Virtual Meeting Minutes
Module 3 "Teaching Methods"

Meeting held on 21 January 2013 at 15:00 CET

The video of the meeting is available on this Internet address:
http://flashmeeting.e2bn.net/fm/8088c6-15830

Participants

Partners

Federico Fragasso (Pixel), Mauro Di Grazia (Cipat), Christine Cloes (Inforef), Enric Ortega (Florida), Camilla Tamiozzo (USR Veneto), Giuseppe Italiano (Datini), Andreea Cleminte (EuroEd)

Teachers

Antonella Panziera (IPSIA "C. Scarpa"), Santa Lucia Andolina (IPSIA "C. Scarpa"), Matteo Vecchiatto Montorio (IPSIA "A. Scotton"), Antonio Pittala' (IPSIA "A. Scotton"), Marialuisa Bianchi (IPSIA "A. Scotton"), Maria Antonia Forte (IPSIA "A. Scotton"), Chiara De Manzano (IIS "L. Luzzatti"), Loredana Fossella (IIS "L. Luzzatti"), Mirella Accappaticcio (IIS "L. Luzzatti"), Giuseppe De Blasi (IIS "L. Luzzatti"), Sara Nalli (IIS "E. De Amicis"), Luigi Veronese (IIS "E. De Amicis"), Catia Ziggiotto (IIS "E. De Amicis"), Julien Keutgen   (INFOREF), Monica Vlad   (Fundatia EuroEd), Lupuleasa Radu (Economic High School), Adina Amariei   (EuroEd School), Lupuleasa Daniela   (Economic High School), Lucia Nicolai (CIPAT), Paola Bertin (Datini) Paola Fiammelli (Datini), Marco Manzuoli (Datini)

Minutes

Welcome of Participants and Introduction of the Meeting Agenda

Lucia Nicolai - Cipat (IT) – as moderator of the meeting - welcomed all the participants for joining in the third transnational virtual meeting and then introduced the agenda and the structure of the meeting: each partner would be invited to present the results of their third training and after each presentation there would be a session for questions and feedback from the partners to make the discussion really interactive. Lucia Nicolai also explained the purpose of the transnational meeting that was that of allowing the teachers belonging to the six partners' organizations to discuss the feedback from the trainings with the other teachers as well as the discussions made during their workshops and the groups' reactions to the material provided by Module 3: "Teaching Methods".

Teachers' Opinions

Cipat (IT) teachers

1) A topic they have discussed about is how to build new teaching methods in order to tackle early school leaving. They think that a new approach to subjects can power the students' self esteem involving them in the process of learning.

With students with learning difficulties, the traditional teaching method doesn't work. Active learning promotes motivation and inclusion. It is important to consider all learning styles and they give students a questionnaire in order to evaluate them and find proper "tools" for the students. Students at risk prefer a learning style based on concrete actions rather than on a theoretical approach.

2) They need adequate spaces for the use of the new teaching methods, and this is not always possible.... to liven up and complete the action of learning. It would be important to have some I.T. DEVICES such as an interactive board at disposal.

3) They have also agreed that it's fundamental to find teachers who are really interested and motivated in using new teaching methods, and who like to share them with students, in order to create a work group that can face and tackle the issues discussed in the other modules (risk of early school leaving and similar)

4) Agreement is expressed by most teachers on the fact that, in some cases and in some schools, new teaching methods are difficult to practice because they require extratime and extrawork

5) ICT is a powerful resource to make the class an active learning group but it's just a tool because it's fundamental to have a team work composed by teachers and students

Session of questions and feedback from the partners

Andreea Cleminte - EuroEd (RO) raised the question if all the teachers belonging to the group and the teachers in their respective schools agreed on the use of new technologies.

Lucia Nicolai replied that most of them agreed, especially on the positive effects they prove to have on "difficult" students.

The Romanian team also asked whether, in the Italian situation, students are allowed to intervene on the school syllabus with suggestions or some sort of comment on their learning.

The reply was yes, they can, even because in the Italian school system there isn't a national fixed syllabus any longer, but teachers are required to follow some guidelines in general terms, being quite free, however, as far as HOW to develop contents and subjects concerned.

USR Veneto (IT) teachers

The virtual meeting was managed by the vocational and technical high school "L. Luzzatti".

Mr Giuseppe De Biasi, spokesperson of the USR Veneto teachers highlighted the following points in his contribution:

Reference to Vocational and Technical school

Syllabus and practical notions and techniques

Different typology of teaching situations

Strategies against dropping out

Peer education

Mr De Biasi presented his school: a Vocational and Technical kind of institution. Their syllabus is devised to allow students to succeed in developing mainly practical notions and techniques. This main agenda results in a factual teaching approach which has a core status in daily instruction. Therefore, this framework inspires teachers to use different typology of teaching situations. Among them, they have underlined the following ones:

- Active Learning and Teaching
- Cooperative Learning
- Peer Education
- Educational Technologies
- Additional Teaching Resources

The above mentioned educational strategies are even more useful when they call attention to the latest major reform of Italian High School. As a matter of fact, it has changed the current curricula of

Vocational and Technical high schools. As a consequence, it drastically reduced laboratory hours in favor of non-practical lessons.

This is why the Venetian group think they need to implement educational situations with successful strategies such as the aforementioned five points they said. Markedly, they have been developing strategies against dropping out. Peer education is to be considered a positive way to offer an encouraging motivation to drop-outs. Then Mr De Biasi focused on a few aspects of this educational agenda:

Students may be selected and trained - on a voluntary base - to give others students belonging to the same class or to other classes support on subjects where the latest are weaker. Older students are also trained to give help to younger students in order to prevent dangerous behaviors

On the basis of the high percentage of non-Italian students enrolled in their school, they have focused on them and they have given them the chance to be more integrated into the Italian school community. By means of their being part of the school peer education activities, students are given the chance to be mentors of younger students of the same ethnic group

In the end, teachers give lessons in the afternoon to the newly arrived students who are enrolled in the first classes.

Venetian group of teachers remarked that evidence says these strategies work. Last year, they were also awarded a national prize on Peer Education. This means that they are on the right path.

Session of questions and feedback from the partners

Lucia Nicolai – Cipat (IT) replies to USR Veneto intervention saying that she teaches in a technical and vocational school as Mr De Biasi does. She says they have a large number of immigrants. A major problem they have faced is about the new arrivals because students of 2nd generation are indeed like the Italian ones. Thus they take a double action:-They try to place the new arrivals in classes were a student of that same country is present, but specifically a student of second generation, so that it works as a facilitator, as a mediator.-and, at the same time, they organize lessons of Italian as a second language in the mornings twice a week, because their immigrants usually live in the outskirts of the city and they don't like to stay at school in the afternoons. She would like to know if Venetian teachers have ever tried to organize Italian lessons in the morning to integrate peer education. She asks Giuseppe if he can specify how the voluntary students help the weaker ones and whether it happens in the afternoons. Lucia also wishes to congratulate for what they have done to fight early school leaving and for the prize they got. What she thinks is lacking is the RE-motivation to study. She thinks they should help students with subjects in order that they can improve, but...first of all they have to remotivate them to study and to stay at school. In Lucia's school the guidance teacher of the class signals the students at risk of dropping out to the people responsible of the project. For these students they organize talks with external experts who investigate about their problems that can be psychological, familiar and so on, and they help them to reflect on their learning method. Their project includes meetings with experts of job agencies too.

Inforef (BE) teachers

1. GENERAL COMMENTS

The working group is disappointed by this module, which they find too general and theoretical.

The working group emphasizes that in the fight against early school leaving, the teaching methods described are not always as positive as what the module implies.

Those methods should be presented in a more refined and critical way.

Each method should be the object of "one module specifically dedicated to it"!

In the end, the working group wonders how this module could be useful for teachers.

2. SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Chapters 1 and 2: Active learning – Cooperative learning

The notion of "active learning" is not "AOC" (controlled designation of origin).
It is not a built up concept, but a term that encompasses various schools of thought, different practices the common denominator of which is to make the pupil active and actor of his/her training.
In Belgium, some of those practices are considered as elitist and not suitable for everybody, including in the fight against early school leaving.
The issues related to "learning styles" or "multiple intelligences" do not win unanimous support in the scientific world. The questionnaires regarding learning styles are not advised by pedagogues. Indeed, cognitive styles are closely related and it is dangerous to "categorise" pupils according to their answers to such questionnaires. Putting pupils in a "box" and adapting teaching to that box is not verified by research.
They think approaches should be diversified and chances of learning for all multiplied.
Regarding "cooperative learning", they recommend the following work:
« L'apprentissage coopératif »
Théories, méthodes, activités
Auteurs : Abrami, Chambers, Poulsen, De Simone, Howden, D'Apollinia
Editions de la Chenelière - Education à la coopération
http://www.pirouette-editions.fr/boutique/produit_details.php?rubrique=42&produit=133

Chapters 3: Peer education

The opinions are divided.
Several members use this method and find it fruitful (e.g., a better pupil explains the subject to a weaker pupil and the teacher becomes a resource person).
Other members express reluctance regarding remediation activities carried out by peers. This method should be pondered and supervised.

In this regard they draw attention to the tutorship programme set up by the ULB (University of Brussels). It is a school support programme for pupils in situation of school failure.
This programme is implemented in one school out of four in Brussels. Every year, more than 1,500 pupils are supported by around 200 tutors (see description sheet in the "publications"):
The tutors are students of upper education. Closer regarding age and status, they are often perceived by the pupil as an "older brother" and work in collaboration with the teacher.
Aims of the programme: supporting pupils regarding knowledge, skills and social skills; helping pupils to reconcile with school and regain self-confidence; informing and making transition to upper education easier.
http://www.schola-ulb.be/fichiers/scholadepliantv6.pdf

They also draw attention to the device "Ecole citoyenne" (peer mediation) proposed by the MIEC (Civic Institutions and Schools Movement). In Belgium, around forty schools are part of the MIEC network and the movement is spreading.
It aims to implement in the school a participative system, in which young people and adults build together a civic project:
Writing the "law" (some basic rules to live together in mutual respect)
Electing a "civic council" (with teachers/pupils parity) responsible for the application of the law and developing projects to improve "life together".
http://www.miec.be/index.html

Chapter 4: Educational technologies

In their schools, minds are more and more open to new educational practices including digital tools, but there is still much to do...
The members of the working group emphasise the interest of digital educational supports, including for:

quick access to audiovisual reference documents to free oneself from the constraints of paper;
using the interactive whiteboard to work in optimal conditions regarding readability and tidiness;
possibility to save documents in progress to gain time;
communication with pupils through a digital workspace or simply by email to individualise educational relationships…

However, they express the following comments:
The difficulties that some pupils encounter in "traditional" education remain in digital education:
Searching relevant information in a "paper" referential or on the internet remains complex;
The difficulty to concentrate before a blackboard or an interactive whiteboard remains;
Information processing and synthesis are still problematic;
Problems related to tidiness, layout, spelling or syntax are the same written by hand or typewritten…

To guarantee good quality work with digital educational tools, there are certain conditions:
Adapted recent and maintained material (and therefore financial means).
Good knowledge and command of the necessary software.
Continuing, almost daily training, given the many novelties.
Willingness of the education team to work coherently …

Session of questions and feedback from the partners

Paola Bertini – Datini (IT) speaks in the name of the Datini group of teachers after listening to the Belgian colleagues' report and asks them how they think of tackling the risk of having students feeling a sense of disease at school, especially completely demotivated students who have lost their self-esteem and have rejected all school subjects alike.
Datini's teachers don't think that following the same type of teaching methods and the same set of contents for all students, the same way and at the same time, without making any distinctions among them, could work.
In Italy, in their experience in Vocational Schools, they try to reach the same objectives with the students at risk with the help of workshops and using personal methods, inside the same class group and with the cooperation of all students.
Of course, the role of the teacher in this process is surely weary, but it's just like the rays of a star that have to reach all the different sides of the earth.
Julien Keutgen - Inforef (BE) replies they don't reject the whole module, they just think that some terms there used are too general, some ideas have a too broad meaning.
They think the module was too theoretical, they don't know how well it could work in the class, and sometimes the term "active learning" is associated with negative connotations.
For the rest, they have generally appreciated the module.

Florida (ES) teachers

Enric Ortega – Florida (ES) is the spokesperson of the following group of teachers:
Laura Casades, Charo Lopez, Conxa Montesinos, Laura Uixera, M. Jose Sendra, Enric Ortega who took part in the workshop.
Enric said that their teachers liked the first three chapters of the module because they give interesting and synthetic information about the different methodologies of learning. They liked the
main idea that all the methodologies can be mixed, because they are working on an Interdisciplinary Cooperative Project during the last years and they believe that this methodology contains some of the parts explained on this module:

1. Active Learning: their way of working is based on the idea of active learning, thy show a challenge to the students and they have to follow all the steps to get it, including all the aspects from the different

subjects. This project is structured on the phases described in the chapter and is following the steps of a research.

2. Cooperative Learning: their projects are made in big groups, the class groups, and are normally based on the idea of experts and heterogeneous groups. This way of working tries to develop the social and emotional competences of the students, it needs a specific organization of the classroom and changes the traditional role of the teacher.

3. Peer Education: also it's an interesting part of the module, and in their school what they do, is exactly to make pairs between students: one with the responsibility of being the helper and the other with the responsibility of being helped, which means to follow the instructions of the other. This is a way of transferring knowledge between equals and a way to improve the responsibility.

4.ICT: They are using blogs and wikis to collect all the information that has to do with the projects and then, students and teachers can share everything, and what is more important for them, is that the students can see what the others are doing and then, they can think about the quality of their own work.

In general what is more important is to realize the change of the teacher's role, as a need to get the change of the methodological approach:

- OLD ROLE **to** NEW ROLE
  - Teacher-centered classroom **to** Learner-centered classroom
- Product-centered learning **to** Process-centered learning
- Teacher as a 'transmitter of knowledge' **to** Teacher as an organizer of knowledge
- Teacher as a 'doer' for children **to** Teachers as an 'enabler', facilitating pupils in their learning
- Subject-specific focus **to** Holistic learning focus

Session of questions and feedback from the partners

Giuseppe - USR Veneto (IT) asked whether they think the use of new methodologies can reduce the gap between teachers and students. Enric replied that the teacher has to change his/her ROLE: the student has to become the protagonist of the learning process.
Teachers must be well prepared not only in their own discipline, but they also have to be holistic focused in order to reduce the gap with students.
Lucia - (Cipat) said she perfectly agreed with Enric and she added that using ICT can really reduce the gap with our "digital natives" students.

Giuseppe communicates that USR Veneto group have to leave by 4 o'clock

Datini (IT) teachers

Paola Bertini – Datini (IT) reports what has been debated in the teachers group' workshop.
She says that Datini's teachers' group has remarked the need for a new approach to subjects, which can enhance the student's self-esteem. It will be important to consider different learning styles, as well as the exchange of "emotional" aspects between teachers and students.
Students usually show great interest and appreciation for these sides of their teachers, which make them appear more "human".
Teachers also highlighted how the new teaching methods can help schools to reach EUROPEAN KEY COMPETENCES, even with regard to the EFQ (European Framework of Qualifications) levels.

Teachers agreed on the fact that the use of new teaching methods should follow precise guidelines and contents, they should also be employed by a TEAM WORK, otherwise teachers could run the risk of working in complete "loneliness".

In order to use and exploit all the potential advantages of new methods, teachers should share them with students, so as to create a work group that can face the problems discussed in the other modules, and also be aware of the longer time needed to know and master new methods.

As far as teaching methods, the working group finds a sort of "RESISTANCE" from many of their colleagues in the field of evaluation connected to teaching methods, as the school system is still organized on the " syllabus" and evaluation is based on single subjects rather than on the whole process of reaching key competences.

Technologies allow to reach good results only if a team work is carried out first of all, and that isn't always easy to achieve.
In addition, they require an intense INITIAL work from the teachers, which can be found quite "tiring" by some, but which proves to be really effective.

Session of questions and feedback from the partners

Enric Ortega - Florida (ES) asked Datini how they can evaluate te results of a new methodology, and how they can know that they are really getting what they supposed to when they decided to change the methodology.
Paola replied that some of these new methods can be particularly useful for teachers when they are going to acquire some new skills, for example the key competence "Learn to learn": through lab activities and workshops they can teach students "how to learn".
Teachers, while observing a process into the classrom, can have a privileged point of observation and also of evaluation, even of the weaker students. If teachers have a project on the classroom, they can more easily find the right place even for weaker students
Eric suggests that the next module- Module 4- will be useful to develop the crucial issue of evaluation.

EuroEd (RO) teachers

Andreea Cleminte is the spokesperson of the Romanian group of teachers. She reports that all teachers appreciated the module **Teaching methods** very much because it highlights their main need as teachers when it comes to solving school problems of students at risk. Teachers need an effective method to motivate students to learn. The most effective teaching method is the one which encourages *active learning* because:
-*it takes into consideration all students' learning styles*.
-*it is based on learning by doing; it means acquiring knowledge through experience and reflection*
-*it focuses on skills rather that theory*

All participants mentioned that students do not feel comfortable if teachers adopt a unique teaching method. This is exactly what "Active learning" tries to avoid. It combines different learning styles and teaching models. An initial questionnaire must be filled in by students in order to identify their different cognitive styles. Their participants insisted on having the online questionnaire translated in Romanian because it is very useful. (other sites?) Knowing what students' cognitive styles are helps teachers choose the most adequate techniques and it also teaches students how to learn. "Active learning" makes learning more accessible and personal. Active Learning promotes motivation and inclusion.
The participants agreed that some collaborative teaching strategies are successful, in particular:
cooperative learning / peer education / the creative use of those learning technologies which have become learning environments where students can work/learn/share experiences/discuss/meet together

The teachers said that students favour Cooperative Learning because it creates groups/ communities where everybody has to contribute to do the tasks. The participants shared their experience related to cooperative learning which encourages and motivates all students to work.

Peer Education is also used by our teachers especially with older students welcoming the young ones and helping them to integrate or even helping them with their studies.

The younger teachers valued the creative use of IT during the classes. They said it livens up classes by activating all students. They explained that students like to participate in a virtual group and share, solve problems and cooperate with the others (they are used to; see Facebook etc). Such things can be used to promote learning, to improve communication techniques, or to practise negotiation and reflection.

Session of questions and feedback from the partners

Julien - Inforet (BE) asked whether they all agreed on the use of ICT and found really positive results in students and Andreea replied that, if you know how to use them properly, ICT can really improve teaching and get better results with students, making them more motivated and interested in what they are learning. Even using social networks or other can be helpful.

Paola Bertini - (Datini) added the fact that having to interact with "digital natives", it has become nearly essential, for teachers, to use new methods in order to reach their students effectively.

Julian says that many, even not all, of the problems students encountered BEFORE ICT are still there. Enric remarked the difference between ICT and social networks. He also pointed out the fact that students today are digital natives, but they are not always so able to "select" properly the information they get from the computer.

Conclusions

Lucia Nicolai – Cipat (IT) invited Datini, the project's promoter, to conclude the virtual meeting.

Paola Bertini- Datini (IT) said Module 3 was quite stimulating and created a lively debate among the teachers involved.

Every partner agreed with the importance of new teaching methods such as the ones mentioned in Module 3, although with some distinctions.

Differences in the interventions and in the points of view were due to the different personal attitudes of the participants, and also to the differences among the school systems of the countries involved in the project.

A central issue which has been hinted at is the problem of Evaluation, which will be deeply treated in the following module.

Lucia Nicolai Cipat (IT) greeted all the partners and told them the next meeting will be hold on 27th February 2013.