



European Workshop

Plurilingualism and the development of language competences in the 21st century: boosting participation and social cohesion using European tools and ICT

Valencia, Spain, 7 to 9 September 2015

Trainers:

Mercè Bernaus, Spain

Aart Franken, The Netherlands

Focus

This workshop was organised by the SEPIE (Spanish Service for the Internationalization of Education) and the Education Body of the Autonomous Region of Valencia. The event was multiple purpose. The main subject was plurilingualism in Europe. In addition, the way in which linguistic diversity should be understood as a tool for respect and tolerance among different cultures. The 3-day workshop was based on the methodology of the Pestalozzi Programme: learning by doing.

15 international participants from 13 countries and 16 national participants, primary and secondary teachers and teacher advisers, took part in this workshop.

Day 1 – Plurilingualism in Europe

Day 1 focused on Plurilingualism. Following the official opening session with speeches from representatives of the local authorities, there were two plenary sessions on the subject of linguistic diversity in Europe. The first one, by Beatriz Tourón, Spanish NLO, covered the activities of the Council of Europe related to plurilingualism, emphasizing the role of the Centre of Modern Languages in Graz, the European Day of Languages, and the Pestalozzi Programme. The second one, by Elsa Vilalta, teacher adviser of Educational Policies in Valencia, described the linguistic situation in the Autonomous Region of Valencia, where there are two official languages.

In the evening sessions, lead by Pestalozzi trainer Mercè Bernaus, several activities were carried out to "break the ice" and to deal with interculturality. Co-operative learning techniques and principles were introduced as one possible way of developing such competences. Two sessions managed by Pestalozzi trainer Aart Franken, focused on explaining the "Assessment Tree" and the "Open Space". All participants were really enthusiastic and engaged. A local teacher managed a session about M-Learning and Apps in Language Learning.



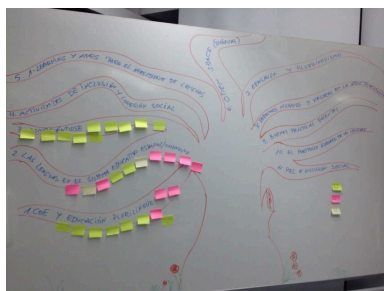
Day 2 – Strategies to promote Plurilingualism and Human Rights in education

The first session was a presentation, dealing with the possibilities of cooperation in schools through the Erasmus+ programme and other European initiatives, and lead by Andrés Ajo, Head of School and Adult Education Unit at the SEPIE.

Afterwards, Mercè Bernaus talked about human rights and values in plurilingual education and about how to introduce them in the classroom.

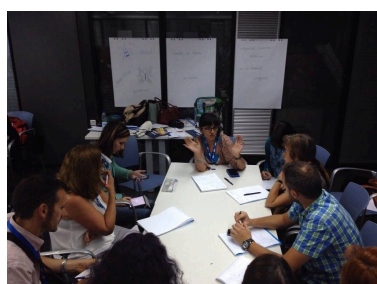
During the evening sessions, the group visited a secondary school in Albal, a small village close to Valencia, where they observed three examples of good practices in plurilingualism and ICT.

The day finished with a cultural activity. Invited by the mayor of Algemesí, participants attended the Festivity "La mare de Déu de la Salut Festival", which was awarded in 2011 the title of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.



Day 3 – The European Language Portfolio

Day 3 started with a presentation on the role of the European Language Portfolio in Plurilingualism. Given by Elena López Luengo, responsible for ELP at SEPIE, the presentation was followed by an example of good practices by two teachers who have integrated sign language in their teaching. Day 3 ended with another Open Space session designed to further scrutinize certain topics such as: interculturality, ELP, and cooperation. One of the results of this session was that some of the teachers participating in the Valencia European Workshop decided to form a partnership agreement between their respective institutions.



Conclusion

The event concluded with an award ceremony. Participants conveyed their satisfaction with the workshop and the activities carried out and expressed how inspired and motivated by the Pestalozzi philosophy they were. This workshop provided a framework of reference for individual efforts, highlighting the fact that teachers face similar issues and challenges irrespective of the country of origin. Hopefully, this workshop contributed to the professional development of its participants as well as to the dissemination of the Pestalozzi philosophy.

