

The cases: Embedding and dissemination

Case 19: The English Language Teachers’ Association (ELTA) project for newly-qualified teachers in Azerbaijan

Sue Leather

The project

The British Council ELTA project aimed to address the needs of newly qualified secondary school teachers of English in a number of countries in southern Europe and the Balkans. It was originally targeted at Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Armenia, Romania, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Macedonia. However, though some of the research into the needs of teachers was done in Armenia and Greece, as well as other countries in the region, only four countries eventually took part in the full project. Those countries were Romania, where the project was ‘owned’, Georgia, Macedonia, and Azerbaijan. The project was initiated in 2005 and handed over to local partners in April 2008.

The perceived need at the outset of the project was that newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in these contexts were ill-equipped by their university education and pre-service training for working as teachers in schools. Most of their training was academic in nature, and little attention was given to their needs in terms of dealing with the practicalities of working with pupils or supporting the teachers as they settled into their positions in schools. The goal of the project, therefore, was not only to provide effective training for the NQTs, but also to provide the means, through a flexible, self-access resource pack, to support them in-service.

The project included research into the needs of NQTs in the countries involved in the project, the development of the resource pack for them, trainer training, and delivery of the training to the teachers by local trainers.

The project today

In Azerbaijan, about 500 newly qualified teachers have benefited directly from training since the project started. A further 100 have benefited indirectly by cascade training. In 2011, the project is still going strong in Baku, where the number of NQTs who are eager to take part in the training has never declined. The demand is also strong in the regions, though lack of material support has meant that it is

not delivered face to face there, much to the disappointment of AzETA (Azerbaijani English Teachers' Association). This brings to the fore a common dilemma in change projects, namely insufficient funding fully to carry the project forward in the medium to longer term, once initial donor funding is no longer available. In this way, it could be said that the project has not fully embedded, though AzETA do at the very least have an effective continuing course 'product' that they can present to possible future funders.

Stage – embedding and dissemination

In this case study, I will look at the embedding and dissemination stage of the project, particularly at the stage where British Council funding ended and the project was handed over to local partners. I will examine factors which led to successful embedding and dissemination in one specific context – Azerbaijan – focusing specifically on the factors that led to success.

Experiences and issues which I consider to be of interest or importance will include: matching of project aims and local context; the nature of the target group; suitability of materials; effective partnering; processes and procedures, and leadership and management. I will include an update of the project in Azerbaijan today.

Story

Matching of project aims and context

An important factor in the successful embedding and dissemination of the project in Azerbaijan was the effective matching of project aims and context. The feeling among key participants from both the British Council Azerbaijan and the main partner, the local Azerbaijani English Teachers' Association, is that the project addressed, and continues to address, a real need in the local context. The British Council's in-country ELT consultant, who worked alongside the programmes manager on the project, described pre-service training for teachers in Azerbaijan as being based on the old Soviet model. This makes it top heavy with theory and very light on the practical issues of teaching and up-to-date interactive methodology. The British Council's project manager, initially ELT country co-ordinator for the project, suggested that the main challenges for NQTs in Azerbaijan are lack of resources, modern teaching methodology, managing the classroom, and lack of confidence. The project aimed to address all these factors through highly practical training and through the resource pack. According to AzETA and the British Council, there are about 200 NQTs per annum graduating from universities in Azerbaijan, and they all continue to be in need of the training and the resource pack. This has clearly made the embedding of the project easier.

Target group

Another reason that may have led to successful embedding has been the members of the target group themselves. In *Planning for Educational Change*, Martin Wedell points out that one of the main reasons why educational changes fail is that 'the change causes teachers to worry, because it expects them to use new practices that require a different classroom management style' (Wedell 2009: 45). By their

very nature, the teachers in the target group had very little classroom experience anyway and were arguably more open to change than teachers who had been teaching in a particular way for many years. While these NQTs still had to fit in with their school cultures to an extent, their youth and relative lack of experience may well have made them more open to change.

Choice of partner

An additional factor which was critical for the effective embedding and dissemination of the project was choice of partner. The key partner for the project was chosen by competitive interview. Before the project started, the British Council Azerbaijan already had well-established links with the local Teachers' Association, AzETA. It therefore seemed natural to choose AzETA as key partner for the project, especially since it had, as the British Council ELT consultant said, 'the capacity and the ability to deliver'. Local Departments of Education and the Ministry of Education were also partners. The British Council made a point of raising the profile of AzETA with the Ministry of Education.

Within AzETA, an NQT Special Interest Group (SIG) was set up during the initial stages of the project. A professional trainer within AzETA was appointed as co-ordinator of the SIG, under the leadership of the TA (Teachers' Association) head. The NQT co-ordinator had a special understanding of the needs of NQTs and was keen to develop training for them. In addition, the co-ordinator and another trainer from AzETA attended trainer training for delivering the project training materials in the summer of 2006, given by the international consultant to the project. The AzETA trainers thus became, in effect, the master trainers of the project. This enabled AzETA to develop ownership early in the life of the project.

Choice of trainers

As I have detailed above, the initial choice of trainers was important. Once these AzETA trainers had received training with the resource pack, the British Council then proceeded to select the regions and trainers to pilot the NQT course in Azerbaijan. In late 2006, a trainer training session was held in the capital, Baku. Six trainers from that group were then selected to work on the project in the three pilot cities of Baku, Sumgayit, and Ganja. The two master trainers worked in Baku, another two trainers worked in Sumgayit, and two more in Ganja. The training was then delivered to NQT participants in instalments between January 2007 and mid-2008, each separate training session being focused on different modules from the resource pack. All the training was closely monitored by the British Council project manager in Baku and two other appointed observers in Sumgayit and Ganja. All observers gave responses to the trainers.

This staged assimilation of trainers and roll-out of the training during the implementation phase seems to have been successful in providing AzETA with a good model of how the training could be managed. The monitoring and responses during the phase of the project which was supported by the British Council also ensured that the Teachers' Association and the trainers felt guided and supported, which made handover much easier.

Resource pack

The resource pack *Steps to Success* was used in the training of trainers and then in the delivery of the training to NQTs. It was written by the international consultant as a result of research done into the needs of NQTs in the region and in consultation with local trainers. In it, there were 12 topics under four main headings: classroom skills and competencies; developing skills; materials and resources; and developing as a teacher. In addition, there were trainers' tips for each topic and other resources such as observation sheets. The intention was for the pack to be user-friendly for both trainers and teachers, with plenty of ready-made activities. Steps to Success was effectively a first-aid kit, offering easy-to-follow solutions to problems that NQTs face in their first year of teaching. As the resource pack was delivered in the regions, evaluation was gathered from participants and incorporated. The practicality of this resource pack went a long way towards making its embedding and dissemination successful.

Leadership and management

As can be seen from the comments above, leadership and management factors contributed greatly to the successful embedding and dissemination of the project in Azerbaijan. From the British Council side, there was careful selection of trainers by the project manager, in consultation with the Teachers' Association, and trainers chosen were diligently and professionally monitored. This monitoring process gave AzETA a clear model of how training was to be organised and provided. Before handover, the British Council and AzETA carefully planned what was to happen and what the objectives were; the British Council leadership also attended all project board meetings. Without this constant support and involved partnership, it is doubtful whether the handover and the period after handover would have been so successful. The effective leadership of AzETA and its NQT Special Interest Group was also key.

A teacher's story

What of the newly qualified teachers themselves? How did they experience the project? Looking at the project through a teacher's eyes will give us insight into how it was received by the target group.

Amalya is a 23 year old newly qualified teacher in a secondary school in Baku. She attended the training which was held every Saturday for 12 weeks in the AzETA office at Baku Slavic University, starting November 2008.

The topic of the first session was 'Managing your classroom and your students'. In the session, she was able to discuss with her trainer and colleagues some of the difficult issues that arise for young teachers in state secondary schools. One of the most challenging problems is how to control teenagers in class, as there is not much age difference between teacher and students. There were a lot of good discussions on that topic, and Amalya found it a great relief to learn that she wasn't the only teacher with discipline problems. She also found it fascinating to meet colleagues from different institutions in Baku.

The second session of the training was on ‘Planning lessons and courses’. At university, Amalya had found lesson planning boring, but here she discovered how crucial producing a good lesson plan was to her work. She also experienced ‘micro-teaching’.

The next topic was ‘Grammar and vocabulary presentation, and practice issues’. In that session, she picked up some fresh and exciting ways of presenting grammar. She also learnt about how to use lead-ins effectively, to get students ready to learn.

Further topics included teaching the four skills, teaching about culture, using visual aids, and the important topic of assessment. The final part of the course was about professional development. Here, Amalya and the other participants discussed how to develop as teachers and how they could support one another once the course was finished.

During the course, Amalya gave three workshops for other teachers in her school, telling them about the new ideas she was learning. She found that very stimulating, as it was her first experience of running a workshop for teachers.

Overall, Amalya felt that she had learnt a lot from the course. Perhaps the most important thing, she felt, was that it was possible to make training sessions – and lessons – both hard work and fun. She was also very happy about how practical everything was. She was able to try out ideas and activities immediately with her students.

Lessons

There are a number of lessons that emerge from this brief study of the embedding and dissemination stage of the ELTA project for newly qualified teachers. They are:

1. *The project needs to meet a real need in the local context.* Clearly, making sure that the project aims are suited to the context is crucial. In the case of the project in Azerbaijan, the extensive research and consultation that took place before project initiation made sure that this was the case.
2. *The right partner needs to be chosen to take the project forward.* AzETA proved to be the ideal partner to take the project forward. It already had professional trainers, provincial branches, and a desire to address the needs of NQTs in the country. Crucially, also, the project seemed to fill a need already identified within AzETA.
3. *The key partner(s) must develop ownership early in the initiation stage of the project.* AzETA set up a Special Interest Group for NQTs early in the life of the project. Trainers were also involved at an early stage and became the master trainers of the project. The communication between the British Council and AzETA seems to have been very good, enabling ownership from the outset.

4. *The project resources must be well suited to the real needs of the target group.* The Steps to Success resource pack proved to be very popular with the target group because of its user-friendliness and highly practical nature. It was well suited to the needs of the participants, largely because it was based on extensive research and consultation.
5. *There must be a good management model of how to deliver the project.* The way that the project implementation was handled by British Council managers showed a good, principled approach to training delivery. There was an effective monitoring and reports system. All this gave a good model to local partners for the delivery, monitoring, and evaluation of training, which, in turn, made dissemination more effective.

Case 20:

Embedding change in state education systems in Brazil: The Paraná ELT project

Christopher Palmer

The project

The Paraná ELT project ran from 1999 to 2002, with the British Council being invited to manage this ambitious three-year project at the request of the State Secretary of Education, State of Paraná, Brazil, with funding coming from the World Bank. The focus was on improving the language and teaching skills of teachers of English in the southern Brazilian state of Paraná.

The project had a number of dimensions, including a language improvement programme, a distance learning teacher training programme using resources created by the Open University, a tailor-made internet-based English course, immersion courses at a specialist Teachers University (*Universidade do Professor*), a BBC radio course adapted for local radio, methodology courses in the United Kingdom, a tailor-made programme for the best teachers designed to embed the programme into the educational context of the state education system, and, finally, the formation of local self-help groups.

The progress of each teacher was measured by means of tests from the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) which were administered before and after participation.

The client, the State Government of Paraná, expressed great satisfaction with the outcomes of the project, which succeeded in raising the levels of English language and the teaching capacity of some 2,875 teachers from all parts of the state. The project attracted particular attention for its range of innovations, not least its use of distance learning methodology. Success can be measured in requests from other subject areas for a similar programme, requests for replication from other Brazilian states, and the number of papers the project generated, especially from teachers themselves.

Stage – embedding and dissemination

This case study will focus on how the project team attempted to embed the achievements of what became a three-year project into the education system in Paraná and promote its success and possible replication across the country.

Story

The challenge

Every project has to overcome internal and external challenges, and the Paraná project was no exception. These can be divided into two categories: those external to the project and those resulting from the project itself, which I refer to here as internal challenges.

External challenges:

■ Funding

Funding was based on provision of results on a year-by-year basis with the following year's funding only released several months after the start of the year. This created a challenge for planning and continuity.

■ Political uncertainty

There were several periods of political uncertainty in which the very position of the State Secretary of Education was under threat and these had a direct impact on the team and the state teachers.¹

■ Local opposition

Foreign interference in a local issue was an accusation used on several occasions to undermine the integrity of the project. Even amongst some of the partners, there were those who questioned the whole ethos of allowing an organisation such as the British Council to lead a project of this kind, despite their track record.

Notwithstanding the impact of these external factors which threatened the project itself, it was the internal factors which had to be addressed, if lasting impact was to be achieved.

Internal challenges:

■ Low self-esteem amongst teachers

The first challenge was the low expectation of teachers. At the start of the project, language teachers were the only group of teachers not to have benefited from training and access to the resources offered by the Teachers University, the Universidade do Professor in Faxinal do Céu. An initial needs analysis indicated that the language level of teachers was very low and, furthermore, teachers' self-esteem appeared to be at rock bottom. There

¹ In fact the State Secretary of Education lost her job during the second year of the project for a period of several months, only to be reinstated after the Governor could not find an adequate replacement. She was finally dismissed in a political shake-up prior to the elections and was not replaced.

would clearly not be any short-term fixes, and any long-term impact would be dependent on building self-esteem to a level that would allow self-expression and ownership of their own learning (see next point).

■ **Dependency culture**

Making teachers independent learners was the next most challenging task. However, in view of the project's uncertain life expectancy, it was essential to instil the learning skills which we hoped would give teachers the encouragement to pursue their learning with or without a 'project'.

■ **System failures**

Another challenge was the fact that the State Secretary of Education saw the failure of the teachers as being the direct result of failures in the university teacher education system. This was highly disputed by the universities themselves, and it was clear from the outset that no teacher training solution could be either successful or sustainable unless the universities were involved, as the project proved.

■ **Size and reach**

A final challenge facing the project was the problem of size. There were over 4,500 teachers of English spread across a state which is four-fifths of the size of the United Kingdom. To deliver training to them all and give all teachers an equal chance to participate would involve a wide network of delivery partners (universities) and a model largely based on distance learning. Distance learning was relatively new to Brazil, and we had been warned that Brazilian culture, where self-discipline and autonomous learning were not considered common attributes of teachers, was not conducive to such an approach. The project was to prove this a myth.

The response

To meet these challenges the project team focused on a number of strategies:

■ **Feel-good factor**

The feel-good factor was fundamental to addressing the issue of low self-esteem. From day one of the project, when 500 teachers came to the Teachers University to give their views on the training model being envisaged, it was apparent that raising self-esteem would be a significant factor in embedding the benefits. The fact that this project was focusing on state teachers of English for the first time had an immediate impact, but to sustain this impact, both the management team and the delivery partners had important roles to play. Whether through individual study programmes or the shared opportunities in Faxinal do Céu and the United Kingdom, creating a strong group dynamic was fundamental to raising self-esteem and promoting a sense of can-do.

■ **Autonomous learning**

Turning teachers into independent learners is challenging if the pervading culture is one of dependency. The starting point for tackling this had to be the universities and building the skills of the university trainers in managing autonomous learning. This was achieved through a series of workshops.

■ Capacity building of trainers and trainees

Universities had traditionally implemented pre-service and in-service training, but the perception was that this had not been successful. It was not within the Project Manager's remit to delve into the basis of this perception but, as the only training bodies in existence capable of managing teacher training at a state level, it was clear that universities would have to be strengthened if the improvements in teacher education were going to be embedded. Through the creation of a university supply network, building their capacity through a number of trainer training programmes, and involving representatives in the project consultative committee, not only did this allow for much better communication and exchange of skills and knowledge amongst them, but it also enhanced their own sense of worth within the system, in that they were able to influence the development of the regional project directly. In all, the project enhanced their abilities and strengthened their reputation within the state and across Brazil.

■ Developing learning skills

As I have previously mentioned, the question of size and reach was addressed by adopting a distance education approach, with periods of self-study interspersed with fortnightly meetings with tutors, where the focus was less on teaching new content and more on such matters as managing learning and assessing needs, celebrating successes, and dealing with learning problems. The internet and radio English courses also helped to enhance teachers' sense of managing their own learning. Both courses were optional additions which grew in popularity over the life of the project. This brought the twin benefits of making teachers more independent in their learning and less dependent on others for input, and also the building of a sense of self-worth and achievement which would continue well beyond the project itself.

The final countdown

As we approached the third year, it became evident to the management team that the project would not continue beyond three years, with the prospect of a change of government growing increasingly likely. To ensure a positive legacy beyond the short-term gains of better teaching and improvement in student performance, we needed to create the conditions for continued self-development. For this, we needed to identify leaders amongst the teachers who could act as catalysts, co-ordinating local initiatives such as self-help groups, modelling good teaching behaviours, taking the message to the outside world through participation in state and national events, and, most importantly, finding a voice as the English language teachers of Paraná. This would need different structures and types of training to be put in place.

■ Special Interest Groups

With the State Secretary of Education's support, these were established across the state. This allowed teachers to meet and conduct group learning and other activities together. It also helped them plan and engage in professional events at state and regional level².

² Response from teachers (2011) indicated that some of these groups still exist at the time of writing.

■ The textbook project

Teachers consistently said that the textbooks they had were no longer adequate. With the help of publishers, a group of teachers and university lecturers participated in a textbook evaluation project. Although this did not culminate in the purchase of textbooks, the skills acquired by those involved meant they were in a better position to evaluate materials and later choose which resources they wanted to use in their classes³.

■ Pathmakers

The *Pathmakers* programme was designed for a group, largely self selected, who wanted to help make the Paraná ELT project sustainable. The programme specifically addressed issues of self-esteem, leadership, and action. It was run three times over the final year of the project and was so popular that, by the end, the university teachers were asking to join in – this perhaps representing the final breakdown of barriers between the perceived ‘carriers’ of knowledge, in this case, universities, and the ‘consumers of knowledge’, in this case, the teacher-learners. It was no surprise that several of these teachers subsequently gave papers at conferences, including one who gave a joint presentation with the author at the annual IATEFL Conference in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, some of these teachers went on to do Masters degrees, join university departments, write articles for journals, and, in an ultimate act of self-empowerment, write to the incoming State Secretary of Education arguing for the continuation of the project and extolling the benefits that had been gained in its lifetime⁴.

Dissemination and replication

Throughout the life of the project there was widespread interest from neighbouring Brazilian states and further afield. Towards the end, project managers were giving regular presentations at conferences and to state governments. These culminated in a presentation to all state ministers of education. This resulted in direct interest from the states of Pernambuco, Bahia, Santa Catarina, and Tocantins, where a major project was subsequently conducted.

Lessons

People and relationships

Relationship management is extremely important when dealing with a very complex set of stakeholders and participants, involving institutions, government, individuals, and communities. For all the available technologies, nothing can replace direct human contact when there are major issues to resolve, and investing time in managing relationships is not, as it is often perceived, time wasted, but time gained in achieving your goals.

³ Textbooks were subsequently introduced under the new state government.

⁴ Although the project was not continued under the new government, the new State Secretary of Education stated that it was one of the best he had ever seen managed by an external organisation.

Trust

Trust is extremely important when distances and numbers are great. Building trust is not easily achieved and trust can normally only be developed over time. Fortunately, in this case, the author had been working with the state universities for three years prior to the project, which allowed more immediate acceptance. Gaining the trust of the State Secretary of Education was also important, especially since her initial position was that the programme should not be conducted through the universities, because they were the problem. The team had to earn trust in order to build the space to develop the programme without constant scrutiny⁵. Moreover, the State Secretary of Education also had to convince the teachers⁶.

Empowerment and shared ownership

Concentrating power in the project management team does not promote independence and autonomy, and does little for building trust. It stifles individuals and creates pressure at the centre. By empowering both delivery partners and teachers to take responsibility, confidence and engagement grow and the project is strengthened.

Self-belief and conviction

Without strong self-belief and conviction on the part of project managers and stakeholders, projects are likely to fail. Self-belief and conviction will carry project teams through adversity and take partners, sponsors, and participants (teachers) along with them.

Emotional intelligence

Systems and planning are extremely important, as I have outlined above, but dependence on them will not guarantee success. The use of emotional intelligence, or rather emotional leadership, and the ability to respond sensitively to situations and particularly to people are ultimately what makes a difference.

I will leave the final word to the former State Secretary of Education, Alcyone Saliba, who made improvement in the quality of English language teaching the flagship project of her mandate and who, the author understands, to this day continues to receive e-mails in English from teachers extolling the virtues of the programme:

If I ever had the opportunity again, not only would I set up the ESL programme with a few improvements; I would also use that design/approach for other teaching areas, starting with (Portuguese) language.

(Personal communication 2011)

⁵ The fact that meetings between the Project Manager and the State Secretary of Education became more infrequent was evidence of the growing confidence and trust in the programme. 'I know how well things are going: I hear it from the teachers every time I speak to them, because they now speak to me in English' (the State Secretary of Education).

⁶ When the project was proposed to 500 teachers at the first consultation meeting, one of the first questions was: 'Can we really believe you?'

Acknowledgements

My thanks go to everyone involved in the ELT project in Paraná who provided opinion on its legacy, particularly my former colleagues, Vanessa Andreotti, Ines Carnielleto, Thaisa Andrade, and Maria Tognato, and state teachers such as Joina Almeida, who remain living proof of everything the project sought to achieve. I would also like to thank Alcyone Saliba, former State Secretary of Education for Paraná, for having the vision in the first place and lastly my British Council colleagues, Adrian Odell and Michael Houten, who played their own parts in the success of the project.

Case 21: An early years bilingual schools project: The Spanish experience

Teresa Reilly

The project

In 1996, the Spanish Ministry of Education, in partnership with the British Council, introduced a pilot *Early Bilingual Education Project* (EBEP) in 44 state schools throughout Spain. 15 years later, there are 120 primary and secondary schools participating in the project, with a total of 30,000 pupils aged between 3 and 16. The model developed through the project also serves as an example of good practice for regional governments in Spain which are developing similar programmes. With close to 1,000,000 pupils in state schools throughout the country studying a form of bilingual education, a number of language professionals consider that the approach is bringing about a transformation in language education in the country and challenging existing perceptions of how children may best learn a foreign language.

Bilingual education

There is considerable debate globally on what constitutes a 'bilingual' person: in the Spanish EBEP, the outcomes specify that, by the age of 16, pupils are proficient, literate English second language users, confidently able to communicate with age-appropriate native and non-native audiences. In addition, in subject areas taught in English such as science and geography, it is expected that pupils will achieve the same results as their monolingual peers. And finally, though they have had less exposure to teaching in Spanish, their competence in L1 (first language) will be equal to those of their monolingually educated counterparts.

It is worth noting that the project was designed with a whole-school approach, with 40 per cent of time dedicated to teaching through English. There is no selection of pupils in primary schools: the children, all from state schools and many from a background of social or economic challenge, continue through nursery school to primary and on to secondary.

Stage – embedding and dissemination

EBEP Spain has recently completed a three-year independent evaluation study directed by Professor Richard Johnstone and jointly funded by the two major stakeholders, the Spanish Ministry of Education and the British Council.

The task of the evaluation team was to collect high-quality evidence through classroom observations, reports, and questionnaires in order to learn whether the project was achieving its objectives. The evaluation itself had three aims agreed with the stakeholders. The principle aim was to provide research-based evidence of pupils' language proficiency as demonstrated through the study of subject areas and their achievements in Spanish. The findings in the report provide examples of how the project aims with regard to language proficiency are being achieved and often superceded. The second aim was to gather evidence within the project, at school and classroom level and at project administration level, which would provide examples of good practice leading to success. This case study highlights the major societal and provision factors identified as part of the second aim which have contributed to successful project embedding.

Story

Societal Factors – political will and parental demand

There were a number of good reasons for the Spanish Ministry of Education to adopt a new approach to the teaching of English. There is a widely held conviction in Spain that competency in English is of growing importance in permitting young citizens to take their place, academically and professionally, in an increasingly global world. In addition, there has been dissatisfaction with levels of English at the end of secondary education, in spite of the fact that teaching a foreign language to children from the age of eight has been mandatory since 1992. This political will for change, continuing over the 15 years of the project and accommodating changes of government, and the demand from parents of children in state education for a bilingual approach, have been instrumental in the long-term embedding and dissemination of the project. This might best be appreciated by noting that the impact of the initial EBEP has led to a demand from parents for extended provision of early bilingual education in state schools: most regional Ministries of Education in Spain, which have had devolved responsibility for the management of education since 2000, have now established similar models of EBEPs.

Provision Factors – strong partnership between the Ministry of Education and the British Council

The project was set up with an agreed high-level strategy document stating the roles and duties of each partner, and the expected outcomes, and stressing the need for sufficient time for the project to embed itself bottom-up from primary and then into secondary schools, before expecting the impact to become manifest.

A Joint Ministry/British Council steering committee, convening annually, has overall responsibility for strategy decisions. This board, in turn, appoints two project managers, one from each organisation. They are members of the steering committee and advise on strategy decisions using the knowledge they have acquired from working in both strategic and management roles. Their roles include:

- management of the jointly allocated budget
- analysis of needs and outcomes, and taking appropriate decisions on project planning, development, and training

- co-operation and collaboration with regional governments in Spain, international examination boards, research and evaluation teams, universities, teacher trainers, and school management teams
- facilitation of continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers
- leading on curriculum design and implementation
- recruitment of supernumerary teachers
- website development and production of an annual magazine *Hand in Hand*.

Provision Factors – continuity and commitment

For schools, this is not an opt-in/opt-out programme. Schools put themselves forward voluntarily, but if accepted, they had to commit to remain for the duration of the programme: the full impact of an EBEP approach would not necessarily be apparent until the second or third cohorts had completed their tertiary education. Before a school was accepted, meetings with the two project managers were held with all parties involved: head teachers, Spanish and English teachers, inspectors, and parents were all expected to commit to supporting the initiative during the nine years from nursery school through to the end of primary. Extensive information was provided on project implications and guidelines were supplied for parents. In addition, at the time the project was established, there was agreement with the participating secondary schools that the pupils from the primary schools would continue to receive a bilingual education. Finally, two evaluation studies were built into the planning, and there was an agreement that pupils aged 16 would be prepared for specific IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) examinations.

Provision Factors – integrated curriculum

A significant amount of time (40 per cent) is allocated to learning through English from the age of three, in a number of academic subjects such as geography, science, and history, in addition to English language and literacy. There were initial concerns from school management and parents as to what exactly the children would be studying in each language and how standards of Spanish were to be maintained: these concerns were highlighted in an early evaluation study (Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sport and British Council 2000). The report emphasised that teachers were doing excellent work, that the standards of the first cohort (seven and eight-year-olds) were good in both languages, but that too much was being expected from teachers by requiring them constantly to adapt the existing Spanish curriculum to meet the demands of a bilingual classroom.

The recommendation of the evaluation team resulted in the production of special curricula approved by the Ministry of Education (Boletín Oficial del Estado 2000) and designed in three stages: nursery school, primary, and secondary. One of the strengths of the various curricula is that, though shaped by the Ministry of Education and the British Council, they draw very largely on the experience and expertise of classroom practitioners, Spanish and English teachers, from the project schools. Evidence gathered from classroom research and observation and the

Evaluation Report (Dobson, Pérez Murillo, and Johnstone 2010) highlights the fact that the curriculum is an essential tool in providing confidence that standards are being maintained in the 120 schools.

Space does not permit a detailed analysis of the curriculum, but it is worth noting that a basic principle has been the emphasis on the early introduction of reading and writing, and a focus in all three stages on the development of authentic literacy skills to promote an underlying competence in language acquisition and learning of subject knowledge, and an increasing capacity for reflective skills.

Provision Factors – teacher provision and continuous professional development (CPD)

When the project was established in 1996, Spanish teachers in primary schools generally had a relatively low level of competence in English. The decision was therefore taken to recruit several native-speaker/Spanish bilingual primary school teachers (not EFL teachers) per school to deliver the English part of the curriculum.

However, a school project which depends solely on the 'foreign expert' would be unsustainable, financially and culturally: for the 15 years of the project there has been a focus on quality CPD for Spanish teachers teaching through English. The courses are not a reflection on teachers' skills, focusing rather on an awareness that the bilingual classroom requires a different mental framework and methodological approach that complements their skills and helps overcome difficulties. Support needs to be continuing: there is often a mismatch between the expectations of a teacher before teaching in a bilingual environment and the reality of the classroom. Overcoming the initial conviction that they were not good enough and that only the native-speaker teacher could teach literacy and subjects in English has been a challenge, but Spanish teachers of English have gradually taken on more responsibilities for teaching, mentoring, and now teacher training within the project, and often beyond.

The blend of supernumerary teachers and Spanish teachers has brought benefits to the schools, not the least of which is the added dimension of other cultures and teaching experiences. This considerably enriches the lives of the children and the culture of the schools and local communities.

Lessons

There is no single model of bilingual education, but what successful models have in common is that they illustrate an understanding of the underlying principles of bilingual education and are applied and evaluated appropriately in their own particular contexts. This section of the study focuses on key learning points in the Spanish project which policy developers might find useful when designing similar projects.

Key stakeholder partnerships, long-term political buy-in, commitment to strategic change, and good ground-level management and support are essential, non-negotiable components.

Understanding the underlying principles of early bilingual education is essential: both languages are of equal importance and the focus is on education through the medium of English, not the teaching of a foreign language as a subject. Stakeholders, especially politicians and parents, must recognise that patience is required, that education in two languages is a long process, and that traditional EFL tests may not be the most effective way of reflecting the benefits and impact of the bilingual classroom and bilingual child.

The curriculum is a fundamental standardisation tool. No two projects will develop in the same way and, for some situations, a special curriculum may not be an option. However, in the EBEP, all parties agree that, once the curriculum was in place with a clear focus on the importance of literacy, standards rose, inspectors and parents were reassured, and teachers felt they had the tools to achieve results. The curriculum motivates and challenges, encourages continuity, collaboration, and networking, and addresses issues such as diversity and assessment.

Sufficient and continuing funding needs to be secured for continuing teacher support. Teachers participating in such innovative projects deserve support in understanding how the underlying principles of bilingual education impact on their classroom practice: they need time to develop appropriate resources, reflect on their practice, carry out classroom research projects, and network and attend training courses, meetings, and conferences.

An external evaluation process should be built in at agreed stages of the project, the results of which should encourage further sustainable implementation/ dissemination.

Conclusion

There are issues within the bilingual project in Spain which remain to be resolved, not least of which is gaining official recognition at European level for the achievements in education of young bilinguals. There is also the challenge of addressing the needs of the 10 per cent of pupils whom the evaluation study (Dobson et al. op.cit.) identifies as not clearly benefitting from a bilingual approach. There is, however, convincing evidence that, for the other 90 per cent, the objectives of providing an enriched model of education in two languages are being delivered within the model.

It is hoped, through this short case study, that the points raised and challenges overcome in the EBEP project may be of interest to educational institutions seeking sustainable ways to raise standards in language teaching in the early stages of education.