Building a Culture of Achievement through the ASDAN Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE)

England

http://keyconet.eun.org
KeyCoNet (2012 – 2014) is a European policy network focused on identifying and analyzing initiatives on the implementation of key competences in primary and secondary school education.

On the basis of the evidence collected through literature reviews, case studies, peer learning visits, country overviews, videos and exchanges between network members, the project’s final objective is to produce recommendations for policy and practice regarding the enablers and obstacles to a holistic implementation of key competence development.

Among KeyCoNet’s current 18 partners in 10 countries (Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden), are Ministries of Education/related agencies, universities/research institutes, European organizations, and practice related partners. KeyCoNet also has a growing number of associate members from other countries and stakeholder groups, steadily increasing our network’s scope and influence.
# CONTENTS

- **ABOUT THIS CASE STUDY** .................................................. 6
- **BASIC INFORMATION** ...................................................... 8
- **SUMMARY** ................................................................. 10
- **INTRODUCTION** ............................................................ 12
  1. CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCE ............................................. 14
  2. SUBSTANCE RELATED ISSUES ......................................... 21
  3. PARTNERSHIP RELATED ISSUES ................................. 25
  4. STRATEGY RELATED ISSUES ........................................ 26
  5. MAINSTREAMING RELATED ISSUES .......................... 28
  6. SYSTEMIC ASPECTS ..................................................... 31
  7. EVALUATION RELATED ISSUES .................................... 35
  8. ACHIEVEMENT OF INITIATIVE’S AIMS ....................... 37
  9. NEXT STEPS ............................................................. 38
ABOUT THIS CASE STUDY

Part of a series
This case study is part of a series of case studies being produced by KeyCoNet, to highlight various initiatives concerning key competence development, taking place across Europe. Each case study analyzes the initiative’s implementation strategies in depth, and will feed into the network’s recommendations for policy and practice on how to implement a key competence approach in schools most effectively.

How and why was this case selected?
Each year the KeyCoNet network identifies initiatives concerning key competence development across Europe, and a case note is produced providing basic information about each one. Following this, network partners participate in an online selection according to pre-established criteria, as well as an in-depth face-to-face discussion, in order to select the most interesting initiatives to develop into case studies.

This case study from England was selected due to being one of the few initiatives identified focusing specifically on the assessment and accreditation of transversal skills for learning, employment and life. It is a large-scale initiative which has enjoyed success and been mainstreamed across England. The implementation decisions made and strategies used are therefore of interest, and will contribute to the network’s know-how and eventual recommendations.

Which methodology has been used?
Case studies are the main tool used by the network to probe beneath the surface of each selected initiative and provide a rich context for understanding the implementation issues involved. The initiatives selected by the network differ in many ways, according to the nature of the key competences addressed, the implementation process used, the number of students and teachers directly concerned, the type and number of actors involved, and the duration and stage of development etc. A multiple-case study design, whereby each initiative generates its own case study, but uses one single prism for a common analysis, was therefore chosen. This method makes it possible to explore diversity, as well as the enablers and obstacles to the initiative’s implementation, as perceived by the initiators and stakeholders interviewed. Moreover, through a multiple-case study design it is possible to identify choices, strategies, characteristics, situations or contexts leading to success or failure in a recurrent manner. This will particularly contribute to fuelling the set of recommendations for policy and practice at institutional, local, regional, national and European level, for the effective implementation of key competences in school education.

Each case study included interviews with the initiative’s coordinators and stakeholders, as well as desk research. In some cases, where considered feasible and fruitful, focus groups were also organized. In this particular case study, face-to-face interviews were conducted with two coordinators of the initiative; ASDAN’s Strategic Adviser, and the Head of Qualifications Development. Two additional stakeholder interviews were carried out by telephone with ASDAN coordinators from two different schools. The case study report is structured as a series of questions under nine topics concerned with the initiative’s implementation. The answer to each question incorporates the views of the various coordinators and stakeholders interviewed, as well as the desk research undertaken.
# Basic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country:</th>
<th>UK – England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title of initiative:</td>
<td>Building a culture of achievement through the ASDAN Certificate of Personal Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator/Organization:</td>
<td>Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Key competences addressed: | • Problem Solving  
• Improving Own performance  
• Working With Others  
• Research  
• Discussion  
• Presenting  
• Communication  
• Entrepreneurial learning skills |
| Type of initiative and channels used for implementation (e.g. curriculum reform introduced through legislation etc.): | Curriculum and assessment leading to qualification |
| Partners: | 5,000 schools, colleges and training providers are registered as examination centres with ASDAN across the UK |
| Scope: (student/teacher/school level; local/regional/national): | National |
| Learning context: (formal or non-formal): | ASDAN programmes and qualifications support both formal and informal learning contexts |
| School education level/s: | Secondary schools and post-16 colleges of further education |
| Target groups: | All attainment levels |
| Time frame: (start and end date): | ASDAN has been operating since the early 1980s; the ASDAN Certificate of Personal Effectiveness was launched in 2002/03 |
| Relevant links: | [www.asdan.org.uk](http://www.asdan.org.uk) |
The UK system of awarding bodies, particularly in England, has made it possible for Awarding Organisations such as ASDAN to develop a qualification such as the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) within a national framework for qualifications. The CoPE is designed to widen access to further and higher education by developing generic, crosscurricular “effectiveness skills”. These comprise skills that are nationally recognised as “Wider Key Skills” (problem solving, improving own learning and performance, working with other) and additional skills identified by ASDAN as important through consultation with employers and higher education institutions (research skills, discussion skills and oral performance and presentation skills). The development of these skills is based on a methodology involving experiential learning by way of personal challenges which permit the incremental development and recognition of skills through formative assessment and on “learning to learn” through a process summarised as “PLAN>DO>REVIEW”. Portfolio assessment facilitates this methodology, enabling learners to document their progress with the help of their teachers. An example of a portfolio using the “plan, do and review” process is available here:


To implement CoPE programmes, ASDAN has developed materials, held workshops and created a network to help teachers develop the methodology. Some initial teacher training providers have incorporated the methodology into their programmes but this is restricted by existing teacher training requirements. Nonetheless, an independent evaluation found that students on CoPE programmes achieved improved outcomes in the more established subject-based national qualification. This was particularly the case for students from lower socioeconomic groups. Further research investigating the causation of this improvement is planned. The dissemination of research findings and the recognition of employers and higher education institutions have been crucial in encouraging students to choose to work towards the CoPE.
INTRODUCTION

ASDAN (the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) is a national educational charity founded in 1980 to explore wider ways to learn and recognise achievement outside of the formal examination system. Over the past thirty years, despite the changing policy context, the organisation has managed to retain its focus on developing skills for learning, skills for employment, and skills for life. These skills are developed through a specially designed activity-based curriculum and now recognised through a suite of qualifications.

Today, ASDAN operates in most secondary and special schools in the UK. It has a well-established network of partner organisations including: training providers, youth centres, and volunteering organisations. Internationally, ASDAN operates in more than twenty-five countries around the world. Among many curriculum programmes that ASDAN has developed, the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) has been particularly successful. It was introduced in 2003-2004 with the aim of widening access to further and higher education. The CoPE is a nationally-recognised set of qualifications that guarantees students’ capability in the following six skills:

- Problem Solving,
- Improving Own Learning and Performance,
- Working with Others,
- Research Skills,
- Discussion Skills,
- Oral Presentation.

Since its introduction, the popularity of the CoPE has grown steadily. In 2009-10, more than 40,000 students across the UK were registered on the CoPE. Many schools have been using the CoPE as a basis for increasing their students’ core of formal attainment. Indeed, a recent study found that the CoPE could markedly improve students’ attainment in the major national English language qualification. Furthermore, many schools consider the CoPE as a very successful initiative. Teachers at one school interviewed for this case study noted that the Certificate is easily adaptable to different levels of skills, which means that it can be taken by all students. It focuses on transferable skills and it recognises skills that students gain while being engaged in additional activities at school, such as charity work, sports days, part-time work; these are skills which otherwise would not be acknowledged. This level of success is attributed not only to the work of ASDAN, teachers and students but also to a number of contextual factors that acted as enablers during the implementation of the initiative.

---

1 ASDAN prospectus: 2012-2013
2 The six skills are also referred to as effectiveness skills and as key competences in this case note.
4 The General Certificate of Secondary Education taken by 16 year olds
1. CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCE

Which contextual factors have been perceived as enablers to the implementation of the initiative, and why?

Change in the policy context in the UK

One of the most important enablers for the introduction of the CoPE was the change in the policy context in the UK in the late 1990s. The government decided that the National Curriculum was too prescriptive. This led to a period of curriculum and qualifications reform. In 1994, a government-commissioned report advocated a curriculum which prescribed only 80% of timetabled time, so that the other 20% would be free, i.e. devoted to the activities chosen by individual schools, teachers and students. ASDAN’s CoPE was used as an example of a syllabus that could well fit into this ‘free’ planning. Furthermore, when the CoPE was first introduced, the government was very much interested in the concept of widening participation, responding to the needs of all learners, and raising students’ achievement. They were interested in making education more open and more accessible. This provided the political context for the introduction of a qualification that was not purely academic, but one that focused on a set of skills that were more generic in nature and also more directly transferable between education and employment.

Demands from parents, higher education, and employers

One other significant enabler to the implementation of the certificate at the beginning of the new millennium, was the regular reporting from employers, parents, higher education institutions and employers’ organisations that school leavers lack necessary ‘skills’ for employment and/or for pursuing further education. Skills that were often referred to included: team working, working without external supervision, problem solving, self-management, and oral communication skills. This shared view of school leavers lacking important skills clearly supported the early work on the CoPE and led to a continuing consultation process with industry. ASDAN set up an Employers’ Skills Forum to consult employers on their skills needs and to reflect these needs in the CoPE.

Participation in the “Wider Key Skills” pilot study

A final enabler to the introduction of the Certificate was ASDAN’s involvement in a large national pilot study (2002-2003) on the development of Wider Key Skills qualifications. This was very important in helping ASDAN to define and select the skills included in the CoPE. The study explored both the Key Skills as well as the Wider Key Skills, i.e. Communication, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Application of Number, Working with Others, Improving Own Learning Performance, and Problem Solving. The first three skills were easily definable and measurable in terms of outcomes; however the three latter skills presented a more significant problem for assessment. For this reason, ASDAN decided to focus on this problem and included them in the CoPE.

---


6 The Key Skills qualifications comprise: Communication, Application of Number and ICT.

7 The Wider Key Skills comprise: Working with Others, Problem Solving and Improving Own Learning Performance.
Which contextual factors have been perceived as obstacles to the implementation of the initiative, and why?

**School organisation and communication**

The organisation encountered many contextual factors considered to be obstacles to the implementation of the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness. One of the main obstacles was that schools are organised according to subjects. Furthermore, the internal structure of schools at secondary level is strictly departmental. There are separate departments for mathematics, English and so on. Teachers of those subjects are familiar with the content and requirements of their own areas. They use subject-specific language within each department. On the other hand, the CoPE approach is cross-curricular and cross-departmental. In consequence, language that is specific to skills is not understood / interpreted consistently, e.g. Level 2 Problem Solving competence may not be easily comprehensible and may have different meaning for different teachers. Therefore, it was difficult for teachers to engage in a conversation with ASDAN about the skills.

**Solution:** It was crucial for the organisation to first of all define the skills and to ‘translate’ them into clear language. This helped to make the initiative more understandable to a wider audience, including school leaders and employers. ASDAN’s learning to learn methodology (PLAN>DO>REVIEW) has been applied to a wide range of curriculum contexts including subjects such as mathematics and English, but also Sports and Fitness and Personal Social Health and Economic Education (PSHEE). ASDAN offers also Short Courses that focus on the development of specific subject-based curricula that incorporates the effectiveness skills. In addition, the organisation provides ‘maps’ that cross-reference the key competences to different subject areas. Finally, the organisation plans to create a scale of smaller steps that can be used as a guide to monitor students’ progress as and when the students achieve each skill.

**Assessment and reporting of outcomes**

Another obstacle facing the initiative is a wider socio-cultural trend, namely the ‘data-driven culture’. That is to say, modern society is very much focused on outcomes that can be measured in terms of numbers. School assessment is subject-based. Students’ performance at school is captured in scores, percentages and exam marks. The CoPE, with its intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, metacognitive skills, and a continuous portfolio-style assessment, does not fit comfortably with this focus. Furthermore, since the development of skills is difficult to quantify, they are difficult to promote.

**Solution:** ASDAN applied for, and gained, national accreditation for the CoPE. This means that students are eligible for public funding, their outcomes are currently recognised in national performance league tables and the qualification can contribute to eligibility for further and higher education. As a result, schools have incentives to offer the qualification and students have incentives to choose the relevant courses. Also, ASDAN developed a portfolio-style assessment, which requires students to document their progress as and when they complete the modules. Students plan their work, they complete challenges (do) and engage in a review process (PLAN>DO>REVIEW) to form a Portfolio of Evidence that

---

8 The Department for Education in England and Wales has redefined those achievements that count in headline measures of school performance to include, from 2013-14, only those with a significant body of subject knowledge assessed through an external examination. This is not compatible with either the personalised curriculum or interpersonal skills that are key components of the CoPE.

9 For detailed information about the modules please see Section entitled Mainstreaming related issues.

10 An example of a challenge focusing on communication skills could be: planning a journey, entertaining a group of guests, or finding out how a piece of equipment works.
reflects on their acquisition of the effectiveness skills. During the process of planning, recording, and reviewing each challenge, students are encouraged to ask questions along the way; questions that ASDAN presented in an easy to follow diagram presented below. The assessment of students' learning and portfolios is first of all moderated internally, before it goes through external moderation.

The diagram has been adapted from the CoPE Levels 1 and 2 Student Book Samples Pages available online on: http://www.asdan.org.uk/media/downloads/CoPE.Levels1and2-Sample.pdf.
Teacher Education Provision

One last contextual factor that has acted as an obstacle to the implementation of the CoPE is related to the struggle the organisation has had to engage in initial teacher education provision. ASDAN is only one of many awarding organisations in the UK and therefore it is difficult for it to exert major impact on the national framework for teacher education.

Solution: ASDAN has focused on in-service teacher education but also has had a small degree of engagement with initial teacher education in a few universities in the UK, where they conducted a series of seminars on the impact of competences based assessment during an educational conference12.

2. Substance Related Issues

Which substance related issues have been the most difficult ones to fix when deciding on the content of the initiative, and why?

Defining and communicating the key competences

Defining the effectiveness skills and communicating them to a wider audience has been one of the most difficult substance related issues to address. The selected skills (Problem Solving, Improving Own Learning and Performance, Working with Others, Research Skills, Discussions Skills, and Oral Presentation) are rather broadly understood. To make those skills communicable, they had to be defined in a way that would meet the quality standards criteria of the government’s national examinations regulation institution13, would follow the government formats, and also could be understood by all stakeholders, i.e. classroom teachers, students, parents, and employers. In a time-consuming process, ASDAN developed precise terminology that describes each effectiveness skill at three levels, i.e. Level 1, 2 and 3 of the CoPE (Table 1)14.

11 The diagram has been adapted from the CoPE Levels 1 and 2 Student Book Samples Pages available online on: http://www.asdan.org.uk/media/downloads/CoPE.Levels1and2-Sample.pdf.

12 University of West of England and University of Huddersfield

13 Ofqual is the government’s regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland.

14 Standards for Level 1, 2 and 3 can be downloaded as a PDF document by clicking on the following link: http://www.asdan.org.uk/media/downloads/CoPE_StandardsOnly_L1L2L3-2012.pdf.
At this stage of education, high non-completion rates are recorded. Also, engagement is difficult to achieve. Therefore, there was a need to target this particular age group and to offer them a way to re-engage in learning. Next, upper secondary students 16 were targeted. This was done in response to higher education institutions’ requirements for school leavers. It was possible to focus on this group inter

Targeting different education levels

Once the key competences were defined, ASDAN had to decide on the order in which to target different education levels. This has certainly been another substance related issue that was difficult to resolve. The CoPE initially targeted students approaching the end of lower secondary education 15 due to their specific characteristics.

Table 1. Effectiveness skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Understand and carry out a designated job.</td>
<td>Share out responsibilities, support others and review work.</td>
<td>Plan objectives, develop strategies, monitor progress and evaluate outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target-setting</td>
<td>Understand and plan to meet targets, accept advice on working more efficiently.</td>
<td>Help to set own targets, produce evidence and recognise new skills.</td>
<td>Set personal targets, identify obstacles and use new skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
<td>Understand there are alternative ways to tackle problems and follow a plan.</td>
<td>Recognise problems, evaluate ways of tackling a problem, carry out a plan and check it has been solved.</td>
<td>Explore problems, compare risks and benefits, make systematic checks and evaluate success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Use different sources of information and report back.</td>
<td>Plan and carry out primary research in response to a question and present findings.</td>
<td>Gather data from various sources to develop an in-depth understanding of complex matters; present conclusions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Discuss using appropriate language and manner, listen to others and ask questions.</td>
<td>Make clear and relevant comments, listen carefully and help keep discussions on topic.</td>
<td>Make clear and relevant contributions to discussions and create opportunities for others to take part.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Make a short presentation about a topic and use images.</td>
<td>Give a presentation using appropriate methods and engage the audience.</td>
<td>Prepare and give a detailed, varied and engaging presentation on a complex topic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 This known as Key Stage 4, which describes the two years of school education, i.e. Year 10 and Year 11, when the students are between 14 and 16 years old.

16 Known as Post-16, which describes the two years of education when students are 16 to 18 years old.
The teachers who were interviewed also saw the CoPE as an enabler of students’ transitions through lower secondary education. However, there is a lack of research on the wider benefits of developing key competences. This is something that can only be addressed over time. ASDAN commissioned independent research which demonstrated an association between completing the CoPE and higher grades in the national English language examination. Further investigations are, however, necessary to explore the causality of the improved levels of achievement.

3. Partnership Related Issues

Which key aspects should be taken into consideration when defining the partnership?

ASDAN’s list of partners and collaborators is exhaustive. It includes schools, local authorities, national organisations, education providers, volunteering organisations, and organisations providing enrichment for education e.g.: Addaction – skills 4 change, Beatbullying, Fresh Start for Kids in Schools, the Leadership Trust, Leeds Metropolitan University, Macmillan Cancer Support, and many more. Two organisations were identified as particularly important partners in the early days of ASDAN, namely the

---

17 The organisation referred to is Aimhigher. It focuses on “widening participation in HE by raising HE awareness, aspirations and attainment among young people from under-represented groups” (http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk).

18 This is known as Key Stage 3 and refers to the three years of school education, i.e. Year 7, Year 8, and Year 9, when the students are between 11 and 14 years old.

19 BRILLE (2010-2012)

20 The GCSE English examination

21 For a complete list of partner organisation please visit ASDAN’s webpage: http://www.asdan.org.uk.
Aimhigher organisation and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Also, the National Children’s Bureau was recognised as an important partner in the process of creating opportunities and promoting personal development. Currently, the organisation is exploring ways of working with chains of privately-owned, publicly-funded schools (so called Academies) with more autonomy than other state-maintained schools.

ASDAN engages in and encourages schools to participate in events organised by partner institutions. For instance, it promotes learning of the key competences through charitable events and through meaningful school-based learning. Most of the time, it shares its main aim, i.e. raising attainment and widening participation, with the partner organisations; however, at times the ‘fine-tuning’ of shared objectives between different organisations is hard to achieve.

4. STRATEGY RELATED ISSUES

Which aspects of the strategy implemented for the initiative have proved to be particularly effective, and why?

Two strategy related issues have been identified by ASDAN as those that have been most effective to the implementation of the Certificate. First of all, the inclusion in the national Schools and Colleges Attainment and Achievement Performance League Table was an important strategic factor. Secondly, local governments that were identifying schools in which sufficient progress was not being made let ASDAN intervene by introducing the CoPE at those schools. Both examples illustrate a top-down approach. However, a significant bottom-up movement has also been recognised, namely the input on ASDAN’s curriculum provided by individual teachers. Teachers’ feedback helped ASDAN refine the ‘learning to learn’ methodology, the portfolio-style assessment, and the student-focused approach to learning.

Furthermore, setting up a network of teachers and introducing Cluster Leaders have also been recognised by ASDAN as effective strategic decisions. Networks include regular face to face meetings/events with teachers and practitioners, during which common problems are dealt with and good practice is identified and shared. Cluster Leaders are well-trained teachers who are members of the national ASDAN training, support and quality assurance network. They offer practical advice based on their extensive professional expertise with ASDAN methodology.

In addition, ASDAN supports teachers to become trainers with training and resources. A free online resource bank is available, including worksheets (both in paper and electronic format), ideas for lessons, cross-curricular mapping, and mapping to assessment units. Additionally trainers can purchase the CoPE Schemes of Work and the CoPE Resource Pack to assist in planning and implementing the CoPE curriculum.

Finally, schools are regarded as customers and the good customer care that the organisation provides has been perceived as an effective strategy. Telephone queries are responded to by a person not by an automated service. Most email enquiries are dealt with in a very efficient way within twenty-four hours.
Which aspects of the strategy implemented for the initiative have proved to be most problematic, and why?

One aspect of the strategy implemented for the initiative has been identified as rather problematic, namely supporting the international centres. The organisation operates in more than twenty-five countries around the world. It has a number of international partners in countries such as Australia, China, Germany, Singapore, and South Africa. Due to the scope of the international cooperation and the fact that the CoPE is only offered in English, it has been difficult to support those centres sufficiently.

Another obstacle that has been encountered in the process of mainstreaming is related to the increasing number of ‘Academy’ schools across the country. Academies must meet the core subject requirements of the National Curriculum but they are self-governing. This produces a more diverse landscape with varied requirements that are more difficult to address coherently.

Yet the success of the Certificate lies in its freedom, i.e. the variety that it offers to students. The CoPE at Level 1 and 2 offers twelve different modules:

- Beliefs and Values
- Communication
- Citizenship and Community
- Expressive Arts
- Health and Fitness
- International Links

Shifting government policy has been one of the major obstacles encountered by the initiative in the process of mainstreaming. In the 1990s and the early 2000, the government was advocating a national curriculum that was less prescriptive, that focused on wider set of skills, and that catered for needs of the vast number of learners. However, the political context has not always been so conducive to promoting the CoPE. For instance, in September of 2012, the UK government announced that the English Baccalaureate Certificate (EBC) would replace the GCSEs. This meant that the exams would be taken at the end of a two year course and that all coursework would be abandoned. For ASDAN this was devastating news. It meant that the CoPE, with its continuous portfolio assessment, would not fit into the new arrangement. In February 2013, however, the government cancelled its plan to introduce the EBC but the issue underlined ministers’ preference for examinations instead of coursework.

Another obstacle that has been encountered in the process of mainstreaming is related to the increasing number of ‘Academy’ school across the country. Academies must meet the core subject requirements of the National Curriculum but they are self-governing. This produces a more diverse landscape with varied requirements that are more difficult to address coherently.

If the key competence initiative aims/aimed at mainstreaming, what are/have been the major obstacles encountered to generalise it?

5. MAINSTREAMING RELATED ISSUES

If the key competence initiative aims/aimed at mainstreaming, what are/have been the major obstacles encountered to generalise it?

One aspect of the strategy implemented for the initiative has been identified as rather problematic, namely supporting the international centres. The organisation operates in more than twenty-five countries around the world. It has a number of international partners in countries such as Australia, China, Germany, Singapore, and South Africa. Due to the scope of the international cooperation and the fact that the CoPE is only offered in English, it has been difficult to support those centres sufficiently.

5 For a complete list of the international centres please visit ASDAN’s webpage: http://www.asdan.org.uk
To which extent has the initiative been designed as a systemic one from the starting point, i.e. introducing changes in several areas related to the student curriculum (such as teacher training, assessment, school organisation, etc.)?

The initiative has been designed as systemic right from the very beginning. The Strategic Impact Measures (Table 2) were put into place during the first year of the project and executed during the first eight months.

Table 2. Strategic Impact Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Impact Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examinations regulator approval of the CoPE as a full qualification within the National Qualification Framework (NQF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The calibration by government of the CoPE qualification as a GCSE equivalent at levels 1 and 2, and as an AS equivalent at level 3 achievement of the certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The inclusion of the CoPE qualification by government in the Schools and Colleges Attainment and Achievement Performance League Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ascription of higher education entry points to the CoPE qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification eligibility for funding achieved both pre and post 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 150 institutions of Higher education (HE) are formally acknowledging the significance of the ASDAN contribution to the process of application and entry to HE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23 The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

• Independent Living
• Science and Technology
• Sport and Leisure
• The Environment
• Vocational and Diploma Preparation
• Work Related Learning and Enterprise

Level 3 includes six modules:
• Active Citizenship
• Work Related Activities
• Career Planning
• Global Awareness
• Enrichment Activities
• Extended Project

Students have freedom to select the modules they wish to work on (the structure of the modules deliberately prevents learners from choosing too narrow a curriculum) and provide evidence of their progress in the form of a portfolio. The personalisation of the curriculum in this way means that individuals who complete the CoPE have shared skill levels but not necessarily shared knowledge about the same set of topics. It therefore becomes difficult to compare all aspects of those learners’ outcomes against one another.
What have been the obstacles and/or challenges encountered during the implementation because of the systemic aspect of the initiative?

Lack of long term vision, systemic national support, and communication about how to take education into the 21st century are considered to be obstacles that the organisation encountered during the implementation of the initiative. Educational change is often seen, especially by the media, as negative. Furthermore, it is difficult for the initiative to influence the government decision making process since ASDAN is seen as one of many relatively small qualification awarding organisations in the UK.

How have the obstacles and/or challenges encountered been overcome?

ASDAN has adhered to its initial aims and the Strategic Impact Measures throughout the changing policy context. It reviewed and adjusted its curriculum along the way but the general approach and methodology of teaching and learning has not changed. Also, ongoing support from employers and teachers helped ASDAN to overcome the obstacles created by government’s change of view.

Have some parts of the original design of the initiative (from the systemic point of view) been abandoned and why?

The original design of the initiative has not been significantly amended but there are minor changes taking place every few years. For instance, the resources are formally adjusted every three to four years based on the feedback received from teachers and learners. Also, the curriculum develops according to the changes...
in the wider social context. For instance, new topics e.g. the Internet or Social Media have been introduced to reflect changes in the society i.e. the increasing reliance on technology.

Moreover, the CoPE was introduced at three levels: Level 1 (European Qualifications Framework – EQF – Level 2), Level 2 (EQF Level 3), and Level 3 (EQF Level 4). Also, in 2008, the Award of Personal Effectiveness was introduced. It has different features to the CoPE. The Certificate consists of six mandatory units and the students are requested to pass them all, whereas the Award contains seven units but the students can choose to do only four. This reflects choice available in the CoPE. The Award gives more flexibility in terms of time, content and therefore optimises students’ potential.

If no systemic approach was thought of from the beginning, or if some components had to be abandoned during the implementation, would a step-by-step (or area by area) implementation be advisable, i.e. starting with introducing changes supporting key competences in one area and then introducing related changes in the other areas, and why?

ASDAN agreed that the model that would have worked best, had a systemic approach not been introduced, would have been an ‘area by area’ approach i.e. targeting schools regionally. However, this type of approach would require the right level of coordination within and between the local areas and therefore additional resources.

7. EVALUATION RELATED ISSUES

In case a simultaneous/real time evaluation process has been part of the initiative:

What have been the obstacles to implement it, and why?

Evaluation is a crucial part of the initiative. The PLAN>DO>REVIEW student assessment contributes to the evaluation process, however the simultaneous evaluation process has only been part of the smaller scale projects i.e. projects run together with the Local Authorities and the Aimhigher project. The evaluation was set up in a form of action research; however, each project had its own evaluation measures. For instance, some of the small scale projects focused on the number of school leavers with or without qualification, or post-16 progression, or even the ‘Contextual Value Added Score’.

What have been the difficulties or risks that have been solved/avoided thanks to the simultaneous evaluation process, and why?

ASDAN has identified two major difficulties in the evaluation process. First of all, the effectiveness skills are difficult to report. They do not fit well into a data set. They cannot be easily converted into a numeric value that is easily comparable across other skills. Second, the organisation has found it troublesome to persuade schools to participate in the evaluation process. Most school are not willing to cooperate/participate due to time-constraints and a fear of ‘failing to succeed’.

24 This score compares attainment at a starting point and an end point whilst taking each school’s socioeconomic context into account.
Nonetheless, ASDAN considers the evaluation process to be beneficial. It has helped to improve and modify the functioning of the organisation and it has helped ASDAN to describe the impact of the initiative. In addition, it has helped to develop a better structure for the CoPE through identification of gaps and potential problems. Most importantly, it has informed the initiative with ‘what works’.

8. ACHIEVEMENT OF INITIATIVE’S AIMS

Have the original aims of the initiative been achieved?

Right from the onset, the organisation introduced the CoPE with the aim to:

- raise attainment,
- widen participation,
- enable progression to higher education,
- spread good teaching practise,
- help learners to become more independent and autonomous.

Most of the original aims have been achieved. At various stages, the aims were slightly modified but none of them was abandoned. For instance, the ‘learning to learn’ methodology is crucial and therefore features more strongly. Also, the terminology that is being used to describe the key competences has changed slightly. The term metacognition is now commonly used to refer to essentially the same concept as ‘learning to learn’. Furthermore, in the light of a recent policy change (the aborted plan to introduce the English Baccalaureate Certificate in the place of GCSEs), ASDAN considered adding an examination component to the portfolio-style assessment to comply with government definitions of what would count as a qualification. However, the organisation decided against this because examinations were thought ineffective in assessing personal skills.

---

25 BRILLE (2010-2012) identified several causal features that may contribute to the success of the CoPE, i.e. personalised learner-centred approach, the PLAN>DO>REVIEW process, culture of achievement based on milestones, curricular flexibility, low staff – student ratio, and commitment to engaging with the individual.
9. NEXT STEPS

What is planned next for the initiative?

A report published by BRILLE (2012) demonstrated that the completion of the CoPE has a positive association with the results obtained in the national English qualification. This effect was especially pronounced for students from deprived backgrounds and those from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. A second phase of the BRILLE project has been planned and it will involve a study on the causation of this. Also, ASDAN is currently taking part in a ‘New Philanthropy Capital Survey’ that measures, in a format of multiple choice questions, students’ well being. It is run across 15 schools in different parts of the country. Once all data has been collected, a comparison between students who take the CoPE and those who do not will be performed.  

26 Additional in-depth information about the CoPE is available on ASDAN’s webpage: http://www.asdan.org.uk/Qualifications/CoPE_1_and_2.
European Schoolnet is the coordinator of the KeyCoNet Project.

European Schoolnet is the network of 30 European Ministries of Education, based in Brussels. As a not-for-profit organisation, we aim to bring innovation in teaching and learning to our key stakeholders: Ministries of Education, schools, teachers, researchers, and industry partners.

Since its founding in 1997, European Schoolnet has used its links with education ministries to help schools make effective use of educational technologies, equipping both teachers and pupils with the skills to achieve in the knowledge society.

In particular, European Schoolnet pledges to:

• Support schools in achieving effective use of ICT in teaching and learning
• Improve and raise the quality of education in Europe
• Promote the European dimension in education

The KeyCoNet project has been funded with support from the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission. Responsibility for this publication lies solely with the author, and the Commission is not responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

http://keyconet.eun.org