

Deliverable D9.1 FaSMEd Project Evaluation Report Month 24



FaSMEd Evaluation Team:

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As the project evaluators we are grateful for the cooperation of the project team in providing up-to-date information on the project's progress and for answering our questions.

In December 2014 we reported that the project was proceeding successfully in a timely manner and that all deliverables had been completed and accepted as scheduled. That situation appears to be equally true now.

We are particularly pleased to see that the project team has continued to develop links with other EU projects on aligned topics.

A. Comments arising from the project team's response to the Month 12 Evaluation

1. Clarification of the role of technology

Comparing the use of technologies

Table 1 [Technologies used by each partner (April 2015)] gives a useful overview of the digital technologies being used in the project. Given that the particular infrastructure available in specific schools and systems will differ, the considerable variation shown in the table is understandable. The development of a framework which acknowledges a 'Functionality' dimension for the digital technology in use should help to identify, at an appropriately generic level, the role played by such technologies in formative assessment practices (Figure 1: FaSMEd theoretical framework).

Looking at the pattern of variation (in Table 1), there appears to be good scope for comparison across several partners of strategies for making use of the generic digital technologies for communication, etc. (with three partners participating for each named type). This scope appears to be weaker for the more mathematics and science specific technologies. The choice of (two) case studies from each country will also influence the comparisons possible.

The question then arises as to which particular combinations of digital technology type and assessment functionality will the ensemble of cases chosen provide sufficient scope for direct comparison of the use of that combination across several sites and countries? The functionalities which appear across several countries and sites will be the 'sending and sharing' technology and 'processing and analysing'. The most common application for processing and analysing is in the form of the multi-choice quiz, but other applications, such as sharing students' work also occur in several sites.

Point 1: There is a need to acknowledge and value the contexts of different project partners in relation to technology, but also in each case a need to innovate from that starting point.

The comparisons will be the responsibility of WP5 leader and will emerge from the case studies. Adoption by both teachers and students of both technology and FA strategies; the most effective combination of technology and FA strategy; and the extent to which the practice appears to have the potential to become embedded and sustained will be a focus.

Technology use in South Africa

According to Table 1 in the project team's response, two partners (IT and UU) are focusing on one particular technology. Other partners are making use of two or three of the identified technology types. Given the explicit focus of the project, it might seem surprising that the South African partner (SA) is not making use of digital technologies (although other technologies are being used). However, the project has always been explicit that the South African partners were not going to use digital technology – indeed it is this 'difference' that is their contribution.

The rationale for involving South Africa has been well established by the project team. Research and innovation are global activities by nature and must, therefore, be dealt with at an international level first by systematically integrating the national and regional cultural, social, economic and ethical context, and by exploring options for global governance of research and innovation.

It is the case that projects involving technology are frequently used in already enriched environments. In South Africa, where underachievement is very widespread, this project could have a significant impact on the educational standards for the population as a whole. The project will focus on how formative, diagnostic assessment practices can be embedded in classrooms in challenging circumstances – for example where the first language of teachers and students is different to the language of instruction.

2. Toolkit

The point from the Month 12 review about highlighting use of digital technologies has been picked up. However, the evaluation team were initially unclear as to how the first point about the value added by the project to reusable resources has been addressed.

We are now aware that the case studies presently being developed will provide examples of how both teachers and partners have adapted and developed resources identified as starting points for classroom activities. For example, the German and Dutch partners are commissioning extensive development on interactive environments for learning mathematics. Other examples will show how teachers have integrated the use of technology in their practice when using exemplar activities in mathematics and science.

Comments arising from Technical Review Report

European added value

The EC review suggests stronger emphasis on synthesis of collected data at consortium level to highlight European added value. WP5 is the key to this issue and is the major focus for the final stage of the project.

Point 2: The final report of the project should make specific reference to FaSMEd's contribution in terms of 'European added value'.

Focusing of the Toolkit

The EC review suggests that the FaSMEd Toolkit needs to become more focused on how digital technologies support formative assessment for low attainers, and more explicit and complete in describing the level of detail that will be helpful for professional development. Our understanding is that the Toolkit will draw on the case studies and on the film being produced with a clear focus on this issue to exemplify for teachers how such strategies and technology can impact on raising achievement.

Point 3: The Toolkit is a major project deliverable and it will need to be appropriate to the needs of a wide range of teachers in very varied contexts. The evaluation team will be keen to see how the Toolkit develops and how it meets the needs of its target audience.

Priorities for effective dissemination

The review identifies a cluster of issues deserving priority in ensuring the wide dissemination of project outputs: identification of key outputs; translation of outputs; clarification of potential user audience; development of user-facing website. At the same time the project is clearly operating under resource constraints.

In terms of the project team's priorities, the evaluation team has learned that the key element for dissemination must be the development of a website. Newcastle University colleagues are at present engaged in discussion with their institutional administration to ensure that a suitable, sustainable site is found on the university servers. Support for website design and development is being sought within the constraints of our resources.

Point 4: The evaluation team recognises that the development of the project website on the University servers is critically important for the success of the dissemination phase of the project – a key project deliverable.

Comments arising from Periodic Report

Some of the material here is common to the previous reports but there are two substantial appendices concerning the preparation of case studies. If the guidance in Appendix 1 is followed, then the resulting individual case studies should provide a reasonable basis for some kind of comparative analysis across cases to identify patterns and trends. This is likely to represent the major scientific contribution of the project.

Progress on the country-specific analysis

This analysis (as WP5) has been scheduled to take place over 10 months (commencing in Month 22 and finalising in Month 31). The report completed in Month 18 conveys the following picture:

	Finalised	In progress	Neither
Context	9		
Unit	2	2	1
Description	7	1	1
Teacher report/log	3	4	2
Observations	4	4	1
T interviews	4	3	2
S interviews	1	2	6
Attainment	2	2	5

At that point, then, only three months remained to complete data collection and analysis and produce the individual case studies, before the comparative analysis was due to start. In terms of the current position, our understanding is that each partner is analysing data and preparing two case studies. This work is due to be completed by the end of 2015. Within each study there will be a full description of data collected. Each case study will distinguish between ‘intervention cases’ (observed lessons since the beginning of FaSMEd project) and ‘case studies’ to feed into WP5. The first part of the analysis is more descriptive, the second part contains questions that facilitate a brief analysis of the lesson in term of formative assessment and use of technology (related to the research questions of the project).

The two case studies feed into WP5 and one of these cases must be a time-distance activity. In order to facilitate future cross comparison (WP5) across the partners the project team is ensuring that they follow the same writing structure for the cases.

Point 5: In order to facilitate the future cross comparison, it will be interesting to refer to the FaSMEd three-dimensional framework that has been developed in Essen and presented in Budapest at ECER 2015.

Progress on the cross analysis

The cross comparison is due to begin in January 2016, led by the Norwegian partners. Preparatory work in formulating the protocols and guidelines for data collection, analysis and case write up took place from month 22 onwards and has been effective in providing a structure to which all partners are working towards. The comparative analysis is on target to begin in Month 25.

Point 6: The cross analysis is a key deliverable and we look forward to seeing the results towards the end of the year.

December 31st, 2015