

International Visit and Exchange Grant (Phase 2)

Pilot Project:	International Visit/Leadership Conference (Roots and Wings Leadership Programme for School Leadership)
Teacher:	Headteacher of a Secondary School
Aim:	To work with Headteachers from Tuscany and Vejle in a three way International Partnership to reflect on current practices and to consider the effectiveness of School Leadership within a structured framework

The Activity

I visited Tuscany from the 7th – 14th March 2003 to participate in the second cycle of the Roots and Wings Leadership Programme. For the first part of the programme twenty seven headteachers from west Wales, Vejle and Tuscany attended a Transnational Education Conference in Florence (days 2 – 4). The Conference was led by Mark Fowler, of Resolv, assisted by coaches from the three partner regions. During the conference we learnt about the Italian Education System, reflected on key learning from Cycle 1 and explored further the leadership issue. The different elements of change were explored and the importance of understanding value and how it can bring purpose to an organisation was emphasised. Consideration was also given to the different views of value that can exist in schools. The discipline of coaching (including Inquiry and Advocacy) was introduced and each trio participated in a coaching exercise. The concept of vision, building clarity and rethinking the future were other aspects of leadership that were explored. The Conference included focused development activities in groups and in trios, made up of the headteachers from the three partner regions who are working together over an eighteen month period. There were also opportunities for personal reflection.

Following the Conference, I, together with the Danish member of the trio, spent three days at the school of our Italian partner – a 14-19 vocational school in Pontedera, in the Pisa region of Tuscany, to undertake Leadership Development Activities and a School Development Project. We gathered further information about the Italian Education System and the organisation and the Curriculum of the school. We visited workshops and classrooms and talked to staff and students. During our visit we met six local headteachers and spent one morning discussing various educational issues and comparing the Welsh and Italian Education Systems. We also visited a school which catered for pupils aged three to fourteen.

During this time the trio worked together on the leadership issue in the Italian school – see Appendix 1. As the school effectiveness intervention develops over the next seven months the three partner heads will communicate electronically and one of the regional coaches will act as a facilitator.

Relevance to Current Role/Position

The programme has provided an opportunity for me to reflect on my practices and consider their effectiveness within a structured framework inviting inquiry and challenging present practices and priorities. It has given me a new insight into school leadership.

Ownership of the whole school vision, developing team management, delegation, time management, staff/pupil relationships, new ways of operating, clarity and coaching are all leadership issues that were explored and which need to be addressed to develop the school's capacity to move forward and raise standards. A clear and unifying purpose will be needed to unite individuals, teams and the school as a whole to achieve new levels of performance. Different leadership styles were considered and the value of coaching was emphasised and the coaching exercise provided an opportunity to develop the skills required.

The interaction and dialogue in the trio was valued as it enabled options to be explored giving more than one way of exploring solutions to problems and issues. Visiting the school of the Italian head also provided an opportunity for me to reflect on practices and standards in my own school.

Benefits in the Classroom

It is anticipated that the learning of pupils will improve as a result of developing the leadership and management effectiveness of the school.

After the second cycle of the Leadership Programme I am aware of the importance of dialogue and inquiry hence the need to build closer relationships with pupils and parents. The development of an action based inquiry approach to school improvement is important. Pupils need to have a say in the running of the school to obtain ownership. They should feel valued and respected and have a strong sense of belonging. The pupil needs to be at the centre of the learning process and we need to gather pupils' views on how the school can be improved. A range of teaching styles should be provided to suit individual pupils and the curriculum should reflect pupils' needs. As a result of these changes pupils should be more enthusiastic about learning, have higher expectations and develop better relationships with staff.

Ideas regarding good practices, different methodologies and approaches to enhance pupil learning need to be shared with staff.

Benefits I Have Shared

Whilst working on the school effectiveness project, within the context of the Italian school, the trio explored together the theme for intervention, planning and implementing, identifying leadership and management issues. As headteachers in the three way partnership we were able to develop challenging mentoring relationships and coached the host head to clarify the leadership issue and to "do differently". I wish to share the benefits of a collaborative approach to school leadership with the staff in my school in the future.

Impact on my Own Professional Development

The second cycle of the Leadership course has enabled me to review my understanding of the present reality, my learning and my leadership. It has enabled me to have a clearer vision for myself and for my school. I have learnt how to coach others to do differently and have developed challenging mentoring relationships with partner heads. The programme has enhanced my International understanding of school systems in other countries and has developed a deep three way partnership between the individual heads. I also feel that it has developed my leadership and management effectiveness and has enriched my learning and leadership capacity.

In conclusion, I found the course valuable, challenging and stimulating.

Appendix 1.

The Leadership question: The Italian school presented by the trio C

Vision: To motivate pupils to reach higher standards

Steps to be taken:

1. **Clarify situation. Collect facts.**
We discussed: inquiries such as interviews with students, staff, parents, and factories. In addition to interviews questionnaires could be used. The questionnaires have to be well planned. Mind the assumptions. Professional help could be considered
2. **Analyse data to find out the true situation and discuss with all the stakeholders.**
We discussed: the ownership - question, how to present the facts to the stakeholders.
3. **Prioritise the collected facts**
We discussed: the mission of the school, identity, values,
4. **Take action. The results and the plan will be presented to the stakeholders**
We discussed: when, who, a student council, clarity, group of teachers communication, time plan.
5. **Evaluation. An evaluation plan was suggested, which should be ongoing.**
We discussed the following time plan for the ongoing process:
 - April: discussing and making decisions in the committee, preparing the questionnaires, communication with staff and students
 - May: give out questionnaires
 - June/ July: analysing the results of the incoming data
 - September: formulate an action plan 2003 –2005
 - September - December: start implementing plan
 - January: first evaluation of plan
 - After January: modify plan according to evaluation