

DEVELOPING YOUNG ADULTS' CREATIVITY THROUGH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

Emilia Saulescu
Romanian Society for Lifelong Learning, Bucharest, Romania

Abstract

Young people of today are attracted by IT&C techniques. Starting from here the DYACIT project proposes to realize a motivating learning environment for young people in danger to abandon school. The project emphasizes on trans-national cooperation between the young people from the project partner countries that through the IT technologies , will realize virtual photos exhibitions , on the site of the project. The main mean of communication for students and professors is the communication platform of the project that offers the ideal environment for opinion and information changes in the framework of the project.

Keywords

Communication platform, website, methodology, creative lab, virtual photo exhibitions.

I. Aim of the project

At present, the motivation for learning of young people is very low and this is very well reflected in the high rate of the school drop-out.

In the European educational system there is a need of higher flexibility so that the system should be adaptable to all the needs of the young people.

Starting from the idea that all the young, irrespective of the geographical area they live in, are attracted by the new technologies, the partnership aims at creating and developing a flexible innovative learning environment using specific didactic and pedagogical methods with the final goal of capturing the interest and increasing the motivation of the young adults, in order to determine them to study throughout their whole lifetime.

The project emphasizes on trans-national cooperation between the young people from the project partner countries that through the IT technologies, will realize virtual photos exhibitions , on the site of the project <http://www.srep.ro/dyacit>

The main mean of communication for students and professors is the communication platform of the project <http://www.srep.ro/dyacit/platform/>, that offers the ideal environment for opinion and information changes in the framework of the project.

By using new technologies the partners propose to determine the young people in the target groups to use their creativity to achieve their own aspirations to become "consumers" of permanent education.

The project addresses young adults, aged between 16-20 years old who have completed 1st level of secondary education, and face the risk of being "early school leavers", due to a multitude of factors. They can be: victims of poverty and violence, immigrants, people with disabilities, experiencing behavioural problems, etc.

The main objective of the project is to create a new learning environment in which young people in risk of being "early school leavers" can develop their creative talent in close cooperation with their European counterparts, through the means of communication technology.

Specific objectives:

- ✓ Improving the attractiveness of learning;
- ✓ Expressing creativity through photography, using ICT in learning processes;
- ✓ Learning English as a means of communication with other European young people;
- ✓ Facilitating social integration of young adults, according to their own aspirations;
- ✓ Exchange of good practices in the field of education.

II. Pedagogical and didactical approaches

- Computer Lab - use of useful software for photo processing (Photoshop);

- Language Lab – use of English as a means of communication; teaching of words, simple phrases and dialogues accompanying pictorial exchanges; the language is taught only in the context of the project, in order to help the young communicate and share their exhibition also with the other partners.
- Creation Lab – where the young will learn how to make photos on themes chosen by themselves, how to process them with the help of the software learnt in the Computer Lab and with the help of English that they will have previously studied in the Language Lab; thus the young people will be able to develop their own virtual photo exhibition and within this context they will be encouraged to express their talent and creativity.
- Communication platform - it will be the environment for communication and exchange of information for the young and their trainers. By the means of the platform the young will be able to exchange emails with the colleagues from the team they will be working with, and they will also be able to exchange opinions on the themes they choose and on the way their activity evolves.

The modules will not be separated, but they will be integrated in order to accomplish a final aim. Each module will allow each member of the team to discover and to use his/her abilities playing different roles within the team.

III. Trainers Methodology Concept

A first analysis of the four Trainers Methodology Concepts show that the educators responsible for the workshops have a fairly clear picture of the course participants' educational history, social background and pedagogical needs. The methodological concepts try to take these factors into account.

All four concepts stress that the learning experience to be facilitated ought to differ considerably from a "normal" school experience, which in many cases had been a negative one. In contrast, methodological concepts emphasize that the approaches will

- be tailor-made to individual educational needs of participants;
- have to take into account different levels of skills;
- stress voluntariness as opposed to obligation;
- be learner –centered, and
- include many elements of team work.

Before having results of the workshops it is too early to assess whether these approaches, which have been labelled by one trainer as deliberately "soft" will be successful. At this stage, however, it can be said that they appear to be thoroughly reflected.

A promising approach seems to be that the workshop concepts aim at teaching IT and language skills in a strictly subject-related manner, i.e. by linking competences closely to the – hopefully – joyful dealing with photography and the wish to communicate these experiences.

IV. Impact of the project

The impact of the project consists in improving the perception of the young people with the risk of being "early school leavers" on the education and discovering a new methodology for acquiring useful and at the same time pleasant knowledge.

With this project we want to attract the young, as well as their educators, into new teaching methods that should combine the young people's attraction for the computer with the education and their wish to communicate, the exchange of experiences and ideas between them.

Also, we aim at the socializing and integration of the young disadvantaged in the society by increasing their potential and determining them not to give up education.

A major impact is estimated by the involvement in the project of a German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB), that has the possibility to disseminate the project in 260 vocational training centers, and also Znanie that has 250 secondary general and secondary vocational schools, who are

members of the AdminPro educational software network, supported by one of the departments of Znanie Association.

V. Evaluation of the project

The evaluation strategies are to be accomplished throughout the entire project duration, at the end of each phase.

Three types of evaluation will be undertaken:

1. *Evaluation of the project progress*

Aspects to be evaluated include:

- the commitment, performance, personal gains of the project partners;
- the quality of project management;
- (intercultural, interlingual, interpersonal and other) barriers to successful cooperation in the project;
- the project's impact on the partner institutions and on their institutional environment.

The result will be: Evaluation report on the development of the project

2. *Evaluation of the workshops and learning methodology* (quantitative and qualitative evaluation)

The Austrian partner developed standardized evaluation criteria, guidelines and tools

(questionnaires, guidelines for face- to face interviews) to be used in this context.

Based on the information gathered from the partners he developed an evaluation report for each round of workshop.

To evaluate the progress and results of the workshops, evaluation forms for instructors and participants will be used.

The platform area dedicated to the communication between the trainers will serve as a tool for problem solving and mutual monitoring among instructors from different partner organizations.

The best evaluation of the progress of the workshops will be seen on the website in the form of virtual photo exhibitions. Their production will be possible only on the basis of close and efficient cooperation of the paired groups.

The quantifiable criteria taken into account will be: number of students, selection degree (report between the number of enlisted candidates and the ones finishing the course), opinion of the young adults that has finished the course, achievement of the proposed results.

From the methodological perspective the following aspects will be considered: degree of information systematization, capacity of raising the interest in discipline, degree of emphasizing and establishing fundamental and essential notions, complementarities in time and content between course and practical activities, quality of work atmosphere.

3. *Evaluation of the resulted products*

Each activity has its evaluation method, especially designed to survey the activity objectives achievement. The evaluations will be carried out internally by the partner institutions responsible for each activity.

Due to the fact that the Guide of Good practices is the most important product of the project, we considered it would be useful to have it evaluated by an external evaluator, an independent university expert that should help us develop a product of the highest quality. The draft of the Guide of Good practices will be evaluated in June 2008 and it will be afterwards finalized by the end of the project taking into account the result of the evaluation.

VI. The results of the project

1. Curricula for workshops – 3 curricula for English, Adobe Photoshop and Photography have been

developed at the beginning of the project, representing the basis for the material that will be presented within the workshops.

2. Creative Lab (training workshop - 6 groups, working in tandem 2 by 2 (SREP+ARIES; Znanie+Bfw; SREP+Znanie) will be organized during each school year. Each partner will carry out the workshops in their native tongue and in English (at the English workshops);

The first round of workshops has ended in June 2007, when 3 working groups from the 4 countries have worked together for realizing three virtual exhibitions on the project's site- <http://www.srep.ro/dyacit/galleries.php>

4. Communication platform - <http://www.srep.ro/dyacit/platform/> - On the communication platform, each team of groups have: a discussion area for the young and a discussion area for the instructors that work with the young.

Forum	Topics	Threads	Latest Thread
Let's introduce ourselves.	7	13	2007-05-18 - 17:40
Trainer's corner	5	10	2007-06-19 - 16:43
Do you like our photos?	1	5	2007-03-08 - 13:34
What hobbies do you have?	7	7	2007-05-18 - 17:42
news from the Italian seminars	1	1	2007-03-27 - 16:46
Romanian country	2	2	2007-05-18 - 17:33
Workshop Impressions	4	6	2007-07-09 - 12:48
first galley	1	2	2007-06-10 - 09:31
Angelo: my photos	11	11	2007-06-16 - 18:14
Bernardo's photos	14	14	2007-06-16 - 19:10
Antonietta: my wonderful pictures	15	16	2007-06-16 - 20:54
Gennaro and his photos	13	13	2007-06-16 - 21:58
Giuseppe	11	11	2007-06-16 - 22:40
Luchini Rosa	12	13	2007-06-17 - 11:39
Italian gallery: some explanations	2	4	2007-06-17 - 12:00
Trainers' last impressions from the workshops.	1	3	2007-06-19 - 17:11

5. Site of the project - Information on activities developed under the project, objectives, partners, meetings, virtual photo exhibitions, etc.- <http://www.srep.ro/dyacit>

6. Guide of good practices - it will contain information on the experiences and work in the project printed/on line, CD. The guide will be developed in English, but also in the languages of the partner countries (Romanian, Italian, German, Bulgarian).

7. Internal and external evaluation

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