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PARTNERS IN EXCELLENCE

Evaluation Report

Richard Johnstone, Hannah Doughty & Irene Malcolm

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FOREWORD

The Partners in Excellence Board of Management is delighted to receive this independent external evaluation of the project. On behalf of the Board I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Richard Johnstone and his colleagues for their work on this report. I would also like to thank head teachers, teachers and students in all the Partners in Excellence schools for their assistance and support throughout the evaluation process.

It is clear from the report that Partners in Excellence is making a significant impact on the teaching and learning of modern languages in the participating authorities and is now an essential part of languages education within the virtual community of languages learners in Argyll & Bute, East Ayrshire and North Ayrshire. The Board is committed to the continued development and looks forward to continuing to work with all involved.

John Mulgrew, Chair, Partners in Excellence Board

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

1. 'Partners in Excellence' (henceforth PiE) is supported by the Excellence Fund of the Scottish Executive Education Department for the benefit of modern languages students across three education authorities (Argyll & Bute, East Ayrshire and North Ayrshire). Its three main stated aims are:

   - to raise attainment of all modern languages students in S5/S6 and improve uptake post S4;

   - to develop an appropriate environment for ICT-assisted learning and teaching; and

   - to build a community of language learners and teachers across the authorities.

2. Students are mainly in the upper secondary school. A key intention is to support them in engaging with various innovative aspects of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), including the use of a specially designed PiE website (available for public access at **http://www.pie.org.uk**), a LanguageZone (consisting of a Virtual Learning Environment, or VLE, for participants in the project seeking to further develop particular aspects of their language proficiency, available at **http://www.languagezone.org**) and opportunities to link the development of skills in digital video production to their emerging command of their particular foreign language (French, German or Spanish), with Scottish Gaelic also featuring on one occasion. Linked to this are other modes of activity such as residential weekends, short-term immersion visits to the continent of Europe, conferences, special gala events, summer courses and roadshows.

3. PiE came into being at a time of major importance for languages in Scottish upper secondary education. The report on Foreign Languages in the Upper Secondary School by McPake, Johnstone, Low and Lyall (1998),[1] funded by SEED, had tracked the unremitting and major decline in modern languages presentations at Higher since 1976 and had identified a range of factors which lay behind this. These included a perception by many high-performing students that a modern language had a rather dusty image compared with other subjects and that it was lacking in intellectual excitement; that nonetheless a Higher in a modern language was perceived as being very difficult; that even though they were gaining the highest grades possible in their national examinations they were in fact not really able to use their modern language well enough and with sufficient confidence in real communication with their peers in other countries. Would then the advent of

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[1] McPake, J., Johnstone, R. M., Low, L and Lyall, L. (1998). *Foreign languages in the Upper Secondary school: a study of the causes of decline.* Edinburgh: SCRE. (135 pages).

McPake, J., Johnstone, R.M., Low, L and Lyall, L. (1998). *Foreign languages in the Upper Secondary school: a study of the causes of decline.* Edinburgh: Scottish Office Interchange Series. (12 pages).

PiE, with its significant governmental funding, help to turn this deteriorating situation round?

4. Given the significant scale of the project at a time of major importance nationally for modern languages, the Project's Board considered it essential to introduce a process of monitoring and evaluation from the start. Professor Richard Johnstone (Director of Scottish CILT) was invited to become a member of the Project Board and it was agreed it would be appropriate for him and his colleagues at Scottish CILT to take responsibility for monitoring and evaluation. 'Monitoring' is understood here as a process of keeping track of what is happening which is complemented by 'evaluation' as a more considered judgement on how effectively the project is achieving its aims.

5. During the lifetime of the project thus far five interim reports have been produced:

   - Interim Report 1 (April, 2001)
   - Interim Report 2 (November, 2001)
   - Interim Report 3 (January, 2002)
   - Interim Report 4 (August, 2002)
   - Interim Report 5 (October, 2003).

6. Each report is discussed with the Project Board which includes the Director of Education (or equivalent) for each of the three authorities and the Project Co-ordinator. Findings and recommendations can then be passed on by the Project Co-ordinator or by one of the evaluation team to the PiE Implementation Group (which has membership from all three authorities) and at appropriate times also to teachers, advisers and headteachers directly, as happened for example at a PiE conference in Kilmarnock (2002).

7. The present report summarises key findings from all five interim reports. It focuses on findings only, and for present purposes does not seek to convey detail about the particular techniques of sampling or data-collection or data-analysis which were used. Detail on the latter will be given in subsequent, more academic publications. Suffice for the moment to state that the main method of data-collection was semi-structured interview (although in a minority of cases questionnaires were used) and the number of respondents for each report was:

Report 1	13 staff	57 students
Report 2	18 staff	22 students
Report 3	0 staff	25 students
Report 4	10 staff	114 students
Report 4	5 staff	57 students

   The present report then conveys a sense both of how the project has developed since it began (August 2000) and of the position it has reached at present (Spring 2004).

8. The key findings of the evaluation thus far are set out in the next two sections of the report, dealing with:

   - Student perceptions, and then
   - Teacher perceptions.

The report then provides a final section:

- Discussion and conclusions

which seeks to situate the PiE innovation within the broader context of modern languages in Scotland and to suggest some pointers for the future.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

9. In this section we report on students' perceptions of:

*   the residential weekends, in which they learnt to make digital video-films of stories, soaps etc which they themselves had created during that same weekend;

*   the visits to the continent of Europe (to Tarragona and Palma de Mallorca in Spain, to Marburg in Germany and to Lille, Nice and Strasbourg in France) in which students had the opportunity to meet young people of their own age and to immerse themselves in the language and the culture;

*   the general impact which they felt PiE was having on them as language-learners; and

*   the website and LanguageZone.

Their perceptions of the residential weekends

10. The 'film-making weekends' were beyond any doubt a highly positive experience for the great majority of participating students. When asked what they enjoyed most about the weekend, the fun and social element scored highly. The students enjoyed meeting peers from other schools and they generally got on very well with each other.

11. The great majority claimed to have found it confidence-boosting to test their language skills in a different social context and to learn that they were 'no worse' than the students from other schools. A small minority of students seemed rather more ambivalent about the weekends, possibly because of a lack of social confidence.

12. A sense of achievement and a feeling of empowerment were other clear sources of satisfaction. The students emphasised how pleasing it was to realise that they could operate the new equipment and manage the task they had been set with only limited instruction and assistance

13. As for the language content, most students claimed to have spoken a lot of their target language during the weekend. In general, the students found the language used for the video to be more informal and colloquial than the language with which they were familiar in the classroom. Some thought this had made the learning experience to be more interesting and relevant, as they considered this kind of language closer to what they would use if they went to the foreign country.

14. Many students highlighted the presence of the foreign language assistants as beneficial, not only because they were an approachable and useful source of linguistic help but also because it gave the students an opportunity to use their language skills with a native speaker. The students rated the direct contact with native speakers very highly.

15. One student had even decided to continue with languages at university level as a direct result of her positive experiences on the 'film-making weekend' and with other project activities. One school had made a special plea for students from S4 to be included, two of whom subsequently indicated that their participation in the weekend had positively changed their decision on whether to take languages at 'Higher' grade.

Immersion visits abroad

16. In March 2001, an opportunity arose to organise a visit to Lille (France), developing links between East Ayrshire and Lille Education Departments. Given the close links between East Ayrshire and the Groupe d'Établissements Scolaires (GRETA) in Lille, it was decided that the focus of this visit would be the world of work, and that the most appropriate target group would be S6 students, most of whom were involved in Advanced Higher French. Activities combined interview skills with cultural visits and opportunities to develop confidence in spoken French.

17. The evaluation of the organisation of the visit was extremely positive, with one student saying:

    > *I have been on many out-of-school visits with various organisations and this visit rated the best in organisation.*

    All aspects of the week's programme were positive, with the visit to the European Parliament being rated as 'excellent' by most (82% or 19) of the participants.

18. One question focused specifically on how successful the visit was in immersing the students and encouraging them to speak French. In this important aim, it was highly successful, with most students saying that they had spoken a lot of French and that their confidence to do so had received a great boost. Before the visit most students (12) were either 'a bit' or 'very' insecure about speaking French and only four were 'confident' or 'very confident'. After the visit, seventeen were 'very confident' or 'confident' and four students who had been 'very insecure' before the visit were now neutral. It is worth noting that a few students specifically mentioned liking the opportunity to speak when they undertake visits. Students also mentioned that they are now seeking an opportunity to meet 'real French people'.

19. An issue for further consideration is how such visits can be integrated with the students' learning on return to their school. Most students were at the end of the sixth year and one of them pointed out that, although his confidence was high at the end of the visit, there had been no opportunity to consolidate this. Because the visit came at the end of the academic year, presentations to students in S4 and S5 which were envisaged as part of the programme were only undertaken by two of the students who participated in the survey. For these students the experience of giving a presentation to somewhat younger groups was extremely positive and gave them the opportunity for consolidation and further self-directed learning.

20. A potentially positive aspect of PiE for participating students is the opportunity to develop transferable skills. Taking responsibility for a task and seeing it through, presenting in a foreign language and working in a team all involve

the development of social, communication and organisational skills. The fact that all students who visited Lille, most of whom had never met before the visit, have kept in touch with other members of the group after the visit is likely to be a healthy sign in the development of social skills.

21. Following the visit to Lille in March 2001, the PiE Board was keen to develop similar activities for students of other languages. Firm links existed between North Ayrshire and Tarragona in north-eastern Spain, and an immersion visit was organised involving students of Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher Spanish from the three participating authorities. Most had not participated in PiE activities before. The programme was well received, described by one student (for example) as *an unforgettable experience.*

22. The students welcomed the opportunities to meet young Spaniards and to converse with them, and expressed the desire for further opportunities to speak the language. There appeared to be positive benefits in relation to the students' social skills, and there was clear evidence of an intention to keep in touch with the fellow students whom they had met for the first time on the present visit.

23. All students felt that their levels of confidence had improved as a result of the visit, and all except one student felt 'very confident' or 'confident' with their Spanish on their return.

24. There were some issues of preparation and follow-up which might benefit from further reflection. Only one student, for example, had received any language preparation before the visit (s/he found this to be useful). While most of the students commented that they regarded such language preparation as unnecessary, because they felt they knew the language quite well already, this is not entirely confirmed by their responses to the questionnaire concerning their levels of confidence before the visit. In addition, it would be worth considering how visits such as this might be followed-up. Only two students were asked to give presentations on the visit after it had taken place.

25. Further visits were planned for groups of students studying French, German and Spanish over subsequent years. These included visits to Strasbourg, Marburg and Mallorca. In each case, existing international links were further developed. As a proportion of those interviewed, the number who had taken part in the visits abroad was relatively high (30/57). The experience for participating students had been invariably positive:

> *The visit to the European Parliament was mind-blowing – before I didn't have much interest in the EU but the trip has changed the way I feel.*
>
> *It [the trip to Marburg] was fantastic – the [linguistic] benefits may have worn off a bit but the memory of the trip keeps you going.*
>
> *I thoroughly enjoyed Euroscola […] it was really intense but it has made listening a lot easier now.*
>
> *We had lots of opportunity to speak Spanish (Mallorca trip).*

26. As a contrasting note, students in one group referred to a (not PiE-related!) trip abroad, which was not successful because there had been virtually no native speaker contact and teachers had taken over any opportunity for speaking, e.g. in restaurants.

27. Inevitably, the number of places available for visits abroad is limited, and uptake amongst schools is uneven. In order to offset the disappointment of not being selected, or not being able to go, the Implementation Group has sought to increase participation in other ways, e.g. through interactive visits via the public PiE website where students at home are able to follow the daily progress of the students on the trip.

Their perceptions of the general impact of PiE on them as language-learners

28. One of the issues most frequently discussed by the students was the opportunity to use their language 'for real'. For many students, this had been the case as a result of participating in PiE activities. Only in isolated instances did students refer to visits abroad with the family, or of being able to use the language with tourists visiting Scotland. Thus, quite clearly, the existence of PiE has made a distinctly positive impact on the lives of these students:

> *I wanted to do Advanced Higher German anyway but I didn't think that it would make such a difference and that I'd find modern languages so important as a result of the immersion week.*

> *PiE got me to use French outwith the class – it helped me stay with French because at start of year I felt I was DROWNING, with all the grammar being THROWN at you.*

29. By contrast, outwith PiE there appeared to be few opportunities to use the language spontaneously in class. A number of students said they wanted to express themselves and their opinions in the target language.

> *We'd like more speaking with the foreign language assistant, and more contact abroad.*

> *At the moment we just learn speaking tasks by memory, we don't get to think about it.*

Their perceptions of the PiE website and LanguageZone

30. In our earlier interim reports we had indicated that there seemed to be a lack of perceived connection between PiE and what counted as everyday classroom activity (which inevitably was largely geared to the national examinations). A significant feature of the revised LanguageZone (launched in November, 2003) in this respect is the inclusion of a range of topics which fit well into the syllabus for S5 and S6 students, thereby bringing PiE and what we might term 'mainstream class teaching' much more into the same frame. Each of the texts featured on LanguageZone includes a 'learn' section which affords additional analytical information about the texts which are displayed. A Surgery allows students to submit questions about vocabulary

and structure and to receive live on-line help at appointed times, with the full discussion between student and on-line teacher eventually becoming available in the KnowledgeBase for future users who are exercised by the same question. It is intended to provide audio versions of some if not all of the texts which students can download. These are featured on Radio PiE for the time being. In all of these ways, the project is showing itself to be highly sensitive to the perceptions of the students who after all are the intended beneficiaries of the site.

31. Our empirical findings in respect of student perceptions in this area are inevitably tentative, given the relatively recent emergence of the revised LanguageZone. However, we have already been able to ascertain (Report 5) that almost all students claimed to be aware of the 'virtual' provision which is available to them, e.g. the PiE Blog (a section of the public PiE website) which allows parents to keep in touch with their children via e-mail when their children are on immersion visits abroad. LanguageZone is used by students to keep in touch with their new-found friends after the visits (film-making weekends and foreign visits) and indeed in the preparation for a visit beforehand when students are encouraged to use it as a means of getting to know one another.

A smaller number of students were *additionally* using the site regularly to get help with their homework and found this to be most effective.

I usually get responses from several teachers!

32. Subsequent discussions with the Project Co-ordinator suggested to us that some students may still not be aware of how fully to engage with all the features of the new LanguageZone, but a considerable amount of effort and expertise are being put into making it as user-friendly as possible. The revised version was influenced by a process of consultation with students on the bulletin board for the site, and a working group of key users was established. The implementation group have offered to go into schools to work with students in order to show them how to get the best out of the site.

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

From Report 1

33. All teachers interviewed were enthusiastic about the project and pleased to be part of it. They said they were happy to embrace new ideas or projects which might help their subject.

34. They all had a clear picture of the aims and objectives of the project and were generally satisfied with the amount of information they had received and the way in which it had been imparted. Some teachers said the stream of information had increased lately and welcomed this development.

35. In general teachers found that the implementation of the project was going well, though the installation of equipment seemed to be going rather slowly.

36. All teachers had received very positive feedback from students participating in the film-making weekends. Some thought the students seemed more motivated as a result. When asked if they thought the project would be successful in reversing the decline in the uptake of foreign languages post-16, most teachers responded that they thought PiE would need to be brought down to S4 and possibly even to S3 to achieve this desirable effect. Some said they would take on this task themselves by including the use of ICT in their teaching of these age-groups in the future.

From Report 2

37. Whilst some aspects of the findings will require consideration, it may be stated with confidence that the attitudes of the participating teachers are generally very positive. When asked what they hope PiE will achieve, all have very clear views and a strong appreciation of perceived key aims of PiE, with most replies relating to the popularity (uptake) and the image of the subject. It also appears that teachers view the foreign language as an opportunity to develop students' social skills and to widen horizons. The vast majority of teachers have high expectations of the project itself with most expressing the belief that PiE will achieve these expectations.

38. At this stage not all teachers had received PiE ICT training. Those who had received ICT training found it 'excellent' or 'very good'. After receiving the training the majority felt 'very confident', although a few were more cautious. Praise was given for the effectiveness of the training programme and the support provided by the Project Co-ordinator and others involved in the training. Where teachers had already received the PiE ICT training, it is interesting to note that they tended to be more ambitious and optimistic about the general level of ICT competence to which they might aspire, anticipating the achievement of a high level of skill. Those who had not yet received ICT training tended to be more cautious when predicting their future attainment level. The fact that ICT training seems to have boosted teachers' confidence in this area to such a degree is an important benefit of the project which is worth highlighting.

39. One teacher commented that there was now a need to win over other teachers to the use of ICT. If it is the case that the investment return on ICT training is high (boosting confidence and stimulating further self-learning), the Board may wish to look into the issue of extending the existing successful training to other language teachers in project schools. This would require action from project implementers since in-service plans in some authorities have already been drawn up.

40. Teachers had clear views about whom they thought the project should target. Most saw it as targeting the full range and S5 & S6 in particular. (It is worth mentioning that the initial focus of the project was established as S5/6 through the original proposal which was submitted to SEED.) Those who thought the project was for elite students added that this was the target in the first instance and that the aim was to achieve a 'trickle down' effect. The vast majority of teachers emphasised the longer-term benefits of the project as being for the whole range and the need to start the project further down the school in S3 or S4. There was specific mention of the need to attract pupils for whom a language Higher was not an automatic choice and one teacher commented that the 'far reaching effects [of the project] will hopefully be on a wider audience'. The benefits of bringing the project further down the school were evidenced in one school where S4 pupils were targeted and they are now able to run their first Higher class after a number of years without one. 'We must avoid elitism' and 'should be for everybody' is a sentiment which is echoed frequently in the interviews.

41. Across the project there was marked variation in the approach taken to installation, with the most effective being the allocation of special ICT technicians who visited the schools and installed the equipment over a dedicated period of time. There, installation was rated as 'going smoothly'. In other places however it appears that no equipment had been installed, teachers did not know when this would happen and they seemed to have no way of exercising influence.

From Reports 4 and 5

42. Teachers' views of PiE were generally very positive. The interviews offered an opportunity to explore in some depth what they regarded as the advantages that PiE offered, whilst also affording them the opportunity to discuss their view of problems and possible solutions. All of the teachers said that PiE had had an impact on them as teachers and they welcomed the fact that it had 'pushed them down the road of ICT'.

> *It has encouraged me to keep abreast of things.*

> *We need to be more confident – ahead of the students in the use of technology.*

43. Teachers were united in their perception of PiE, which they saw as aiming to increase the student uptake in languages and generate enthusiasm for the subject. When asked where they saw PiE fitting into their department, the great majority tended to see it as an 'extra', as supplementary to the work of the department:

> *…as an extra – it adds a dimension.*

> *It helps that people other than the Modern Languages teacher say that languages are important.*

44. Most of the teachers believed that CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) could help to make language learning more effective.

> *It can individualise learning.*

> *It allows students to redraft and to print out.*

However, some of those interviewed emphasised some basic problems, which CALL could not mitigate.

> *We still need books and up-to-date courseware.*

Most of the teachers interviewed felt that CALL also had a generally favourable impact on teachers, affording them increased variety. A few teachers identified a problem with confidence and made the point that it took time for teachers to adopt new approaches.

> *We want to do it, but it needs support and confidence.*

45. Whilst problems still persist relating to the installation of the ICT equipment, the issue of implementation is also worthy of consideration. More time and further support will be needed to allow teachers to develop experience and pedagogical techniques which exploit the media on offer in such a way as to make a real difference to the learning experience. There is certainly considerable scope to use ICT to address the students' interest in using real language and communicating with real people beyond the confines of the classroom. Further networking and the sharing of ideas, which was evident at the recent PiE conference, may help support teachers in the project in developing their approaches.

46. As in Interim Report 4, teachers' views of PiE were generally very positive. All of the teachers said that PiE had had a positive impact on them as professionals, in that it had increased their awareness of the potential of ICT, and that it had enabled them to update their own knowledge about events abroad. Most of the teachers interviewed felt that CALL also had a generally favourable impact, affording them increased variety.

47. All teachers interviewed were also united in their perception of PiE, which they saw as aiming to increase the student uptake in languages and generate enthusiasm for the subject. They also saw some the *technical benefits* for teaching:

> *The i-Board has really excited the teachers, they can see the potential benefits.*

However, when asked where they saw PiE fitting into their department, the teachers interviewed tended to see it as an 'extra', as supplementary to the work of the department.

> *I feel PiE is complementary to the main teaching.*
> *It's as an extra only, but it's very useful.*

Most of the teachers believed that some CALL could help to make language learning more effective.

48. If the above presents a positive picture of the perceptions of PiE held by participating teachers, our data also inevitably point to a number of issues which the Board, the Project Co-ordinator, the Implementation Group, the authorities and the school staff themselves are already working on. These include the following two:

49. **Issue 1: the integration of PiE activity (much of which is out-of-class) with mainstream classroom activity geared to national requirements.** Is PiE (as one teacher at an early point in the project stated) 'the icing on the cake', or is it to be viewed as more integral to students' experiences? Our data from teachers suggests that if some of them schedule time in class when students go on a weekly basis to look at LanguageZone blogs and feed back to the blog-writers, others (a clear majority) feel they are sacrificing valuable time. Our data from students on the other hand suggest it would be useful to spend some class-time preparing for forthcoming immersion visits abroad or video-weekends, and to follow these up once they had taken place, both in order to reinforce the learning which had occurred in the students who took part but also in order to offer some benefit to students who had not been able to participate.

50. **Issue 2: maximising the use of PiE equipment.** In most schools the basic PiE equipment had been installed by the end of session 2001/2, but there remain issues of maintenance, of technical support, of training and of pedagogical support for teachers, to ensure that it is used in ways which reflect the potential which the new medium has to offer. Again at a fairly early point in the project, some students felt that the new equipment was being used in class in order to reproduce more or less the same sorts of activity as they encountered in their normal course materials. It is true to state that as the project has evolved, it has progressed well beyond this, and a wide range of stimulating activities has been developed which reflect the potential of the new medium very well, but this in itself can raise issues of CPD support for teachers as well of course as for the students themselves in respect of the particular strategies they will use in order to exploit the new medium successfully.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

51. There can be no doubt that PiE has achieved considerable success in respect of its stated aims. Our report has focused mainly on the perceptions of students and their teachers. The attitudes, motivation and aspirations thereby revealed are generally strongly positive. It is true that not every school, teacher and student has made the same progress. In a project as innovative and ambitious as PiE this would be an unrealistic goal. The image then is perhaps one of a comet with a tail, but a range of supportive and (where necessary) robust measures continue to be put in place at project-, authority- and school-levels to maximise the benefits of the project for the maximum number of students.

52. It will be useful to relate our findings to two sorts of additional data which are available.

53. First, we can relate them to the independent data on uptake and attainment in the national examinations which the three authorities commissioned. This compares figures for S5 candidates in the national examinations in 2000 with those for 2003. In the case of all three authorities there is an increase in uptake (in Argyll & Bute from 9% to 15% of the S5 roll; in East Ayrshire from 8% to 16%, and in North Ayrshire from 12% to 17%) and also in passes (in Argyll & Bute from 7% to 12%, in East Ayrshire from 6% to 14%, and in North Ayrshire from 9% to 13%). Moreover, when comparisons are made within the national family of similar authorities/schools, these in most cases favour schools in the three PiE authorities.

54. It seems to us likely that, in research terms, the two key dependent variables of uptake and attainment have been positively influenced by a cluster of variables associated with PiE. These include:

- positive attitudes, motivation and aspiration

- additional time for learning (e.g. arising from use of ICT, from residential weekends, from visits abroad)

- greater opportunity to use the language for real in association with peers and native speakers, for purposes which they come to value

- development of a modern, 'cool' image for modern languages, partly through association with the development of digital video production, and an opportunity to display products at gala events

- creation of a larger community of language learners and users which in one sense is partly real and partly virtual, and in another sense is partly local, partly regional (across the three authorities), partly national and partly international

- provision of an on-line VLE which increasingly is able to offer students opportunities for consolidating their learning and use of their modern languages in ways which are designed to take account of the

requirements of their syllabus and which boost confidence rather than induce anxiety.

55. Neither the evaluation team nor the PiE project team claim that the above are the sole factors determining the increases in uptake and pass-rate. It is in fact not possible fully to isolate PiE factors from other non-PiE factors, and we should always acknowledge that great credit must be given to the commitment and the contributions of the teachers and the students themselves.

56. Second, we can relate our findings to the national study of attitudinal and motivational factors pertaining to modern languages in the upper secondary school in Scotland by McPake, Johnstone, Low and Lyall (1998) mentioned earlier in the present report. In this study (which has come to be known as FLUSS, or Foreign Languages in the Upper Secondary School) the researchers collected data from over 2000 high-attaining modern languages students in S4 and S5, many of whom had decided to discontinue their modern language study at school.

57. On at least three dimensions, there is good reason to believe that PiE has served to move the situation on considerably from that which was recorded in the FLUSS research:

58. First, FLUSS presented clear evidence that many of these high-achieving modern languages students, though possessing positive underlying attitudes to languages (e.g. they did not wish this to become an English-speaking world), nonetheless felt that at school the subject entitled a 'modern language' had a rather dusty, old-fashioned image. They compared it unfavourably in this respect with some of the newer subjects which were becoming available at Higher. PiE on the other hand, to a much greater extent than in any other modern languages project with which we are familiar, certainly in Scotland but probably much further afield also, has succeeded in enabling students at school to perceive modern languages as 'cool' and 'real' and at the 'cutting edge'.

59. Second, FLUSS revealed that many students, despite their excellent grades in national examinations (all of them for example had gained or were due to gain Credit at Standard Grade) were not confident about their language proficiency (which may be understood here as their capacity actually to put their modern language to real use, e.g. in interaction with their peers in other countries). In other words, although they were high in attainment, they felt rather low in proficiency. This in turn appeared to affect their confidence. PiE by contrast provides clear evidence that the great majority of students are gaining considerably in confidence through PiE activity, particularly that which puts them in a position (e.g. film-making weekends or immersion visits) to make real contact with peers and native speakers and to put their language capacity to real, creative use. This is particularly so when the modern language is not a subject in its own right but is used in association with other activities which they value, such as meeting new and interesting people or learning how to do digital video-production. Partly as a result of this, their aspirations towards future language-use become more positive.

60. Third, there is at least preliminary reason to believe that PiE may have enabled Scottish upper secondary students to develop types of motivation which were not evident to the same extent in the FLUSS report. It is worth

commenting on what might be meant by the term 'motivation', since it often tends to be used without much definition. In respect of learning modern languages, the international research literature, e.g. Gardner, 1985[2], identifies two motivational orientations: an 'instrumental' orientation which leads languages learners to seek practical benefit such as gaining entry to Higher Education or acquiring an impressive CV which might lead to a good job; and an 'integrative' orientation in which languages learners seek contact with other cultures.

61. More general research has identified two further well-known types: 'intrinsic' motivation which comes from within the learner and reflects interest, curiosity and sense of challenge; and 'extrinsic' motivation which comes from outside the learner but pushes the learner in a certain direction, e.g. a learner having to learn a modern language because the curriculum requires this or because their job requires it. With young learners at primary school generally, there is little evidence of forms of motivation other than intrinsic – for them, languages can be fun, interesting and exciting. As they approach adolescence, however, the other forms (instrumental, integrative and extrinsic) can kick in. At least, this is what tends to happen in countries on the continent of Europe where the modern language to be learnt is English. However, in Scotland there is less convincing evidence that this actually happens. FLUSS for example did not identify clear evidence of integrative or instrumental motivation in Scottish 16-year-olds; it found that intrinsic motivation was rather low, because the S3-S4 curriculum was felt to be lacking in interest and intellectual challenge; but there was evidence of extrinsic motivation since a modern language was a compulsory subject. The international research on extrinsic motivation, e.g. Ryan & Deci, 1999[3], does suggest however that if it becomes too powerful, then it can obliterate an individual's intrinsic motivation. At any rate, we can claim on reasonable evidence that PiE has promoted some increase in integrative motivation, e.g. students actively wishing to be in contact with their peers in other countries, and some increase in instrumental motivation, e.g. students beginning to see that languages might be potentially useful to them in their further studies and careers. The clearest benefit, however, seems to be in the area of intrinsic motivation. e.g. students finding their learning of a modern language to be 'cool', modern, pleasurable, sophisticated and to help them form a new and more ideal sense of self.

62. There is one further aspect of languages motivation as elaborated in the most recent international research literature which seems to be reflected, in preliminary fashion at least, in our PiE evidence. There seems to be an increase in 'willingness to communicate' (WTC) a concept which very recently has received detailed attention from leading international researchers, e.g. MacIntyre, Baker, Clément & Donovan[4] (2003). According to Dörnyei (2003)[5]

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[2] Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: the role of attitudes and motivation.* London: Arnold.

[3] Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L. (1999). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, 54-67.

[4] MacIntyre, P. D., Baker, S. C., Clément, R. & Donovan, L. A. (2002). Sex and age differences on willingness to communicate, anxiety, perceived competence and L2 motivation among junior high school French immersion students. *Language Learning*, 52, 537-564.

this construct comprises several layers and subsumes a range of linguistic and psychological variables. These include linguistic self-confidence, the desire to affiliate, interpersonal motivation and communicative competence. PiE students therefore, in showing increased WTC, are likely to have made progress on some or all of these key dimensions.

63. There is also clear evidence to suggest that many teachers have found in PiE an opportunity to develop professionally, especially through the acquisition of ICT knowledge and skills. Indeed, PiE already offers the opportunity for creating a virtual community of teachers as well as of learners, and there is already clear evidence that valuable experiences are being shared. We have identified two key issues which will benefit from further consideration: how best to integrate PiE with mainstream classroom teaching which inevitably has to focus on national requirements; and how best to support and train teachers, and also to maintain and up-grade equipment and software, so that the potential inherent in the PiE Virtual Learning Environment can best be realised.

In what ways might PiE develop over (say) the next 2-3 years in its next phase?

64. PiE has been highly successful in meeting all three of its aims as stated in paragraph 1 of the present report. This does not however imply that the project is in any sense completed. Rightly, the PiE Board and Implementation Group are keen to push on ahead, in order to take the project to its next phase. The evaluation team considers that this will be in the national interest as well as in the interest of PiE. The thoughts set out below are offered by the evaluation team as a contribution to this process of looking ahead:

65. **Maximising the amount of time (in-class and out-of-class) that students spend in using ICT for languages.** This is a critical factor, because if (for example) a student were to spend only fifteen minutes per week in this mode, then (however excellent the website or software in question) there would be little likelihood of their internalising any gains that would last.

66. **Analysing the nature of the ICT activities in which students engage and the strategies they use for learning through these activities.** It will be worthwhile to consult students and teachers about those activities that they find really useful and the sorts of strategy they employ in order to make the most of these particular activities.

67. **Minimising barriers to fuller integration of ICT into classroom activities.** Initial fears about ICT activities being simply perceived as 'doing the same old thing' were generally not confirmed as the project progressed. On the contrary, students who had used ICT were overwhelmingly positive about its use and were keen to explore this technology further. Some teachers, however, cited both physical constraints and pedagogical objections as barriers to increased ICT use. These contrasting viewpoints need to be explored in more detail.

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[5] Dörnyei, Z. (2003). Attitudes, orientations, and motivations in language learning: advances in theory, research, and applications. *Language Learning*, 53 supplement, 3-32.

68. **Ensuring the social and intercultural benefits of PiE.** Both students and their teachers are clear that PiE brings benefits in this area**,** thereby linking PiE to broader concepts of international mobility, European citizenship and multiple identity. It would be relevant to discover if there was 'progression in intercultural development' in PiE students. Are there any networks, processes and strategies, linked to ICT that might be facilitated by PiE in order to give students maximum opportunities for developing intercultural competence?

69. **Enabling students to learn other subject-matter through the medium of their modern language.** On the continent of Europe and in many other countries further afield, including to some extent in England, there are increasing instances of secondary schools offering their students opportunities to learn other subject matter (often, geography or biology) through the medium of the modern language they are learning (whether this is English, French, German, Spanish, Italian or Russian). By contrast, this has not happened in Scotland. A natural extension of PiE would be to develop its virtual technology in order to offer students the same sort of opportunity as is available in these other countries. A venture of this sort would imply collaboration between languages teachers and teachers of the other subject. Ideally, there would be video-conferencing and computing links with partner schools in the other country, so that students (and their teachers) in both countries could engage in joint projects relating to the particular subject area. In Higher Education there are many examples of fascinating inter-cultural joint projects which have been facilitated by ICT, e.g. Belz (2001)[6], Liaw & Johnson (2001)[7]. If SQA were fully consulted, it is not inconceivable to envisage the eventual development of an additional optional paper in particular subjects which students could take in their modern language rather than in English. They would therefore gain (say) a Higher in Geography through the medium of English, with an additional Geography-in-Spanish supplement. PiE would be very well-placed to lead on an initiative of this sort which would equip students in new and better ways for becoming highly proficient language-users.

70. **Offering benefit nationally, beyond the three authorities which own it.** It is acknowledged that the benefit of a project such as Partners in Excellence will be of interest to other areas of the country. In this respect it is worth pointing out that the Project Co-ordinator has been highly active in disseminating information about PiE to a national and international constituency. The evaluation team considers it is likely to be the case that some components of PiE activity will continue to be experimental and will therefore require careful planning, control and evaluation at project- and more local levels. This will require the sorts of high-level expertise which the Co-ordinator and other PiE colleagues have acquired, in part through their participation in the PiE project. Other components, on the other hand, particularly those which have gone through a process of development, piloting, refinement and teacher-support, may well lend themselves to use in

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[6] Belz, J. A. (2001). Institutional and individual dimensions of transatlantic group work in network-based language teaching. *ReCALL*, **13**, 2, 213–31.

[7] Liaw, M-L. & Johnson, R. J. (2001). E-mail writing as a cross-cultural experience. *System*, 289, 235–51.

parts of Scotland beyond the three authorities. This is a matter which the Heads of the three education authorities and the Project Co-ordinator will no doubt wish to discuss with SEED officials who have responsibility for Excellence initiatives and also with their colleagues in other parts of Scotland. We conclude that PiE is very successful not only because of the excellent virtual materials which it has produced and made available on its websites, but also because there has been a considerable investment over the years in building a community of learners and teachers, one which is acquiring its own distinctive regional culture. In other words, the success of the project is a result of the combination of excellent virtual materials, learner support, teacher professional development and localisation of activity.