCEE and the participating schools in the project in Barcelona: Escola St. Ignasi, Escola Virolai, and Escola Pia Sarrià, are willing to continue collaborating to refine the European standards to guide the assessment of teacher in-service training in the future.

4.4. Community participation in the MOST

One of the most important contributions of the MOST in Barcelona has been its community sense of implementation. Thus, Barcelona schools participating inn the project have become completely involved in the programme, contributing with their staff: coordinators, and tutor teachers, as well as material and logistic resources of all kinds. Their collaboration has been essential for the success of the project's implementation in our institution, and their sense of responsibility for MOST objectives has been remarkable.

The involvement of schools in the project to develop European standards to assess teacher in-service training has enhanced a closer, stronger and meaningful bond between universities and incoming students. The representation of our city's educational community has been the link between incoming students, our faculty, and the objectives of the MOST project.

4.5. The standards according our MOST students

The critical look at the European standards proposed, was also a part of our project aims in Barcelona, since we think that being a good teacher it also implies to be critical. That's why our MOST students finish their learning process in Blanquerna with their own list of standards minims. The reflection was interesting because even if they found the original list

interesting, they all agree with a basic list of attitudes that they all needed to reach such as: to show responsibility, to be flexible and open mind in order to resolve problems, to show empathic attitude toward your students and colleagues, to show enthusiasm and dynamic attitude in his or her job.

5. Final conclusion

In our opinion any research project is never done or close, as alive project is always ready to be rewrite or resignificant. So thinking about new ways to explore we would suggest on walking again some of the paths we started to explore at the beginning of the MOST project. Our three years experience offers us the opportunity to suggest new ways to approach common criteria about the teaching practices assessment. We would like to share some research lines that could help to develop this always-alive project:

(a) As mention at the Bologna's convention, it is need to argue, share and come up with a common idea of what education (in terms of *educare* or *educere*) we need to promote toward the Europe of the 21st century.

(b) We also need to think about what competences (understanding not only knowledge but also abilities, strategies, techniques and attitudes) do our future teachers need to get in order to educate the new

European citizens. We would suggest in this part to include not only the academic voice world but also the mentors, students and all the community, in order to initiate and inductive research.

(c) Finally we would try to develop a symmetric dialogue about competences for the teacher trainees. These new competences would come from a discussion group where all the community agents would participate with their own and personal voices. The competences will need to be questioned and re-elaborated at the same time as the implementation process is taking place. As any research project, rethinking the competences will be necessary because they will never hold a final meaning but always a movement one since they are a construction based on social discourses and so language.

Reflections on the project in Norway
Bjørg Klokk and Hermann Skogsholm

1. Preface

After three years in the MOST project we have reviewed of our journey. We will focus on the experiences and reflections of mentors, teacher trainees and us (teacher educators). What have we learned during this journey and what are our thoughts and conclusions at the end of it?

We knew there were differences between the Norwegian school system and the school systems in countries participating in the MOST project. We knew that the issue of education is loaded with attitudes and values, and education reflects the cultural and historical background and political preferences of a country. The differences in national curriculum (if there is a national curriculum) may explain some of these differences. We even know from our country that there are big differences between schools. As this article indicates, we may wonder if it is possible to come to a conclusion or an agreement on standards.

In this reflective journal we will consider our reflections from each of the three years in the project, saying something about our preparation and work on the different documents on standard and assessment, what we did during the exchange period and what is our evaluation and reflections after each year. We decided to bring the voices of the teacher trainees

and the mentors into the article, because we think they were the most important voices. In the last chapter, we intend to have a special look at the last year of the project and we try to give a summary of our thoughts and conclusions.

We must admit that we have spent much time with our mentors and the teacher trainees, trying to understand the standards, assessment documents which were sent to us after different transnational meetings.

2. Information about practice and different practice schools in Norway

2.1. Organisation

In Norway we have a system where certain teachers in lower secondary schools, here called mentors, do most of the mentoring of the students in practice. These mentors have the responsibility for the practice part of the programme, but the programme is worked out in collaboration with teacher educators from the university. Therefore we had to use a lot of time to inform the mentors and to discuss the evaluation criteria with them before the student exchange took place.

2.2. The practice schools

As referred in different documents schools represent a great variety also in Norway. In most schools, the normal school day is not structured

tightly in lessons according to specified minutes. The structure and length of 'an hour' will be different and depend on pupil and teacher activities. In many schools, especially primary and lower secondary schools, the traditional 'talk and chalk activities' (instruction based teaching) are not the most typical teaching strategy. Pupils often work with a project and are given several days to complete it. The practice schedules are therefore different from one school to another.

In Norway, the teacher trainees were placed in schools that used very different didactical ideas. Some schools might be called 'traditional', with the day organised in lessons and teachers giving lectures on the subject planned for a certain period. Other schools were more experimental, with a focus on individual learning programmes for the pupils, and the working periods varied. In 'the traditional schools' the mentor saw the teacher trainee as a lecturer when evaluating the student's work. In the experimental schools, the mentors focused more upon the teacher trainee as a guide or a tutor. To make criteria that take account of varying didactical activities a starting teacher may be involved in, will be a great challenge for the project.

All the teacher trainees had their practice in lower secondary schools where the age of pupils were from 12/13 to 15/16. We knew that in some of the other participant countries the age of pupils involved in the MOST project were up to 18. We think that this fact has been an extra challenge in the project

3. MOST assessment document - year 2004–2005

3.1. Preparation – making the programme and deciding the assessment criteria

The Norwegian programme for the student mobility at the MOST programme was made in cooperation with the teacher educators and the mentors. The teacher educators had an overall responsibility for the programme for the two first weeks and the last one, and the mentors were responsible for the programme during the practice weeks.

The discussion with the mentors about how to understand the aims of creating standards and assessment documents was a great challenge. 'Standard' was certainly a negatively loaded word. The mentors preferred the word 'framework'. We discussed the proposal from Belgium. As this was the first year of the project, the mentors wanted to use the practice assessment system made by the University of Stavanger. We compromised by making a decision that the mentors should concentrate upon two assessment criteria; teaching competence and social competence:

Teaching competence
– Develop professional knowledge by reflecting upon subject knowledge and knowledge of teaching with different persons in the practice arena
– Base teaching decisions on national and local curricula and on legal requirements
– Provide differentiated learning activities for individuals and groups on the basis of pupils' varying abilities
– Plan, carry out, assess and reflect on teaching and learning with different persons in the practice arena
– Demonstrate willingness and ability to use and try out a variety of teaching and organisational methods, learning approaches, teaching materials and other educational resources
– Alongside pupils and colleagues, contribute to a productive learning environment and good learning experiences
– Demonstrate willingness and ability to use and try out a variety of assessment methods and types of examination
– Lead and manage the learning of individual pupils and groups
– Demonstrate ability to critically reflect on own and others' teaching

Social competence
– Communicate and work together with children and young people
– Communicate and work together with adults (other student teachers, colleagues, parents and other co-workers)

- Demonstrate willingness and ability to listen to, understand and take account of other people's views and perspectives
- Develop professional knowledge by engaging in discussions in an informed and constructive manner
- Demonstrate willingness and ability to understand and contribute to conflict resolution among pupils and adults
- Critically evaluate key subject concepts, as and when these appear during the course

3.2. Language barrier

The first days at the university the students were a bit shy due to the fact that they had to communicate in English. But after some days of practice, we think they spoke English quite well. Because we wanted them to practice their English, we organised mixed groups of nationalities during their school practice period. We think it worked well.

We experienced though that there were some language barriers in the communication between the pupils and the teacher trainees and between the teacher trainees and the rest of the school personnel. Not all the pupils or all the school personnel felt comfortable when they had to speak English. Sometimes it sort of disturbed the focus and depth of the subject talk. And we think that language barriers will be an important question to discuss related to the field of assessment.

3.3. Reflection on criteria used

The mentors were satisfied by the fact that we had decided to focus on only two assessment criteria for competences. After two weeks they got an impression of each teacher trainee competence in communication skills and their ability to establish relationship with pupils and the school personnel. But the mentors found it hard to evaluate their subject competences (due to language barriers), understanding of the Curriculum and handling individual differences among pupils.

The mentors reported that the period of two weeks was short, and they supposed that we would extend the period by one more week of practice next year.

3.4. The SWOT-analyses

Together with the mentors at the practice schools, we evaluated the practice period using SWOT (analyses of strength, weakness, opportunity and challenge). One of the mentors, Kjell, gave his evaluation:

3.4.1. Strengths

As we had only a couple of students at each practice school, the number of students in each group was just right, because the students had a few lessons within a short period of time. And the fact that the relationship between the students, both socially and professionally, was brilliant, the

students were able to do a solid piece of work. They were eager to learn and were cooperative and hard working.

The students communicated well with the staff and the pupils. Having students that only communicate in English, encourages both the staff and the pupils to use English, both orally and in writing, in a good and natural manner. I was introduced to an evaluation form called "Guidelines for lesson assessments 04/05". This turned out to be quite reflective for me, and it gave the students feedback concerning their work.

Thinking back upon this project, positive memories come to my mind, like constructive dialogues with the students concerning the preparations, the teaching and the discussion concerning pedagogical competence in general.

3.4.2. Weaknesses

Adding just one more week to the project, would have improved things quite a lot regarding the skills of the pupils in communicating in English with the students. In addition, the students would have more time with the pupils and the mentor more time to evaluate and hopefully improve the skills of the students concerning professional and pedagogical competence.

During the teaching practice period, some students were eager to visit one or two of the other exchange schools to get new ideas on how schools in Norway are run. We were not able to put these ideas into reality full scale this time, but clearly this is possible!

3.4.3. Opportunities

We would like for the students to have tutorial responsibilities to improve subject competence. Letting the students work with smaller groups/ individuals would make the Norwegian pupils more comfortable speaking English amongst others as well as improving social competence.

3.4.4. Challenges

One of the challenges we experienced was including the students more actively in pedagogical discussions with other students/mentors in both pre and post- training meetings. For subject and pedagogical competence, the students should also experience more staff meetings, both in the mentor`s year and in the other two years. The overall aim is to increase competence in tutoring and training in planning, carrying out the plans, and evaluating their work together with all of the exchange students, the teacher trainer and the curriculum subject teachers (Kjell, 2006).

4. MOST – Assessment Document - Project Year 2005 – 2006

A new Assessment document based upon the standard, discussed at the transnational meetings, was sent to the participants before the teacher trainees arrived the second year. The Assessment document was a big issue during the meetings with the mentors. They found the Assessment document too detailed, especially on the topic of class management. They wanted to develop the SWOT grid, used the first year. Therefore we adjusted the assessment document to the practice of SWOT analysis. The second year we wanted to adjust the SWOT to the teacher trainee level. The mentors' feedback was to a great extend focused on student evaluation as illustrated in the following tables (Figure 12 & Figure 13).

CLASS LEVEL	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Challenges	Comments
1.1. language of instructions					
Shows proficiency in the language of instruction.	Good communication skills. Very fluent English language.		Is able to teach pupils who master the English language.		
1.2. lesson planning/preparation					
Designs tidily, orderly and clear lesson preparations which correctly mention the references of the used material and which are based on student's knowledge and understanding	Very tidy and orderly, takes responsibilities, she is in charge of the group.		A future leader!		
Uses a range of resources	Great variety, capable of motivating the pupils.		Will become a very good teacher.		
Provides differentiated learning activities for individuals and groups on the basis of pupils' varying attitudes	She is able to see different kinds of pupils.		Will become a very good teacher.		
1.3. implementation					
Shows mastery of subject content	She is able to master a variety of subjects.				
Demonstrates the capability to think out a functional organization and classroom arrangement.	She is capable of functional classroom arrangements.				
Sets about the lesson personally and creatively	She is creative and uses her experience in a personal manner.				
Is able to teach in an enthusiastic, relaxed and inspiring manner	She is very enthusiastic and energetic.				
Demonstrates willingness and ability to use and try out a variety of teaching and organizational methods	She is able to use a variety of teaching methods.				

Figure 12: Example SWOT-analysis – part 1

CLASS LEVEL	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Challenges	Comments
1.4. learning environment					
Alongside pupils, contributes to a productive learning environment and good learning experiences	She is able to set up very good learning experiences.				
1.5. communication					
Communicates and works together with children and young people	She communicates in an open and including way.				
Demonstrates willingness and ability to understand and contribute to conflict resolution among pupils					It is impossible to assess this within two weeks.
1.6. assessment and evaluation					
Demonstrates willingness and ability to use and try out a variety of assessment methods and types of examination	Has used some assessment methods.				It is difficult to achieve this goal.
Demonstrates ability to critically reflect upon own and others' teaching	She has good reflection abilities.				
Develops professional knowledge by reflecting upon subject knowledge and knowledge of teaching with different persons in the practise arena	She is able to use her subject knowledge in a convincing way.				

Figure 13: Example SWOT-analysis – part 2

5. Reflections after the second year

After the second year, we asked the mentors to give us critical comments about the project. We knew the next period would be the last one, and we needed to make the necessary improvement.

The mentors wrote:

> The limitation of time (two weeks) is a far too short period for objective assessment (….). The number of subjects is limited, and consequently the students prepare/teach about 4-5 lessons each in different subjects/classes per week, which makes it quite hard to give a solid and reflective evaluation of the students, especially since we were required to do a very detailed evaluation on special criteria.

> In addition, students were encouraged to make similarities and differences between the school systems in Norway compared with their home country. This is a valuable experience and certainly needs to be reflected upon!

5.1. Evaluation of the assessment criteria

5.1.1. Language of instruction

We find these criteria to be very important and adequate, because we should require that the students communicate well with the mentors, the staff and of course with the pupils as well. Generally speaking, we must say that the students had the knowledge and qualities that are needed in order to take part in the MOST project.

Some of the students had some problems with their English, especially the oral English. This made it difficult to get deeper discussions about professional framework. And these criteria are quite easy to evaluate as well.

5.1.2. Lesson planning/preparation

The 'key words' which are meant to help the mentor to evaluate the students in the planning/preparation seem to be given in detail.

To give fairly general evaluation about the students relating to the strengths of lesson planning/preparation seems to be quite in order. In our minds we think that the lack of time/subjects, for each student, makes an objective evaluation upon the other criteria like weaknesses,

opportunities, challenges, comments), almost impossible to have an objective view upon!

5.1.3. Implementation

The Norwegian school system differs quite a lot compared with the Belgium/Lithuanian ones, in which the teacher seems to emphasize lecturing a lot more than we do in Norway.

Our school system is based upon a different tradition and culture. Lecturing still exists of course, but often it lasts shorter than for instance in Lithuanian and Belgium schools. In Norway, there is more on the process, and on efficient and individual learning strategies, than on dictating or giving instructions. Another interesting aspect, evaluating the implementation, is that in Norway we have a much stronger focus on the relationship between the pupils and the teacher. We like to encourage a real and natural dialogue between the teacher and the pupil. In addition, the pupils are quite frequently working in groups aiming to help each other in the learning process, putting the emphasis on keeping pupils active and giving them a lot of responsibilities.

The students have, during their training practice at two lower secondary schools in Norway, experienced a mixture of lecturing, organising and evaluating pupils when working in team groups, tutoring individuals and

tutoring groups and assisting individuals working with special needs. Pupils with special needs are integrated.

Summing up the implementation evaluation, we clearly see that the criteria given in the MOST assessment document are not appropriate due to different methodology used in Norway.

5.1.4. Learning environment

We found it natural to evaluate the learning environment when it comes to the strengths and weaknesses, but had really no more comments relating to the other criteria.

5.2. Thoughts and conclusion after the second year

Our experiences are that two weeks is a very limited period to get to know and evaluate these foreign students properly. But it is obvious that some of the assessment criteria suggested in the MOST project, could be useful to add to our Norwegian assessment criteria as well. Some of the assessment criteria are more valid and clear, and they signal another culture of evaluation than we have in Norway.

To communicate in a meaningful way about professional framework, we in Norway have a culture of mutual trust as the basic idea. This trust is impossible for us to build in two weeks!

We have a subject- subject connection between the pupils and the teachers to a greater extent than other countries may have. Therefore some of the assessment criteria given by the MOST project are quite irrelevant to us working in the Norwegian school system.

6. The third and final year of the project - reflection and conclusion

Before the students arrived Stavanger the third year we received the Handbook produced by Julie de Ganck (2007). This handbook gave us good guidelines and we were presented with the molecular model of standards. The model is built upon three domains, group level, school level and society level. Comparing the ideas of this model with the ideas of the structure of the national curriculum in Norway, we found the molecular model of standards adaptable. We understand the molecular model more like a framework than our understanding of the concept standard.

We decided to work according to the instruction given in the Handbook, and we decided to try some of the assessment tools built upon the structures in the Molecular model.

We also decided that all the teacher trainees should concentrate their work on writing a Portfolio instead of different pieces of reports. The

Portfolio presented by Christopher Bezzina (2005) was used, but we made a sort of Norwegian version.

In the following, we will use some quotations from the reflecting part of the portfolios of the student trainees which we find representative. Those reflections are telling us how he teacher trainees felt using the assessment tools worked in the practice schools.

6.1. Comments on the assessment tools

6.1.1. Peer observation

The observation sheet for peer observation is built on the standard or the assessment criteria developed during the second year. The teacher trainees were told to observe and give comments on the: *Overall description, Competencies on group level and Competencies on School level.*

All the teacher trainees did the peer observations and they really put hard work into answering all the questions. The comments on the Overall descriptions and on the Competences in Group were detailed as well as describing what was well done and the possibilities of improvements. The comments on Competencies on the School level were less informative.

Mattias wrote (Reflective paragraph on observation of me by Ana):

I think Ana has written a very good overall description of me. She answered perfectly the questions about how the teacher felt, what he did, thought and wanted. She knew exactly how I felt and what I was thinking feeling, doing en wanting. I don't know how she managed to do it, but I can't reflect on something that she has done perfect. The only thing I can say is I'm wondering how she's able to write it so perfect. I think she remembers what I've told her before the lesson and she's studying to become a psychologist, maybe this has something to do about it.

Ana doesn't tell anything wrong about the lesson. She also doesn't say anything wrong about my competencies on group- and on school community level. It is nice to get an observation like this; it gives me confidence and a nice feeling about my lesson. (Mattias, Spain, 2007)

Emilie, Lituania wrote:

This method is useful for both sides. Also, it is always good to observe and to see advantages and disadvantages that afterwards could be discussed and brought in a positive way for improving if it is necessary. Observing I found being a valuable experience and way of learning.

6.1.2. Pupil observation

We experienced too that the pupils had problems understanding the terms used in the observation sheet. And they were at a loss for words when they had to describe a lot of observed situations.

Emilie wrote:

> We also had pupils observing us and telling about features that a good teacher should have, but even respecting pupils as persons I do not think they are competitive enough to tell what a good teacher is. They can feel that, but I am in doubt if they are able properly expressing this.

6.1.3 Mentor observation

The mentors gave good feedback from what they experienced by using the observation sheet for the mentors. The mentors used the observation to tell the student trainees what they should work on to become a better teacher and they gave them responses on what they were good at.

Mattias wrote:

> The mentor wrote I managed the class quite well but didn't show
> firmness enough. This is correct again. I found it hard to be firm
> and strict due to the fact I don't like reprimanding students.
> When it's necessary, I will do it. But sometimes I don't do it
> enough.

7. Our summary

Our experiences through these three years have taught us that coming to
an understanding of education and standards is complicated. We think it
is like starting a journey which will last as long as you are occupied with
thinking educationally. Through the MOST project, our journey has
been enriched by new perspectives brought in by the other participants.
We think we have come to a new and broader understanding.

During these three years, we have gain experiences by working with
mentors and teacher trainees. We have asked them to use different
assessments tools. Some of them have been easily adjusted to the
Norwegian system, while some of the tools they have decided to ignore.
The partner institutions in the MOST project have different strategies for
evaluation of a student in practice and different visions of the basic
competences a starting teacher must have reached. We therefore think

the partner institutions do not have the same understanding of what the standards reflect.

As we reflected upon during the first year, the idea of creating and accepting detailed standards is hard. We think that the project has spent a lot of time to work out a common understanding of the idea of standards. And we have discussed how detailed the standards and assessment document ought to be. We still know after three years that the partner institutions have different understandings of these issues. We think that the concept of standard is too fixed, and we prefer using the word framework.

When we look forward, we know that schools and education have to prepare the young citizens of Europe for a different world than we know. We think that we cannot solve the challenges of tomorrow by using the methods and standards created in the past. We find though that the molecular model represents a framework which has the flexibility each country may adapt.

We want to end our journey by quoting from the portfolio from Marion from Spain:

> MOST is an international exchange programme where student trainees of five European countries (Belgium, Spain, Norway, Lithuania and Sweden) are sent out to spread their studious wings

to one of the partner countries for a period of five weeks. So it is an opportunity for students and also teacher trainees to share together teaching and learning experiences.

The first two weeks abroad you get to know the country, the culture, the school system and the people. In order to achieve this knowledge, the students take some lessons about the school, the country, the national educational system, the meaning of European citizenship, etc, not only by lecturing but also through team work and discussion. So, one of the main ideas of the MOST programme is to involve students in the new reality and give them some tools in order to plan well their interventions in the schools and also to have enough knowledge to compare educational systems between different countries.

During two weeks, students went to a local school and taught in English (or Spanish) about topics they should predefine with the mentor or teacher educators.

Thanks to that school experience, students should acquire a wide frame of educational systems. Furthermore, through their own experiences and the teamwork with their partners and also with the teacher educators, the MOST students should get aware of the weak points of teaching and should learn how to improve as future teachers. Afterwards, the MOST programme pursuits that

students and teachers reflect on their work together in order to get some conclusions, which could be applied in the future.

Finally, the individual reflection of each student after their experiences abroad is also important. All the observation sheets and the portfolio as well have been designed to reflect, as future teachers, about what is already good and what could be improved.

A MOST interesting journey: some reflections from Malta
Christopher Bezzina, Anton Cardona and Philip Said

The MOST project has been a three-year journey which took us through varied landscapes and made us reflect on different scenarios. It has been a journey that we have experienced at a number of levels and in various ways. The three-year journey has allowed us to engage at different levels, both personally and collectively within the local/national contexts and beyond our boundaries or shores to include and embrace new ways of looking at things. The various and varied experiences have allowed us to reflect on various issues as they have influenced tutors, mobility students and pupils and have allowed us to review and re-experience some assumptions and beliefs that we may have held on various aspects of teacher education.

The project has allowed us to review issues like competencies that beginning teachers ought to have as they embark on a teaching career; critical issues that need to be covered; contextual issues that need to be considered; issues that deal with the teaching and learning context; school matters and various others issues.

What is evidently clear is that the project allowed us to highlight the importance that teachers need to possess various qualities, values and beliefs that very much determine how they will affect the lives of others, – children and adults alike. The various activities carried out with both

the mobility students, and the discussions in which school mentors and teacher educators were involved, including the responses that the children themselves gave us, helped to highlight the qualities that teachers need to possess. It is interesting to note that in spite of age differences and experiences, we can all come up with similar lists when it comes to qualities we expect teachers to possess or better still develop. The learning curve, however, is that we realise that it is extremely hard for all of us to possess the same qualities and that the perception of such qualities may vary over time.

The project helped a group of people to come together over focused periods of time. This is often considered as a luxury given that we are often rushing from one thing to another and often when we are working independently from each other. The time we allocated to the project also helped us to create opportunities for learning by focusing specifically on how we related to the various sharing sessions that we experienced with the mobility students. These unique experiences helped us to view things from other angles and appreciate the contextual embeddedness of the process that we were engaging in. On the one level, we learnt to appreciate that although we could say that we were Maltese and that brought us to relate at the level of identity we still had to appreciate that we each had our own baggage which had been influenced by our own past and present – that is, our family background; the educational programmes that we had followed; our own social and educational experiences; the major influences over the years that make us who we are

(e.g. family, friends, moral and spiritual development; the discourses we meet and form part of ; the personal state of being). All these determine our perception of the things that we are directly involved in. This, in itself, helped us to appreciate the complexity of the exercise that we often take for granted. This, in itself, was another learning curve. This resonates with the point that Bengt Söderhäll raises in his contribution. Quoting the work of Arfwedson (2002) – learning is *complex*, *contextually bound*, and *historically formed*. This sums up how difficult and maybe at times presumptuous on our part to try to understand teaching and learning through a competency-based approach. Whilst we acknowledge that competences are important and can help us appreciate specific areas and focus on them, what determines those competences and better still the manifestation of those competences are often determined by factors which are not necessarily in our grasp – if they ever can be.

The project and the varied activities that we created naturally provided us with various challenges. On the one hand it meant that as a group we had to start off by reviewing the competencies that we needed to assess; it allowed us to identify the type of European topics that needed to be discussed with the students and the pedagogical implications and preparations that students needed to experience to be in a realistic position to take on active teaching within a short and concentrated span of time. Another challenge was to take on board the templates that the MOST project team came up with. We may not have been in full agreement but we all decided to work with it and provide feedback to

improve and help introduce what we called a European standard for the beginning teacher. Another challenge was to provide the necessary reflections that would help incoming students into the educational, social and cultural contexts that we all came from. The questions that we raised included: how do we go about accepting the different cultures with all the implications for working together? The use and interpretation of language – verbal and non-verbal - coming from contexts that practically hit the various compass points of Europe? How do we allow each other to speak and communicate given the different baggage we have accumulated over the years? What are the learning experiences that we want the MOSTers to experience? We had to identify opportunities that would transcend the educational experiences that we often prepare for our own students. We felt that a portfolio similar to the one developed for our own students would serve the purpose. A tailor-made portfolio was developed round the experiences that we decided we wanted all the students to experience. The mobility students were encouraged to reflect on all aspects of the journey that they went through personally and collectively within the different components of the five-week programme. Thus we had to identify enough time and space for the MOSTers to have the opportunity to experience the educational system of each respective country; opportunities to experience the local context through an appreciation of various cultural and historical activities; the lectures and discussions held on various topics; the pedagogical experiences both within the university context and in schools; the actual preparations to teach; the school observations; the teaching and learning

processes. All these activities allowed the participants a rich variety of issues to focus on and share with others.

The feedback that was shared allowed us to appreciate quite a number of things. Firstly, it allowed us to see that people do react and reflect differently even when they are in fact going through the same experience. This very much emphasises the personal baggage we already spoke of. It helps us to appreciate whether people feel at ease with this style of learning. Reflective journals are very personal in nature and whilst some may be used to writing about themselves or other things through the form of a diary others may not be so at ease with this form of writing. Therefore, the coverage and depth of reflection and analysis may also vary. However, what was the key was that the portfolio was meant to help each individual take time out to engage in some form of reflection and data gathering in specific aspects that were experienced. This was crucial.

The teaching experiences in school allowed us, as tutors, to appreciate the various qualities and abilities that the mobility students brought to our own context. It helped us to realise the individuality that each individual, irrespective of country of origin, brought to the teaching learning context. It was a joy to see particular unique qualities that some individuals expressed. Some already expressed the appropriate qualities and beliefs that are required of teachers, such as a high level of confidence, the belief that children need to be cared for respected, the

importance of involvement; of using activities that engage the students in exploration, reflection, challenge and debate; the importance of allowing children space for learning to take place. Each mobility student brought his/her own baggage to the project which enriched the journey and made it unique.

The journey was a learning experience for us tutors who had the pleasure to share and experience the richness not only of our colleagues in the participant countries but also of the mobility students who enriched our baggage.

Working within the time limitations set out by the project the students have generally profited from their two weeks teaching practice engagement. This was expressed by the amount of preparation, actual class contact, encounters with teachers and school administrators, feedback from tutors and peers, and the follow-up reflective exercises.

Ability in the improvisation of teaching and learning resources within the constraints of the host schools was evident. This has helped students' creativity and adaptability to new learning environments.

It was generally agreed that a system of meetings between the subject teacher and students needs to be explored before the start of the teaching practice. Aspects of mentoring need to be encouraged further. Where this was evident the students benefited immensely.

As the experience unfolded we came to acknowledge in a very direct way the importance behind the social construction of learning, the role of enquiry processes in applying learning in practice, and the need to draw equally upon three fields of knowledge. Within this model of learning, the fields of knowledge are utilized in a dynamic relationship with one another as we challenged our own ideas, as we tried and tested ideas/ activities in the classroom.
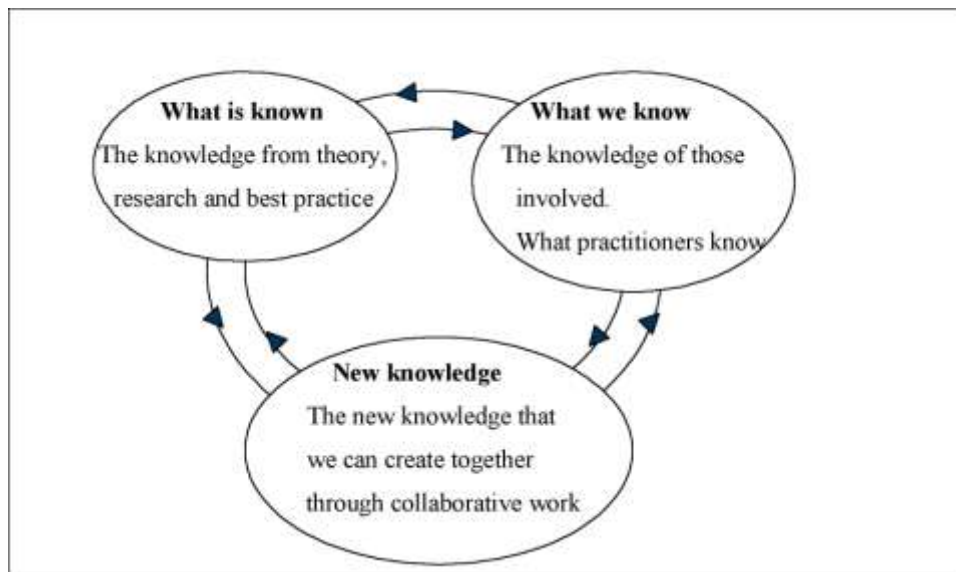

Figure 14

Future teacher – A reality and seek point. Reflective journal
Daiva Penkauskiene and Asta Railiene

1. Introduction

Becoming a teacher is a process of systematic development, professional growth until certain experience is formed. This process of 'becoming' should be understood as a lifelong process not as a period of time from the first independent lesson to the acquisition of the diploma certifying teacher's qualification. Quality of studies organized by teacher training institutions and ability to ensure practice and theory coherence in the teaching and learning process play a very special role in the whole process.

The aim of this article is not to conduct a theoretical preparation of the future teacher or analyze competences that are developed. It is a critical analysis of a process - teaching practice - in an international project which took place three years. The analysis is based on reflection of its participants and organizers and its aim is to reveal the assumptions of future teacher's standard development and its expression from the national point of view.

2. Before we started...

It is worth to start the reflection from the introduction of the general
teacher training situation in Lithuania. The research of the recent years
shows the weakest point in organizing Lithuanian education reform in
initial teacher training which does not correspond to the changes that
took place in schools in the last decade. National education system is not
ready for modernization of teacher training system, it does not accord
with labour market and requirements raised by knowledge society.
Universities are still too distant from general education school. These
were the main reasons for Modern Didactics Centre (MDC) team's
participation in the project 'MOST – mobility framework and standard
for teacher trainees'. Involvement into this project was a challenging
experience for the Lithuanian team. We were the only partners who still
do not have a national initial teacher training standard. Concept paper is
stuck in the ministry policy-makers' and scientific workers' groups as it
has been perfected, changed, discussed for four years already. Every year
the number of students who study at teacher training institutions, but do
not relate their career with teacher's profession, increases. Content of
studies, especially of teaching practice, is not always directed to the
student's as future teacher's competencies development. The order of
teaching practice organizing is different in different teachers training
institutions and even in the faculties of the same institution: students
have a different number and different length of teaching practice,
regulations, requirements and evaluation systems differ too. The quality

mainly depends on the faculty members who are responsible for the teaching practice, competence, place of practice, mentors experience and their ability to conduct the student' practice. For example, future mathematics teachers at Vilnius Pedagogical University have a possibility to practice at school only when they are fourth-year students. So, a student, who is going to get at teacher's diploma, realizes that work at school is not for him/her. This situation is even strengthened by the society's prevailing attitude towards teacher's profession that it is not promising, not prestigious.

We, as project partners, were influenced not only by general project framework, but by national and institutional aspects of teacher training. This paper reflects the development of beginning teacher standard: from form specification (*What is the best? How it should be?*), through content improvement (*What has to be changed?*) and search for coherence between content and form.

3. Search for Forms

The first MOST students' practice mobility stage was a challenge for MDC team. Our experience in organizing international student exchange, especially with incoming students, was more modest. All partner countries – Belgium, Spain, Norway, Sweden and Malta – followed their own standards, deep mentoring traditions, settled and stable teaching practice order. Our colleagues had soled experience in students' exchange. The project was a great possibility for us and for our students

to prepare professionally and responsibly for teaching practice. Students studied Lithuanian education system, analysed partner countries' history and culture, their education traditions. National coordinators get aquatinted with teacher training and teaching practice systems of partner institutions.

The choice of practice structure (1+3+1) can be named as the success at the first project year. The first week was for getting acquainted with the host institution, education system of practice country, culture, and traditions, discussing practice evaluation criteria, and meeting mentors. Three weeks were for practical work at school (lesson observation, preparation for lessons, lesson and after class activity organization). The last week was for students' self-assessment, reflection, discussion, practice assessment and evaluation. The last day of every practice week we organized contact meetings for incoming students and mentors to discuss and reflect together. Those meetings were very useful as encouraged open and critical exchange of ideas and plan next steps.

We have followed assessment guidelines developed together with MOST partners during the first project year. The guidelines consisted of three competences blocks: student's competences, beginning teachers' competences and social competences. It was decided that this document will be reflected through students' competences portfolio as final assessment tool. We had no strict portfolio structure and form at that time. The only requirement for every student was to include an essay 'My teaching philosophy' and 'Double diary'.

An idea to develop portfolio was good, but not elaborated till the end. It was more as reflective journal without boundaries and limits. On the one hand, the indefinite requirements for portfolio revealed students' critical thinking, information analysis abilities; on the other hand, it complicated the assessment process for ourselves. We missed clear teaching practice requirements, identified assessment criteria, prepared lesson observation and discussion forms, involvement of mentors into the process of practice organization at the first project year. But this experience and project partners' reflections were good lessons for improvement of MOST students practice order, requirements, assessment system for the following project years.

4. Content improvement

First stage mistakes analysis, experience of other countries, students' reflections and suggestions encouraged the Lithuanian team to look for better balance between the aims of teaching practice and the quality of its content. It was decided to leave the same practice form and the content of the first and the last week. We paid more attention to students' preparation for practical work at school by including more elements of assessment document. This document described teacher competencies based on three levels: classroom, school community and society. More active involvement of mentors' into practice preparation stage was an important and significant change. They participated in development of student practice assessment requirements and in the process of practice

planning as well. It was good decision to integrate Vilnius Pedagogical University students into MOST students' practice who had their teaching practice at that time. Their participation in the project was not only voluntary help as in the first MOST student mobility stage, but it was also the main part of their own teaching practice. Together they participated in various practice activities both at university and at school. The only difference was that Lithuanian students teaching practice was assessed according home institution requirements. Mixed group of students enriched discussions and reflections, helped to improve final project product – standard of the beginning teacher.

The second year students had to prepare a portfolio as the first one. Portfolio requirements were simplified as the idea of competence portfolio was changed to practice portfolio (the experience of the first stage showed that it was too difficult for the students to distinguish their as beginning teachers' competences and justify them using direct and indirect proofs collected during practice). At the same time requirements for portfolio structure and its content were clearer. Lesson observation forms, lesson observation guidelines and teaching analysis gave certain structure and put in the form students' reflections. Special attention was paid to student's self-assessment and self-analysis, e.g. at the end of practice students were asked to analyze their experience on three levels: professional (I am a teacher), social (I am a community member) and educational (I am a student). Those analyses were based on the essay 'My teaching philosophy' written at the beginning of the practice, reflections, and the results of lesson discussions.

I am flexible and I like to be well prepared for a lesson. Sometimes I feel I must still learn to be more expressive in my talking. (Johannes, student from Belgium, 2006)

I learned to teach with as less material as possible (...) It was also an experience to teach a group with different language. (Jokke, student from Belgium, 2006)

One most important thing I learned is that our way of teaching is not that divine as I thought it was. There are a lot of teaching philosophies that aren't worse or better, but different from ours. (Marius, student from Norway, 2006)

As the extracts from students' works show, such tasks prompt comprehensive self-assessment, deepen self-analysis skills, and develop critical reflection.

More formalized practice assessment criteria, active mentors involvement contributed to the more simple assessment procedure – it became more individualized, targeted on students as the beginning teachers' competence assessment.

5. Coherence between content and form

The aim of the third, final, MOST practice stage was directed not only to incoming students, their practice organization and analysis. It was very important to analyze the developed standard for beginning teacher and other documents, their practical application. So students' as standard

evaluators' role was very important in this stage. For that purpose we slightly corrected practice form and content structure. More attention was paid to the analysis of standard in the light of the national and European education contexts. According to the developed standard student preparation for practice at school was organized in two directions – discussions about teacher profession as such (Visualization exercise, my teaching philosophy) and school community as space and environment where teacher acts (Active meeting). While discussing the importance of integration into school community on the efficiency and quality of teaching process it came out that students worry about first days at school, possible communication problems with pupils (making contact, mutual relationship, communication, discipline), other teachers and other school staff.

The feedback given by students helped to improve teaching practice organization at school. Local coordinators and mentors looked for possibilities for every student to work with one class pupils during the whole practice period, i.e. a student could observe different subject lessons of the same class and the work of different teachers with them and after had lessons themselves and organized extra school activities with the same pupils. It was good that the mentors were the class teachers, students worked with, at the same time. Incoming students had better possibilities to be involved into overall teaching process and school community life. Students had more opportunities to get acquainted with pupils, analyze and assess the organization of teaching process and, what is the most important, use this experience for lesson preparation.

Another important aspect was that both mentors and students had a possibility to record and reflect teaching and learning process, initiate necessary changes. Students were part of school community as they participated in common events, school celebrations, discussions with other teachers.

Students had to present a portfolio for practice assessment as overall result of their work. Portfolio included students self introductions, first impressions about the country and school, detail lesson plans and their own thoughts on preparation, class management skills, pupils motivation and evaluation. Logical and structured lesson observation and practice evaluation forms simplified both - self-assessment and practice evaluation processes.

> Through this portfolio I learned how important it is to reflect on this experience. It is important that you can be critical for yourself, especially as a teacher (...). (Vicky, student from Belgium, 2007)

> Because of this portfolio I learned to analyze myself, my pupils and even my mentor. I have learned to tell good things about myself, but also negative things. Before I was afraid to tell something negative about myself, I thought I will have bad marks. Now I know that everybody makes mistakes and that you learn out these mistakes (...). (Charlot, student from Belgium, 2007)

6. Summing up

The three-year process was useful for all - students, practice organizers, tutors and mentors. International practice experience was so deep and rich that proved students broader abilities and competences gained outside ordinary national environment.

> (…) I learned a lot about myself and other people. This experience gave me a possibility to understand what kind of teacher I would like to be. I will become a teacher who isn't afraid to reflect on herself, a teacher who isn't afraid of negative things, but ALWAYS tries to find a better way to teach the next time. (Charlot, student from Belgium, 2007)

> The lessons and the experience to teach in a totally other situation where you really should try to take care of stuff yourself and be independent is useful on itself just because it makes you stronger for the practice in national environment. Also reflecting so much is a great mirror and makes you think about yourself. (Bjorn, student from Belgium, 2006)

The thought expressed by MOST students from our university could serve as a final summary and a topic for an open further discussion about teacher training.

During five practice weeks in Sweden I realized the mission of the teacher – to help pupil learn. I felt relieved as a child who had disclosed a big secret. When I returned to university routine, in the first lecture I heard: "Your teacher's duty is to teach a pupil (…)." I could not listen to this any more. I was shocked. There was the only question in my head – why this way? And that thought that I do not want to be a teacher (…). (Kristina, student from Lithuania, 2007)

Reflective thoughts about a MOST unique mobility programme
Julie De Ganck

1. Expectations of students and teacher educators: between dreams and reality

Foreign projects often have a certain exotic ring to them. They sound appealing both to teacher educators as to participating students. This is a good thing.

Dreaming away by the idea of educating students under the Spanish sun or in snowy Norwegian surroundings, combined with a hunger to explore other European cultures, are the first conditions to qualify for a foreign experience. After all, the grass seems greener and slightly more exotic on the other side of the hill. There lies the dream.

But foreign projects go beyond that. And this is a reality. Foremost, foreign projects are being developed to achieve particular goals. As for our project, we can –more or less- situate these goals on two levels. On one level, the project should facilitate future mobility between foreign institutional partners. On another level, the development of a standard that maps out the competencies a beginning European teacher should possess. However, between dreams and action one encounters several boundaries: laws, cultural backgrounds, different languages and practical objections. All of these are not insuperable, and often very challenging, but a reality to deal with nonetheless.

Standards of minimum competencies for teachers have attracted a lot of debate in Europe (and even far beyond) for quite a while now. In the Flemish part of Belgium, a decree of 1996 stated the first standard of basic competences for beginning teachers .

These basic competences describe the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are to be expected of beginning teachers (Figure 15).

10 Common minimum competencies for teachers: Knowledge and Skills	Attitudes The following attitudes apply to all job components
01. The teacher as guide of learning and development processes	A1 decisiveness
02. The teacher as educator	A2 relational orientation
03. The teacher as subject expert	A3 critical reflection
04. The teacher as organiser	A4 eagerness to learn
05. The teacher as innovator – the teacher as researcher	A5 organisational skills
06. The teacher as partner of the parents/carers	A6 sense of collaboration
07. The teacher as member of a teaching team	A7 sense of responsibility
08. The teacher as partner of external parties	A8 creative orientation
09. The teacher as member of the educational community	A9 flexibility
10. The teacher as culture participant	A10 orientation towards a correct and appropriate use of language and communication

Figure 15: Competencies for Secondary School Teachers

As soon as the first group of mobility students participated in the Belgian programme, it became clear that there were fundamental differences between the partner institutions regarding the use and development of standards.

For Belgian students, talking about basic competencies comes naturally, as the Flemish standard is being used among others to evaluate their practice programmes. On the other hand, some foreign students barely had a notion of this concept.

At first this obstructs the intercultural dialogue, but once this stage is surpassed, it's an invitation to question and discuss the concept and the process of standard development in a Socratic fashion.

> The educational systems of Belgium and Norway have fixed standards and minimum teacher competencies, while Lithuanian government is still working on it. In my opinion Norway and Belgium have more stable, concrete and clearer systems for teachers on how to behave in front of the class, and how to treat students. (Egle, student from Lithuania, 2006)

2. Five intensive weeks

It's customary for the Flemish approach and part of our work ethic to offer foreign students a comprehensive educational programme. The higher education system in Flanders, in contrast to for example

Scandinavian countries, puts a lot of emphasis on contact education. By this tradition and through the relatively short period of mobility, a very intensive programme was being offered in the first year of the project. In some ways it might be considered as being too intensive.

During those first two weeks, the students followed daily classes for 6 to 8 hours, participated in intercultural seminars and were prepared for their practice period through micro-teaching and assistance with their lesson preparations. In the third and fourth week, along with one or more foreign students, they were teaching European themes, (a total of 16 to 32 hours per student). All lessons were conducted in English. During the first mobility programme, no lesson observations in secondary schools were provided prior to the practice period.

Finally, the last week was dedicated to extensive reflections, conference discussions, (self-)assessments and an evaluation of the project.

This comprehensive programme provided a good experience of the working rhythm at our university college. But for the foreign students the multiplicity of teaching themselves, attending colleges, contact moments, … was far from obvious. In the first year of the mobility programme we did not sufficiently consider what a foreign experience does to students. Continuously having to express yourself in a language that is not your own, meeting other nationalities, having to find your way in a new city, being confronted with other habits, a different school and work rhythm,… So many impressions that enhance the experience but also demand a lot of energy.

Furthermore, these differences were not limited to various cultural backgrounds, school rhythms and the (un)familiarity with the process of standard development.

Trainees came from different stages in their teacher training programme. This affected which knowledge they had regarding educational topics presented and covered during the exchange programme. For some the material was new, but not for others. More striking was the fact their teaching experience also varied. For some students it was the first time they were facing a group of pupils.

> It was my first class in my life, as a teacher trainee. I didn't work with the class yet, through the programme I have learned how to teach in real life. How to give all the necessary information. In the beginning it was very difficult to do, but through the practice it became easier. (Rita, student from Lithuania, 2005)

In this sense, meeting foreign students has a very insightful effect. It confronts the teacher trainer and the project associates with the fact that one often thinks in a constrained way. From his/ her own nationalistic norms, habits and visions on education. Even though we seem to consider them as being 'typical European'.

3. Learning the hard way

Students' feedback from the first mobility period was very valuable in processing a modified programme in the next years of the project.

> The thing I missed most was that there wasn't given any time for observations. Even if it would have been in Dutch, you can notice the nonverbal communication, the spirit in the classroom, the relationship between teacher and student (...). (Anna, student from Sweden, 2005)

The mobility programme in the second and the last year of the project still was a reflection of the current rhythm at Flemish university colleges, but offered more space for a gradual adaptation to a new context (of education).

From the second project year on, no lectures or intercultural seminars were given on the first project day. It was reserved to get to know the university college and the other foreign students during an informal breakfast and a city excursion. The first year, cultural activities were mainly organised in the evening and at weekends. But the last two years of the project, they became an integrated part of the weekly schedule. The students were shown around in several Belgian cities, got acquainted with the Dutch language, and were introduced to Belgian art, history and heritage. These cultural activities allowed foreign students to contextualise the Belgian educational system. At the same time these

activities stimulated the group dynamics, the dedication for academic activities and tasks and caused moments of astonishment and emotion.

> I will never forget the journey to Bruges, as I have not seen such a beautiful town before. The whole town is like a huge museum and the strange feeling of calmness and peacefulness is everywhere around. I will never forget that feeling and I will definitely come back there one day. (Egle, student from Lithuania, 2006)

From the second year on, prior to their teaching training period, students had the chance to observe as many lessons as they wanted to in the secondary school where they were about to teach. These observations had a clear effect. They helped the teacher trainees to get familiar with the school's culture and infrastructure. The students had supportive meetings with the teachers, which gave both parties the chance to talk about their expectations. The students also indicated that observing professional teachers has an inspiring effect. As such, the professional teachers often acted as role models. By observing them, alternative educational visions and methods were passed on.

> I observed 5 lessons of teachers who are teaching in Sint-Pieters Institute in Ghent. I liked very much the lesson of history. Most of all I liked the teacher, who was self-confident, sociable, capable to handle problems and solve them in a friendly way. She

was really the authority in the classroom. To my mind she is the teacher, who gets the respect from pupils. As about the connection, I could tell, that the atmosphere in the classroom was warm and working. Pupils were concentrated, attentive to the teacher and what she was saying. That is the way it should be in the classroom. The spirit of a teacher has a lot of influence on the pupils. So a teacher always has to be a guide and source of enthusiasm. I don't think that there were some better ways of teaching then the one the history teacher demonstrated. To my mind, I will remember her as an example of the ideal teacher. (Ruta, student from Lithuania, 2007)

4. A 'European' practice period

4.1. About teaching in English

Attending courses and teaching in a foreign language was the reality for most teacher trainees involved in the MOST project.

For some of them this became a stumbling-block and the lack of language skills inhibited them from implementing good lessons. Other students saw this as a perfect opportunity to experience the power of nonverbal communication. For yet another group, exercising and improving their practical knowledge of the English language was one of the challenges that made them choose to participate in the project.

It has been a challenge to teach and have lessons in English. I have taken my English one step further and have passed the fear to speak in English in front of a big group of people. As long as I was myself, me and the students could overcome the lack in language. (Anna, student from Sweden, 2005)

4.2. The European experience for Belgian pupils in secondary schools

Attending 'European lessons' that were conducted in English also required an extra effort from the pupils, but this generally didn't pose problems. In any case, the local teacher trainees and teachers were always present to help overcome eventual language barriers. There was a strong involvement and interest in the project of both teachers and pupils. By setting up the observation period, teachers and pupils already knew the teacher trainees before the actual start of their practice period. Through that, pupils made spontaneous conversations with the foreign students and even invited them to teach in their class as well.

The exotic nature of another European culture is something that was clearly picked up in the secondary schools as well. It seems as if foreign students only had to mention they came from Spain or Lithuania, and the attention in the classroom was instantly drawn.

I saw this practice as very useful to me. Despite of different cultural backgrounds, having no common language basis, I still managed to create situations in which the understanding from both sides was achieved. (Judita, student from Lithuania, 2005)

Participating in an international project also offers an added value on different levels for teachers and pupils. For them, as for the local teacher trainees, we could easily use the term 'mobility@home'. First of all, being lectured by a foreign student breaks the everyday routine. Furthermore, by indirectly experiencing other educational visions, pupils develop another perspective on some elements within their own educational system. Certain aspects are appreciated more, while others are being critically questioned. It is often a matter of detail: "Is it true that lessons in Lithuania are shorter than in Belgium?", "Is it true that in Norway you are allowed to read a book or listen to music? We want that too!", ...

Being taught by foreign students often instils a kind of amazement, endearment, and –in a few cases- also some level of irritation. I remember well a poetry lesson, taught by a Lithuanian and a Belgian student. The Lithuanian poems revealed something of the countries troubled times. The class was so attentive, that during the lesson, one could hear a pin drop. It's much harder to achieve anything like it with for example a 'common' lesson of history. From this perspective, exchange projects build bridges towards more openness and tolerance for other cultures. In some cases, for some of the older pupils, it was an

invitation to explore their own possibilities regarding a foreign study or experience.

4.3. Team work: managing diversity

Normally, the pupils were being taught by a mixed group of two or more different nationalities. Teaching in teams was a big challenge for the teacher trainees. While co-operating in international teams, some irritations emerged, comparable with regular dynamics that arise from individuals working together. Besides that, contrasting views on learning methods and education in general resulted in very time consuming lesson preparations.

> The things we have learned here are totally different from what we have been taught in Lithuania. Participating in the project was very useful and practically gave me ideas how to make the teaching-learning process more attractive and interesting to the students and to me. I practiced working in a team, because usually I don't trust people to do things instead of me. (Ieva, student from Lithuania, 2005)

In spite of the pressure, at the end of the day, working together in an international team was considered as very rewarding. Along with the instructiveness of observing each other, it also provided the biggest transference of social, pedagogical and didactical competencies.

I will always remember the first lesson that I did together with Bernard and Pieter. I felt that we were a team and that they are listening, feeling when it is time for them to start speaking, when they can let me talk. (...) I can't promise, that I will not forget the colour of your eyes or some of your habits. However, I will always remember everyone from our team as special teachers or advisers. One of them told me to be honest with my self and with the others. The other one tested me if I am able to savour the pleasures of the moment. There was also one, who advised me to talk less about unconsidered things. In addition, because of all them I knew my self a little bit better than I used to do. (Ruta, student from Lithuania, 2007)

A supplementary positive aspect of teaching in teams, especially for those who had never been in front of a classroom, was the 'element of support'. It was always possible to hide behind someone for a while, thus intensifying feelings of security.

4.4. Teaching a different age group subjects you're not specialised in: from fear to challenge

The different participating teacher trainees came from a wide variety of training types. Some of them were educated in psychology, philosophy or

the social field. Some of them were trained to teach primary school pupils, others to teach lower secondary education students.

These different starting situations were more or less eliminated by the Belgian design and format of the practice period. After all, the students had to educate an age group (16-18 year olds) they were not experienced to work with.

> This practice has given me the opportunity to experience what it means to teach older students. Before this project I hadn't decided if I wanted to be a teacher for 7-9 years old or 10-12 years old students. Now I feel that the last age group is more suitable for me –you interact with the students more when they are older. (Anna, student from Sweden, 2005)

Furthermore, they handled European themes as the core of their lessons, themes they were not specialised in either. A Belgian mathematics teacher trainee along with a Lithuanian social worker trainee teaching on European art, culinary habits or multicultural society was not exceptional, but rather common.

Given lack of experience and knowledge of the local educational culture, some lessons did not live up to the quality standard. Sometimes the content was poorly structured or not well adjusted to the pupils' level. But the project showed that students can learn a lot within two weeks,

given good supervision by the responsible teacher educator or mentors in the secondary school. Within the Belgian programme, practically every lesson was attended by me and reviewed afterwards with the students involved. This kind of intensive guidance is unseen in the regular educational system and brought on a substantial increase of work.

Given the evolution every student in the project went through, it would seem very valuable to reflect within a European context on how beginning teacher trainees could be more efficiently guided in the first years of their careers.

> I think I will never forget the aesthetics lessons. I felt so nervous and confused during the first lesson and so relaxed and self confident during the fourth one. I taught the whole lesson with Bert. Both of us, I think, made a huge evolution in the way we implemented those aesthetics lessons. We hated it so much at the beginning (…) and now we are big fans of Dali and Magritte. (Dovile, student from Lithuania, 2007)

The prospect of this exceptional practice situation offered enough conversation substance to lead to animated discussions during intercultural seminars regarding basic competencies for the beginning teacher. One of the most vivid discussions was the one in which the profile of the ideal (beginning) teacher was being measured in terms of 'being an expert in subject knowledge' and 'demonstrating efficient

psycho-pedagogical skills'. This discussion took place before the start of the training period.

Teacher trainees from the Scandinavian countries, Spain and the ones who were following psycho-pedagogical training, argued that "being able to stimulate the psychological and emotional growth of pupils and having a good relationship with them" are the most important competencies or qualities a good teacher should possess. Other students disagreed and were convinced that a good teacher should foremost be a 'subject expert'. At the end of the practice period, student's opinions on both fronts were strikingly more nuanced.

> The entire journey and all this practice time I will remember very well. I am not going to forget teaching pupils subjects you are not an expert in. For example the Capoeira or Latin lessons. The most important things that I learned during preparation for these lessons is not to give up and to find the information, be more open-minded, not being afraid to ask for help, … Moreover, it is important to cope with your task, what ever it is. (Ruta, student from Lithuania, 2007)

After the practice period, everybody agreed a teacher has to possess enough 'subject knowledge', but can't be expected to know everything. Therefore, one of the most important competencies a (beginning) teacher should possess was described in terms of the attitude 'eagerness to learn

and to know'. Besides, everyone agreed that some psycho-pedagogical skills are indispensable.

Obviously, the minimum competencies a beginning teacher should possess go far beyond that. In what follows, we'll describe the results of a small-scale survey within the Belgian programme of the MOST project.

5. Results of comparative analysis of intercultural seminars, lesson observations and street interviews on basic competencies for beginning teachers

In three years, a total of 25 students participated in the Belgian mobility programme. By attending intercultural seminars, writing portfolios, observing peers and themselves, they were questioned directly or indirectly about teacher competencies. In doing so, they participated actively in developing a possible European standard for the starting teacher. The first project year, students had to use a fixed document to reflect about their practice period. In the second and third project year, students kept a portfolio, in which they wrote about their experiences and conclusions. They were motivated to use their practical experience to reflect on the competencies a (beginning) teacher should possess. They also made an observation report of attended peer teacher trainees' classes and local school teachers' classes. A final component in the quality research was the visualisation exercise about 'skilful class management'.

Furthermore, in the third year, students reported on video recordings of themselves teaching in front of a classroom.

All of these documents were screened for 'teacher competencies or qualities'. The results of which are reflected in figure 16. This table represents the percentage of participating students that have mentioned a specific teacher competence.
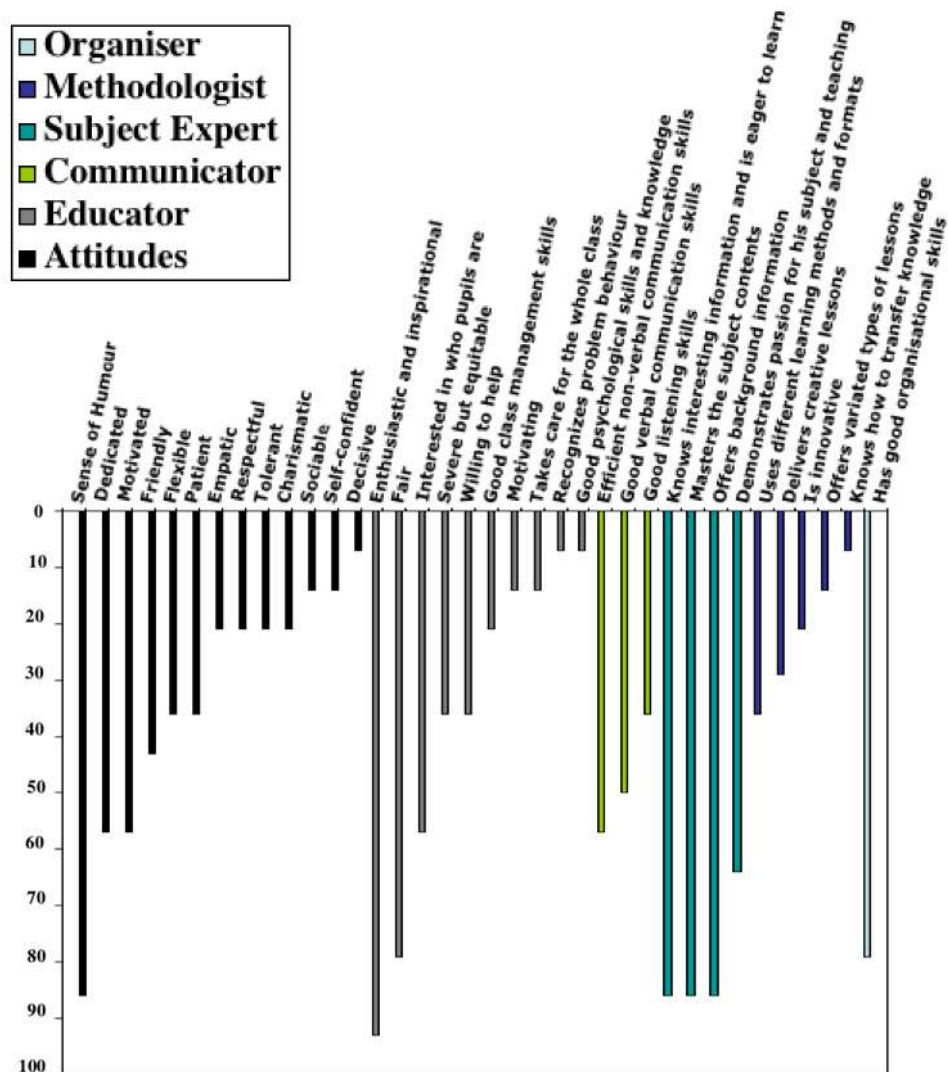
Figure 16: Teacher competencies mentioned by teacher trainees in the MOST project

In the last year of the programme, 46 secondary school students were also involved in the inquiry. Selected pupils observed one particular

student who gave a lesson on a European theme. In addition, they also presented a short, modified version of the 'skilful class management' exercise. The results of the pupil's analyses are reflected in Figure 17a and Figure 17b. This table represents the percentage of participating pupils that have mentioned a specific teacher competence.
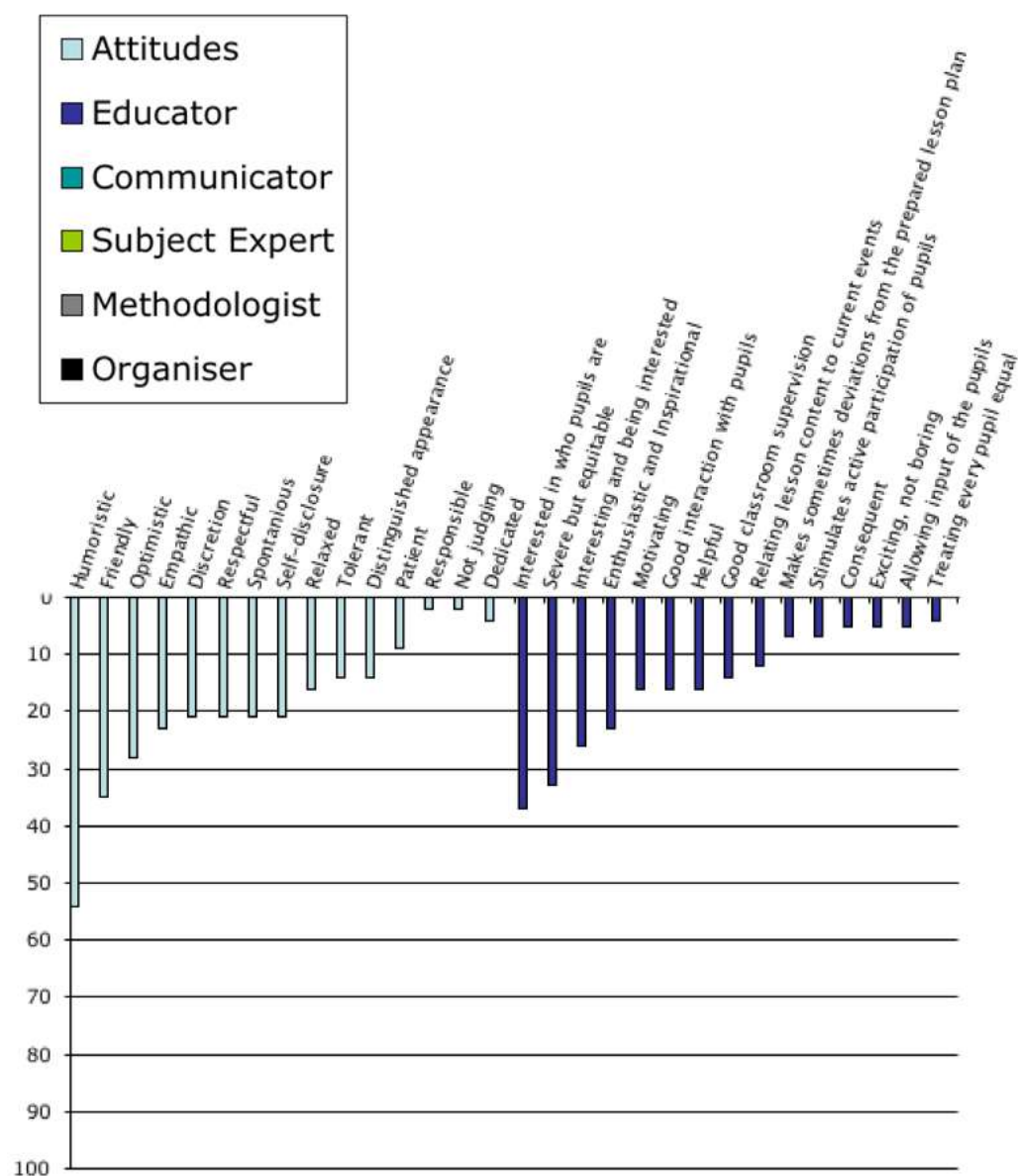
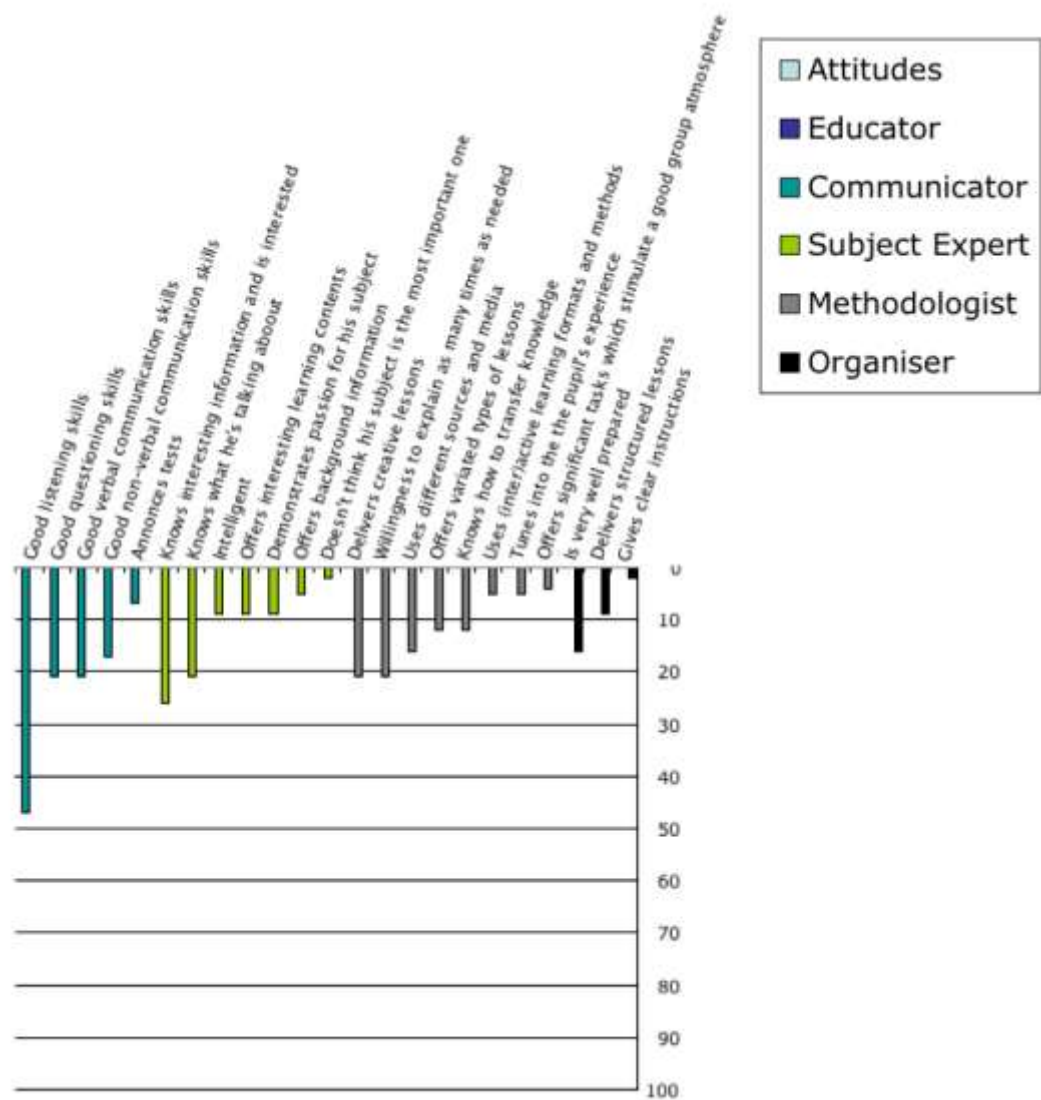**Figure 17a: Teacher competencies mentioned by pupils in the secondary schools**

Figure 17b: Teacher competencies mentioned by pupils in the secondary schools

Many of the competencies, both mentioned by pupils and teacher trainees, seem to concentrate mainly on attitudes, personal teacher characteristics and interpersonal, relational qualities.

Both interest groups described a good teacher in the first place as someone who has a sense of humour. He or she is a friendly, dedicated and has a righteous personality. Teacher trainees and pupils state that he/she is sincerely interested in the pupils as persons. A good teacher has an optimistic and empathic attitude. He or she is enthusiastic and inspiring. Nearly 50% of all questioned pupils and 40% of the teacher trainees indicated that by definition, a good teacher is also a good listener. The ideal teacher seems to be defined in terms of a person that is authentic, sincerely interested in people and stands in the classroom (and in life?) with a good amount of motivation and optimism.

The following comments can be made on this:

– Characteristics such as sense of humour, friendliness, understanding, empathy, tolerance, ... represent more than just an attitude or personal quality. For example, student A can describe a certain teacher as friendly, warm and understanding. However, this doesn't mean that student B has the same perception. What we consider as teacher's qualities (or people's qualities in general) are a result of interpersonal relationships and often emerge through transference processes between teacher and student.

– The question imposes itself whether qualities and attitudes that often result from transference processes between teacher and pupil can be taught in the context of a teacher education. And even more so: how can they be assessed?

> We had the assignment to design a European Standard for the Beginning Teacher. We noticed that it wouldn't be easy. From all the material we gathered it seemed that everyone thinks that the personality of the teacher is very important. It is really hard to assess someone on his personal skills. (Student team of the 3rd project year)

These comments may seem to suggest that mastery of subject contents, knowing how to transfer knowledge and mastering didactical principles would be inferior competencies a beginning teacher should possess. This is certainly not the case, as the teacher trainees also clearly stated in their reports. In my opinion, however, the complexity of what makes one a good teacher seems to be to some extent overlooked by the way standards are formulated. These standards mainly seem to focus on the teacher's 'professional' identity and describe it in technical terms such as subject expertise and didactic competence.

Such terms, I believe, are easier to teach than qualities like empathy, authenticity, involvement with others, curiosity and eagerness to learn.

Within the context of standard development, the personality of the beginning teacher is often neglected.

Because a psychologist deals with people and guides them in their growth process, it's expected of him/her to have participated in intervisions and/or to have been analysed and supervised himself/herself. This has to prevent that blind spots (which we all have) would thwart the therapy. Doesn't a similar ethical attitude of 'having to know one's self' seem appropriate in regard to teachers? Is one able to accompany people in a learning process if one doesn't know one's self?

My experiences in the clinical psychological field have taught me that someone's identity (let alone that of a beginning teacher) can not instantly be changed. Neither should it be intended to. Quite the contrary: I feel strongly that as teacher trainers, we have the responsibility to reach students anchor points which allow them to question their own identity and to somewhere consciously fit in certain elements of their personal history. It is not about changing, but about –as Nietzsche formulates it- "becoming what one is", about self-reflection and awareness.

I recently heard the story of a teacher trainee who had difficulties with being strict and authoritarian in the classroom. On several occasions, she had a hard time to master and control the pupils. Traditional reflection procedures often describe what went wrong in behaviouristic and technical terms. As such, this is not a bad thing. However, the solution of

this particular situation is not only to be found in technical interventions or tricks like looking the pupils in the eye or only starting the lesson when it's absolutely quiet. Often (but not always) a solution can be found on the level of the teacher's personal history. In this case the student couldn't tolerate authority. She was raised in a family with a very authoritarian father who often yelled and had violent ways of communicating. In her wanting to repress this difficult relationship, she had developed an aversion for every form of authority. And when pupils were going too far, she unconsciously used the same violent communication strategies as the ones she experienced at home.

I therefore plead for another way of reflecting that invites a teacher to look and think about how his/her personal history and identity affects his/her professional functioning in a classroom.

Important reflective questions are:
− Why do (did) I want to become a teacher?
− Which desire and which expectation did I pursue to choose for a teacher education?
− Who am I as a person?
− Who am I as a teacher?
− How does my personal history affect me as a teacher?
It leads no doubt that the process of becoming self-aware, the impact it has on others and on functioning in a professional context, is a process that never ends.

6. Learning from Life: Testimonies

In addition to the results of the comparative analysis of research data, the impact of the MOST-programme seems to be situated to a large extent on the domain of stimulating personal growth.

> During this project I learned a lot of things about myself; more than I expected when I started the project. Not only on the level of teaching but also on the personal level. For example, before this project I wasn't really confident about myself. I thought that people didn't think I was interesting or that they would find me rather dull. During these 5 weeks I was proven wrong and I noticed that people were more interested in me than I originally thought. This improved self-confidence will allow me to show myself to a group much sooner and in a more profound way. This in turn will help me to be a much better teacher. (Bernard, student from Belgium, 2007)

Inspired by the discussions within this project, the process of becoming a competent beginning teacher, doesn't necessarily seem to be one of 'changing one's self on one or more levels', but one of 'becoming what one is'. Because, consciously we teach what we know, but unconsciously we teach who we are (Hamachek, 1999, p.209).

European Mobility of Teacher Trainees: conclusions from the project MOST
Walter Baeten

1. Intro

Europe has to be integrated into school life, but at the moment there is nothing like a European teacher training. Even when it is society's demand to educate pupils to be good European citizens as the best way to become citizens of the world, the same society decides to do this by teaching a national curriculum. This means that Europe comes into the classroom through the backdoor as a topic of classes of history, geography, social sciences, economics, etc. but never through the front door. There are some initiatives like the common French-German handbook for history (*Histoire/Geschichte. L'Europe et le monde depuis 1945*, Paris, Nathan, 2006. ISBN 3-12-416520-9) or the development of a common handbook for the history of the Baltic States. Further, there are the different results of many Comenius-projects upon European citizenship. But no one can deny that there is no such thing as a European teacher training, not even when a European recommendation asks every country that all students of higher education should spend a period abroad. One way to explain this is the fact that the teachers' employer in compulsory education is the national or regional government itself (or his stakeholders[vii]) and the same government is also the organizer of the teacher training institutions. It seems that the argument

of a utilitarian teacher training focused on the national needs is more important than the implementation on a European level. Furthermore, for the type of teacher training without subject training the government can argue that the European dimension must be in this subject training. Of course, strictly speaking, Europe is only in charge of vocational education and training, which it has extended to higher education policies with the Erasmus programme founded in 1987 as a highlight.

The MOST project – an acronym for *Mobility of teacher trainees and standard development* – wants to investigate the strong and weak points of the mobility in the pre-service teacher training so that teachers, already before their professional career, are prepared for a European dimension. Therefore the six teacher training institutions involved in the MOST project use the practical training – a key element in every teacher training - to bring the European dimension into the teacher training[viii]. This article focuses on how such mobility can be integrated in the curriculum of the teacher training, how such mobility can get full academic recognition, what the problems and opportunities are inside mobility are and the most positive experiences from the six participating teacher training institutions concerning the mobility aspect. The focus is the institutional level and not the individual, because it all starts with the fact whether teacher training institutions want to implement the European dimension or not.

2. The integration of mobility into the pre-service teacher training

The key to the integration of the European mobility into the pre-service teacher training is the willingness of the teacher training institutions to do so. If there is no agreement from the board or directors and if there is no commitment on the level of the training, it can not work. This became very clear by the Swedish and the Maltese partner of the MOST project where the colleagues had to face a lot of internal discussions to get students into the mobility even when their institutions have subscribed their participation into this project. This can also be explained by the fact that many universities with a European University Charter implement the mobility aspect in the subject-specific or domain-specific studies of the teacher's training rather than in the teacher training itself. For them it is always difficult to give teacher trainees permission to go for their studies abroad. The main argument for this is that teacher trainees are only trained to teach in a national school environment. In the triptych – education studies (e.g. pedagogy, general didactics, educational psychology, etc.), subject-specific didactic studies and teaching - there is nothing foreseen concerning the European dimension. The future employer of teachers in compulsory education – the national or regional government or their local stakeholders - does not ask for it. So how to convince colleagues or the teacher training institution itself to do it?

In general in the pedagogical-psychological component, there is no place for the European dimension as such[ix]. This can be strange when teacher

trainees are learning about values. If there is a course or module about 'learning from another educational system' then it is commonly accepted that students are taught about important, not so modern pedagogues like Rudolf Steiner or Célestin Freinet, but not about the educational system in another European country. Even for topics like classroom management or communication, there is no flexibility to make this a European topic, because pedagogues will always argument that you need to maintain the link with the local school culture.

In the field of the subject-related part of the training it is a tradition that foreign language teachers go to one of the countries where the language which is studied is the mother tongue language. There can also be a very strict subject-related tradition for teachers of other subjects, like history – ancient Rome, music – Hungaria, etc. But, for those teacher trainees the visit to that country has everything to do with learning the cultural background of the language or the subject, so not cross-curricular and certainly not the European dimension. There is one typical exception of visits to the European institutions in Brussels or Strasbourg, but the link is more political – society rather than not school-subject. Of course, every one can ask what the European dimension of mathematics or chemistry is, but the didactical approach is related to values and should be connected with daily life in the classroom. The problem with the 'subject component' is that most of the curricula are full (or overloaded) because teacher trainees must be prepared for different types of schools or a wide range of pupils' age.

Finally, the best component to integrate the mobility seems to be the teaching practice, because here the two other components have to be applied and there are opportunities to do the practice in any school. Only at the end of the pre-service training, the trainee will have enough theoretical and practical knowledge to enter the reality of a classroom for the practice. Only there it is a matter of free choice where he will do that practice, so it can also be abroad. Here it depends upon the willingness of the local schools to be creative and flexible and to see what opportunities they can give to a foreign teacher trainee. They have to overcome a lot of prejudices and have to be open for the advantages. For example teachers are afraid whether their pupils will understand the non-mother language accent or foreign language used by the teacher trainee; or pure pragmatic, there are afraid of loosing classroom hours. Advantages like making pupils open-minded or to bring a young, enthusiastic trainee in the classroom are not thought of. For the teacher trainee, the most important argument to do the practice abroad is the fact that by being confronted with another school culture he can better reflect on what he has learned from his own educational system and on top of this he has to make the transfer to another educational system. This opens a lot of opportunities to prove that he is fit for the profession of teaching. All students that have participated in the MOST project or in any other Erasmus programme can testify that they are better prepared for the teaching profession. All schools involved in the MOST project can testify about the surplus value of receiving incoming students from Europe in their school. Schools that are motivated can prove that 'meeting the others' is

so rich for their pupils that they can argue perfectly to bring this component into teaching a national curriculum.

3. The academic recognition of mobility

The European credit transfer and accumulation system (ECTS) offers the perfect solution for the academic recognition of the mobility of students. The key element is that teacher training institutions have a bilateral agreement which includes the opportunity to make learning agreements for the individual teacher trainees, including practice as a part of the programme. A bilateral agreement means that there is respect for each others methods of evaluation so that marks and grades can be transferred without any discussion. The MOST project reveals that this is a weak point for the exchange of teacher trainees because teacher training institutions don't like to give their supervision upon the evaluation of the practice in someone else's hands. The solution for this is to work out a system of global assessment starting by the evaluation of mentors in the schools. Those mentors are trained by the local teacher trainers so that everyone will use the same methods and interpretation of the local standards concerning the evaluation of teacher trainees. There can also be peer assessment by other teacher trainees and in case of doubt there can be the visit of a foreign teacher trainer to help the mentor. Teacher training institutions have no problems to transfer such assessments into their own system of marks.

Another aspect of the full academic recognition is that there is a correct transfer of the work load for the student. Therefore the learning agreement is very important because the person in charge of the sending institution agrees with the person in charge of the receiving institution about the content and the credits of the exchange programme. It is clear that if the practice in the home country is replaced by practice in the receiving country then it doesn't have to be done again after the exchange programme. But again, not all teacher training institutions will share this opinion. Therefore it is so important to have commitment of everyone in the sending institution about the exchange programme. The MOST programme proves that teacher trainers have to convince their colleagues about this. When they can accept the idea that a practice abroad makes the teacher trainee into a more rich personality and so a better teacher, then there is also commitment on the side of the academic recognition. Finally, not everyone is so flexible to cancel the work load of the lessons that have been missed in the home institution. Even when the lecturers of the home institution support the idea of practice abroad, they don't have the opportunity to find out alternatives for the so needed, missed items of the curriculum… This has all to do with 'release' the teacher trainee. There must not be only mobility in the mind, but also in the heart. Teacher trainers know the biography, the history of their students and often, they don't want to let them go outside the safe paths of their own teacher training model. They don't see for example the richness of the fact that their trainee can go abroad without the negative connotations of this history, that they can take a new start.

The most significant element in the recognition of the mobility inside the MOST project was that there has never been any doubt about the competencies of the colleagues' teacher trainers abroad. Everyone relies completely on the professionalism of the others, even when they knew a lot about the differences in their approach of teacher training. Every one accepts that their students have earned the credits abroad and that the qualitative information was written down in assessments or evaluation documents. Such information is many times more important than a mark. So everyone makes full recognition of the credits, because they know that it was based on the work of the students and the guidance by excellent colleagues.

4. Challenges and opportunities for mobility with teacher trainees

As usual, these reflections can be split into the practical problems and more philosophic questions or positive challenges.

A big practical issue has to do with timing. What is the best moment for a practice abroad in the curriculum? When is the student ready for it? Also, what is the best moment during the academic year for sending out/receiving? At last, but certainly not a least, what is the best moment in the calendar of the schools to welcome teacher trainees for the practice? The MOST project was full with agenda problems. For example, in Malta during the first and second year of the project students were not allowed to go abroad because it could not be scheduled into

their curriculum. Also the periods proposed for receiving were impossible for them, because at the same time students had exams. Finally their students had to do six weeks of practice while the project only offers a period of five weeks. Luckily, the Swedish partner was flexible enough to organize an extra week for them.

A specific challenge is that there are always internal changes into the overall organisation of a teacher training, because education means a very dynamic environment. So circumstances can create either the exact right moment for doing things or the worst moment. This is expressed in the ancient Greek word 'kairos' and this was never far away in our project. For example, during the project the Swedish colleagues reported that the implementation of the Bologna process caused some problems. The structure of their system was a problem; they had different modules which couldn't be changed. During certain modules teacher trainees didn't get the permission of their lecturers to go abroad and there was a problem with accepting the credits afterwards. Some students therefore had to do a double programme. So it is clear that few of their students were willing to go abroad. On the other hand, the colleagues of Lithuanian connect their success with this mobility programme that their candidates were the last of an 'old educational system'. So a period of internal changes is always a challenge, because mobility must guarantee students enough stability – as well in study, as in private life - for doing another form of practice.

A very realistic and practical topic in mobility is the accommodation. The MOST project proves that it is very hard to find solutions to receive different students for a short period of five weeks. This is too short on the normal market for renting a student's flat and too long to stay in youth hostels. Solutions have been found by renting apartments, by creating accommodation in not used offices on campus, a special offer from a B&B/hotel, etc. An acceptable price, basic comfort and safety are key elements to guarantee that students can concentrate on their work for the practice. Another aspect of housing is the social component. It is very important that the guest student is feeling well, otherwise it can turn into a negative spiral until homesickness comes. Full participation in the daily life of the mobility and so integration in the group are elements to wave your own safety net. There is also a correlation between the grant from the National Agency and the price and equipment of accommodation. If there are opportunities for self-catering, free internet access, etc. it influences the budget. Furthermore, even when the grant is sustainable, it can never cover all the costs. The guidelines of Europe are clear. But it was a fact that there were differences upon the component how much students have to invest from their own money. The MOST project proves that this can be correlated with the opportunities that the receiving institution can offer.

A specific aspect is the profile and background of the teacher trainee. If you have to receive teacher trainees studying for different ages of pupils, then you have to find different types of schools for the practice. There it

becomes clear that educational systems are so different within the various European countries. Primary school can target pupils from 6 to 12 or sometimes to 14 years old. Secondary school can be compulsory or specialized, etc. The ideal is to receive students which are studying to teach to the same type of pupils, so that the receiving institution can make mixed teams, can give them tasks like peer-lesson preparation, etc. Correlated to this is also the capacity of the practice school to receive students for the training. If there are too many in one school, then there are also problems to find enough teaching hours for every student. This proves that there are limits on the number to receive students and the number of hours to teach per student. If the sending institution is too demanding things can collapse. The fact that teacher trainees can form a subgroup inside the normal staff seems never to be a problem. As a matter of fact, mostly they were accepted as young colleagues.

The recruitment for mobility is also a big challenge. For both Scandinavian partners in MOST, there was a kind of general, cultural background in the profile of the students that made that they had no or less interest to go abroad for a longer period to do the practice. Swedish and Norwegian Students often have more or less regular jobs beside their studies. They want them for material quality in life like their house, car, … A lot of them are also a little bit older and often they already have a family or a long term relationship. Under these conditions, their job is strongly connected to their sense of responsibility. Some students have so many obligations at home, that they weren't able to go abroad. It is an

open question what to think about the fact that those students recognize as well a high standard in their studies, as well as in their private life, but that they will not take all consequences to get that high standard in their studies. Do social values have to be implemented at any time and anywhere?

Another type of student, which can be found by all partners except Lithuania[x], are those who travel a lot during the holiday, so they don't have to do it anymore during the academic year, … Those are the opposite of the believers in the richness of the monolithic culture of their home country. Their country has already the answers, they think, because they have a good educational system. The MOST project proves the richness of the observation and – why not? – confrontation with another educational system. It seems to be the best way to reflect critical about the 'good' educational system at home.

Some students are afraid for the extra work load as a consequence of teaching abroad. One specific element is that teaching in another language than your mother tongue always includes extra preparation time. Therefore, the Spanish partner selected students who were studying English, so it was a normal issue for them. Many students from Norway and Sweden grow up in a quasi bilingual context, so for them English never was a problem. For Belgian students it is a little bit similar, but they speak more 'Euro English' instead of 'British English'; so some of the Maltese parents complained about the language of the teacher trainee

from abroad. On the other hand, in other countries the pupils' English was a problem. In both cases a solution could be found in a check-up of the lessons plans in advance. The conclusion is that there are many point of views upon 'content and language integrated learning' even when it is an open, didactical form like a project in the classroom. This is dependent on the willingness of the schools for the practice and the linguistic competencies of the incoming students.

The MOST project proves that terminology inside a language is a bigger problem for the teacher trainees than for the teacher trainees. Students are not so stigmatised by an educational vocabulary and they are very flexible to use youth language in a school context. For the teacher trainers the only solution was to release a part of their vocabulary and to accept in pragmatic way common definitions, which make a project works. An excellent tool to get this was created by the fact that in the first year of the project where there was no time or opportunity for staff exchange and all had to do 'action research' upon the standard for teacher trainees. Finally, the coordinator put some lessons – recorded in different countries – on the digital platform of the project and all partners involved in the project have to evaluate the same lessons. This means that the element of the observed practice was common for all and first, all could start to evaluate in their own terms and later on, all have to find out a common language to discuss about the same evaluations.

The conclusion is clear: if there is a challenge, take it and do it. The MOST project was based on so-called 'action research' which also means 'learning by doing' and this is often the way how teacher training is organized.

5. Most successful elements of the mobility

The number of students that want to participate into mobility is not the perfect factor to indicate the success, but nevertheless, for some partners of the MOST project it is a clear indication. This became very clear for the Lithuanian partner where in every year, there were four times more candidates that wanted to go than available places. This has to do with the fact that young people of Lithuania still don't have so many opportunities to go abroad. The logical consequence was the need of a hard selection. The Lithuanian colleagues have chosen for open selection criteria, so nothing to do with grades. Most important was the selection based on a personal interview on different levels. The level of English was important, but more important was motivation. It was a big challenge; during selection a lot of attention went to social competences, being flexible, being reflective, ... So finally, not only students with English were selected, but the best went abroad. For many of them, it was also the first and last teaching practice, because they were the last of the 'old educational system'. In Norway, it was the opposite, so the colleagues had to do a lot to find candidates. Those students who went abroad mostly had a connection with abroad like foreign parents, ...

maybe that's why they were more open-minded. How the professors thought about it; "if you go, you will have this and this problem". That's why the local coordinator first talked with his colleagues before he talked with the students. But now the project's over, all agree that the students who went abroad learned more than those at home. Also because of the fact that they start to compare and reflect on their own Norwegian educational system. To the two students with a bad experience the coordinator said: "Before you start to complain, try to learn about the new culture." Being an inclusive teacher is one of the main competences in this exchange programme. This statement is true for the outgoing as well as for the incoming students. The confrontation with the consequences of inclusive education in Norway learned them to understand it, even when they didn't agree with it. In Belgium, on the students' intranet a discussion starts in the second year of the project about the selection because it gives students a 'special and honoured status' to be selected for the MOST project. This was also for students who participated in MOST@home in Belgium, Lithuania and Spain, because you don't always need to go abroad for an international project. Most of all students who participate in mobility or I@H learn of lot of social skills which are excellent for their professional career.

It was always clear that incoming students reflect very well on the good things and bad things of the educational system of the host country and so they learn so much more about their educational system and on top of all of this how to deal with it personally. This has a lot to do with the

'success formula' of the mobility activities, based on a five weeks, intensive programme. In all countries there is a variation on the basic concept: one week preparation, three weeks of practice (observation and teaching) and one week of evaluation and follow-up as part of the action research. This very, logical programme has also to be connected with the intensive atmosphere, where from three to six different nationalities are working and studying together. This was really a challenge for teacher trainers and teacher trainees. All colleagues reported how lucky (afterwards) they were with this type of deep and intensive cooperation. They never have time and occasion to do this with their own students. It gives them all an intense professional satisfaction. At the side of the students we can find all variations of numbers from being the one and only Norwegian student in the exchange programme in Belgium to an enclave of four Belgian students together in Lithuania. By using the word 'enclave' there is a clear indication that there was also an inside interference in the small group from the same country as visitors in the other. Further on, there were the interferences between the different enclaves. To conclude, it was the atmosphere of "L'auberge espagnole"[xi] with the rendez-vous of young people from different cultures.

6. Conclusions

Mobility in teacher training is always a unique experiment based on respect for each other. Meeting the other in another country in school context goes deep inside the teacher training of an individual. The

outgoing student has to be open-minded, has to be able to release his prejudices and must have the courage to teach in a totally different school than what he has experienced in his own educational autobiography. The context factors like sending and receiving teacher training institution and most of all the schools of the teaching practice are there to make this mobility successful.

The mobility of teacher trainees of different countries at the same time towards the same, receiving country gives an extra dimension. The MOST project proves how important the connection is between an international classroom for incoming students and the situation of the individual in the teaching practice. This means that the Erasmus exchange of teacher trainees must be embedded in a global context of an open-minded teacher training institution and the schools for the practice.

The communication of the success experiences in the different countries could have been better. But nevertheless sharing such experiences during feedback sessions after the mobility brings a positive view on the richness of the difference inside European education. The experience that education is so much more than the cool transfer of knowledge proves the value of the humanistic approach in education on the old continent.

Finally, there was the confidence between all teacher trainers involved in the MOST project. During the three years of the project, the personal, professional connection between all has grown and so they have learned

from each other strong and weak points. Every one could explain and when needed defend his points of views upon teacher training, what is good in an open dialogue. But at the end, there has never been a discussion upon the professional competencies of each other. This important fact of deep respect opens the door to release their own students and send them abroad, because all knew they will come back as 'rich' European teachers.

Report on the Final Evaluation of the MOST project
Kestutis Kaminskas

1. Introduction

This report is presented as it was defined in the Application submitted to the Comenius 2.1. The project *Mobility Framework and Standard Development for Teacher Trainees* (MOST, 2005-2007) was funded by the European Commission - 118340-CP-1-2004-1-BE-C21.

The conclusions and recommendations in this Report are based on observations, interviews, analyses of Handbook, reflective journals of national coordinators and student portfolios. There is no evaluation of the financial aspects of the project in the report.

2. Background to the external evaluation

The MOST was Comenius 2.1. project, devoted to European teacher trainees and teacher educators. The representatives from Belgium, Spain (Catalonia), Lithuania, Malta, Norway and Sweden High schools, which educate teachers, participated in the project. The project linked the teacher trainee's mobility with the applied research. The aim of MOST was to contribute to the development of a European standard for the starting teacher. This standard was prepared using the component of students' mobility, reflection portfolios compiled by the students and

project participants' discussions. It should be noted that students practice in another partner country was most emphasized. In addition, it was considered the most important component in the project.

The specific objectives were:

- A preparing of framework for mobility of teacher trainees, including practice and recognition of those activities. Within the Socrates / Erasmus programme, mobility of teacher trainees is a difficult issue as teaching practice has different approaches in the different European countries.

- To create a dynamic evaluation system for the European standard for the starting teacher, so that the European standard stays in tune with the changing society and the role of teacher training institutions in society.

3. The External Evaluation

3.1. Terms of evaluation

The scope of the external final evaluation was the period 2005-2007 during which the project was carried out. This scheme of the practice visits was prepared - each partner organised a five weeks' training period for a mixed group of incoming and local students. The structure of each training period was: two weeks of intensive training, two weeks of practice in schools and one week for reflection and evaluation. This had to lead to the enhancement of the professional competencies of all actors

involved in the project (teacher trainees, teacher educators, mentors and national coordinators also).

3.2. Methodology

The methodology included analyses of the Assessment document, the portfolios of student teachers, lesson planning reported on the DOKEOS platform, the Handbook (De Ganck, 2007), the Professional Development Portfolio (elaborated by prof. C. Bezzina), the observation in the classroom, and interviews. The aim of the MOST project was to contribute to the preparation of a European standard for the starting teacher. As the MOST project was focused on an action research, it might be concluded that this standard was prepared applying a research approach (method).

The final aim of the project was to improve the quality of teacher training. Therefore, to reach this goal, it was estimated basic competencies, under which teacher educators could improve their curricula.

3.3. Findings and conclusion

All goals estimated by the organizers were achieved and objectives were implemented. One of the most valuable results of the project was the topicality of European dimension in the programmes of teacher training that might be entitled as *European added value*. This result was achieved in

all components of the project; the foremost was that six teacher training schools decided to participate in this European project. Moreover, the conditions to achieve these results were very prosperous, as representatives from very different educational institutions participated in the activities; furthermore, the project participants were admittedly very qualified teacher educators and organizers.

The final outcome of the MOST project is a prepared publication of a Handbook (De Ganck, 2007) with the European standard for the starting teacher.

The project was also effective from a quantitative point, because 154 students participated in the mobility practice. So many future European teachers had a possibility to learn the education theory and practice, culture and language of the other country and also establish human contacts during these three years.

In the European Parliament critical analysis of the Communication from the Commission of the Council and the European Parliament entitled "Efficiency and Equity in European education and training systems" (IP/B/CULT/FWC2006) were stated four significant pressures – globalisation, population, rapid changes in the labour market, and technological innovation. The project participants had the possibility to experience and successfully overcome all these pressures.

The project aimed to study classroom practices, as it was referred in the Communication, for "factors affecting teaching efficiency are even less well understood".

The project had pedagogical and didactical approaches: the teacher trainee had to undertake practical training in school with students of 10 to 18 years in foreign country, and teacher educator had to develop and test principles of evaluation of teacher trainee competencies that could be transferred to a European standard.

Organizing the theoretical base, aims and objectives of the project, coordinators and participants invoked one of the main documents – Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications

(http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/testingconf_en.html)

which was prepared by expert group. Ten recommendations, which competences the teacher should have, are named in these principles: "Teachers should be equipped to respond to the evolving challenges of the knowledge society, participate actively in it and prepare learners to be autonomous lifelong learners. They should, therefore, be able to reflect on the processes of learning and teaching through an ongoing engagement with subject knowledge, curriculum content, pedagogy, innovation, research, and the social and cultural dimensions of education." These competences were points of the reference for MOST project participants to estimate their goals and objectives to national and regional policy makers: "(...) Teacher mobility should be encouraged." The project tried to present means how to encourage national teacher training organizers to implement this recommendation and introduce a structured framework for the organization of mobility activities of

teacher trainees including the practical training and the recognition of these activities. This objective was successfully attained in this project.

On the other hand during the project activities participants and student teachers were able to examine practically the meaning of their existence in the country of four pressure, which were named in the document by European Commission experts (Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament entitled "Efficiency and Equity in European Education and Training Systems" (COM(2006)481 final)) – globalisation, population, rapid changes in the labour market, and technological innovation.

The project MOST was based on integrated praxis by the mobility of teacher training, so that teacher trainers and student teachers of the six different European countries were able to cooperate with special purpose to create a European standard for the starting teacher.

During the first visits participants fully realized that student teachers' practice is very different, so the project was a unique chance for each of six institutions to develop their understanding about students teaching practice and generally about the whole system of teacher training; in addition, it might help rationally to improve their own contribution to the developing of teacher training. This possibility is of high importance, as the society and government in most countries are not satisfied with teacher training.

Students' portfolios could be considered as a very reliable source since it helped students to evaluate the results of the project as they reflected doubts, hesitations, findings, challenges and ways of self-appraisal, since

the students decided what to include in it. It is necessary to point out that such a practice was surely challenging for the students, as they had to go to no well known country for five weeks, moreover they had to teach people from another culture using a foreign language and teaching usually a different subject than they had studied in their high school.

3.4. Problems

The different structure of High School students, practice period, ways of assessments and credits standards were main problems, which appeared within the project. So it required extra discussions (to guarantee the academic recognition of activities carried out at the host institution). It was the most problematic aspect in the project.

Students are trained to teach their curriculum, as Education is a national issue and when students had practice in another country, they had too little time to learn and to teach a curriculum of another country. The project participants had much discussion due to these differences and had to find a suitable decision for everyone, moreover in turn, this decision helped to reach consensus, which might be entitled as the European dimension of the project.

3.5. Recommendations

It is a discursive proposal for the High Schools, which train teachers, to carry out a detailed research and to find out how effective is student

teachers` practice that is to say, which relationships **are** between the resources brought into teacher trainee practice and the results obtained. Students who participate in the mobility prepared portfolios and reflective journals, which proved that MOST project was very effective. According to these sources it was analyzed and prepared this assessment.

It can be proposed for European Education politicians to discuss a possibility to develop the scope of teaching about Europe in the curriculum in their schools. It could be an informal (indirect) contribution to the European dimension of the development of the European citizenship.

It would need to find a possibility to establish sub-programmes of ERASMUS for teacher trainees as their studies are specific and they usually differ from other study programmes in various parameters.

Since students' mobility is being encouraged in the areas of the European education (Common European principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications); thus, students' practice might develop and it would be very effective to propose that the public institutions of University rectors seek for possibilities to prepare references for regulations of teacher students' practice. This proposal is really difficult to implement especially due to acknowledged, legalized and very supporting autonomy of the university, though these agreements or recommendations would concede possibilities to enlarge European dimension in the field of Education practice.

The common standard for the starting teacher could be practical tool for the academic recognition of teacher trainee mobility under European

projects and could contribute to improving quality in teacher training at national and European level.

It would be reasonable to the Teacher training institutions in European countries to take the results of this project into account when planning the development of their teacher training system.

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[i] This article is partially based on a written reflection by the teacher educators of the six participating countries during the final meeting in Malta (June 2007).

[ii] Steele, J., Meredith, K., Walter, S., & Temple, C. (1998). Reading and writing for critical thinking. Guidebooks I-VIII. New York.

[iii] Verksamhetsförlagd undervisning (on-the-job teaching practice)-report

[iv] Spain joined the project only from the second year on. The first draft of a European standard is the result of the comparative analysis of the national or local documents of and the independent lesson assessments by Belgium, Lithuania, Malta, Norway and Sweden. The grid was completed with data from Spain after a first draft of the European standard was already developed.

[v] Spain joined the project only from the second year on. The first draft of a European standard is the result of the comparative analysis of the national or local documents of and the independent lesson assessments by Belgium, Lithuania, Malta, Norway and Sweden. The grid was completed with data from Spain after a first draft of the European standard was already developed.

[vi] Alternatively Sweden used the method of story-telling.

[vii] In this article we will always use 'the national government', but of course it will be different from country tot country.   In Belgium and Spain education is the responsibility of the regions Flanders, Catalonia and in Sweden it can be a local authority or a board from the parents.

[viii] Golzales, J. & Wagenaar, R. (2001). *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe* (pp. 133-134)

[ix] In most of the regular teacher training programmes, there is not a course like 'comparative education'. But, this is a typical course for pedagogues at the university.

[x] Notice that the project was from 2005 to 2007, which means that this statement is very 'dated'. This element of youth culture is also rising in Lithuania.

[xi] Film de Cédric Klapisch about the life of Erasmus students in Barcelona. *L'auberge espagnole*. France, 2002