13 proPIC student vignettes

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1.   Introduction

Up to this point, chapters in this volume have reflected on the proPIC Europa project primarily through the experiences and views of the educators involved. However, a major element of the project was the active and constant involvement of pre-service teachers in the study programme (see Hoinke & Clausen, 2022, Chapter 3 this volume). Throughout the project, 142 students took part and helped develop various outputs and resources. Moreover, the students contributed to our research agenda by giving their feedback, allowing us to record various sessions and meetings, and by producing a great number of diverse essays and papers. Then, towards the end of the project, students from all cohorts and all partner institutions were invited to contribute a short essay detailing an aspect of the project which had impacted their studies, their practice, and their professional development. Primarily, the students either reported on their own individual experiences in becoming a part of this transnational endeavour or presented and discussed the findings and results of their own research projects, which they worked on during the proPIC project. On examination of the submitted essays and other contributions by the participating students (e.g. Bachelor of Arts or Master of Arts theses),

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thematic strands emerged of developing knowledge and skills in the fields of language learning and teaching, digital mobile technologies, and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and reflection. These underlying themes demonstrated that the transnational project had been effective in meeting its objective of inspiring prospective teachers "to actively engage in lifelong learning processes and to cooperatively establish a culture of self-reflection, innovation and interculturality in foreign and second language learning and teaching"[4].

Having been inspired by Mann and Walsh (2017), this chapter combines extracts of student essays and includes a choice of vignettes that help examine the project from the perspective of the students themselves, exploring their reflections on their participation and the impact this had on their studies and future careers as language teachers. Additionally, we have provided links to the complete essays as handed-in by the students on the project website[5].

2. Theme 1: developing knowledge and skills in the processes and theories of language learning and teaching – how can the transnational experiences explored in the proPIC project impact foreign language teaching and learning?

The majority of our students are going to become second or foreign language teachers. As a key rationale for our project, we tried to bring together students from different national and regional backgrounds in order to discuss their perspectives on language learning and teaching. Although teacher training across Europe is different in many respects, there is nonetheless common ground regarding what teaching is about, as Cristina described in a clear and thoughtful manner:

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4. https://propic-portfoleo.weebly.com/study-week-i.html

5. http://www.propiceuropa.com/final-publication.html

Cristina's vignette

proPIC's values in education: How do they help to enhance students' motivation and interest?[6]

Teaching has never been easy. As teachers we are not only in charge of conveying academic knowledge, but of being capable to manage a long list of skills, such as class [organisation] and control, pedagogical and psychological coaching abilities, empathy, creativity, being innovative, self-development and, of course, in nowadays society, digital, and technological skills. Being a teacher means to constantly learn and develop professionally, but also personally. Thus, we must prepare ourselves for the various situations that we face in our daily work.

Cristina considers in this vignette her future field of work from a rather general point of view, detailing the numerous skills and competences that a prospective teacher must develop and demonstrate, both professionally and personally.

Marie-Louise went a step further and tried to look at her experience with proPIC from the perspective of a (prospective) *language* teacher. In her Master's thesis, she shed light on the role of an international study programme on the professional habits and developments of future language teachers.

Marie-Louise's vignette

Becoming Professional – the impact of international collaboration on the professional development of future language teachers[7]

The findings [of the author's MA thesis] show that a study [programme] that is aimed at fostering international collaboration among future language teachers can include workshops, dealing with projects,

> actively engaging with contents, interviews, and discussions with experts, school visits, social events, and communication devices and digital tools. A [programme] can foster international collaboration in that it provides opportunities and time for any form of exchange among its participants, brings people together, [organises] activities in which students collaboratively work on a task and everyone contributes to a shared outcome.

> In addition to that, collaborative reflections and group discussions with experts in the field of teaching can be ways in which such collaboration can be fostered. The participants' active role is especially important. Findings on how international collaboration could affect the participants' CPD have shown that a collaborative culture can evolve in which professional knowledge can be expanded, new cultural knowledge can be developed, and participants are found to be active producers of knowledge. Such collaboration can further enable professional sharing with peers, can lead to receiving feedback from peers and foster reflection processes.

The affordances which students have in order to foster collaborations and exchanges among themselves as well as with each expert and others with experience in the field (teachers, lecturers, administrators, etc.) seem to be highly important in an international study programme such as proPIC. Marie-Louise here points out the wide range of activities being offered to the participating students. Being actively engaged in these enterprises may help to become more reflective and thus more professional.

However, as professionals in the realm of foreign language teaching, and in particular English language teaching, we also need to look at the object of our teaching, i.e. the target language and how it needs to be taught. In her Master's thesis, based on a project during the study week in Spain, Felicitas dealt with the role of English as a lingua franca or international language (Waldman, Harel, & Schwab, 2019) and presented her findings in a separate paper, thereby taking a critical stance on how English has been taught in the past.

Felicitas's vignette

The intercultural speaker model: language proficiency and the 'Native Speaker' redefined[8]

English in the international context has long been a reason for discourse in [second language acquisition theory]. Little empirical work has been done however, and language policies continue to rely on the native speaker model (Seidlhofer, 2003). During the project I observed how non-native English speakers facilitate the English language to communicate interculturally on an academic level. My considerations lead me to the following questions:

What are the common linguistic standards of Intercultural Speakers of English? Once established, how do these standards apply to language education? (Siwik, 2019)

I realised quickly that it is nearly impossible to define one common version of international English that could facilitate the innate diversity that comes with Intercultural Speakers (Siwik, 2019). Nonetheless, I was able to get an insight into what intercultural communication in an academic setting looks like.

I used the guidelines for assessment of spoken performance by the *Common European Framework of Reference* (Council of Europe, 2001) in order to identify common themes among participants. I then compared these to native speaker performance in a recorded interview. What was observed was that out of the five qualitative aspects, *Range, Accuracy, Fluency, Interaction*, and *Coherence,* all remained relevant (Council of Europe). However, the way in which they were achieved differed notably. […]

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8. http://www.propiceuropa.com/uploads/1/0/8/0/108097905/propic_book_part_iv_felicitas.pdf

Overall, Intercultural Speakers were able to facilitate diverse non-native accents, different grammatical styles, and proficiency levels. If there were problems during the interaction, they could get around these difficulties using strategies such as paraphrasing, code switching, and mutual correction. They avoided ambiguity through repetition and the sensible use of idiomatic expressions. […]

Teaching the English language brings an additional responsibility to its teachers and learners. Although it may be of noble intention to use English as a tool for international communication, cultural exchange, and/or even peace efforts, it is (still?) accompanied by the bitter reality of (neo-)colonialism. Capital-based globalisation is the continuation of a system that centres the global West and its cultures as a benchmark for what is considered 'international'. Traditional approaches to literature in English promote predominantly British or American white (and often male) authors at the expense of all others. Efforts have to be made to include more postcolonial literature and authors with diverse backgrounds.

There is a need for real change in European language education. The fact that non-native English speakers outnumber native speakers to such a high degree and, due to their ability to connect with members of diverse cultures in this shared L2, they now hold the balance of power when it comes to evolving the English language and its cultural diversity. Future teachings of English to Intercultural Speakers demand that teaching techniques and methodology evolve to meet their needs.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, communicative language teaching has been enhanced with the notion of interculturality and the concept of intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 2008; Byram, Holmes, & Savvides, 2013). Languages are closely connected to the cultural background of the speaker, which plays an important role not only for one's L1 but also for each and every additional language. While this is true for every language, it needs to be

considered even more when dealing with English as an L2 due to its role in history and in international communication today. In her study, Felicitas clearly highlights this and includes another dimension which is the socio-political understanding of English as a foreign language and how we deal (or do not deal) with it in European schools.

Digitalisation is certainly not limited to language teaching and its different methodological considerations. Nevertheless, it has become a prevailing topic in foreign language teacher training programmes across Europe and also became an overarching topic within the project, a theme that was tackled in multifaceted ways.

3.   Theme 2: developing knowledge and skills in digital mobile technologies

In her essay, Lisha looks at using technology in language teaching and how to implement it in her own teaching while being part of the student project group.

Lisha's vignette

Digital natives: how digital technologies can influence speaking proficiency[9]

The development of technology encourages me to hold an insightful observation into the impact that technologies can make on language learning in an effective and innovative way. This is the reason why I got so excited when I received the invitation to participate in the proPIC programme, from which I can obtain the latest news about digital education and most excitingly, I can study abroad for one week at the University of Barcelona in Spain. Before the study week, some e-portfolio training was given in the study session at Newcastle University

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9. http://www.propiceuropa.com/uploads/1/0/8/0/108097905/propic_book_part_iv_lisha.pdf

and I learned about some approaches to teaching and learning with technologies, [CPD], and more. Unfortunately, due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the trip to Spain was cancelled. However, as a postgraduate student from a TESOL [programme] at Newcastle University, there are so many other ways for me to continue my interest. Hence, I created an English website for improving students' oral proficiency based on the framework of task-based language teaching. It is at the very initial stage of my website and I will create more related content in the future. I will also share my beliefs into what makes an effective teacher.

As was the case all over the globe, the pandemic had a massive impact on students and their opportunities to take part in student programmes such as proPIC. Although our programme included much more than a five-day study week abroad, this can certainly be considered a highlight of our project (see also Schwab & Oesterle, 2022, Chapter 4 in this volume). Therefore, it is no surprise that Lisha was quite disappointed not to be able to go to our partner university in Barcelona. Nonetheless, she seemed to profit greatly from taking part in the programme at her home institution, and she put particular effort into creating a website in order to foster her digital and methodological competences.

Digital competence can be taught in many ways. In our project, we decided to provide basic knowledge and competences via the use of iBooks, compiled by all the partners in proPIC (see also Baldwin & Ruhtenberg, 2022, Chapter 5 in this volume). The effect and impact of the iBooks were researched in a Bachelor's thesis by Birnur.

Birnur's vignette

Promoting innovation and collaboration among future teachers of English at secondary schools[10]

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10. http://www.propiceuropa.com/uploads/1/0/8/0/108097905/avsar_2018.pdf

Living in the new age where technology is an integral part of everyday life and new media an important tool, teaching is getting more and more towards the use of innovation in educational settings. The emerging changes in the global economy, due to development of new technologies, retails the evolution of new skills in our education system in order to prepare students for their future life. Therefore, the integration of the use of such technologies in teacher training is vitally important, in order to prepare prospective teachers for the use in their own classrooms. The proPIC course integrated as an example the interactive books in the syllabus, giving future teachers the opportunity to work with emerging technologies. Prospective teachers could figure out which features, tools, and apps can be integrated in iBooks while learning the subject matter of the books. Getting to know iBooks as a tool for language learning and teaching, prospective teachers could experience the advantages and disadvantages of their use in the classroom which gave them first-hand experience.

The results of the survey [conducted in the context of the author's BA] showed that the integration of this tool in the proPIC course caused in general a positive attitude towards the use of iBooks in the classroom. Future teachers who participated in this project are aware of the benefits iBooks entail in the field of education and think that the use of iBooks can improve students' understanding and engagement, caused by their own experience. This shows that in order to foster the professionalism of prospective teachers the integration of emerging technologies in university courses is inevitable. Even if difficulties occur while using new tools, the effect of gaining new experience and developing critical thinking pose an enrichment for the future teachers, which is the presupposition for the effective application of such technologies in language learning and teaching. Not only the integration of technologies in the classroom is essential, but also the motivation and competencies of teachers to use iBooks in a meaningful way. The elation of future teachers to use iBooks for their own teaching paired with the know-how they need can lead to a positive effect on students' learning process.

Looking at how participating students in all four European countries managed with the iBooks was the main focus of Birnur's survey. For most of the students, it was the first time that they came across this tool, especially as we started our project before the onset of the global pandemic when digital tools were less commonly used in most European countries. All in all, students appreciated the fact that they were presented with state-of-the-art technology. They managed to get along without significant problems, gained insights into their advantages and disadvantages, and learned about the opportunities of using iBooks (or similar applications) in their own classrooms.

As iBooks represented only one tool that we promoted in our project, students had to deal with other applications as well. Mercedez, a student originally from the US, reported on how she developed her digital competences over time, i.e. before and during the time as a participant in the project.

Mercedez's vignette

Using mobile technologies in the classsroom to aid learning: creating a digital escape room[11]

proPIC played a significant role in my professional development as it helped me understand how to use digital tools in the classroom to aid student's learning. […]

In 2017, I was accepted onto a teaching [Master's programme] at the University of Barcelona. There, I had the amazing opportunity to take classes that encouraged students to learn using digital tools. Professors J. and O. taught me just how effective digital tools could be in helping students understand, whether in the classroom or through distance learning. We did a project in collaboration with students from the University of the Háskóli Islands, and used *Google Docs, Google Slides, Canva, WhatsApp,* and other similar platforms to deliver our

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11. http://www.propiceuropa.com/uploads/1/0/8/0/108097905/propic_book_part_iv_mercedez.pdf

lessons, while students used the same digital resources to complete their assignments. […]

Going to Karlsruhe was the perfect supplement to my studies in Barcelona. The contribution of knowledge from my proPIC peers, our group discussions, presentations, and school visits truly resonated with me, having a lasting impact on how I teach. This is especially true now that we, as educators, have been forced to adopt these new forms of teaching due to the pandemic. Times change, and we need to adapt. […]. I am proof that acquiring knowledge does not only come from classroom experience. I had plenty of experience in the classroom prior to the pandemic. However, without the knowledge gained through my studies at the Universitat de Barcelona and my study week in Karlsruhe, I would not have been able to teach effectively via distance learning during the pandemic. This is because instead of focusing on the design, development, and delivery of subject matter, I would have been preoccupied with simply learning how to use the digital tools that would enable me to teach effectively.

In conclusion, it is crucial that educators spend time learning about digital tools that will improve the quality of their lessons. They must consider researching the numerous applications, websites, and software that can and should be used by students to promote autonomous learning. Looking back on my first teaching experiences, I realise that although I was very comfortable using technology, I could have helped students develop greater skills if I were able to better implement the use of digital tools in the classroom. Focusing on how to use digital tools in the classroom will allow educators to improve the experience of distance learning for themselves, and their students.

Mercedez here emphasises two major aspects that other students have reported as well during and after the project: first of all, learning in the framework of an international collaboration is a truly beneficial experience that today's students need in order to become professionals engaged in serious CPD (for more see

also Mann & Webb, 2022 and Oesterle & Schwab, 2022, Chapters 1 and 2 in this volume, respectively). Learning how to use mobile devices and digital technology is a permanent process that requires an attitude of openness and curiosity and cannot be reduced to single training events. Second, taking part in a study programme such as proPIC, with a strong focus on digitalisation, helped her (and others) immensely during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although none of us was aware of what would happen two years into the project period, both students and lecturers benefitted enormously from participating in the project as online learning and using a wide range of digital and online tools was no longer new to us.

A quite similar impression on the advantages of digital tools was reported by Cristina. Here, she writes about developing an online escape room and how the concept of gamification became of relevance to her. She also puts it in the light of CPD and the overall rationale of proPIC, combining the three project strands of internationalisation, digitalisation, and professionalism into one project that helps future language teachers to become experts in their field.

Cristina's vignette

proPIC's values in education: how do they help to enhance students' motivation and interest?[12]

The overall aims of proPIC are "actively engage in lifelong learning processes and to cooperatively establish a culture of self-reflection, innovation and interculturality in foreign and second language learning and teaching" (proPIC, 2020, n.p.). All these objectives are meant to "promote professionalism, innovation and transnational collaboration […] and using mobile technologies […] integrated in different curricula" (proPIC, 2020, n.p.). Promoting and enhancing all these aims among different communities of teachers can help improve professional development and, consequently, the learning processes. As

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12. http://www.propiceuropa.com/uploads/1/0/8/0/108097905/propic_book_part_iv_cristina.pdf

a result, we achieve a more motivating educational environment and better outcomes in our students' performances. That is why experiences such as proPIC are an excellent opportunity for (future-) teachers to develop professionally, as well as personally. […]

As part of my own research project, I created a didactic sequence of activities entitled 'Hispanic diamond: educational escape room proposal and testing for A2 contents revision' (Martín, 2020). This research project consists of a designed set of activities for Spanish as a [foreign language] students that focus on the development of language and different skills, cultural aspects, and Spanish varieties (from Spain, Argentina, Cuba, Chile, Mexico, and Colombia). This project is meant to be a revision activity for the A2 level, according to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) in a format of an educational escape room that includes gamified elements (Werbach & Hunter, 2012). 'Hispanic diamond' was tested and analysed from both, teacher and students' perspectives, regarding the use of language, the gamified elements and the [information and communications technology] resources, in order to reach a conclusion on whether it had a positive impact and [benefitted] the students' learning process or not. […]

All in all, I believe that as teachers we must be aware of the different preferences, difficulties, and backgrounds of our students. Being a language teacher does not only mean to teach linguistic content, but having the adequate tools and resources, as well as having a great pedagogical management in order to make the most of our students and having a positive impact on their learning processes.

In that sense, the Hispanic diamond project has proven to be a great asset to promote and improve our students learning process, as well as their motivation by using not only merely linguistic content, but by introducing gamified and digital elements and resources (Martín, 2020; Martín & Batlle, 2021). For that purpose, gamification is a learning approach that aims to encourage the students to learn by means of

game elements. Although it offers numerous benefits for our students as previously stated, it has its downsides as well, such as challenging the teacher's skills, the teacher's need of being up-to-date in educational innovative experiences and the time-consuming effort that it entails (Chia & Hung, 2017; Lee & Hammer, 2011).

> I think that many teachers regard gamification activities and escape rooms are [sic] still out of their comfort zone and therefore they are not common in language courses. However, it is worth trying them out and checking first-hand any possible improvement in terms of motivation, interest, autonomy, social, personal skills, and academic performance in our students' learning process. By taking into account the elements of the proPIC project, such as innovation, mobile technologies, development as teachers and as learners, prospective teachers, lifelong learning processes and the culture of self-reflection and interculturality we can benefit in many aspects and they can help us become better teachers, improve the learning, grow professionally, and educate covering our students' needs and interests and, therefore, motivate them.

Although gamification was not included explicitly in our project, students such as Mercedez and Cristina came across it and tried to implement it in their own teaching toolbox. They were able to identify the challenges of dealing with it in the language classroom, but also found ways of overcoming problems. Pivotal to this seems to be a clear focus on digitalisation as it may support teachers in dealing with what the future of teaching and learning in and outside the classroom could look like. This is also of great importance when looking at some key aspects of CPD – motivation and reflection.

4.   Theme 3: dealing with experiences and perceptions of CPD and reflective practice

CPD can be seen as an umbrella concept for proPIC and its activities (see also Mann & Webb, 2022, Chapter 1 this volume), a topic that has not only been dealt

with extensively in this book but also in our programme and structure as it was tailored to the needs of future language teachers.

Claudià's vignette

Teachers' beliefs about assessment and reflective practice: a prod to [CPD][13]

Being part of the proPIC Project in 2019 not only enriched my [information and communications technology] skills, but it also boosted my own self-regulation and made me more autonomous as a teacher, in line with my [CPD]. Reflecting upon my teaching practices was not new for me, since I had already been working on my reflective e-portfolio within my Master's degree to become a teacher of Spanish as a [foreign language]. The goal of it was basically to register my evolution by selecting relevant samples and accompanying them with a reflection. At the beginning of my portfolio I showed my initial beliefs about the didactic process, but I did not discuss my beliefs about assessment that much. It was only when I began my Master's degree thesis, defended in July 2020, that I started focusing on them. My main objective was to analyse pre-service, in-service, and teacher trainers' beliefs about [Spanish as a foreign language] assessment.

The idea to conduct this study came from my first formal contact with assessment. I [realised] that I had always thought that assessment lay merely in doing an exam, because of my own assessment experiences as a pupil. My perspective shifted notoriously thanks to formal knowledge, and when I was considering options for my thesis this curiosity to explore my colleagues' beliefs about assessment arose. Regarding its interest, beliefs are a small part of teachers' thought that, although not easily accessible, can affect teacher assessment practices. Exploring them can help me understand how teachers conceive this inseparable

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13. http://www.propiceuropa.com/uploads/1/0/8/0/108097905/propic_book_part_iv_claudia%CC%80.pdf

part of the didactic process, but also delve into my own assessment activity. […]

Our findings showed that all the teachers report changes in their beliefs, either as a result of training or because of their teaching experiences, and that the teaching context and the assessment experiences as language learners were related to their beliefs. Some informants disclosed that training helped them reflect upon their own assessment practices and experiences as language learners or teachers. In general, we found more similarities in the beliefs of teachers from different groups than within a specific group. Concerning teacher training in assessment, there were similarities in teachers of distinct groups, yet within a specific group each participant offered their own perspective.

Taking the findings into account, our first conclusion was that informants' assessment experiences, as well as the teaching context and formal knowledge, could cause changes in their beliefs about assessment or could be related to them. However, what teachers articulated could not correspond to their actual beliefs or practices, and at this point reflective practice stands as a possible solution to this issue. It would be interesting to carry out an investigation based on [reflective practice] to make teachers think about their beliefs and assessment practices in the classroom (Esteve & Carandell, 2009). With that, we could strengthen teachers' CPD and contribute to [reflective practice]'s main goal: to enhance teachers' pedagogical tasks.

After carrying out our investigation we were able not only to explore our colleagues' beliefs about assessment, but also to gain an insight into our perspective. We became more aware of, e.g. the fact that each assessment procedure has its purpose. In addition, we consider that it is crucial to take beliefs into account, especially during formative periods, since they evolve along with our teaching skills and experiences and are, therefore, a part of our CPD. In that sense, we encourage teachers to delve into their own beliefs about assessment and share them with

their colleagues. Reflecting upon our beliefs and practices is relevant, but expressing them in a portfolio or discussing them with others is fundamental to our development.

In order to foster her own CPD, Claudià made use of the e-portfolio, an instrument of reflection used by all partners in the project (for more on this see Cuesta, Batlle, González, & Pujolà, 2022, Chapter 7 this volume). Although portfolios are considered to be a tool for individual reflective practice, they can also be used to combine one's reflections with research on a particular aspect of personal interest. Here, Claudià focused on a topic she pinpointed as relevant for herself as well as for teaching in a more general sense: assessment and beliefs about assessment procedures. She figured out how important pondering one's attitude towards evaluation and assessment is when becoming professional so that relevant changes in one's behaviour are possible if necessary. In addition to that, she also underlined another point of great importance: dialogic reflection. E-portfolios (and other tools for reflective practice) should not be restricted to oneself, but ought to be used in collaboration with colleagues and associates in the field of teaching, locally or in international projects.

In her essay, Noelia tackles the question of what CPD is about and how to achieve a professional attitude. In her vignette, the e-portfolio is taken as a starting point as she intensively reflects upon its use by looking at its advantages and disadvantages or, as she called it, 'the good and the ugly' of using such a tool.

Noelia's vignette

[CPD] through the use of portfolios: the good and the ugly[14]

As a first-time user of e-portfolio, I was hesitant on what information would be more appropriate to include in my work, and in which way content should be organised. This highlights the need for specific

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14. http://www.propiceuropa.com/uploads/1/0/8/0/108097905/propic_book_part_iv_noelia.pdf

instructions and guidance when it comes to creating and developing an e-portfolio, potentially taking away from students' creativity. Additionally, I would highlight the need for training onto the use of e-portfolio features to partially tackle the time-consuming nature of this instrument – although, the learning process of those features is time-consuming on its own.

There are certain aspects of e-portfolio I have found controversial as I developed my own skills with this tool. One of the first things I questioned was the advantage that had to do with openness and sharing knowledge and information (Tur & Urbina, 2014). This openness can be viewed as an advantage – information is available to a wide(r) audience when it is online and free of charge, it fosters collaboration and empowers the learner; or as a disadvantage since it raises several questions. Firstly, it made me consider if publishing content on the web free of charge would continue to provide big data management corporations with information they can use. If e-portfolio is used on a specific platform free of charge, who does the information the user published on that platform belong to? Another potential barrier of e-portfolios when it comes to openness is the fact that users can compare their work, potentially fostering a competitive environment. This is particularly hazardous when it comes to assessment practices, generating anxiety in students (Tur & Urbina, 2014, p. 16).

The last point I would like to raise is creativity. E-portfolios provide a plethora of opportunities in the design and presentation of student's work, with tools to exploit this creativity widely available to those who can access a computer or tablet (Allen & Coleman, 2011). From my own experience using e-portfolio, one of the main challenges was to learn how to use certain tools efficiently, for example certain software such [as] photo or video editing tools. Not only is learning how to use these tools time-consuming, there is also specific software that the user has to purchase, which might pose an accessibility threat. Not necessarily everyone has access to the required hardware and software to make

the most of e-portfolio in a creative way, leading to an imbalance in opportunity and therefore, in the final work individuals might be able to produce.

As a novice and first-time user of e-portfolios, she tries to shed light on all the different aspects of using such an instrument. This includes certain critical points such as (alleged) openness, data protection, or a competitive attitude caused by presenting oneself in public. However, she also points out what positive facets can be ascribed to portfolios. Among them are (true) openness and creativity due to what she calls a 'plethora of opportunities'.

Collaboration was emphasised in Shahad's report on her experience in the project. As a student in the UK, she had the opportunity to travel to Germany during the study week and reflected upon her professional development as a future English teacher.

Shahad's vignette

Professional development through a transnational study experience[15]

[Travelling] to the University of Kiel, Germany, as a part of proPIC Europa project in 2019 was a very eye-opening experience that I have [benefitted] from in many aspects. Especially as a graduate student at Newcastle University studying for [a Master of Arts] in Applied Linguistics and TESOL, with an ambition to work as an English language instructor in the future. Thus, having the opportunity to join the study week at the University of Kiel was exciting because it gave us the chance to learn intensively about transnational language teaching and the creative use of modern technologies in teaching practices. As Godwin-Jones (2018) states there has been a major shift in the way that second language learning/acquisition is happening because of the growth of online networks and media, especially

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15. http://www.propiceuropa.com/uploads/1/0/8/0/108097905/propic_book_iv_shahad.pdf

among young people. In the field of language learning, [utilising] computers (Johnson, Becker, Estrada, & Freeman, 2014) to assist learning has made brilliant developments in many aspects, such as computer-mediated communication, telecollaboration and even game-based learning. Hence, the study week in Kiel, was very valuable for my professional development as a teacher. […]

The proPIC Europa project helped in many different ways, from meeting new people and listening to their different backgrounds as teachers and/ or learners, to being exposed to the many different methods of teaching conducted all around the world. Additionally, I [benefitted] from the project with my university studies, and finally with professional development and teaching experiences after I graduated from the university. Even though it was only one study week, it was tailored perfectly for the benefit of teachers' development especially in the use of mobile technologies, as it is [up-to-date] with the students' current needs (Zhang, Zhou, Briggs, & Nunamaker Jr, 2006). […]

Last but not least, the project also helped me with my professional development. The development of technology implies that the delivery of information has been gradually replaced by flexible digital formats, such as online videos and broadcasts (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). Therefore, it is only progressive for the field of education, to have technology add to its contribution to the improvement of educational outcomes (O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015). For example, some studies have shown that video lectures outperformed face to face lectures (McNeil & Nelson, 1991; Zhang et al., 2006). Thus, having recently become a language teacher in Kuwait University I tried to implement what we learned during the study week. Accordingly, making use of technologies in teaching, and making it fun and relevant at the same time. As well as making sure to apply elements of collaborative working for the students to benefit from their sharing of ideas (Li, 2017). However, most of the things learned during the study week in Kiel, will need to be adapted

in order for it to fit in the target culture, as teaching in Kuwait is very different from my experience in both Kiel and Newcastle.

In conclusion, the study week in Kiel has been advantageous for me, in both short and long-term basis. As for the short-term I have immediately benefitted from applying what I have learned in the study week to my [computer assisted language learning] course in Newcastle University, and as a student teacher the experience was very valuable and beneficial. As for the long-term, I'll be sure to participate more in self-reflectiveness during my own teaching career, and applying all that I have learned during the study week. As well as making sure to continue working on my own development as a teacher, as there is a lot of benefit to collaborating with teachers from around the world.

Shahad provides a comprehensive picture of how the study week helped her to develop skills and competences in teaching language with the help of advanced technology, but also puts this experience in the context of what she learned at her home university. Furthermore, she sees that teaching is a collaborative endeavour – for her as a (tertiary) teacher, but also her students when working on language tasks.

5.   Conclusion

In all of the vignettes presented here, students dealt with an individual understanding of the overarching topics of the proPIC project: (1) developing knowledge and skills in the processes and theories of language learning and teaching, (2) developing knowledge and skills in digital mobile technologies, and (3) dealing with experiences and perceptions of CPD and reflective practice. As part of our transnational project, participants looked at these topics from different regional and national perspectives and tried to present them against the backdrop of their own experiences. The range of impressions presented

here depicts only a small part of what students encountered. Thus, we decided to provide all of their essays on our website to reveal a fuller picture of what we tried to achieve with proPIC: promoting professionalism, innovation, and transnational collaboration among future language teachers.

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