

Computer teachers's training PE 19, 20

Materialisation of the blended learning program in the prefecture of Cyclades

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TARGETS AND MAIN FRAME OF THE PROGRAMME

The information and knowledge society of which we are members, requires a well-designed educational system which would be able not only to meet the needs and requirements of its time, but also the constantly changing demands of the educational process. We require well prepared teachers but also equipped with skills such that they are able to cope with the difficult task undertaken.

In particular, the information technology course is constantly evolving and changing. The dynamic nature of the course leaves no allegory to it. For the teacher to maintain his/her educational and scientific value, he/she should be aware of new developments in technology in IT too. Training in other issues related to new technologies and changes occurring in the field of computers is marked as essential.

TARGETS AND MAIN FRAME OF THE PROGRAMME

Unfortunately most teachers in the sector have not been trained on pedagogy and didactics of informatics. Thus, they face problems both in communication and contact with students, as well as the teaching practice so that there is no uniformity in the teaching goals of the courses.

For this reason, the Special Application Service Programs CSF of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, proceeded to design and implement a program for IT training for 3,200 teachers throughout Greece, with a duration of 72 hours. The program could be divided into two main sections. The aim of the first section is to update and refresh the knowledge of teachers in technology. The second part relates to modern pedagogical approaches, and the use of ICT and educational software in teaching informatics.

TARGETS AND MAIN FRAME OF THE PROGRAMME

Therefore a single curriculum was designed for 3200 teachers from all over Greece , with proportional coverage of all Directorates of Education in the country and with specific objectives being:

- updating the educators' knowledge on their scientific field and acquaintance with cutting edge technologies
- teaching of IT and pedagogical use of new technologies to substantially upgrade the teaching act
- acquaintance with software that could be used in the classroom and improve the educational process by giving it meaning and substance
- fostering skills and attitudes to teachers so that they themselves will be seeking ways to achieve and then continuously improve their scientific, teaching and professional skills within the context of the " information and knowledge society".

MATERIALIZATION OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE CYCLADES PREFECTURE

The " special " prefecture of Cyclades, was involved in the training program. But only in Syros were suitable trainers found and therefore the ability to implement the program was better established.

Also, it was decided to establish classes in other parts of the prefecture i.e. in other islands, where the training would take place from distance.

MATERIALIZATION OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE CYCLADES PREFECTURE

So in the prefecture of the Cyclades we had two training periods and we created the following groups:

1st period : Introduced two groups in Syros with a total of 20 trainees, where the training took place in person. During the same period we created a group on Naxos with 14 trainees and one in Santorini with 13 trainees where the training took place from a distance.

MATERIALIZATION OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE CYCLADES PREFECTURE

2nd period : During the second period (September-October 2008) we created two distance learning groups, one in Paros with the participation of 11 trainees and one in Tinos with the participation of 14 trainees. These two groups had the following specificity regarding their composition: in the group of Tinos there were 4 participating teachers that worked on the island and in the group of Paros there were 6 participating teachers working on the island . The other trainees in both cases came from the islands of Andros, Syros, Sikinos, Mykonos and Naxos and they did not have to travel to attend the meetings of the program.

MATERIALIZATION OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE CYCLADES PREFECTURE

In all islands beyond Syros, training took place from a distance, with a combination of synchronous and asynchronous communication. In order to implement asynchronous training, a new platform was created at <http://teklearn.cti.gr/nisia>, only for the purpose of training in the Cyclades, on which platform, access was limited to those involved coming from the prefecture.

MATERIALIZATION OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE CYCLADES PREFECTURE

The training material was located in this platform, having been implemented with moodle, which was unified for the whole program. The trainee had access to the lessons of the week and all previous lessons. Educators on the other hand were able to access all the topics that they would teach. They could experiment further, test tools and adapt the platform to their changing needs and requirements.

MATERIALIZATION OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE CYCLADES PREFECTURE

Beyond the asynchronous communication trainees and trainers came in personal contact twice, once at the beginning and in the middle of a program, but were not limited to these contacts. So beyond interpersonal meetings, there were three teleconferences held for each unit, there were problems discussed and the difficulties encountered, and suggestions were made and there were also summaries of subsequent modules presented.

MATERIALIZATION OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE CYCLADES PREFECTURE

According to the e-learning model that was followed and which was considered the most appropriate for the needs of the program there were two trainers for each group. The trainer A was the coordinator of the group and each week there was a trainer B (not always the same) who was a specialist in the current subject and was the trainer of the week. It was an attempt to bring in distance learning to the organizational patterns of adult learning, where instructors ("trainer B") shall have the sole task of education, while the coordinator (in this case: "trainer A") has the task of coordinating the team and solve problems that may arise during the training.

MATERIALIZATION OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE CYCLADES PREFECTURE

The first trainer was the one who came in personal contact with their trainees. Having thus gained some familiarity with them, communication via email or forum went smoothly, thus fostering a positive communication climate. Any query, complaint or problem, was discussed and solved.

MATERIALIZATION OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE CYCLADES PREFECTURE

At the teleconferences held, both trainers attended, with each one of them preserving his/her own role. So the trainer A was responsible for coordinating the process, while trainer B after a brief suggestion was there in order to resolve questions and problems of ' students in the ' virtual classroom.

Beyond teleconferences held with each department individually, there was also an extremely interesting teleconference taking place involving three training sections from three different islands (Syros, Santorini, Naxos).

MATERIALIZATION OF THE PROGRAM WITHIN THE CYCLADES PREFECTURE

The meeting was very successful, although there was not much freedom and room for initiative-taking . In each island there was a coordinator who determined the order of speakers. The order of speaking was given in a specific manner, in a round table fashion at each of the three parties once every time. The quality of picture and sound was quite satisfactory and gradually superseded the stage of the initial embarrassment, the meeting evolved into a very interesting discussion with the active participation of all trainees , as were several rounds of speeches .

EVALUATION

The difficulties they encountered had mainly to do with the large amount of material of the course and that there was no possibility to download and store the material, also very few problems with the platform and connection speed while there were some very few participants who reported that felt alone, that is without help.

Almost all teachers said they communicated by email and the forum, and only decided to contact via the phone. They requested more synchronous meetings, with most of them suggesting for one meeting per week for direct contact, immediate answer to their questions , but do not suggest to have more face to face meetings , due to great communication difficulties in the islands and multi-day journeys. When asked whether they are satisfied with the communication with trainers, opinions are divided

SEMINAR EVALUATION

On the positive side of the course, teachers report direct communication, resolving queries, encouragement from trainers and great experience for trainers, while the negative points included trainers that were not well prepared, not responded promptly to the forum but did not encourage such communication not supported teachers and did not send comments on activities . The large differences in the responses is because each section , three hours long, usually had a different trainer, and there were some who knew the items and some not.

The platform had no particular problems, the training materials were simple and understandable, the activities were good, but they had little to do with teaching courses. The difficulties were mainly the vast amount of material and lack of time.

SEMINAR EVALUATION

We asked for suggestions from teachers on techniques which would improve the consistency of the e-class and suggested encouraging communication, forum usage, use of teleconferences, punctuality from the trainers and assignments that require the cooperation of many teachers. However the vast majority of teachers felt that they belonged to an e-class.

CONCLUSION

No one can argue that distance education cannot replace personal contact and the teacher – pupil relationship. In some cases though, however, as the Cyclades one, where personal contact ranges from difficult to impossible, distance education seems to be the only option. Thus, teachers of small and isolated islands, which in many cases do not have access to many activities and live cut off from the mainland, through this and similar programs can feel equal members of the society, with rights, opportunities for learning and active participation on current developments.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the effort that took place could be regarded as successful, despite the problems presented. So based on the given experience and maintaining the fundamentals of the program stable, we should proceed in the design and implementation of such programs, which will enhance the educational value of teachers in the industry and will ultimately enhance the educational process.