

The Use of Project Work to Improve English Language Competence in an 11th Grade  
Group at a Public School in Medellín.

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### **Abstract**

This action research report accounts for the result of exploring how the use of Project Work can improve English Language Competence in a group of 11th grade at a public school in Medellin-Colombia. This research project was carried out during the second and first half of 2017 and 2018 respectively and the results display the positive effects on students' performance and attitudes towards project work in class. Data provided was gathered through observations, journals, an interview and a survey. The findings and conclusions evidence the positive aspects of implementing this approach and the difficulties found along the process.

*Key words:* Project work, Communicative competence, students' engagement.

### **Degree Requirement**

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## Preface

This action research project emerged from my personal and academic interest in using project work to improve English Language Competence in a group of eleventh graders at the public high school Monseñor Francisco Cristóbal Toro in Medellín, Colombia.

Teaching English in a non-traditional way was related to the personal learning experiences of someone like me who believed that learning grammar or translating texts were not enough for learners. Knowing that the students belonged to the *Media Vocacional en Gestión Ambiental* I thought that they could benefit working through the methodology of Project Work where they had the opportunity to work with issues that were intertwined with what they chose to study and their real context. The challenge was to connect those issues, the “*Media Vocacional*” and the institutional syllabus in such a way that could give the students the opportunity to work in collaborative learning groups and with language content according to their level to create a final product. The improvement of students’ language competence along the implementation of this methodology was expected. To frame of this research inquiry, the following action research question was posed: How can the use of project work improve English language competence in a group of 11th grade at a public school in Medellín, Colombia?

### Description of the context

“Institución Educativa Monseñor Francisco Cristobal Toro” is a public institution which serves fourth and fifth basic primary; elementary and high school grades from sixth to ninth; and tenth and eleventh of *Media vocacional*. It also offers two learning acceleration groups, created for displaced, orphan or poor teenagers who have not finished the primary school, and are between 13 and 15 years old. Third, fourth and fifth grades are served in the afternoon and sixth and seventh in the morning for those students.

The institution is located in Aranjuez, a low-middle class neighborhood of the north-east area in Medellin and it has an enrollment of 1835 students from 9 to 17 years old. Most of them come from the school surroundings, belonging to the socioeconomic levels 1 to 3.

The institution was founded in 1925 with the name “Escuela Berlín” which was changed later on to “Escuela la Arboleda”. The name was changed again to “Escuela Monseñor Francisco Cristobal Toro” in 1959, in honor to a bishop born in Santa Fe de Antioquia. In 2002 it becomes “Institución Educativa Monseñor Francisco Cristobal Toro” bringing together the sections “Escuela Ana Frank” which serves pre-school, first and second basic primary; and “Escuela Epifanio Mejía” with second, third and fourth grades.

The philosophy of this institution is based on the respect for others, their rights, values and abilities in search of social harmony, being inclusive of everyone by following their institutional values: *ethical-academic, social approach, inclusion and permanent updating*.

The Mission shows that the integral formation of students in science, diversity and equity is the principal goal and according to the Vision, there is an interest to be recognized for the development of its students through scientific knowledge, bilingualism, technical education and the use of ICTs.

Regarding the infrastructure, the section Monseñor Francisco Cristobal Toro has two floors and a playground in the middle of the building, the classrooms are organized by subjects; thus, the students have to move for each change of class. There is a school cafeteria, a library and a bilingual classroom. There is also one bathroom for girls and other for boys, but they remain closed during the whole day because some students were using those places to have drugs and that problem needed to be controlled. Nowadays if they want to go there, they have to ask for the keys to the teacher who is in charge of them.

The group assigned to me for the first semesters of the practicum is a tenth grade with 32 students with a low English level, 16 women and 16 men who belong to the *Media Vocacional en Gestión Ambiental* group. For the second semester I continue with the same group but being in eleventh grade and with 21 students. They are between 16 and 18 years old. As I mentioned before, students must move from one classroom to another every change of class, but something curious is that even if the institution has a bilingual classroom, they do not go there for the English class since that one is assigned to the Spanish teacher. Consequently, they study English into a wide but traditional classroom where there are computers, but they do not work; there are no other kind of visual aids such as video beam, TV or just posters. There is only an acrylic board, but it is difficult for the students to see what is written there owing to its position and the brightness produced by the reflection of the light in that place.

My cooperating teacher (CT) is graduated as “Profesional en Idiomas” from Universidad de Antioquia in 1990. She has been teaching English around 30 years, 19 in private schools and 11 in Monseñor Francisco Cristóbal Toro, so she has a big knowledge of the institution, its processes and the learners.

The interaction between my CT and the group is excellent; they work very well and she



does not need to raise her voice to call their attention. Undoubtedly, classroom management is an important and satisfactory element for this teacher. From her point of view, even if the students have a low English level, she considers they are a very good group because in her words, “it is easy to work with them, they are well-behaved and willing to work and learn”.

The syllabus of the class is based on the parameters given by the Colombian Ministry of Education for each grade. The contents (themes) for the third and fourth term are: ‘*Sostenibilidad: fast fashion*’ and ‘*Globalización: La globalización cotidiana*’ respectively. The teacher gives her classes following that syllabus (in a straight way), in an attempt to cover all the topics proposed there, but she does not use variety of activities for the class, the dynamic is almost always the same. She uses a traditional teaching method, focused on grammar–translation exercises and memorization, but she demonstrates disposition to try new activities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

By observing several classes, their structure, the kind of activities, materials used for the lessons, students’ participation, performance and having a continuous dialogue with my cooperating teacher, I realized that there are certain factors influencing the correct development of the classes and the improvement of the students’ performance.

Carrying out the observations for about two months, evidences that learners' actual English level does not correspond to the expected one for 10th graders, hence the classes are taught using Spanish most of the time.

Firstly, owing to the teacher beliefs, centered in the importance of grammar – translation over the other aspects of language (speaking, listening, reading), most of the activities in the classroom are written with hardly any production by themselves. They just must transcribe and

translate to their notebooks the different worksheets, workshops or material provided by the teacher and all the activities have invariably the same dynamic. Consequently, students have not achieved a level good enough to work independently. Also, because they must use a folder with grammatical content provided by the teacher from the beginning of the school year for them to learn it, but I have noticed that even if they have it from the time mentioned before, they do not know how it is organized and my CT always has to tell them where the items related to the activities for the class are, which leads me to believe that they are not engaged and they are not taken into account for the development of the classes.

On the other hand, they must work on their preparation for “Pruebas Saber 11”, a standardized test that the Ministry of Education applies to all the eleventh graders in Colombia. The students receive a booklet similar to that test, they solve it, share their answers and present simulation exams. Nonetheless, the preparation in class which consists in translating the booklets, selecting and sharing the answers without reading the statements (just saying A – B- C or D), is not to the syllabus of the course and scarcely provide them with the skills to analyze, comprehend and answer well the items in the booklets, therefore to obtain good scores.

Another issue is that at I.E Monseñor Francisco Cristóbal Toro, schedules are affected by variety of activities, events or meetings organized by the institution or Ministry of Education. These activities affect directly the continuity of the English class because sometimes the classes cannot be given or others, the teacher only have few minutes to teach, which is not enough to have a good and effective class.

After stating the issues mentioned before, I strongly believe that the time limitations in the school make the development of the classes difficult, the concern about the preparation for “Pruebas Saber Pro” and the fact that the students are always trying to translate what is given,

but without being aware of the sense or the connections among basic language concepts, are not allowing to reach a real progress that enable them to use English for communicating effectively with others.

As a result of all the difficulties described above, the use of a different kind of approach is a real need with this group of learners. They need to be an active part of the process and they need to gain confidence in their using the language to express their real concerns and interest. They also need to support each other while learning English that is why I have come upon an approach that can help them work in all the abilities they are to develop at the same time they study English. Such approach I am interested in implementing with them is Project Work as a means to build and learn together being, as learners, the central actors of the process.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Project work is commonly known as a pedagogical approach that has become an important resource in English Second Language courses, providing many benefits regarding cooperative learning, acquisition and the use given by learners to the target language, therefore their communicative competence, hence various authors have carried out different research studies and written about it in order to determine the advantages, disadvantages and the scope of this approach within variety of settings around the world.

Beckett and Slater (2005) define project work as “a valuable way to promote the simultaneous acquisition of language, content, and skills, provided that students in academic ESL classes can see the value of learning through projects, which the literature notes have not consistently been the case” (p 108). In the same way, Fried-Booth (1993) considers that this approach can lead to the usage of English in variety of settings, and states that “project work helps to bridge the gap between language study and language use” (P 7). It is important to

remark that working by projects goes beyond the traditional way of teaching and its goals are not merely connected to the development of the syllabi, grammar lessons or contents. Stoller (1997) states that “Project work is potentially motivating, stimulating, empowering, and challenging. It usually results in building student confidence, self-esteem, and autonomy as well as improving students' language skills, content learning, and cognitive abilities”. In like manner Beckett (1999) has confirmed this through his research saying that “teachers reported having various goals for implementing projects in their ESL classroom such as: Challenging students' creativity; fostering independence; enhancing cooperative learning skills; building decision-making, critical thinking and learning skills”.

Authors like Haines (1989), Fried-Booth (1993), Beckett and Slater (2005), Cárdenas (2005), Stoller (1997) concur with the conception of project work as a set of organized activities and strategies to obtain a final product towards a real theme, concern or issue of interest instead of limited or specific language tasks. All the authors also point out that project work has demonstrated, despite the pitfalls or possible problems, bringing more benefits than disadvantages for both students and teachers.

Fried-Booth (1993), Stoller (1997) and Cárdenas (2005) consider similar stages or steps such as discussion, selection of the theme, stating the outcomes, determining the language required, gathering information, materials needed and the final presentation for project work. As can be seen, project work is a complete process that requires negotiation, attention to the details, empowerment of students to make decisions and define their roles and responsibilities along the project.

Considering the information above, cooperative learning is an important matter to succeed when working by projects since it is necessary to enhance students' motivation,

autonomy and responsibility at each one of the different stages. According to Felder (1994) “The term cooperative learning (CL) refers to students working in teams on an assignment or project under conditions in which certain criteria are satisfied, including that the team members be held individually for the complete content of the project”.

Likewise, Johnson & Johnson (1991), argue that to work cooperatively it is required to consider five elements: positive interdependence, Individual accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, appropriate use of collaborative skills and group processing. For them it is mandatory the existence of these elements to talk about cooperative learning; otherwise, it is merely a work in groups which is totally different and simpler.

Different from the traditional methods, “by its very nature, project work places the responsibility on the students both as individuals and as members of a co-operative learning group”. (Fried-Booth,1993, P. 3). Indeed, the projects are not solely an ensemble of steps for following through. It needs and includes joint efforts and collaboration to achieve the goals set from the very beginning.

On the other hand, talking about learning a second language, project work provides not only the opportunity to work as a whole, but also to focus the attention in the specific students’ reality. Here the language becomes a mean to express their thoughts and believes; propose and discuss strategies and take part of their contexts, leaving the passive attitudes or behaviors apart. Certainly, it is of great importance to develop and/or improve students’ communicative competence which, according to Bagarić (2007), is “a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skill needed for communication” and considered by the Common European Framework of Reference (2001) as “comprising several components: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic. Each of these components is postulated as comprising, in particular, knowledge

and skills and know-how”; consequently, providing the students with opportunities to interact with others within and outside the classroom, with the purpose of integrating all the language skills in a natural non-imposed environment that can give response to the objectives of any project.

### **Research Question**

How can the use of project work improve English language competence in a group of 11th grade at a public school in Medellin, Colombia?

### **General Objective**

To improve the English language competence through the use of project work.

### **Specific Objectives**

- To determine how project work can improve English language competence through the development of activities connected with the syllabus of the institution and students’ lives.
- To promote the integration of communicative skills working by projects.
- To provide students with opportunities to use language in their real context.

### **Action plan**

Bearing in mind that the core of this action research is the use of Project Work to improve English language competence, I will follow a series of stages or actions in order to attain the aim of this project.

Firstly, I will talk to the students about project work, what it consists in, the way in which we will work the next months (possible activities, working cooperatively, responsibilities) and my intention of using this approach to improve their competence for using English. Also, I will

ask for their opinion and discuss the topics they are interested in, but taking into consideration that the “*Media técnica en Gestión Ambiental*” should be integrated with the projects.

Secondly, I will organize the list of topics from the syllabus and I will share different options with the group to choose and vote for their preferences regarding the form of the end product (Magazine, newspaper, video display, booklet, oral presentation), the objective of the project and the manner of presentation. In addition, students will organize the teams for working along the semester and they will assign responsibilities to ensure that all the members of the teams work alike.

Thirdly, with the information gathered, I will plan the classes in such a way that the project’s development is intricately intertwined with the syllabus of the course. The lesson plans will include the language the students need for the different stages of the project, the group activities and the collating information resources (conducting interviews, gathering visual and printed material, etc.). The development of the project will allow to promote the integration of the communicative skills and provide students with opportunities to use language in and about their real context. With this purpose in mind, the mandatory character of using the grammar folder for all the class activities established by the cooperating teacher (mentioned in the statement of the problem section) will be changed to an additional resource for the classes but not the only one that they can use.

Finally, it is important to remark that during the implementation of these actions, the teacher must be a guide for the students but not the person who makes the decisions about the work of the teams, what the students should do for the projects or how they will do their presentations.

Despite the fact that the role of the teacher will be of a guide, reviewing and monitoring

the work is an important component of the whole process; therefore, opportunities to discuss and to provide feedback will be also included into the lesson plans (comments by the teacher and teams' analysis about their own work) for the length of the project.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The data collection instruments that will be used during this research project are: Observations, interview, survey and journal.

The observations of the group and my CT will be carried out during the first semester of the practicum conducive to identify the problem and to decide the strategy that will be implemented. The observation from my practicum advisor will provide valuable feedback and will help me to plan and improve further activities. The interview to my Cooperating Teacher will allow me to know her perceptions about the implementation of my action research proposal. A survey conducted to the students will serve to identify their insights into the methodology implemented. Finally, a journal that is a very important instrument to get information since all the reactions, events, actions and thoughts from the classes will be recorded in it as a means of reflection, making comparisons, applying changes and for extracting the relevant and necessary information to develop the data analysis.

### **Development of Actions**

As it was mentioned in the action plan, observations were carried out during the first semester of the practicum, when the students were in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. I started doing those observations to gather enough information about the group, their communicative skills in English, attitudes, behaviors; my cooperating teacher, her methodology and practices; and about the institution. Everything was registered into an observation journal divided in 3 different categories that allowed me to do a better analysis of the information:



- Description: Here the classes, activities, materials, behaviors (from the students and the teacher), interactions and constraints were registered.
- Interpretation and Reflection: In this part of the journal, I included my perceptions, comments, questions and reflections towards all those facts that were described in the first category of the observation journal.
- Categories: In this part I tried to classify the different situations or aspects described from the classes, into several categories or classes related to teaching and learning strategies, classroom management, assessment, demonstration and modeling activities, etc.

As it can be noticed, all the information from the observation stage was given and analyzed as detailed as possible in order to have valuable data that provided the opportunity to make decisions about which could be the best route to implement the actions established in the plan of my research project.

For the second part of my practicum which was intended to implement my action plan, the students were in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and the group was smaller because some of them changed to another group or failed the previous school year. After having noticed this, I started this second semester of my practicum telling the students about my intention of working with the Project Work methodology as the way to help them improve their communicative competence (this concept was also explained to have a better understanding of my purpose) in English. I described it, talked about the steps we would follow to get the projects, the activities needed inside and outside the classroom and the way of working (cooperative and collaborative). I also told them that even if they would be the ones who made decisions about the projects, we could not leave aside the school syllabus and the “Media técnica en gestión ambiental”, hence they must be intertwined and reflected in the end products. All in all, the idea with this first contact was that

we could have an initial and real discussion where they felt involved, therefore I asked for their opinions, comments and suggestions. The students had a good reaction and they seemed to be keen on learning English in a different way. Having finished the presentation of the methodology, they organized the teams (five teams), chose the issue to guide the research (Environmental issues in Aranjuez/Medellín), the final product (Environmental Magazine/Newspaper) and signed the cooperative group contracts for them to assign responsibilities inside each team.

As for the first semester of the year they had to work on sustainable actions based on the 17 goals proposed by UN, I started to plan the next classes so that the syllabus given by my Cooperating Teacher and the projects were really interwoven. Each class was focused on topics like world environmental issues, natural resources, the goals proposed by the UN among others, coupled with activities that were planned for working in their project groups. The plan was that the students could work cooperatively, watch, analyze and discuss about different issues that are affecting the world to lead them to make decisions about what issues they would like to investigate for their projects, but bearing in mind that the issues chosen must be from their neighborhoods or the city (Medellin).

Once they have defined the issues they wanted to investigate, I presented a proposal for the structure of their magazines/newspapers:

- Cover
- Biographies
- News (minimum 2 and created by themselves)
- Interview(s)
- Campaign

- Classified Ads

We discussed about the structure and agreed on keep my proposal without adding or modifying something. With this information we started to detail our work and to narrow the specific skills, materials and resources needed for the end products, like how to write an autobiography, how to write a piece of news, how to do an interview and whom. When an activity was done, there was a revision, feedback and correction time (they had to present their advances towards their research and receive my comments and suggestions about those tasks).

At the end of all the work the students, the cooperating teacher and the practicum student agreed to do the final presentation first in the classroom and then they would be shown in a pedagogical journey scheduled by the institution and called “Carrusel” where all the groups of the school must present projects or do any activity linked to the different subjects that are given there so that the others could appreciate their work, but some institutional constraints

### **Findings and Interpretations**

After carrying out the different steps of project work, the findings of this research were derived from the different sources of information mentioned in the action plan such as my research journal, observation from my practicum advisor, the students’ survey and the CT’s interview. For the analysis of data gathered from the mentioned instruments, I followed the framework suggested by Burns (2009): assembling, coding and comparing the data, building meanings and interpretations and reporting outcomes.

With all the information gathered, I firstly read and coded the data separately and a list of categories emerged. Then, a triangulation was done to make comparisons and look for connections among all the data. Finally, this analysis led to me to reflect about the research process and the outcomes through the following categories:

### **Institutional Constraints**

In the case of the Institution Monseñor Francisco Cristóbal Toro, time and place constraints were very frequent. The first issue we had to face during the development of the research project was the lack of a permanent classroom for the English class. Therefore, “the class started late..., so we must wait for finding an empty one. (we lost between 10 and 15 minutes of each class for this reason)” (Journal entries, 2018). Likewise, it is important to point out here that even though the institution had a “bilingual classroom”, it was assigned to the Spanish teacher.

By the same token, we did not only lost time of each class but also, we lost many classes due to different institutional facts that were not informed on time.

On the one hand, events like the campaigns from those students who wanted to be the students representative, spent all the time of the class or in the case of my group, was the cause of the absence of at least 12 people because three candidates belonged to my group and they could visit the other classes and branches accompanied by other classmates selected by them.

On the other hand, as eleventh grade students they had to attend several simulations of “Pruebas Saber Pro 11” that were not announced in advance either. As it is stated in the interview to the CT, the students’ survey and the journal entry of every class along the semester, the different school activities, changes on the schedule without prior notice, lack of a classroom and the missed classes were the principal factor that had a negative impact on our work. A student argued that “If there had not been so many trouble to have the classes, we could have started faster and the work would have been much better prepared” (Students’ survey, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

### **Positive attitudes concerning project work**

As project work aims to have a student-centered environment, all the activities were planned with the objective of encouraging students to have a more active role in the classroom and specifically inside their project teams. My first step to achieve this was “tell them that they should avoid using the folder with grammar structures given by my C.T and try to infer the rules by the examples and explanations that I would give them. They seemed to be surprised with my proposal but at the same time they reacted very well to it” (Journal Entry, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Coupled with the information above, a student claimed that project work was appealing “Because the methodology that we worked with before was very different and we worked developing and translating evaluations, besides we had to work with a folder making sentences too” (Students’ survey, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018). According to the journals, student’s survey and the CT interview, the implementation of this methodology provided different possibilities for the students to participate and work in the classroom without being focused on a grammar-translation activity. Besides, all students were involved and could talk about every decision or proposal received from me or any of the other members of the group.

In addition, students appreciated the use of another alternative to learn English. Some of the most relevant answers were: “I think the methodology offered a different way of working because from the beginning we were already clear about what we were going to do, we did not work with the same tools we were used to and the classes were very dynamic” and “we came out of the routine of studying the same thing and still we informed ourselves of what happens in Medellin” (Students’ survey, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

### **Engagement**

An essential part of any educational work is having the participants engaged enough to work hand in hand, accomplish their responsibilities and to have an active role during the whole

process.

It is important to remark that in a public institution as Monseñor Francisco Cristobal Toro, awaken students' interest in the different classes and more specifically in English, which has become a reason for some students to feel frustrated, is a real challenge. This can be taken as an important issue because the different institutional activities pass into drawbacks that interfere with the continuity of the classes, and thereupon constrict students' performance. Furthermore, they are assigned to do tasks that only worsen their frustration and lack of interest. In contrast, when they perceive any changes, they react in a positive way and they work in the activities proposed if those activities have a clear intention and are designed specifically for them.

Concerning this, one of the students said: "the way in which the activities were given was different and they called the attention of the class and that made us all to work" (Students' survey, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Having the students engaged with the class, the opportunities to discuss, negotiate, participate and work were higher. In fact, some of them dared to do some activities with no help from the teacher which shows that they felt confident enough to challenge themselves without fear of having mistakes. This was noticeable in the following journal entry:

"I gave a sheet of paper to everyone to start writing their own autobiography. At the end of the class, the students should hand in their writings. Most of them preferred to do it first in Spanish to have a clearer idea of the correct structure, but 4 students decided to do it in English; one of them said that they would take the risk" (Journal entry, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018).

Equally important was to show myself as a supporter, someone who can be suggested or asked about anything. Concerning this, a student wrote that "all the classmates were very happy with the teacher because he was always sincere and supported us when we needed" (Students'

survey, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018). In the same way, as the students were really involved with their learning process, they were able to work without the continuous monitoring by their teacher. My advisor referred to this when she wrote “discipline and behavior are appropriate. Students are able to self-regulate their attitude and in that way, they respect the teacher and the class” (Advisor observation, October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

Along the duration of this research, most of the teams made an effort to finish their magazines and newspapers in the best way and handed them in, despite the time and institutional limiting factors mentioned before.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, I am pleased to say that despite the different issues and constraints presented along the carrying out of this study, paid off. Although at the beginning the students were bewildered because they had never worked through project work in their English class, they rapidly adapted and felt pleased with this proposal.

Undoubtedly, the findings concur with the Project Work literature. The categories found in the data analysis are consistent with the theory, and reflect positive changes on the students’ behaviors, attitudes and performance. Here the students’ engagement was one of the main factors that increased during the implementation of this research study.

Notwithstanding that the methodology of project work has demonstrated having more advantages than disadvantages, in a context like that of Monseñor Francisco Cristobal Toro where the missed classes, academic events, lack of classrooms, non-informed changes in the schedule and others, its implementation can become a matter of concern because sometimes it seems that to achieve the goals stated from the very beginning is almost impossible.

With regard with the above mentioned, it is important to remain positive and have

everything clear with your students to know their progress and how you can support them if it is necessary.

Looking more closely at the implementation of project work, it is imperative to claim that not only students benefited in this process; I as the researcher of this study found great advantages in carrying out this type of methodology, such as the work in groups, the interactions and discussion with the students without being the one who has the last word and the reflection about how to counteract and manage the negative situations to improve the teaching and learning conditions.

### **Reflection**

From my point of view, project work is a useful methodology to teach a second language towards different topics that are interesting for learners. It allowed them to work collaboratively leading to positive attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, there was higher engagement with the assigned responsibilities since everyone should know everything about the chosen issues.

Even though some of my expectations were fulfilled, I experienced various frustrating situations that postponed some of the activities that I had planned and made us to work faster than was expected. As a result, I found out about it first-hand: The success of the project work implementation depends largely on students but also on some institutional and academic resources and organization, because they are an essential part for the completion and full understanding of the final product. Therefore, when all those institutional constraints are presented as a continuum, there is a risk of losing essential stages of project work and the interaction between the teacher and students can be substantially undermined.

On the other hand, the fact of being teacher in a public school was challenging and a great experience. First, it was challenging because I had not taught in that kind context, just in private



institutions and both have many differences, so I felt a little insecure at the beginning. Secondly, it was a great experience because beyond the feeling of insecurity, I could see that most of the students were engaged with the classes and we talked not only about the contents or the project, but also about their lives. From this experience I confirmed and think that I will always keep in mind what my cooperating teacher told me several times: “We must teach for life first and try that our students become great persons, then teach the contents”.

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