

11 Impact beyond the project: exploring engagement in proPIC Europa and potential lasting impact on teaching studies and professional development

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1. Introduction

As seen in previous chapters, student involvement in the proPIC Europa project differed at each partner university. For some, engagement rewarded students with formal credits towards a Master's programme. For others, the project offered an opportunity to experience another education system and broaden their knowledge of mobile technologies in the language learning classroom. In this chapter, we will examine a sample of students from Newcastle University (UNEW), UK, and the University of Borås (HB), Sweden, to see if they observed an impact on their studies, their teaching careers, and/or their mindset towards language learning and teaching, after the completion of the project.

2. Background

2.1. UNEW

At UNEW, student involvement in the proPIC project was voluntary and not a mandatory component of any degree programme, which meant that students did

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not accrue credits towards their studies. Most, therefore, participated in order to gain an insight into European education systems and for the opportunity to spend a week at a host university. Participants were required to spend their own time on the tasks and activities involved and request time away from their study programmes to attend the face-to-face sessions and the study week (see Schwab & Oesterle, 2022, Chapter 4 this volume).

Although students reported that they enjoyed their experience on the project, it appeared to be difficult for them to take time from their study programmes to attend the face-to-face sessions, and they struggled to understand the rationale behind the use of e-portfolios, as it is not common practice either in their study programmes or in their home countries.

2.2. HB

At HB, student involvement in the proPIC project was voluntary and not a mandatory component of any degree programme, as in Newcastle. The project was instead organised as an extra optional course worth 7.5 credits or as 7.5 credits equivalent to some existing credits in the existing English courses or Swedish as a second language courses for trainee teachers. Experience shows that all students participating chose to take the course as an optional course.

In terms of student participation in the proPIC project, the fact that the programme was run parallel to the students' existing studies was problematic, both in terms of attracting students to join the project as well as retaining them. This is reflected in the number of students completing the project. In Cohort 1, only five students took part in the course and of them only one completed all parts. In Cohort 2, seven students took part with all seven completing all parts of the course. For the third cohort, 11 students joined the project, but due to problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority decided to leave the project prior to the decision being made to cancel the planned study week. Several group meetings had taken place and participants had begun the process of formulating their project ideas.

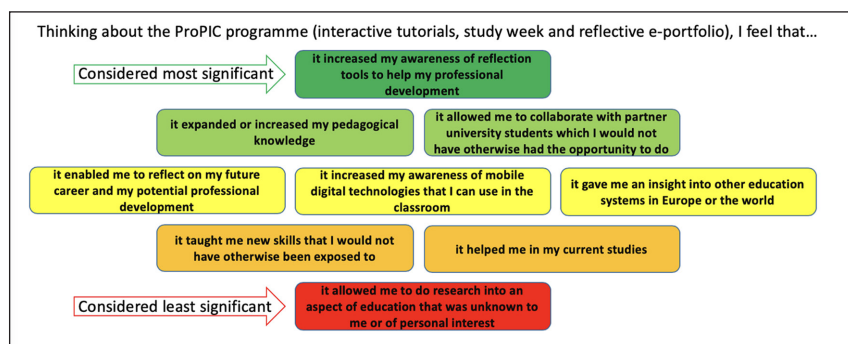
3. Data collection and analysis

One data set was collected from UNEW Cohort 2 students during a face-to-face group debriefing around one month after their participation in the project. Another data set was then collected from HB, in the form of a delayed online questionnaire sent via email to the Swedish second cohort around 14 months after they had attended the transnational study week.

3.1. Diamond 9 Ranking, Cohort 2, UNEW

Feedback was collected from UNEW Cohort 2 after the study week using a Diamond 9 approach, a recognised thinking skills tool usually carried out with nine written statements (Rockett & Percival, 2002). Eight students were given nine statements and asked to rank them in order of agreement, with the one they most agreed with at the top of the diamond, working down to the one they least agreed with. The statements in each diamond were then given a value of one (highest significance) to five (lowest significance) depending on the line of the diamond where the student allocated it.

Figure 1. Diamond 9 ranking feedback after final face-to-face session from UNEW Cohort 2 (n=8)



The results of the exercise were collated and presented based on the overall rank allocated to each statement. Clark (2012) explains that Diamond 9 ranking

requires participants to “make explicit the over-arching relationships by which they organise knowledge, thus making their understandings available for scrutiny and comparison” (p. 223). The results of this ranking exercise are shown in the Diamond 9 above (Figure 1).

3.2. Online survey – Likert scale statements, Cohort 2, HB

An online survey was emailed to the second cohort students from HB, consisting of two sections. Firstly, students used a five-point Likert scale to respond to the nine statements used with the UNEW Cohort 2 students. This was intended to align to the Diamond 9 method, though the process of arranging the statements was missing. Unfortunately, only three responses were received due to some students having completed their course and moved on. The Likert scale responses were analysed in the same manner as in a Diamond 9 approach, arranging the statements which had been accorded the highest significance in the top rung, and those with the least significance at the bottom. As there were fewer responses (n=3), some statements had equal values and were placed on the same rung. Results are shown below (Figure 2). The two sets of responses were then assigned values and arranged into a final combined Diamond 9. Again, there were several statements which had equal value, and these were assigned to the same rung (Figure 3).

Figure 2. Diamond 9 ranking feedback from online Likert survey from HB Cohort 2 (n=3)

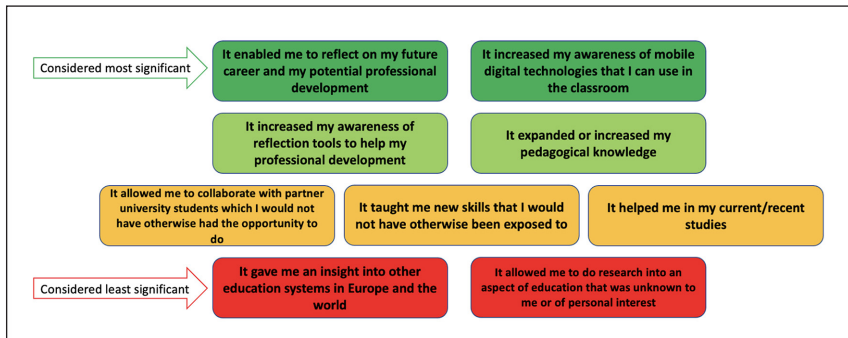
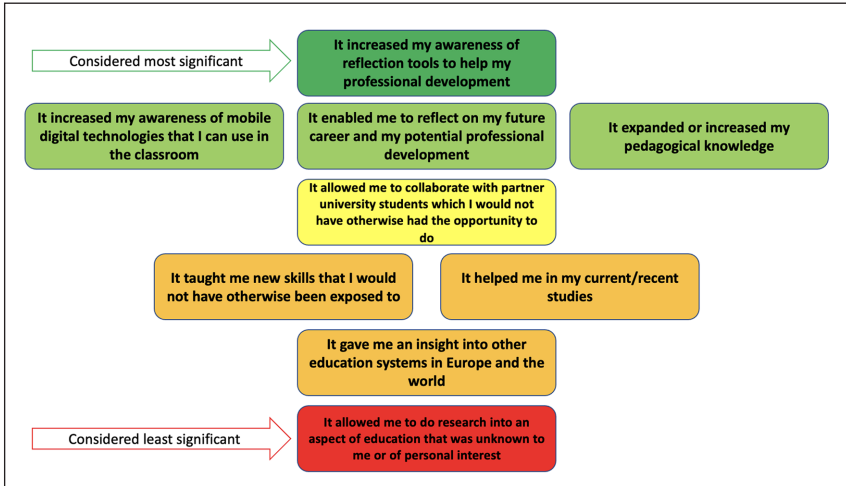


Figure 3. Diamond 9 ranking combined responses from UNEW and HB Cohort 2 (n=11)



The most positive benefits recorded were increased awareness of reflection tools to help professional development; increased awareness of mobile digital technologies; an ability to reflect on future career and potential professional development; and increased pedagogical knowledge. These findings mirror those from the student evaluations (see [Hoinke & Clausen, 2022](#), Chapter 3 this volume).

3.3. Online survey – qualitative responses, Cohort 2, HB

Qualitative data was also collected through questions about the students' experiences of their participation in the project and their perceptions of the lasting impact, which complemented the data collection and analysis discussed in [Schwab and Oesterle \(2022\)](#), Chapter 4 this volume). These responses were analysed using a thematic analysis approach ([Braun & Clarke, 2006](#)), extracting the key statements and arranging them into the themes that arose from the Diamond 9 responses: (1) increased awareness of digital mobile technologies;

(2) reflection on future career and professional development; and (3) expanded or increased pedagogical knowledge. The fourth potential theme, increased awareness of reflection tools to help professional practice, was not apparent in the responses.

3.3.1. Increased awareness of digital mobile technologies

“I am far more confident in using mobile technology in my classroom” (HB Respondent No. 2).

“I am a bit more aware of what different digital tools are available” (HB Respondent No. 3).

“Becoming more acquainted with various digital tools has both increased [my] confidence and knowledge on additional teaching methods” (HB Respondent No. 1).

3.3.2. Reflection on future career and professional development

“The project opened doors to so many opportunities such as travelling to another country, collaboration with students and professors from around the world and exposure to different education forms” (HB Respondent No. 1).

“It made me more confident in my approach” (HB Respondent No. 2).

“I believe the collaboration opportunities that were made during the project will be of great use in my teaching career” (HB Respondent No. 1).

“The best and lasting impact that I will take with me from the propIC project is all of the new friends and connections I have made during the process” (HB Respondent No. 1).

3.3.3. *Expanded or increased pedagogical knowledge*

“My hopes in participating in proPIC were to establish connections with other students and professors from around the world, as well as increase my awareness and confidence in teaching through digital platforms. I can successfully say that I achieved both of these goals” (HB Respondent No. 1).

“I benefited a lot from the course since it broadened [my] perspectives to see and learn how other teachers/schools/systems work” (HB Respondent No. 2).

“The proPIC project has opened my eyes to collaboration opportunities within the teaching profession, both in Sweden and other countries. Working together and exchanging have been successful tools during my studies” (HB Respondent No. 1).

4. Discussion

The Diamond 9 ranking from the two data sets shows four key impacts on the students’ teacher training and professional development.

4.1. Increased awareness of reflection tools to help professional practice

This was not expanded further in the qualitative comments but scored very highly from both cohorts. The proPIC project had a strong focus on developing reflection skills, with students using e-portfolios as a means to externalise their thoughts and share them with others and discussing their learning with fellow trainee teachers both using online platforms and in person during the study week. This awareness of reflection tools includes reflecting on teaching practice, future professional development, digital tools available, and how they can be incorporated in the classroom.

4.2. Increased awareness of digital mobile technologies

Most of the students surveyed scored this highly, and the qualitative comments reflected the perceived importance. Students mentioned increased confidence, awareness, and knowledge of the digital mobile technologies available, and were able to use new technologies during the study week. Combining this with their increased awareness of reflection tools means that they were able to externalise their views and experiences of these digital tools with their fellow trainees and think about how they could implement them in their differing educational environments, particularly if they observed their use in transnational contexts.

4.3. Reflection on their future career and potential professional development

The students talked about the opportunities they had encountered through involvement in the project for transnational collaboration, connection with other trainees, and exposure to other education systems and contexts. All of these experiences enable the students to consider their future career and how they can use their knowledge and skills in their own classroom contexts. This early exposure to a wider variety of experiences than they may have perhaps otherwise had will undoubtedly have an impact on their future professional development, as they mentioned how the project had broadened their perspectives and increased their awareness of the need to improve their skills in terms of the constantly evolving world of teaching and learning.

4.4. Expanded or increased pedagogical knowledge

One key aspect of the proPIC project was that many of the students took part as a voluntary or additional element to their university course. This meant that they appeared to demonstrate increased motivation from the outset, and a willingness to learn from each other, the educators involved, and from the

overall experience. They were therefore open to learning new pedagogical knowledge and developing their skills and were exposed to a wider range of pedagogies than those available purely on their own course. As a result of engaging in the proPIC programme, the interaction students were able to have with educators and peers from other transnational institutions expanded their knowledge and allowed them to demonstrate new skills, learning from the theory they engaged with, but also from the implementation and reflection processes.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the students' responses clearly show the impact that the project had on their studies and their professional development. The students developed skills and acquired knowledge from engaging with the theory, observing and interacting with educational contexts during the study weeks, and using e-portfolios to document and externalise their reflection. This latter point, having the opportunity to develop their reflection skills and increase their awareness of reflection tools available to them, was the most significant impact and is a key aspect of being a teacher. One respondent stated that:

“[participating in proPIC] is an experience and knowledge that I will have with me and mostly that we, as teachers, always have to ‘step up our game’. We cannot teach in the same way we did 20 years ago. We have to be able to reach our students, meet them on their level. This is not levels of highs and lows rather than levels of evolution and development, personally and generally” (HB Respondent No. 2).

Reflecting on their practice, both through reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983), is crucial for teachers, and developing a reflective mindset with positive beliefs, motivation, and self-regulatory abilities (Blömeke & Delaney, 2012) can help a teacher to grow and adapt to educational changes, challenges, and conflicts.

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