

Implementing the EPOSTL (European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages) at the CELT

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The EPOSTL was developed for the Council of Europe to serve the overall aim of harmonising language teacher education in Europe. It is a new and innovative instrument for reflection and self-assessment intended for use in teacher education with the aim of helping student teachers to reflect critically on the didactic knowledge and skills required for foreign and second language teaching (cf. Newby 2007).

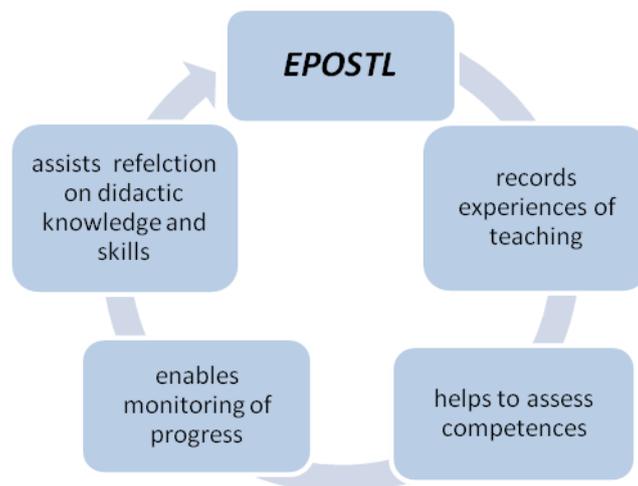


Fig. 1: Aims of the EPOSTL

The CELT is among the first institutions in Europe to integrate the EPOSTL into its pre-service teacher education programme. Since the summer semester 2007 the EPOSTL has been most intensively used in a methodology course, which accompanies the student teachers' first teaching practice phase at schools, in order to assist student teachers with the development of a critical reflection and self assessment capacity. In this methodology course, the EPOSTL is used before the placement phase when students work with selected can-do descriptors which are more of a general relevance to all students at this phase of their education. This work is continued during and after the practice phase when the focus is on individual and specifically relevant descriptors. After the school practice phase the EPOSTL is used as a spring board for the final reflection talk with the teacher educator.



To explore the potentials and possible limitations of the EPOSTL in connection with pre-service teacher education at our centre semi-structured interviews were conducted with student teachers after their first teaching practice phase. Additionally the so-called reflection talks between student teachers and teacher educators immediately after the teaching practice phase were recorded.

The analysis of these qualitative data demonstrates that the EPOSTL is generally seen and accepted by student teachers as a useful tool for structured reflections on their knowledge base, skills and values as stated by one of the interviewed students:

Well, it [the *EPOSTL*] really is a kind of stimulus to think about various things and not just act in a kind of intuitive way, but have something to look at and be able to structure things. And then, in case something goes wrong you need not rely only on your intuition and react accordingly [...]

In summary the EPOSTL has proved to be a useful instrument for various aspects of teacher learning and teacher development as it

- facilitates self assessment and helps chart progress,
- has a motivational force and helps initiate discussions,
- is a useful planning device for professional growth, and
- supports a systematic approach to reflection.

[The EPOSTL is available from: <http://www.ecml.at/epostl>]