

Public Consultation School for the 21st Century

Student group: *Giulia Coppetti, Giulia Ciriello, Federico Scamperle, Robin Roy Fonda, Michele Salzano*

Institution: *Liceo Scientifico Statale "Galileo Galilei", Trieste, Italy*

1. *How can school be organized in such a way as to provide all students with the full range of key competences?*

In our opinion to reach the aims from the European Framework of Key Competences and in particular the so called 'transversal' abilities as learning to learn and the ability to think laterally teaching methods should be deeply improved.

In particular the mnemonic and repetitive assimilation of contents needs to be drastically limited. Although since their first approach to school, pupils should be driven in learning in a inductive way: getting the fundamental notions from

- the reasoning derived from a more maieutic approach to teaching,
- the direct experience derived from observation and valuation of phenomena and experiments.

We are deeply convinced that theory is really important in learning and also conscious that the simple memorisation and repetition of contents aren't the right answer to the rapid change in socio-economic conditions of the contemporary society.

Our proposal should be complemented with

- the organisation of laboratories in cooperation with the local scientific (but not only) agencies,
- an implementation of connection between school seen as 'teaching place' and the outside world as a 'learning place'
- the updating of teaching methods for 'old' teachers, and a completely new formulation of methods for the new generation of teachers.

All this should be done in order to open the pupils' mind and to have a more logical-thoughtful approach to the society and to the problems that new generation will surely face in it.

2. *How can school equip young people with the competences and motivation to make learning a lifelong activity?*

Also in this case the traditional way of teaching should be implemented with new methods.

Adults in school should have a role no longer only as a means of information, instruction and notion, but as a tutor, as a guide(programming, discussing, helping...) that teaches the students how to find the knowledge, how to learn in an autonomous way and to love the simple pleasure of knowledge.

In order to make learning a life-long activity, the primary necessity is to create a new school in which the fundamental teaching is that learning and the knowledge shouldn't be lived as impositions (as many students see it nowadays) but, as future citizens, a right and, somehow , a duty for the society that students will face at the end of their study.

Teaching should be more focused on the benefits and the utility school-knowledge has in the outside world and on the practical use of it we can have in our ordinary life.

Moreover to stimulate and motivate pupils in learning, we think it is necessary to make them active participant in lessons. This can be obtained through

- the introduction of group-work classes, maybe concerning different knowledge areas in order to stimulate everyone in taking part
- a deeper relation between school and the 'external' world (lessons could be more interesting if made in direct contact with the most important social, political, cultural and economical challenges).

3. *How can school system contribute to supporting long-term sustainable economic growth in Europe?*

We think that at school teachers should teach students to use the key and indispensable knowledge in order to find a job.

Today the rapid technological progress requires constantly updated skills and the new way of organising companies requires social competences. So teachers must explain to young people the ability to think laterally (to stimulate a different approach to the situations) and the ability to explain your point of view with other people who have a different idea and the capacity to convince them. About that, teachers should modify the process of learning. They have to promote many discussions in the class and also between different classes in order to stimulate young people to speak and approach with other people. Essentially classes should be more interactive. They also make practical lessons so that students can apply their theoretical knowledge.

4. *How can school system best respond to the need to promote equity, to respond to cultural diversity and to reduce early school leaving?*

Considering that inequalities in education and training have huge hidden costs (such as discrimination, emargination, social and economical problems, etc.) and this brings to the creation of barriers in the development of the society, school system should adopt strategies at all levels and in all forms of education to avoid discrimination, disparities and the consequent early school leaving. So we suggest models of multilingual classes in order to favour greater social cohesion and intercultural dialogue. Furthermore it is important to introduce activities that foresee the discover and the evaluation of different culture approaches to the same problem or situation, making pupils understand that diversity can be a wealth for the society and that the thing we call difference is just another way to approach to life and it is due to a historical and cultural development lasted many years. Another issue consists in promoting more interactive and cooperative lessons aimed at giving everyone the same possibility to express its own idea and opinion to emphasise and evaluate each cultural diversities. During these lessons it is important to debate constructively and spontaneously in order to promote moments of cultural exchanges and growth (in social, emotional, behavioural and academic terms) in full respect of different cultures and traditions.

Moments of cultural exchanges should be done also in extra-school time (socializing activities, sport activities, debates, conferences, seminars, work-shop) in order to promote further opportunities for a better integration between students.

Moreover we urge the presence in each school of native speaker tutors to help foreign students to improve their competences through integrated learning approaches of subject specific contents and native language. We also propose supplementary courses for foreign students to support their linguistic necessities but also to favour their integration and relations with other people. However, of course, inclusion largely depends on teachers' attitudes towards pupils with special needs, on their view on differences in classrooms and their willingness to deal with those differences effectively. Generally, the attitude of teachers represents a decisive factor in making schools more inclusive. Moreover pupils with special needs may require more instruction time or other learning methods

and professional knowledge. In that case, teachers will feel the need for more time, materials and knowledge.

Furthermore, deeply convinced that the improvement of the quality and attractiveness of education and training continues to be a key challenge for the future, we encourage more interactive classes and task-oriented teaching, favouring the use of information and communications technologies, as a collaborative construction of knowledge and development of skills.

We think essential all these actions to promote that propitious and favourable European environment in order to enable all the students to use the basic knowledge.

5. If schools are to respond to each pupil's individual learning needs, what can be done as regards curricula, school organization and the roles of teachers?

In our opinion it is essential to improve the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems and provide access to the information society for teachers and students by giving them an insight into the use of these new tools and into training in the subject. For these reasons, we support types of classrooms which include cooperative teaching and learning, collaborative problem solving, heterogeneous grouping and all the activities that can promote more interactive lessons.

Teachers need support from, and to be able to co-operate with, a range of colleagues within the school and professionals outside the school. It's important, in this way, group-work and debates on the most important challenges of the society in order to favour the sensibilization of students and their active participation in social and political dimension. In fact, co-operative learning is effective in cognitive areas of pupils' learning and development. Pupils who help each other, especially within a system of flexible and well-considered pupil grouping, profit from learning together. Moreover it's necessary a development of the measures in the fields of research, experimentation, evaluation and use of new information and communication technologies in the education and training systems. For these reasons, we suggest to implement, if necessary, infrastructures to enable progressive access to high-quality on-line multimedia materials, software and services, deeply convinced that technologies have an enormous potential to support collaborative learning and development of skills and knowledge. Then, we call to step up initial and continuing training for teachers and training staff in handling educational software and on-line multimedia services. Finally, in our opinion, we emphasise the importance of a standardization of curricula at an European level, supporting and promoting a better competition between European students. In this way, it is necessary the implementation of learning of European languages: it should be essential the knowledge of two European languages at least (in addition to mother tongue).

6. How can school communities help to prepare young people to be responsible citizens, in line with fundamental values such as peace and tolerance of diversity?

In our opinion it is a good way to prepare young people to live in the European Union as active citizens through the implementation of projects aimed at making understand to pupils the importance of active citizenship. These projects may be activities during which students debate about European issues for example the European Youth Parliament. It should be spread across all schools for this impact on the students. This institution opens the mind of young people and makes them understand what working in touch with European institution means. Other important ways to teach students how to behave in the new knowledge's society consist in the participation to conferences in which are presented European's tasks which bring the students in a wider European dimension.

Students can approach the world of the values of peace and tolerance of diversity by participating to European campus in which people of different countries discuss and express their ideas in a different environment which is not the traditional school.

Moreover we consider very important that initiatives have to be taken from the very beginning of the school. In order to achieve those objectives actions should be taken in each member state so that people in Europe will have a common vision of the world and will promote the same values and principles.

7. How can school staff be trained and supported to meet the challenges they face?

The contribution of teachers is key to success of every school system: in fact teachers have to complement the key role of parents and support young people to become autonomous life-long learners and help students to develop his talent. So I think that teachers should have the possibility to attend many up-date courses in order to enlarge their knowledge and their competences above all on the new world challenges.

Teachers should also have the possibility to learn also a foreign European language seeing that they work with more heterogeneous group of students than before because people come from different background.

Moreover teachers can require to use the opportunities offered by new technologies.

Then in order to resolve the problem of the withdrawal of teachers from their profession I believe essential an implementation of salary and support better conditions in work. For example, to make easier the teaching, the classes should be less numerous.

8. How can school communities best receive the leadership and motivation they need to succeed? How can they be empowered to develop in response to changing needs and demands?

Nowadays, in our society, the demands and the needs changes continuously and sometimes school's leaders are too much linked and constrained by the central decision to respond with the adequate motivation they need to succeed. However we don't support a completely independent school from the ministries of education (in particular concerning the educational policy) but in some cases the leadership of the school could take in account the social or/and economical backgrounds of their students, the collaboration with local administration and authorities to develop their own ideas and alternative programmes. This should be done in order to evaluate every school communities' different approach to society and to make easier every changing school needs to respond better to our society challenges.

Moreover we strongly support a creation of a web-system at national and international level to permit the collaboration between school communities and exchanging of programmes and ideas in order to give a more qualified preparation to students that are going to face the changing world and society.