

CONCLUSION FOR FUTURE TEACHING

Katarina Chovanová, Kamil Gembický and Luise Nern

INTRODUCTION

Pupils have changed, but the way of teaching very often has not. Because of that students who want to become teachers receive a completely different education at university than was common many years ago. Consequently, the way of teaching may change in the future as well. Considering the European perspective though, it has to be mentioned that education may differ from one country to another.

The majority of student participants in the ‘European Values Education’-project are going to be geography teachers in the future.

In this chapter our group will try to find an answer to the question, whether the project has any impact on our job as teachers later on; whether we had some new experiences while teaching, whether we will use the assignments we worked on again and in general whether we think that this project was useful for our professional development.

We hold the opinion that for future teaching it is important to learn working in a team and of course find compromises with others. Additionally, teaching in the future should be more than just standing in front of the class or give monologues. Instead we should prepare active lessons, try to teach patterns, find explanations, have interesting discussions and make the pupils think critically. In the two weeks working together in Germany and Slovakia we all gained knowledge through preparing lessons together in a team and through teaching at different schools in the respective country. Whether we think that these experiences were useful for future teaching we will find out in this chapter.

We used a questionnaire, which consists of several items relating to ‘conclusions for future teaching’ in order to find out what the project members think about the exchange. The results of the questionnaire are presented in the following pages.

QUESTIONNAIRE

To get an overview, as mentioned above, our student colleagues filled in a questionnaire comprising four questions:

- » *‘Would you like to use this assignment again in your future job? Why?’*
- » *‘Did you learn anything interesting for your future teaching (methods)? What?’*
- » *‘Do you think this project is useful for your future job? Why?’*
- » *‘What did you learn for your future life from this project?’*

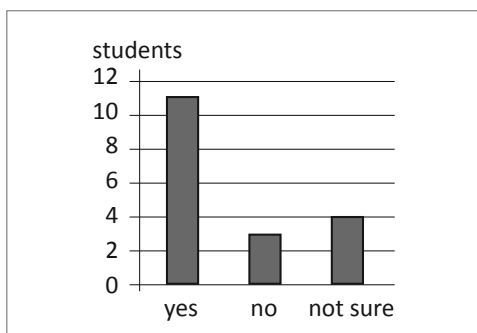
To design this questionnaire was not as easy as it might seem, especially to find appropriate topics. We thought that it would be interesting to find out whether we as future teachers feel that we will ever use the assignments again and whether this project on European values will be useful for our future work and life in general.

The results of the questionnaires are really interesting and most of us answered in a similar way.

USING THE ASSIGNMENTS IN THE FUTURE

The majority of our colleagues state that they will use the assignments again in the future. Reasons given include the fact that students thought that they discussed interesting topics like religion, which can also be important in everyday life in a community. Therefore a detailed discussion about different religions should be part of the curriculum. Furthermore, it was thought important for pupils to express their feelings about their own and other religions. Other reasons cited included one student who said that the assignments are very helpful because they offer pupils the most important information about religions in Europe. They further their understanding because they get a simple overview. They are also useful for teaching about multicultural societies in Europe. The assignments give an impression of the many religions and religious customs you can find in Europe and pupils can learn how to tolerate different points of view.

Only a minority of our student colleagues said that they will not use the assignments again, because they think that some of the topics do not seem to belong into the geography classroom. From their experience at a Slovak school they assumed it might be difficult to transfer assignments like the one on the religious background of some British



Graph 1: 'Would you like to use this assignment again in your future job?'

football clubs to other nations than the United Kingdom. Furthermore, sometimes it was hard to keep the focus on geography.

To sum up, the majority will use the assignments again, because of the maps, helpful tasks and interesting topics. But it is important to find a connection between the topic religion and the subject geography.

HELPFUL EXPERIENCES FOR FUTURE TEACHING

Most students (especially Slovak students) claim that they have learned a lot on teaching methods, when they answered our second question on whether they learned anything interesting. This is because at their university they did not have any courses on teaching methods at all. In contrast to the Slovak students, the German students are well trained in teaching methods. Therefore they could help the Slovaks to expand their repertoire. That is why a lot of groups used teaching methods like brainstorming and diamond ranking. Brainstorming helps to find out what pupils already know and diamond ranking is very useful to foster discussions and make pupils become more active. By including these teaching methods in the assignments we could all practice our teaching skills. In the end it was obvious to all of us that teaching methods are really necessary in modern teaching.

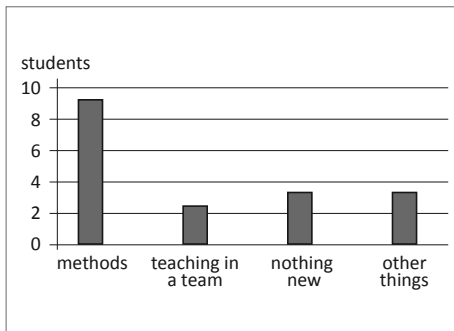
Apart from this focus the question on whether they learned anything interesting was answered in many different ways. On the one hand students said they were trained for improvisation because of technical faults or unpredictable situations. On the other hand one student thought that it was important to experience that ‘every class has a different character; so every lesson is different’.

In connection with the preparation of the lessons students gained knowledge on planning lessons in a team with a foreign partner, which includes dealing with different teaching approaches and is also an important competence to develop for the future.

Furthermore, all of us became skilled at explaining tasks in a few words and making sure that the tasks stimulate the pupils’ critical thinking. Additionally, students

are of the opinion that learning critical thinking is very important, because it is necessary for questioning statements and if possible finding alternative perspectives. One student underlined the fact that critical thinking means falsification and not verification (to affirm statements).

To conclude, the project members had great experiences. For their future teaching, they learned a lot of interesting and new things, especially on teaching methods.



Graph 2: 'What did you learn for your future teaching?'

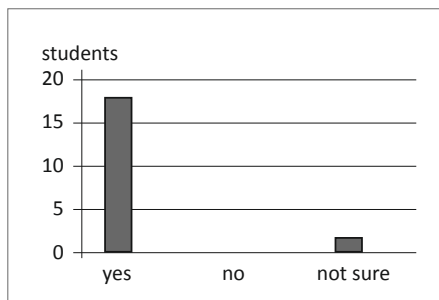
VALUE OF THE PROJECT FOR FUTURE JOB

Finally, there was the question on the usefulness of this project. It is interesting that every project member answered with 'of course, it is useful'. Some students said that it was a great experience to teach in English, while others underlined that they liked the idea to cooperate with foreign partners. One student claimed that this project was a good chance to teach geography differently.

Yet others stressed that 'European Values Education' supports learning important facts about religion in other countries, some of which were new even for us as future teachers.

Still others are of the opinion that this project is useful, because preparing lessons is a teacher's daily work. This should be practised in many ways. In addition to that, being in another country always broadens your view. Students underlined that it was useful to learn about and compare different school systems, in this case the systems of Germany and Slovakia respectively.

To summarize, every student participating in this project was of the opinion that the project was useful for their future and will help us to become more confident as teacher. This is attributed especially to working in a multicultural group. Also teaching foreign pupils is a great experience that every teacher should have.



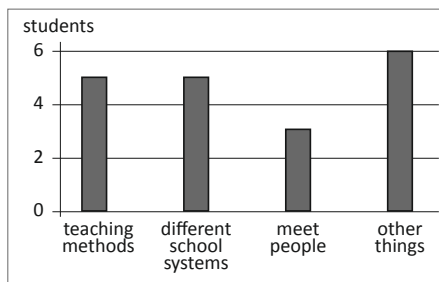
Graph 3: 'Do you think this project will be useful for your job?'

VALUE OF THE PROJECT FOR FUTURE LIFE

Now the question remains whether the student teachers think that the project has any implications on their future life.

The majority declared that they have learned a lot about different states, school systems, teaching methods and also about different people and their culture. Additionally, for the students' future life it is important that they have met nice people and had exchange experiences in general. Also central for future life is learning to be tolerant and to know how to make compromises. These aspects were much in demand in both weeks that we spent working together.

Students also said that they have learned a lot for their future life. On the one hand to cooperate in English and on the other hand to learn that every student has another starting position (basis) from which to work.



Graph 4: 'What did you learn for your future life from this project?'

Furthermore they gained experience in being flexible and open-minded and of course talk about their own expectations and feelings. To sum up, all of us learned much more for our future life from this project than expected.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the introduction future teaching means to prepare lessons which make the pupil become more active and think critical about different topics. Using teaching methods belongs to a modern way of teaching.

This project gave us the opportunity to work with foreign partners at different schools together in a different language. For future teaching it is important to make compromises. It is always useful to learn from each other because everybody has new ideas and different points of view. Surely, this project was useful to make new experiences, gain knowledge and learn interesting things for future teaching.

Especially by observing pupils reactions teachers know how to change their plan. For example which teaching method the pupil like or dislike is interesting for future work with the class.

'European Values Education' is a very good example of how it is possible to work with foreign partners easily and get to know other cultures. For our future work as becoming teachers we can profit from such assignments and opportunities to plan lessons together with professional support from our advisers.

We had the chance to get to know two different school systems, on the one hand the German system, on the other hand the Slovak system. We have seen different education systems and different schools: private schools with very good equipment, and public schools with a different status. To sum up, you can say that this project is really helpful for future teaching.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE about conclusion for future teaching

Class:

Kind of school:

Assignment:

- » *'Would you like to use this assignment again in your future job? Why?'*
- » *'Did you learn anything interesting for your future teaching (methods)? What?'*
- » *'Do you think this project is useful for your future job? Why?'*
- » *'What did you learn for your future life from this project?'*