

# EDUCATION ON VALUES AND IN-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING: DESIGNING, IMPLEMENTING AND EVALUATING TEACHING MATERIALS FOR THE TEACHING OF CROSS-CURRICULAR THEMES IN THE ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS<sup>1</sup>

M<sup>a</sup> Teresa Rodríguez  
Asesora de Lenguas Extranjeras  
Centro de Profesores y Recursos de Oviedo

## Foreword

The aim of this paper is to set forward the methodological principles and organisational bases designed in the Comenius 3.2 E.C. (European Community Project, Socrates Programme) *"Formación del profesorado para la innovación en regiones en transformación"*, which was co-ordinated by the teacher training institution, Centro de Profesores y Recursos de Oviedo (CPR). These principles have been implemented in some of the activities that take place in the Foreign Language Department of this Institution.

I selected this specific teacher training activity because I found it most representative of the *innovation principle* sustained in the E.C.P., as it has motivated a group of Foreign Language teachers and a teacher trainer to organise their own training activity, taking into account the following facts:

- a) *Their school contexts* (teachers and students beliefs and demands on the teaching and learning of Educational Values through Cross-Curricular Themes, the presentation and treatment of values in current text books, etc.);
- b) *The learning and teaching needs* of the members of the group.

c) The importance of *involving teachers in education research and self-directed learning by means of:*

- relating theory and practice;
- encouraging teachers to be critical towards values that appear in text books, either in a explicit or implicit way;
- helping teachers to develop their own teaching materials o supplement text books.

The data collection, outcomes and final products presented here were autonomously designed and undertaken by the Working Group.

## Defining the Teacher Training Activity and subsequent action principles

### Training needs and priorities

#### Context and teacher-training needs

I would like to start by emphasising our specific Asturian teacher training context, as it is widely accepted in the ethnography of education that cultural variations determine attitudes towards learning, and particularly to autonomy and self-direction in education (Benson & Voller, 97; Marcelo, 1992; Ribé, 1994; Richards and Lockhart, 1994; Riley 1988; Saville-Troike, 1982).

I had gathered data for teacher training needs in educational values in different teacher training activities during the last two years previous to the starting of the IC Project. Some teachers had even asked for specific training on the topic, due to the requirements of the Education Reform Act (L.O G.S.E, 1990 ).

Many Foreign Languages Teachers of Secondary Education believe that a Foreign Language can be taught through Cross Curricular Themes, as required by the L.O.G.S.E., though few of them actually tried it. Nevertheless, students' attitudes and behaviour in schools often proved the need to delve into the matter of educational values.

A third important contextual fact related to the Teacher Training policy sustained over the last few years, which has generally conditioned teachers' attitudes towards effective teacher training in a rather negative way.

For these reasons many teachers have demanded solutions to solve their school problems, but very few were ready to work on reflective teacher training activities.

### **Criteria for the selection of the training needs**

- The L.O.G.S.E which explicitly prescribe the following Cross Curricular Themes: Moral and Civic Education; Peace Education; Education for Equal Opportunities; Environmental Education; Health and Sex Education; Traffic Education and Consumerism Education.
- The fact that in other European countries similar Cross-Curricular Themes are also included in the compulsory School Curriculum.
- The actual Asturian school context, in which Secondary School children tend to present cases of irresponsibility or non-democratic behaviour.
- The observation that English Foreign Language Textbooks used in Spain did not seem to deal with Cross Curricular Themes with an educational perspective.

### **Priority lines to ensure innovation**

- The type of teacher training activity selected: a Working Group whose members define and set their work objectives, final products and outcomes, timetable and work methodology.
- The adoption of a teacher centred approach which implied that the members of the Group should work in a collaborative, democratic and autonomous way. They should also organise their own planning of teacher education according to the teaching needs they experienced, while giving lessons in their schools (personal and contextual needs). We thought that by adopting this model, a teacher could become a sort of researcher who "generates hypotheses about teaching from the experience of teaching, and encourages teachers to use this research to make their teaching more competent"(Hopkins, 1995).
- The organization and type of activities carried out in the Working Group. These followed a kind of action research model: Identification of a social need; action plan; reflection and revision of the plan.
- The use of New Technologies of communication (Internet) to get "authentic materials" on Cross-Curricular Themes in the English language

### **Design of the Teacher Training Activity**

- Type of Teacher-Training Activity: Working Group<sub>2</sub>  
—Members: 6 (5 English Secondary School Teachers and 1 Teacher Trainer).

- Working schedule:* about 80 hours a year (2,5 hours meetings every fortnight plus personal work). Duration of the project: 3 years.
- Aims:* to explore the possibility of teaching Cross curricular Themes through English Foreign Language in Secondary Education and to design, implement and evaluate a set of teaching materials for such a purpose.

### Types of contents

Working out the possibilities for implementing ordinary School Contents of English Foreign Language Subject (oral communication; written Communication; language learning and grammar awareness and social/cultural dimension) the Cross-Curricular Themes (Moral and Civic Education; Peace Education; Education for the Equal Opportunities; Environmental Education; Health and Sex Education; Traffic Education and Consumerism Education) in English Foreign Language Classes in Secondary Education (E.S.O.).

### Contextualisation of contents

Cross-curricular contents were integrated in English Foreign Language lessons mainly through attitudinal and conceptual contents and ordinary language activities carried out in a task-based and reflective approach.

### Training and educational strategies

Through collaborative, democratic and autonomous manner of dealing with the following activities:

- To achieve specific Group education on the topic of Cross-Curricular Themes and Values in Education. For this purpose the members of the Group went through several pieces of outstanding literature, published by the Ministry of Education and other educational institutions.
- To analyse the treatment of Cross-Curricular themes in five English Foreign Language textbooks.
- To analyse the school context where each teacher works. This was done through personal observation and through questionnaires passed to other teachers' colleagues and to students. The questions were posed to detect their interest and knowledge about Cross-Curricular Themes (C.C.T.).
- To gather a wide selection of texts, "authentic materials" or documents, in

English to teach C.C.T.

- To design teaching activities to be implemented in the English Foreign Language Lesson.
- To experiment and to evaluate the feasibility of the teaching materials and revise or reformulate them when necessary.
- To use N.T. (internet) to get "authentic materials" on the Cross-Curricular Themes.

### Criteria for the selection of the strategies

The Working Group decided on the learning and working strategies they thought suitable for them, and that would help them to acquire the aims of the project. Teacher training strategies were selected if they proved useful:

- To implicate all the members of the Working Group in the process of autonomous learning, personal growth and collaborative learning.
- To report intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (the desire to learn and gain new insights in the field we were working with and the desire to analyse teaching materials, to design and produce new ones and to implement and evaluate them).

### Evaluation

Principles and evaluation criteria were also agreed on in the Group, and they correspond to the criteria of innovation, context adequacy, design of the activity, development and to the results and outcomes of the Working Group. Quantitative (questionnaires and grids) and qualitative (group reflection, minutes, diaries) evaluation was carried out.

The following evaluation instruments and activities were agreed on and used throughout the process and at the end of the Teacher Training activity:

- Attendance and personal and group reflection during the working sessions of the Group were reflected in the *Minutes*, and taken down by the teacher co-ordinator.
- Teaching reflections and incidences during the implementation of the materials were noted in each teacher's diaries or agendas.
- Questionnaires were passed to other school teachers and to students to elicit the general knowledge and expectations on the teaching of Cross-Curricular Themes and on values in education.

- The analysis of the treatment of Cross Curricular Themes in some English Foreign Language text books. Results were recorded in grids and a final report was written on the results.
- The outcomes and products :
  - ✓ The book: *Los Temas Transversales en la clase de Inglés de Secundaria*.
  - ✓ The implementation of some of the activities of the book, the evaluation of its teaching/learning possibilities and the revision of them if necessary. The instruments used in this evaluation were: questionnaires, filled in by students and by the teachers, plus a report written by each teacher who implemented the teaching materials.

## Conclusions

Though I am aware of the limitations of this work, the following conclusions were made in the Working Group at the Final Evaluation of the teacher training activity:

- a) The activity design and structure proved to be adequate for Teacher Training, and three aspects of it received special consideration: Context adequacy, innovation and coherence in the evaluation.
- b) Teachers and teacher trainer develop intrinsic motivation and positive attitudes towards autonomous learning and self-directed education when we reflect upon what and how we teach and relate theory with practice. Moreover, teachers become aware that they are able to organise their training activity to benefit their teaching practice.
- c) They realised that effective teacher training takes place through reflective and active observation, experimentation and evaluation.
- d) In social contexts where educational reforms and changes have taken place, (e.g. LOGSE in Spain) it is necessary to provide teachers with Teacher Training Activities that promote security and self-esteem. This helps them to avoid a certain insecurity, "fears" and resistance to educational changes.
- e) To foster learners towards becoming autonomous, we trainers/teachers, must adopt a non interventionist and humanist role, letting them be the centre of their training, supplying training materials and activities and being ready to support them if necessary.
- f) Teachers who experienced self-directed training are likely to reproduce the same attitudes and skills in their classrooms. Some of the strategies learnt by the Working Group on autonomous and co-operative learning were put into practice in their classrooms, as can be noticed in the book activities

- designed by the Group.
- g) In relation to the teaching of values. The Group experienced the importance – and the possibility- of dealing with Cross-Curricular Themes while teaching a Foreign Language. They became very much aware of the truth of the old saying: "teach what you preach", as values in education are transmitted rather than taught.
  - h) Teachers and the teacher trainer became especially motivated in the Working Group and dedicated more time to it than was previously planned. There were good reasons for doing so, but one of the most important was due to the fact of being part of a European project. It was extremely rewarding for all to experience that we were able to produce our own teaching materials, and that using them in class proved to have a positive teaching and learning effect.

## References

- Benson, Ph. & Voller, P. (eds) (1997). *Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning*. London: Longman.
- Candy, Ph. (1991). *Self-direction for Lifelong Learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Carr, W. y Kemmis S., and (1983) *Becoming Critical: Knowing Through Action Research*. Victoria, Deakin University.
- Contreras Domingo, J. (1994). *Enseñanza, curriculum y profesorado*. Akal
- Elliot, J. (1993). *El cambio educativo desde la investigación-acción*. Ed. Morata.
- Holec, H. ed. (1988). *Autonomy and Self-directed Learning: Present Fields of Application*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Hopkins, D. (1985). *A teacher's Guide to Classroom Research*. London: Open University Press.
- Kemmis, S. & McTaggart (1988). *The Action Research Planner*. 3rd. Edit. Deaking University Press.
- Little, D. (1991). *Learner Autonomy 1: Definitions, Issues and Problems*. Dublin: Authentic.
- Richards, J.C. and Lockhart, CH. (1994). *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms*. Cambridge: C.U.P.
- Riley, Ph. (1988). "The Ethnography of Autonomy" in *Individualization and Autonomy in Language Learning*, ELT Documents, 131. Modern English Publications in association with the British Council.
- Rodríguez Suárez, M.T. et al. (1999). *Los Temas Transversales en la clase de Inglés de Secundaria*. Propuestas diácticas y materiales para el aula. Ed. Centro de profesores y recursos de Oviedo.

M<sup>a</sup> Teresa Rodríguez

McKernan, J. (1999). *Investigación-acción y curriculum*. Ed. Morata.

Schon, D. (1987). *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. New York: Jossey-Bass

Stenhouse, L. (1981). *Investigación y desarrollo del curriculum*. Madrid. Ed. Morata.

Widdowson, H.G. (1990). *Aspects of Language Teaching*. London: Cambridge University Press.

## Notes

1. Paper presented in Comenius 3.2 ES-41168 Course "Innovación en la Formación inicial y permanente del profesorado en regiones afectadas por cambios socio-económicos"