3 Case study DE2

Name of the Project: INTERTool

Introduction

INTERTool., a 3 year project funded by the European Commission during 2007 and 2010 in the framework of the GRUNDTVIG programme.

The project consists of a partnership of 6 partners from DE, AT, RO, FI, UK and IT with long term experiences with transnational projects and networks.

INTERTool aimed at providing European project managers and teams in adult education with the basic specific intercultural competencies necessary for successful transnational cooperation in the framework of European projects, with a "strong focus on the virtual dimension".

In the project lifetime the partners developed, tested and disseminated virtual (web-based), paper based and face-to-face learning and training tools to contribute to a systematic approach for "Intercultural Management in European projects".

Setting

INTERTool and the developed tools and methodologies aimed to contribute to:

Reconciling different communication and working styles and values brought into European projects

- Facilitating an effective type of moderation to solve problems during the project process taking into regard the emotional aspects of intercultural communication
- Organising intercultural communication in virtual environments
- Facilitating, mostly by virtual means, an efficient and effective intercultural team-building process
- Securing equality in the partnership caused by differences especially in the field of language competencies and cultural values

In the course of the project a pilot course was carried out and the learning outcomes of one person were evaluated with the help of the LEVEL5 system in 2009.

Project Activities

The vast majority of EU-funded projects mainly concentrate on fulfilling their assigned "hard" objectives and deliverables and rather neglect the meta-objective "European collaboration". However, collaborative European learning bears a tremendous potential since project actors are multipliers of the idea of European integration.

In contrast to collaborations on the national level these transnational and intercultural teams require higher efforts in regard to the diversity of the team members. The INTERTool management approach for European projects shall enable project communities to monitor and improve their collaborative, intercultural procedures by applying tailor-made diversity management techniques.

Thus INTERTool addresses a large variety of different European stakeholders and LLP-programmes: project and network coordinators and partners as well as participants of various mobility actions.

The INTERTool-Training Course

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The content blocks of the training course reflect the main elements of the INTERTool concept.

The objectives of the training course are[1]:

1. Awareness creation of the intercultural aspects that play an important role in the interactions among representatives of different cultures.
2. Utilisation of the Virtual Intercultural Team Tool for the European projects they are and will be involved in.
3. Setting up a personal development plan as members of future intercultural teams.

Programme (20 -25 April 2009)

April 20th	April 21st	April 22nd	April 23rd	April 24th	April 25th
Arrival of participants	Culture and cultural dimensions Team development	Stereotyping and intercultural competencies	Kick off process	Monitoring tool process	Departures
,Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	
Get to know each other Introductions	Leadership	Intercultural communication Virtual communication	Padova rally	Development plan Follow up Evaluation	
Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	
Free/cultural programme	Free/cultural programme	Free/cultural programme	Free	Free/cultural programme	

Table 4: Programme of the Padova Course, 2009

5 Level 5 Evaluation Scheme Applied to the Project

Since competence development is a complementary issue that has not (yet) been tackled in the framework of INTERTool both projects fit very well together and the developed methodology for evidencing the competence development was applied in the Padova training.

For this purpose a self-evaluation of a participant (a member of the blinc cooperative using a learning diary) and the external evaluation (observation) was carried out.

Methodology:

Prior to the course the evidencing patterns were developed as first drafts by the learner (as course participant and self-evaluator) and the "external" evaluator in order to set up a common reference system. This was done on the basis of a draft project description and a collection of relevant learning topics from the inventory.

The topics very discussed and it was agreed that they should all be grouped in one overarching topic titled "Diversity management" including the aspired competences in relation to the other topics.

As next step a 3-dimensional system was set up in order set up a specific reference system for the cognitive, activity related and affective competence development in relation to the topic "diversity management".

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[1] taken from the preparatory notes to the course

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1	2	4
Grade/ Level	**Corresponding Level Titles**	**Individual description/ explanatory statement/Indictors**
5	Intuitive Acting	Applying the knowledge about other cultural groups in order to value, respect and support cultural diversity in the project group = Managing and behaving in the group under conscious consideration of DM.
4	Implicit understanding	Having a deep knowledge about other cultures. Understanding how cultural aspects can influence communication in international projects and how to react on that with the help of the INTERTool approach.
3	Distant understanding	Understanding certain connections to intercultural management in regard to different cultural groups (e.g. chronometric, leadership, communication preferences)
2	Know how	Having a basic knowledge and a basic understanding about different preferences of different cultural groups
1	Know-that	Knowing that there are other cultural backgrounds

Table 5: Cognitive Dimension: Learners knowledge and skills concerning Diversity Management

1	2	4
Grade/ Level	**Corresponding Level Titles**	**Individual description/ explanatory statement**
5	Developing/ constructing	Being able to develop own strategies for diversity management (here: setting up strategies in own projects supported by the INTERTool procedure and approach). Assigning adequate roles to team members?
4	Discovering/acting independently	Being able to *transfer* strategies for diversity management to the own context (here to apply them in the own intercultural work group)
3	Deciding/selecting	Being able to apply basic strategies for diversity management (e.g. communication principles (active listening)
2	Application, Imitation	Accepting diversity like other group members do. Behaving in a conscious way in regard to the diversity of the other team members
1	Perception	See that there are different groups without drawing conclusions

Table 6: Activity dimension: learners' activity potential concerning Diversity Management

1	2	4
Grade/ Level	**Corresponding Level Titles**	**Individual description/ explanatory statement**
5	Regulating (**with**) others	Being able to inspire others to respect and to appreciate the diversity in the team. Managing diversity in regard to respecting feelings and different needs and preferences.
4	Affective self-regulation	To value other participants' cultures and behaviours although they seem strange to oneself and may even block the smooth proceeding of the project. Trying to see potential advantages from the divers situation in the work group.
3	Empathy	Respect and value members from other cultural groups. To question the own stereotypes. To try to see and certain project issues through the eyes of other team members (here work-group members)
2	Perspective taking	Curiosity towards cultural diversity and a respective management approach
1	Self centred	Being rather indifferent towards other cultural groups; here: entirely concentrating on the own "cultural view" on project issues

Table 7: Affective Dimension: learners' affective competences concerning Diversity Management

The idea of the informal learning assessment system (IAS) is to establish the competence levels in a realistic, contextualised way. In the case of INTERTool this grid referred to a participant's group that was more or less known through the preliminary questionnaires.
It is not a general competence evaluation grid for covering all potential stages from "ignorant to expert". Stage 1 for example is not displaying the knowledge, activity and affective

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condition of an "intercultural ignorant" and stage 5, for instance, does not represent an ideal, well trained and very experienced intercultural team manager.

It was tailor made for a prototypical audience of EU-project managers and team members.

Following action research principles the grid on hand was specified and modified in the evaluation process since new findings and find tuned descriptions were included at several stages.

The reference system was set up by the external evaluator and the participant in a discussion and modification process. However if this instruments should be further applied it could be considered to separate the management from the diversity topic and to apply 2 grids. However this would need more elaborated impact assessment in a further developed project (see also chapter 6: perspectives).

The evaluation was carried out at the beginning of the training and at the end at day 5. It shall give an idea about the potential of the learning event and the development of the learner in the rather informal learning situation.

The following tables display the competence development of one participant in the very learning situation.

As stated above the evaluation was carried out in a double internal and external way.

The original state of knowledge about the issue was detected by an introductory interview prior to the course combined with the results from a preliminary self-reflection.

The second evaluation was based on the results from the learning diary (internal) and observations and a final interview (external). The mix of methodology and the internal and external evaluation was applied to keep up with basic scientific quality criteria (objectivity and reliability).

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Results: Project Impact

1 Grade/Level	2 Level Titles	4 Individual description/ explanatory statement	5 Time 1	6 Time 2	7 Reasons, explanations, indicators for your rating
5	Intuitive Acting	Applying the knowledge about other cultural groups in order to value, respect and support cultural diversity in the project group = Managing and behaving in the group under conscious consideration of DM.[2]			
4	Implicit under-standing	Having a deep knowledge about other cultures. Understanding how cultural aspects can influence communication in international projects and how to react on that with the help of the INTERTool approach.[3]		x	In her case she stated to be interested in leadership. She received distinct information on leadership in intercultural teams. Other theoretical input just reinforced issues that she learnt in her studies.
3	Distant under-standing	Understanding certain connections to intercultural management in regard to different cultural groups (e.g. chronometric, leadership, communication preferences)[4]	x		She is aware that diversity in teams is influencing the communication and management in intercultural teams.
2	Know how	Having a basic knowledge and a basic understanding about different preferences of different cultural groups			
1	Know-that	Knowing that there are other cultural backgrounds			

Table 7: Learners' cognitive competences development at evaluation times 1 (marked in grey) and 2

The learner had a relatively profound pre-knowledge on intercultural issues since it was part of her academic studies and because other participation in various European projects. Applied in our reference system this stage met the 3rd plateau (distant understanding) because she was well aware of the influences of diversity on management in European teams. This already went beyond a basic and rather theoretical knowledge about diversity because she was easily able to draw conclusions from different case studies presented both in the GD and in the training.

After the course the rather theoretical knowledge was reinforced both through other, more profound and practical oriented input (GD, especially TCI and Intercultural Teams in Practice parts) as well as through the first half of the course that not only repeated theory but offered transfer in simulation games and group exercises.

The rating was fixed at the end of the fifth training day.

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[2] Indicators for stage 5: Application of the INTERTool system in own projects. Managing the group according to diversity aspects, Identifying strengths and weaknesses of certain cultural preferences and assigning tasks accordingly. Being able to balance contradicting diversity issues (e.g. culture vs. gender)

[3] Indicators for stage 4: Applying certain theory approaches, such as TCI or action theory in order to solve certain problems or set cases in the learning group. Applying different learning and working styles. Being able to identify and cluster certain cultural preferences of group mates.

[4] Indicators for stage 3: drawing conclusions from case studies, theoretical transfer of knowledge in theoretical cases, understanding different behaviours in unknown situations (simulation games). Understanding cultural dimensions in a theoretical way. (This level is reached when the GD is fully understood)

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1	2	4	5	6	7
Grade/ Level	**Level Titles**	**Individual description/ explanatory statement**	**Time 1**	**Time 2**	**Reasons, explanations, indicators for your rating**
5	Developing/ constructing	Being able to develop own strategies for diversity management (here: setting up strategies in own projects supported by the INTERTool procedure and approach). Assigning adequate roles to team members?			
4	Discovering/acting independently	Being able to *transfer* strategies for diversity management to the own context (here to apply them in the own intercultural work group)[5]		x	As we realized in practical team examples she applied several methods and strategies of team building, IC and leadership in her team. Taking over certain roles in the team according to her skills and background
3	Deciding/ selecting	Being able to apply basic strategies for diversity management and conscious team work (e.g. communication principles (active listening) [6]	x		Applying diversity "management" only intuitively. Due to the lack of a system she just deals with diversity in a spontaneous way. This may also be level 3 since she already applied active listening technigues
2	Appli-cation, Imitation	Accepting diversity like other group members do. Behaving in a conscious way in regard to the diversity of the other team members[7]			
1	Percep-tion	See that there are different cultural groups without drawing any conclusion			

Table 8: Learners' activity related competences development at times 1 (marked in grey) and 2

The evaluation was carried out mainly through observation (external) and through the learning diary.

Initially, she acted with their team mates in a rather intuitive way. This is not much of a surprise since in initial group phases one has to get familiar with the situation and won't be able to consciously reflect on diversity. However she acted carefully and was trying to accept the others and not to offend anybody. She dealt with the diversity in the team in a spontaneous way. Due to her professional background and experience she applied active listening techniques and sometimes even acted in a rather "didactic" way (asking leading questions). During the first day she consciously watched their team mates and detected intercultural specifications.

At the end of the course she was more active, moved in the group with more self esteem and was also aware that she could play certain roles in the team(s).

What seems to be a simple observation can certainly be fed back to the course developers. Especially the group work phases are evident to create a (still) simulated intercultural team situation that each learner has to cope with. She rather consciously applied intercultural communication methods and contributing with her specific skills and abilities when playing

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[5] Indicators stage 4: Assigning tasks according to skills and preferences of team members (either as manager or active part of the group). Playing a certain role in the intercultural team. Considering diversity aspects when team building and performing

[6] Indicators stage 3: Watching other team members' behaviour in collaboration and in discussions. Bringing in own positions and opinions. Contributing with own creativity.

[7] Indicators stage 2: collaborating with others in a result oriented way. The result is more important than the own idea. Collaborating when asked to by the trainers and in a "minimum" way – fulfilling the tasks of the trainers

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certain roles in group tasks and performances. She performed rather assertive in her working group without dominating.

1	2	4	5	6	7
Grade/ Level	Corresponding Level Titles	Individual description/ explanatory statement	Rating 1	Rating 2	Remarks, explanations, reasons for your rating
5	Regulating (**with) others**	Being able to inspire others to respect and to appreciate the diversity in the team. Managing diversity in regard to respecting feelings and different needs and preferences.[8]			
4	Affective self-regulation	To value other participants' cultures and behaviours although they seem strange to oneself and may even block the smooth proceeding of the project.[9].			She remained calm though for her the development processes in her team were too slow. She respected the pace of the others to contribute at the right moment. She accepted other opinions for the sake of the group and was open to change views.
3	Empathy	Respect and value members from other cultural groups. To question the own stereotypes.[10]			
2	Perspective taking	Curiosity towards cultural diversity and a respective management approach[11].			Curious to meet people from other countries in a learning situation. Expecting a tool and an approach to manage diversity
1	Self centred	Being rather indifferent towards other cultural groups[12]			

Table 9: Learners' affective competences development at evaluation times 1 (marked in grey) and 2

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[8] Indicator stage 5: Moderating and mediating conflicts for the sake of the group
[9] Indicator stage 4: Trying to see potential advantages from the divers backgrounds and preferences in the work group and support grouping of all members in a fair and supportive position, evtl. moderation
[10] Indicator stage 3: To try to see and certain project issues through the eyes of other team members (here work-group members) and to argue from their position, support others
[11] Indicator stage 2: Interest for other opinions, stories, backgrounds, talks not only with own peers but also with members from very different cultures (e.g. East-West, Mediterranean – Northern countries)
[12] Indicator stage 1: here: entirely concentrating on the own "cultural view" on project issues, just interacting with own culture

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Discussion & Perspectives

Conclusion
Impact of the INTERTool course
Developments of the learner's competences during the training were obvious on all 3 levels. Though having profound pre-knowledge and also very practical experiences with intercultural and diverse groups she not only gathered additional background knowledge but got also enough space and opportunities to practice, to test and to develop these skills. The intercultural cooperation in small teams was certainly a challenge but after 5 days of intensive training one could clearly state that there were most positive developments on the affective level.
The training and the concept was very successful from the competence point of view – one can state that it has a big impact on the participants.
Though only the competence development of one participant was assessed and evaluated, there is much evidence that most of the other 12 participants also "developed" in the course of the training.
The theoretical parts of the course were well developed and it is certainly an art to deal with all theory in regard to intercultural issues within 2 days in such a comprehensive and very practical way.
Talking about "practice": The practicability is certainly one of the biggest points in the course since it helped the participants to stay in an active condition and also create their own teams to exercise the learnt theory.
As said above the parallel team work is evident to reflect upon oneself and to deal with the affective side of leaning; to watch oneself in new team situations with unknown tasks exploring and feeling the skills, expertise, the creativity and also the different working styles of the team members.
Impact of the LEVEL5 evaluation
It is certainly a merit of the evaluation system that it makes learning outcomes and learning processes visible. Instead of just "controlling" what a person knows, which skills and competences are possessed LEVEL5 goes deeper and feeds back to the learning process. It gives value to the learning – which is the core element of an evaluation.
One of the strengths of the system is certainly the flexibility of the approach – one can compile a set of topics or select just one topic or create a new one. This is of course the first step to approach a "learning outcome" in an informal or rather non-formal context. The aspired learning outcome has to be seen in the context of the learning event and has to take in regard the context of the individual learner. All this is possible with LEVEL5.
In the end the results could be fed into the software and a complete documentation could be established. For the learner the REVEAL certificate was of great importance – for the INTERTool project the REVEAL project validation. For the trainers the reflection on competence development was the initial step to modify certain strands of the course and to take on board the developments of the individual learners in the course delivery.

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