

Sluttrapport - to år med fremmedspråk1 (Final report - two years of foreign language in the upper primary) Key messages (SCILT)

INTRODUCTION

- Pilot project organised by Directorate of Education, Norway into foreign languages in the Upper Primary, ran from Autumn 2010 to Spring 2012.
- c. 2300 pupils started languages at 6th grade, c.1700 completed the full 2 years.
- 74 schools started, 68 finished.
- c. 130 teachers involved in the project over 2 years, 124 in the final phase of the pilot.

The progression model

- Goal for pupils to develop good language skills in one foreign language.
- 80% of the schools chose the progression model, majority seems satisfied with this form of organisation.

The introduction model

- Aims to ensure that pupils will become familiar with several languages, getting a taste of different languages over two years.
- 20% of the schools opted for the introduction model, to a large extent 'satisfied' though there was wider range of models of organisation in schools.

Initiation and implementation

- Both models - average 2 hours (60 mins) per week, largely voluntary for pupils to participate, contribute to positive attitude towards learning multiple languages.
- Over half of the teachers said they would have chosen the same model in the case of national implementation. Otherwise, many stakeholders would like the opportunity to combine the two models in the event of national implementation, ie. starting with a short introduction in several languages before choosing one to specialise in.
- Because the pilot was largely voluntary for pupils, in some cases it was difficult to keep pupils attending these extra-curricular lessons. The majority view was that languages should be made compulsory to simplify implementation & organisation. Another view is that Upper Primary is too early to specialise and indeed for some pupils 'it is too much to learn yet another language' (p.16)
- Learning experiences in both models are varied and active including songs, music and reading.
- Continuing education is taken to mean continuing professional development (CPD)
- 'Closer guidance ... in terms of school visits' and accredited CPD courses, languages as part of ITE are three key suggestions.
- '... it is important to offer a twofold continuing and further education with a linguistically oriented and a didactic part' (p.16) ie: teachers' own language skills AS WELL AS ML pedagogy.

FINDINGS

- Very little time has been spent reflecting on the two models before schools making a choice, decisions seem to have been based on the available teacher resources, and it seems like teachers have had only limited involvement in the choice of model.
- Generally all stakeholders were very enthusiastic about the pilot. Data over two years showed a slight decline in pupil enthusiasm in the second year perhaps due to initial curiosity about novelty of language learning wearing off but pupils still feel happy, motivated and satisfied; clearly seeing the value of multilingualism while not necessarily looking forward to the extra-

curricular lessons. Notably, pupils attending combined primary-secondary schools looked forward to languages lessons to a greater extent (LJ's own note - better 'transition'? languages graduate teachers throughout?)

- Re: continuity of language instruction at transition - 'the lack of continuity in the lower secondary school in some cases has led to the loss of pupils' (p.18)
- National uptake of languages at lower secondary has increased from 73% to 76% (NB: time span not given in paper) and is more popular with girls. In pilot sample, uptake is 83% with little difference between gender.

Pupils

- The use of the target language in class, 'teacher competence' and the learning experiences themselves impact on learners' intrinsic motivation.
- In the case of 'gifted pupils' they 'look forward' to their languages lessons a lesser degree - could be because they don't learn much or because the 'practical teaching form that is ... suitable for the less academically strong pupils' (p.17)
- The progression model pupils seem to be 'a bit more' motivated than the introduction model pupils.

Teachers

- Less use of the target language in class than might be expected.
- Where lessons were voluntary, some teachers felt they 'had to limit the language teaching to "easy learning", and various forms of play and physical activity have been necessary to stay motivated at the end of the school day' (p.18)
- Some teachers do not have the linguistic or didactic skills required.
- Assessment was variable across the pilot, largely because of the voluntary nature of the project. The European Language Portfolio received mixed feedback in data.

Target language

- Appears that target language 'is more easily adopted by teachers and pupils in the introduction model ... [possibly because] the academic level here is lower' (p.17)
- In particular, teachers of German seem to do more interdisciplinary work, vary their teaching methods and use the target language more than teachers of other languages.
- Teachers and pupils thought the pupils learned 'relatively much' during the pilot.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Practical language learning experiences should be meaningful to pupils.
- In the event of national implementation, it is important to take account of local needs and challenges, a level of flexibility is essential because there is considerable variation between schools in terms of resources and needs.
- Beneficial to have more than one ML teacher in a school, so that teachers have the chance to 'exchange experiences' (p.18). The 'support and actively participating school leaders are key' (p.18)
- Research into transition from upper primary to lower secondary ahead of any national implementation.

The report can be downloaded through the following link, and the English summary is on pages 17 - 21 - <http://www.udir.no/Tilstand/Forskning/Forskningsrapporter/Sintef/Fremmedsprak-pa-6-og-7-trinn-motiverer-til-spraklaring/>