Final Report of Demonstration Project in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2017

Professional Development of Teachers and Trainers in VET in the SEET Region.

Project Leaders: Goce Nedelkoski (SOU Gorce Petrov) & Vlatko Butleski (SOU Riste Risteski Richko)

Project Coordinator: Julian Stanley (ETF)

Improvement of the professional competencies of teachers and achievements of students in VET schools by establishing a new concept for digital learning and teaching (E-school concept) – Phase 2

Partners and management

The Demonstration Project was led by The Civic Association - Harvest of Knowledge. Partners in the project were eight VET schools – SOU Krste Petkov Misirkov – Demir Hisar, SOU Car Samoil – Resen, OEMUC Sv.Naum Ohridski – Ohrid, SOSU Sv.Kiril I Metodij – Ohrid, SOU Taki Daskalo – Bitola, SOEU Jane Sandanski – Bitola, SOU Orde Copela – Prilep, SOEPTU Kuzman Josifiski Pitu – Prilep.

Creation of Web site and Manual

In the Phase 1, at the beginning of 2016 a web domain and hosting for digitalschool.mk were bought and a moodle platform was installed and set up.

Master trainers developed a user manual for the trainees which consisted of 13 modules, all of which were uploaded to ETF web site.

Training of teachers

The first part of the training was conducted on 4-5 March in Bitola. The course lasted two days and included 9 sessions on the following topics.

- Process of the professional development of the teacher
- Introduction to Moodle
- Moodle – Users, roles, categories and courses
- Moodle – Activities and resources
- Moodle – Formulas
- Moodle – Questions and quizzes

- Moodle – Forums
- Moodle – Programmed Lessons
- Presentations in Google Slides

The second part of the training program took place on 11th of March. 4 sessions were held on the following topics

- Moodle – Webinars
- Creating video lessons with InstantDemo
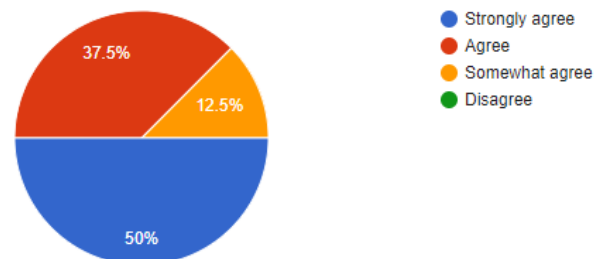- Upload videos to YouTube
- Video editing

Feedback

Upon completion of the first phase of the project, trainees were asked to give feedback by filling in the questionnaire about the training.

11. I feel confident to train other teachers.

16 responses

In answer to the question of whether they feel confident to train other teachers, 37.5% agreed, and another 50% strongly agreed.
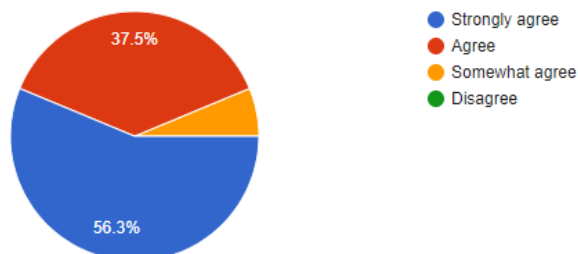
12. With this training I acquired new skills which will contribute to my CPD.

16 responses

All of the participants agreed that their newly acquired skills would contribute to their CPD and that this training would improve teaching in their subjects.

Dissemination

Dissemination took place in eight participating schools during the period of 15.06.2017 – 03.07.2017. There were 145 participants in total:

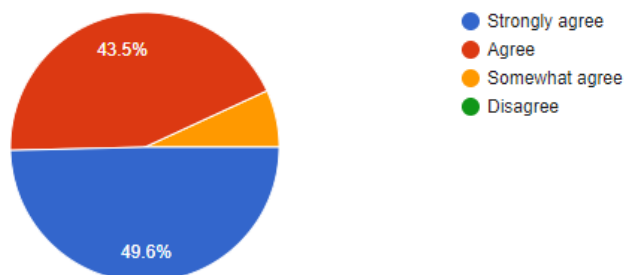| School	City	Number of participants	Certificates
SOU Krste Petkov Misirkov	Demir Hisar	9	8
SOU Car Samoil	Resen	16	14
OEMUC Sv.Naum Ohridski	Ohrid	19	14
SOSU Sv.Kiril I Metodij	Ohrid	16	12
SOU Taki Daskalo	Bitola	20	18
SOEU Jane Sandanski	Bitola	12	11
SOU Orde Copela	Prilep	19	17
SOEPTU Kuzman Josifiski Pitu	Prilep	20	18

Sixteen teacher trainers who were trained during the first phase of the project subsequently delivered the training to their colleagues. The trainees were given instruction materials and in the course of two days, they learnt about using the Moodle based platform at digitalschool.mk allowing them to upload and create learning materials, create programmed lessons, quizzes, forums etc. In addition, teachers learnt how to use moodle based webinars, screen-recording software, and how to create, edit and upload a video to YouTube.

Feedback

Training participants were asked to give feedback via the questionnaire about the training.

12. This training will help me improve the teaching of my subject.

131 responses

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Disagree

43.5%

49.6%

In answer to the question of whether this training will improve their teaching, 49,6% strongly agreed, and another 43,5% agreed.
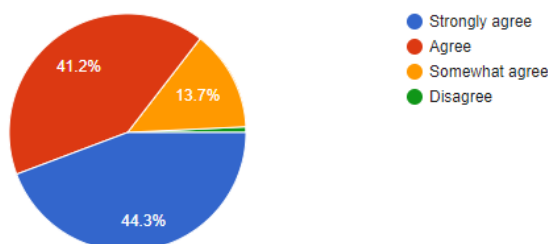
Similar percentages are for the question whether they think this training will help improve achievements of the students (strongly agreed 44,3% and agreed 41,2%)

13. This training will help to improve the achievements of the students.

131 responses

In the section of the survey about the particular topics and sessions, most useful topic for the teachers will be moodle quizzes with 98,5% responses (very useful – 61,1% and useful – 37,4%)

- Strongly agree
- Agree
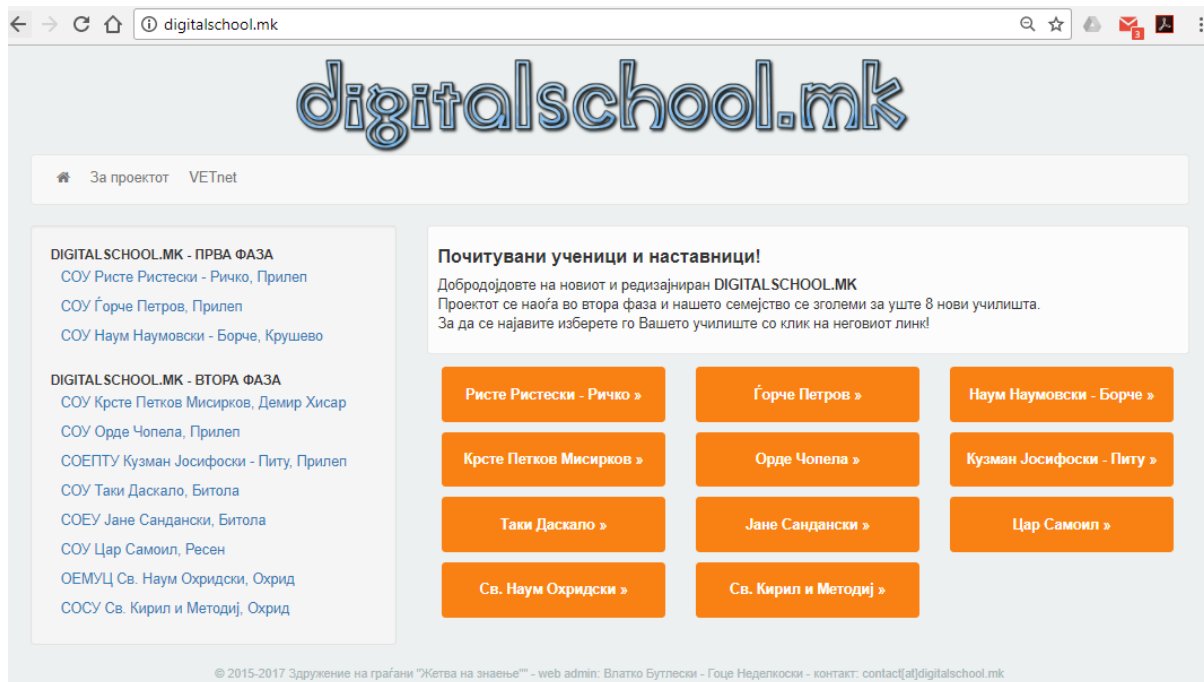- Somewhat agree
- Disagree

41.2%

13.7%

44.3%

As part of the training process, by the end of August teachers undertook the final exercise which consisted of applying acquired knowledge and performing a task according to each module of the training.

They were mentored by teachers who had received the earlier training on how to implement the new skills in practice. Their practice and competency was assessed by the mentors according to previously set criteria as a result of which 112 teachers were awarded the certificate.

Web site migration

Due to increased number of schools and users, web site was migrated to a VPN server and separate web site and moodle installation were created for each school.

Previous domain digitalschool.mk now serves as hub for accessing the school sites. (e.g. gp.digitalschool.mk, rrr.digitalschool.mk etc)

Application

From August 2017, teachers continued to apply their new skills with other classes and students.

In December 2017 there were 2897 active users (out of 5119 registered), 702 courses, 13205 assignments and 10564 quiz questions on digitalschool.mk platform.

Approximately 40% of the trained teachers are actively using the platform.

The number of active users is not evenly distributed across participating schools. In some of the schools there is a great interest, while there are school with minimum or almost none activities. That is due to a lack of motivation and activity of the teachers trainers that were conducting the dissemination. In other words, some of the principals made bad choices when proposing teachers for trainers at the beginning of the project.

Monthly meetings

During the dissemination, teachers and their mentors had their regular monthly meetings where they shared their experiences, ideas, problems and obstacles. Three meetings took place in August, September and October. Apart from the regular meetings, teacher-mentors as well as master trainers are available for help and advice on all aspects relating to the project.

Certificates

112 teachers received certificates for participation and successfully performing project tasks, accounting for 85,4% of total participants in the dissemination phase.

16 teacher trainers received certificates for successfully completing their tasks.

Summary

In this digital era where students are using computers, smartphones and various gadgets every day, teachers of the 21st century have to adapt and adopt new teaching techniques and skills. This project provides a model for teaching teachers new digital techniques which can be applied effectively in the teaching process. These skills and techniques improve teachers' competencies and increase interest amongst students. Via interactive classes students have round the clock access to learning materials. Assessment of assignments, tests and quizzes are easier and more acceptable for students.

New modules and plugins are being tested and implemented at digitalschool.mk platform.

The teachers feel supported by other teachers and some of them believe the new tools or methods will be of immediate value to them, their students and other teachers. Other motivating factors are: the opportunity to work with enthusiastic teachers across schools, certificates, small financial rewards and 'belonging to a group'.

This is something new to a greater number of teachers and lot of them are not aware that they are those who should make the changes, and the training is just the trigger. But we need to start from somewhere even if the institutions are not very supportive to this type of bottom-up projects.

Challenges

1. Motivation – there are two different types: internal motivation which comes from the teacher's personality and this motivation brings quality. Second type is external motivation (certificates, financial reword) which brings quantity. Our opinion is that success and sustainability of the project mostly depends on internal motivations of the teachers.

2. Hardware - teachers at schools in Macedonia face serious problems due to the lack of the computers in the classroom. Only a few classrooms at each school are equipped and the computers are old with outdated software and hardware. Schools also suffer from insufficient support from technicians.

3. Internet - the sometimes poor internet connection and very poor wi-fi coverage at the schools.
4. Workload – using these new techniques in teaching increases the workload of teachers, which may cause some teacher resistance.
5. Sharing – although cooperation between teachers has improved with this project, it seems that it is still not enough. Traditionally, teachers in Macedonia are not very keen on sharing teaching materials. Adding the sharing module on the platform might improve that.

Goce Nedelkoski

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goce.nedelkoski@gmail.com