DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 412 762   FL 024 855

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TITLE   Using IT To Run IT Projects.
PUB DATE   1994-00-00
NOTE   9p.; Paper presented at Eurocall (1994).
PUB TYPE   Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   Area Studies; *Computer Assisted Instruction; Computer
                Software Development; Courseware; *Distance Education;
                *Educational Technology; *Electronic Mail; Elementary
                Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Information
                Technology; Institutional Cooperation; International
                Organizations; International Programs; Modern Languages;
                Second Language Learning
IDENTIFIERS   Council of Europe (France); Ireland

ABSTRACT
                European education projects in which exploitation of
Information Technology has been a means as well as a goal are described. (1)
The Council of Europe has begun a series of workshops, number 7 of which was
on using information and communication technologies in modern language
teaching and learning in Europe. Themes for further development included:
interactive multimedia in language instruction; databases and courseware;
telematics; and teacher training. (2) The Lingua project connects French
teachers in Denmark, Greece, Belgium, and the United Kingdom in pursuit of
better quality electronic mail communication among language professionals.
(3) The European Studies Project, begun by Ireland, Great Britain, and
Northern Ireland for international discussion of the theme "conflict,", links
schools in different countries by electronic mail to examine a variety of
European issues. (4) Denmark has begun a teacher training initiative to
encourage teachers to explore and exploit the potentials of new technologies
in teaching and learning at all school levels. (5) A Danish distance
education project is focused on training teachers in the use of information
technology at all educational levels. (6) A 1994 Danish conference addressed,
among other issues, use of the information highway. Contains nine references.
(MSE)

Using IT to Run Projects

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Using IT to run IT projects.

Most projects aiming at integrating new technology in education
have until now been planned, managed and evaluated in the
traditional ways: planning meetings, exchanges of documents by
snail mail, phonecalls etc. Only recently have people begun to
actually practise what they preach and started to make use of the
new technologies in the management of projects.

Consequently international cooperation in this field has often
been expensive, slow and less successful than might have been
expected. With the increasing standardisation and
userfriendliness of both hardware and software, however,
educators have begun to realise the potential of these tools also
where the more administrative aspects are concerned.

In this paper I will describe some European projects where the
exploitation of IT has been the means as well as the goal.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE WORKSHOP 7 "NEW STYLE".

The "new style" workshops of the Council of Europe are run by two
countries that each organises a conference (Workshop A) with the
participation of one delegate from each member state. At the
first conference the delegates propose sub-themes to be studied
jointly and form international working groups that are then
supposed to cooperate during the following two years of "research
and development project work".

At the second conference (Workshop B) the results of the
collaborative work are presented and recommendations for further
cooperation elaborated.

The title of Workshop 7 was "Using information and communication
technologies in modern language teaching and learning in Europe",
and for the two years of research and development work the
following main themes were decided:

    Interactive multimedia in language teaching and learning
    Databases and courseware
    Telematics
    Teacher training

The animators of Workshop 7A were responsible for the various
themes and working groups, just as subgroups were formed with one
person responsible for reporting back to the organisors about the
progress of the groupwork.

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PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED.

In spite of the positive atmosphere among the participants of Workshop 7A the ensuing collaborative work proved to be very difficult. Though many participants came from the ministries funding for the two years of research and development work turned out to be hard to get. The Council of Europe cannot fund the inter-workshop period, so it is up to the national governments to finance the activities. As most subgroups consisted of people from several countries a certain amount of travelling would seem to be natural if not unavoidable, but very few got sufficient support to arrange even one meeting during the two years.

At Workshop 7A an overwhelming majority of the delegates wanted to work with telematics, and the organisors/animators tried to make people subscribe to the same network, in order to facilitate communication. This proved to be very difficult, not to say impossible. Although all delegates had been selected because of their knowledge of IT, few had access to an electronic mailbox, and those who had were often on different networks.

Collaborating internationally with the obligation to produce concrete results in a new field such as IT, but with no possibility to visit one's collaborators and no access to electronic mail is extremely frustrating. And many participants lost courage due to the lack of support. Others got new positions, new areas of responsibility and no replacement was found to take over the work already begun.

POSITIVE ASPECTS.

Still the personal contacts established at Workshop A continued to play a role. Several delegates were invited to give talks or take part in seminars on IT in other countries, a number of articles and experiences were exchanged, just like software developed in other contexts was disseminated among the participants.

More participants got access to an electronic network, and several national networks opened gateways to Internet.
People began to send files by E-mail, not just an envelope with a disk. For me, as Director of Studies, it was a great help, as I had to elaborate 3 reports with contributions from the participants. But also the various groups started to exchange drafts by E-mail that were then continued by the other members. And much time was saved because you could send your letter to many people at the same time, just by adding their E-mail number to the message.

Deadlines were easier to keep, and several times E-mail actually saved a problematic situation, when letters disappeared or faxes were mutilated, but could be reconstructed via the files sent to me by E-mail. With the time and date, of course, proving that the senders had in fact kept their deadline.

Likewise the preparation of Workshop 7B which took place in April 94 benefitted from E-mail. Animators and participants sent last-minute demands and wishes, and we could mail them back asking them to bring specific software etc. And the Danish organisors who came from different parts of Denmark simply saved the budget by being able to communicate electronically.

Although many participants in Workshop 7B were newcomers - some without much knowledge of IT - the working atmosphere was excellent and evaluations extremely positive. Ambitious action plans and recommendations were made for future cooperation, and fortunately the participants have kept their inspiration and enthusiasm. A large number are taking part in this EUROCALL conference and are determined to continue the international collaboration begun in Workshop 7.

LINGUA PROJECT VB: DIDACTICS AND TELEMATICS IN MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING.

This project has been started by FIPF (Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Francais) where I am the responsible for informatics. Four countries participate: Belgium, Grece, the UK and Denmark, and we use French as the language of communication. Students and teachers from upper-secondary schools in the partner countries exchange electronic mail regularly and organise teleconferences on a number of themes agreed in advance.

An important basis for the project was the Danish-French telecommunication project "Petite Sirène", which gave many Danish French teachers a considerable knowledge of telematics. So the Danish group has functioned as "locomotive" for the teachers from the partner countries, where many had little or no experience with IT.

As could be expected we have encountered a number of technical problems. We were prepared for that, but what has taken just as much time and effort has been the differences in curriculum, the teachers' working conditions, cultural background etc. A vital point in all telematics projects is the keeping of deadlines, and in the first two years technical or other problems often interfered negatively in several countries.

The Danish participants are spread all over Denmark, so most of our communication has been done by E-mail from the beginning. Little by little the other countries have joined in, so that now, in the third and final year, all the four partner countries communicate regularly by E-mail.

Other countries have asked to be allowed to take part in our teleconferences, so I act as a sort of human gateway and send files from the French network, Missimix, on to Campus 2000 and Internet and vice versa. Together with the organisation Eurosesame we are establishing a gopher on Internet, and we hope to transfer the whole project to Internet before July 1995.

The main objective of the project has been to improve the quality of E-mail exchanges. All electronic networks are filled with "junk mail" where young people exchange masses of futile information on pop-groups, sport stars etc. That is perfectly all right as a spare time interest, but numerous experiences show that students tire very quickly of this kind of communication in an educational situation.

So I totally disagree with the female leader of an American computer lab, who claimed, according to an article in Newsweek, that the reason girls liked E-mail was that "they considered it electronic note-passing". My female students could only shake their heads when they read that.

In our project we have tried to establish certain guidelines for how to run telematics projects. We have shortened the traditional personal profiles considerably and instead told the students to describe their country, the educational system, the political system etc. already in their introductory letters. We have tried to avoid the most trivial subjects and instead, for instance, studied the same literary texts or read articles about the same news item, or seen the same film and then discussed/interpreted them via telematics.

Several physical exchanges have taken place, both among the teachers and among the classes involved. And we have been able to profit much more than usual from these meetings because we could prepare the trip jointly over the network in advance, and of course also exchange evaluations afterwards.

The coordinators of the project are planning the material that we will publish at the end of the project via E-mail, otherwise it would simply not have been possible to produce a reasonable result. And of course we plan to continue our collaboration after the end of this project - now that we have finally established an infrastructure in the partner countries.

THE EUROPEAN STUDIES PROJECT.

The European Studies Project was started by Ireland, Great Britain and Northern Ireland several years ago. Students debated the theme "Conflict" with students from France, Belgium and Germany via E-mail. Now more than 200 schools from all over Europe take part in the project, which runs on Campus 2000.

The schools are put in clusters with schools from other countries and discuss various European issues. In many of the UK and Irish schools the responsible is a history or geography teacher as they have the project as part of a subject called "European Studies", whereas several of the teachers from the other countries are language teachers.

I have participated with my students for several years, and the interest among Danish teachers was so great that we last year established a Danish "branch" with me as coordinator. 40 Danish schools are now participating in the 16+ programme, and 30 are on the waiting list. And from this year several secondary schools have joined the 11-16 programme.

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Besides E-mail lots af snail mail circulates as well, such as video and audio tapes, photographs, booklets, articles etc. And many schools have visited their cluster schools.

I correspond almost daily by E-mail with the project managers in Northern Ireland and Ireland, and there is no doubt that using E-mail to run the project is one of the main reasons for its success. We have established a European Studies conference on the Danish national network, SKODA, where teachers can exchange experiences, ask questions, and have problems solved. This project has really been an eye-opener for the advantages of IT for a large number of Danish teachers, in many different subjects.

TEACHER TRAINING IN IT.

Denmark has just started a major initiative in teacher training in IT. Like in many other countries such efforts have been made previously, always with less noticable effects than might have been expected or at least hoped for.
This time the structure is carefully planned, in order to tempt even teachers who have until now declined to touch the machines.

The course consists of four modules :

- an elementary hands-on course at the school to see and to try the school's equipment and software
- a course in wordprocessing and process writing, both for the teachers' personal use and to use in classes
- a course in exploiting the software and other material available in one's subject, e.g. courseware, CD-ROM, databases, E-mail. Organised by the pedagogic centres in the various parts of Denmark in collaboration with the national steering committee
- a "inspiration" course for the whole school where policies

  for collaboration plus the acquisition and the use of IT material in the future are established

I am a member of the steering committee that has planned this initiative, and we have the pleasure of seeing that finally Danish teachers - in all subjects - want to attend these courses. The target group for this initiative is teachers from the "Gymnasium" (16-19 general education), who all have a 6 year university education in their subjects. But people from the other school systems are eager to apply our model, perhaps somewhat modified, to their educational sectors.

DISTANCE TEACHING AND LEARNING.

I have recently become member of the teaching staff of a ministerial project in distance teaching. Our target group is, in the first round, teachers from primary and secondary education, teacher trainers, and teachers from schools for disabled people. Our task is to teach our clients the use of IT with the help of IT.

My first assignment has been to describe in detail how to use an electronic network, in this case the Danish network, SKODA. In spite of the efforts to make the interface to these networks userfriendly there are still many little snags for the unexperienced user. So my job is both technical and pedagogical, as I am also giving advice and examples on how to integrate E-mail in the curriculum.

During a whole week this year the Danish Ministry assembled 4 "experts" in IT from each educational sector. We were about 30 people who worked with E-mail and databases from morning to evening in order to produce material to be used by teachers in their classes. Several subject areas were represented, and we spent hours finding relevant gophers and database-material on Internet, defining routes to follow so as not to waste too much time, and outlining ideas for interdisciplinary projects.

The different educational sectors inspired each other, and much of the final material can be used or easily adapted to different age groups. I have already sent out parts of the material to our distance teaching group and am now waiting for comments to come in. Denmark may be a small country in size, but we have a long tradition for a widespread adult education, where the flexibility of distance teaching and learning can give many more people a chance to educate themselves.

SOCIAL EFFECTS.

In the beginning of December 94 I will take part in a "think tank" meeting for three days, where among other things a government white paper on "the information highway" will be debated. The outcome is supposed to be a number of concrete proposals and guidelines to be implemented both in the public and the private sectors of the Danish society. And of course particularly in the educational system.

It seems that, finally, both the educational and other authorities have realised that IT blurs, sometimes eliminates, the difference between teachers and learners. And that this is a positive development, not something to be feared. So in my opinion the good teacher of the future will be the person who is willing to learn continuously and then to pass on this new knowledge, generously, to other people.

Lis Kornum.

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FL024855   Eurocall 94
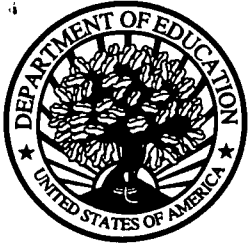
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