



ICT approaching Students... and more!



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Pedagogic innovation and curricular integration

The idea behind the project was to involve ‘demotivated‘ students (in vocational schools most students study very little and take no interest even in extra – curricular activities) in an innovative project : the staging of a common show (“*Out of time and out of space*”) and its publication on the Internet. For the first time, students were provided with an opportunity to produce a worthwhile product based on their own input and ideas. The project was not designed to suit directly the school syllabus, but the students were given an alternative way of learning some of the school subjects they often reject in formal lessons: learning through doing.

Collaboration with the partner schools.

The project involved vocational schools. Together with their European partners, the students made a common research on the most relevant historical events of the 14th and 15th centuries in each country, shared information communicating in English, staged a show and published it using ICT. Eventually, they decided to perform an event of local history not necessarily related to that period, but relevant for their principles of justice and freedom . The final product of each project was then available on-line to all participants. While planning and carrying out the different stages of the projects, both students and teachers from the different countries had the opportunity of knowing each other using e-mails, chatting or introducing themselves and their towns through videos and photos. In schools where even the study of the mother tongue is problematic, communicating in English was the first important objective achieved.

Creative use of ICT

ICT are worth using in the classroom for their potential to motivate the students. They enjoy computers and feel the benefit of it. ICT allowed our students to interact with the partner schools in a new way, opening up the classroom to the real world in a way which had never been possible. Access to ICT led to a change in the way other subjects were learnt and enhanced cross-curricular work.. The students exploited all the available resources: from mobile phones to videocameras, our and our partners’ LANs, forums, chats, e- mails, dedicated softwares, they installed and used *CMS portals*, they created databases and a *podcast*, and used, almost daily, the *e-Learning Moodle* provided by our Portuguese partner and, of course, the *Twinspace*. Some of the students had never used these tools before but their skills improved greatly in the development of the project.

Sustainability and transferability

We live in the age of the computer and there are growing demands on teachers to learn how to use ICT or to improve their technological skills. All the teachers involved in our project felt the benefit of using the new resources and of exploiting the huge potential of this media in all aspects of their teaching practice. This kind of project can enhance the creativity of teachers of different subjects (from History to Social Studies, from Literature to History of Art and, above all, Foreign Languages). By communicating and sharing problems and ideas with teachers from other countries, we all broadened our perspective and actually experienced an European dimension. Schools which



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operate in difficult situations can benefit greatly from the involvement of students and teachers in international cooperation projects on apparently 'not too curricular' topics.

Results and benefits

Vocational schools are often rated as second-class schools. The same goes for our school, which is in a peripheral, working-class neighbourhood. Besides, we are often damaged by our 'insularity'. This project allowed our students to go beyond social and geographical boundaries: they realized that, through ICT, distance cannot prevent communication; that English is not a remote and unreal thing but a useful tool to know and understand people; that different cultures can share the same values and issues. For the first time, they experienced an European dimension. They improved their technical, study and learning skills. They developed initiative, autonomy, self-discipline and co-operation. It was a rich learning experience- rich in colour, movement, interaction and, most of all, involvement. Students invested a lot of themselves and made every effort to do their best. For the first time, they played a leading role, and not just in the show!