



eLEARNIG INITIATIVE

PRAISE Project

Peer Review Network Applying Intelligence to Social Work Education

Key points of small group discussion in Inverness, June 2005

Present: Liz, Catarina, Vania, Waltraud, Jürgen, Terry, Maureen, Hanna Pórey, and Sean (intermittently)

Outcomes/impacts/achievements

1. Narrative method stimulated both teacher and practitioner interest. Practitioners are particularly motivated by it.
2. Using technology has been a big challenge for some but has also stimulated interest and motivation, especially in teachers and students. Some practitioners are not so interested in computer supported teaching and learning.
3. Students engaged enthusiastically and critically with the material.
4. Barcelona achieved a multi-disciplinary virtuous circle which they felt was very important because it meant that the narratives were analysed from different theoretical and practical perspectives thus strengthening the quality of the case study and supporting material for the formative module.
5. Bethel experimented with three different virtuous circles and their local experience chapter provides very useful information on the difficulties and what worked and what didn't work so well. The circle that worked best and was more closely embedded with the core business of the school
6. The project teams in Barcelona and Bethel divided tasks based on existing skills and experience. This worked well and there was some transfer of skill across team members, and this could be formalized.
7. Students enjoyed the courses.
8. The platform was also used for module evaluation by the students.
9. In Barcelona the students on the module divided into two groups: one group met each other in other modules and the other group had no face to face contact during the online phase. The latter group therefore did all their communicating using the platform and developed their skills and enjoyed it. For the first group, online communication was artificial and they were therefore not so motivated to use it and develop their skills.
10. The students in both countries were interested in the case studies from countries other than their own (this was a formal objective of the Barcelona module). Some students in Barcelona chose to work with one of the French case studies. Their analysis centred on the case and did not extend to a comparative analysis. Students in Bethel were also very interested in other cases, mainly with a view to working or placement in another country in the future. This interest was developed by studying the case studies translated into English in their English module.
11. Barcelona now in a good position to bring in other institutions to sustain and extend the work.

Challenges

1. There are three big skill areas which had to be developed in order to progress the work of the project: vc creation, facilitation and support: narrative and case study methods; design and delivery of modules supported by new technology; distance teaching (not mandatory).
2. Setting up the vc's takes a lot of time and involves many administrative and organizational problems. In some countries, whilst there may be formal agreement for the work to be done, there is no real organizational support and the work remains peripheral. Project money helps but is not extendable or sustainable.
3. Making progress in the PRAISE project team has been much slower than anticipated. It has taken time to understand, experiment, and gain experience with the methodology. Pedagogical partners did not make use of the opportunity to meet as a working group outside of the project meetings.

General notes

1. Barcelona students were not in the vc so the module was not developed based on their formative needs.
2. Bethel students were in the vc so module developed to meet their formative needs

Notes for book

1. The introduction should include our working definition of elearning i.e. all technology supported learning/blended learning
2. Organisational buy-in – well known problem; Sean has written some papers and can cite these in the conclusion.

What we could have done better:

1. Need to be more aware of what the other partners are doing. Sessions like this earlier on.
2. European/international dimension needs further work

Increase of teacher interest in case based learning supported by technology, narrative transmission. This interest has cascaded beyond the original group associated with the project.

Resulted in the use of the CSDB as a pedagogical resource.

Design training programmes by the ICE for a wider set of teachers within the faculty in the use of the CSDB.

As a result, INFOP students has integrated directly into their everyday training those methodological components derived in the PRAISE project. Specifically, the PRAISE methodological and pedagogical framework has become the framework for training activities within normal practice. Another linked result is the added value to the self directed group learning owing to the application of the PRAISE methodology.

The extension of a training network. Addition training for the training network for the management, the monitoring and the development of the project., which is creating further training for teachers who are members of the network. These members then participate fully in the network and thus self-organize the PRAISE project. In addition, these teachers are now monitoring the immediate and future experience of the project.

Make permanent the self directed training valourised by elearning within the French course DEFA.

The systematic incorporation of the PRAISE methodology into the normal INFOP framework has resulted in large structural changes. These include an increase in numbers of training staff in the organization. However, to remain within a fixed budget, the organization reshuffled the group timetable and the distribution of the staff workload, displacing other tasks onto administrative staff, to allow for more training opportunities.

A closer working relationship between researchers and practitioners has been achieved. The interest of the virtuous circle members to participate in active research has been increased. These members are committed to continue the project methodology because of the benefits which they accrue through participation. To support this desire, UB is seeking funding opportunities in the future as a matter of strategic importance.

INFOP determined that there was an acquisition of international practices, either in terms of professional practice or in terms of ODL techniques, in combination with technological skills acquisition. The result was the creation of a research group to build new modules to support ODL; these modules are both designed for students and trainers. This is creating new international projects. Sustainability is addressed by there being more choice available in training opportunities within an internal collaboration but the strategic choice here is to have an international collaborative partnership. Also, the new training courses offered involve new professional categories.

Increase in learner motivation to work in a collaborative fashion, to analyse cases and seek solutions to complex problems.

Resulted in more effective learning by students on the course, evidenced by collaborative learning and self reports and demonstrated ability to put in practice their skills. There was increased motivation amongst individuals to collaborate on case study collection both inside and outwith the

institution. There is an ever increasing interest in participating in the virtuous circles by members of other disciplines within local authority, but who interact in common problem domains.

Sustainability will result from attempts to more systematically integrate these methods into full course provision and to repeat successful courses. Presently, there is a strong community of practice effect occurring where individuals are propagating news of the new methodology amongst different discipline practitioners. Training management is seeking ways to incorporate the methodologies into normal practice where appropriate.

Growing interest amongst the local students in European issues in social work and in language as a means of international communication. As a result, English language teaching starts using case studies and starts using practical work. At a strategic level, Bethel will seek regular interaction with other European partners at both the teacher and student levels.

A big organizational change and a great investment in distance learning technologies and competence sharing, as well as the development and implementation of new methodologies. The main outcome is the structuring of distance and open education curricula. Another result is the acquisition of skills and competencies in using ODL for building educational modules. The reduction of the costs associated with self learning for adult students to become more flexible in space and time, provide just-in-time education, and facilitate a circulation of experience. Increase in social worker satisfaction owing to less time wasted in travelling for training events and opportunities, allowing for more involvement in real case work. and the increase in the effectiveness and efficiency of. Comune di Torino has now created a new, permanent unit inside the institution which offer distance education programmes for staff. New investment has been made from core budget for new technology deployment to support these new programmes. A new accreditation from the local educational authority has been created for the institutional ODL training programmes and the ODL curriculum is now part of the executive plan of the CdIT.

UA has a continuing mission to develop a full social work education programme despite difficult institutional and funding conditions. A basis has been achieved whereby social workers and students can participate with future UA provision from across the country, including designing and developing any such provision. There has been a great deal of enthusiasm and interest in the PRAISE methodologies as a means of reflection and CPD. The PRAISE project has greatly increased the capacity and quality of course design and development for the planned social work programme. Senior management in social services of collaborating institutions have demonstrated interest in the opportunity to co-develop training programmes which will increase the effectiveness of graduates and make them more able to bring problem based methods to bear rather than a perhaps traditional over emphasis on theoretical aspects.

There is a tension in HEIs whereby they seek to incorporate the PRAISE methodologies into provision, but the radical nature of the methodologies is resisted by traditional expectations from client organizations. In other organizations, the situation was reversed, here they were more au fait with the methodologies but were inexperienced in modern elearning techniques. However, once the technical aspects of elearning were understood, both clients and staff were eager for their adoption. This confirms and validates the use of elearning as an effective and efficient tool in continual professional development.