



Teaching For The Xxi Century

Cristina Isabel Pavisic

cristina_pavisic@hotmail.com

Istituto Tecnico per Attività Sociali "Galileo Galilei" (Italy)

Abstract

Now a days there are a lot of problems in education, the students are not interested, the teachers become discouraged and there are weak results in the student's performance. Something had to be done.

In our school we began to work with the Leonardo da Vinci Programme.

Since 1996 our school is involved in work placements for students in different European countries.

These experiences helped the students to understand how important was their professional and languages skills. But these was not enough, not all the teachers at school were really convinced that 3 weeks in other country should be better than their marvellous lessons in the classroom. That's why we decided to apply for a project for teachers.

Our first project for teachers was for 32 teachers; they went for 2 weeks to England, Ireland and Spain. During their mobility they studied English or Spanish and they visited some schools to understand the Educational System of those countries and to improve their knowledge about the different teaching methodologies.

The result was that they realize that there are a lot of methodologies and knowledge that they were not using and even if they knew about them they were not able to use them. A lot of teachers began to study English and Spanish and began to be interested in the CLIL methodology. The consequence was that the school apply for another project for 54 teachers. The teachers went to England to improve their English skills and to improve their professional skills using CLIL methodology.

The result of all these experiences was that now in our school there are some teachers teaching for some hours their subject in English. The result is that the students are more involved in the school work, the teachers found the tools to be motivated and the performance of all students and teachers became better. The traditional teaching is not enough if we want to teach the citizens of the XXI century.

Introduction

Now a days there are a lot of problems in education, the students are not interested, the teachers become discouraged and there are weak results in the student's performance. Perhaps part of the problem was the lack of understanding of what really motivates students.

According to sociologists, current school environments are a reward-scarce setting for professional work and often seem to work against teachers' best efforts to grow professionally and improve student learning (3).

Teachers' attitudes are crucial to the success of in-depth curricular innovation.(4)

A "radical rethinking" of professional development that encourages teachers' growth has to be done. Teachers must have opportunities to try out new practices by taking new roles and creating a culture of inquiry. (5)

Staff development also means "providing occasions for teachers to reflect critically on their practice and to fashion new knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy, and learners" (6)



Motivation is optimized when the person engages in the task for his own reason rather than in response to external pressure; the task is of appropriate level of challenge and there is sufficient choice.

How can teachers set up learning environments to optimize these conditions?

The answer to this question is wide and varied. Specific strategies could depend on various cultures and environments.

Whatever level of motivation the students bring to the classroom, it will be altered either negatively or positively, by what happens in that classroom.

Research has shown that good teaching practices can do more to offset student indifference than extraordinary efforts to attack motivation directly. Most students react positively to a well-organized lesson taught by an animated teacher who has an authentic interest in students and what they learn. A good teacher has to be enthusiastic about his topic to generate an atmosphere that is open and positive.

When students are treated well, respected, encouraged and the work has meaning, high levels of motivation will automatically developed.

It is increasingly evident that the educational methods we have been using for the past 70 years are no longer sufficient.

They are based on scientific assumptions about the nature of knowledge, the learning process and differential aptitudes for learning that have been eclipsed by new discoveries (1)

Description

Taking into account all the teacher's needs, something concrete had to be done at school to help students and teachers to become better teachers and better students.

At the ITAS GALILEO GALILEI we began to work with the Leonardo da Vinci Programme

The Leonardo da Vinci programme links policy to practice in the field of vocational education and training. Projects range from those giving individuals the chance to improve their competences, knowledge and skills through a period abroad, to Europe-wide co-operation between training organizations.

In 1995 the European Commission adopted a document on education called *The White Paper*. Teaching and learning. Towards the learning society". It declares that proficiency in three community languages is a prior objective, and suggests teaching content in a foreign language as a way to contribute to the achievement of this objective of plurilingualism.

Since 1996 our school is involved in work placements for students in different European countries. These experiences helped the students to understand how important was their professional and language skills. But these was not enough, not all the teachers at school were really convinced that 3 weeks in other country should be better than their marvelous lessons in the classroom.

The teachers were used to take part in several training courses but they were specific for their subject and they were at local, regional or national level. They needed something new and something with a very high impact in their professional development. That's why we decided to apply for a European project for teachers.

In the Leonardo da Vinci programme there are projects that can be granted for the mobility of professionals in vocational education and training. The aim focus on the transfer, improvement and update of competences and of innovative methods and practices in the field of vocational training. Individual teachers exchanged experiences with their counterparts in other countries.

Our first project for teachers has given the opportunity during 2 weeks at 32 teachers of the ITAS GALILEO GALILEI, Jesi (AN) for a work placement/exchange. It has been done in some partner institutions in England, Ireland and Spain.

The needs of the participants, that are teaching in Jesi, a little town in Ancona, were to improve the professionals and linguistic skills and to be trained in the innovative methodologies in vocational education; all these permit to work in European schools that are evolving continuously.

During their mobility the teachers studied English or Spanish and they visited some schools to understand the Educational System of those countries and to improve their knowledge about the different teaching methodologies.

The relevance of the project for the professional and personal development of teachers of the ITAS GALILEO GALILEI was the possibility to take part in a mobility action, with all the accompanying measures needed to improve the necessary skills to work successfully in the knowledge society.

The aims of the project were based on the political European Framework (Copenhagen, Lisbon, Maastricht 2004 and Helsinki 2006) to reinforce the interest, quality and effectiveness of Vocational Education, the information and vocational guidance as well as improving the European Dimension in education.

Moreover it has been improved the reciprocal learning, the cooperation and exchange of experiences and “know how” to develop quality and innovation in education at local and European level.

Mobility is a fundamental action to achieve the aims of the Copenhagen process. All these to think about the teaching/learning process through pedagogy, innovation, research and social and cultural dimension of education by comparing with other educational systems and languages. The participants were involved in the dissemination of results and in vocational guidance at schools and at local level.

The period of 2 weeks was enough to know deeply the new context, to develop new skills, to improve the foreign language and in this way there weren't a big standstill of the school activities.

During the mobility there were discussions and formulation of various key tasks of the occupational profiles typical for the country; discussions of the working processes typical for the country and occupations that are associated with the key tasks; acquisition /expansion of knowledge about the country and international expertise. Within the project, co-operation have been done between the sending institution and the host organizations, their respective roles and involvement in the different steps for implementation of the mobility activities have been clearly defined.

The extraordinary result was that the teachers realize that there are a lot of methodologies and knowledge that they were not using and even if they knew about them they were not accustomed to use them. After the end of the project, a lot of teachers began to study more foreign languages, English and Spanish and began to be interested in the CLIL methodology.

Being the average age of the teachers of the ITAS GALILEI coincident with the mean age of the Italian teachers (50-55 years) , the competence of the English language is almost absent or poor in the majority of the teachers. With the project we intended to neutralize their not real mastery of the foreign languages and to stimulate the awareness of the need of competences and knowledge, furthermore to stir up the individual study of foreign languages.

The added value of the project was that we succeeded in the participation of the 40% of the teachers staff at an experience of mobility. This type of experience is often only for the teachers of foreign languages, but rarely for the teachers of other subjects, with own expenses or with a grant for a in service training course under Comenius or Grundtvig.

After their participation to the project activities, the teachers were able to motivate the students in some new competences and skills because they were more motivated and enthusiastic.

The first consequence was that the teachers took part during the hole year at an English course at school with a mother tongue teacher.

The second consequence was that the school apply for another project for 54 teachers. The teachers went to England to improve their English skills and to improve their professional skills in the learning/teaching process using CLIL methodology.

The objective of this second project was to have at school very competent, motivated and committed teachers, who cope confidently and well with their task, which are becoming more and more complex. Furthermore, there is a need to work with teachers to find possibilities “of making their profession more attractive including continuous updating of their professional skills”. (2)

The new project, carried out in the period August 2010-September 2010, promotes transnational cooperation in the field of multilingual curricular education and training so as to favour the transfer of specific competencies and the dissemination of up-to-date teaching methodologies targeted to the specific didactic contexts of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approaches. It also aims at facilitating and increasing teachers' mobility, which holds out the prospect of a stronger European Dimension to teaching, and improving the quality of vocational education and training systems through the adoption of innovative solutions which may grant the students up-to-date training with respect to the skills and competencies required by the European market.

The two weeks exchanges have been for the beneficiaries, trainers and mentors in the area of language competencies in the promoting institution, a significant opportunity of continuing their professional education with a training experience abroad, developing their independent and lifelong learning skills, developing adaptability and flexibility, acquiring up-to-date knowledge, experiences and innovative practices in the field of CLIL education which include the use of ICT, improving their linguistic and communicative competence. The project satisfied also the requirements of the other partners, which were interested in the opportunity of making the theoretical and practical training provided by the vocational education and training systems meet the requirements of the knowledge



society. The exchanges took place in London (UK), were monitored by a tutor and a mentor and certified with the "Europass-Mobility" instrument.

The teachers understood that teaching with CLIL methodology will help their students because it:

- builds intercultural knowledge and understanding
- develops intercultural communication skills
- improves language competence and oral communication skills
- develops multilingual interests and attitudes
- provides opportunities to study content through different perspectives
- allows learners more contact with the target language
- complements other subjects rather than competes with them
- diversifies methods and forms of classroom practice
- increases learners' motivation and confidence in both the language and the subject being taught.

Hard work and big efforts have been done to prepare the teachers for this commitment.

As most of the lessons at school have to follow national curriculum requirements, this leaves the responsibility for the development of teaching materials with suitable content largely up to the individual teacher, who must take into consideration a series of features: the level of the language, the design of activities able to assimilate concepts and develop competences. The cooperation between subject and foreign language teacher was essential, but it is time-consuming and requires considerable commitment.

The innovative imputes was taken up by many teachers, seeking to enhance the school programmes. In this way sometimes teachers who were not initially inclined towards CLIL were also edged into the practice.

A great deal of energy and effort has been put into individual lessons. Under these circumstances it was possible for the school and some individual teachers to start experimenting with one of the many variants of CLIL. As not all the teachers have the same level of English, they are still following in service training courses of English with mother tongue teachers during all the school year.

At school we began with experimental lessons, there are some teachers teaching for some hours their subject in English. There is a generally favorable atmosphere and a positive and sometimes enthusiastic response on the part of students and parents.

The result is that the students are more involved in the school work, the teachers found the tools to be motivated and the performance of all students and teachers became better.

The students and teachers are interested in learn more foreign languages, learn more under a mobility project in another European country and they enhance their interest towards taking active part in the Knowledge society.

Of course, teaching with CLIL is not the only tool to increase the performance of teachers and students, but it can be an important one.

Bilingual teaching and learning requires that we look not just at what the students have learnt/understood but, equally importantly, at how they have understood it.

With the secondary school reform in Italy, the CLIL teaching will be compulsory.

At linguistic lyceum a subject not linguistic will be taught in a foreign language since the third year and another not linguistic subject will be taught in a second foreign language since the fourth year.

For all other lyceums the teaching of a not linguistic subject, in a foreign language, will be compulsory at the fifth year. To carry out this innovation it is necessary to train the teachers.

This school year, as students and teachers wanted to foster understanding of the culture and mentality of other countries, they would like to improve their language and professional skills and they wanted to enhance the European dimension of the learning/teaching process, we apply for new Leonardo da Vinci mobility projects for students and teachers. As the selection of the participants at the mobilities will be based on their results, this will be another important propulsion to enhance their performances.

The traditional teaching is not enough if we want to teach the citizens of the XXI century.

1. L Resnick: Making America Smarter 1999
2. Maastricht Communiqué, 2004)
3. Peterson 1995
4. Zimmelman, Daniels, and Hyde (1993)
5. Lieberman (1995)
6. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995)
7. (Johnson, Johnson and Smith, 1990: 200).