

# The Evaluation of European Competencies for Learning

Draft proposal and some considerations  
UK NAPE



# UK Approach

- Teacher-led project involving 6 schools, their headteachers and class teachers; coordinated by a designated headteacher and overseen by John Coe, project director.
- Examining and developing approaches to evaluation beyond the statutory testing and assessment requirements of Government.
- Using outdoor education as a catalyst for this work. Each class of children involved in 4 educational visits - 2 in summer term and 2 in autumn so progress and development can be assess across the competencies.
- Meetings of the teachers monitor, share and moderate successful methodologies and assessments and develop methods of recording findings.
- Members of NAPE council accompany visits and attend meetings to support, advise and guide progress.

# Why this approach?

- Current situation in UK — curriculum narrowed to a sharp focus on English and maths due to Government concerns about attainment which has led to National testing at 6,7,11. The results are used to make schools accountable and the stakes are high.
- Professional independence diminished and learning narrowed.
- The 6 chosen schools have made considerable efforts to maintain a rich curriculum for the children and have retained a focus on outdoor education.
- The schools welcomed involvement in a project where their expertise and professional integrity is valued and assessment and evaluation of learning is seen as teacher led, focussed on the attainments and needs of individual children rather than being test driven by an outside body

# Evaluating the competencies

- Observations of all children - Records kept in manner chosen by the teacher
- Detailed in-depth observations of 6 focus children representative of class in sex, nature (introvert/extrovert) etc and at least one child who finds learning in the classroom a challenge.
- A summary of each visit including preparatory work and a diary of the day.
- Samples of children's work
- Recording of the experience in situ, as appropriate to activity
- Follow up work/learning activities and discussion in class
- Following visits, preparation by all children of profiles which reflect and summarise their experiences.
- Records of progress established based upon all learning experiences both in school and in the environment throughout the project.
- Presentation of outcomes

# Teacher Evaluation UK next step - monitoring

A learning review day for the teachers, assistants and parents involved in the summer visits and a further review day after the completion of all the visits in the autumn.

Records of progress established with particular reference to the six selected children.

The six schools divided into three partnership groups of two. Each group to monitor, discuss and possibly revise the assessments made by the two schools.

# Keykolab Project

- Define competencies
- Principles of evaluation
- Testing
- Human Assessment
- Considerations for our European partners
- Specific issues for those involved in evaluation of competencies to consider before carrying out assessments — the need for consensus

# The key competences in primary school education

- The growth and development of young children can seldom be delineated in such separate categories and it must be stressed that ultimately all competences are indivisible within the child's nature and being.
- Competence is defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes in context. The context always has the child at its centre.
- Three competences; Communication in the mother tongue, Communication in foreign languages, Mathematical competence and Basic competences in science and technology may be categorised as core skills universally recognised across the European community.
- The remaining five competences; Digital competence, Learning to learn, Social and civic competences, A sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, Cultural awareness and expression relate more to the affective development of the individual child.



# Principles of evaluation

- It is assumed that all partners will be using their locally required evaluative instruments which will doubtless include a combination of teacher assessment and written testing.
- Such evaluation of children's progress is more generally applicable to the first category of competences-communication, mathematics, science and technology.
- It is proposed that such locally agreed and/or required evaluation will continue in use. However, it is suggested that the project should contain a critical evaluation of such practice with a view to establishing the relative merits of conventional techniques.



# Testing

- A test is a snapshot of performance at a particular moment and the snapshot is of what is measurable and inherently capable of being tested.
- Testing reveals only limited aspects of human development because performance in a test cannot show how far knowledge and skill is embedded in the individual to the extent that test performance is translated into behaviour.
- It is the application of knowledge and skill beyond testing which is the fundamental aim of education.
- Testing has a limited place in the classroom. It contributes information which can be used formatively by the teacher but it is simply one, quite transitory, aspect of the whole child.
- The unintended consequences of testing are the greatest danger to the quality of education. When results are used as an instrument of accountability the inevitable outcome is that children are instructed in order that they are sufficiently competent to pass the test. The process of education will be narrowed and distorted, test performance will become even more transitory and test performance skills will quickly be forgotten.
- It is proposed that testing should not be the primary instrument of the evaluation of the Keycolab project.
- We should aim for a more comprehensive and accurate assessment of the growth and development of the children.

# Human Assessment

- Teachers of young children enjoy the considerable advantage of a close personal relationship with their pupils and their families.
- Parents have a unique insight into their children's growing maturity.
- The partnership between teachers and parents is crucially important in providing sound judgements of children's progress.
- Progress in young children's learning cannot always be set out in steps denoting a smooth incremental progression.
- The assessment of progress in primary education cannot be measured with any precision except in the long term.
- **It is the complexity of learning and the fact that young children are building up a network of understanding which may not be immediately observable or evidenced which confirms our decision to evaluate the progress of the children involved in the project through the collective assessments made by teachers and parents and to take into account the self assessments of the children themselves.**
- A word of caution
- The closer we are to the children, the greater the danger that our assessment of progress may be coloured by the relationship we have with them.
- The answer is twofold.
  - 1 Sharing assessments with our colleagues
  - 2 We must always remind ourselves of the impossibility of entirely accurate assessment and be respectful of the human lives we are presuming to assess.

# Considerations for our partners

- Children should be assessed individually and never ranked one against the other.
- Assessment is a vital part of teaching. It is only damaging when the results of assessment are used for accountability purposes.
- Evaluation of progress is valuable to children in that it assists them to engage more fully in their own development and learning.
- There must never be a backwash of assessment requirements into the curriculum which is defined as the process of teaching and learning.
- The outcomes of assessment should be used by teachers and parents to enhance children's opportunities to learn.
- Assessments of the evaluation of progress are best expressed as descriptive profiles and never subsumed into numerical summaries. The use of figures implies an accuracy which is spurious since assessment is never entirely accurate.
- Children have a human right to contribute to the assessment of their own development.
- When we assess the child her age is more important than the organisational stage of education.

# Specific issues around elements of children's development which are most difficult to assess.

- Are the teachers functioning as stimulating and facilitating partners of the children or simply as instructors or a balance?
- Are parents and carers seen merely as consumers of education or as active participators in the education process?
- Are children encouraged to learn from their mistakes so that mistakes ?
- Is success considered only to be related to the absence of mistakes?
- Is failure always seen as an opportunity to learn?
- Is the marking of children's work and the offering of comment by the teacher carried out alongside the child?
- Does the curriculum stress the importance of creativity across all the competencies?
- How much freedom of choice within their personal capacities do the children have in and out of school?
- Are opportunities offered for the initiation by children of activities related to their interests?
- Is a clear distinction made between playing and working?
- Are the motivation, perseverance and self-control of the children considered to be closely related to their learning or is "behaviour" held to be a separate consideration?
- How often do the children work towards outcomes which are not pre-planned and required by the teacher?
- Are there opportunities for the children to discuss and review their work independently of the teacher?
- Is the children's curiosity welcomed or seen by the teacher as time wasting?
- Are the teacher's questions predominantly close ended seeking a correct answer or are they open ended so provoking constructive thought?
- Are there signs of emotional intelligence in the interactions between the children and the teacher?
- Do the children have to meet the requirements and expectations of the class or are individual children the subject of those requirements and expectations?
- Are there opportunities for children to discuss their work independently of the teacher?

# Summary

- We define the competencies as above.
- We include a statement regarding the principles of evaluation
- We include a statement against the use of formal testing
- We include information about human assessment and its pitfalls
- We include a series of statements / questions for those who adopt our methods to discuss in their institutions to explore their attitudes and philosophies to help ensure consistency of approach and to enable discussion of teaching methods and curriculum content to take place prior to evaluation
- Evaluation will take the form of an ongoing profile and record of progress of the child including: observations by teachers, comments by parents and self evaluation by the child; as well as work sampling.
- We advise peer moderation to prevent biased evaluations.
- The recording of the above will vary between countries and institutions.
- The project will provide exemplars of methods of recording which can be adapted.

# Summary

Flexibility is key

Guidelines not rules



# Finally

- We ask you to feedback to the UK
- We are particularly interested in your thoughts on the sections:
  - Considerations for our partners
  - Specific issues around elements of children's development
- Feedback is best in email format for ease of sharing for consultation