

SELVET - Social and Emotional Learning in Vocational Education

Evaluation of the 4th Meeting, 19th – 22nd October 2014, Kingston upon Thames

Written by Elizabeth Mc Donnell (UK partner)

The stated aims of the second SELVET meeting in Kingston upon Thames were:

- Introduction of SEL in UK context
- To participate in lectures and fields trips with organisations involved in the theory or practice of social skills training /education in VET in the UK
- To look at what role the arts can play in SEL
- To develop the toolkit and understand everyone's responsibilities in moving the toolkit forwards
- To participate in cultural activities
- To evaluate the meeting

The meeting was hosted in Kingston upon Thames, UK at a number of different locations: the Stanley Picker Gallery, Kingston College, Kingston University and The Rose Theatre. It was attended by 15 participants from Germany, the Netherlands, Malta, Hungary and the UK. The content of this evaluation is based on the responses received from 6 of the participants via a Survey Monkey questionnaire.

1. Overall impressions of the meeting

The experience was seen as very positive – the sessions were interactive, informative, and allowed active participation by all. The mix of activities, including cultural ones, enabled the group to get to know each other better, to share common interests and to make progress on the project.

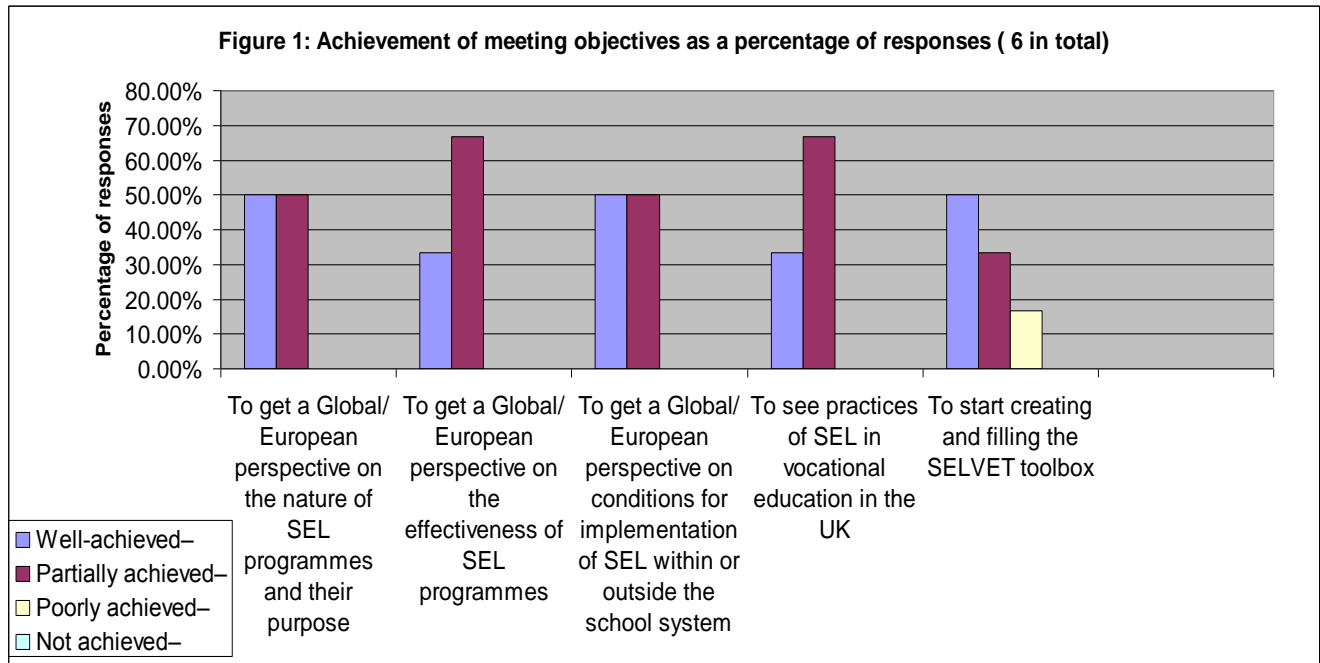
“It was great the group really came together, we started to have a clear view about our project result (the toolkit,) the city is fantastic”

“A great mix of fun, information on the UK vocational education system and direct visibility of the connection between Arts, Games, Social & Emotional Learning and Education as well as Community Building”

2. Achieving the meeting objectives

(Note from Elizabeth: The meeting objectives as stated above are not matched by those in the survey and in figure 1 below – apologies, my error in not adapting the survey form fully!)

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

- effective and productive teamwork, lively group dynamics and reflective exercises
- over the course of our meetings, getting to know the situation in different countries and visiting different colleges
- hands-on experience
- clarifying tasks, agreeing responsibilities and deadlines for the toolkit

“By now, we have a general view of four of the five different countries, which is most empowering to start putting things together.”

“The more partner countries we visit, the better we see the multitude of programs and intentions of these in each vocational educational system. I particularly liked the effectiveness and sort of pragmatic business-orientation of the Kingston College we visited.”

Reflecting on what did not work so well, concern was expressed that skills in SEL might not be sufficient – there is a need to consider the ‘baggage’ that people hold within themselves which may hinder them from integrating the skills. After drafting the tasks, it would have been useful to compile them and discuss on best to present them in a coherent, rather than a disjointed manner. More time could have been allocated for this part. And will we be able to have any influence?

“I still struggle with the idea that we need to make something available to the EU upon which the decision makers CAN or even WILL act...”

In terms of the details – room set-up, agenda, flow of the day etc, the organization and set-up of the days was good. There was plenty opportunity to participate and interact and this was helped by having different meeting venues, interesting activities and a good balance in content. Chairs were not comfy in one room, and one room was rather small and dark. Meeting together in the evenings helped with group cohesiveness.

“Set up was rather good as generally meetings were held in different places, making the experience more interactive. The activities were superb, always kept everyone on the go and there was a very good balance between practical and theoretical content.”

“The success of this meeting is mainly attributed to the other members, because they are very welcoming and understanding.”

Regarding the experiences of community events (Ski Sunday, King’s Soup, Cheese Club) and arts-based activities during the working sessions, the full comments are provided here and speak for themselves:

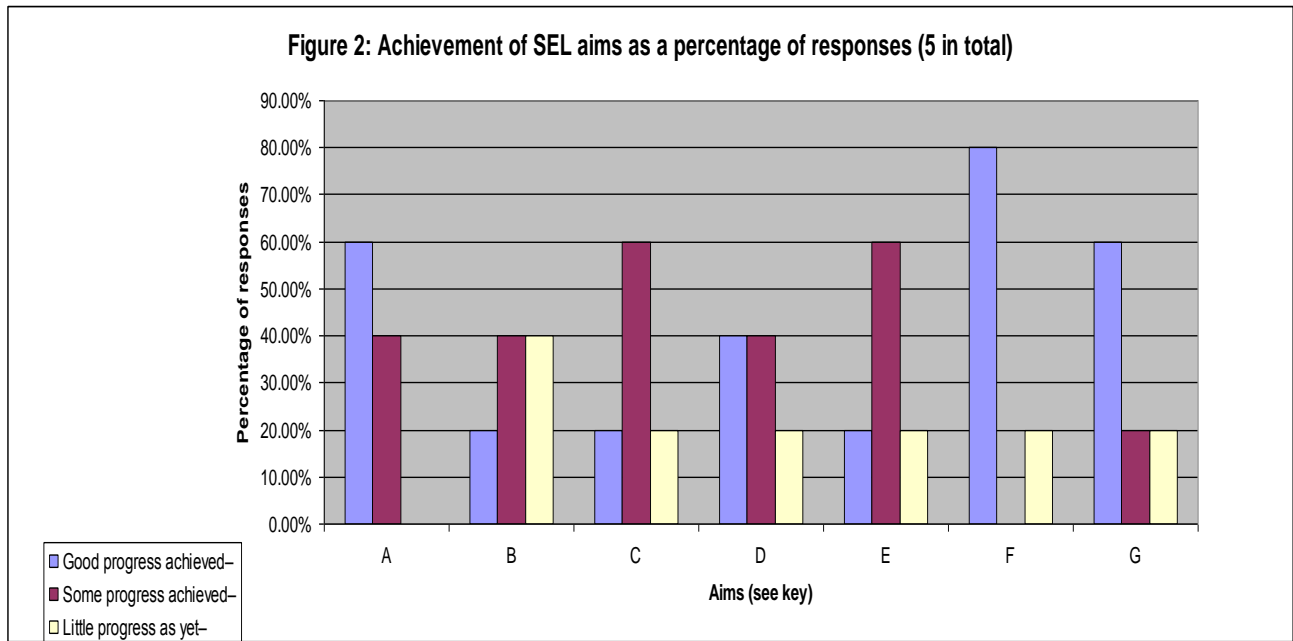
- *“Such experiences emphasize the importance of connecting through experiential activities, fun and active participation.”*
- *“The morning with the drama educators (puppets and other activities) was a bit too long as it was only loosely connected to our main them. Tthe community events were great -*

community development activities can be very efficient to make people get to know each other.”

- *“Most of the mentioned events promoted unity. I was astonished at the motivation and participation of the community in general. Apart from this, the workshops helped us in building confidence and trust, as well as energizing ourselves for the later stages of reflections.”*
- *“I believe that it is very important to attend and participate in different community events mainly because it would help us to get a clearer picture of the community. From this experience I was intrigued because, although they did not use extravagant resources, however they were all a huge success (especially the Ski Sunday and the King's Soup). Furthermore, I believe that the arts-based workshops were very informative and appealing, not only to the project but also to us as educators.”*
- *“The importance of the inclusion of a whole community in building it through these events. I am quite convinced that kids growing up in such an environment will become more aware of social and emotional life aspects as well, making them easier approachable by potential SEL programmes later on.”*

3. Progress in achieving SELVET aims

Figure 2 provides a summary of responses (good progress, some progress, little progress) on our progress-to-date towards achieving the aims of the SELVET project.



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 good progress in learning about ways that SEL programmes can be applied in vocational education and after-school settings (A), in laying down foundations for future projects (F), and in dissemination of ideas and best practice (G).

We have made some progress in identifying critical success factors (C), in involving VET students in evaluation of best practice (D), and in examining the transferability of methods (E). Less progress has been made in identifying the kind of training needed for VET teachers (B).

Comments on progress agreed that there has been a lot of progress since the project start and a lot of work has been carried out between meetings. We should focus on how a single SEL programme could be adapted and applied in the different countries. More work is needed on sustainable implementation of SEL and teacher training.

“It is like having most of the pieces of the jig-saw. Now we need to identify the missing ones and put it together.”

“I wish it would last at least a few more years instead of running out in a few months.”

4. Moving forward

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

- getting an overview of SEL in Malta
- time to focus on our remaining tasks to complete the toolkit; having all queries answered regarding the toolkit so that we can draw out our conclusions
- considering how to take forward this work and how to continue to work together on future projects.

One final comment...

“I miss Kingston and the atmosphere a lot. I could imagine myself living and working there - specifically with all those people met around me :)”

Send any questions or comments on this report to:
Elizabeth Mc Donnell
Tel: 00 44 (0)1722 718057; Mobile: 00 44 (0)7990 633109
Skype: eilismcd1
email: elizabeth@ifacilitate.co.uk
<http://ifacilitate.co.uk/>