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Promoting digital competence in secondary education: Insights from a case study

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Nowadays, many educational systems are shifting from a content-based curriculum to a competence-based one (Burke, 1989; OECD, 2004; Driscoll, 2007). In light of this, the local Catalan government has established a set of basic competencies for all infant, primary and secondary school curricula arranged around: (a) Communicative competencies: linguistic and audiovisual; artistic and cultural. (b) Methodological competencies: information handling and digital competence; mathematic competence and learning to learn competence. (c) Personal competencies: personal autonomy and initiative. (d) Social competencies: knowledge of and interaction with the physical world; citizenship competences. Among all of them, the Department of Education places special emphasis on communicative, linguistic audio-visual competence; and on digital competence, understood as the ability to locate, organize, understand, evaluate, and create information using digital technology. For this purpose, the guidelines issued at the beginning of each scholastic year for the organization and functioning of schools states that ICT should: (i) be used to organise, apply and show different kinds of information; (ii) become a relevant tool for teaching and learning; (iii) facilitate students' interaction with mathematical objects; (iv) generate music and combine sounds and images. This Department envisions ICT as privileged learning tools and proposes to name them not as Information and Communication Technologies but as Learning and Knowledge Technologies, although changing the name is proving to be easier than changing the teaching practice (Sancho, 2008).

This paper discusses the results of a case study carried out in a secondary school as part of a R&D project ("Policy and Practice regarding ICT in Education: Implication for Educational Innovation and Improvement" (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia. SEJ2007-67562. 2007-2010), whose main aim is to explore the encounters and failures to bring together educational policy and teaching practice with the use of ICT. Our presentation will focus on an analysis of how secondary school teachers implement ICT in their daily teaching across all secondary school subjects.

Methodology, Methods, Research Instruments or Sources Used

To explore the encounters and failures to bring together educational policy and teaching practice with the use of ICT we have first undertaken an extensive policy analyses process followed by 4 case studies (2 in primary schools and 2 in secondary schools). The case we present here has been conducted in a secondary school during an intensive stay in the field where we have carried out observations in lessons using ICT from all subject matters; interviews with teachers and students; analyses of school documents and analyses of student work.

Conclusions, Expected Outcomes or Findings

In this research we have generated a map of the way different secondary school teachers understand and try to develop students' digital competence. Furthermore, we have been able to explore how every teacher, independently of the educational Administration guide-lines, customises the use of ICT to his/her own way of understanding what teaching and learning means.

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