



eLEARNIG INITIATIVE

PRAISE:

Peer Review Network Applying Intelligence to Social Work Education

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Monitoring report

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Executive summary

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PRAISE

Monitoring and Evaluation summary

Evaluation

- PRAISE is fundamentally about building a knowledge network amongst pedagogic partners who are involved in training of social workers, both still in training centres and involved in continuing professional development.

Twin Objective Pillars

- Analysis and sharing of pedagogic practice for improving the experience of social workers with their clients, and to increase the effectiveness of the organization in its training regime;
- Analysis and sharing of technologies which support the training requirements of the social work training organization.

Monitoring and Evaluation Objectives

- Establish a evaluation criteria framework upon which to measure impact of PRAISE;
- Establish an instrument framework with which to conduct measurements;
- Analyze the results of instrument measurements against evaluation framework;
- Provide feedback to project of progress.

Evaluation framework

- What is the perceived value of PRAISE to participating organizations?
- What is the impact of PRAISE pedagogic practices on participating organizations?
- What is the perceived value of PRAISE on knowledge transfer between participating organizations?

- What is the perceived value of PRAISE on knowledge transfer within participating organizations?
- What is the impact of PRAISE on knowledge transfer between participating organizations?
- What is the impact of PRAISE on knowledge transfer within participating organizations?
- What is the impact of the interaction between CABLE and PRAISE, specifically the additional partners found in PRAISE?
- What is the impact on the regional social services stemming from the introduction of new training methods?

Interview Evaluation Framework

- At the end of the meeting, all of the pedagogical partners who were present were interviewed concerning their views.
- This was conducted against a structured framework.

Interview Evaluation Framework

- What does your institution hope to gain from participation in the PRAISE network.
- What part does practice based training have in your institution presently.
- What is your present understanding of a virtuous circle.

Interview Evaluation

- These interviews have been captured by digital systems and deleted after the analysis.
- At the second meeting, pedagogic partners have been interviewed again and this has establish a baseline against which the partners' perspectives and understandings has been monitored through the remainder of the project.

Interview II Evaluation Framework

- What is the relationship between CABLE and PRAISE?
- What is the organizational policy on capturing and sharing case studies between domain experts?
- What is your present understanding of a virtuous circle?

Analysis

The PRAISE project has been monitored by the UHI partner since the inception of the project.

The evaluation framework was constructed upon a number of criteria which reflected the particular goals of the project.

The goals of the project focused upon improvement in quality of the educational provision and impact of courses at the training partners, the establishment of peer support groups for trainers working in the same domain, the production of learning material which reflected best pedagogic practice and innovative reflective practice techniques, and the establishment of communication and group reflective practice methods that were sustainable.

The mechanisms for achieving this included engaging and constructing peer groups amongst expert practitioners which would allow for bidirectional cascading of expertise, both pedagogic and subject domain centric, to all the partners represented in the virtuous circles, at both the regional and trans-national levels.

These factors led to the identification of the particular criteria of monitoring which measured the level of communication both at regional and transnational levels amongst participating organizations.

Also, there was the need to measure the perceived impact of the virtuous circles on participating organizations' process and practice at both levels. In an effort to measure these impacts and levels of communication, themselves a reflection of knowledge sharing embodied by the principles of the project, the monitoring focused upon assessing the change in attitudes to the various pedagogical techniques identified and developed during the project as perceived by various partners.

This measurement took the form of observation, both through personal interaction with other partners and through written documentation and communication, as well as through structured interviews which were to be made longitudinally throughout the duration of the project.

These interviews assessed both the perceptions of the partners' views of the PRAISE methodologies as well as the perceived impact on each representative's organization.

The monitoring process also observed and analysed the progress of the actual developments of the learning materials and techniques exhibited by partners through the project.

Over the course of the first reporting period, all project communications have been monitored and analyzed. The monitoring team has been present at all important transnational meetings and, in addition to independent observation, analyzed meeting progress and difficulties encountered and provided structured feedback to project management on any suggested corrective measures.

The monitoring has also included the important public meetings where PRAISE participants have engaged with relevant groups and actors in several of the regions in an effort to communicate the theoretical and practical aspects of the PRAISE project.

The monitoring team has also conducted several hours of structured interviews with participants, with the interviews recorded on digital video which provides for a timeline view of changing views of the project participants.

This activity will continue for the duration of the project and will provide a sound analytical basis for assessing the progressive impact on organizational process of PRAISE on participating organizational practice.

A number of issues are becoming clear; Importantly, there has been clear evidence of the impact of many of the PRAISE techniques and components on partner thinking.

Examples include the impact of virtuous circles, a dynamic group reflective practice method, on the identification of good practice amongst the project participants, both trainers and social workers participating in the experimental developments.

This has been a challenging and exciting development for many of these participants, which has marked a real sea change from the more traditional, linearly hierarchical educational techniques employed previously.

In addition to the preliminary results which indicate some identification of knowledge amongst regional participants, as well as the same in a much more pronounced fashion at trans-national level, there have also been results which indicate an impact on individuals involved at the domain level where the individuals begin to engage actively in the identification of their own training needs through analysis of colleagues' best practice and directed self-reflection on domain workers' own knowledge and requirements.

The establishment of these VCs in partner regions has been difficult because of the conceptual shift involved in their operation, but many of the respondents have indicated their own excitement in the process once the process has been running for some time. A similar result has been found for the case studies themselves, and all of the process involved in their creation.

The innovative techniques of the project, which represent a shift away from ordinary reporting of activities involved in domain worker activities, has successfully challenged many staff to consider and evaluate their own practice as evidenced in their own work.

There is also evidence that the format envisaged by the partners has allowed for these practices to be more readily identified than in more formal reporting.

A important note is the conceptual complexity expressed by many of the partners in understanding this shift, as it is so far removed from normal practice; while not a negative result, it is important to record that there is a long lead time involved in such profound organizational culture change and an observed danger that the human resource element will be resisted both by management and by participants owing to a lack of capacity in the organization to free up staff sufficiently to benefit from the techniques.

Another area of development has been the transfer of new elearning techniques to several partners.

There has been a long learning curve, but the partners are now engaged fully with the techniques are evidencing high enthusiasm to learn and grow capacity to deploy these techniques in their own organizations.

There is interview and process evidence to indicated that PRAISE is having a radicalizing effect on process in several organizations.

The jump that these techniques present for several partners should not be understated.

Even where some partners have used ICT previously, the lack of effective pedagogic structures has been recognized and a real enthusiasm to apply sound pedagogic planning and design to course construction and choice of technological intervention has surfaced.

Also, the transnational network has evidenced a high level of important theoretical exchange at this level, examining the pedagogic practices and their interaction with the demands of domain workers and their particular training needs.

This has clearly been a difficult but valuable experience for all participating organizations.

Another aspect that has proven beneficial to the partners has been the self-examination of practitioners and domain experts has been the challenging task of explicit codification of concepts involved in the ontological engineering

This has been evidenced both at regional and trans-national levels.

This activity has afforded an important opportunity to participants to question conceptual assumptions in their own work related to the domain and to learn from the different perceptions of colleagues at both levels.

There is evidence of conceptual transmission between participants and organizations owing to this process and this activity should continue to provide important insights for the remainder of the project.

Overall, there is a much evidence to prove that the organizations involved in the project are, for the most part, determined to gain as much benefit from the new techniques and processes as possible for their organizations.

There is an enthusiasm amongst the practitioner partners to improve their training programmes and thereby make their staff more effective in their important roles as social work trainers and social workers.

The radical nature of the pedagogy and associated technology has been a challenge for the partners, as has the radical and often painful process of first, understanding organizational processes, and then re-engineering them to make them better.

Because this process engineering involves so many stakeholders who are by nature resistant to external change, it is a slow and arduous process.

The next reporting period will need to continue the build up of present momentum which is manifesting itself as organizational and conceptual change into the instantiation of experimental educational reform.

Project management has successfully coordinated and motivated the participating organizations in what has been a difficult process.

The majority of training service providers have not only responded to the vision expressed by management, along with a positive engagement to contextualize that vision within their own particular organizational realities, but also have committed themselves to full and earnest implementation of those changes.

There appear to be a small number of large partners who are struggling to find sufficient human resource capacity within their overstretched departments to implement the experiments as fully as they would desire.

What is clear from the representative interviews and feedback from these cases is that, even in these cases, these organizations see the techniques as being

innovative and exciting methods for improving both the training and overall efficiency of their workers and in meeting their objectives; however, they have expressed their frustration at a viscous cycle of limited resource and immediate demands versus strategic planning.

Project management has also successfully managed a large array of partners in keeping to budgets and overall timescales, with the caveats to workplan progression made above concerning the difficulties in bringing all partners up to a similar conceptual understanding of both the innovative methodologies and of their own organizational and procedural realities.

Praise Task Evaluation

The following section reports an evaluation of each of the major Praise tasks. Each task is listed along with a short summative evaluation.

Task 1: Definition of Virtuous Circles [VC].

Actions:

1. Identify the VC domain;
2. Identify the VC actors, including the PRAISE partner;
3. Analyse the possible VC interactions.

Outputs:

1. Praise community document describing the VC model;
2. Description of their own VC implementation from each pedagogical partner.

Evaluation:

Each partner engaged with this activity from the very beginning of the project. The only major difficulty presented with task was the inability of HC [Highland Council] to fulfill the required actions in time to establish a sustainable VC in their own region, specifically their inability to identify enough actors early enough in the project to make further tasks easier to fulfill. The outputs were made effectively by each partner as a complete set of descriptions, including the definition, in the Praise book, *In Praise of Practice: Social work case studies for eLearning*.

Task 2: VC Activation.

Actions:

4. Analyze actual VC interactions;
5. Monitor on local and global level;

Outputs:

3. Description of activation activities and analysis for local and global levels;
4. Monitoring feedback to partners.

Evaluation:

Each partner managed to establish and run an effective VC in their region save for HC, which had difficulties because of staffing and because of changes in management over the course of the project. HC had initially used a social worker to coordinate activities at the council level, but this changed in the midst of the project and an external consultant was used at the later stages of the project. The description of the VC activations was made by each partner and INFOP collected this information via a questionnaire. Furthermore, critical elements were collated into the Praise book. Finally, extensive analysis and consideration was made of these activities at project meetings and Praise public events.

Task 3: VC Experimentation.

Actions:

6. Validation of case studies;
7. Exchange of case studies at local and global level.

Outputs:

5. 10 case studies for each partner;
6. Reports from each partner.

Evaluation:

The VC Experimentation task was effectively undertaken by each partner, although with variable results. SFEP, Bethel and UB had extensive numbers of VC interactions. In the middle ground was INFOP, Romania and UA. HC had the least level of VC experimentation. However, analysis from each partner shows that VCs were recognized as being a very effective instrument for knowledge sharing and from each partner there was positive engagement from staff and positive results. Each partner produced meaningful case studies, and in most cases, exceeded the required ten. HC only managed to produce five during the course of the project. UA collected feedback and analysis regarding each local experimentation and produced a report which detailed the total experience. The activities were also reported and analysed at project meetings and public events. Finally, the book contains critical aspects and analysis of each partner.

Task 4: Formative plan preparation.

Actions:

8. Produce a local formative plan for each partner through case study analysis;
9. Produce collective guidelines.

Outputs:

7. 3 local reports;
8. Guidelines document.

Evaluation:

During the course of the project, local formative plans were produced by each partner. The HC plan was rather weak, in part because of their lack of engagement with the project platform. Part of this difficulty was due to their absence in the associated CABLE project and hence a strong learning curve demanded on their part. Thus, all of their formative plans were based solely on traditional instruments and VCs. All of the plans were reported and collected by Bethel and included in the Praise book and a separate deliverable report. Each partner effected analysis through a standardized format of a structured table. A guidelines document was produced, out of group analysis, by UB. There was also extensive analysis and monitoring of this task at project meeting and public events.

Task 5: Semantic Network Interaction.

Actions:

10. Provide training, expertise and support for elearning and semantic technologies to pedagogical partners;
11. Produce written technical report.

Outputs:

9. Training documentation and workshops;
10. Technical report.

Evaluation:

PdT made effective workshop presentations and short courses for the pedagogical partners at project meetings that greatly increased participant awareness. The technical atmosphere created during the project resulted in sustained impacts on the organizations involved in the project and all are increasing their use of the associated technologies in their own provision. The technical report's critical aspects were also distilled into the book. PdT acted as representatives of the collective technical and scientific expertise found within the companion CABLE project. There was also extensive analysis and monitoring of this task at project meeting and public events.

Task 6: Diffusion or Dissemination.

Actions:

12. Disseminate Praise methodologies at local VCs and other networks;
13. Disseminate Praise methodologies through European network, publications and public meetings.

Outputs:

- 11.5 public events;
12. Praise book.

Evaluation:

This task was a key one for Praise. All of the partners engaged with the activity in an effective and professional manner. There is ample evidence that at local levels the Praise profile has been raised significantly and that there is growing interest from both the participating institutions as well as from external observing organizations. The Praise book is well written and professionally produced. It is an effective dissemination instrument which should be useful to other practitioners, strategists and organizations looking at modernizing and making more effective their own training programmes. All the partners contributed extensively to the book's contents.

Task 7: Monitoring and Management.

Actions:

14. Monitor and provide feedback to the project;
15. Produce final evaluation.
16. Provide project activities coordination service, including administrative, financial and technical services;
17. Coordinate with the European Commission.

Outputs:

13. Monitoring Plan;
14. Interviews;
15. Monitoring report;
16. Meeting organization;
17. Public event coordination;
18. Management reports.

Evaluation:

Monitoring took place throughout the project in a functional, immediate, pragmatic fashion. Each project meeting had a dedicated slot for monitoring feedback and group quality assurance. This was done in order to provide formal but effective analysis to the project participants as well as management. The coordinators worked closely with the monitoring group for the entirety of the project. Interviews were conducted at project meetings in order to provide longitudinal samples of participants' views and directions. Where it was deemed necessary by the monitoring and management group, direct intervention was taken to correct project mishaps, e.g., a visit was arranged with HC senior management to present HC with a choice of leaving the project or correcting its insufficient engagement therewith. Another example includes the coordination of additional visits to partners to provide additional formative support in order to meet project goals. The management and monitoring group made considerable efforts towards ensuring that all participants shared the European perspective which was fundamental to the project's success. The management services were provided throughout the project and included dedicated slots to partners at project meetings for financial and administrative controls. Coordination and monitoring activities occurred between meetings with a dedicated website, mailing lists, video conferences, audio conferences and site visits. Management also effectively represented the project at various transnational events, including EC sponsored activities.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Description</i>