



## SUMMARY OF FINAL REPORT SUBMITTED TO BRITISH COUNCIL REGARD INTERNATIONAL JOB SHADOWING OPPORTUNITIES CARRIED OUT IN ESKILSTUNA, SWEDEN 2015 - 2017

The European Development Plan's starting point for the schools involved in the project, was to facilitate opportunities for international job shadowing placements for staff (*with a variety of experience and expertise*) within Swedish schools; providing an insight into another culture and another philosophy operating within an urban environment. For this project to have greater credibility and impact it was important that this was an urban environment facing similar social and economic challenges to those faced by the participants themselves.

This objective I believe was well met within the life of the project. From an urban perspective Birmingham and Eskilstuna mirror each other in many ways. Both were former industrial manufacturing cities that have had to develop a service industry economy, both cities have welcomed significant immigrant communities into their cities. Both are searching to raise aspiration, skills and flexibility in generations to come, in order to continue to grow and sustain themselves as key economic centres moving forward.

This core, helped provide relevance and reference to those engaged within the project; allowing them to contrast differing pedagogical approaches, which they were then able to compare, contrast and take back to their individual institutions.

The focus of that contrast for the participants looked at a comparison of a system with tighter structure and control of education in a micro-climate (e.g. a school institution) against one that placed a greater emphasis on individuality, freedom and choice. This could be seen in school based systems seen as more rigid and hierarchical against a system that had greater social flexibility, centred very much on individual need.

This challenge provided those involved in the process, of self-evaluating their own philosophy and practice in the classroom, against the demands of the school and national curriculum.

The core element of international job shadowing was further enhanced by the focus on both the foundation building blocks of education (through early years practice) and the provision for the needs of the often educationally marginalised; this being seen as the provision of special educational needs and those whose mother language was not native.

Again exposure to differing approaches, enabled participants to self-evaluate and adapt practice, to improve the quality of teaching and learning offered for these key groups and ultimately raise outcomes. In terms of meeting or exceeding expectations I believe it is clear that all staff who were fortunate enough to experience the opportunity Erasmus Plus provided, felt their pedagogy had been challenged and that the quality of what they offered their institutions and children on a day to day basis improved as a result of the Eskilstuna experience.

Participating organisations in this project worked at two levels. There was the organisational and logistical level that the Birmingham Catholic Primary Partnership [BCPP] and Eskilstuna Kommun addressed and then there was the participant level which involved the various institutions in each community.

At an organisational level there is a strong and well established partnership between BCPP and Eskilstuna. This dates back as far as 2005. This meant the dialogue, planning and logistics of organising and facilitating the job shadowing could be carefully planned with a deeper understanding of the schools and their needs brought to bear. This deep partnership enabled participants' needs to



be fully met, delivering high levels of motivation and enthusiasm and the ability to enrich and if necessary adapt any programme to ensure the needs and desires of all participants were fully met.

The participants themselves brought a willingness, an openness and a level of expertise to the programme that enriched the professional experience of all involved. Colleagues gave their time freely, were happy to enter into pedagogical debates and explain the cultural and pedagogical philosophies behind the practice that was being observed. Their professional expertise, their willingness to share and engage and the time they made available ensured all involved felt enriched by the opportunities the project presented.

The choice of receiving organisations again happened on two levels. Initially there was a planning meeting where BCPP and Eskilstuna Kommun discussed the focus and the needs of the bid. This involved BCPP meeting with Eskilstuna Chief Education Officer and their International Development Officer. Here the meetings outlined the focus of the job shadowing opportunities being sought and ensuring there was the ability to meet potential demand.

Once the parameters of the bid were agreed, both organisations went to the schools they represent and recruited participant schools and candidates with the necessary expertise and desire. Following the bid being accepted BCPP then funded an additional visit to Eskilstuna where in further meetings schools and candidates were selected and paired. Availability and time frameworks were negotiated leading to three mobilities being planned over a two year period to ensure there was never any “system overload” and schools in both communities could maximise the impact and opportunity Erasmus provided.

The parameters of the programme addressed the following topics

- Whole school management
- The management of special educational needs within a whole school community
- The development of native language for those whose mother tongue is different
- The development of education in an early years setting

Many of the activities that demonstrate the objective of the project being achieved and the levels of success happen take place at a school based or institutional level; these are then reported back to BCPP more at a strategic level.

Schools involved in the project have:

- Reported back their thoughts, feelings and findings at staff meetings to order to review and influence whole school practice
- Reported back to school governing bodies their thoughts, feelings and findings as to the impact the project can/has improved the quality of teaching and learning and ultimately supports raising outcomes
- Shared with children in their schools and classrooms, the similarities and differences between two countries, the people that make up those countries and the educational experience available; helping to build and promote tolerance, understanding and harmony which becomes ever more important
- Shared with parents (via websites) an overview of the programme and its benefits to their children
- Continued a dialogue with staff and schools visited through email exchanges and are looking into other multimedia opportunities

BCPP:

- Has shared outcomes with its management board
- Have held follow-up meetings with participants to discuss the influence the outcomes of the visit have had on individuals and school practice
- Have been part of social media and email discussion between groups who continue to share their enthusiasm and impact of the visit
- Have continued to recruit for further projects



There are a number of success indicators that are evident:

- Teacher / participant enthusiasm – BCPP runs as many as sixty INSET events per year for schools who are members – participants continue to regularly speak to us about the impact of their experience and how it has helped them develop professionally.
- A willingness to continue a dialogue and support the process. BCPP continues to support international visits from Sweden to Birmingham be they teachers, young adults seeking school experience, or elements of Eskilstuna Kommun – all schools that have experienced international placements are always keen to reciprocate kindnesses shown to them, share practice and continue the dialogue which they value so highly.
- A strong belief in the benefits and importance of international visits to school improvement. BCPP has a long and rich history in providing international placements dating back to 2001. In excess of five hundred members of staff in BCPP schools have experienced an international placement. BCPP schools are still very keen for their staff to have their professional development enriched with such experiences and schools are keen to develop and deepen their partnership with schools they have visited. This is evident in the recruitment of any new bid

In its role as the coordinating body, BCPP undertook the practical and logistical support for schools for the three mobilities that formed the basis of the project.

- It recruited the participant schools and those who would participate
- It liaised and negotiated placement placed with the Eskilstuna Kommun International Coordinator
- It visited schools in Sweden to negotiate suitable and appropriate timeframes
- It organised travel transport and accommodation for each visit
- It held preparatory meetings to brief participants and raise awareness of before each visit
- It addressed any logistical need during the job shadowing experience that arose

The long standing and effective partnership between BCPP and Eskilstuna Kommun resulted in all quality and management issues being effectively addressed before each visit. This was achieved through:

- Direct face to face negotiations with Eskilstuna officials (C.E.O & International Coordinator)
- Direct face to face negotiations with Eskilstuna Headteachers
- Email communication over the period of project
- Telephone conversations

In preparing the participants BCPP organised that:

- All participants became part of an email group so relevant information could easily be shared
- All participants received a preparatory briefing explaining the nature of the visit, the logistics, information regarding the organisation of the Swedish educational system and some cultural information.
- Each participant was assigned a school, a headteacher and a school based buddy. Participant email addresses were shared with Eskilstuna Kommun facilitating early communication
- Participant itineraries were developed and shared with prior to each visit
- Initial first day contact meetings with school buddies were organised to ensure job shadowing was immediately effective
- School visits were made each time to ensuring experiences were maximised for both parties and any initial teething troubles (*should they arise*) were addressed
- As a result of such preparation, all participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the process, programme and experience.

The monitoring and/or support of participants out during the project involved:

- Email communication was established early in the process to share and gather information
- Face to face meetings were held to explain and reassure
- Schools were visited quality assure the experience
- Feedback was sort to assess effectiveness and the appropriate nature of support offered



Due to the long and successful history BCPP has in delivering a process such as this any problems or difficulties were minimal and had very little impact on the process

The levels of satisfaction indicated in post-experience evaluations, indicate all candidates expressing a positive satisfaction rating. 100% of participants would recommend the experience to a colleague and 86% indicated they were very satisfied with the Erasmus+ experience.

The biggest change the bid faced from planning to eventual delivery lay within Sweden. The initial premise of the bid was of partnership being best built through a programme of reciprocal job shadowing experiences. Eskilstuna Kommun were not in a position to submit a bid within the then time framework and so the experiences were one-way; from the UK to Eskilstuna.

The effect it had on the UK participants however was overwhelmingly positive, with all participants

- viewing the experience as positively refreshing their attitude to teaching
- having the opportunity to observe good practice
- feeling it had re-enforced cooperation with the participating organisation
- 86% stating it had increased their level of job satisfaction

The 2017/2019 Erasmus+ bid which has been successful will address this as both coordinating organisations have received funding which will result in reciprocal visits that will deepen the level of communication and cooperation.

The project funded twenty three job shadowing opportunities:

- In terms of gender 78% of participants were female 22% male
- 26% of participants were Headteachers
- 35% of participants had responsibility for special educational needs teaching
- 13% of participants had responsibility of additional language teaching
- 23% of participants were teachers in early years classrooms
  
- In terms of age profile 26% of participants were in the 25-34 age category
- 30% of participants were in the 35 – 44 age category
- 13% of participants were in the age 45 – 54 age category
- 22% of participants were in the 55 – 64 age category

In terms of competencies acquired as a result of project participation

A significant aim achieved was an increase in participant's cultural awareness, understanding and tolerance. 100% of participants positively affirmed this competence being improved with 91% very positively affirming this. This outcome matches participant's belief that the experience increased their social, linguistic and cultural competence with 95% of participants positively affirming this and 65% very positively affirming this.

In terms of building links and embedding practice, the participation of those experiencing a job shadowing experience in this bid demonstrated:

- 100% positively expressing a view they had an opportunity to observe and learn from good practice,
- 100% positively affirming they had shared the knowledge gained with others
- 100% positively affirmed a view that they had extended their professional network of contacts and reinforced their levels of cooperation with partner organisations

*As partnerships develop further with this successful bid for funding during 2017 – 2019 with both an inclusion of ICT element as well as reciprocal visits within the bid we anticipate an increase in the digital exchange of information and communication*

In terms of the longer terms aims and goals for the project:

- 100% of participants positively affirmed they had upgraded their knowledge of school systems in other countries, with this with 90% very positively affirming this.
- 81% of participants positively affirmed developing new learning practices or teaching methods with 52% very positively affirming this.



Although the project had a very positive effect on individual participant's levels of satisfaction, some outcomes would be shaped by the age profile of the cohort. (*A number of participants were very close to the end of their teaching careers.*)

- 100% of participants positively affirmed a refreshed attitude to teaching with 71% very positively affirming this.
- 86% of participants positively affirmed the experience had increased levels of job satisfaction with 57% very positively affirming this.
- 81% of participants positively affirming the experience had increased their employment and career opportunities with 28% very positively affirming this.

A major area of project positive affirmation lies in the fact that 100% of participants were very satisfied with their experience, 100% would recommend the experience to colleagues

Formal recognition was offered to participants, in terms of being able to use the experience and outcomes to contribute towards a Masters level qualification; this would have been validated through Newman University in Birmingham. No participants however either currently are engaged in this level of study are intending to start such a course at present.

Participant outcomes indicate that recognition was mainly informal. Participants would be recognised/seen as lead practitioners in this area within their schools supporting and disseminating at a variety of levels, they would be charged with helping develop an international dimension to the curriculum (*where required*) and introducing appropriate initiatives arising from the outcomes and findings of the experience. This can be seen in participants reporting that in schools

- 71% already reporting the experience has led to changes in organisation of the sending institution, with 100% expecting this to be the case
- 86% reporting that they expected the experience to lead to greater internationalisation within their institutions

All participants report that direct feedback of findings and outcomes will be shared through dissemination at staff meetings – it is here that explanations will be provided and initiatives shaped to support schools moving forward

- 48% of participants intend to, or have led workshops within schools and for their communities,
- 40% have compiled written reports to disseminate information more widely.

There is also anecdotal evidence from group social media exchanges that demonstrate/indicating the sharing of outcomes and cultural experiences directly with children in classrooms through lessons with an international dimension.

Participation in the project has had an impact on schools within the Partnership on a variety of levels:

- The awareness of and willingness to take part, as well as be part of an international education and pedagogy dialogue has increased. Headteachers (the initial target audience) have gained a great insight from participating in the project and have then been prepared to extend and deepen and this relationship by releasing key members of staff
- The project has opened up an international dialogue between colleagues. Strong relationships have been forged leading greater understanding, through a deepening honest and open educational dialogue. A successful conclusion to the current round of funding (in both communities) means experiences can now be reciprocated, resulting in dialogue that can be extended, initiatives started being evaluated, contextualised and shared. This we expect both traditionally and through the virtual world
- School leaders and teachers have been able to critically evaluate two almost diametrically opposite education systems when it comes to the ethos and social dimension of education. Schools and key leaders have had to compare a system that encourages child independence a more relaxed approach to school and classroom discipline and relationships, greater emphasis on the development of social skills and interaction, with a system that has to meet strict levels of accountability with a much greater emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge





and skills. The impact has resulted in a desire to rebalance some elements of educational philosophy and ethos within Partnership schools

- There is no doubt that the experience has refreshed and enthused participants as a workforce, it has provided them with an opportunity to gain a global and cultural insight into a different education system, facing similar twenty-first century issues, in communities that have evolved from an industrial and social heritage that is quite similar

Participation in international job shadowing opportunities (particularly in one that is on-going) does impact on a schools view of both the values of education in an international setting and the blossoming of relationships that will lead to greater cooperation in future.

Participant evaluation analysis indicates strong levels of increased cooperation with outcomes tempered between actual and potential impact as the final mobility was completed only weeks before the final evaluation was due to be submitted. Having stated that:

- 100% of participants positively affirmed the experience had raised levels of cultural awareness with 91% very positively affirming this.
- 100% of participants positively affirmed they had reinforced or extended their professional network or built up new contacts with 75% very positively affirming this.
- 100% of participants positively affirmed they had reinforced cooperation levels with partner institutions with 62% very positively affirming this.
- 76% of participants positively affirmed they believed the experience had led to internationalisation within their setting with 29% very positively affirming this.
- 82% of participants positively affirmed the experience will led to internationalisation within their setting with 43% very positively affirming this.

If one returns to the core purpose of the project which was to:

- Facilitate opportunities for international job shadowing placements for staff within Swedish schools; providing an insight into another culture and another philosophy operating within an urban environment.
- Allowing staff to contrast differing pedagogical approaches, which they could compare, contrast and adapt in their individual institutions.

Then the project has been successful, achieving its core aims. Analysis of evaluations demonstrate:

- 100% of participants stating very satisfied with their experience
- 100% of participants prepared to recommend the experience to colleagues
- 100% of participants positively affirmed a refreshed attitude to teaching
- 86% of participants positively affirmed the experience had increased levels of job satisfaction

Analysis also indicates

- 100% positively expressing a view they had an opportunity to observe and learn from good practice
- 100% positively affirming they had shared the knowledge gained with others
- 100% of participants positively affirmed they had upgraded their knowledge of school systems in other countries
- 81% of participants positively affirmed developing new learning practices or teaching methods
- 100% positively affirmed a view that they had extended their professional network of contacts and reinforced their levels of cooperation with partner organisations

Over a period of many years BCPP has developed an ever deeper knowledge and understanding of the benefits international job shadowing can bring to schools and to school communities. This experience of recruiting, organising and managing projects allowing schools to therefore concentrate on the benefits such opportunities can bring to school improvement is something we are more than willing to share and to highlight to other bodies considering such projects.

Indeed recently BCPP was delighted to be asked by British Council to share the benefits of our work, the methodology we use and our organisational support to schools, as well as providing practical examples of the in-school benefits within BCPP schools to a Serbian national delegation visiting the



United Kingdom to explore how such visits could be embedded within their countries structures and organisation.

Project dissemination takes place at both a school based and coordinating organisation level. Schools indicate that as a result of participation

- 90% positively expressing a view that project participation will lead to the use of new teaching methods, approaches or good practice within their institution
- 86% positively expressing a view that project participation has led to the use of new teaching methods, approaches or good practice within their institution
- 86% positively expressing a view that project participation will lead to the introduction of changes in the organisation or management within their institution
- 66% positively expressing a view that project participation has led to the introduction of changes in the organisation or management within their institution

In terms of sharing and disseminating this practice within the sending institution, the following methods proved popular. When interpreting the percentages set out below one must remember that sending institutions rarely chose a single dissemination method; often they combined meetings with reports or meetings with workshops. Findings indicate however:

- 92% chose the medium of staff meeting to discuss the implications, the benefits and desired outcomes not only with staff, but with senior leaders and governors
- 44% chose the medium of workshops to achieve a similar aim
- 40% presented their findings to a range of stakeholders via a written report
- With a very small percentage choosing to do this either in the media or at conferences

As a coordinating organisation the strategic outcomes will be shared with a variety of stakeholders. For example the report will be circulated to:

- Participating schools in the UK
- Participating schools in the host venue
- BCPP Management Board members
- All schools within BCPP
- West Midland local education authorities
- Equivalent bodies in the host venue
- Selected Universities in the West Midlands
- The British Council (UK)
- Suitable professional papers and magazines

In addition, where appropriate, reports are placed on suitable websites, including the:

- Participating schools Websites.
- Host Schools Websites
- Local Authority Websites
- British Council Websites
- NAHT and other teacher union websites

BCPP as a coordinating organisation often, on request, attend staff meetings, senior management meetings, governing body meetings etc. at a variety of schools in order to give feedback about participation and the benefit it brings to schools. A PowerPoint presentation is always prepared for this purpose.

Again affirmation of participation and the sharing of experience as something totally positive, takes place at both a school based and coordinating organisation level.

As mentioned in the previous section, schools within institutions do share information in a variety of ways. Reaching beyond the institution there is evidence of sharing implementation and practice through sections of social media. Group chats set up (*amongst some cohorts*) to not only showcase



good practice shared and implemented but also to encourage others to experiment, implement and expose such good practice observed within their own classrooms and schools.

BCPP also has structures enabling staff to meet regularly, be this in the form of support groups, cluster groups or special interest groups. It is within this structure that the implications of special needs teaching, the teaching of additional language or of alternate management structures can be explored and unpacked.

The benefits of gaining international experience and the benefits of participation in international projects are raised through discussion at Management Board, or through Headteacher briefings and also in the reports and explanations that are widely shared. A significant number of staff within BCPP schools, over time, have experienced international placements, as a result there are numerous informal discussions outlining the benefits former participants feel they received.

BCPP and schools within BCPP take many opportunities to promote the benefits of Erasmus+ and its importance in supporting school improvement. We are in discussion with Birmingham local authority to support the possible reintroduction of Erasmus+ projects. This may be through the utilisation of our services and experience at a time of reduced staffing and significantly reduced budgets. Indeed there is the possibility that on a BCPP planning visit taking place shortly the Chief Education Officer (at BCPP expense) will experience a day's international work shadowing.

BCPP also work closely with the Birmingham Diocesan Education Service (the largest Catholic diocese in the country) actively seeking to promote the Erasmus+ benefits to many schools in a similar way.

As a result of the strong partnership and a proud history of working with British Council, BCPP has supported international collaboration with for example local and international universities, It has also met with local officials in Sweden to discuss wider participation, has spoken to Swedish Children's Services, as well as organising and hosting one month placements of young people visits from Sweden in BCPP schools. As part of that process BCPP also arranged short placements in secondary schools for the teachers visiting and supervising the young people. BCPP also recently hosted a visit by the Eskilstuna Naturskolan, a group we have worked closely with as part of our international programme. Here we linked them with various Education Support Services, with schools who had developed a Forest School and with appropriate charities.

At all times BCPP as a coordinating body seeks to promote and demonstrate to staff, children and institutions the benefits of working within an international context. Concrete examples of where this has taken place recently include meeting the Serbian national delegation with British Council to provide successful case studies of international cooperation, supporting a recent KS2 project involving schools from Spain, Sweden, Turkey and Czech Republic as well as initial discussion with Aksaray Education department about developing an international partnership.

Through remaining true to the core purpose of previous bids, the Birmingham Catholic Primary Partnership [BCPP] seeks to continue to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and a highly skilled and motivated workforce by consistently evaluating and sharing best practice locally, nationally and particularly across Europe.

Links with Eskilstuna in Sweden; seeking to:

- To increase staff knowledge and understanding
- To increase the life-long learning motivation
- To increase in our schools tolerance, sensitivity and cultural diversity
- To provide opportunities for personal growth and development
- To provide insight into different school systems and ways of teaching
- To provide professional development through sharing ideas, observation and practice

This partnership has been built over many years through a variety of work shadowing experiences. The successful conclusion of 2017 /2019 bidding means this can be developed further, not only through reciprocal visits but also through the widening of the client base. This project will therefore offer opportunities for:





- new school leadership job shadowing opportunities, these to new, experienced and aspiring leaders.
- reviewing how teachers striving to safeguard the most vulnerable
- leaders of learning working within schools to focus upon pedagogical development
- teachers with information technology responsibility to share and understand how information technology is deployed in schools to deepen and enrich learning

This staged approach, that has built a year on year a programme is deepening inter-school relationships that will have a longer term impact on how we prepare our children to live and grow as happy, effective and productive members of a wider community and the staff in our schools to prepare them for the challenges they will undoubtedly face in the mid to late twenty-first century.

What has become apparent over the course of the project has been the benefits participation has had on schools involved. Some benefits are harder to quantify but are never the less tangible. After returning to schools participation in international job shadowing has:

- Increased levels of job satisfaction
- Refreshed attitudes towards teaching
- But professional friendship
- Challenged perceived wisdom and understanding

Spending a prolonged period within an institution allows participants to truly evaluate any good practice observed, enabling them to place their understanding in a cultural and contextual setting whilst deepening their understanding of behaviours and practices seen. This then allows them to evaluate how their own practice or the practice within their institution it could be developed in light of their findings.

