

## Module 4 "Educational Evaluation and Prevention of Early School Leaving"

Meeting held 27 February 2013 at 15:00 CET

The video of the meeting is available on this Internet address:

<http://flashmeeting.e2bn.net/fm/c903fd-15831>

### Participants

#### Partners

Lorenzo Martellini (Pixel), Christine Cloes (Inforef), Enric Ortega (Florida), Gisela Vidal (Florida), Camilla Tamiozzo (USR Veneto), Paola Bertini (Datini), Andreea Cleminte (EuroEd), Mauro Di Grazia (CIPAT)

#### Teachers

Martine Prignon (Inforef), Julien Keutgen (Inforef), Elena Fecioru (Inforef), Antonella Panziera (IPSIA "C. Scarpa"), Santa Lucia Andolina (IPSIA "C. Scarpa"), Daniella Perotto (IPSIA "C. Scarpa"), Matteo Vecchiato Montorio (IPSIA "A. Scotton"), Antonio Pittala' (IPSIA "A. Scotton"), Marialuisa Bianchi (IPSIA "A. Scotton"), Maria Antonia Forte (IPSIA "A. Scotton"), Anna Campese (IPSIA "A. Scotton"), Chiara De Manzano (IIS "L. Luzzatti"), Loredana Fossella (IIS "L. Luzzatti"), Mirella Accappaticcio (IIS "L. Luzzatti"), Sara Nalli (IIS "E. De Amicis"), Luigi Veronese (IIS "E. De Amicis"), Fabio Mosco (IIS "E. De Amicis"), Davide Penello (IIS "E. Uselli Ruzza"), Tiziana Ferlicca (IIS "E. Uselli Ruzza"), Enrica Lazzaretto (IIS "E. Uselli Ruzza"), Elza Gheorghiu (Vasile Alecsandri High School)

### Minutes

#### Welcome of Participants and Introduction of the Meeting Agenda

Julien Keutgen from Inforef, as moderator of this meeting, welcomed the participants and introduced Module 4 and its theme, "Educational Evaluation and Prevention of Early School Leaving". He then handed over to his colleague Elena Fecioru who presented the results of the Belgian workshops.

#### Teachers' opinions

##### Belgian teachers (Inforef)

Elena Fecioru (Inforef) started with some general comments on teachers' opinion on the module and its topic.

When they are asked about evaluation, teachers do not seem to be particularly trained to evaluation practices nor in reflections on how to make them more adequate, although they admit the importance of evaluation at all the levels of the educational process.

There do not seem to be a proper "culture of evaluation" in schools. Yet evaluation is certainly a key element to make practices evolve, as indicated by several project partners. Regarding Module 4, the participants regret the too general and theoretical aspect of the module. They wonder how it could help teachers who face early school leaving. The module gives almost no concrete example and practical tools, although this is precisely what teachers expect!

Inforef then detailed various chapters of the module.

In chapters 2 and 3, the distinctions between evaluation "kinds" and "forms" seem a bit arbitrary. Globally, the participants know and use those various evaluation "strategies". We use the word "strategies" to include all the different kinds, forms, models ... evoked in the module. The participants





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consider that strategies need to be varied according to the learning “moments” and according to the “object” of the evaluation (teaching techniques and methods, learners’ satisfaction, knowledge and skills acquired, changes in the learners’ behaviour ...). In tackling early school leaving, they prefer “positive reinforcement”: starting from what the learner can do, recognising him/her as a person able to do something, giving him/her a better self-image, rather than punishing the negative aspects. For that purpose, the participants emphasise the importance of “individual interviews” rather than an evaluation of the class-group. The working group also stresses the importance of meetings with parents during activities that are not directly related to school (such as festivities). These are appropriate moments to discuss with parents and solve their children’s problems.

The evaluation techniques proposed in Chapter 6 are interesting but some of them (such as audio or video recording) seem difficult to carry out at school. Observation techniques might require the intervention of an “external observer” in the classroom or on the field. It is difficult for a teacher to be at the same time actor and observer of the teaching process.

Regarding metacognitive evaluation (Chapter 7), there is in Belgium, France and some other European countries a teaching approach called “mental management” that precisely aims to help learners be aware of their mental process and thus better master it. Many teachers, speech therapists, social workers, parents ... are trained at this approach that radically changes the point of view on the learner and on the relation maintained with him/her in any teaching process. See the project “Co-nai-sens”: <http://www.conaisens.org/>

All the participants agree that it is important to develop students’ “social skills”, addressed in Chapter 8, but they do not always know how to do so and how to evaluate these skills that strongly interact in any learning activity. The module does not really offer any concrete idea in this regard. The type of grid proposed in the module to evaluate students’ “social skills” prompts strong reactions in the working group: most participants refuse to categorise students with this kind of questionnaire. “*We end up with tick boxes about human behaviour*” said a participant.

Inforef concluded on comment from the teachers on prevention in primary school. The working group reminds that evaluation and early school leaving prevention strategies must be developed from that moment. The Belgian working group includes the headmaster of a primary school, who is also the president of an important association of primary education headmasters in our area. He calls attention to the fact that school leaving starts early, as soon as the first years at school, even in nursery school. Problematic behaviours start to settle in at this early stage (irregular presence at school, mutual misunderstanding between cultures – including on the role of school and of parents in education – aggressiveness between children, between parents, between parents and headmasters/teachers...).

Yet few devices are proposed at this level and there are few means in primary schools, deprived of educators and mediators, to manage this kind of problem. Most headmasters do not even have a secretary. Primary education wishes its specific needs were taken into account at the level of education policies (at the regional, national and European levels).

### Session of questions and feedback from the partners

Paola Bertini from Datini said they agreed with Inforef, especially regarding the too theoretical approach of the module, on the fact that most teachers are not properly trained to evaluation, and on the use of the word “strategy”. She then asked about meeting parents during activities that are not related to school, asking for examples of such activities. She also asked how mental management is carried out in class and requested information on the project “Co-nai-sens”. Finally, she wondered how early school leaving could start in primary school.



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Inforef gave examples of informal meetings with parents and suggested visiting the website of the project "Co-nai-sens", mental management being too complex to be explained in a few words. Regarding primary school, Inforef replied that bad habits can begin at that stage.

### **Romanian teachers (EuroED)**

The Romanian participants found Module 4 very useful and agreed that evaluation is an essential component of education as it lies at the basis of understanding and promoting the learning process. Teachers highlighted the complexity of the issue, which covers a vast area ranging from evaluation of school systems, schools and students.

The focus of the discussion was on evaluating students. It is important in identifying students' learning difficulties (which often cause students to leave school for not being able to meet its requirements). Evaluation helps teachers identify pupils' learning difficulties and define the intervention suitable for each pupil.

Taking into consideration the importance of evaluation teachers need to be familiar with its types and forms, techniques, models and tools in order to become able to use them effectively. Participants mentioned that it is a pity that some of the links leading to samples/ examples on the platform are in Greek. They should be translated in an international language.

One of the most appreciated chapters was the one on evaluation techniques. Participants exchanged experiences and opinions related to using these techniques (questionnaires diagnostic tests, observation, tape-recording of an educational meeting, video-recording of an educational meeting, interviews given by learners). The common idea was that teachers need to know and use a vast variety of techniques as well as a combination of these techniques (necessity of samples/examples on the platform).

A very interesting discussion was raised by testing skills (what and how to test skills); teachers signaled lack of materials and models/ samples in this respect.

Teachers concluded that Module 4 is very useful but it should encompass more practical examples (for different school subjects, having students at risk in mind).

### **Session of questions and feedback from the partners**

Enric Ortega (Florida) said he agreed with most of what was said and asked whether Romania had a specific way of evaluating skills. It was answered that teachers should work hard to meet the new demand, to evaluate skills rather than information, which Enric agreed with. He took foreign languages as an example, pointing out that some people learn them for years and pass the tests but are unable to use the language they have learnt.

### **Italian teachers (CIPAT)**

Cipat group considered three aspects of evaluation: the one of school systems, the self-evaluation of schools and, with a special regard, evaluation of students which best meets teaching and learning needs when teachers have to evaluate students at risk of dropping out.

In Italy there is a great discussion about evaluation in Vocational Schools and they are getting more and more aware of the fact that not only theoretical school learning but much more the achievement of



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practical skills through project work can be spent in a future job and it is exactly these skills that are therefore to be measured through adequate assessment.

The group was deeply involved in a debate concerning which kind of evaluation would turn right and finally agreed with the conclusion that evaluation starts at the very beginning of every teaching unit, it needs intermediate observation steps of the students' behaviour and ends with a final assessment that must consider all previous mentioned steps and the level of increased competences of the student by the whole teaching process.

Teacher thought that Module 4 offers a large overview of evaluating systems, but it doesn't suggest concrete proposals or provides really useful examples for students at risk of dropping out.

Our conclusion is that evaluation is an important, integrating part of teaching and has to be led to educational skills which are the most appropriate for Vocational School students because such an evaluation involves the prospective of what they are going to do in the future as employees, specialized workers or anything else, as the success of stage experiences already demonstrates.

### **Session of questions and feedback from the partners**

Julien Keutgen (Inforef) asked how the evaluation of skills in professional schools was carried out. It was answered that the Italian system was "schizophrenic", with various ways of evaluating. Evaluation is done in several steps from the beginning of the educational path. At the end of the year, the evaluator has to collect all the various evaluations. It is easier in practical subjects (such as catering industry). The system is not yet consolidated in Italy. There are evaluation models, but schools are autonomous in their evaluation. The traditional system of performance evaluation is easier than the skills evaluation. Julien Keutgen then asked whether there is a legal framework for evaluations. Paola (CIPAT) answered there are two methods, they are complex to explain.

### **Italian teachers (USR Veneto)**

Educational assessment is the process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs according to pre-set conditions and terms (learning, knowledge, skills and behaviours). In education and training the assessment is one of the most complicated issue/topic since it covers ethical, social-economic and legislative aspects.

In our school the assessment deals with some processes affecting the quality of service, the structures, the training offer, the integration and the prevention of early school leaving. We apply functional methods to the continuous improvement by carrying out actions aimed at monitoring the learners' performances.

The "INVALSI" assessment, carried out in the first two-year period of secondary education, provides the school with relevant information on the learning process and thereby supports its improvement. Currently, besides the assessment of achievements, it is necessary to provide a certification of learning outcomes according to European guidelines. This however implies a change in teaching and assessment methods. The concreteness of knowledge and the interdisciplinarity are essential teaching actions and have brought about new assessment approaches.

The legislation states the school role by describing assessment and certification steps. A competence means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.



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We focus in particular on two kinds of competences:

1. key competences: they describe the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes related to: decision making, analyzing, problem solving, communicating, finding creative solutions, personal and social well-being. Key competences are necessary for the active citizenship: they are pre-requisites for the access to training and therefore they are essential in order to facilitate the access to labour market, the re-qualification and to positively face changes
2. Technical and professional competences: they are knowledge and skills related to specific working activities and processes (specific knowledge of a sector concerned).

A competency-based assessment implies the design of learning pathways in terms of units of learning outcomes. Teachers/trainers cooperate and share their decisions. This approach allows to enhance and valorise the autonomy, the meta-cognitive strategies, the cooperative learning, the assignment and change of roles.

The formative assessment doesn't focus on the competence but on the competent person.

The authentic assessment is used as a complementary action:

1. observing and analysing learners' cognitive behaviours
2. assessing the learning with all suitable instruments as long as they are in line with learning objectives
3. analysing the added value by complying with a set of common criteria agreed at the beginning of the learning pathway.

Our school has elaborated a variety of units of learning outcomes functional to the certification of competences. The units involving students in laboratory activities and group works have made a success. Students have acquired new competences and improved previous ones in a more appealing learning context.

Final products have been showed during expositions and Open days by increasing the appeal of the learning process. In schools trying to set up new strategies to prevent early school leaving, the competency-based assessment and the learning activities carried out are the more effective.

### **Session of questions and feedback from the partners**

Julien Keutgen (Inforef) asked what the INVALSI assessment was. Anna Campese (USRV) explained it is a national evaluation for secondary schools, adding that, unlike the international evaluation PISA, INVALSI is mandatory. Here, Paola from Datini added that it is also carried out in primary school. Then, Elena Fecioru (Inforef) asked about the assessment of learning outcomes for students, wondering if all students could take it. It was replied that all students are involved.

### **Spanish teachers (Florida)**

Spanish teachers consider the module has gave us a quite interesting general vision about evaluation and also showed good classifications and good definitions of the important concepts.





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It has been especially interesting for our teachers because we are working on new processes of evaluation in our school. We are developing the idea of formative evaluation with other schools and that's the reason why we have paid specially attention on the chapter two talking about evaluation forms and in particular on the formative evaluation to improve the work that we are doing.

We suggest reading also the bibliography about Neus Sanmartin. She is an expert on this topic and we are following her studies to develop this way of working in our school.

At Florida we are trying to focus our evaluation methodology on the idea of evaluating the process and not only the final part. It's very important on this idea to know the difference between evaluation and qualification, and we have to try to remember the last part of the evaluation process about revising what we have done and what we have learnt to use the errors as a learning tool.

We need to ask ourselves about how do we help the students to learn from their mistakes at class, for example, and we have to understand that the formative evaluation needs everyday classes and everyday routines to be organized taking this idea into account. For example how to help students learn how to learn, or which situations in classroom are helping the students to improve their autonomy or to improve their planning skills.

We are also focused on the idea of how to get Schools emotionally competent and the chapter 8 talking about the development skills and the quality indicators for the assessment of Social Skills has been quite clear and the Scale for the assessment of student's social skills it's an example of rubric that can be use easily at schools.

### **Session of questions and feedback from the partners**

Paola (CIPAT) addressed formative evaluation. She said it had been used for a long time in Italy but that the final evaluation does not always confirm the results of the formative evaluation which raises doubt about students' achievement of skills. She then asked how the Spaniards planned to disseminate the new evaluation methodology in schools and she wondered how the proposing group would react in case of opposition to the new methodology. She wanted to know whether it would only be a form of awareness or a prescriptive rule for the school. Enric Ortega (Florida) answered those questions were raised in Spain as well. There are also gaps between final and formative evaluations; Enric Ortega ascribes it to confusion between evaluating and qualifying. There is indeed a resistance in Spain to the new law.

### **Italian teachers (Datini)**

- How new teaching methods can help to fight early school leaving? A new approach to subjects can enhance the student's self-esteem. It will be important to consider all learning styles and find proper "tools" for the student, so as to be able to share also "emotional" aspects between teachers and students. How new teaching methods can help schools to reach EUROPEAN KEY COMPETENCES, considering also the EFQ levels?
- How to think about (and to find, of course) adequate spaces for the use of the new teaching methods? They should follow precise guidelines and contents, they should also be recognized by a team work, otherwise teachers could run the risk of working in complete "loneliness".



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- It is necessary to find teachers who are really interested in 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).
- Agreement is expressed by most teachers on the fact that, in some cases and in some schools, new teaching methods are difficult to practice, 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 competences.
- Technologies don't always allow to reach good results, because a team work is necessary first of all, together with the effective sharing of methods and objectives. How can we connect ICT with other teaching resources?
- It is agreed by most teachers that new teaching methods will be a good way to involve the class group in each step of a process based on teaching /learning, and not only on a simple transmission of contents. How to handle conflicts between tradition and innovation is a difficult path which involves teachers (among themselves and towards students) as well as students (among themselves and towards teachers).

Considering different learning styles is a necessary phase of individual approach to learning/ teaching path.

### **Session of questions and feedback from the partners**

Anna Consonni (USR Veneto) asked which difficulties they had met evaluating students' skills. Paola Bertini (Datini) answered the new forms of evaluation would be implemented next September, they have not been experimented yet. Then, Julien (Inforef) asked whether there are training for teachers to perform evaluations. She answered there are such training at the regional level. Then, Elena Fecioru (Inforef) asked if schools could implement self-assessments or whether there is a regional grid and schedule. Paola said there are regional guidelines, while the skills to assess, adapted by each schools.

### **Conclusion**

Julien Keutgen (Inforef) concluded that there are many similarities between the participating countries. The partners agree on the importance of evaluation, of using different kinds of evaluation according to the object of the evaluation, of evaluating skills and not only theory.



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