Use of Innovative ICT Methodologies
Intellectual Output 2, UNIT VII

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7.1.   Introduction

IERS (https://iers.unive.it/, 2013-2016) and SORAPS (https://soraps.unive.it/, 2016-2019) projects provide teachers with an extensive collection of materials on history of religions, contemporary religious pluralism, intercultural dialogue focusing, particularly in the most recent contributions, on stereotypes and prejudices concerning religions. Contents are composed by text sources, studies, and multimedia materials with the aim of promoting various educational uses. Even if they include guidelines for teachers and suggestions for use, these materials are not intended for direct use in the classroom but can be adapted by the teacher according to the context (age of students, subject, work methodology, skills to be acquired by students...).

The infographic below summarizes the process to implement in order to move from contents to the classroom. Three steps (CONTENTS, TOPICS and ACTIVITIES) are preliminary to the work in the classroom and are used to plan the learning units. Three steps (IN CLASSROOM, EVIDENCES and EVALUATION) include the phases in which the didactic planning is put into practice from the implementation of the activities in the classroom to the final evaluation of the learning experience and results.

Picture 1. How to work with IERS and SORAPS in the classroom.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) in this context - as in general in education – contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning processes. They are viewed as an instrument transversal to school levels, subjects and teaching and learning approaches

crucial to build knowledge societies. It implies that not only the schools are required to invest in technological tools, but that the teaching models have to change: the teacher's role, classroom organisation, teaching and learning processes as well as interaction mechanisms[1]. So an effort is expected from teachers in facing this new teaching role, but also from students when ITC are integrated in learning.

To facilitate the teacher's work and provide some suggestions on how to combine the use of SORAPS and IERS contents with ICT tools, some applications have been selected among the numerous resources available for free on the web. In the following sections these applications have been associated with different teaching and learning methodologies, because we must not forget that to reach effective teaching and learning processes the choice of technological resources depends on the methodological design of the activity.

7.2. Discovery learning

Discovery learning is a technique based on the students finding things out for themselves, looking into problems, and asking questions. The teacher guidance is focused on supporting students during the discussion, encouraging dialogue and the sharing of experiences.


There are different web 2.0 tools that provide innovative ways to support this kind of approach. *Padlet*, for instance, is a tool that provides a blank board to post contents (photos, documents, web links, music…) on a collaborative wall. The organization and presentation of the contents are supported by different templates and are easy to use. It is possible to create collaborative boards so classmates can add contents, or comment or interact with the existing ones, in this way facilitating discussion and the sharing of the results of their findings.

Padlet can be used for different activities. For example, for a treasure hunt as a way to collect information related to a particular topic. The teacher creates a blank board accessible by sharing the link to the Padlet page, so the students can access the board and add new contents. The board represents a metaphor of a whiteboard with post-its. This is an example used to collect religion-related news during a SORAPS teacher training session: https://padlet.com/aliciagh/soraps.

Another example taken from an Olympics of Philosophy with secondary school students is available in the following video https://youtu.be/WTpqpFrLRiY?t=1h38m56s.

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[1] Albert Sangrà & Mercedes González-Sanmamed (2010) The role of information and communication technologies in improving teaching and learning processes in primary and secondary schools, ALT-J, 18:3, 207-220, DOI: 10.1080/09687769.2010.529108.
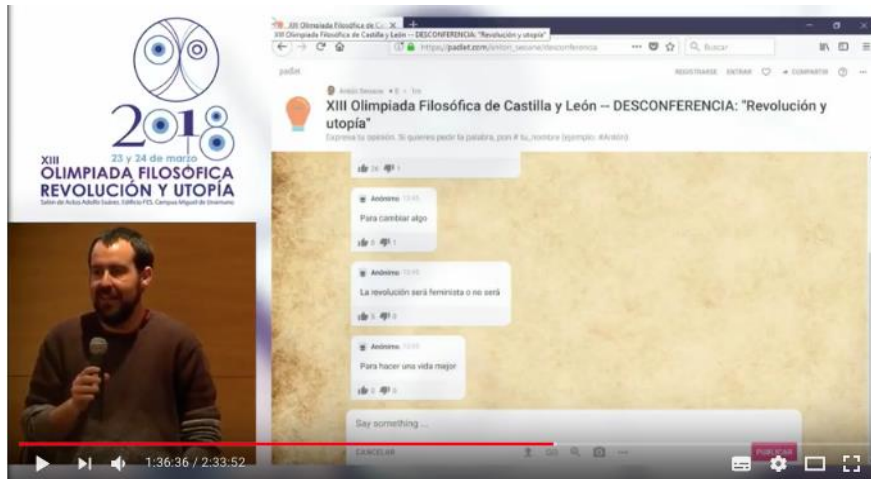
Picture 2. Use of Padlet to moderate a debate with students during a conference.

Once the activity is over, it is possible to change the configuration of the board in order to share the results but not allow users to add new contents.

7.3. Open discussion

During classes, both face-to-face and online, the involvement of students in the teaching and learning process is very important, in particular when it is required they share their opinions and approach an issue from different points of view. Techniques such as brainstorming can be effective in these cases.

After some introductory activities that allow pupils to learn more about the topic selected – for instance, prejudices and stereotypes in a religious tradition - , an open discussion focused on it can be implemented. It is possible to do a brainstorming as a way to identify and select a stereotype on religions to be investigated with the students in the next phase or to maintain an organized debate on a stereotype previously identified and identify pros and cons of different reactions to it.

There are different web 2.0 tools that support brainstorming and on-the-fly questioning, for example, Kahoot (https://kahoot.it), Tricider (http://tricider.com) or Socrative (https://www.socrative.com), and also Padlet provide tools for brainstorming activities. For this example, the selected tool is Tricider. The first part of the activity is focused on sharing stereotypes on religions. After, the students can vote one stereotype and give pros or cons about it.

You can see the activity here: http://www.tricider.com/brainstorming/2SZkhHG8f0N

7.4. Problem-based learning

Problem-based learning is a student-centered pedagogy in which students learn about a subject by the analysis of a given problem as a starting point for the acquisition of new knowledge.

Learners are actively encouraged to reason and solve the problem by drawing autonomously from all the information sources necessary for this purpose.

In order to collect information on the problem to be explored and to organize it in a final document to which students, distributed in groups, are encouraged to work in a collaborative way.

For this purpose, tools for collaborative writing can be used.

Wiki software is the most common tool and allows users to work collaboratively on a document, to modify contents and structure, add comments and review the history of the page one is working on. The result is an online content organized in pages and in some cases enriched by graphics, tables and interactive components.

For a first approach to this kind of collaborative work with students, the use of Google Docs is suggested. It is a free web-based application in which

documents can be created, edited and shared with other users in real time. The editing possibilities are wide, and the document can be easily downloaded for printing or off-line individual use.

Example of learning unit developed collaboratively by teachers during the SORAPS teacher training course:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OhXcbnxQcn0qlh_zSofM0v9QKKxqI8Am8h6FHr94Wt8/edit?usp=sharing

7.5. Project-based learning

Project Based Learning is a teaching method in which students acquire knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time on investigating and responding to a question, problem, or challenge.

Students are expected to use technology in meaningful ways to help them investigate, collaborate, analyze, synthesize, and present their learning. Different tools can be used according to the phase of the project implementation, so this kind of activity could be the perfect occasion for teacher and students to test the different ICT tools used so far in specific activities for implementing a bigger project.

Online collaborative blackboards or brainstorming tools are useful in the initial phase to focus on the issue, share information and take decisions. Collaborative writing works well in order to organize contents.

As regards the presentation of the final product, an effective way to present the results is to create a video.

How to prepare a video in an easy way?

There are various online tools for creating videos. In particular, Powtoon provides a huge library of styles, characters, backgrounds and videos, or you can upload your own. The first steps to create a video with this tool are the following:

1. Go to Powtoon https://www.powtoon.com
2. Create an account or login with your Facebook account
3. Create your first video. Even if you can create a video and define every detail by yourself (layout, characters…), it is recommended to start with a predefined template or storyboard. Example:
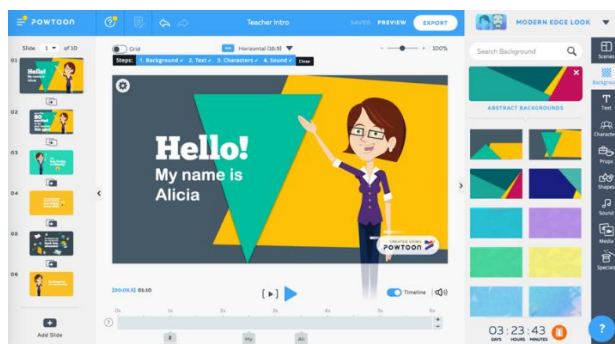
Picture 3. Powtoon video editing interface.

For students, in addition to the technical challenge of preparing the video, the creation of the storyboard is an excellent exercise to summarize the results of their research and select the most important points to highlight. In this way we also encourage the development of creative skills through the use of communication tools other than written language.

Another possibility for presenting the final product is to prepare online contents with the aim of facilitating the dissemination of the results.

How to prepare online contents in an easy way?

Regarding online contents, there are a huge amount of tools that support the creation of contents.

We suggest eXeLearning, a free and open source editor for creating educational resources. It allows to create in an easy way navigable web pages with texts, maps, images;

eXeLearning is a desktop application, so you need to download and install it on a personal computer.

You can download eXeLearning at http://exelearning.net/en/. The eXeLearning tutorial available in several languages supports the user during the first steps of the contents creation: http://exelearning.net/html_manual/exe20_en/ .

If you want to prepare contents with the SORAPS project style, you can install the SORAPS style we have created for eXeLearning.

Download the SORAPS style for eXeLearning at:

https://soraps.unive.it/files/2018/09/SORAPS.zip

To install it, open the eXeLearning tool and click on the menu option: Tools -> Style Manager -> Import style and select the SORAPS.zip file.

Here are some examples of contents created with eXeLearning to get you inspired to create a course plan, teaching materials or a travel guide for school trips:

- Course plan: http://guiasdidacticas.grial.eu/sorapsguidelines/
- Teaching materials: http://guiasdidacticas.grial.eu/evalintocourseweb/
- Info for students: http://antia.fis.usal.es/sharedir/venancio/florencia/