"Paving the way towards Elos"
Initiating and facilitating the implementation of Elos on management-level in a Dutch bilingual school

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Schools wanting to improve the quality and coherence of their internationalisation practice can choose to implement various formal internationalisation programmes. One of those programmes is Elos, coordinated by the European Platform. Elos strives to provide a learning programme which gives pupils knowledge of Europe and the wider world, the ability to cooperate successfully in international encounters and a high proficiency in the chosen international language of communication. Although the Elos Quality Standard, compiled by the Elos-network and issued by the European Platform, offers general guidelines for implementation, the translation of these guidelines into practice has proven difficult for some schools. Our study looks into the first management steps that can be taken to implement Elos in the school. Our research also provides some useful suggestions for schools wishing to implement Elos or improve their internationalisation programme.

Introduction

A medium-sized public secondary school in the Netherlands requested our research team to investigate how it could make its internationalisation programme more coherent. This school offers three streams: havo, vwo and bilingual vwo. It has been certified as a tto-school by the European Platform[1], which also coordinates the Elos network and already conducts a lot of international activities. The school responded positively to our suggestion to look into the implementation of Elos as a tool to enhance the quality and consistency of its internationalisation programme.

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[1] In the Netherlands, certification of bilingual (in Dutch: tweetalig onderwijs, abbreviated to tto)secondary schools by the European Platform ensures that a school's bilingual program is of sufficient and consistent quality.

We chose the Elos programme because a study by Maslowski (2009) indicated that Elos can offer a coherent and effective internationalisation programme to secondary schools.[2] A second consideration was that Maslowski showed the relative flexibility of the Elos network, making its programme more inclusive towards pupils and easier to integrate into the organisation of the school. [3] The main reason for our choice is however that the client school has been certified as a tto-school and is therefore already involved with the European Platform. For this reason, further cooperation of the school with the European Platform with regard to its internationalisation programme seemed the most practical choice.

There is some scientific literature available on internationalisation in secondary education in general, the implementation of European and International Orientation[4], and, since its inception in 2004, the Elos programme and its benefits for students. However as of yet, no research has been done into how school managements (can) initiate, facilitate and support implementation of Elos in their schools.

The dissertation on the benefits of internationalisation on education by Oonk (2004) has become the basis for the development of the European and International Orientation (EIO) and ultimately the Elos programme by the European Platform.[5] Oonk devotes a paragraph in this work to the organisational and financial preconditions for implementation of internationalisation in education. He concludes that schools that have installed a coordinator of internationalisation and an internationalisation commission are the schools that are most likely to invest both time and resources in internationalisation.[6] The study by Maslowski et. al. (2009) also deals with the implementation of Elos in schools, describing choices schools have made in implementation and providing some practical examples about internationalisation coordination, facilities and the decision-making process that could form the basis for an

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[2] Maslowski et al, *Effecten van internationalisering in het voortgezet onderwijs. Een analyse van de implementatie en effecten van een Europese en internationale oriëntatie* (Gion, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2009); 57.

[3] Ibidem, 53.

[4] Abbreviated as EIO, this is the international component of bilingual education in the Netherlands.

[5] G.H. Oonk,, *De Europese integratie als bron van onderwijsinnovatie : een onderzoek naar de betekenis en de resultaten van de internationalisering in het voortgezet onderwijs in Nederland* (Europees Platform voor het Nederlandse Onderwijs, 2004)

[6] Ibidem, 137-138.

advice to schools considering implementing Elos:[7] A study by Thijs and Resink (2010) provides more practical guidelines for implementation. Four different models of internationalisation are being compared in this study, one of which is the Elos model. In this study it becomes apparent that the management and the coordinator of internationalisation play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of Elos.[8]

The studies discussed above identify a coherent organisational structure and active (material) support of school management as determining factors in the success of an internationalisation programme like Elos. The importance of organisation and management, identified in academic research, has served as the theoretical foundation of our decision to focus on the organisation of implementation of the Elos programme on a management level. Furthermore, in the Elos Manual for schools full and continuing support of school management is also identified as fundamental for the implementation of Elos in the school.[9]

After the Elos pilot project that ran between 2004 and 2008, the European Platform and the Elos network have developed a Quality Standard for Elos that all Elos-schools in the Netherlands will have to adhere to.[10] As this standard offers insight into the factors that have to be facilitated or supported by school management, it has served as a guiding document in our research.

With these theoretical and practical considerations in mind, we formulated our main research question as follows: *What are effective steps that can be taken by our research school´s management to facilitate the process towards becoming an Elos-school, taking into account the Elos Quality Standard?*

We broke the main research question down into three sub-questions:

1. *Which of the criteria in the Elos Quality Standard concern actions to be taken, initiated or encouraged on management level to facilitate the process towards becoming an Elos-school?*
2. *To what extent does our research school already meet the criteria for Elos identified in question 1?*
3. *Which effective steps could our research school take at management level to meet the remaining Elos Quality Standard criteria as identified in question 2?*

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[7] Maslowski et al, *Effecten van internationalisering in het voortgezet onderwijs. Een analyse van de implementatie en effecten van een Europese en internationale oriëntatie* (Gion, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2009), 49.

[8] A. Thijs en F. Resink, *Leren van internationaal onderwijs. Vier internationale onderwijsprogramma's voor het voortgezet onderwijs in kaart gebracht* (SLO, Enschede, 2010), 52.

[9] European Elos Network, Manual for Elos schools (Final English Version, May 2008)

[10] Europees Platform, Standaard Europees Platform Europa als Leeromgeving op Scholen-vwo versie 1, (28 November 2008).

Method

To investigate what steps can be taken on a management level to facilitate implementation of Elos, we needed to identify which criteria of the Quality Standard concerned actions to be taken, initiated or encouraged on management level.

The Elos Quality Standard contains 4 elements to assess the quality of the Elos programme at schools: Outcomes and results (A), Educational learning process (B), Quality Care (C), and Side Conditions (D). All elements contain a series of criteria, indicating what a school must have in place to be considered an Elos-school. The criteria of Element A and B deal with curriculum and learning experiences of pupils and therefore they have not been included in our research. Element D, "Side conditions", contains basic material conditions and conditions with regard to human resources (involvement of teachers and parents), whose presence facilitates the implementation of the rest of the Elos Quality Standard. Thus by no means unimportant, these criteria mostly form a specification of the criteria mentioned in Element C "Quality Care" and for the purpose of our research have been treated as such. It is Element C, Quality Care, that provides the most criteria for effective implementation and support of the Elos programme on a management level. These criteria concern[11]:

A. Integration of the Elos standard in the school plan, PTA's and learning programmes.
B. The existence of an Elos management plan in the school.
C. Internal evaluation mechanisms regarding Elos products and processes.
D. Professional development of teaching staff in line with Elos goals
E. Evaluation and accreditation of (formal and informal) international student activities.
F. Facilitation and support of Elos- student portfolio.
G. Contribution to further development of Elos
H. Participation in Elos-system of quality insurance.

This list of selected criteria from the Dutch Quality Standards for havo and vwo served as the main instrument in our research. Like other research instruments, we then undertook steps to sharpen it.

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[11] The criteria have been numbered here for research purposes.

Some of the criteria that were selected proved to be ill-defined or open to a multitude of interpretations. In the case of the professional development of teaching staff in line with Elos goals, we could refer to Element D.1 of the same Elos Quality Standard, which deals with the role of teachers in the implementation of Elos in more detail. In order to clarify other vague criteria, for instance: 'De school evalueert systematisch en cyclisch de kwaliteit van haar Elos-producten en –processen.'[12], an interview was conducted with an expert from the European Platform who is involved in the coordination of the Elos network.

To clarify the selected criteria even further and where possible receive practical information on the implementation process, we have conducted research into the implementation of those criteria at a school already part of the Elos network. This additional research served two purposes: to clarify the Elos-criteria by illustrating how they could be translated into practice and to use the experience of an example school to formulate suggestions for implementation the research school at a later stage in our research.

On the basis of the selected criteria of the Elos Quality Standard and their clarification by the European Platform and practical illustrations by our experienced Elos-school, we developed a grid to categorise and assess the information about internationalisation practice at our research school. The main criteria of this grid corresponded with the selected criteria from the Elos Quality Standard, whereas the sub-criteria were based on the specification of the main criteria by the consulted expert of the European Platform and the practical illustrations by the example school.

We then had to investigate to what extent the RSG Broklede already meets the selected criteria from the Elos Quality Standard (research sub-question 2) in order to be able to design a plan for initiating the implementation of Elos in a coherent way into the school. The results of the research were categorised using the grid mentioned above to make comparison easier.

With the relevant criteria identified and clarified by the European Platform, by looking at how an existing Elos school had largely implemented them and having an understanding of the current practice at the research school, we could draw conclusions about the extent to which the research school meets the selected criteria formulated in

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[12] Translation: 'The school systematically and cyclically evaluates the quality of its Elos products and processes', in: Europees Platform, Standaard Europees Platform Europa als Leeromgeving op Scholen-vwo, section C, 4.

the Quality Standard. These conclusions then formed the basis for a series of suggestions to the school management concerning steps to be taken to facilitate, initiate and support implementation of Elos. The final results were presented to the relevant schools and they were given an opportunity to comment on them. Both schools confirmed our findings.

Respondents

The example school we have selected for the additional research has extensive experience with internationalisation and has been part of the Elos programme since its inception. The research has been based in the largest of the school's several locations. The population of this location is around 1300 pupils and it offers regular and bilingual HAVO and VWO-streams, making the educational set-up of this location comparable to that of the research school. Our respondents were mid- and higher-management staff members who were involved in the school's internationalisation programme and included the coordinator of internationalisation, the team-leader of the bilingual junior college, the deputy-principal and a senior policy staff member.

Our research school is a public secondary school with approximately 1350 pupils divided over three streams: havo (approx. 600 pupils), vwo and bilingual vwo (approx. 750 pupils in total). Two relevant staff members at this school were interviewed to investigate the current internationalisation practice at the school: the coordinator of internationalisation and the deputy principal. Together, the coordinator of internationalisation and the deputy principal are the key management functions in the organisation of internationalisation. As they were our only respondents at the client school, we therefore have to allow a certain degree of uncertainty with regard to the validity of our findings in this respect. However, on two separate occasions the results were presented to representatives from the school, including the coordinator of internationalisation, the deputy principal, and the acting principal. They were requested to point out any inconsistencies or incorrect information in the results, but none of them indicated misrepresentations. Therefore the results may still be regarded with reasonable certainty to be valid.

Instruments

For our interviews at both the research school and the example school we have used interview scripts based on the selected criteria from the Elos Quality Standard. The interview scripts contained questions about the presence or state of implementation of the selected criteria. These questions were adapted to the situation of the school and the position of the respondent. For the example school, the term 'Elos' was incorporated in the questions, whereas for the research school 'Elos' was replaced with 'internationalisation', wherever relevant.

<u>Illustration of adaptation of interview question:</u>

Selected criterion from the Elos Quality Standard:
"De school evalueert systematisch en cyclisch de kwaliteit van haar Elos-producten en – processen."[13]

Question to respondents of the example school:
"Wordt het Elos-programma binnen de school structureel en regelmatig geëvalueerd?"[14]

Question to the respondents of the research school:
Voert uw school organisatorische kwaliteitscontroles uit op het gebied van internationalisering?[15]

All the interviews have been conducted by two researchers, so one could ask the questions and the other could take notes. The interviews were also recorded on audio device, so the accuracy of our notes could be checked afterwards. Limited study of school documents was also conducted to corroborate and expand the findings of the interviews

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[13] Translation: 'The school systematically and cyclically evaluates the quality of its Elos products and processes', in: Europees Platform, Standaard Europees Platform Europa als Leeromgeving op Scholen-vwo, section C,4.

[14] Translation: 'Is the Elos-programme within the school being evaluated on a structural and regular basis?

[15] Translation: 'Does your school check the organizational quality concerning its internationalisation programme?'

<u>Results</u>

Based on the selected criteria in Element C of the Elos Quality Standard a grid was developed to categorise and assess the information about the internationalisation practice of our research school. The sub-criteria of this grid are based on the specification of the main criteria by the consulted expert of the European Platform and the practical illustrations by the example school. The sub-criteria of the fourth criterion of Element C, "professional development of teaching staff in line with Elos goals" are based on the criteria mentioned under Element D 1 "Staff" of the Elos Quality Standard. To avoid confusion, directly under each category we specify which Element C-criterion we are referring to.

<u>Integration of internationalisation in school documents and subject curricula</u>

The first criterion of section C of the Elos Quality Standard is "integration of the Elos standard in the school plan, PTA's and learning programmes", which is deemed essential to guarantee the quality, continuity and uniformity of the Elos programme at different schools. Further inquiry with the European Platform learnt that this integration falls apart in integration of Elos in the relevant documents of individual subjects, such as PTA's and learning plans or programmes, as well as integration in school-broad documents such as the school management plan or year reports. Although even established Elos-schools haven't fully integrated the Elos standard in all school documentation yet[16], it is important for schools starting with Elos to realise this is eventually required.

1.1 Integration of internationalisation into the school and subject documents
The research school has implemented EIO into the tto-stream and is exploring options to extend the internationalisation programme to the rest of the school. In an annexe to the school plan of 2008 the research school has formulated goals for its internationalisation programme. These goals are being translated on an annual basis into concrete year plans. During the interview with the deputy principal, it became apparent that each year the achievement of these goals is evaluated.

We advise the research school to fully integrate their internationalisation policy into its school plan. Through this the school will not only meet the criterion – provided the

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[16] As was the case with the example school where our additional research took place.

internationalisation policy meets the Elos Standard – but it will also show employees and external contacts what the importance of internationalisation is at the school. Research at the example school has shown that documentation of all forms of internationalisation is important to be able to prove one meets the Elos-criteria. Moreover, not recording all internationalisation activities, whether they take place inside or outside of the classroom, hinders insight in the (lack of) coherence of the school's overall internationalisation programme.

This year's inventory into internationalisation activities by the coordinator of internationalisation at our research school should therefore not be an exception, but a constant process. We advise the coordinator to also take into account whether or not clear learning goals are formulated for each activity and to what extent the activity is embodied into preparatory sessions and follow-up meetings. Practice at the example school shows that these procedures can greatly enhance the outcomes of the activities and provides additional information about the coherence of the internationalisation programme.

2. Teachers integrate internationalisation in pta's and learning plans

Its deputy principal confirmed that the research school strives to make internationalisation part of the learning plans and pta's of separate subjects. It is also actively organising international activities and projects for students, which include exchanges, cooperation projects and participation in conferences (for instance Model European Parliament). Furthermore, the research school offers tto-pupils participation in separate subjects on international issues and cultural exploration: European Studies in junior college and Global Studies as part of senior college. With these subjects the research school offers its bilingual pupils a clearly identifiable 'internationalised' curriculum. According to the deputy principal, the research school is in the process of evaluating the effectiveness of these subjects and is considering their extension to streams outside tto.

However, the Standard requires a school to integrate the international components of all subjects into their pta's and learning plans. Although not all current Elos-schools fulfil this requirement yet, we strongly advise the research school to take the initial steps to document the amount of 'internationalisation' in the classroom. This will make certain gaps in the coherence of the internationalisation programme visible. It may also help in creating more support for internationalisation amongst staff, to which we will get back below.

The existence of an internationalisation management plan

The existence of an Elos management plan in the school is the second criterion mentioned under section C of the Elos Quality Standard. The experience of our example school suggests it is preferable to have a separate Elos management plan to make the internationalisation component easy to recognise and to evaluate both internally as externally. Writing and updating this Elos (or internationalisation) management plan on a regular basis (usually every 3 to 4 years) furthers the coherence, quality and continuity of the Elos programme at school. At our research school, an internationalisation management plan is in existence. Based on this plan year plans are made and evaluated. The existing plan could potentially form the basis for an Elos-management plan. We have some strong recommendations concerning the organisation of internationalisation at our research school, which we will discuss below. These recommendations could be incorporated into an eventual Elos-management plan.

Internal evaluation mechanism regarding internationalisation products and processes

It is important that an Elos-school has internal evaluation mechanisms in place in order to monitor, guarantee and improve the quality of its internationalisation programme. This aspect is discussed under the third criterion mentioned under section C of the Elos Quality Standard. Evaluation of internationalisation activities can be done as part of regular internal quality checks, as long as it happens at least once every three years. According to the consulted expert of the European Platform, the most practical self-evaluation is to compare the Elos Quality Standard or the Common Framework of European Competences with practice at school.

The deputy principal of the research school has named different mechanisms with which they evaluate their internationalisation programme. These include:
- Grades of students: if the grade averages are low this may indicate a problem in the specific project.
- Questionnaires: the research school makes use of questionnaires to investigate a problem that has been uncovered.
- Evaluation forms: teachers and students are asked to fill out an evaluation form after each exchange to evaluate its educational effectiveness and the quality of the organisation.

- Each year the internationalisation programme is evaluated with regards to the year plan and the internationalisation plan of 2008.
- Teaching staff is stimulated to perform self-evaluations.

Systematically updating and extending the current inventory of the coordinator of internationalisation can give management valuable information for a critical evaluation of its internationalisation programme. Moreover, at our research school there is no internationalisation team, which would be the ultimate platform for evaluation of internationalisation products and processes. The findings and suggestions concerning organisation, discussed in the next paragraph, could help to improve the evaluation mechanisms at our research school.

Organisation of internationalisation in the school

The fourth criterion mentioned in section C of the Elos Quality Standard is `Professional development of teaching staff in line with Elos goals´. This criterion is elaborated under Element D 1, "Staff" of the Elos Quality Standard, which deals with the role of teachers in the implementation of Elos in more detail. We have therefore combined these criteria into an overall criterion: 'Organisation of Elos within the school', which can be divided into three interrelated requirements:

1. Staff needs to be facilitated to prepare and conduct the Elos-programme through the availability of professional development opportunities and coordination facilities.
2. The Elos-programme has a large support base within the school.
3. There is an Elos-team with regular meetings.

1. Facilitation of staff to prepare and conduct the Elos / internationalisation programme

According to Element D 1 of the Elos Quality Standard and the consulted expert of the European Platform, an Elos-school should provide and actively stimulate professional development opportunities to its teaching staff with regard to enhancing their knowledge about Europe and the European Union, language or internationalisation coordination skills. Furthermore, schools should stimulate international mobility of teachers and teachers should document their international professional development in an Elos-teachers portfolio.

According to its deputy principal and the coordinator of internationalisation, the research school has set aside a large budget for professionalisation of the staff. It offers

teachers courses (for instance in English and CLIL), trips abroad and exchanges. The coordinator of internationalisation indicated that the research school has also used these events to establish new contacts with possible partner schools. We consider it vital for as many staff members as possible to become part of the international 'feel' of a school and these exchanges provide excellent opportunities to do so.

Apart from professionalisation, teachers also need appropriate coordination facilities within the school to be able to prepare and execute the Elos-programme. All respondents in our research confirmed that active support of school management, in the form of granting sufficient time and budget for coordination, is vital to succeed with Elos. The role of the coordinator of internationalisation, usually the direct link with the European Platform and the Elos network, is of prime importance in this regard. He or she should be awarded a consecutive amount of hours per week to devote to his or her tasks. At the research school, a coordinator of internationalisation was first appointed for the year 09/10. This person has 40 hours on an annual basis to perform his/her duties, which includes drawing up an inventory of all the internationalisation projects that are being organised within the school.

Our additional research into the criteria showed that other key members of mid- and higher-management should be accredited with hours to spend on internationalisation on a weekly basis, but they should meet regularly in order to harmonise their activities.[17] Finally, coordination facilities should be visible and known to all staff. Creating a transparent organisation so staff members know who to address with internationalisation issues is therefore an important requirement for an Elos-school, according to the consulted expert of the European Platform.

2. *Elos / internationalisation has a large support basis within the school*

The success of an ambitious internationalisation programme like Elos is dependent on a large support base within the school. To create and sustain this support base, it is important for school management to increase the familiarity of all staff members with the concept by making internationalisation in the form of Elos part of the school's official policy; to give teachers access to professional development opportunities; to stimulate teamwork and to show appreciation for the efforts of staff members.

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[17] The organisational structure at the example-school has served as a 'best-practice' in our research in this regard.

According to the coordinator of internationalisation of our research school, active support for the internationalisation programme from school management is given by the deputy principal. Amongst teaching staff support for further internationalisation is divided. The research school does try to extend support. The deputy principal and the coordinator of internationalisation initiate cooperative projects between teachers. The deputy principal also sees a positive trend: more and more teachers are becoming supportive of internationalisation when they see the educational effectiveness and the fun it involves. It also provides extra motivation for them to develop their teaching competencies further. Both the coordinator of internationalisation and the senior policy staff member at the example school add that teachers very often already deal with plenty of internationalisation in the classroom, they either may not have been aware of it, or have not documented this aspect of their lessons.

The senior policy staff member at the example school confirmed that teachers should be (made) aware of the importance of internationalisation for the school and the pupils. On top of that, he stated that if school management doesn't show commitment to the internationalisation programme it will not be regarded as important by the staff. A school's management can show its commitment in a variety of ways. School documents have been mentioned above, a large budget for professionalisation as well. Presence of school management at meetings concerning internationalisation or at opening ceremonies of certain international activities are two other examples. More importantly, a management also shows clear commitment by creating an organisational structure that helps to oversee and evaluate internationalisation activities.

3. There is an Elos/internationalisation team that meets on a regular basis

Internationalisation must be carried by the entire organisation, but without a body keeping the overview of all internationalisation activities, schools risk fragmentation, overlap and gaps in their internationalisation programme. The Elos network therefore recommends the creation of a separate internationalisation team within the school to coordinate and stimulate further development of the Elos-programme. This team should meet at least a couple of times a year and should consist of staff members from different school departments and subject sections to ensure the continuity of Elos when individual staff members leave.

The deputy principal of our research school indicated there is no such team active within the school and there were no plans to install such a team.[18] The internationalisation programme is being overseen by the deputy principal; who stimulates teachers to become active in internationalisation projects, implements it in separate subjects, evaluates internationalisation projects and manages the budget. We strongly recommend our research school to install an internationalisation team or committee to harmonise school policy, ensure periodical evaluation, and to guarantee the continuation of its internationalisation policy if one of the key staff members is predisposed. This is also why the Elos-network requires it.

Within the research school teachers have joined cooperative teams to organise activities. Some of these have been initiated by the coordinator and deputy principal, others are initiatives set up by the staff themselves. These cooperative groups are sufficient for the organisation at present according to the deputy principal. Comparable 'bottom up' initiatives are initiated by cross-curricular cooperation teams. We recommend the coordinator of internationalisation and an internationalisation team to coordinate these activities in order to guarantee the coherence and quality of the overall internationalisation programme.

Evaluation and accredition of (formal and informal) learning experiences of pupils

As formal evaluation and accreditation of pupils' international learning experiences by the European Platform is still in development, Elos-schools still have their own systems of evaluation and accreditation, including working with optional extra-curricular language programmes (such as CertiLingua, Anglia, Delff or Goethe) and requiring pupils to write their "profielwerkstuk"[19] about an international theme. The consulted expert of the European Platform expects official certificates, recognized by the European Platform, to be introduced within two years. There is also a broad consensus within the Elos network in The Netherlands that non-formal learning experiences of pupils – international experiences not organised by the school – should also gain some form of formal recognition. A school wishing to evaluate and accredit formal and informal international learning experiences of pupils should start with formulating the competences pupils have to achieve and what sort of evidence is required to prove the achievement of those competences.

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[18] After the presentation of these research results the school however indicated their intention to start up such a team.
[19] This can be regarded as the Dutch equivalent of the 'Extended Essay' of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme.

The research school formally recognises tto-pupils' participation in internationalisation activities and proficiency in English with certificates provided by the European Platform. Outside tto, pupils are offered to participate in Anglia (English), Delff (French) and Goethe (German) language programmes, for which a certificate is given. However, these programmes are extra-curricular and only open to pupils who have shown an above-average aptitude for the chosen language. Furthermore, the deputy principal indicated that some teachers may require pupils to keep a portfolio or, for instance after an exchange project, request that pupils write an evaluation after the conclusion of the project. Other than these, pupils may receive grades for projects, but no other form of formal recognition. Neither is there any recognition for informal experiences. The deputy principal asserted that the research school has no means in place to assess the achievement of affective goals as formulated in the internationalisation plan of 2008.

Precisely in this area, Elos could provide both school and pupils with a more substantive accreditation of its internationalisation policy. Accrediting pupils' learning experiences provides them with evidence of their learning, which they can present to future educational institutions or employers. It makes a vague concept such as 'internationalisation' tangible. Evaluating pupils' learning experiences will both improve the activities and enhance the pupils' learning. We recommend our research school to make evaluation and accreditation an integral part of the international experiences of pupils. The Elos-network is developing ways formally accredit formal and non-formal international experiences. This will make the international learning experiences pupils encounter outside school visible and gives credit to those pupils who prove to be true 'international citizens'.

Facilitation and support of student internationalisation portfolios

The facilitation and support of an Elos pupil-portfolio, the sixth criterion of Element C of the Elos Quality Standard, makes it easier to reflect on a pupil's development, as it contains products from various stages in a pupil's learning process. There is some discussion within the Elos network about the exact format of this portfolio, but there is a broad consensus that pupils should at least be able to describe their language levels, document their international mobility and include their CVs in this portfolio. Preferably they could use (parts of) their portfolio as proof of their international competences in their further study or career.

The European Platform is in favour of the implementation of a digital Elos pupil-portfolio, which includes all (recognised) international learning experiences. The European

platform is developing concrete guidelines for the Elos pupil-portfolio. It is likely that a document similar to the Common Framework of European Competences will be created and used to assess the international development of the student as documented in his or her portfolio.

Although the research school has formulated the goal of implementing the use of a pupil-portfolio with regards to language development in 2008, so far the portfolio project has not been initiated. However, current developments might revive the portfolio project. 3rd form pupils are being subjected to arithmetic- and spelling tests. The progress of a pupil has to be documented according to reference frameworks and this will probably require the use of a portfolio. The deputy principal sees opportunities to expand the content of these portfolios to include internationalisation and/or language development.

Some Elos-schools have already successfully introduced Elos portfolios where others are in initial stages of implementation. If the research school decides to join the Elos-network, it has the opportunity to learn from these experiences and avoid certain mistakes other schools have made in the past. We consider the ICT-facilities at the research school to be more than satisfactory to provide pupils with the opportunity to work on their portfolio. Time and money should be made available to instruct teachers how to work with the portfolios.

Contribution to further development of internationalisation in education

As Elos is a concept and network in development, schools participating in the programme are expected to contribute actively to its further development, for instance through participation in one of the Elos work groups devising the international, subject-transcending projects InterScience, InterArt or InterHealth and by sharing examples of 'good practice' with each other. There is also a financial contribution involved in the shape of an annual Elos membership fee of €2000. More importantly, as the subsidy provided by the European Platform for the initial stages of implementation of Elos at schools is limited, schools must be willing and able to finance the cost of the Elos-programme themselves.[20]

The deputy principal has indicated that so far the school board has not posed financial obstructions in the way of the internationalisation programme, considering the height of the annual Elos membership fee acceptable. However the school's management wants the school to remain accessible to the average income parents. The research school currently charges an

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[20] However, schools can apply for various national and European Union subsidies for specific international exchanges and projects, like BIOS and Comenius.

extra fee for participation in the tto stream, but care should be taken that further development of the internationalisation programme will not require more and higher fees.

Naturally the research school, not being an Elos school, has not played an active role in the Elos network yet, but the school does participate in several international organisations, programmes and partnerships. These include: e-Twinning, the tto network and partnership programmes with schools in Belgium, Denmark, Great-Britain and Canada. If the research school consciously decides to apply for Elos-membership, and fulfil its criteria, we have no doubt it can, and will, contribute to the further development of Elos.

Participation in external systems of quality checks regarding internationalisation

Inquiry with the European Platform has learnt that this final criterion of Element C in the Elos Quality Standard in reality means that the school must be willing to allow external quality checks, mainly by the European Platform. Although the Elos Quality Standard mentions quick-scan and visitation, considering the fact that Elos is still a programme in development, quality checks by the European Platform currently take place in the form of advisory visits, rather than official visitations. Other elements of participation in an Elos-system of quality insurance mentioned in the Elos Quality Standard are self-evaluation and peer-review.

The research school participates in external research projects, for instance by Dutch universities. As the school is part of the tto network its bilingual department has also been subjected to visitations by the European Platform. The deputy principal indicated that these reports were of help to identify the qualities and focal points in the internationalisation programme of the research school.

We have already made a number of recommendations concerning organisation and evaluation that we feel will also enhance our research school's abilities to perform constructive self-evaluations. The external quality check by the European Platform will become a mandatory requirement for becoming and staying an Elos-school. All the elements of the Elos Quality Standard will eventually become official requirements that all Elos-schools have to adhere to. We believe implementing the Elos Quality Standard would be a feasible goal for Broklede and a great improvement for the school and its internationalisation programme.

Conclusion and discussion

This research was aimed at providing the research school with advice on how the management can initiate, facilitate, and support implementation of Elos into the school. The focus has been on those criteria in the Elos Quality Standard that have relevance for the management. On the basis of the research conclusions were made concerning the extent to which the research school meets these criteria. These conclusions formed the basis for the list of recommendations below.

In general we feel that in order to meet the relevant Elos Quality Standard criteria, and enhance the coherence of its internationalisation programme, the management of the research school needs to translate its commitment to internationalisation into concrete organisational changes, such as the formation of an internationalisation team and the upgrading of the position of coordinator of internationalisation. Even if the school would decide not to apply for Elos membership, we believe our findings can still be used to improve the school's internationalisation policy.

This research has tried to fill a gap that existed between the theoretical requirements for participation in the Elos network and the practical implementation of Elos into the school. Although this research has been focused on the situation at one school only and the scope, set-up and methods were very limited, the resulting suggestions are valid. They are supported by theory and the practical experience of the Elos school that has participated in this research. The results have also been presented and accepted as being correct by the schools involved. Therefore, we feel they can provide a school with helpful advice on how to proceed in the implementation of Elos or even provide advice on how better to organise the internationalisation organisation.

As mentioned above, the scope, set-up and methods were limited. This has resulted in several issues that influence the reliability of the conclusions for the research school and education in general. The research was based on the situation in one school which has requested the research to be done. Therefore the conclusions and suggestions may not always be applicable to other interested schools. At the example school we could see that it does not yet meet all the relevant Elos criteria. Although we have not researched this, we assume there are more schools – inside and outside the Elos network – who don't have an internationalisation policy that lives up to the Quality Standard. Some of these schools may be able to use our findings, if they feel their situation is somewhat similar to our research school.

The instruments we used have not been piloted beforehand and although the results of the interviews were checked this could influence the results in a negative way. There were also other, less technical, issues that might have influenced the results. Firstly, the researchers were all three relatively inexperienced practice based researchers. Secondly, far into the research the research plan was still being adjusted, mainly aimed at narrowing down and specifying the research question and sub questions. This has caused that the actual research was conducted under considerable time pressure. The interview with the deputy principal at the research school was also limited because they didn't have much time available for the interview.

Taking this into account, the research can still be considered a success. All the required data have been collected, relevant and researched conclusions have been drawn, and on the basis of these useful suggestions could be made. For those wishing to repeat a similar research, the most important advice would be to reserve enough time for the research itself, expand it to other schools if possible and make sure the instruments are piloted. Another advice would be to involve an experienced practice based researcher into the team to give support on technical issues and possible pitfalls.

Suggestions for further research include further practice-based research into the implementation of individual criteria of the Elos Quality Standard. Future research could thereby focus even more on the practical implementation of Elos Quality Standard to identify possible stumbling blocks and formulate solutions to problems in implementation. Considering the European Platform and the Elos network are in the process of formalising the evaluation and accreditation of student activities within the Elos programme, we think research into evaluation mechanisms such as the EIO-test and the Elos student portfolio could be especially relevant. Other interesting topics could include: teacher mobility and cooperation amongst staff and between management and staff.

List of recommendations

The following recommendations to school management are applicable to the situation at the research school, but may also be valuable to other schools wishing to improve their internationalisation programme and/or are considering to implement Elos.

- Make internationalisation an integral part of the school plan.
- Transform the existing internationalisation plan into an Elos management plan, following the structure of the Elos Quality Standard: this will make internal and external evaluation easier.
- Upgrade the position of the coordinator of internationalisation (c.i.):
    - Structurally increase the task hours
    - Create a fixed time slot for his/her tasks
    - Provide with office: this will increase accessibility and visibility
    - Make it a middle-management position
- Empower the c.i. to make an inventory of internationalisation activities outside and inside the classroom on an annual basis.
- Create an internationalisation team (i.t.) to coordinate, support and evaluate the internationalisation programme to ensure coherence and continuity.
- Make discussions with teacher on the implementation of internationalisation into the curriculum a structural part of the tasks of the c.i. and/or i.t.
- Members of higher management can show commitment to internationalisation by regularly being present at meetings of the i.t. and activities.
- Use the EIO test and the Common Framework of Europe Competence (CFEC) to design a coherent international learning route.
    - The same documents could also be used to evaluate the programme.
- To evaluate and accredit pupil learning experiences systematically.
- To enlarge the support base for the portfolio investigate in what other ways the portfolio can be used, e.g. document language and arithmetic skills.
- Join or initiate a regional network of (Elos) schools for peer-review purposes.
- Share your experience and projects with other Elos-schools for mutual benefit.