



eTwinning Professional Development Workshop

“Digital Competences & IT Didactics for teachers”

December 11-13, 2019

131 teachers from 34 countries discussed challenges and possible solutions for classroom digitalisation.

The international eTwinning Professional Development Workshop (PDW) „Digital Competences & IT Didactics for teachers” which took place from 11-13 December in Vienna offered a diverse programme and professional training for its participants.

The topic of Informatics/ICT is among the most popular in eTwinning projects in Austria, second only to foreign languages. “That’s why ‘Digitalisation in schools’ became our unofficial topic of the year”, explained Ursula Panuschka, Head of eTwinning Austria and Erasmus+ School Education in the OeAD-GmbH. Ms Panuschka further highlighted the synergies available in eTwinning and Erasmus+ projects, opening further doors to internationally-minded educators.

“Just because you grow up among technologies, it does not mean that you know how to use them”, Deirdre Hodson from the European Commission pointed out in her welcome speech at the eTwinning-PDW in Vienna. In addition, only four out of ten teachers feel well prepared to use ICT in classroom, which underlines the importance of further training for teachers.

To meet the challenges and opportunities of education in the digital age, the European Commission has set out a Digital Education Action Plan with measures to help EU Member States. “Digital skills are vital, there are 500,000+ ICT jobs in the EU we cannot fill”, Ms Hodson continued to explain the significance of digital education.

eTwinning – the community for schools in Europe – does not only offer the possibility to do cross-border projects in schools, but also enhances teaching and learning, and can break down the walls in classroom. The eTwinning-PDW in Vienna provided a space for teachers with a multitude of backgrounds to learn about new tools and how to implement them in class, as well as to network with international colleagues.

“What we see today is that children get younger and younger when they first use digital tools [...], and it’s up to the teachers to not forget that the future will be even more digital”, Martin Bauer from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research added and presented good practice examples on how digital basic education can be implemented in primary schools combining the analogue and digital world.

“Digital transformation is happening in your classroom [...] and we need to take into consideration the social and emotional aspects of it”, Rute Baptista from eTwinning Europe/European Schoolnet concluded the welcome speeches.

„analogue or digital – NO. PHYGITAL!”

In his keynote speech, maths and physical education teacher Kurt Söser from HAK Steyr business school in Upper Austria pointed out that “we often forget how fast things change [...]”. Do you know today’s influencers? Can you name your country’s biggest YouTube stars? 250 million people are playing Fortnite, which would make it the fourth largest country in the world. Fortnite is free, but kids spent 2.6 billion dollars in 2018 to equip their avatars in this online game.

Mr Söser further stated: “We have to know the life of our students. We see digital education from our point of view, but we have to rethink.” There’s no distinction anymore. Our world is phygital – which means we should take a step back and not only digitise our existing practices but combine the physical and digital world our pupils live in.

Finally, Mr Söser quoted Jack Ma, co-founder of the Alibaba Group, who said: “If we do not change the way we teach, thirty years from now we will be in trouble.”

Before the end of the first day of the PDW, the networking was kick-started by a trivia quiz organised by Stefan Pletzer, the Head of the Austrian Quizzing Association. Testing their knowledge of biology, geography, pop culture and other fields, the participants got to know each other in mixed teams and had a lot of fun in the competition.



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“Are we preparing today’s students for what awaits them in the future?”

On the second day of the event, Gary Jones from Makeblock Co Ltd. stated in his keynote that “children are the greatest resource of every nation”. But do we prepare them for the future? Do we actually know what awaits them?

“65 per cent of children entering primary school today will work in jobs that don’t yet exist. Only 10 per cent of STEM graduates (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) are in Computer Science, but 67 per cent of all new STEM jobs will be in computing”, Mr Jones continued.

He quoted Plato who already 2000 years ago said “Do not train a child to learn by force or harshness; but direct them to it by what *amuses their minds*, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of *the genius of each*”.

The speed of change is phenomenal. So “help every child thrive! Teach kids how to learn and all will follow”, Jones is convinced. To start, he suggested implementing hands-on learning, because as research shows 24 additional brain activities are working when education incorporates physical applications to support the theory being taught. “Fun brings engagement... and engagement brings learning”, Mr Jones concluded.



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Learn to proGrAME – Learning to Code by Developing Video Games with Unity

Video games are fascinating for teenagers. “Can video game development improve engagement, motivation and learning of students?” Outcomes of the project “Learn to proGrAME” – a cooperation of the University of Vienna and two secondary schools through the national “Sparkling Science” programme of the OeAD were presented by researcher and teacher Oswald Comber. Together with pupils, scientists studied through various classroom activities such as problem solving, video game developing sessions, teamwork and questionnaire reflection their learning of programming. The survey shows that fun during the lessons increased for most of the students. “Video Game Development [...] can be successful with appropriate learning materials, teamwork and support [...], good preparation [...], engaged teachers and sufficient amount of time”, Mr Comber concluded.



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“Digital self-defence skills for teachers and students”

Kari Kivinen from the Lycée franco-finlandais d’Helsinki in Finland focussed in his keynote on Friday on guarding against false online information and presented good practice examples from his country. In Finland, “teachers have the freedom to do the right thing and teach pupils to be critical thinkers”, he started. “Social media is an essential part of modern life and today’s kids don’t get information via newspapers, but from the internet and that’s where they need to get our help”, Mr Kivinen explained and advised to “invite journalists into the classroom to tell students how the information is given”.

It’s essential to guide children – even young children are perfectly able to use a differentiated terminology – through the so-called ‘fake news’ and to further explain to them a) Mis-information: a mistake, which can be corrected; b) Dis-information: false information which is spread to do harm; c) Mal-information: gossip shared, in order to cause harm, e.g. hate speech.

To help orientate, Mr Kivinen presented resources such as the [FactBar EDUCheck and Voter Literacy Handbook](#), published by a Finnish fact-checking service; [EUFACTCHECK](#), a fact-checking project of the European Journalism Training Association and the handbook [Teaching and Learning with Twitter](#) which was developed together with UNESCO to help educators empower youth with the digital skills they need to critically analyse news they engage with online.



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Wrap-up

Having reflected on their experiences of the previous few days in small groups, under guidance of Rute Baptista, the participants agreed that it is vital for teachers to keep up with the new technologies and use them in creative ways in the classroom. Many emphasized the new teaching methods they have learned at the PDW and can implement at home. Finally, there was a consensus that using eTwinning can be valuable in many ways: training in the use of digital media, connecting with and learning from peers, using the professional development opportunities. Through eTwinning, one group concluded, “We have the possibility to improve our digital literacy – because of the safe environment it helps teachers to provide for their students' well-being”.

Photos of the event

[APA photo gallery - Day 1](#)

[APA photo gallery - Day 2](#)

[OeAD photo gallery - Day 3](#)