

Freemantle Church of England Community

EuroDuaLE Dual Learning: Student visit to Freemantle Academy, Southampton, UK

EuroDuaLE – A Framework for Dual Learning in Higher Education

EuroDuaLE (<http://www.euroduale.eu/>), the European Cooperative Framework for Dual Learning, is a multi-national European Commission-funded project providing higher education students with planned international employment experiences as part of – and which reflect – their studies. As such, students are provided with both academic and work-based learning, known as ‘dual learning’, as well as the experience of living, working and studying in another country.

The goal of EuroDuaLE was to develop a model for creating integrated transnational dual learning degree programmes, in which Higher Education Institutions and relevant stakeholders in the labour market work together to provide students with curricula which combine academic education with vocational learning and working in another European Union country. In doing so, students are provided with both a dual learning education and an international experience. The project focuses on the tertiary education level and so can apply to bachelor, master, doctoral or equivalent level.

The framework was then piloted by the partner organisations of the project, enabling young people studying for degrees at universities in the partner countries to spend two weeks with an employer in one of the other countries. This short report highlights the collaborative work undertaken by higher education institutions in England and Spain, together with a junior academy school in the UK, as they participated in a pilot study.

Pilot

The pilot was a collaboration between the Universities of Southampton, UK, and Seville, Spain, and the Freemantle Church of England Community Academy, a multi-ethnic community school in Southampton. Overseen by



Dr Michaela Brockmann at the Southampton Education School, two education students from Seville, Marina Cortés Gálvez and Celia Ramírez Soto, visited and worked in the Freemantle Academy for a two-week period in March 2018.

Working in the school

Marina and Celia's work programme was carefully planned by Dr María José Gómez Torres at the University of Seville and Nina Myszkowski, student mentor and project coordinator at the Freemantle Academy, based on the students' studies and the work undertaken in the school. The work programme was also agreed with the students, Celia and Marina, before they travelled to the UK and again during their stay. Their work was split into two phases or periods of 'mobility':

- the *physical* mobility (ten days spent working in the school)
- the *virtual* mobility (Information and Communication Technology-supported activities). The virtual mobility was split between pre- and post-visit activities:
 - Pre-visit, the students prepared by learning relevant information about the English primary education system.
 - Post-visit the students were able to reflect on their experiences and compare and contrast practice and theory in Spain and England. As the Spanish education system is going through a great deal of change in their educational practices, Celia and Marina saw plenty of innovative practice first hand during their work at the school and they were hoping to use elements of this in their own teaching on their return to Spain.

Over the course of the first seven days, the students gained valuable experience by working with different year groups in the school. In addition, they also joined the pupils for lunch, as all the teaching staff do, and participated in staff meetings. In doing so, the students were given as 'all round' an experience as the two-week period allowed.

During their stay, Marina and Celia met with Nina, the Academy project coordinator and student mentor, to discuss their observations, but also to understand more about their specific areas of interest and thereby tailor their second week to suit these interests. Three days were then given over to the students to choose to work in classes reflecting the studies and interests.



Both students commented on being given greater responsibility in the second week:

“I created a cultural activity about Spain and gave some concrete examples of my hometown of Malaga, where the children could participate, learning about customs, traditions and gastronomy, and ending with a short quiz” Marina, student teacher

“My biggest problem was to confront my fears when teaching fifty students and being worried about the language and whether the children would understand. But I knew how the English teacher worked and so I felt able to teach the children and be part of the class.” Celia, student teacher

Nina noted how:

“They developed their skills of becoming reflective practitioners. Both students felt a great sense of achievement post-teaching, but more importantly it helped them reflect on how teachers plan for and manage the children in their class, catering for a range of diverse needs,”

But it was not just the students who gained from the experience, as Nina reported:

“From our dialogue with Celia and Marina we learned more about the education system in Spain and how this is currently in a climate of change. It was useful for our teachers to compare pedagogical approaches to enhance their professional development, especially when we are a school with so many ‘new to English’ children!”

Positive outcomes

The pilot was considered a great success by all those involved. In particular, the experience highlighted the success that can be achieved in a very short placement period through careful planning and collaboration between the partners. Overall, the pilot was considered a positive experience, with all the partners working together at various stages of the programme to provide a positive learning and working experience for the students and school alike.

“It was an amazing and very enriching experience, highly recommended. I saw and learnt from another philosophy of education, more inclusive and with more resources than the Spanish one.” Marina, student teacher

By collaborating and pre-agreeing the work to be undertaken in the school, the expectations of all involved were met, as all parties reported positively on their experiences. The Freemantle Academy put a great deal of resources into the project, all of which ensured Marina and Celia were supported throughout their work, but they in turn were able to offer insights into the Spanish educational system, thereby contributing to the knowledge-pool of the Academy's teaching staff. The transnational element provided expanded experiences, particularly for the students and, in this instance, raised only the most minor of problems, which were easily overcome.

Pilot drawbacks

The one weak point of the whole process was that the two-week physical mobility placement was too short to allow the visiting students sufficient time to gain a full understanding of the work.

The transnational elements of the pilot raised only minor issues, such as the need to complete international 'Disclosure and Barring Service' checks as the students were working with young children. However, these were undertaken quickly and in place prior to the physical placements beginning. Languages provided another minor issue, raising only occasional misunderstandings, but the students were pre-assessed for their ability to speak English and so the language difference did not present any specific issue.

Implications for the EuroDuaLE Dual Learning model

The pilot provided a 'snapshot' to show how partners from different institutions and countries could work collaboratively to produce a valuable work experience programme capable of enhancing students' knowledge and skills whilst simultaneously benefiting the employer. The HEIs involved were also able to gain benefits from the experience by working collaboratively with HEIs and employers in other countries, taking into consideration transnational differences of languages, laws and cultures. The pilot therefore highlighted the positive potential of the EuroDuaLE Dual Learning model for an expanded model base.