



Dissemination Event

Pedagogy Makes the Difference – Report

Malta, 7 to 9 July 2015

Trainers:
Guðrún Ragnarsdóttir, Iceland
Charlot Cassar, Malta

Focus

This dissemination event was organised within the in-service professional development programme for teachers in Malta. The event had a dual purpose. On the one hand it aimed to disseminate the ideals of the Pestalozzi Programme while at the same time supporting the Maltese National Curriculum Framework and the Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024. The 3-day training event was based on the theme of the Pestalozzi Programme Summer School 2015 – Pedagogy Makes the Difference. It looked at the core of what being a teacher means: our pedagogy, what we feel and think about the relation we have with education, with knowledge, with school and above all with the learners. If we are to put learners at the centre of our educational undertaking, we also need to focus on teachers, value their expertise and importance and look at the “tools of their trade”, and invest in reflection about pedagogy.

45 primary school teachers from St Margaret College took part in this dissemination event.

Day 1 – TASKs and Co-Operative Learning Techniques

Day 1 focused on the Transversal Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge with an emphasis on attitudes linking this to the transversal competences as identified in the Maltese National Curriculum Framework. Whose responsibility is it to “teach” these transversal competences and how do we do it? Co-operative learning techniques and its principles were introduced as one possible way in which teachers can support the development of such competences. Participants were challenged to think about the implications this has in the classroom, touching on issues of authenticity, and the notion that teaching is so much more than a job. In groups, participants were asked to create a lesson based on the principles of co-operative learning structures and they were then invited to provide structured feedback in a co-operative manner.

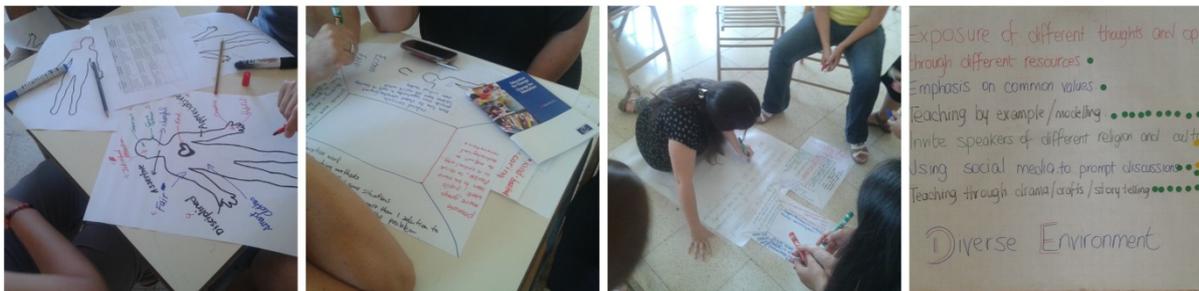


Day 2 – Teacher Characteristics and Challenges for the 21st Century

Participants were asked to think back to their favourite teacher and to then identify the “things” that made these teachers unique, first individually, then as a group, modelling co-operative learning structures. The characteristics that participants identified were all mostly related to how these favourite teachers treated them and made them feel. It was their attitude that made the difference. Participants were asked questions like - did your favourite teacher ever have disciplinary issues? Do you model what your favourite teacher did? Participants were then asked to identify the transversal attitudes from the TASKs document which these favourite teachers had – and not surprisingly, they touched upon each and every single one of the transversal attitudes identified.

Participants were then asked to reflect on the universal human addictions as identified by Angeles Arrien¹ (1993) and to then reflect on the implications of these human addictions in the classroom context. Throughout, the importance of self-reflection was emphasised.

Working in groups, participants were asked to focus on the challenges as identified in Education for Change, Change for Education, Manifesto (2015). Using the place-mat technique (again modelling co-operative learning structures in practice), participants were asked to identify concrete actions that they can take to face the challenges as described in the manifesto and to vote on those actions that they can and actually want to implement in their own contexts (in green) and the actions that they could try (in yellow).



Day 3 – Assessment and Pestalozzi Themes

Day 3 started an activity during which participants had to construct a free standing structure using spaghetti, string, tape and a marshmallow. This activity was meant to put the participants under the duress of assessment. This was followed by more simulations – participants had to recall a list of words that they read, that they heard and objects that they saw - representing different modes of learning (visual learning, auditory learning, reading/writing preference learning), again putting them under the stress of a formal assessment task in class.

¹ Arrien, A. 1993. The Four-Fold Way: Walking the Paths of the Warrior, Teacher, Healer, and Visionary. New York: HarperOne.

Participants were then asked to work in groups, identify a subject area, determine the modes of assessment that they currently employ and the percentage per mode in the specific subject and eventually to identify other possible forms of assessment. This task was very useful and provided valuable information that can be taken up to analyse teachers' perceptions of assessment. Participants were challenged to think in terms of the assessment strategies they use and the challenges as identified in the manifesto.

Participants were then split into 4 groups with 4 parallel workshops running at the same time. The workshops/activities focused on diversity, values, gender issues, and sports (sports and democracy). After the parallel workshops, participants had to provide feedback to each other in expert groups. These workshops were run by

- Mary Claire Saliba (Participant – Pestalozzi Summer School 2014)
- Jason Inguanez (Participant – Pestalozzi Summer School 2015)
- Ronald Zammit (Participant – Sports and Democracy)
- Charlot Cassar (Pestalozzi Trainer)



Conclusion

The event ended with a general debriefing session, bringing the various issues and aspects discussed during the 3 days together and grounding it in the Maltese and actual classroom contexts. Participants were inspired and motivated, with many expressing their interest in the Pestalozzi Programme. This dissemination event provided an international frame of reference for local efforts, highlighting the similar issues and challenges which teachers face across borders. It is hoped that issues identified during this dissemination event will inform school development planning, continuous professional development for teachers and the establishment of a national Pestalozzi group.