Certificate of Personal Competencies

Material for Module 4

„Project Management"

Kaufmannsschule II, Hagen, Germany

I.I.S.S. Canudo, Gioa del Colle, Italy

Colegiul National Mihai Viteazul, Bucuresti, Romania

GenikoLikio Pentapolis, Pentapolis, Greece

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Description of the project

Teachers at the applicant schools have realised that their students lack many skills and personal competencies for entering working life. Many students do not have a long-term strategy for their professional development. They are very focused on their free-time activities and not consciously seeing the benefits of the full-time education they are in. Many students claim to aim for a higher school leaving certificate but they do not actively work for it. There are students who do not do their homework, show disruptive behaviour in class and are not diligent enough to achieve good marks or the best marks they could. Teachers have observed that in many cases the students do not have the skills and personal competences to reach their goals. Sometimes economical circumstances are not favourable.

The teachers involved in this project would like to develop new ways of tackling these problems in a European perspective. The Greek and Italian school are faced with the consequences of the financial crisis. Moreover they are situated in remote areas. The Romanian school is faced with students who see their future in an academic career but do not realise that you need personal competences to attend university courses where lecturers will focus on special knowledge not on personality. The German school has a very heterogeneous group of students who come after having attended different types of secondary schools in order to prepare for an apprenticeship in business or to study. We believe that our different problems and circumstances will enrich our view on the situation of the students and give us the chance to see personal competences from different perspectives. The schools aim at developing a programme leading to a Certificate of Personal Competences (CPC) that will be implemented in the schools on a long-term basis. Moreover the concept and the steps will be published in an eBook for other institutions to use for their students.

Many schools throughout Europe face these problems and we would like to find ways of addressing them and sharing our ideas with other institutions via the project blog. The project team has taken a conscious decision to focus on pupils who are not achieving their potential - this includes pupils of lower abilities but also gifted students who are hindered by other factors from getting the best marks they could.

The teachers of the schools involved will have the chance to think about their students and their pedagogical and teaching methods in a different way. Many teachers only see the knowledge a student has and how s/he uses it in class. This approach will help teachers to see their pupils from a holistic point of view. So teachers will find new ways of working with the pupils thus helping them to improve their exam results. We believe that this project will facilitate new developments in our schools which would not be possible without the European perspective enriching us with different views on solving the problems we are all faced with.

Module 4: Project management

What is project management?

A project is defined by a fixed beginning and a defined end. Thus it has a temporary nature with the aim of reaching a certain goal. In order to fulfil the set objective it is necessary to bundle resources and to involve a team of people who usually do not work together. Project management has five stages: initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, closing. Within the framework of project management people are given defined roles and responsibilities in the process of one project. Questions of how to use time and resources effectively are also raised.

The relevance of project management

Preparing for a final examination can be seen as a project, too. Once a pupil takes the decision to take higher school leaving examinations s/he has an objective to fulfill. It also has a clear time structure as you know when it will be once you have enrolled in your course. While attending school it is important for the pupil to look at her/his resources and find out who are stakeholders helping her/him. As a pupil s/he is part of a social group within the class and outside the class. Other elements of project management can be found at school: initiating and planning the learning process and executing your plans. Monitoring and controlling takes place in the form of written assessments and feedback by the teachers but can also be done by the pupil herself/himself by revising the learning process. This project is closed once the final examination has been taken successfully.

Within education each pupil is surrounded by a team of people: parents, teachers and peers. All of them play a part in successful education. If a pupil reflects these roles s/he can develop a better understanding of how effecting learning can be organised and that teachers can be seen as partners and advisors in the learning process.

It will be helpful for pupils to acquire the skills of project management to give them good tools for organising themselves. This will enable them to successfully manage their lives in the future. Together with the competencies acquired in the modules learning, self-reflection and time mangement they can take the next step into working life either by studying or learning a job. Later in life they will have even more to take into consideration when they have a family to provide for and look after.

Suggestions for teaching

As our project meeting on this topic had to be cancelled due to Covid19 we can only suggest steps to follow and questions to ask.

Step 1

First pupils find out about project management. This can be done by asking the question and collecting first ideas. Next they are shown a definition of project management and analyse it. The different stages and people involved and their roles and tasks can be speculated on.

After this pupils work on the different subtopics of project management and prepare informative presentations. These are presented to the whole group. Students can do their own research on the internet or given copies from books about project management.

The presentations ensure that pupils understand the concept of project management within a business framework so that they can perform the next step of knowledge transfer.

Step 2

Pupils can do the following questions individually or in groups:

- Why is my employability a project? (Comparison with characteristics of a project)
- Which elements of project management can be found in your employability project? (analysis of project management)
- Who are my team members and what is their function? (application of knowledge on project management)
- Which responsibility regarding your employability lies with your school, your city, your parents or other stakeholders?

Why is my employability a project? (Comparison with characteristics of a project)

- Because is planned, a single item and has a particular purpose.
- Because it is unique, a defined end result, characteristics of the context have to be taken into consideration.
- Because one can define roles and resources.
- Because it is new and unfamiliar.

Which elements of project management can be found in your employability project? (analysis of project management)

- Temporary nature: Duration of the course that leads to the final examination.
- Objective: Pass final examination – sometimes: with specific grades needed for a certain career.
- Resources: Situation at home, situation at school, personal qualities, skills, peers, friends.
- Initiating: Start of the course, point in time at which pupils makes the conscious decision to set the objective and work towards it, moment when s/he speaks to her/his team about it.
- Planning: Pupil makes a plan using time management skills.
- Executing: Pupils starts putting the plan into practice.
- Monitoring and Controlling: Pupil revises planning at the end of certain periods (e.g. every week, every month), pupils talks to teachers or advisors about her/his situation, Feedback in form of results from assessments that require changes in the plan. Pupils talk to their parents and peers seeking advice.
- Closing: Reaching the objective, i.e. passing the exam and deciding on what to do next.

Who are my team members and what is their function? (application of knowledge on project management)

- Project leader: pupil herself/himself.
- Team members: Teachers, parents, other members of the family, friends, classmates, careers' advisor, local community …
- Functions can be: general support by giving feedback and encouragement as well as scolding if something goes wrong, giving financial support, giving moral support, providing honest

feedback, making sure pupil takes time for relaxation, providing suitable extra tuition, helping with finding opportunities, helping with applications …

Which responsibility regarding your employability lies with your school, your city, your parents or other stakeholders?

- Pupil herself/himself: All the responsibility due to age and the importance of the decision for her/his life.
- School: Making sure pupil receives the best education possible for passing the final exam and personal growth, creating the right environment for learning, providing for guidance (careers, social needs, help).
- Parents: Moral support, creating the best environment for learning, help when needed.
- Local government: Providing well-equipped schools (might be a different body in your area), ensuring a good infrastructure for attending school and for supporting students with difficult backgrounds, providing a network of meaningful free-time acitivities for the age group.

Suggestions of what to do next

Pupils can devise a project plan for their objective and define all the team members, their roles and their tasks. Using the knowledge gained in the module „Time Management" s/he can then do some planning on different time scales from monthly over weekly down to daily plans with suitable intervals for revision. The module of „Self reflection" can be used to assess the pupil's skills and personal qualities. Once the strengths and weaknesses have been discovered the schedule can be revisited to add measures to improve oneself. The module „Learning" can be used to make a list of suitable settings for learning that are likely to lead to success.

Pupils should be encouraged to develop a routine of planning and revising. Keeping a diary or a bullet journal are both suitable of keeping track of commitments. There are also useful apps.