



COST IS0703

The European Research Network on Learning to Write Effectively

Report of Rui A. Alves Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM) to the University of Leon. COST-STSM-IS0703-04208

Porto, February 25 2009

Dear Prof. David Galbraith,

I am pleased to submit for your approval the report of the STSM that I made to meet Prof. Jesús Nicasio García's team, at the Universidad de León. As planned the visit took place from the 2nd to the 11th of February 2009. The aims of the visit were fully achieved and due to this valuable COST instrument the cooperation between our two teams was established in solid ground. Please, find attached to this letter three other documents: i) STSM scientific report; ii) STSM host report; iii) STSM final payment request form.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'R. Alexandre Alves' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rui A. Alves

STSM Scientific Report

Summary

This text reports on the Short Term Scientific Mission (STSM) that Rui A. Alves made to meet Prof. Jesús Nicasio García's research team, at the Universidad de León. As planned, the visit took place between the 2nd and the 11th of February 2009. During the mission several works have been done, and the aims of the visit were fully achieved. Most importantly, the design of the Portuguese writing intervention study was achieved, and a vigorous cooperation between the two teams was set forward.

Aims

This STSM had two main aims, as a recap from the application plan, we proposed: i) to initiate the development of a joint intervention program that can be empirically sound, and have the prospect of social relevance for Portuguese disadvantaged children; ii) to start a research cooperation between the two teams based on the design, conduction, and evaluation of an experimental intervention study. Both of these aims were pursued, and resulting from a very successful STSM, the two are now established in solid ground. Next, we present a review of the works carried during the mission, its main results and the advances in the research cooperation established.

Works

The visit started with a STSM planning meeting with Prof. García. Then, a whole team meeting occurred and served for welcoming the Portuguese team, and sharing of research interests and findings of the group. A whole team meeting occurred, again, in the last day of the mission, and served for an appraisal of the STSM.

As the Portuguese team is new to the field of writing interventions targeting self-regulatory skills, a major part of the STSM had a goal of favouring Rui Alves advanced training in this kind of writing instruction. This goal was accomplished through individual meetings with the team's researchers. Specifically, consultations were held: with Dra. Raquel Fidalgo on the overall rationale for fostering metacognitive knowledge about writing (for a review see Fidalgo & García, in press), and advice was given on the best solutions for implementing the Portuguese writing intervention (e.g., García & Fidalgo, 2006, 2008; Torrance, Fidalgo, & Garcia, 2007); with Dra. Ana Maria de Caso advices were given on how to foster writing motivation and self-efficacy in a writing instruction program (García & de Caso, 2004, 2008); with Dra. Olga Arias-Gundín the issue of how to promote revision skills through a writing program were addressed (Arias-Gundín & García, 2006; García & Arias-Gundín, 2004); with Dra. Deilis Pacheco the key role of the teacher in delivering the instructional program was underlined, and an instrument for assessing teacher beliefs about writing, instruction and learning was presented (Pacheco, García & Díez, 2009); finally, with Dra. Begoña Martínez Cocó tasks for assessing working memory in children were presented and the pivotal role of working memory in writing was emphasized (Cocó & García, 2007). All these discussions were very helpful and insightful for delineating the plan of the Portuguese program.

Fruitful discussions with the younger researchers of the León's team have also taken place. Patricia Robledo presented an interesting intervention for promoting the involvement of the family on the writing activities of the children (Robledo, 2008; see also Robledo & García, 2007). Carmen Díez highlighted the importance of developing social skills in children with learning disabilities, a topic on which she has helped developing assessment tools (Díez, Garcia & Pacheco, 2007). Lourdes Álvarez spoke about the relevance and evaluation of the social support network in children with developmental disorders (Álvarez & García, 2007). The three younger researchers also provided a productive workshop to the Portuguese team on the text evaluation and coding scheme developed by the Spanish team to document the improvements delivered by the interventions.

Also, during the visit a meeting with a vice-rector of Universidad de León, Prof. Hermenegildo López González, in charge of the International Relations Office, has taken place. Discussions were held on how to improve the cooperation between Porto and León universities.

Results

Several results were achieved as a consequence of this STSM. Cooperation between the two parties is now deeply established. The Portuguese team immensely benefited from the expertise of Prof. Jesús Nicasio García's research team, and is now in a much better position to implement and evaluate their first writing instruction program. For its importance, a brief outline of the Portuguese writing program, and the planned intervention study is outlined next.

The planned intervention study will be based on the experimental procedure of having control and intervention groups, with pre and post tests evaluations. The evaluations will be made on the writing processes and on the texts. Specifically, process evaluation will be made using the Writing Log (Torrance, Thomas & Robinson, 1999) and measuring execution periods (Alves, Castro, Sousa & Strömquist, 2007). Text evaluations will be made using the coherence, structure and quality criteria fine-tuned by the Spanish team. The writing instruction program will be implemented in school context, but outside the normal teaching classes to allow random group assignment. Experienced and motivated language teachers will deliver the writing instruction to 6th graders during twelve weeks. The intervention will target narrative text production and will focus the self-regulation of planning processes, and in developing translating skills (viz., vocabulary and sentence combining).

The visit was also an opportunity to foster the international cooperation between the two participating universities. During the visit an Erasmus agreement was established between the parties. And as off this moment, channels for student and faculty mobility are open, and provide yet another venue for collaboration.

Future collaboration

The cooperation between the two teams has just started. It was agreed that both teams would continue working and will seek instruments to strengthen and deepen the relationship. Specifically, available instruments under the frame of the COST network, and the Erasmus agreement will be used to foster research cooperation and mobility between the two teams. Overall, the aims of Rui Alves STSM were fully accomplished, and particularly relevant within the COST IS0703 network, a sound and fruitful node of cooperation was established between the Spanish and Portuguese teams participating in the mission.

Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank Prof. Jesús Nicasio García and his team for kindly welcoming us in León, and favouring with so much generosity the design of the Portuguese writing intervention.

References

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Universidad de León

Departamento:
Psicología, Sociología y Filosofía
Área: Psicología Evolutiva y de la Educación

STSM Host Report

León, February 25 2009

Dear Prof. David Galbraith,

I hereby confirm that the STSM report presented by Rui Alves is accurate and that the objectives settled for his visit to the Universidad de León were successfully achieved. The workplan for the visit was fully accomplished and the prospect of a very fruitful collaboration between our two teams was set forward with this mission.

Yours truly,

Professor Jesús N García, PhD,

Principal Researcher of the team: Psycho-educational Intervention in Developmental and Learning Difficulties

Excellence Research Group (GR259) awarded by Junta de Castilla y León (Regional Government)

University of León

Vice-Chair of the Department of Psychology, Sociology and Philosophy

SHORT-TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION**FINAL PAYMENT REQUEST FORM**

COST Action Number: IS0703

Beneficiary's Name and Institution: Dr Rui Alexandre Alves, Universidade do Porto

Host's Name and Institution: Jesús Nicasio García, Universidad de León

Period: from 02/02/2009 to 11/02/2009

Place: León (ES)

Reference code: COST-STSM-IS0703-04208**Claimed amount of the grant: 1300.00 €**

The above STSM has been successfully completed and the following documents are attached:

- **My Scientific report supported (email) by the host institution**
- **Approval by the Management Committee (email)**
- **My bank details as follows:**

Name of account holder: Rui Alexandre Alves

Address of Account Holder: Rua de Silva Porto, 397, 1º
4250-473 Porto, Porto (PT)

Name of Bank: Caixa Geral de Depósitos

IBAN Account number: PT50003507430000272410086

Bank SWIFT code or BIC: CGDIPTPL

IBAN and BIC code are mandatory for EU-27 countries and EFTA-countries.

Without IBAN and BIC/SWIFT code, the Cost office will not be able to process your payment.

IBAN: International Bank Account Number

BIC: Bank Identifier Code (also called Swift address)

Date:03/03/2009..... Signature



For COST Office use:

Date_____
Signature