FOCUS GROUP REPORT
REPORT DOCUMENT

Di2Learn:

DISTANCE-DIGITAL TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE POST-COVID-19 ERA

Author: Parent's Association Step by Step

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PROJECT INFORMATION

Project acronym:

DI2LEARN

Project title:

Distance-Digital Teaching and Learning in the Post-Covid-19 Era

Project Number:

2020-1-PL01-KA226-SCH-095530

Sub-programme or KA:

KA2 – COOPERATION FOR INNOVATION AND THE EXCHANGE OF GOOD PRACTICES

KA226 – Partnerships for Digital Education Readiness

Website:

www.di2learn.eu/

CONSORTIUM:

- Coordinator:
  - SPOLECZNA AKADEMIA NAUK, Poland – www.en.san.edu.pl
- Partners
  - European Digital Learning Network, Italy - www.dlearn.eu
  - A & A Emphasys Interactive Solutions Ltd, Cyprus - www.emphasyscentre.com
  - POLITEKNIKA IKASTEGIA TXORIERRI S.COOP, Spain - www.txorierri.net
  - Parents' Association "Step by Step", Croatia - www.udrugaroditeljakpk.hr
  - PCG Polska Sp. z o.o., Poland - www.pcgpolska.pl
  - FUNDATIA EUROED, Romania - www.euroed.ro

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Report on IO1/A2 Focus Group with Teachers-Students-Parents

Hosted on: 7th July 2021/ 16:00-17:15 PM

Facilitated by: Parent's Association Step by Step

I. Organizational issues and focus group participants

The Di2Learn focus group in Croatia with teaching and learning stakeholders was organized on the 7th of July 2021 via ZOOM platform. The duration of the focus group was 1 hour and 15 minutes. There were 10 registered participants who have filled in application form via Google forms. One of participant dropped out due to technical difficulties, so the focus group involved 9 participants in total. The focus group consisted of two parents and seven teachers from Primary and Secondary schools based in Primorsko-goranska County and the City of Zagreb. Some participants had years of experience working in the school system while others were employed for only a few years. In this way, we were able to gain insight into different experiences and views on the required topic. Two employees from Parent's Association Step by Step were involved in leading the focus group. One of them was the moderator while the other one was technical support.

II. Agenda

The agenda of the focus group followed the guidelines agreed by the Di2Learn consortium include but not limited to:

1. Welcoming note by the event moderator
2. Asking participants for consent to record the discussion
3. Asking participants to introduce themselves and organisations they represent
4. Presentation of the Di2Learn project
5. Discussion based on proposed questions and Focus group guidelines
6. Closing session, wrap-up and summary

Final words and a "thank you" note by the Partner Organization.

III. Minutes

> 1.   Mia Krpan (Parent's Association Step by Step), as the focus group moderator, welcomed all the participants and thanked them for attending the

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focus group. She briefly introduced herself and Parents Associatioon Step by Step.

2. The participants were then asked to fill in Google forms that consisted of signature list, a consent form regarding the recording of the focus group and consent to further communication related to project activities. Link of the Google forms: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeljkIZ3wHfbeHBF9tQp3eTIxkyWx3kUwsEQr0bfO-83dC_Bw/viewform

3. After the consent form was signed by all the participants the focus group moderator started to record the session. The focus group moderator asked participants to briefly introduce themselves.

4. After all participants introduced themselves, moderator briefly presented the Di2Learn project that included short information about the project consortium, project objectives, intellectual outputs and timeline. Karmen Stipeč (Parent's Associoation Step by Step), as technical support, shared a link to the official website and Facebook page of the project via chat.

5. After the project overview moderator suggested moving to the discussion based on the questions which were divided into three blocks (PRE-COVID, COVID, POST-COVID).

6. Moderator has terminated meeting with short summary and "thank-you" note highlighting how discussed topics and outcomes are important for modern teaching and learning.

IV. Discussion outcomes

PRE-COVID ERA:

Question 1: How was teaching and learning conducted in your organization before Covid?

All participants agreed that classes were held classically before COVID-19. Students were given an introduction to a topic in class and after that they would be given homework assignments. In the lower grades of Primary school, digital teaching was used very rarely before the pandemic. In the upper grades of Primary school, teachers started using digital tools due to the reform called "School for Life". It was all up to the individual to what extent they would use digital tools in the classroom. In Secondary schools was a lot of extracurricular activities and fieldwork held outside of school.

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Question 2: Was distance learning used at all (if not – why, if yes – how and to which extent)?

As mentioned before, distance learning was used very rarely in Primary and Secondary schools before the pandemic. Some of digital tools that they used before pandemic were Wordwall, Kahoot, Emaze, Power Point, short educational videos etc.

Question 3: Did you expect such situation as Covid at all - were there any procedures?

All participants expressed that they were quite unprepared for the whole situation. They were told they were moving to online classes and had a short workshop on how to use digital tools. There were no systematic protocol or procedure so they prepared individually or at the school level for the whole situation. One of the participants said that the step in which teachers needed to be taught how to handle with whole situation was skipped. They were expected to know everything. Even the younger generation of teachers was not prepared to use digital tools in the default way. All participants agreed that parents also had a great burden on their shoulders. They were expected to be educated and technically prepared for online teaching. To sum up their conclusion, all three parties, teachers, students and parents, were unprepared.

COVID ERA:

Question 4: How (if) your school was prepared to rapidly transform education online?

Teachers agreed that the hardest part was during school year 2019/2020 when the pandemic started because then no one was prepared for it. Each school had its own vision of online teaching and in each it was assumed that teachers knew how to handle technology and that they knew how to pass it on to students. There was no preparation either inside the school or outside. Everything depended on the individual engagement of the teacher. In September, when the new school year 2020/2021 started, the situation was better. By then they already had some knowledge and helped younger colleagues with advices (What's good? What could be better?). They taught students at the beginning of school year 2020/2021 how to prepare for online classes. The positive thing is that everyone is more digitally literate after first wave of pandemic. Some participant said that they faced a problem with technical capabilities of the students (one laptop, and several students in the same family, weak internet connection).

Question 5: What were biggest challenges to switch to online learning (skills, hardware, software, lack of support from authorities, other)?

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- For all teachers, the problem was the evaluation of the student's knowledge. They did not receive specific instructions or information on how to assess students and whether it is a realistic reflection of their knowledge.

-For Primary school teachers the big challenge was adjusting the amount of content for students. In face-to-face lessons, the teacher processes a larger amount of content with students, and the parent repeats the content at home. The question arose as to how much primary school children are able to follow online classes at home on their own and process the given information.

-For some teachers (in Primary and Secondary schools), the great challenge was the nature of the subject itself. It was not possible to customize everything online e.g., Math and it was unrealistic to expect students to process new content on their own without help and support.

- They also pointed out that a great challenge was the motivation of the students, especially in Secondary schools. They faced the problem to find a way to bring demanding content closer to the student. The presence of teachers was missing to further explain the content to them.

- There were also difficulties with the concentration of students but also teachers in online lessons. Concentration in school is subject-oriented, and when lessons are online students don't feel like they are in class and their concentration is dispersed. For teachers was difficult to constantly maintain attention.

- Online learning showed how much work needs to be done to develop digital communication skills between teachers and students

- There were also some challenging situations where students did not want to turn on cameras, microphones, they avoided contact and involvement in video calls. But there are students to whom online classes suit really well - they feel safe inside their homes and engaged in lessons more often.

Question 6: How you address these challenges (please provide some good practices)?

- Record audio lessons with assignments lasting approximately like face-to-face lessons

- Few teachers of Primary school point out that they compiled worksheets and parents came to pick it up once a week. The worksheets were intended for the Roma population who did not have technical support for online teaching. They contacted them via phone calls when and where to pick up the worksheets. The Roma population is not digitally literate, so worksheets were the only creative solution for them.

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- One teacher said that they need to be flexible and willing to adapt. One student refused online classes altogether. The teachers in her Primary school agreed, together with the principal, that only that student would go to school and had face-to-face lessons because otherwise she wouldn't finish that grade.

POST-COVID ERA:

Question 7: Lessons learned from COVID-TIME (please share)?

- Flexibility

- Patience. You need to be persistent and patient in order to achieve some results because nothing goes by a short procedure

- Increased digital literacy of teachers and students themselves

- Better teamwork between teachers (openness to new ideas and solutions, exchange of experiences, devising strategies)

- Tolerance and trust (honest communication between teacher and student)

Question 8: Are you going to continue distance learning POST-COVID (if not – why, if yes how and to which extent)?

Primary school teachers said that they will use digital tools in the lower grades of Primary school, but only for certain subjects. Major subjects such as Croatian Language and Mathematics must be held face-to-face.

Secondary school teachers will use digital tools to prepare students for graduation. This would facilitate the presence of students attending school outside their place of residence.

One teacher said that partial use of Teams in unprofessional replacement by other teacher in classes will continue to be used. The teacher will send what needs to be done via Teams and an unprofessional replacement (teacher) will be in the classroom with the students and will follow together video instructions or a lesson. Teams will be used to exchange materials between teachers and students.
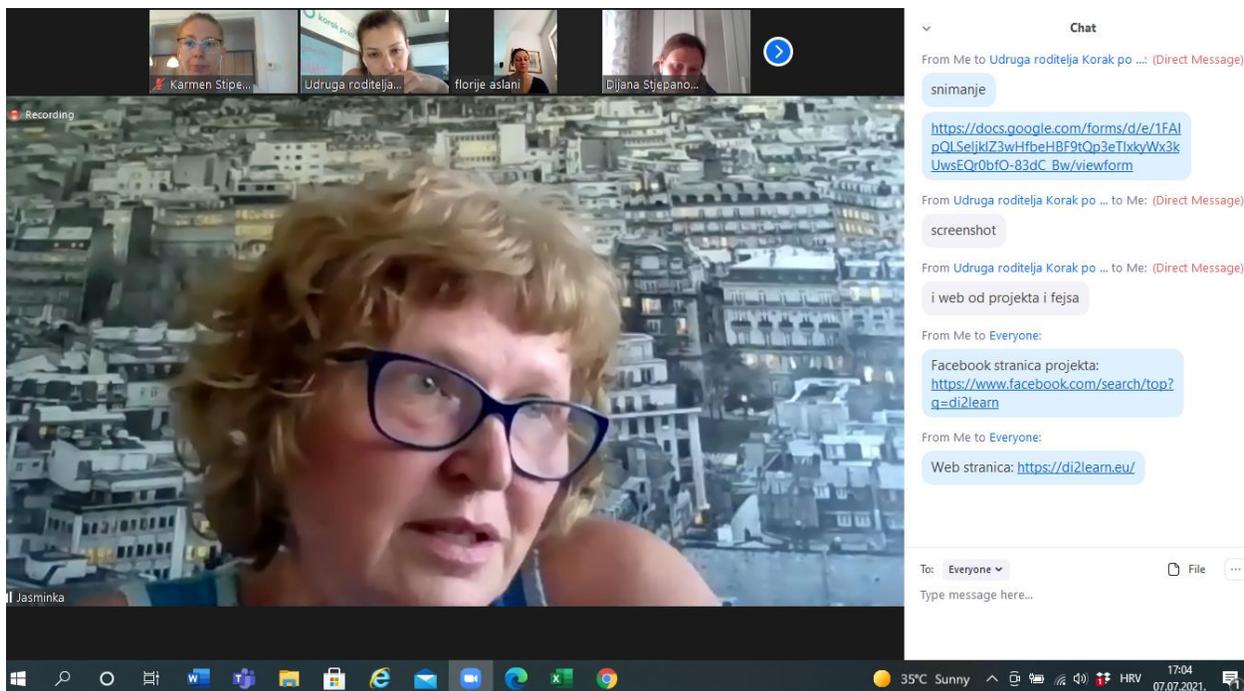
Question 9: If yes, what kind of support do you expect and from where?

-Internet connection and technical support from school

- Providing adequate IT equipment for schools

- Psychological support for students

- Support for all professionals at the institutional level. A lot of effort has been put in on an individual level

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- Ensuring a positive atmosphere and cooperation between teachers, students and parents.

- Support in developing work discipline and attitude towards work in students

- Awareness of one's own responsibility for achievement and success in students

V. Pictures or screenshots from onsite or online meeting

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Annex 1. List of registered participants Di2Learn focus group

First and last name	City	Country	Position	Organization	Email address
1. Branka Mihajlović	Delnice	Croatia	Secondary school teacher	Secondary School Delnice	mihajlovicb10@gmail.com
2. Florije Aslani	Zagreb	Croatia	Parent		florije.aslani19@gmail.com
3. Dijana Stjepanović	Zagreb	Coratia	Primary school teacher	Primary School Trnsko	dijana.stjepanovic10@gmail.com
4. Tania Mulc	Skrad	Croatia	Primary school pedagogue	Primary School Brod Moravice	taniamulc@gmail.com
5. Dijana Arbanas	Skrad	Croatia	Primary school teacher	Primary School Brod Moravice	dijana.arbanas@gmail.com
6. Martina Liker	Ravna Gora	Croatia	Parent		dinko.liker2@ri.ht.hr
7. Jasminka Lisac	Lokve	Croatia	Secondary school teacher	Secondary School Delnice	jasminka.lisac@email.t-com.hr
8. Ivona Jerbić	Ravna Gora	Croatia	Secondary school teacher	Secondary School Delnice	ivonajerbic1@gmail.com
9. Mirna Bogić	Rijeka	Croatia	Secondary school teacher	Secondary School Delnice	bogicmirna@gmail.com