

“The capacity to learn is a gift; The ability to learn is a skill; The willingness to learn is a choice.” Brian Herbert

GENERAL REFLECTION

PRACTICUM IV

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When I first started Practicum IV, my initial expectations were learning how to implement a CLIL lesson, learning new ways of assessing, new methodologies, how to work by projects, to improve my time management and learning how to teach without books among other things. The outcomes of these 8 weeks are much more than I expected not only through the implementation of my teaching unit but also thanks to the observation and the opportunities that my tutor and some other teachers have given to me in order to participate and become part of their team.

If I analyse my experience in practicum IV I can distinguish two main lines of apprenticeship: observation and implementation.

The first weeks of observations were crucial to get used to the dynamics of the school as well as to analyse pupil's strengths, weaknesses, pace of learning and behaviour. It is true, that it was not an easy start because I did not have the same feeling with my tutor compared with the one that I had last year. However, I think that we have improved our relationship and at least, I have tried to learn as much as I can from her strengths: organization and ability to promote critical thinking while she introduces new topics. Nonetheless, pupils have been my main source of learning and improving my teaching skills. They have been kind and always ready to participate and enjoy their time with me. Through this period of time, I have achieved some of my expectations like: teaching without books, analysing the differences of a public school, understand their way of working by projects and seeing new ways of assessing as well as teaching resources.

Since I arrived I have tried to be an active part of the class because I think that it is the best way of learning. However, I do not think that I have had a lot of chances to lead classes beyond my personal implementation, in the very end of the teaching practices, which I think that has been a drawback. Still, I am very happy with my intervention because, from a given topic, I have done it in my way trying to be creative and innovative. Moreover, the performance and response of the kids have been amazing and we have all enjoyed this four days of implementation. I am very grateful to the arts and crafts teacher, who gave me all the freedom, support and help not only before the implementation but also during the same.

I personally think that I have learned the most while I was teaching. Although I had everything planned and very specified, there are always unexpected situations and I actually think that this is the best way of learning because you have to overcome situations that were not planned. That demands flexibility and resources to change whatever that needs to be changed. In this last week, I have achieved or worked some other expectations such as: time management, improvement of verbal and non-verbal communication, CLIL implementation, improvisation and flexibility and working with pupils with special needs.

I have to recognize that quite before finishing Practicum IV I felt like I was competent enough to become a teacher and that in the class, I was feeling more like a teacher rather than a student. I think that this is due to the fact that in this thirty years, I have had the chance to live a lot of education experiences which made me take the most difficult and important decision of my life: leaving my life as an architect to seek my real passion: which is educating. It was a feeling that it was already growing when I was still studying architecture but that was not strong enough to make change my mind. However, once I worked as an architect I felt that my life was not fulfilled and that it was the moment to do a U turn and to face my real vocation. Since I started the primary education degree, I have tried to do my best and to learn from each of the educational experiences that I have lived. I can see a different future teacher than the one that started the degree: now I feel more confident and this is because I am carrying a bag full of experiences, methodologies and resources that I have been collecting on my way from very diverse places and people. For me, this is a never-ending process of learning in which I will have to evolve as the society and its demands are evolving.

I have kept on improving competences such as: organization and planning, time management, creativity, ICT, flexibility and communication in a foreign language through CLIL. I have highlighted these main ones because those had been my biggest challenges in the education context.

Firstly, I think that it is essential to have a good organization and a detailed planning of the contents, objectives, competences, materials and activities that you want to carry out with pupils. It is something that we have slightly worked during the degree but it

represents a very important part of the teacher once you become part of any school. These teaching practices have been a great opportunity to observe how my tutor and other teachers were planning the different trimesters and also to practice it when we had to create our own teaching unit. This competence is closely linked with the capacity of being flexible. Because even that you plan everything, the reality is that once you apply it a lot of unexpected situations arise in the classroom. Which leads to restructure all the previous planning and to adapt it to pupil's pace and needs. I still need to learn and practice lesson planning, especially when it comes to analyse the curriculum and the competences of each dimensions.

Secondly, and close related to the two competences mentioned above, is the time management. This still seems to be the most difficult aspect to control for all teachers. In my opinion this depends a lot of the pace of each group of students. Therefore, although it is necessary to have a good planning with the correspondent time planning it is really important to observe the different pupils' pace and to adapt our own pace to theirs. It was a competence that I had in mind since the very beginning of these teaching practices and although I have improved it is still very challenging for me.

Thirdly, I believe that creativity is a very important concept to take into account which is usually underestimated. We all born with creativity but as Ken Robinson states: "we don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out of it". In additions, he also argues that "you can't just give someone a creativity injection. You have to create an environment for curiosity and a way to encourage people and get the best out of them". Therefore, as a future teacher I feel the responsibility of fostering this human capacity and to push it to the limit to obtain the best results of each pupil. Every time that I have to create an activity I keep this idea in mind as well as a statement of Fernando Alberca "teachers don't like to be surprised, they are expecting the answer that they want"¹. So, I try to have an open minded and to let pupils surprise me.

We are living in the information society in which a lot of our communication is through social media. So, I think that it is very important to use all ITC in our favour. I am

¹ Rius, M. (2012, February 3). ¿La escuela mata la creatividad? *La Vanguardia*. Retrieved from <http://www.lavanguardia.com/estilos-devida/20120203/54247867713/la-escuela-mata-la-creatividad.html>.

especially thankful to my Practicum's teacher, who has discovered us a new world of great resources to be more innovative and surprise our pupils. Being innovative demands a constant renovation and although I have improved, I will keep on learning.

The last competence that I would like to highlight is the improvement of my communication using a foreign language through CLIL. This was my biggest challenge because it was something that I had not put it in practice before, I just had the theoretical background. In these teaching practices it has been specially challenging because the six graders had a quite low level of English and their CLIL lessons were combined with a lot of Catalan. I was asked to only use English and I was surprised because the final outcome and response was much better than I expected. However, I need to improve a lot the language support and my strategies because I feel like it is still something new and unknown for me. I also think that the school implementation of CLIL is not the best example to learn off since their use of Catalan is very high.

All in all, I think that the school intern ship has been useful to develop three main competences: planning, time management and push pupil's knowledge without books. My tutor has been a very good example of organization and time management as well as to foster pupils critical thinking which has been very helpful to improve my teaching skills. I have also seen very nice resources such as games, learning corners and the number chart which are tools that help to arise this knowledge.

As I was mentioning above, I am really thankful to my university tutor who has encouraged us through all the practicum and has shown plenty of great resources that I have already used in my intervention and in the tasks, that I was asked to do. I think that this is one of the bests parts of this teaching practices and I am really looking forward to discovering new resources to keep on feeling my educational bag. It has been hard, because we had to do a lot of tasks but I think that we have given the best of us. My improvement for the UAB seminars would be to do less tasks but of better quality and to exchange more teaching situations to reflect together which possible solutions and resources may be helpful to face them. I finally would like to highlight the Greek experiment as an essential experience to empathise with pupils' feelings once they are asked to interact in a foreign language.

In conclusion, If I had to give a mark for my general practicum process, I would grade it with an 8. On the one hand, I think that I have worked very hard, spent a lot of time to creating the material and thinking creative and meaningful activities for pupils and that I have tried to be an active member not only in the school but also in the seminars. I am proud of pupils' performance and the best outcome has been pupils' enjoyment of the T.U But in the other hand, I have been too ambitious with the amount of activities and I consider it as an important mistake. Moreover, I think that I need to improve my performance in CLIL lessons and to learn more about it. In addition, I think that the perfect teaching unit does not exist and that we can always improve things.