

## **ELFE 2 Internal Evaluation Report September 2008**

### **Overall Performance and Co-ordination of the Partnership**

ELFE 2 has a consortium structure, based on a partnership between five national teacher trade unions (ESTUS, GL, LIZDA, NUT, ZNP), led by their European umbrella organisation, the ETUCE. This partnership is supported by two pedagogical experts from Mid Sweden and Warsaw Universities and an external evaluator from Linkoping University.

The consortium has met twice to date, in January and June 2008, at Steering Committee meetings held in Brussels and London. At both of these meetings, the two pedagogical experts and project evaluators have made valuable contributions on the project methodology, in particular, the criteria for selection of educational institutions to be visited as part of the project and the project study instruments. The need for academic rigour and the robustness of the project's findings have been stressed by the pedagogical experts and project evaluator throughout.

The representatives of the national teacher trade unions have shared information about the use of ICT in education and teacher training in their own countries and their unions' policies on these issues. This has led to increased understanding about the situation regarding ICT usage in education in other partners' countries, which has been fed back by representatives to their unions, thus enhancing policy development in this area further.

The consortium is serviced by an ETUCE administrator. Arrangements for Steering Committee meetings, including travel and accommodation and the distribution of papers, have been undertaken in a timely and efficient manner. Steering Committee members have been made to feel able to call on the services of the administrator if they require any assistance or information about the project.

### **Project Study Instruments**

The project study instruments are based on those used in the ELFE 1 project. Members of the Steering Committee who participated in ELFE 1 were able to make recommendations about their refinement, based on their experiences of using the study instruments. New members of the Steering Committee made useful suggestions based on the education systems and requirements of their own countries. The pedagogical experts and external evaluator stressed the need for the study instruments to reflect the aims and objectives of the project.

The project instruments were subject to intense scrutiny and debate, with email used to disseminate and discuss various versions of the instruments. The national teacher trade union representatives emphasised the need for the instruments to be manageable for both institutions as well as project members, in order not to generate additional workload for participating institutions. The pedagogical experts were able to suggest ways of achieving

this aim, such as merging the “teacher” and “innovative teacher” questionnaires and producing interview guidelines which enabled the interviewer to use their discretion about the total number of questions asked whilst maintaining the academic integrity of the project.

In total, the partnership prepared and agreed five interview guidelines, for school principals, teachers, students, teacher educators and student teachers. In addition, it collaborated on two questionnaires, for principals and for technical information. This work was supported by materials prepared by the pedagogical experts in conjunction with the project co-ordinator for use by the national teacher trade union representatives, such as guidelines on document collection and the conduct of interviews.

The project study instruments were discussed further at the second Steering Committee meeting, following their use during the first scheduled study visits in Denmark. As a result of the experiences of those who had used the study instruments, some slight adjustments and changes in emphasis in their usage were made by the pedagogical experts, which balanced the need for the study instruments to be consistent throughout the project with the national teacher trade union representatives’ wish for them to be practicable and manageable in the time allocated for interviews.

### **Project Activities**

The main project activity undertaken to date, in addition to the Steering Committee meetings, has been the two study visits to Denmark and England. As set out in the original application, the national teacher trade union representative was responsible for approaching schools and teacher training institutions to participate in the project, using the criteria agreed by the Steering Committee and for finalising the programme for the study visit.

The work plan associated with the study visits has been implemented in line with the anticipated timeline submitted with the project application except for a two month delay to the study visit to England. This was due to both the illness of the national teacher trade union representative and the timetable for national examinations in England, which precluded any study visits to schools during that period.

Preliminary work was also undertaken on the two regional seminars and final conference which are scheduled to take place in 2009.

### **Identification of Challenges/Risks**

The dependence of the project’s successful implementation on the individual members of the Steering Committee was highlighted by the illness of the national teacher trade union representative from England. Contingency arrangements for such circumstances had not been discussed, therefore this could become an issue, particularly if any long-term absence involved the pedagogical experts or external evaluator.

The Steering Committee, however, has had an informal discussion on how to handle a situation where one of its members has a long-term absence. There is a strong feeling that all partners must remain connected to the project and that substitutes should be sent if Steering Committee members are unable to attend meetings.

The participation of schools in the programme is dependent on their relationships with the national teacher trade unions. In the case of England, the original schools which had been selected for the study visits withdrew after the union concerned initiated a national one-day strike and campaign on teachers' pay. New schools with close links to the union therefore had to be selected which, whilst meeting the project criteria, did not display the same level of ICT innovation as the schools which had been selected originally.

Securing all of the questionnaires and background documentation from schools and teacher training institutions, as required by the project, continued to be a problem. As in the ELFE 1 project, participating institutions had rarely completed both of the questionnaires prior to the visit and also often needed to be reminded several times to forward material to their national teacher trade union representative, despite the national teacher trade union representatives having made these requests both verbally and in writing to the schools before and during the visits. This added to the work commitment of the national teacher trade union representatives and could potentially delay the reports of the study visits written by the pedagogical experts.

The Steering Committee debated the use of the ELFE website and the option of using the debate forum to stimulate dialogue with and between teachers on the use of ICT in education. The Steering Committee concluded that the website should function primarily as a means of displaying all of the activities connected with the project and as a place where all relevant ELFE documents and findings could be accessed. In reaching this decision, the Steering Committee noted that teachers have access to a huge number of debate fora, both national and international, therefore it was reasonable to expect that any activity on the ELFE debate forum was likely to be unsuccessful unless it was directly in connection with the regional seminars and the final conference, where it was felt that participants might be motivated to use the area to follow up on items dealt with during the conference.

## **Effectiveness and Impact**

At this early stage of the project, the main impact has been at national teacher trade union level, in terms of sharing information about different countries' approaches to ICT in education and their implications for the teacher unions, particularly in meeting the challenges of teachers' professional development and workload issues. The Steering Group's national teacher trade union representatives have fed back this information to their own organisations, to inform debate about their own policy development in this field.

The study visits have also enabled the national teacher trade union representatives to highlight their work on ICT in education to the participating

schools and have facilitated discussion on this issue with head teachers and other teachers both during and after the study visit, challenging the stereotype of teacher unions being concerned only with traditional areas such as pay and conditions, thereby raising awareness of the contribution teacher unions make to professional matters.

All materials relating to ELFE 2 have been posted on the ELFE website <http://www.elfe-eu.net/flx/english/frontpage> and the study visits have been publicised in some of the national teacher trade unions' publications.

### **Recommendations**

- Further consideration is needed of how to improve the efficiency of the collection of the questionnaires and other documentation from participating schools and teacher education institutions.
- The Steering Committee should investigate ways of improving the use of the ELFE website by schools and teacher education institutions, including asking the views of those participating in the study visits.