

6 EXPLORING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS IN CLIL/BILINGUAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: Continual professional development (CPD) is essential for teachers to meet the professional and psychological challenge which CLIL/bilingual education brings. The provision and nature of CPD is often supported by official national programmes. Such has been the case in Portugal with the PEBI programme. However, this as yet only covers approximately 7% of official schools which does not represent the full extent of CLIL implementation in the country. Teachers and schools have sought alternatives for developing CLIL/bilingual education which deserve closer attention for the strategies used, resources produced and even their understanding of the concept of CLIL itself. This exploratory study investigates professional development opportunities that teachers have identified and used to implement CLIL in schools. It highlights two resources used for professional development: Erasmus+ funded programmes (staff mobility and school projects) and the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Data presented pertains to the situation in Portugal and was collected from web-based research utilizing the Erasmus+ database for the period of 2016-2021 as well as the Conselho Científico-Pedagógico da Formação Contínua (CCPFP) on accredited teacher development courses related to CLIL in Portugal. By discussing the merits and limitations of these resources it is hoped that these cases may inspire teachers, researchers and policy makers in other contexts to develop sustainable professional development practices.

Key words: continual professional development for teachers; CLIL; bilingual education; Erasmus+ programme; sustainable professional development

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Each country has its own idiosyncrasies which influence the implementation of new educational approaches, and all would agree that the preparation of teachers in initial teacher education and the in- service professional development training events for teachers are vital for administering subsequent

programmes in schools and for the success and quality of their implementation. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)/bilingual education is no exception as it is a relatively recent pedagogical approach that many student teachers and in-service teachers in Portugal are not fully trained in. Thus, continual professional development (CPD) is essential for teachers to meet the professional and psychological challenge which CLIL/bilingual education brings, as is the investment in initial teacher education, not only for foreign language teachers but for all teachers (Ellison, 2022).

The provision and nature of continual professional development (CPD) for CLIL in Portugal would appear to be insufficient as several schools and teachers seem to be unable to meet the criteria to be accepted into the bilingual programme (PEBI) when they apply. As a consequence, several Higher Education institutions (HEIs) involved in teacher education have launched CLIL training, monitored CLIL implementation and quality, and supported teachers' experience,

knowledge and skills in the CLIL approach through workshops, local and national conferences, college courses and local interactions with teachers. To supplement the lack of official support to launch a CLIL programme, schools and teachers in Portugal have become involved in a vast range of international professional development activities and interactions that can increase their knowledge of CLIL, such as Erasmus+ funded projects and staff mobilities. These initiatives require researchers to reappraise teacher professional development and view it from a broader perspective that treats teacher learning as constructivist and based on social interaction within communities of practice that may be informal or less formal in nature (Borko 2004; Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999). In this sense professional development can take many forms, be it self-examination, class observation, doing action research or designing a new curriculum (Little, 1993). In fact, there is great diversity in the extent to which teachers seek support and are supported for CLIL through professional development programmes, materials and other resources. Not all of this may be effective as professional development, but it deserves attention in terms of what opportunities are available for teachers.

A study by Ellison, Morgado and Coelho (2022a) looked broadly at the CLIL landscape in Portugal in 2021 which not only included the official 'top-down' policy of the PEBI programme of the Portuguese Ministry of Education but also several 'bottom-up' grassroots initiatives of CLIL implementation in schools as well as and the provision of accredited professional development on CLIL for teachers in from primary to upper secondary education. The findings, which will be presented in this article, help us understand the extent of CLIL implementation in

schools in Portugal and the provision and nature of continual professional development for teachers. Prospectively they will contribute to an understanding of how professional development of CLIL teachers may change their professional knowledge and practice, as well as explore how professional development impacts on student achievement (Desimone, 2011).

6.2 THE PEBI PROGRAMME

In comparison with other European countries, CLIL is not universally present nor compulsory in mainstream school education across all levels in Portugal. Table 1 shows the evolution of the official national CLIL/bilingual programme in schools from 2016 to 2022 over

6 editions of the programme. The Bilingual Schools Programme, *Programa do Ensino Bilingue em Inglês* (PEBI), resulted from a partnership between the Ministry of Education – Directorate General of Education (DGE) and the British Council which, after an evaluated pilot project in a small number of state primary schools from 2011 to 2015, was extended to 38 schools and/or school clusters, of which 7 are private, by in the academic year 2021-2022 (Xavier & Tice, 2022). The current number of schools/school clusters in mainland Portugal and islands is 809 (portugal.gov.pt). PEBI is implemented from pre-primary to the end of lower secondary in mainland Portugal.

Academic year	Edition of Bilingual Programme call	Schools / schoolclusters	Education level
2016/2017	1 st edition	18 schools including preschool / 11 school clusters Preschool	1 st and 2 nd Cycle
2017/2018	2 nd edition	19 school clusters	Preschool, 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd Cycle
2018/2019	3 rd edition	25 school clusters	Preschool, 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd Cycle
2019/2020	4 th edition	23 school clusters	Preschool, 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd Cycle
2020/2021	5 th edition	28 school clusters	Preschool, 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd Cycle

2021/2022	6 th edition	33 schools (29 school clusters and 4 private schools)	Preschool, 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd Cycle
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Ellison et al. (2022a) highlight the slow growth of CLIL implementation, despite its expansion across different school cycles. They also note how it has failed to expand to upper secondary education in Portugal, and that the most noteworthy increase has occurred in the transition between preschool and the 1st cycle. The authors further point out that the regional distribution of the PEBI programme in Portugal appears to be uneven, with the northern region being overrepresented in comparison to the central and southern regions.

Table 1. PEBI 2016-2022

Source: <http://www.dge.mec.pt/programa-escolas-bilinguesbilingual-schools-programme>.

The PEBI programme highlights one of its priorities as being the focus on the content: providing formal teacher training of the curriculum and its adaptation for bilingual education, thus ensuring appropriate re-visitation of curriculum topic areas alternating between Portuguese and English over subsequent school levels (Xavier & Tice, 2022). It also considers collective participation as being key to the type

of professional development being officially offered through the Ministry of Education. Teachers and other administrators should participate in professional development activities together to build an interactive learning community, in order to guarantee continuity of the CLIL programme, to foster the whole school ethos and to secure stakeholder buy-in.

The slow implementation of the official CLIL programme in Portugal (PEBI) and its limited range, as it only covers approximately 7% of state schools which are predominantly in the north of Portugal, does not in fact represent the full extent of CLIL implementation in the country. Although it is claimed that the pilot run of PEBI attempted to follow the implementation model developed by the Spanish Ministry of Education and the British Council in Spain, “in which all classes in the school would participate as the programme was progressively introduced at each school year, starting in year one” (Xavier & Tice, 2022, p.265), staffing in Portugal involved regular teachers rather than teachers specially recruited for the purpose. The level of English of regular primary teachers in Portugal was not always adequate to integrate a CLIL programme since initial teacher education for primary teachers does not include training in foreign languages or CLIL. This

led to the option for schools to introduce the PEBI programme on a smaller scale. The issue for PEBI is that the small scale continues to be the current scenario. Several reasons may explain this, namely there being no compulsory commitment of schools to follow through with the PEBI programme over nine

school years. Additionally, there continues to be no provision in initial teacher education programmes (which is regulated by the Ministry of Education) to guarantee that student teachers who will qualify for pre-primary, primary and lower secondary teaching positions receive training in CLIL and in a foreign language. As recommendations for the future, Xavier & Tice (2022) also prioritise “the inclusion of bilingual education/CLIL modules at initial teacher training level” (p. 276). Furthermore, the authors recommend a sustainable and quality practice for CLIL implementation which is “the acknowledgement of bilingual schools in the Portuguese education system with a view to enabling the direct recruitment of professionals” (p. 276), which is not in place.

Training in CLIL is included in the PEBI programme. It qualifies as accredited in-service training for teachers and is offered by the Ministry of Education and the British Council. This CPD is mandatory for PEBI teachers and focuses on CLIL methodology in bilingual education and practical workshops. Initially there was no CPD on language improvement, which was gradually included. According to Xavier and Tice, the CPD offered follows the ‘INSPIRE’ model (Richardson & Díaz Maggioli, 2018) described as follows:

Our courses and workshops are designed to be impactful (enhancing children’s learning), needs based (highly contextually relevant for the participants), sustained (through consistency between workshop and course content and monitoring follow up after the training), peer collaborative (teachers from the same and different schools, along with the English language teachers supporting them, working on producing ideas and materials together), practical and classroom based (providing opportunities for the teachers to plan activities and carry them out in their classes), reflective (encouraging teachers to consistently reflect on and improve their own practice) and evaluated (seeking feedback from children and peers). (Xavier & Tice, 2022, pp.272-273).

6.3 OBJECTIVE

This article looks into professional development opportunities that teachers have identified and used to implement CLIL in schools in

Portugal or to acquire knowledge on CLIL beyond the official offer in relation to the Ministry of Education PEBI programme. The article highlights two resources used for professional development: Erasmus+ funded programmes (staff mobility and school projects) and additional training activities offered as CPD as examples of strategies that are being sought by teachers to learn about CLIL and implement bilingual education through the medium of English. By discussing

their merits and limitations, the authors explore alternatives of peer learning and support to build CLIL teachers' communities of practice (Wenger, 1999) and Virtual Innovation and Support Networks online as a viable resource capable of sustaining teachers' ambitions of implementing good CLIL programmes.

6.4 METHODOLOGY

Data presented was collected for a study on mapping CLIL activity in Portugal (Ellison et al., 2022b). The authors designed three research questions. The first research question inquired about *the extent of CLIL/bilingual education being implemented in schools in Portugal*. Answers were sought through an online questionnaire using Google forms, with open-ended and closed questions, divided into four sections: information about the school/school cluster; current situation regarding

CLIL/bilingual education at the school/school cluster; situation in previous years regarding CLIL/bilingual education; and future perspectives. After piloting the questionnaire with three schools and being granted permission by the Directorate-General of Education (DGE) to send it to schools, the questionnaire and a cover letter were sent to private and state schools and school clusters in all regions of Portugal – mainland and islands, namely: Alentejo, Algarve, Centro, Lisboa e Vale do Tejo, Norte, Ilhas (Madeira and Açores) first in 2019 and again in 2020. There was a low return with only 28 schools (school clusters) out of the 131 respondents claiming to have run CLIL projects or programmes, both under PEBI and on their own. While these responses provided valuable insights on CLIL implementation in schools, they may not fully represent the overall landscape of CLIL implementation in schools.

The second research question - *What European projects about CLIL are schools in Portugal involved in?* - used a different approach to collecting data: desk research. Summaries of Erasmus+ funded projects for the period 2017-2021 were retrieved from the website <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects>. Selected projects had to include partner organisations in Portugal in order to detail recent CLIL activity in Portuguese schools.

The project summaries were analysed in terms of key action and action type. Special attention was given to School Education Staff Mobility in CLIL when the coordinating partner was from Portugal, as an indicator of existing professional development plans and/or school development plans. Content analysis of course summaries focused on how CLIL was characterised and/or defined, as well as on

how project coordinators describe the implementation of CLIL. The search yielded 208 Erasmus+ funded projects involving Portuguese partner organisations, of which 44 are or were coordinated by a Portuguese organisation. Projects coordinated by Portuguese partner organisations fall overwhelmingly into the School Education Staff Mobility action (27 projects). The Erasmus+ funded resources were valued as examples of bottom-up initiatives in a country with limited official CLIL implementation and interpreted as a form of CPD to which teachers resorted when accredited CPD was either not available for them or not enough to address their needs for knowledge, practice and willingness to extend the benefits of CLIL to their students.

For the third research question - What is the extent of accredited in-service teacher education for CLIL/bilingual education in Portugal?

- The online database of the Portuguese accreditation body for in-service teacher education, *Conselho Científico-Pedagógico da Formação Contínua (Ministry of Education)* was used to search for “ações de formação” (training actions) on CLIL and bilingual education at <https://www.ccpfc.uminho.pt/acoes-formacao/>.
- A total of 10,383 “ações e formação” from 2019 to 2021 was read for CLIL-related terms such as: CLIL, AICLE, integration of language and content, and bilingual education.
- The search also highlighted actions that mentioned training in English and curricular flexibility to contrast those with CLIL actions. Additionally, a Google search was also conducted with the keywords “CLIL” “bilingual education”, “bilingual learning/teaching” (in Portuguese) to explore further opportunities for accredited courses for teachers in Portugal.
- The news section on the Portuguese website of the Ministry of Education (General Directorate of Education) was further used with the keyword “CLIL” in order to identify training events on a national scale. The researchers were able to identify 22 in- service teacher education opportunities on CLIL and bilingual education from 2016 to 2021 and an additional 7 training courses, including those offered officially by PEBI.
- All were offered as accredited CPD that contributed to in-service teacher career advancement.

6.5 RESULTS

6.5.1 Responses to online questionnaire

When analysing responses to the online national questionnaire, the motivation of teachers to participate in CLIL programmes in their schools foregrounds the improvement of student learning and their belief to be advancing education or innovating. Teachers use their new knowledge to improve the content of their instruction and their approach to pedagogy. Teachers emphasise the importance of fostering better coordination and collaboration among different departments and educational levels to ensure a cohesive CLIL implementation throughout the school. The challenges of their CLIL involvement which they choose to highlight concern: their own linguistic proficiency in the FL; the lack of didactic materials and resources associated with lack of time for planning lessons and producing class materials; and the need for articulation and collaboration. One further challenge identified by these teachers is the lack of specific teacher development opportunities.

6.5.2 Erasmus+ projects and mobility

The Erasmus+ funded resources are examples of bottom-up initiatives that do not require approval from the Ministry of Education and are developed through international cooperation. The growing presence of CLIL projects in Portuguese schools beyond the official PEBI programme can be attributed to the dedicated efforts of enthusiastic teachers who are committed to incorporating innovative teaching practices into their classes and the educational system as a whole. These teachers take the initiative to design their own CLIL programmes and materials, integrating them across various subjects in the curriculum. Teachers articulate their involvement in CLIL projects as benefiting their own school students through 'early exposure' to the foreign language (which is in most cases English which they envision as the lingua franca of the global world), promoting future success in foreign language learning (i.e. enhancing vocabulary production), promoting students' professional development, 21st-century skills and transdisciplinary learning, besides increasing the motivation of students and their enthusiasm for learning.

It is apparent that Erasmus+ funding has played a crucial role in supporting various teacher education initiatives at the regional and national level, which have the possibility to modify the school

landscape from a monolingual to an aspiring bilingual school. However, in terms of actual knowledge about CLIL, project summaries and descriptions tend to position it as an overarching umbrella term that covers a methodology, a classroom strategy and a collaborative, transdisciplinary or interdisciplinary student-centered practice. The term CLIL also intersects with many other educational beliefs, reforms and policies that are taking place in schools such as digital learning, citizenship education, education for sustainability, and the pursuit of quality and efficiency in education. This convergence creates some tension and challenges around the concept of CLIL, which need to be addressed. One further issue to take into consideration is whether the degree of dedication and commitment to CLIL implementation in this way is sustainable and guarantees continuity, when projects are funded for two or three years and mobilities represent short (sometimes intensive) one-week training. Nevertheless, this kind of CPD which teachers seek and through which they collaborate with European peers and classes may be valuable to increasing CLIL implementation given that the synergies and complexities arising from its integration are monitored.

6.5.3 The contribution of HEIs to the professional development of CLIL teachers

Within the Erasmus+ programme, specific actions encourage collaborations between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and schools, which may be relevant for provision of CPD. Teachers involved in Erasmus+ projects often receive support from external stakeholders such as universities or polytechnics that possess expertise in teacher education. This support may be guidance and advice to teachers involved in CLIL initiatives, when sought, accredited training events, and assisting them in developing effective approaches and strategies. It is HEIs that often keep track of and document the progress and outcomes of school-based CLIL projects, helping to share best practices and experiences; and it is researchers in HEIs that mainly contribute to the body of knowledge on CLIL through research publications, disseminating insights and findings (through conferences and seminars) that can inform and inspire CLIL practitioners in schools. The desk research on accredited CPD in the area of CLIL identified that, although not substantial, there was a regular flow from 2019 to 2022 in terms of face-to-face and e-learning modalities for learning, including seminars, courses and workshops. The main providers of accredited training for CLIL in English were the Directorate General of Education, in support of the Bilingual Programme (in 2019 - 75 hours, in 2020 - 50 hours and in 2021 - 50 hours); the British Council (in 2020)

- 150 hours), and the Association of Portuguese Teachers of English

- (APPI) (in 2019 - 25 hours and in 2021 - 50 hours). HEIs such as the University of Porto (in 2019 - 54 hours, in 2020 - 25 hours and in 2021 - 16 hours) and the Polytechnic University of Castelo Branco have supported professional development for teachers in CLIL through seminars, workshops and conferences organised locally and regionally in Portugal on CLIL/bilingual education such as the *Working CLIL Colloquia*; *CLIL for Children 2017 National Seminar* or the *CLIL for Young European Citizens 2022 National Seminar* that are also accredited as short duration professional training for teachers on CLIL.

6.6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the low percentage of schools involved in the official bilingual programme (PEBI) since its inception and after 10 years, it seems evident that the national policy on bilingual/CLIL education is encountering some degree of structural rigidity that impedes its growth since the goal is to continue at 7% by 2025. There is no sign that bilingual education has become an educational priority at policy level (Xavier & Tice, 2022). No direct recruitment of teachers for bilingual

schools is made and continuity of the programme in schools has to be evaluated on a yearly basis. No input concerning bilingual education or learning through a foreign language is foreseen for initial teacher education degrees, with a few exceptions for the training of English teachers. Peripheral to the guidelines used for the DGE bilingual schools programme, we witness many types of CLIL implementation that goes unmonitored. They are a sign of vitality and adaptability that should be taken into account when planning the enlargement of CLIL or teacher education for in-service teachers.

There is a limited offer of CPD on CLIL and bilingual education for teachers interested in understanding the CLIL approach or seeking support for their CLIL implementation in schools. The low offer of accredited courses seems to have stabilised since 2019. There is encouragement for schools and teachers to learn from each other's good practice, online sharing of classroom-based CLIL resources through conferences, seminars and colloquia. There is a website set up by the Working CLIL research group at CETAPS that offers teachers a resource bank which may be useful for teachers already involved in CLIL.

However, there is no provision for the development of understanding of CLIL/bilingual education in initial teacher education guidelines for primary education teachers or in the majority of accredited in-service teacher education. It

would be relevant to use CPD to extend training in CLIL and bilingual education to all content teachers. There seems to be room for a wider public of in-service teachers in schools who could be reached through networked training online and small private open modular courses for teachers addressing teachers' specific needs.

Grassroots initiatives of teachers through their involvement with Erasmus+ CPD opportunities to learn about CLIL and implement bilingual education shows that there is a potential of growth that should be nourished, that there is vitality and willingness of teachers and schools to adapt that need to be taken into consideration when planning the growth of CLIL. What may be missing are professional Learning Communities which could give visibility to these school actions in bilingual education through inter-regional dissemination of good practices, perspectives and materials. *Working CLIL* is already a Professional Learning Community (PLC) that promotes a culture of inquiry and collaboration among educators from all school levels, but being university-based, it needs to be able to reach out to a wider community of teachers.

Encouragement of teachers and schools to get involved with international CPD that address their own specific contextual needs and allows them to integrate within wider international communities of CLIL practice that may be more experienced in CLIL implementation may be a strategy for the future that would build teacher training capacity. This kind of CPD goes beyond methodology and language to address concrete classroom problems and involves teachers in peer discussion with other teachers, both student teachers and in-service teachers. One such strategy is VALIANT's Virtual Innovation and Support Networks (<https://valiantproject.eu/>) which "bring together teachers, student teachers and experts in facilitated online collaboration around real-world educational issues" (from the website). These networks, based on virtual exchanges (VE), both synchronous and asynchronous, are organised around six to eight-week online courses that join student teachers, in-service teachers, and teacher educators as facilitators, around school issues they want to learn about and debate. The exchanges are based on the principles of co-learning and task-based learning and encourage the emergence of multiple perspectives. The tasks follow O'Dowd and Ware's (2009) Progressive Exchange Model: information exchange, comparisons and analysis, and collaboration. Participants engage in tasks, background reading, and reflect on the outcomes of their collaborations. The themes of the Virtual Exchanges involve the issues which teachers consider of prime importance for their own teaching context (Sundqvist and O'Dowd, 2022). As but one efficient and cost-effective form of CPD that can reach teachers everywhere, its potential is not to be overlooked for expanding CPD on bilingual education at an international level without the need to apply for funding.

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