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PRACTICE AND EVALUATION OF THE KEY COMPETENCES THROUGH THE ENGLISH OPTIONAL DISCIPLINE

MODULE: THE EARTH, OUR HAUSE

Carmen Mara CHIȘIU, Ph.D.
„L. Blaga„ University from Sibiu
carmenmariachisiu@yahoo.com
carmenmaria.chisiu@ulbsibiu.ro

Abstract: *Key competences represent a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes that can be practiced during the whole educational journey, necessary for personal development, social inclusion, for training in order to integrate the labor market, being actually fundamental and essential for the life learning. For the young pupils, key competences can be successfully practiced in an optional discipline, modularly organized, with English as communication language. The theme of the module, „The Earth, our hause" has specific contents to the area of sciences – the environment exploration and the English, as communication language. Through an interdisciplinary approach, it was built an integrated curriculum, having exercised competences from the fields of Science, Mathematics, personal development, practical skills, Arts, society education, too. The proposed objectives had taken into consideration knowledge accumulation concerning the reduce, recover, recycle and reuse of materials, same as language skills and social attitudes. The completion of an integrated curriculum has enabled a dominant participatory evaluation, focusing on the assessment of the practiced competences.*

Keywords: *competences, integrated approach, module, dialogue evaluation, learning for life.*

1. Introduction

In a knowledge based society, the key skills of information, abilities and attitudes, appropriate to each context, have a fundamental role for each individual. They provide added value to the labor market, social cohesion and

active citizenship by offering flexibility and adaptability, satisfaction and motivation.

Key competences are:

CC1. communication in native language, which represent the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions, both verbally and in written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative manner in various cultural and social contexts;

CC2. communication in foreign languages, which involves listening, speaking, reading and writing in a language other than their native language;

CC3. **mathematical competence and basic competences on science and technology**. Mathematical competence is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking to solve different problems in everyday situations, the focus being on the resolution, not the mathematical knowledge, activity and information. Basic skills on science and technology relate to possession, use and application of knowledge for understanding the surrounding world. This involves the comprehension of the changes caused by human activity and the responsibility of each individual as a citizen;

CC4. **digital competence** involves basic abilities and the use of Information and Communication Technology.

CC5. **the capacity to learn how to learn**, being the human ability to track and organize learning, either individually or in groups, according to their own needs or the needs of the group.

CC6. **social and civic competences**, which relate to personal skills, interpersonal and intercultural and all forms of behavior that enable each individual to participate effectively and constructively in society. These are linked to personal and social welfare.

CC7. **sense of initiative and entrepreneurship** is the ability to turn ideas into action. It requires creativity, innovation and risk assumption, but also the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve the objectives;

CC8. **knowledge and cultural expression**, which involve the appreciation of the importance of cultural expression of ideas, experiences and emotions through a range of communication channels - music, theater, literature and visual arts.

All these key cmpetences are interdependent and in each case is emphasized the critical thinking, creativity, initiative, problem resolution, risk assessment, decision making and constructive management of feelings.

We intend to share with the primary school teachers, a best practice way, proper to IVth grades, in an optional subject, a module entitled *Earth, our home*, during ten hours.

The activity was conducted in an international project AECLIL, partner of the RWCT Romania Cluj Napoca. In the first step, for primary schools, the activity involved three classes:

- a IIIrd class, 16 students, Sibiu, National Pedagogical College;
- a IVth class, 21 students, the School of cl. I-VIII Nr. 8 Medias;
- a IVth class, 28 students, School of Arts, Sibiu.

In the second stage, the project was applied to a IVth class, 17 students from the School of Arts, Sibiu. At this stage, there were used: designing teaching, worksheets, assessment tools revised based on the feedback received from teachers and students, carried out after the first stage.

Students are involved in a process where the use of foreign language is the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills specific to different school subjects: sciences, mathematics, personal development, practical skills, arts, education for society, in an integrated approach, so as to practice the key competences.

2. The relationship between key competencies and followed objectives of the project

The proposed objectives were:

- O1. To identify ways to reduce, recover, reuse and recycle materials;
- O2. To sort and recycle paper, glass and plastic;
- O3. To search information on a specific topic related to the reduction, recovery, reuse, recycling, accessing various sources of information;
- O4. To communicate relying on verbal and non-verbal constructions, using basic vocabulary related to the reduction, recovery, reuse, recycle, in English;
- O5. To identify the effects of reduction, recovery, reuse and recycling of materials;
- O6. To analyze the effects of people's indifference towards the environment;
- O7. To formulate advice on protecting the environment;
- O8. To design and prepare visual materials (drawings, symbols, images, photographs) to raise people's attitudes towards waste reduction, recycling, recovery, reuse of materials;
- O9. To successfully collaborate with colleagues to achieve various tasks.

Following the listed objectives, assuming the role of a facilitator of learning, during the ten hours, the teacher used different ways of organizing the work: majority group work, but also frontal and individual activities and a

variety of interactive teaching methods, strategies that develop critical thinking and respond to the needs and interests of different students.

In table T1, we realised the correlation between the eight competences and the objectives pursued during the module.

Table 1 - Correlation between objectives and key competences

	KC1	KC2	KC3	KC4	KC5	KC6	KC7	KC8
O1.	x	x	x				x	
O2.	x	x					x	x
O3.	x	x			x	x		
O4.	x	x						
O5.	x	x	x				x	
O6.	x	x				x	x	x
O7.	x	x				x	x	x
O8.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
O9.	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Analyzing the correlation table, we see that each of the objectives exercise at least four of the key competences, which leads us to consider that the proposed module provides learning possibility centered on skills.

As working tools we used: worksheets, PowerPoint presentations, albums, the story "Treasure Eco Pirate", the map "Eco Pirate", questionnaires, graphic representation of information obtained by administering questionnaires, graphical progress monitoring team portfolios. Students have made posters designed to contribute to the support of the ecological balance, including: images, symbols, photos, graphics, maps, graphic organizers.

For more details related to the teaching projection of the module, can be accessed the AECLIL project's link, the module being a part of this project. http://www.aeclil.eu/article.asp?id=15.

2. Assessing competencies specific to project in correlation with key skills

The module design, carried out interdisciplinary, facilitates the practice of skills and the dialogued and participatory assessment provides the evaluation of skills.

Dialogued and participatory evaluation is a process that involves negotiation between the teacher and the student, of different interests, values and viewpoints. *Participatory evaluation* is based on shared responsibility between the student and the teacher. The emphasis is on cooperation,

collaboration and on the learning process. The student, as an assessor, learns how to learn and builds his learning. The activism and involvement are stimulated both in learning and in the assessment process (Chisiu, 2011). By this way of learning it is dominantly practiced **the ability to learn how to learn**.

During those ten classes, as evaluation and self-assessment tools, there were used: matrices of continuous evaluation and matrices and charts for monitoring their own progress made by the pupils, the grid for the final evaluation, questionnaires measuring the satisfaction degree of teachers and students participating in the project.

The matrices of continuous assessment (Table 2) were used by teachers to monitor (through observation, assessment and repeted recording) the evolution of students' performance at the level of the skills practiced during the module, that can be easily observed, that are derived from the key skills . In the T2 table there are made correlations between the competencies assessed and the key competences.

Table 2 - The correlation between skills evaluated (continuous assessment) and key skills

Practiced skills	KC1	KC2	KC3	KC4	KC5	KC6	KC7
C.1. Using acquired vocabulary about recovery, recycling, reuse and reduction in simple sentences	x	x					
C.2. Identifying relevant information about recovery, recycling, reuse and reduce by accessing various sources				x			
C.3. Maintaining a dialogue	x	x			x		
C.4. Oral messages Comprehension	x	x					
C.5. Reading out loud a familiar text	x	x					
C6. Listening Comprehension	x	x					
C.7. Cooperation to achieve the group tasks					x	x	x
C.8. Monitoring the own progress.			x			x	x

The matrices and the graphs made by the students (Table 3) were used for self-evaluation and monitoring progress at the level of language

proficiency (key competence CC2) expressed in number of words, sentences acquired in four activities of self-assessment (I-IV) conducted during those ten classes. To monitor their progress, each student had to write on his own notebook all the words and sentences which he recalls from the topics covered. Each class meant new words and new sentences used. By self-correction, with the participation and under the direct observation of his deskmate, being allowed to consult books, worksheets or the dictionary, each student had to correct what he wrote and to fill in the matrices, CC5- **the ability to learn how to learn.**

Table 3. Matrix used to monitor progress through self-assessment

Self-assessment																													
I																													
II																													
III																													
IV																													

Each student had two matrices of this kind. One for the words and the other for the sentences. They coloured individually (with the deskmate's or the teacher's support) a number of squares equal to the number of words and sentences used correctly during the activity. After each addition, students had to assess the progress from one exercice to another, by answering the questions: Did you record any progress? To what extent? How do you explain the evolution? (CC5- ability to learn how to learn.)

The worksheet that each student received for the self-assessment activities can be viewed on ((http://www.aeclil.eu/article.asp?id=15), in Annexe, Worksheet 9.

As well, the continuous assessment carried out after each activity within the ten classes accomplished through: self-correction exercises with the deskmate's support, comparing the answers (with those of his colleague or with those obtained by the next pair of students, during pair work), the presentation in front of the class of the products obtained, could be used to observe the degree of manifestation of the practiced skills. More details about the continuous assessment can be found on (http://www.aeclil.eu/article.asp?id=15) within design module.

The grid for the final evaluation includes skills and subskills expressed through criteria on five performance levels: Excellent, Good,

Satisfactory, Almost satisfactory and Unsatisfactory that targeted skills in table T3., correlated with key skills.

Table 2 - The correlation between the skills evaluated (final assessment) and the key skills

Practiced skills	KC 1	KC 2	KC 3	KC 4	KC 5	KC 6	KC 7
C.1. Maintaining a dialogue	x	x					
C.3. Written messages	x	x					
C.4. Reading out loud a text	x	x					
C.4.Identifying information by accessing various sources				x			
C.3.Originality in preparing and making products					x		
C.4. Comprehention of oral messages	x	x					
C.7. *Self-evaluation of the own progress*			x		x		
C.8. Involvement in *teamwork*						x	x

In order to achieve the final evaluation and to fill in the grid, the teacher took into account the assessments made during those ten classes, the self-assessment results achieved by the pupils, as well as the results of analysis of products made by pupils (posters, portfolios).

Conclusions

The teaching methods used in conducting the activities over those ten classes, the forms, the methods and the evatuating tools used were a genuine opportunity to exercise and evaluate the eight key competences.Emerging from within a discipline, such an approach of the school learning, got a practical applicability, assured learning for life, an appreciation based on both the analysis of theoretically teaching experiences and analyzing the assessments made by teachers and the students who participated.Knowledge itself was not the assessment purpose, but life contexts where these were used, in onother words it was the skills who were assessed not the knowledge. This is what it wouldn't be bad to learn to expand the teaching practice, in order to improve the results obtained when testing skills.The responses expressed by students and teachers to questionnaires revealed the

fact that that feedback provided individually, directly and promptly assured motivation, which is a crucial element in helping students to learn successfully.Both teachers and students appreciate the project activity as enjoyable, motivating, interesting, unique and useful in that it provides both the possibility of practicing the language and skills applicable in the context of real life.

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