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How did you prepare for the assistantship?

A couple of months before I started, I found a Spanish course in mp3 format, because there was no classes available in my area. I e-mailed with my contact on a weekly basis and searched the internet for information on the Spanish school system. I carefully read the attached documents from Comenius to be sure I was ready for the assignments. I also forwarded the email with the information to my contact at the school, so I was sure we were on the same page regarding the terms of my stay. I also made a presentation of my home town, my family and life in Denmark. I bought a dictionary and a book of Danish teaching techniques I am very fond of (Cooperative Learning).

What concrete measures were taken upon your arrival?

At the beginning of the correspondence between me and my contact, we started to find out in what part of Seville would be suitable for me to live in. She found websites, phone numbers and even tenants that would give me offers for flats and rooms, which was a great help. Therefore, I was not worried getting there, everything was planned, and she helped me with transportation as well. When I arrived I was greeted with a meal by my host at my flat, along with materials of the city, tourist maps and "what-to-do-in-Seville" advices. On my first day at work, I was picked up by my contact from my school and was introduced to the members of the staff that I would spend the next 3 months with. She showed me the school, where I should go if I was lost and if I didn't know what classes I should have, along with the bus stops near the school. If I didn't want to take the bus, she had arranged with a lot of other teachers near my home in Seville that they could pick me up. Furthermore, my contact sent me mails on a weekly basis with websites with materials for the classes, things I could do in the city and many other things.

What did you learn about the Spanish educational system?

I have discovered a different way to teach, both in pedagogical and didactic ways. As a teacher in Spain you only teach one or a few subjects which will divide you in departments. This is just for the big schools, but as I was in a rather big school and I was a PE teacher, I see this from my point of view.

The teacher in each department teaches their own subject in many classes, which gives them a high professional standard. The downside of this is the relationship between teacher and student. For instance has the PE teacher only PE with a class 2 hours a week and it is hard to get a close relationship with the student in this short time. It is therefore harder for the teacher to differentiate the material to accommodate each student. One thing that I really noticed was the high level of theory. The lessons were characterized by a lot of theory, and what I would call memorization. Compared to the Danish educational system, which is characterized by cooperative learning and group activities, these lessons were dominated by solo activities. It was hard for me to do a rather social based activity, but their knowledge in the different subjects was at a very high standard. Furthermore can children start the educational system at the age of 3, at a so called pre-primary school.

The economical situation in Spain is also an important part of how both teachers and students think of education. More and more students join the bilingual programs. This will not give them different

opportunities after school, but being able to speak English can help them, especially in the southern part, Andalusia. Many young people leave Spain and go to England and Germany for better options and to learn a different language, then return and find a job in Spain. But many of them don't return, and the people in Spain are afraid it is many of the intellectuals that don't return.

What did you learn about the language and culture in the host country?

In Andalucía, and especially in Seville, is the tradition of Flamenco and "fiestas" at its highest. The warm-blooded people have their big emotions just beneath the skin, and are often very explicit. Here people are marked by the economical situation where the unemployment is around 50% for the youth. But apart from that, this is the most kind and welcoming people I have ever met. Even if you don't fully understand each other, the patience and good intentions are overwhelming, and this is clearly their nature. As of the people in southern Spain, 3 things are important in their lives. 1 is the family. The family is very important and being social means everything. Here is also the kindness for the elderly, which I personally think is neglected in my country. 2 is work, and that is mostly here where the rate of unemployment is so high. Even though work is important, the efficiency is very low, and people are very slow, a rare calmness that I never experience at home. This may be caused by the temperature, but this may also be just natural for them, "mañana" as they say, "if we don't do it today, we'll probably do it tomorrow". Even though they are very passionate and have a lot of emotions, they are really patient and calm. 3 is food, dancing, beer and wine. Being social over a dinner is important and it is not uncommon to experience people dancing, clapping and singing on a regular basis on the streets. Enjoying life is very important.

How did your language competences improve?

At this point I am not fluent in Spanish, but can make conversations with the Andalusian dialect, which I have learned from my weekly classes. It is necessary to speak Spanish, because their level of English, German or French is very low. This is one of the only places where the people of Spain are a bit more introverted than my home country. Learning a different language is maybe not on the top of the list. Almost every movie is in Spanish and only very few Spanish musicians write the lyrics in English. Therefore it is not that important to learn a different language.

This is a language that, if I have the opportunity, I will keep on participating in by taking classes in Denmark. I would like to return to Spain in a near future to visit the teachers and friends, and would like to speak with them in their mother tongue. Furthermore, speaking a third language is a quality I don't want to be without. During these couple of months I found out that I find it very interesting and giving to speak with different nationalities. Speaking a third language will just give me more opportunities to do so in the future.

Which subject did you teach and what else did you do?

PE (physical education) is as much theory about body, muscles and health as the actual games and sports in Spain than what I am used to in Denmark. In Denmark there rarely is theory included in the subject, which also is called Sports, not physical education. Every trimester the pupils are being tested in several ways to secure a progress. They have also focus on different things like "Strength, Endurance, Flexibility and Speed", which is included in the practical parts of the class, where in Denmark the corporative participation is in focus more than specific personal skills. This is also the case in the Music class I have been assisting in. Theory is more used than practice, meaning reading

notes and talking about instruments and how to play takes the time, where I am more used to actually playing music.

What did the pupils learn about Denmark and Danish culture?

In Music I brought 2 Danish songs with lyrics. We listened to them, pronounced the different vocals and song both songs. In the Spanish language there is 5 vocal sounds, in Danish is there 17, and 3 vocals that do not exist in the Spanish alphabet. We practiced the sounds of these 3 vocals in both Music, History and Language Club. In Music we also discussed the different dialects in Denmark because the songs were from different part of the country. We translated the lyrics from Danish to English and Spanish and discussed the similarities between the languages.

Especially in my class, the Language Club, we have talked about the differences between the two cultures. Ways of doing things like different holidays, food, music, art and ways of behaviour was discussed. In this subject I could talk to the pupils about anything which made the opportunity of getting to know the authentic culture first handed. In the other subjects it was more small inputs from me during the class. After the class I would usually talk with the teacher about the differences and how we do in Denmark regarding teaching methods or cultural differences.

I have tried to give my pupils a Danish way of teaching. In PE the students have learned developing games so the suits every student. In History I tried to integrate some cooperative learning, so the students, like in PE, would think outside the box and be better at be a part of a group. Also it has been very important for me that every student could be a part of my classes. In Denmark I'm used to cater for the 28 pupils in the class with differentiate instructions, and this is very important for me.

How was your assistantship followed up?

When I thought my own material, the teacher that was with the class, would discuss the progress and the ideas behind my teaching after class. What was the students used to, what methods were good to use, how did they normally test the students and so on. On a weekly basis I would talk to my contact at my school about my experiences and my thoughts and if I had any questions. She would also talk to the teachers about how the classes were going. If there was anything that should be changed, we would talk about why and how. If I had any trouble with the changes or what I should do instead, both teacher and my contact would not hesitate to help with both materials and ideas.

What do you get out of this experience?

I did not know before going that I would learn so much about a different culture that I actually did. I knew that I would get some insight in a different culture and school system, but this was my first time away from my home country, so I did not know what to expect. So I was very pleasantly surprised about my stay, I learned a lot and would love to do it again if it was possible.

I found out how interesting I find international work. I now have to find work in Denmark, and I would like to have some international correspondence or work. I like to work with different cultures and I have learned a lot while being in Spain. Therefore I would like to have some responsibility in this field in my upcoming job.

What would be your advice for future assistants?

If I should give some good advice for future assistants I would say that knowing the language of the country you are going to is more important than I thought. Even though my school was very helpful by speaking English, my Spanish should have been better from the start than it was. In the beginning I had a hard time making conversation with my roommate and locals because they could not speak English, which I already knew before I got there. My Spanish was improved during my stay, so at the end I spoke Spanish with both my roommate and others. Therefore, a focus on the language of the country the assistants are going to is very important. At the beginning of my stay I hired a private Spanish tutor to teach my Spanish, and I find it very important to do this early in your stay, as soon as possible because this was not only a way to learn the language, but the material we used and talked about was often about the city I lived in or the area or the Spanish way of living. So I did not only learn the language, but also a lot of culture as well. Besides from that my 3 months was a bit too short. I would recommend the future assistants to consider the duration of their stay. I would have liked to stay longer, the 3 last months have been very exciting and very important to me.