

Guiding a four-week teaching placement abroad in primary schools: A joint international project

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Resumen

Las Escuelas Universitarias de Educación de Ávila y Zamora, ambas pertenecientes a la Universidad de Salamanca, y la Facultad de Educación de la Universidad de Nottingham Trent están desarrollando un proyecto de prácticas docentes internacionales, patrocinado por el Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia español y la Agencia de Desarrollo y Formación británica. Este reciente acuerdo internacional nos ha animado a adaptar los documentos de referencia general del proyecto a las necesidades específicas de nuestros estudiantes, lo que hemos llevado a cabo elaborando conjuntamente una guía bilingüe con el objetivo de clarificar los temas relativos al intercambio de nuestros estudiantes. El libro resultante proporciona información acerca de los programas de formación de los dos países y universidades, un plan de trabajo consensuado con una clara exposición de los objetivos y expectativas de todos los participantes, muestras de informes de evaluación y cuestionarios para contribuir a la reflexión sobre aspectos interculturales clave de las prácticas docente en el extranjero.

Palabras clave: Prácticas docentes internacionales, Educación Primaria, Formación lingüística, educativa e intercultural.

Abstract

The Schools of Education of Ávila and Zamora, both of which pertain to the University of Salamanca, and the Faculty of Education of Nottingham Trent University are involved in a project of international practice teaching, sponsored by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science and the British Training and Development Agency (TDA). Their recent international agreement prompted us to adapt general reference documents to the specific needs of our students, which we have done by jointly writing a bilingual guide to address issues concerning the exchange of our trainees. The resulting book provides background information on the training schemes of the two countries and universities, an agreed working plan with a clear statement of aims and expectations for all participants, samples of assessment reports and questionnaires to help reflect on key intercultural aspects of the placement abroad.

Keywords: International Practice Teaching, Primary Education, Linguistic, Educational & Intercultural Training

Introduction

Both Spain and the UK recognise how vital it is that children start learning other languages in their primary school years. The long-standing partnership between the University of Salamanca and Nottingham Trent University has provided an excellent context within which to develop a training programme within a shared European vision of teacher education. The *International Guide for Placement Abroad in Primary Schools* (Durán, Gutiérrez and Beltrán 2006), which we will briefly present in these pages, is specifically directed to students in the UK and Spain in their practice teaching stage, under the guidance of teachers/lecturers at universities in both countries for a four-week period. It aims to support the publication of the recent bilingual *Common Reference Framework. The competences, skills and expectations for trainees whilst on school*

placement abroad (2004) (English-French / English-Spanish) by the British *Teacher Development Agency* (TDA), the French *Instituts Universitaires de Formacion des Maitres*, and the Spanish MEC. This document describes the competences that trainees are to attain in the fields of pedagogy, language and intercultural development during a four-week placement in primary schools abroad: France, Spain or the United Kingdom.

The objective of our own *International Guide for Placement Abroad* (Durán, Gutiérrez and Beltrán 2006) is to adapt this general framework to the specific needs of the students at the Universities of Salamanca and Nottingham Trent, keeping the original outline, and to contribute to enriching the programme of international teaching practice established between the two universities. This is an initiative which in recent years has brought about on a small scale those important changes that society is demanding and that governments and institutions are attempting to foster on a large scale.

1. Teacher training models: an overall perspective

1.1. Language training

Nowadays, any educational proposal with a European scope, as our *International Guide for Placement Abroad*, should also be consistent with the objectives and methodological suggestions advocated by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (hereafter “CEF”)¹. This is another indispensable tool for any joint initiative in the education and language fields among the countries in Europe. The CEF presents a common foundation and guidelines for all across Europe with regard to language teaching programmes, curricular norms, valid assessment criteria for foreign language students in different countries, the use of textbooks, suggestions for methodology, etc. Besides fostering transparency in courses, programmes and qualifications at the European level, thus contributing to the construction of the European Higher Education Area, this document also pursues political and intercultural objectives such as preparing all Europeans for the challenge of increasing international mobility, the promoting of mutual understanding and tolerance, respecting the identities and cultural diversity of the member States, the satisfaction of socio-economic needs in a multilingual Europe, etc.

The CEF defends the functional, active and communicative use of language and favours a language teaching approach based on the communication needs of students and on the use of material and methods suitable for this need, with the idea that the main objective of the educational intervention in the area of foreign languages is to attain effective degrees of communicative competence. The different legal frameworks that both in Spain and the U.K. regulate educational practice also justify the primacy of communication within the area of foreign languages based on the needs of today’s society: the project of a European community, citizen mobility, the new information and communication technologies, and the forming of a spirit that is tolerant towards other forms of culture and at the same time aware of its own identity. All of these recognize that the purpose of the curriculum in the area of foreign languages for primary education is to learn to communicate in a second language. These new situations also contribute to orientating language teaching towards the acquisition of communicative competence, and more and more this is not only for instrumental purposes but also for cultural understanding.

¹ *Common European Framework for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. (2001) Council for Cultural Cooperation Education Committee. Language Policy Division. Strasbourg. Web version http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/CADRE_EN.asp

Whereas the Spanish *Decree of Minimums* (1991) emphasized the development of language competence (Grammatical, Discursive, Sociolinguistic Strategic and Socio-cultural), the CEF (2001) adopts a more inclusive, overall and integrative perspective, establishing a difference between knowledge (Declarative knowledge, Skills and know-how, Existential competence and Ability to learn) and competencies (Linguistic, Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic). A superficial analysis of the competencies mentioned, both general and specifically communicative, clearly shows their degree of complexity and richness, and situates the latter far from the anti-grammatical model which even today they are occasionally and erroneously associated with. Any type of educational intervention in the classroom can be related to one or several of the competencies offered in both documents, although in any kind of International Guide for Placement Abroad the elements related to intercultural skills and abilities should be highlighted.

For its part, the document recently published in England, *KS2 Framework for languages (10/2005)*, which includes the guidelines for language teaching in primary school, establishes their objectives based on the following skills:

ORACY: Listening, speaking and spoken interaction.

LITERACY: Reading and writing.

INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING: Understanding one's lives in the context of exploring the lives of others.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LANGUAGE: Reinforcing and reinterpreting knowledge and understanding gained in learning the first language and developing insights into the nature of language and its social cultural value.

LEARNING STRATEGIES: Awareness of how children learn languages and learning of strategies that can be applied to the learning of any language.

1.2. Educational training

In our *International Guide for Placement Abroad in Primary Schools* (2006: 35-63) we have presented two different models of training that suggest, in a complementary way, the profile that MFL primary school teachers should have. The first model, which comes from the Spanish educational system, is more specialized, while the second one, characteristic of the British system, offers a more general profile. In this section we will briefly mention the key elements of a feasible profile of "Teacher Specialized in English" following the triple training model - language-orientated (scientific-cultural training), professional (psycho-pedagogical training) and pragmatic (attitudinal training) - proposed by Vez Jeremías and Valcárcel Pérez for training teachers of English as a second language². This model provides a profile of a teacher who:

- takes into account the language and learning needs of their students, as well as their interests, attitudes, motivations, cognitive and social strategies, in order to orientate the teaching-learning process in the most authentic way possible.
- has knowledge of the linguistic system of English (formal and semantic properties) and the rules of usage governing the pragmatic aspects of communication.
- has a command of the strategies needed to direct and control language operations in English.
- places the student at the centre of learning and not the subject matter.
- is capable of analysing what students need to learn and how to learn it: the cognitive and social strategies they develop to progress in their competence and use of the new language.
- takes into account that knowledge of a language involves not only a command of the grammar rules and an inventory of the structures and lexicon, but also those rules governing the social behaviour system of the speaker.
- is able to develop learning strategies focused on interaction and communication, creating a classroom climate of "authentic learning".

² *La Formación de Profesores en Didáctica del Inglés. Orientaciones para la Enseñanza Básica Obligatoria*. Universidad de Murcia, 1989: 59-60.

- knows how to listen to what students have to say, who knows how to “be with the students” and at the same time keep them “in contact with English”.

On the other hand, the profile of the Primary Education Teacher in England is generalist rather than specialist. The competencies or minimum levels needed by future teachers to obtain teaching qualifications are included in the document *Teaching Qualifications. Professional levels for obtaining the official degree of teacher and requirements for initial teacher training*³. (2002:5) They are the following:

- **Professional values and practises**

These establish the attitudes that anyone receiving the official qualification as teacher should have, as well as the commitments they must make.

- **Knowledge and understanding**

These levels require newly qualified teachers to have the necessary confidence and adequate knowledge of the subject matter, as well as a clear idea of how pupils should progress in their learning (children’s learning progress) and the objectives they should achieve.

- **Teaching**

These levels are related to planning, follow-up and assessment skills, as well as to teaching and class organization techniques. These skills are based on the values and knowledge mentioned in the first two sections.

They are applicable to all trainees, regardless of the path they have chosen to obtain their official teaching qualifications. The levels give training providers autonomy to organize the training and satisfy the specific needs of the trainees. They do not lay down a curriculum or specify how the training is to be organized or administered. The levels are a rigorous set of expectations and establish the minimum legal requirements⁴.

More specifically, the similarities and differences in the training of teachers specializing in foreign languages at the Universities of Salamanca and Nottingham Trent are shown in Table 1.

1.3. Intercultural training

As the previous table shows the profile of the students in each country is very different, with regard to age (generally older in the British case), prior experience in foreign stays (much less in the Spanish case) and cultural, linguistic and academic background. For British students, their insertion into Spanish schools represents a change in framework but not a redefinition of the standards previously defined at Nottingham Trent University. For students from the University of Salamanca, the placement in Nottingham may be their first experience abroad and the academic goals accompanying their objectives of cultural assimilation and psychological adaptation are much broader. In order to prepare the students to confront this culture shock, we propose, following Byram (2002), the following model of teaching exchange:

Preparatory Phase: Before the placement abroad:

1) An initial preparation session during which students express their expectations and concerns regarding their stay in the host country. It is very useful to know the students’ concerns in order to examine their fears and work to shore up their confidence.

2) Both the British Council, in co-ordination with the University of Salamanca, and the Spanish Ministry of Education office in London organize a session or series of sessions about the educational systems in both countries to give the students an idea of the environment in which they will carry out their teaching practice.

³ *Teaching Qualifications. Professional levels for obtaining the official degree of teacher and requirements for initial teacher training*. 2002. London: Teacher Training Agency y Department for Education and Skills.

⁴ Recently these profesional standards have been modified in the document Draft Revised Standards for Classroom Teachers, version viii-final (6 April 2006).

TABLE 1: ACCESS TO THE TEACHING PROFESSION

	University of Salamanca	PGCE Nottingham Trent University
Access to the training programme	Have passed Bachillerato There is no further selection of students	Have completed an undergraduate university course. Selection of students by a process of presentations and interviews.
Students' Profiles	Traditionally young students with little or non-existent working experience or travel abroad.	Mature students and in general with a broad working experience and visits abroad.
Length of training programme	A three-year course undergraduate programme.	A year long post graduate programme
Aims	Linguistic: Level CEF B2 Professional: teaching competence	Obtain the teaching qualifications included in the document <i>Teaching Qualifications. Professional levels for obtaining the official degree of teacher and requirements for initial teacher training.</i>
Teaching Placement	Practicum I: generalist practice (4 weeks). Practicum II: MFL specialist practice in Spain or the UK (6 weeks).	Link Practice Plus: Placement prior to the placement abroad, in UK schools (5 weeks). SBTP 2 in Spain: 4 weeks. Final placement: 6 weeks.
Access to the teaching Profession	<i>Oposiciones</i> (Competitive exams) for state schools. Interviews for private or denominational schools	Getting <i>Qualified Teacher Status</i> after finishing successfully a PGCE programme and a year in a school as NQT.

Teaching Practice Phase: This experience requires enormous effort from the students, who may find themselves overwhelmed by the new situations they have to face in the host country. To help them to be successful, they are given the opportunity to reflect on the context they are immersed in an individual way by keeping a diary or blog reflecting their feelings and their reactions to their feelings, and in a group way to be able to compare their own experiences and interpretations with those of other students.

Follow-Up Phase: Spanish Day/English Day. Once the stay is over, a one-day session is held between university tutors and students in order to reflect on and contrast experiences and see what they have in common and what is different about their experiences and learning. This will help them to analyse and conceptualise everything they have experienced with the aim of better understanding the context and the people recently encountered.

On the one hand, the University of Salamanca has until now emphasized the second phase, but attention to the first and third phases will have to take on priority in the future. Nottingham Trent University, on the other hand, has a protocol for action in the first and third phases. In one way or another, all the agents participating in the exchange, without exception, are obliged to try and understand the perspectives of others, to try to put ourselves in the others' skin, and we should make an effort to clarify our own starting

suppositions and ask others to make them equally explicit in order to avoid hasty judgements based on ignorance.

2. Development of the period of placement abroad

2.1. Aims and expectations

The students´

Our aim has been to make the placement abroad in both countries as similar and effective as possible. Both placements are of a very different nature due to the two very different training programmes. So we decided to follow, with some alterations, the British model at the same time that we ask the British students to accommodate to patterns and characteristics of the schools in Ávila and Zamora without neglecting what is expected from them from their home university.

Regarding the common expectations for the students of both countries, they are spelled out in the document as follows:

- 1.- To get acquainted with the English/Spanish system of education through an immersion in real primary school settings.
- 2.- To benefit from their participation in programmes of good professional teaching practice.
- 3.- To become aware of differences and similarities between English and Spanish school visions, management, organization and pedagogical resources, strategies and teaching procedures.
- 4.- To improve their language and teaching skills by being offered the opportunity to teach some Spanish/English, support the teaching of other subjects, introduce topics, prepare displays, (help) organize a Spanish/English club, contribute activities for a Spanish/English day at school, and help prepare teaching materials (labels, recordings of stories for children such as *Where is Spot*, *Elmer the Elephant*, *We're going on a bear hunt*, *The very hungry caterpillar* which can be found in both languages and are popular among school children of the two countries, etc), learn from the tutor's teaching expertise, learn classroom English expressions and learn how children routinely read and interact.
- 5.- To contribute to the educational aims of the host school by becoming a positive presence, offering support to the tutor as deemed appropriate, helping children and showing their appreciation of them as well as sensitizing them to their own language and culture through songs, basic expressions of greetings, games, and appealing materials.
- 6.- To get to appreciate the tremendous educational potential of establishing international links at a Primary level.
- 7.- To help orient their practice towards a truly European citizenship.

The tutors´: The school mentors´ commitments, some of them the same as the university tutors´ are:

- 1.- Maintain regular link between the school and the University.
- 2.- Meet with the students on their arrival and acquaint them with school life and vision, timetables, routines, expected attitudes, responsibilities, assisting tasks and commitments, and with classroom dynamics during their stay.
- 3.- Orient trainees' intervention in the class by monitoring the design of lesson plans, providing advice for the trainees' performance and revising entries into their school-experience diary, observation notes and teaching practice files or report.
- 4.- Review the work of the trainees in school, with trainees, and the designated University supervisor, throughout the placement.
- 5.- Observe lessons of their trainees in school, review and evaluate their work and provide feedback in liaison with the designated supervisor.
- 6.- Participate in the review and evaluation of course provision.
- 7.- Write individual reports assessing the trainees' performance at the end of their placement and report on the overall TP experience.

The university tutors´. Regarding the commitments from the university tutors these are:

A- In the academic context:

- 1.- Maintain regular contacts between the school and the University, ensuring that host class teachers are familiar with the expectations of the four-week placement abroad and the procedures for the formative assessment of the trainees' progress. In order to achieve this, they need to:
- 2.- Liaise with school mentor and home country university tutor.
- 3.- Meet with the students on their arrival, during their stay and on their departure.
- 4.- Review the work of the trainees in school, with trainees, and the designated mentor/tutor, throughout the placement.
- 5.- Observe one lesson of each trainee in school, review and evaluate their work and provide feedback in liaison with the designated mentor.
- 6.- Participate in the review and evaluation of course provision.
- 7.- Write individual reports assessing the trainees' performance at the end of their placement and a final report on the overall TP experience.

B – In the organizational context:

- 1.- Exchange profiles of students in time for host families/schools/tutors to receive with letter outlining hosting arrangements.
- 2.- Welcome Day Agenda to be organized in the two countries.
- 3.- Arrange a meeting for schools having the Spanish/English students on placement:
 - (a) to discuss
 - Nature and purpose of the practice
 - Students' practical teaching experience to date
 - Nature of the foreign students in comparison with home trainees
 - (b) to clarify the assessment process.
 - (c) to provide information on preparation regarding cultural differences.
- 4.- Advise students to telephone host families/mentors on arrival in England/Spain.
- 5.- Expectations about being 'hosted' need to be clarified, e.g. help with washing up, sort own laundry, etc.
- 6.- If any new schools are to be involved, ensure that expectations for NTU / USAL students are clear for teaching staff, e.g. observations, files/report, planning, the standards, assisting tasks and suggested patterns for the four-week placement. Ensure School Heads know that students are not to be used as supply cover.
- 7.- Ensure Spanish students come with evidence of CRB clearance.

2.2. Programme

A sample of a weekly plan: tasks and commitments in and out of the class. This is only the grid for one week out of the overall four-week working pattern included in the published guide.

Suggested pattern for WEEK ONE

	SteP 1 Professional Attitudes & Relationships	STeP 2 “PLANNING”	STeP 3 “Doing”	STeP 4 “Reviewing”
TRAINEE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction. • Health and Safety induction. • Gather information on school policies, the curriculum, class routines and the role of other adults. • Begin to build good relationships with pupils and staff in the host school. • Identify linguistic needs and seek assistance when necessary. • Start building your educational language repertoire. • Evaluate the strength and weakness of your own cultural awareness. • Take an active part in the cultural life of the school. • Share previous report and set priorities for development. • Action plan for SBTP 1 [OBS]* • Use 30% non-contact time productively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan some teaching for week one [OBS]. • Complete grid of teaching themes (Spanish, Mathematics, English + 2 additional themes) [OBS]. • Become familiar with school’s resources. • Draft plans for four week block • Negotiate timetable for week ½ to include co-teaching of Spanish, mathematics and English and supervised teaching of other subjects [OBS]. • Explore suitable timetable for preparation of Spanish display, activities for a Spanish day at school, teaching materials, and for (helping) organize a Spanish club (OSS)*. <p><i>*[OBS]= Only British Students</i> <i>*[OSS]= Only Spanish Students</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe lesson structure, the teacher-pupil relationships, expectations of learning, use of space, etc. • Familiarise yourself with management routines and teaching and learning instructions. • Become familiar with the learning and teaching resources and compile a list. • Support teacher’s sessions by working with groups and individuals. • Co-teach – 2 lessons • Lead some teaching – 1 lesson, at least 1 English lesson [OBS]. • Compare the curriculum and timetable of the host country with the home curriculum and timetable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review own teaching. • Use rangefinders and select 3 profiled children [OBS]. • Conduct assessment conferences with 3 profiled children and establish records [OBS]. • Observe and review 4 of your teacher’s teaching sessions. • Weekly review and action plan.
CLASS TEACHER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction to school/class. • Health and Safety Induction. • Review previous report and set development priorities. • Draft programme of support. • Support trainees in establishing appropriate relationships. • Timetable 30% non-contact time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide explicit information re-schools planning four-week block. • Agree teaching themes + responsibilities for four week placement. • Timetable trainee’s teaching for Block Week. • Review draft plans and focus revisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure school’s approaches to issues of management and control are understood by trainee. • Support trainee’s whole class experiences and prepare for collaborative teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review individual children’s responses to trainee’s teaching and feedback. • Support in identification of 3 profiled children [OBS]. • Monitor progress of file/TP Report by the end of the week & offer feedback. • Review the trainee’s progress over the week. • Ensure sufficient planning information has been received.
LINK TUTOR Spanish University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make initial contact (phone). • Exchange contact information. • Clarify roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange a date for visit 1 in week ½ – for review of planning and preparation and initial observation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify purposes of the week. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the trainees progress over the week (phone).

The Spanish Report and the British File: format and content

To write up their reports, the students from the University of Salamanca use the following model, adapted from the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, which has been modified to suit our own programme aims and expectations. The model, of which we have selected the headings of the main sections, provides non-compulsory guidelines for the students.

GUIDELINES FOR THE PRACTICUM REPORT (SPANISH STUDENTS)

*In every section of your Practicum Report you are supposed to **describe** the reality observed and **discuss** (reflect and analyse) the incidents described.*

1. The School

You should gather relevant information about the school (from the school brochure, web page, etc.) and include it in the appendix. You are also advised to take pictures of significant features and use them to illustrate what you say.

The school setting. The school and the community. School organisation and educational principles. The school assemblies. Languages and cultures present at school. The role of foreign languages in the school curriculum. The use of space in the school and in the classrooms. Health and safety.

2. The Classroom

2.1. Background information about **your** class (if you are placed mainly in one group): Group characteristics; the classroom setting (significant features, flexibility in the use of the different areas, etc.); the class tutor (and other teachers teaching that group); other people participating in class (class assistants, parents, etc.); teaching/learning in the different subjects; co-ordination between the different teachers and subjects; classroom management (grouping, flexibility, common forms of interaction, discipline, etc.); students with special characteristics/needs; assessment; discipline, etc.

2.2. Focus on specific themes:

Choose **one** of the above themes to describe and discuss more in depth.

3. Foreign Languages (FL) in the school curriculum

The role of FL in the school. FL taught in the school. Preference of students' choice of FL. The FL Syllabus. Timetable, textbooks and other materials and resources. The language/languages of communication in the FL class. If there is a special class for the FL lessons, include a plan of the classroom and notes on significant features. Usual seating arrangement. Corners. Methodology. Co-ordination of the FL teacher with other teachers/areas.

Teaching practice as a teacher of Spanish as a foreign language and in curricular areas other than Spanish: A reflection on the activities you have carried out, lessons you have taught, support given to the class tutor, etc., following the day-by-day, session-by-session concise description and reflection that you have included in the appendix.

Classroom language; Materials and resources for TEFL discovered in the school; Stories, songs, games, activities, projects, festivals, special events, etc. that you have experienced during your stay and that you find of interest for the teaching of English as a foreign language; The school and the classroom in the UK and at home: similarities and differences; Out of school visits.

4. Ways of obtaining a QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) and possibilities to get a teaching job in the UK

5. Conclusions

What have you gained with the experience? Highlight the most important aspects. Reflect on the work you have done as well as on the way you have done it and on the difficulties you have encountered.

Bibliography

Appendix. The appendix should include: A contents page; A day-by-day, session-by-session concise description and reflection on the work you have done (including your timetable, activity plans, lesson plans, worksheets, bibliography used, etc.); Documents that you consider useful to illustrate what have been presented in your report: class list, class timetable, classroom plan, the FL specialist timetable, calendar of teachers' meetings, samples of children's work, samples of tests, assessment records, the school magazine, special events, etc.

On the other hand, the British students are required to maintain a file throughout their time on the placement. This is a professional journal which records their developing awareness and proficiency. It is intended to be a working document which promotes positive communication between the trainee, the mentor and university tutor.

The file should be systematically ordered according to the Standards of Teaching Proficiency (STePs) in the following 5 main sections:

1. School information and policies/class information, e.g. information about the school, class routines, timetable.
2. Medium term plans, e.g. grid of teaching themes, evidence of research to support teaching, materials to support developing subject knowledge.
3. Week by week plans, e.g. weekly timetable, weekly plans, individual lesson plans.
4. Assessment and Record Keeping, e.g. range finders, monitoring records, records of four profiled children (PICLES).
5. Professional development, e.g. previous placement report, weekly review and target setting records, mentor/university tutor feedback from observations.

Assessment: criteria and report

Up until now, we have been using two different assessment models. Our hope is that in the future, once we all get more familiar with our different assessment models, although both with very similar qualitative elements, we would be able to use a common model or to adapt one of them for both institutions. What is important is to realise the capital importance of completing the assessment documents for each one of the students. They are an indispensable training tool and not just a mere administrative task. The observation-based reports are read by the students and they play an important role in their academic and professional future. In our *International Guide for Placement Abroad in Primary Schools* (2006) we have offered a model of observation and of a report already completed in order to facilitate the tutors' tasks. The assessment documents offered are different for the students from the two different countries to respect both training models but they do not necessarily exclude each other, they rather complement each other.

3. Conclusion

The path taken up until now allows for a certain optimism with respect to the new challenges awaiting us. Among these are the following: making the linguistic and cultural experience a central component in teacher training; fostering the role of university students as true cultural ambassadors; promoting ever greater links between the host schools of both countries through the exchange of material, videoconferencing, e-correspondence, visits, etc.; favouring the formal "twinning" of schools in order to create, from the school, a greater and better European citizenship; encouraging the design of harmonized school programmes among practice schools in both countries; extending integrated teaching or content-based programmes in foreign languages and among the schools involved in both countries; broadening the network of links with other primary schools beyond the specific programme of the International Practicum through the Comenius programme or others. In the area of teacher training, another big challenge would be to jointly develop school teaching modules, pre-service and in-service training programmes, and educational materials, etc. All of these possibilities clearly show that the exchange programme for international practice teaching that is the

subject of the guide of which we have offered a synthesis is only the tip of the iceberg and that growing levels of cooperation can be channelled through it. This in itself is already proving to be of immense value to all: children, students, form teachers, individual school administrations, university educators and local, regional and national education authorities.

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