

Final report 2005 - 2008

The project was born in 2004, in a seminar organized by Flemish NA with partnership composed by seven schools and chosen coordinator was a Turkish school. During summer 2005 we knew that the coordinator school was not approved so the partnership for the first year was between the Italian school, the Belgium school and the Slovak school. Then the Slovak school became the coordinator school. Changes in partnership causes some difficulties in communication: the Slovak school was very difficult to contact and to involve in organizing the meeting. Only in December 2005 we could agree on having a meeting in Ruzomberok in January.

Evaluation first year:

Partnership organization met many difficulties. The coordinator school, Nasa Skola from Slovakia, has not acquitted to some fundamental tasks: to hold the contacts between the partner, to coordinate the activities between the schools, to write the final relation of the year. During teachers exchange in Rome, the Italian teachers, realizing the difficulties in managing the project and the inexperience of the Slovak teachers, organized a meeting to write together a draft of the final report, writing down points and evaluation descriptors.

In September, when the partner schools asked to the coordinator school the full final report, had back the same draft not completed.

Evaluation second year

The partnership included Czech school and Lithuanian school. First project meeting in Rome in October: very intensive programme, with many proposals of different activities. During the school year some difficulties in keeping contact among schools ; every schools have been working on common topics, but not linked and cooperating with other schools. In May meeting in Kaunas; some problems in organization (coordinator school's absence, lost of time, very relaxing pace) did not allow the group to fulfil their objectives. The final report was just started and after the meeting no one took in consideration the duty of finishing it.

Analysis of the Project objectives and their achievements (as they were stated in the Project form submitted to National agencies)

PROJECT CONTENT AND ORGANISATION

Concrete Aims

- *To make use of various methodologies in teaching languages*
- *To discuss examples of good practice*

On these aspects we worked during Ruzomberok and Rome meetings. In Kaunas meeting the topic was focussed about Internet and ICT in teaching/learning languages. In all the schools were used various methodologies and all the teachers feel more confident with new approaches in their lessons. We shared good practice examples,(CLIL, storytelling, drama) but in fact we did not share lesson plans and didactic support, in order to help other partners to re-use the same activities in other schools

- *To develop new early language learning/teaching methods*

- *To investigate, discuss and share with partners*

During the project activities were applied already existing methods (CLIL, storytelling, video and multimedia tools) . Only some of the exchanged material was created on purpose for the project activities; some were downloaded from internet and shared. Anyway, the occasions in which teachers of the group discussed about conceptual aspects of teaching languages or educational - didactic problems were reduced to some moments, with no written reports and / or formal discussion

- *To achieve a successful language competence related to the age groups involved (2.5-13) in correspondence with the European Language Portfolio Criteria*

Pupils in the involved classes bettered their competence and seem to be more motivated. The European Language Framework and its Portfolio criteria were not included in any aspect of project activities; after the meeting in Rome, in which we try to speak about the Framework, the group ignored this point.

- *To develop a suitable program for students with special needs*

During the meeting in Rome Italian teachers afforded this aspect; other teachers told that they did not feel ready to cope with this topic. Perhaps, being the Italian school the only one with a large number of special needs children fully integrated in the school, the other partners were not interested too much to this aspect. The Czech school proposed a lesson plan designed to special need kids in learning languages, but there was not a discussion among partners about this or other material related to this aspect.

- *To start a language and methodology support program for language teachers in other schools in our regions as well as having an in-service training program for our own staff in our schools*

All the partner schools organized in service training courses for their own staff; in Iqbal Masih school there is a very successful in service training course, beginners level for teachers, funding by Comenius project.

There were not courses or methodology program directed to teachers of the area or region. A good mean of dissemination of methodology is the web site, in which teachers of other schools could find interesting resources to use in their work. The web site was presented also in a meeting in Belgium with principals and pedagogical advisors of Flemish region and they all found it very useful and well organized.

- *To cooperate with the regional universities and teacher training institutions in technical terms on regular basis, carrying out an Action Research Process in early language learning education*

During the three years of the project we had two seminars with local universities, in Ruzomberok and in Rome. We can't say that we carried on any Action Research process, with or without, universities or other institutions. Action Research processes are "*reflective processes of progressive problem solving led by individuals working with others in teams or as part of a "community of practice" to improve the way they address issues and solve problems.*" In the schools "*Action research has been used in science teacher education, and as a way for teachers to collaborate with one another to improve practice. Teachers design, conduct, and present research projects, used reflective journals as research notebooks, and participated in seminars*"

In our group it is quite difficult to talk about Action Research method; it is usually hard to get any kind of written material by some participants and we found difficulties in focussing about the problems we wanted to afford in searching a new way to teach.

It is very difficult sometime to understand each other about methodology. For example, an Italian teacher prepared and proposed a CLIL activity, based on meteorology. The meteorology activity was planned and proposed as a "learning by doing" with laboratory activities and pupils direct involvement, that is a common way of teaching in Italian school. The proposal was indeed very detailed, with all the activities listed. Two schools agreed on this mini project, but there was not debate during the project meeting and the involved teachers did not establish any contacts after that. Some weeks later Lithuanian school sent a description of Lithuanian climate downloaded from Lithuanian meteo system web site and the Czech school some pictures of children working at the water cycle, with a description of Czech climate. No trace of labs, or activities listed in the proposal. Probably in the different schools teachers are applying new methods, but everyone separated and the efforts are focussed on sharing and showing products, not didactic suggestions or evaluations.

- *To analyse and discuss the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
To discuss how to adapt it to pre-primary and primary levels*

The Common European framework was a matter of discussion during the seminar in Belgium where some of the teachers of the partner schools met in 2004 to write the project. After that moment none of the participants to the meetings named it or quoted the Framework objectives in the (few) lesson plans or didactic units they prepared. Consequently, there was not any discussion about adaptation to pre-primary and primary levels. This is a very weak point of the Project; probably the group should reflect on this.

- *To make use of common themes, tools, materials, evaluation tools and didactic materials*

This is one of the strong points of the Project. In fact most of the teachers shared some kind of material and tools; we found some common themes and some common evaluation tool.

There were many activities focussed on storytelling and interesting related material was prepared and shared.

The most original activities were those on movie "Ice Age" and on the Czech cartoon "The mole": in partner schools teachers and children watched the same movies, worked on descriptions, prepared tests and pictures and digital presentations. It is not clear if anybody tried to apply or reuse the material or the planned activities by other schools teachers. The main problem is the lack of discussion about the didactic aspects of the activities, the lack of feed backs after others' material applications, the lack of professional debate on an adequate level.

We have also to say that the quantity of materials prepared by the partners is not equally distributed. From one of the partner school the group had, during three years, just a couple of files and some photos.

- *To organise a web-site of the project to achieve a wide spectrum dissemination*

The web site was planned and organized by two Italian teachers and the material was prepared and published by one of them. There was not any debate about the website organization; it was presented in the Belgian head teachers meeting where it was appreciated. Some feed backs arrived to the web

masters, showing interest . In general, the web site seems to be a mean of dissemination among the partner schools; teachers of the group check often it to find their own material and other partners activities. The proposal, by the web master, to add an interactive part to the web site to be used by teachers and students to meet and exchange opinions (a blog) did not achieve any interest during Project meeting in Zlin.

- *To develop intercultural awareness*

For most of the participants this aspect was very interesting. Project meetings, with the possibility of getting to know new countries, different cultures, different way of life involved the teachers very much and represented one of the best achievements of the project, together with the possibility to escape from daily routine and travel around Europe funding by European Union.

Some classes established a letters exchange activity and it was very interesting for them to get in contact with other pupils in different schools. They could improve their social skills and be open minded for other cultures and the diversity of languages

Evaluation:

- *The evaluation will be done on regular basis at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of each school year via MICE as well as some other different tools such as questionnaires designed by partners, group discussions among teachers, presentations in conferences or workshops, diaries on the web page using the webblog.*

This point was regularly forgotten during project meetings, especially for MICE tools. Just once, during the meeting in Zlin, the group afforded the problem, reading and approving a draft made of 3 different questionnaires and a checklist, without choosing or selecting among them. In the five schools the questionnaires were given around and the results are published on the web site. No news about the checklist. No discussion, so far, about the results of questionnaires.

During the three years also the reports of the meetings are losing parts, becoming shorter and shorter.

Beside the reports, there is not any common written material, pages, tools, evaluation, lists and so on coming out from the project meetings during the third year. There were not specific session on project evaluation and even the e-mails sent by coordinator school, suggesting a reflection on some crucial points did not get any answer. In the meeting reports teachers evaluation it's often evaluating feelings, climate, relaxing time than didactic aspect of their work

Partnership organization

- The division of tasks among the partners was not very clear, except for the web site. On the first two years the coordinator school did not coordinate; in the third the Italian school, now coordinator, met many difficulties in organizing its project group and did not write any proposal of tasks organization. Most of the activities were carried on with the feeling of " do what you can, it's ok, let's try to enjoy the project".
- After the meeting in Rome it seems that nobody put any attention on Project objectives and planned activities as they were approved. So far we have to cope with a distance from planned objectives, activities and final products as they were in the approved form.
- The methods of communication between partners are not agreed and communication is not regular. In the project we established to have a monthly diary of the project activities in each school, to publish on the web site. Beside the difficulties in getting written reports, the communication

among schools is regular just some weeks before meetings, in order to organize travels and accommodation

- Teachers were too busy in organizing accommodation and travels for project meetings and it took too time, compared to the time dedicated to factual work during the meetings .

Final products

¢ *The project web-site (BELL)*

¢ *New didactic materials, documents, tools*

¢ *Reports on researches*

¢ *School exhibitions*

¢ *Conferences and workshops*

¢ *Exchange of various kinds of students' materials*

There are not reports on researches, not having researches, obviously. Some partners seem to be in trouble when asked to write reports or essays on their activities.

The partners prepared different kinds of didactic material, but often without written documents to explain and to help teachers to use them in different situation.

There was a proposal of publishing the didactic material prepared about the movie Ice age, but it failed. The group approved to have as a final and definitive product of the Project BELL a printed calendar (2009) with pictures, that should be also a valid mean of dissemination of the project results.

In some schools exhibitions were organized and in some school fair teachers of partner schools took part and gave their contribution.

Conferences and workshops were organized during Project meeting in Ruzomberok and in Rome; in other schools other workshops linked to the project were organized, but no documentation was shared.

Specific Measures:

- *Designing a cross curricular, multiple intelligence theory based program where students with special educational needs will also be fully integrated in the activities*

Multiple intelligence theory did not affect any activity, discussion or documents of the project.

- *Promoting intercultural education programmes to underline the importance of 'linguistic minorities' enhancing the participation of students from ethnic and minority groups, particularly immigrants.*

Immigrants educational needs were discussed, with the contribution of Prof. M. Brazzoduro, of University of Rome, only during the second project meeting. A document regarding minority groups language learnings, first of all National language learning, was written with the help of two university researchers, but after that the topic was forgotten

Roles of Participating Institutions:

- *All partners will work on the same topics, will prepare materials and send these materials to the coordinator*
All partners will write a monthly diary

So far we had trouble in exchanging a monthly e-mail, imagine a diary...

Conclusion

In the partner schools the project had a positive impact on the school communities and we had good results in students and teachers. Unfortunately, this project was born as a Comenius 1.3, and the focus should have been on teaching methods, staff and teachers involvement. In these aspect we had to cope with several problems.

Didactic products

After the meeting some products are shared among partner schools.

The most important products are

- Storytelling: fairy tales, traditional tales form each country, lesson plans about storytelling activities in the classes of primary schools; storytelling trough movies, using cartoon movies.
- CLIL : science in English language, with a planned activity about meteorology

It seems evident, anyway, the group difficulty in elaborating a suitable didactic plan for each activity. All the material is published on the web site but often it is difficult to understand who did the work (teachers, children?) and how. Some tales seem more directed to adults or for literature courses than to early learners.

Communication

The main problem seems to be lack of communication among partners; the activities are presented without explanation or with a lesson plan, (sometime) but so far we did not discuss didactic aspect, strong and weak points, evaluation and dissemination of the activities.

Information and communication technologies were not efficient means of work in this project; some partners were not in frequent contact through e-mails.

Too much time was devoted in organizing project meetings and during project meetings the time was not well organized.

