Genuine digital learning and teaching emphasises collaboration

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GENUINE Digi -project team from left to right: Jonna Malmivuori, Anu Sköld-Nurmi, Joop van der Horst, Anna-Maija Seutu, Boštjan Ozimek, Yulia Sergeeva, Petri Tuohimäki and Heino Brink.

The two-year (2021-2023) Erasmus+ project "Together towards genuine digital teaching and learning, GENUINE Digi", coordinated by WinNova, came to an end in April 2023. In addition to WinNova, also Tampere University of Applied Sciences from Finland, BIC Ljubljana from Slovenia and Graafschap College from the Netherlands participated in the project.

The goal of the GENUINE Digi project was to chart and develop the digital skills of professional teachers in VET (Vocational education and training). The outputs were surveys for teachers and students about the current state of online education (IO1), a digital pedagogical model (IO2) and a course for professional teachers to improve digital skills (IO3). The course was created in English using ThingLink, so that it would be easy to share it across organisations.

The first year of the project was implemented remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This was a new experience for the whole project team and taught them new skills. The participants

had to put an enhanced focus on regular and active involvement in the collaboration, and active use of the Teams platform to maintain communication.

TAMK perspective

The main role of TAMK was to provide support in the development of the pedagogical model and, to some extent, also to the online course. The main content of the output material was produced by the teachers from the participant schools in a series of live workshops and online meetings, and assignments between meetings. In the first stages, the teachers were asked to share their views on the pedagogical requirements and needs in online teaching in their respective work environments and countries. This was used for extending the discussion to develop the pedagogical model.

Over the course of the project, we learned a great deal about the work of teachers in vocational schools, including the practical everyday situations, the teachers' experiences on what kind of support teachers and students need, and how the educational infrastructure works in their respective areas. We got to see many different teaching spaces as well, for example: a bakery, a physical simulation of a large cargo ship's deck and a metal workshop. Graafschap showed us Civon innovatiecentrum, a development space where they experiment with technology to be used in vocational teaching.

Many perspectives to online learning

The diverse perspectives and roles of teachers from the partner countries highlighted the importance of pedagogical and didactical support in improving online teaching skills. Motivating students for e-learning was identified as a key challenge during the project, along with technical issues, lack of interaction and feedback.

A student-oriented and inclusive approach is crucial in designing effective e-learning that meets the needs of both teachers and students. For achieving genuinely successful digital teaching and learning, teachers should collaborate and embrace technology to create engaging and interactive learning experiences in order to facilitate collaboration between teachers and students and enhance student participation in the learning process.

On the organisational level, teachers should be provided with adequate support and means for skills development. A supportive, positive work culture that promotes open discourse between teachers and managers is a key in achieving this. Access to digital tools that teachers find pedagogically meaningful is equally important.

Read more about GENUINE Digi project:
https://www.winnova.fi/kehittaminen/kansainvalisyys/genuine-digi/

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