

# **SELVET - Social and Emotional Learning in Vocational Education**

## **Evaluation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, 10<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> September 2014, The Hague**

**Written by Elizabeth Mc Donnell (UK partner)**

The stated aims of the second SELVET meeting in The Hague were:

To provide a Global/European perspective on

- What are SEL programmes and what they are for?
- What is known about their effectiveness and about moderators of effectiveness?
- What are conditions for their implementation within or outside the schoolsystem (afterschool)?

To present some experiences/practices from within The Netherlands with regard to SEL in (preparatory) vocational education

To start creating and filling a toolbox for implementation, evaluation and dissemination of SEL programmes, with special emphasis on (preparatory) vocational education

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The meeting was hosted at The Hague University of Applied Sciences and was attended by 16 participants from Germany, the Netherlands, Malta, Hungary and the UK. The content of this evaluation is based on the responses received from 8 of the participants via a Survey Monkey questionnaire.

### **1. Overall impressions of the meeting**

Many expressed pleasure at meeting everyone again and forming new acquaintances.

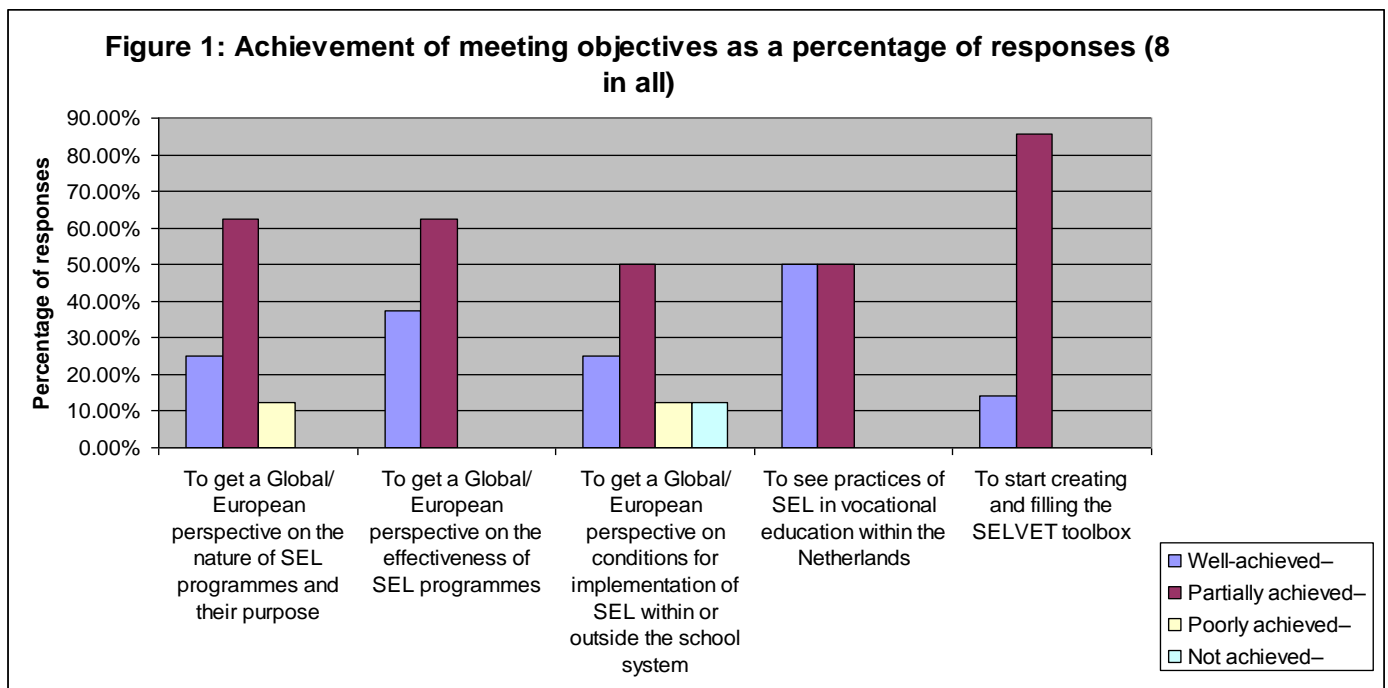
*“Really good to meet some younger students as part of the Hague team - students from the university studying this field brought a more energetic dynamic to the group”*

Overall, the sessions were interesting, especially the practical sessions on Thursday and visit to the vocational school on Friday. At times there was too much emphasis on theory and academic discussion and more interaction amongst the group would have been preferred. Some frustration was expressed at lack of progress and clarity on concrete action although it was

acknowledged that the group has started to find a focus and there is great potential in the collaboration. Some wondered that ‘*we are speaking to the converted*’ i.e. all the content of the sessions support the benefits of SEL and the group itself doesn’t need convincing. So what is the purpose of the proposed toolkit? Some considered the input on application of SEL to be somewhat vague and that there is a need to address the barriers to SEL implementation. An observation was made on arising tension in the SELVET group (*comment from Elizabeth: this is to be expected in any mixed group. My view is that it is a sign of a healthy group if we notice such differences, acknowledge them and any tensions that inevitably arise – then work with any difficulties if necessary, not run away!*).

## 2. Achieving the meeting objectives

Figure 1 provides an overview of responses.



On the whole, the meeting objectives were well or partially achieved. Factors that contributed to the success of doing so included

- the commitment of, and positive atmosphere between, SELVET group members
- interacting with others and getting academic and research perspectives on SEL
- seeing practical examples of implementation of SEL
- a sense that the SELVET project is progressing with each meeting of the partners.

Reflecting on what did not work so well, responses included:

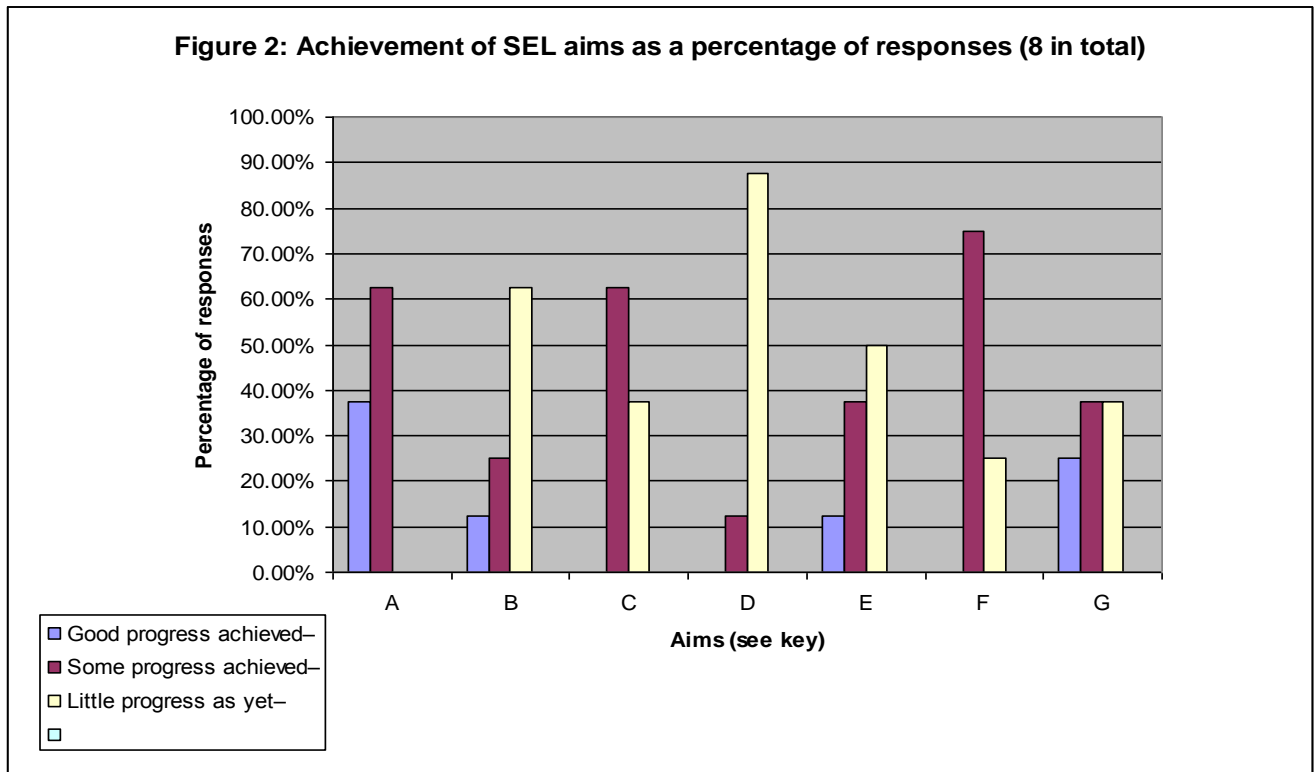
- lack of time for group interaction and discussion
- an imbalance in favour of theoretical considerations over practical application of SEL
- differing expectations and agendas within the SELVET group
- lack of genuine engagement with pressing questions regarding SEL implementation e.g. Who sets the standards for SEL and why? How is allowance made for culture differences? What are the prerequisites for teaching SEL? How do you convince decision-makers and parents of the relevance of SEL in education? Where can SEL be implemented outside the school system and how?

In terms of the details – room set-up, agenda, flow of the day etc - the following comments were made:

- bright, large rooms but stuffy at times, plenty refreshments
- too many theoretical sessions with no time for group interaction and discussion; group interaction was limited to the breaks and evenings
- first day rather too formal; set-up of room created distance and did not allow for sharing thinking; questions not always answered or addressed
- no time at the end of the meeting for circle and feedback
- good interaction with group members ; able to participate most of the time; group welcoming
- programme rather packed.

### 3. Progress in achieving SELVET aims

The next question sought some feedback on participants' views on our progress-to-date towards achieving the aims of the SELVET project. Figure 2 provides a summary of responses (good progress, some progress, little progress) against each aim.



Key to aims:

- A. Learn about ways SEL programmes can be applied to vocational education and to after-school settings
- B. Identify the kind of training needed for VET teachers to conduct SEL classes
- C. Identify the critical success factors needed for sustainable implementation of SEL programmes
- D. Involve VET students in the exploration and evaluation of the presented best practices
- E. Examine the transferability of the studied methods into the partners' countries
- F. Lay down the foundation for future international joint projects
- G. Disseminate the presented best practices and project ideas in the local and wider life long learning communities

Respondents perceive that we have made most progress in learning about ways that SEL programmes can be applied in vocational education and after-school settings (A) and we have made some progress in identifying critical success factors (C) and in laying down foundations for future projects (F). Less progress has been made in identifying the kind of training needed for VET teachers (B) and in involving VET students in evaluation of best practice (D). There has been varied progress in examining the transferability of methods (E) and in dissemination of ideas and best practice (G).

Comments varied as to progress since the last meeting from no progress, to some progress but with much work yet to do. Group relationships were strengthened and insights gained on SEL application in the Netherlands, and on the academic/ research view on SEL, as well as some ideas on application of SEL outside the school system e.g. training of soccer coaches. We carried out some work on the structure of the toolkit.

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#### **4. Moving forward**

The observation was made that there is a need to be more down-to-earth and focus on issues relating to practical implementation of SEL e.g. approaches to promoting SEL in schools, who should be approached, who to work with, means of funding it, rather than spend more time discussing the importance of SEL.

*“The reason why we got together is based on the acknowledgement of the SEL importance, therefore we need to move on and start to be more concrete.”*

We should look out for when we feel stuck and follow up on feedback from the evaluations.

For the next meeting in London, expectations and hopes include:

- having time for group discussion and interaction
- seeing practical examples of SEL implementation in the UK
- meeting everyone again, having fun from activities such as Ski Sunday

- seeing implementation of SEL outside the school environment e.g. in the work of Creative Youth
  - thinking outside the box, getting practical ideas on how to go forward.
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Send any questions or comments on this report to:

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