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Project Report ECLIPSE: European Citizenship Learning Program for Secondary Education

This paper reports on a European project, the Comenius ECLIPSE project (European Citizenship Learning in a Programme for Secondary Education) developed by six European partners coordinated by the University of Trento in the years 2011-2014. ECLIPSE (co-financed by the EACEA - Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) aims at developing, testing, and implementing a Programme of European Citizenship, in order to improve citizenship competence and responsibility and to strengthen the sense of belonging and European identity of 8th grade pupils. These goals are reachable thanks to a number of measures in formal, non-formal and informal fields. The project partners created teaching and monitoring tools for pupils: seven ECMs (European Citizenship Modules), knowledge tests, pupils' portfolio, and suggestions for teachers, especially a portfolio for ECLIPSE educators. The ECLIPSE teaching/ testing materials were implemented in several schools of the partner's countries in order to make sure that it is useful for European pupils of different school systems. It can be used in a flexible way keeping in mind different learning needs in each school system, with a view to improving transversal competencies like learning to learn, as well as initiative and active involvement in improving the chances for young people in citizenship and work worlds.

Dieses Papier beschreibt ein europäisches Projekt: das Comenius Projekt ECLIPSE (European Citizenship Learning in einem Programm für Secondary Education), das von sechs europäischen Partnern entwickelt und von der Universität Trient in den Jahren 2011-2014 koordiniert wurde.

ECLIPSE wurde von der EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) kofinanziert; es zielt auf die Entwicklung, Überprüfung und Implementierung eines Programms zur Entwicklung eines europäischen Bürgersinns, um Kompetenzen als Staatsbürger und zugleich einer europäischen Identität und Verantwortung bei Schülerinnen und Schülern der 8. Klasse. Diese Ziele werden durch eine Reihe von Maßnahmen im formalen, nicht formalen und informellen Bereich angestrebt. Die Projektpartner entwickelten Lehr- und Monitoring Materialien für SchülerInnen, sieben ECM (European Citizenship Modules), Wissenstests, Portfolio für Schüler und Hinweise für Lehrer und speziell ein Portfolio für den Lehrkörper. Die ECLIPSE Lehr / Testmaterialien wurden in mehreren Schulen und Schultypen der Partnerländer getestet. Es kann in flexibler Weise verwendet werden unter Berücksichtigung unterschiedlicher Lernbedürfnisse in jedem Schulsystem, um auch Querschnittskompetenzen wie Lernkompetenz und Eigeninitiative und aktive Mitarbeit zu fördern um die Chancen junger Menschen auf politische Partizipation und auf dem Arbeitsmarkt zu verbessern.

Keywords:

European dimension, citizenship learning, teacher training

1 Introduction

The following paper reports a European project: the Comenius ECLIPSE project (European Citizenship Learning in a Programme for Secondary Education) developed by six European partners coordinated by the University of Trento in the years 2011-2014. ECLIPSE was selected and co-financed by the EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency); it aims at developing, testing, and implementing a Programme of European Citizenship, in order to improve citizenship competence and to develop the sense of belonging, the European identity and responsibility for pupils of the 8th (or 7th or 9th) grades.

ECLIPSE implies deepening the research and, at the same time, designing and implementing teaching/

learning activities and monitoring tools so as to develop competent citizenship in pupils, while fostering their active involvement. The main tangible output of the project is the European publication of the shared teaching/ learning materials for the schools, including the description of appropriate teaching methods based on three key points: *competence*, *responsibility*, *European dimension*, by improving the *awareness* of one's own improvements.

The six Project Consortium partners: Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Romania, and the United Kingdom¹ worked hard together to exchange their experience and put in common the best practices of the represented school systems; interesting were looking and finding answers to the challenges of Citizenship Education in Europe today (Georgi 2008, Eurydice 2012).

ECLIPSE promotes a new paradigm in citizenship education, that is European-oriented and not only nationally-inspired. It is centred around the growing of

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active and competent citizens, who critically engage with, and seek both to respect citizenship rules and to affect the social/ political life by democratically interacting in social/ economic groups.

The Maastricht Treaty formally introduced EU citizenship (Treaty on European Union 1992) as a legal concept. All nationals of a member state also become EU citizens who on one hand shall enjoy the rights guaranteed by this Treaty and on the other shall be subject to the duties imposed thereby.

Anyway, young people need to learn more in this field; as the Survey ICCS-IEA 2009 shows (Kerr, Sturman, Schulz, Burge 2010), information about the functioning of the EU cooperation is greatly to be improved.

Young people should learn and acquire awareness towards ethic, economic, social, political, cultural aspects of the citizenship, and about the close interdependence of the European countries. ECLIPSE underlines the importance of being aware of one's own level of expertise and commitment.

Learning about citizenship and the EU includes, beside information, the challenge of developing transversal skills, like learning to learn and entrepreneurship, responsibility, being aware of the problems, looking for solutions, and being engaged in improving the actual situations.

2 The project: aims and expected output

ECLIPSE puts its focus on fostering citizenship learning, developing knowledge and attitudes of youngsters in view of their becoming active European citizens, and it starts from understanding their perceptions, attitudes and behaviors in this field, that are, along with information, the awareness of the levels of trust in national and European democratic institutions.

In fact, the trust in national political institutions continues to decrease; the proportion of Europeans who tend to not trust national governments (72%) and national parliaments (69%) are high, and even the number of respondents who do not trust the European Union (58%) (Eurobarometer, 2013) is enough reason for concern.

The ECLIPSE aims at the early development of key competences (EU 2006) reached through measures such as active learning and self-planning by the students (portfolio), and through supporting awareness in the choice of the upper secondary school or vocational training.

Young people should acquire the basic life skills and competences necessary both for their personal development and for planning their future employment and for an active European citizenship. The focus is on self-knowledge, on interests in local, national, European and world issues.

Thanks to mutual exchanges at European level, and thanks to innovative pedagogical approaches in daily activity in the European schools, ECLIPSE intends both to contribute to the quality lifelong learning and to promote

high performance and innovation in European citizenship, based on mutual understanding and respect for human rights and democracy, while encouraging tolerance and respect for other peoples' views and cultures. The produced working materials are devoted to the work with the pupils and should help teachers in their daily practice.

ECLIPSE aims at promoting an awareness of the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity within Europe, as well as of the need to combat racism, prejudice and xenophobia: working together, the partners got to know each other and their different Institutions and countries, their peculiar working ways, while practicing intercultural cooperation.

The pupils become active learners, and think about what they can develop under the guide of the European curriculum by starting to understand the possible routes for their personal, cultural and professional future life, being still in time to choose the best *iter* for their further education and training.

At the beginning of the project lifetime, ECLIPSE partners organized testing of students and monitoring work with teachers in order to get to know the actual situation in the different countries by developing materials and by selecting the best strategies to reach the key competences, especially citizenship, learning to learn, entrepreneurship and initiative. In fact, the project addresses this objectives both looking at the state of art and cooperating among countries and motivating teachers and pupils for quality work done together.

The analysis of the different countries approaches, allowed to compare and to choose the most valuable approaches in view of quality learning, planning and implementing strategies to link the school with the daily life of the pupils with awareness of their future, and of the challenges of the strategy Europe 2020.

The six partners organized their work into Working Packages caring for a good distribution of the common work. Each partner had its own focus: project management, implementation, dissemination/exploitation. All of them worked both in work planning and in-service teacher training; all partners used the developed materials within the context of school practices in order to check their practical use of materials, while collecting advice for improvement from the different systems of the involved schools.

3 Shared concepts

European citizenship is a concept with a bewildering variety of interpretations as well as interpreters. In spite of a long list of European networks (Oonk, Maslowsky, van der Werf 2011), the barriers remain high in many fields.

Through a comparison among the different National concepts, and having a constant look to the European documentation (Eurydice 2012), the partners reached a consensus on what "European citizenship" actually means for them, and how citizenship education should



be structured in order to develop responsible national citizenship and responsible European citizenship.

This project started from the premise that citizens of a democratic society should have a civic competence in order to defend their rights and perform their duties. The Consortium agreed upon the main aspects of citizenship education in ECLIPSE after analyzing the proposals of the Council of Europe, OCSE, UE 2006, IEA- ICCS, Eurydice, National Ministries etc. The concept of citizenship was linked to the knowledge of social, cultural, economic and political dimensions and intended to promote individual and social responsibility.

Consortium partners decided to adopt the civic competence as defined by the EU institutions: "Civic competence is the complex mix of the sum of the different learning outcomes which are necessary for an individual to become an active citizen. It is a combination of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which enable people to act successfully in civil society, representative democracy and everyday life based on democratic values" (EU 2006). The partners added some new items, like understanding, dispositions, and behavior, focusing on competent active citizenship. In fact, competence, responsibility in active involvement, European dimension are considered the main traits of the ECLIPSE concept of citizenship, and they are the focus of the ECLIPSE teaching/ learning materials.

In the interdependent society of the EU, where member states share part of their sovereignty, citizenship is decoupled from its dependence on their national identity. The concept and the practice of citizenship expands from a membership status in a local community to a central membership in the territorial nation-state, and it is transferred from the level of the nation-state to that of supranational communities as well.

'Competent active European citizenship' goes way beyond a definition of citizenship that focuses only on rights and obligations. Citizenship in the competent and active mode means participating in the activities and willingness of people to take on responsibility for their community at different social and geographical levels, opening their horizons to Europe and the world. Instead of paying lip service to European diversities and similarities, the ECLIPSE teaching and learning materials make creative use of different viewpoints and experiences. ECLIPSE partners agree that education for competent active citizenship in local, national, European and global dimensions needs to become an internalized and accepted habit of the European youngsters.

4 ECLIPSE Teaching and monitoring tools

The image of the European Union is not perceived in a clear way by all its citizens. A relative majority of Europeans have a neutral image of the EU (39%, unchanged since spring 2013). However, the proportion of respondents for whom the EU conjures up a positive image is only 31%, while there has been a slight decrease

in the number of Europeans with a negative image of the EU (28%, -1) (Eurobarometer 2013).

ECLIPSE partners developed a framework for a European Citizenship Learning Programme, and for constructing examples of teaching lessons and materials, intended both to be used by the pupils and to train and coach teachers.

The proposed material involved a combination of aims and purposes, a framework of tightly-defined learning outcomes. Teachers of different disciplines were invited to use the ECLIPSE materials, especially for Native and Foreign Languages, History, Geography, Visual Education, Citizenship education in its different names in the EU countries, Law, Economics, Visual Education, etc. Teachers were intended to adopt an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach (Bombardelli 2012).

The first step in the project was to analyse the local situation and the country syllabuses, in order to assure that the ECLIPSE teaching activities were in accordance with the National curricula (Eurydice 2012).

In order to reach these objectives, the ECLIPSE partners worked in a flexible way, taking into consideration the fact that curriculum work varies considerably from school to school, from country to country and that the new ECLIPSE materials should be suitable for teachers and pupils all over Europe. The work at school begins by testing students about their civic knowledge in the planned teaching fields, in order to motivate them to learn and to compare the previous level to the results reached after the ECLIPSE teaching activity in the different countries. Planning, development and implementation of the working materials were carried out according to the different country situations by using the best strategies to reach citizenship goals and the key competences, especially learning to learn, citizenship and initiative.

Citizenship education involves all pupils, including teenagers from different social groups and pupils with disability or/and learning difficulties, who are often discriminated in the school with consequent loss of human capital and difficulties for the work. The learning tools facilitate them in achieving good chances, in getting motivated to cooperate, in doing things together across the borders, thus becoming active European citizens. To help teachers in differentiating the learning proposals, the ECLIPSE working materials include many optional parts, and links for a better knowledge of topics.

This specific Programme for Secondary Education has seven Modules focused on key European topics: human rights and responsibility, social identity (at local, national, European and global levels), and cultural diversity; what is the EU, the EU in daily life; European Citizenship; History of European Cooperation process, the work of the main European Institutions, and Learning to start up.

Special attention is given to transversal skills, i.e. looking up information (Where do you discover EU regulations in the everyday life of European Citizens?),



real opportunities of participation, learning to learn, entrepreneurship and transition to work.

Creating the teaching/ learning materials, the partners not only made all possible efforts to produce useful tools for the practice (Tilman 2004), but also viewed intercultural aspects, paid attention to gender questions, aiming at preventing the risk of stereotypes in the contents and in the use of terminology, especially in the knowledge test, while being aware of complex debates in this field (Turner 2014).

The teaching/ learning materials can be used in a flexible way; teachers are invited to include a European Citizenship Learning approach in their subjects, and in school life for the entire school year. What is asked for is about 10 to 30 hours from each participating school timetable. Teachers decide how they integrate the ECLIPSE contents and processes into their subjects.

For evaluation of the learning results ECLIPSE used a qualitative and quantitative approach; partners reflected on and evaluated teaching and learning processes according to clear criteria. ECLIPSE developed a portfolio for pupils and for teachers in the field of civic and citizenship education.

The lack of trust in the institutions should be overcome both by more responsibility at all levels, especially at governmental level, and through bottom up participation.

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through monitoring materials: a Student's Knowledge (pre and post-test), the Students' attitudes questionnaires, and the teachers' qualitative evaluation (port-folio).

The students' portfolio is very useful in making explicit what kind of a student's competences should be developed in the European Citizenship Learning Programme, according to the UNESCO proposal (1996) that includes learning to know, to do, to be, to live together. This helps students to think about their own civic and European identity (EU 1983), that should build up on common values, traditions and cultures, and especially on the awareness of a common destiny of the European peoples in the global scenario.

In the portfolio, students write down their ideas about their own learning process linked to citizenship, to communication, to engagement to improve their reflexive abilities. Their development is to be linked to the ethos of their schools and of their social environment. Also they should have the opportunity to reflect about strengths and weaknesses of their situation and about possible ways of improvement. The awareness of their situation and of their own improvement is one of the main tasks in ECLIPSE.

The Students' knowledge test asks questions about basic information on the European Union (How many EU countries are in the EU? How many countries use the common currency as their official currency? How many inhabitants do live in the EU?), and on the current problems (What percentage of immigrants is there in your country?).

The Knowledge test aims at linking the attention/ awareness of the pupils to their European and local region and to the current situation, by asking the names of their local/regional representatives in the European Parliament. The historical development of the EU is also taken into consideration (When did the European Community start?).

The most important questions are directly linked to European Citizenship, and to European 'freedoms' (What do "free circulation of goods" and the "movement of citizens" mean?). Focused on the purpose and the situation of the EU are the questions: What about the European Union in the global context? What has been the mission and core values of the European cooperation process? Some contents are quite difficult, i.e. 'sovereignty', and they need a good explanation.

Besides acquiring information on the Institutions (Who is the President of the European Commission), and Treaties (The Lisbon Treaty), students are urged to think about controversial topics such as: Which of the following constitutes "discrimination"? and What does "having prejudice" mean?

The Teacher's Portfolio, developed by the Portuguese team, intends to encourage teachers to reflect on essential and specific knowledge, skills and values able to promote European citizenship learning and to help assess didactic and teaching competence, while linking theory to teaching practice. The awareness of the pupils can be strengthened by the clear awareness of their teachers concerning the own tasks and the common responsibilities. Teachers and pupils portfolios have some parallel items in order to facilitate connections and good results.

5 Final remarks

The project deals with the important topic of how to strengthen European citizenship with the focus on competence, responsibility, European dimension and on the awareness of the learning work in progress. To achieve this goal, the European consortium investigated European students' understanding, attitudes and behavior regarding citizenship and they developed teaching instruments to help students develop the necessary skills to perform as active citizens.

This project aims at offering an effective approach to citizenship education. It gives the opportunity for exchanging ideas and practices, among European teachers and educators. It should develop resilience in being good European citizens. Finally, it should be a guidance for pupils to learn how to make well-documented and motivated choices and to develop coherent competences for their own life plans.

ECLIPSE partners shared concepts, methods and approaches for citizenship education in Europe, in close mutual cooperation aiming at providing a common ground for shared school work. It is expected to contribute positive effects for teachers and students, by means of information, critical reflection, and focussing



on active involvement of learners, in order to reach citizenship competences. The best strategies to reach the key competences were found in a greater commitment and in the assumption of responsibility at all levels, of both teachers and students.

Two-thirds of Europeans consider that their voice does not count in the EU (Eurobarometer 2013). Students should be empowered to go over a declarative knowledge about the EU and to understand the effects of the common decision that the country representatives take at EU level in all fields for everyday life in Europe. The current emphasis on ‘competent and active European citizenship’ should help citizens to understand what Europe they want to develop, and promote. Schools should be committed to innovatory practices and to keeping in touch with ECLIPSE in the future.

ECLIPSE partners worked together in order to implement education for European citizenship by giving it the status of a daily and officially recognized activity in the European school curricula/syllabus. The overall impact of ECLIPSE includes hopes of influencing students’ educational policies (Bombardelli 2009) as well as the general design of teachers’ education along with stimulating further research and practice in the area.

ECLIPSE is co-financed by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union (EACEA).

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Endnotes

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