

Educational Integration of Refugees

The first meeting of the project entitled "Educational Integration of Refugees – A Classroom Approach" took place at I.T. Giordani-Striano in Naples, Italy early in October. This is a two year European Union funded Erasmus+ KA201 project. Within the EU there has been a very significant increase in the number of refugees, indeed the number of refugees in the EU continues to grow on a daily basis. Many of these will need to be educated in our classrooms. Since the scale of this is new, the successful integration of these students into the classroom is of paramount importance. Teachers are rarely specifically trained to meet this challenge. Yet teachers need to be in a position to prepare these students for a successful life as European citizens and through this to increase social cohesion. Some educational institutions have well developed strategies to approach this challenge while others are just beginning to take up the mantle. It is a key element of this project to examine how schools and colleges have tackled the challenges brought by refugees in the past, to adopt and share best practice, look to find new strategies for successful integration of

refugees and share the acquired knowledge widely within the teaching community. We need to empower teachers to continue developing their skills and competences in dealing with students in multicultural classrooms through a process of shared experiences and mutual support.

The difficulties facing refugees and those who support them as they progress along their learning pathway should not be underestimated. Many carry deep psychological scars from their previous experiences and find it difficult to adjust to the cultural norms of their host country. Educationally they often face the added challenge of having to learn a new language, in some cases even a new system of writing, and then to assimilate their learning through this foreign medium. Even those who have a good previous education may face the problem of not having their qualifications recognised in their host country and may see difference in curriculum and methodology that they find difficult. Teachers working with refugees need to be conscious of their own cultural prejudice as well as the fears, frustrations and aspirations of the refugee students. They need to understand how the delivery of educational curriculum in Europe may differ from the norms of their new students and also be conscious of the ways in which cultural beliefs can influence learning.

In order to approach this issue in a structured form we intend to:

- 1) Listen to the needs, concerns, difficulties encountered and general opinions of refugees currently in our institutes.
- 2) Examine strategies currently in place in each institute to support Refugees/asylum seekers to integrate successfully

into the classroom and progress successfully along the learning pathway. 3) Adopt best practice from each institute and adapt these practices for use in each individual school/college. 4) Create new approaches/strategies to help refugees/asylum seekers to integrate successfully into the European Educational system. 5) Examine progression routes open to refugees. 6) Disseminate the project learning to as wide an educational audience as possible.

In doing this we plan to maintain a clear focus on the work of the teacher in the classroom and how the teacher can be empowered to better assist students who are refugees. Only through the empowerment of teachers in this area can we hope to truly enhance the individual students learning experience. We also recognize that methods learned by teachers here can also be applied to the education of other minority groups.

We envisage that the activities we will undertake during the two years of this project will result in: The improvement of the pedagogical and didactic skills of the participating teachers. Professional enrichment for all project team members by means of exchange of good practices with the other schools/institutions. Improvement of refugee and minority students' school life and social life by applying in class new didactic strategies, methods and techniques.

This project is being coordinated by the Cork Education and Training Board (St. John's Central College), Ireland with the remaining partners being VHS Regen, Germany, I.T. Giordani-Striano, Italy, Esenler Ilce Milli Egitim Mudurlugu, Turkey and Inspectoratul Scolar Judetean Bacau, Romania



Quality Assurance for VET Providers Using Product Lifecycle Management

St. John's Central College of Further Education and Training (Cork ETB) has completed involvement in a European Funded project (Q-PLM, 538379-LLP-1-2013-AT-LEONARDO-LMP) with the aim of examining Product Lifecycle Management within the VET sector and the development of product lifecycle management software for use with VET products. This in turn facilitates product control, planning, adaptation and product innovation, thus facilitating a market orientated approach of the portfolios in further education.

Active product lifecycle management, including the use of suitable PLM software, is or can be a tool for monitoring and controlling the product portfolio of an educational institution. It can be recommended not only for reasons of quality assurance, but also for the facilitation of the product development, for more transparency in the strategic business areas and last but not least for the maintenance of the competitiveness of VET providers.

The main stages in the project were:

1) Analysis of existing PLM (Product Lifecycle Management) Software:

Since PLM is an approach followed for quite some years in other economic sectors mainly the production industry and IT sector software and IT based solutions already exist from these other sectors. In a short investigation phase, the existing

PLM software was briefly screened for good practical elements that could be used for the PLM tool for VET providers.

2) Researching the key success factors influencing the product lifecycle of a VET product / service:

The most important task in the Q-PLM project was a profound and widely based identification of relevant key success factors, which might have an influence on the lifecycle of a VET product. It was crucially important that this research phase closely involved the members of the different target groups and the stakeholders of the VET providers. At the end of this research activity 10 main key success factors, which were discussed and agreed upon within the partnership, could be identified as the basis for the PLM software tool.

3) Identification of indicators for product lifecycles in VET:

Apart from the identification of relevant and valid key success factors influencing the product lifecycle of a VET product, the task was to find reliable indicators for measuring the different key success factors identified. Again the partnership and the stakeholders from the IVET and CVET sectors were substantially involved in the identification of the indicators. It was recognised that individual indicators may have greater or lesser importance to specific VET providers. In order to allow for these individual preferences a weighting system was introduced into the software for each indicator.

4) Development of a software product for active product lifecycle management for VET providers:

There are diverse factors that need to be taken into account for achieving success with the design and development of educational products, among them: the needs of the students / learners; the demands of the market; the learning contents. At the same time, these educational products are influenced by the teachers and their methodology and didactics. The key success factors' influ-

ence on the different stages of the product life cycle (design, development, delivery and evaluation), made it essential to identify the factors and the stages where they have influence to guarantee a successfully product life cycle management for vocational and educational training providers.

The ten Key Success Factors identified were:

1) Quality of Vocational Education and Training

Improvement and evaluation of the outputs and outcomes of VET providers. How far a set of outputs and outcomes of VET providers fulfil the established quality criteria.

2) Customer Satisfaction

Measure how VET products and services fulfil customer expectation. Number of customers or percentage of total customers, whose reported experience with a VET provider, its products, or its services exceeds specified satisfaction goals.

3) Quality of Staff

How far the qualifications, training, knowledge, skills, competences and experience of the Human Resources of the VET providers (trainers, teachers, technicians, mentors,..) fulfil the requirements necessary to guarantee the success of their work (the quality of the VET activities).

4) Responding to Market Demands

Adapt the outputs and outcomes of VET providers to the needs and demands of the market and/or potential customers over a specific period in a specific market.

5) Cost Control

Process or activity on controlling costs associated with VET processes and activities.

6) Suitability of Infrastructure and Materials

Convenience of the infrastructures

(classrooms, equipment,...) and materials (books, documents,...) to the activities developed by the VET provider.

7) Stakeholder Engagement

Process by which a VET provider involves people who may be affected by the decisions it makes, or can influence the implementation of its decisions. They may support or oppose the decisions, be influential for the VET provider or within the community in which it operates, hold relevant official positions or be affected in the long term.

8) Strategic Provider Benefits

Advantages (image, benchmarking,...) of the VET providers related to the development and implementation of their activities.

9) Evaluation Mechanism

Involve systems, procedures and tools used to get feedbacks (degree of satisfaction) from the VET activities (trainings, seminars,...). These evaluation mechanisms can get information from all the people involved in the process (trainers, teachers, learners, clients,...)

10) Appropriate Certification

How far the students have reached the competences and skills necessary to get the qualification, according to the defined standard

Fifty specific indicators were identified which influence these key success factors and these are explained in detail in the project publications. It was also recog-

nised that additional indicators might exist and provision was made for these within the software.

In the phase of software development the project group were conscious of the need for the software to be:

a) Flexible so it can be adapted to national, regional and organisational needs

b) Comprehensive and scientifically valid taking into account all the relevant key success factors and indicators in the background

c) Easy to use for VET providers: an easy and quick input of quality data with clear presentation of results.

d) Indicator based: the lifecycle of a VET product is influenced by a number of factors and indicators. The tool reflects the most crucial ones and gives room for adaptation to national, regional and additional local and organisational variables.

e) Weighted and balanced: different variables have a different weight in their impact on the lifecycle of a VET offer. The tool developed allows the possibility to weight and rate the single indicators at different stages on the product lifecycle.

f) IT based: in many cases VET providers already have certain quality information and data management in electronic format. For this reason, the Q-PLM IT-tool can create interfaces to existing quality data systems in the organisation and allows a quick and efficient product lifecycle management procedure on VET provider level.

Following the development of the software substantial work was directed at the development of a Product Lifecycle Handbook and Software user manual. The Handbook describes in detail the research undertaken during the project, the Key Success Factors, Indicators and phases of product lifecycle while the user manual provides a concise guide for those who wish to use the software.

All of these products are now available for use.

The QPLM Handbook is available on the St. John's Central College website at <http://www.stjohnscollege.ie> Copies of the software are available by contacting gbrennan@stjohnscollege.ie

Our project partners were:

AUSTRIA: Berufsförderungsinstitut Steiermark

GERMANY INIT Developments, Ltd,

BELGIUM Syntra West vzw

SPAIN Fondo Formación Euskadi,

FINLAND WinNova

SLOVENIA Gospodarska zbornica Slovenije

ROMANIA Universitatea Ștefan cel Mare din Suceava

The QPLM Handbook is available on the St. John's Central College website at <http://www.stjohnscollege.ie> or visit the Project Website: <http://www.q-plm.eu/en>





ESPACE Project Concludes

Our Erasmus+ KA2 ESPACE project, *Evalueur-Situer-un-Parcours-Apprenant-Citoyen-Européen*, has now come to an end. This teacher based project was working to develop a computer application for the evaluation/marketing of students on work placement. It is particularly relevant for students undertaking work placement abroad. It is intended to provide an easy to use interface which will allow employers to evaluate students and this evaluation will then be converted into an appropriate grading report. A very significant amount of time was spent in analysing the expectations of the partner institutes in respect of work placement and in trying to agree evaluation criteria that would satisfy the needs of each partner. The issue of quality in work placement was also examined. The final computer application is available in English, French and Spanish. Our partners in this two year project were from France and Spain. Project meetings were held in Mauleon France, Tudela and San Sebastian Spain as well as in Cork, during which there was substantial analysis of how work placement is organised and evaluated in each country. The final meeting of this project, which was held in Mauleon, included a one day seminar on the topic of quality work placement. This was attended by representatives of the regional education administration as well as local politicians and journalists.



The Learning Games



It is a key element of good teaching practice that the teacher will begin from the place on the learning pathway that the learner is currently at and then help the learner progress further along that path. In order to achieve this goal the teacher must try to use tools and techniques that best engage with the learner and indeed provide the motivation and intellectual stimulation that learners at all levels of study and ability require. Technological developments, particularly in the area of communications, have very much changed the way learners react to educational stimuli. Engagement with the internet and the consequent access to information, social contacts, online gaming and other tools have modified the ways in which people learn and interact. St. John's Central College is now engaged in the second year of a project to develop a gamification system of educational delivery that taps into elements from the modern students real world experience and incorporate them into an integral framework that can be

used to assess all kinds of learning (formal, primarily, but also informal and non-formal) within the classroom through the achievements the students make in their modules; a system that provides immediate and accessible feedback about performance and the level of mastery acquired and what needs to be learnt in order to progress; a system that improves teacher-student communication, and also student-student communication, a social dimension of learning, which is known to encourage deeper engagement with the activities. The overall objective is committing the students to change their attitude towards learning, increasing their motivation and consequently enabling them to achieve their full potential. All these game-imported elements encompass a need for the teachers to incorporate gamification as the base for class management, implying an effort to learn and master both the theoretical aspects of the framework and, on a more practical level, the use of the software for our everyday practice. The project seeks to develop innovative methodologies and accompanying tools to put these ideas into practice aiming at making our students engage more in their own learning processes, therefore improving not only subject-specific achievement levels but also transversal skills at every education-

al level and, in lower educational levels like secondary or second chance education for adults, also basic skills like literacy and numeracy. In order to achieve our goals a specific software application is being developed by the Application Development / Game Design students from our Spanish partner and from St. John's Central College. Once that tool, a mobile applications for both teachers, students and parents is developed, the partners will undertake a simulated test of the tools in order to evaluate it and make the necessary changes. The initial version of the application will be completed by February 2017. There are six institutions involved in the project, these are based in Germany, Turkey, Hungary, Spain and Ireland. Each institute has a significant degree of expertise in educational delivery. The participating institutions have expertise in training students with very different educational abilities and have worked in the past to develop strategies to motivate and assist students with learning difficulties while at the same time engage with more gifted students. While the primary focus of the project is at students studying in VET, some partners also have experience in both secondary and tertiary education and it is our intention that the gamification framework being developed will be flexible enough to work both within and outside of the VET context. Once the project is completed both the Intellectual Output (the software applications and user manual) and all the other related materials specifically designed and created to put gamification into practice will be made freely available online at:

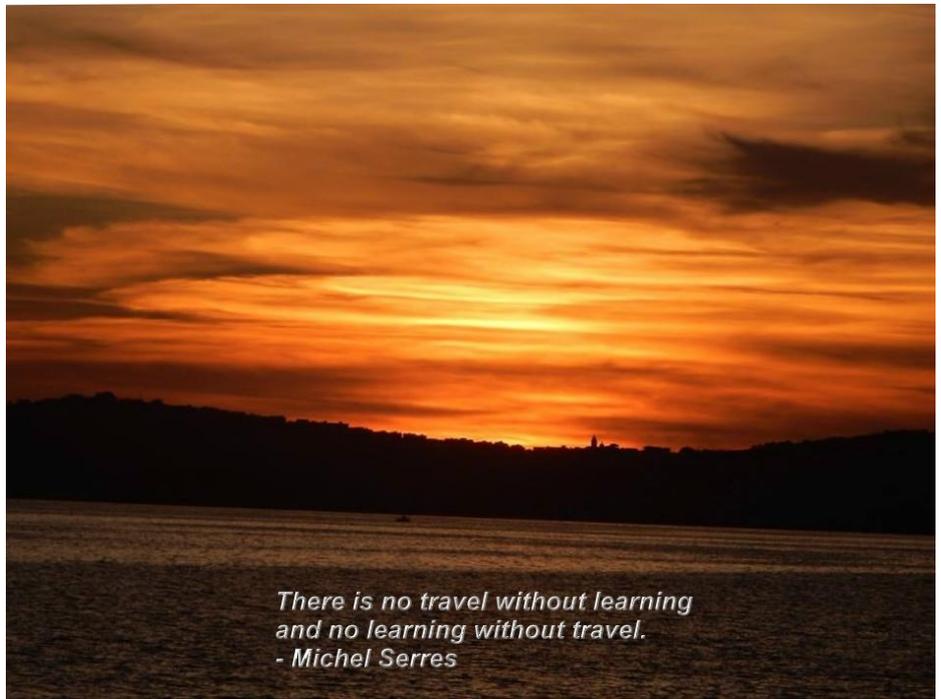
<http://www.thelearninggames.eu>

Teacher Job Shadowing

Through the Erasmus+ project we have an opportunity to send 5 teachers abroad this academic year to job shadow teachers at specific partner institutes. Teachers are most likely to travel during the February work placement week or after exams in May. This project provides a great opportunity for teachers to see how their subject is taught in other EU countries, to get a clear view of the level of their subject in other countries and to gain a greater experience of the educational and management systems being employed at our partner institutes. We will also host teachers from other countries in St. John's during the coming months. In particular we will have three visiting teachers from Spain here between December and February. Each teacher will come for a period ranging from one to three weeks.

Léargas Events

St. John's Central College will host a Léargas workshop entitled "Funding Opportunities available under Erasmus Plus for **School Education in 2017**" on Wednesday 9th November from 16:00 to 18:30. The workshops will cover Erasmus + funding opportunities for schools and school education organisations.



The **ECVET Forward** meeting which will take place on Monday 21st November 2016 at The Spencer Hotel, ISFC, Dublin 1. This workshop will run from 10 am to 4 pm and offers an opportunity for professionals and practitioners working in education and training to consider the possibilities and benefits associated with ECVET in the context of the New Skills Agenda for Europe, as well as possible barriers to securing wider implementation in Ireland. It will be a day of consultation, sharing, discussion and debate on how to align ECVET with existing VET, qualifications systems and structures in Ireland to identify areas for continued development, in the year ahead.

The annual **Léargas Forum** will take place on Tuesday 13 December 2016 in Dublin Castle Conference Centre, from 9.00 to 3.30p.m. In the 30 years since Léargas was established they have supported hundreds of organisations to take part in European exchange, through opportunities like Erasmus+, European Voluntary Service, eTwinning and the European Day of Languages. The Léargas Forum brings together the people involved in these programmes--or interested in becoming involved--to share experience and explore possibilities for the future. Inspired by the words of Robert Frost, we want to celebrate the diverse roads that have been travelled and the differ-



ence it has made: to individuals, to organisations and to communities. They have confirmed that Maurice Devlin, Jean Monnet Professor and Director of the Centre for Youth Research & Development at Maynooth University, as the keynote speaker. After the address they will hold four facilitated workshops, including an overview of available programmes for newcomers:

First steps: A Beginner's Guide to Opportunities with Léargas

Stepping Out: Small-scale Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnerships

Stepping Up: Maximising Mobility with Erasmus+ KA1

Bring It All Back Home: Analysing the Impact of your Project

In the afternoon you can hear directly from project practitioners about the roads they've taken, by visiting the exhibitor stands and tool fair, and listening to inspiring TED-type Talks. You can start to plan your own journey at the 'Ask Léargas' hub by chatting with staff about their programmes, including the 2017



Erasmus+ call for applications.

The European Commission have launched the first **European Vocational Skills Week** that will take place from December 5th to 9th. The aim of the week is to improve the attractiveness and image of vocational education and training. The Commission want to showcase excellence and quality and raise awareness of the wide range of opportunities.

A series of events/activities will take place in Brussels (press conference, conference, workshops, closing event with award-giving) and across Europe. There is also the opportunity to highlight events that are taking place in the Member States in the weeks coming up to the European Vocational Skills Week.

VET Student Mobility Project

St. John's Central College will once again organise student work placement and training abroad under the Erasmus+ program. Under this project we will be able to send 64 students on work placement / training abroad during the current academic year. Within this project we currently work with 16 partner institutes in 8 countries. Our most recent new partners are in Lithuania (Hairdressing and Fashion Design) and Slovenia (Animal Care / Veterinary Nursing). Other partner countries are Germany, Spain, France, The Netherlands, Hungary and Turkey. Students will travel in February and in mid May for a period of three weeks during which time they attended training courses at our partner institutes and participated on workplace training. Students are required to spend a minimum of 15 days engaged in training / placements. Whenever possible student groups will be accompanied by a teacher for the first week of their project. Most of our partners also sent students and teachers to us during the year for periods ranging from 2 weeks to 3 months. Our most recent visiting group were four Veterinary Nursing students from Slovenia. Student application forms and additional project details are available from the European Projects section of Moodle or directly from the International projects office.

For further information on all projects contact gbrennan@stjohnscollege.ie



Learning Games Project group at the Bavarian Ministry of Education

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