

Stay@School
Workshop on Module 3 “Teaching Methods”
Valencia, Spain, 9th January

Minutes

Participants JUAN COMENIUS

Sandra Alcantud Cantero
Laura Alonso Arocas
Andrea Ibañez González
Isabel Martínez Salavert
Candelaria Penalva Aroca

Minutes /

After studying and analyzing the entire contents of module 3, we agreed on the following conclusions: for us, the most appropriate teaching methods to prevent failure at school and subsequent truancy, are those related to educational cooperative strategies such as Cooperative Learning and Peer Education.

We emphasize these methods because we have already put them into practice at our school, making a positive assessment, since we have thus realized that school absenteeism is being reduced.

Firstly, we are dealing with the cooperative learning method.

We started working on this experience a few years ago, when a group of teachers decided to get trained in cooperative learning methods as they had to face the risk of school dropout due to the low motivation which some students showed.

On the first course we worked on S. Kagan's theories. On his method, we adopted the basic structures: disposition of the classroom in small groups (joining 4 tables together in a square), use of signs of attention, speaking time, roles of the student within the group, as well as learning structures: 'RallyRobin' or 'RoundRobin', 'RobinTable', 'RoundTable', 'wise – typer or writer', 'travelling heads', 'groups of experts', etc.

We chose these strategies for its versatility and dynamism in the classroom. We found them useful because of the simplicity of its development and by noticing how fast students were enlisted to the rhythm of the class.

Those students who normally did not participate in class due to their lack of motivation, by applying the techniques of cooperative learning, and conditioned by the role that have been assigned within the group, they are forced unconsciously to participate actively, because each student must provide accurate information.

Subsequently, we continued our learning process in learning methods carried out by Spanish authors. We decided to work on professor *Pujolàs's* philosophy, which focuses mainly on team work.

One of the main reasons why we chose this method was the large number of students with special educational needs who attend our classes. This methodology has helped us greatly to integrate this type of students who need so much attention and achieves that these students feel they are supported or helped by their classmate as much as their academic level as their emotional one.

As we have already remarked, the roles acquire a key role within this methodology. These assigned roles are often conditioned by academic achievement of each student. Thus, the coordinator or the nosy, roles which have an important weight in the group, are taken by those students who have the best better school performance. On the other hand, the roles that require less work such as time controller or the secretary are interpreted by those students who have worse school performance or even curricular adaptations. In this way, it is intended that students acquire commitment for the work to be carried out. This methodology allows us to promote social skills which are so necessary in everyday life, such as the ability to accept and understand different points of view, problem solving, decision making, self-criticism, etc.

Following this methodology, we have managed to introduce gradually those students who were at risk of abandonment in the development of classes. Individual work exposes many times the academic deficiency and school lag these students suffer, but cooperative work helps them *masking* that deficiency with the support of their teammates. But it also has given them higher self-esteem, they feel useful themselves, collaborate and especially they are no longer feeling as losers (main motivation of school absenteeism).

On the other hand, taking into account that our students are really confident at using new technologies (*technological natives*), we cannot fail in our ICT usage and its integration within the class as a tool in the learning process. Therefore, almost every classroom is equipped with multimedia interactive whiteboards. It is a different tool used to maintain active attention and motivation within the classroom, acting as a good ally of cooperative learning. It has also been put into practice with innovating activities such as the *Webquest*. Avoiding the copy and paste so widely used among



students students, the Webquest shakes them off with a clear aim to perform; on the basis of a teaching plan on a specific unit that incorporates links to the World Wide Web, students will be presented an approach and a task, usually a problem to solve or a project to carry out. Students have internet resources and they are asked to analyze and synthesize the information and then come to their own creative solutions. In addition, students solve the WebQuest forming working groups and adopting each one a perspective or a particular role, having specific information in order to accomplish the task.

Another learning methods that we mentioned at the beginning is 'Peer Education'

This collaborative teaching strategy is very useful in our educational context for various reasons and we apply it even in higher educational stages.

The main aim is to help any student who, for some reason, has been disadvantaged (pedagogically speaking) regarding to the rest of his/her classmates. That partner who is going to try "*consciously*" to help his / her peer with curricular problems, may be more accepted by him/her, since both in the form of transmitting as in the understand his / her cognitive strategies are more similar.

While in this method its initial approach seemed to be focused only on improving academic results, we realized that in many cases broader objectives are included , fostering in students the capability to be more responsible.

This collaborative strategy is particularly useful in our institution, since we have a large number of students with motor difficulties and need support and collaboration from their colleagues, both in and outside the classroom .

And we must also finally reflect on great advantages that these strategies bring us : the enrichment and personal maturity as students share and transmit different experiences from different points of view and make students be more supportive, more comprehensive people, etc., in short , become more human.