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PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: MARÍA ELENA GÓMEZ PARRA



Curbing the number of school dropouts and motivating students is a complicated but essential job. There is an increasing number of educators who are opting for other teaching methods that not only focus on results but also on the learning process and on developing key skills.

One of these innovative methods is the incorporation of cooperative learning techniques, that considers group work to be a new way to learn key concepts, in which active student participation is necessary. In addition, it allows for fostering the development of interpersonal skills -such as tolerance, active listening and acceptance of diversity- and adopting a sense of community within the group, which increases motivation, favors social inclusiveness for all students and, as a result, reduces dropout rates.

Project DICO+ aims to implement cooperative learning methods in order to lower school dropout rates in Europe

The level and quality of interaction between students and teachers has a lot to do with how students learn and therefore, how they handle learning. In this sense, Project DICO+ is working to create a resource bank for teachers with different material adapted to different levels and subjects based on

the Lesson Study approach. This is a professional development method based on collaborative group work with teachers and their students in order to improve the results of learning and the quality of teaching.

In this system, teachers are observed by other educators while they teach their class. Upon finishing, a group of teachers and a group of students, give their opinions on what worked and what did not, and they make suggestions in order to improve the next class. The method repeats itself until optimal teaching quality is reached for the subject matter. In this way, students take an active role in learning and classes are adapted to their needs, boosting their interest and motivation.

The DICO+ team is made up of 11 European institutions, among which we can find teacher training centers, bodies of European inspectors, schools with cooperative approaches and European teachers' associations. In all, seven countries are involved: Spain, France, Italy, Lithuania, Hungary, Romania and the Netherlands.

"First, training resources for cooperative methods are in development for teachers, including drawing up class worksheets that can be implemented in a practical way in different educational contexts in each of the countries involved in the project", explains

María Elena Gómez Parra, lead researcher on the project. These Lesson Studies are being designed, many times, in partnership with the teachers that are going to use them. In this vein, it is possible to gather valuable information about the students, the context and the subject matter, which will later be used in order to improve the approach and practices in that specific classroom.

The practical lessons will be recorded and analyzed during international meetings in order to improve their design. Afterwards, the results of the analysis will be reported to the teachers working on the project, with the aim of helping them improve their teaching practices.

After the experimentation stage, an online platform will be created in different languages where the material resulting from the project will be posted, so it could be used for free by teachers in primary and secondary education who wish to use these cooperative learning methods in their classrooms.

By means of performing these cooperative methods, the idea is to encourage students to participate in their own educational experience, in addition to helping teachers improve their own teaching methods and share good teaching practices. In doing so, the intention is to help student inclusion and decrease school dropouts rates in Europe.

