

TILL: A European Qualification of Teacher Competences for Lifelong Learning

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Report of the Second Transnational Meeting

September 25 and 26, 2018

Reggio Emilia, Italy

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1. Introduction and overview

The Second Transnational Meeting of TILL: A European Qualification of Teacher Competences for Lifelong Learning occurred in Reggio Emilia in Italy over two days. Day One of the meeting (Tuesday 25th September 2018) was hosted at Dipartimento di Educazione e Scienze Umane, Reggio Emilia (UniMORE). The agenda on Day One focused on recapping an overview of project development, achievements and criticalities. There was also a presentation of Output 1, the Countries Study, and a detailed discussion of the competencies for Output 2 – the online TILL competency framework for lifelong learning, henceforth referred to in this report as the ‘tool’. There was also a discussion of Output 3, 4, 5 and 6 including presentations by Output Leaders and general discussions.

Day Two of the meeting (Wednesday 26th September 2018) was hosted at “Reggio Children”, Centro Internazionale Loris Malaguzzi, Reggio Emilia. The agenda on Day Two focused on understanding the “Reggio Emilia Approach” including a visit to the Reggio Children Atelier. This gave the group the chance to hear more about educational priorities in the region and to experience the influential work of in reforming children’s education. At the heart of the Reggio Emilian approach is the view that the brain of the child is a plastic and unitary brain and that the brain develops by means of experiences. Every experience allows the child to re-describe the concepts learned, in a process. Experiencing the Atelier was followed by a presentation from Luciano Rondanini, Former Director of Regional Office, Italian Ministry of Education: “Teacher training in Italy” (Output 1). The remainder of the day was dedicated to group work on specific competence elements in the four¹ TILL areas, namely:

- 1) Self-regulation,
- 2) Metacognition,
- 3) Motivate and engage learners,
- 4) Build on Individual differences

These four areas were discussed in a lively session of working groups. The working groups contained initial teacher education students and facilitators and provided valuable insight into the perspective of beginning teachers, which is one of the target groups for the TILL tool. The final session of Day Two was dedicated to evaluation and to planning the future activities and timeline.

2. Our context for the meeting in Italy

The hosts for the Second Transnational Meeting of TILL: A European Qualification of Teacher Competences for Lifelong Learning in Reggio Emilia, UNIMORE, provided a good example of the close links which can be established between initial teacher education, policy at the local level and working directly with schools. For example, local schools take intern students and, in exchange, the university conducts ‘real’ research projects for the schools. This maintains the relationship with the schools and every year there is something new for them by way of the outputs from the action research projects. The university propose some general research ideas and then together with the schools, a selection is made of the research projects to be the focus within any given year. Because of this joined-up way of working, the local schools interested to receive student teachers and students can present motivational and theoretical change.

The context surrounding the two days of meeting in Reggio Emilia was also influenced by the transformational nature of the Reggio Emilia Approach. This is an educational philosophy based on the image of the child, and

¹ At the meeting it was agreed to add a fifth area around creativity.

of human beings, as possessing strong potentials for development and as a subject of rights who learns and grows in the relationships with others. The Reggio Emilia Approach Focuses on the centrality of the hundred languages belonging to every human being. It values the expressiveness and creativity of each child. Loris Malaguzzi was the founder of Reggio Emilia's educational philosophy and together with the local council and local administrators he participated in creating Reggio Emilia's network of municipal preschools (3-6) and infant-toddler centers (0-3). Underpinning this approach is the idea that every moment is a moment of learning and that all learning and all subjects are important and that there should not be a hierarchical preference given to certain subjects or types of learning. Given this broad approach, partnership working and the involvement of other creative professionals in the classroom is a core part of the approach. The notion of the classroom as the 'Atelier' – or artists' studio – means that the Reggio Emilian approach emphasizes the arts, music, dance, graphics and so on and encourages professional artists to work in partnership alongside teachers. This wholistic approach to learning is based on the notion that children possess different languages for learning. For example, from birth to three years of age, children learn through their senses and use all their capabilities to learn in an accelerated and integrated manner. The ideas of the child grow and change in interactions between teacher/adult and the child. This approach places the child as a researcher.

'Assessment' occurs through detailed documentation and sharing of the child's development. For example, teachers take pictures and notes and reflect about what they have lived with through. The reflective process of both adult and child is highlighted. This is based on the Vygotskian theory of proximal zone of development which is enacted through lived theory and practice. The zone of proximal development is the difference between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with help. Vygotsky (1896 - 1934) believes the role of education is to provide children with experiences, thereby encouraging and advancing their individual learning.

The Reggio Emilian approach also places the school at the centre of the community, creating "everyday utopias" where children are encouraged to explore their environment and ask questions. Parents are a core part of the education system. The community welcomes children and families, and education is viewed as a 'political process' developing ideas of citizenship and giving children the chance to experience a broad and balanced "real" education within a social and political context.

The unique context in Reggio Emilia influences the approaches of the initial teacher education students. On Day Two of the Second Transnational Meeting of TILL, the project group had the chance to conduct focus group discussions with Initial teacher education students around the core competencies that had been developed to date. Some of the comments made by the students include the following:

- *The main aim in the classroom is the creation of a cohesive learning community.*
- *The pupils must support each other.*
- *Subjective excellence is the reference and must be shown through practice.*
- *Game methods are the most effective.*
- *The soft skills need to be developed across all subjects.*
- *You cannot develop the soft skills for teaching in universities... You must enter a teaching situation.*
- *Teachers are constrained by standards.*
- *Awareness and mastery are important as is situational learning.*
- *Teaching needs to be more open... more personal... more about formation.*
- *Not enough is said about the importance of cooperation with the family.*

- *In Italy we need to challenge the expectation of the “maestro”.*
- *Working with families is important, but in some cases, there is a lack of cooperation... a lack of education inside the family.*
- *The children see the difference of values between schools and families.*
- *The classroom has often become the place to act out the problems of the society...Society pressure in being told what to do.*
- *There is a lack of integration of technology. The curriculum is rigid and national priorities dominate. There is an increasing gap between the school and the society.*
- *Now the focus is on a knowledge programme for children and there is no focus on education and values... We have lost the focus on the process.*
- *We need to educate broadly, not just transfer knowledge to children.*
- *Start with games experience.*
- *We must not forget that they are children...More listening needed... More difficulties in the society and the children need strategies to cope.*
- *There is less listening. A competence area for teachers should be on listening skills.*
- *Before in Italy we had the possibility two teachers in the classroom at the same time and they could reflect together.*
- *Competencies need to be divided so that two are not within the same criteria. I also found that some of the terminology was too complicated.*
- *Competencies should focus on the meta-cognition of the teacher and the students, there are different levels... what is a good idea... the idea of a good teacher is variable depending on perception.*
- *Trying to speak with colleagues and exchange ideas about our personal strengths and weaknesses helps you develop as a teacher.*
- *Make the items more operational because they are abstract... they need to be translated into practice*
- *There needs to be a criterion about the importance of the family.*
- *The competencies need recognition of the impact of technology. The issue of technology goes across all the areas.*
- *It is easy to measure the competencies if you take the approach of the child at the centre.*
- *We need to consider both the physical space but also the social and emotional space in the classroom.*
- *Individual differences are fundamental. The successful methods are very different.*
- *Teachers watch and learn from the children...The importance of looking and listening to the children.*
- *There is a cycle... Assessment, simulation, observation... We need longer term observations*
- *Children experience learning materials through different approaches.*
- *Judgements about self-efficacy are important*
- *Will the teacher use this type of system? They will use it if it is more concrete and so easier to measure. We need to trust teachers (a critique of self-evaluation).*
- *Where should these competencies be presented if they are important for example in ITT, in CPD etc? Also, you need to separate the knowledge of from the ability to apply this and this differs as well in terms of the ability for recognising this in the child?*
- *These are competencies are very important what do we do if the teacher does not have the competencies?*
- *These soft skills can be taught and learnt.*
- *What is the role of the headteachers in evaluating these competencies?*

- *The competencies need to show the difference between primary and secondary. The biggest gap in competencies is in the secondary.*

3. Reflection on the London meeting and project development

The meeting in London highlighted the problem of quality of teachers and created a high-level debate. It was expressed that the report of this meeting did not capture the richness of the debate. There is a high level of interest in the topic and potential implications of the project to vocational education, adult learning and technical learning.

4. Communication and work processes

The following comments were made about the work processes and internal communications in the project thus far:

- Some colleagues did not like the bottom-up approach to the interim reporting, stating that the project lead should have requested specific information
- It was agreed that there is a need more interaction and improvements in communication
- Project team members need to enter the content discussion and find the debatable points
- Creativity could be developed... Need someone who enters a conversation
- The quality of the project is in the interaction
- The partners did not talk too much
- It is important to say everything we think
- It is about sharing work and not dividing work
- Increase the interaction e.g. One day per month for skype meetings
- The risk is that we take the communication a bit too formally and we do not exploit the potential of being together enough
- Important we all give feedback to the work
- Relationships with each other is an important aspect of the project
- Perhaps we can work together on the same thing
- We can use zoom webinar
- Mental focus is needed before the meeting

5. Public reporting

The following comments were made about the external communications of the competency tool:

- People are interested in this project and eager to hear and listen to what we propose
- Globalisation might be sensitive e.g. growing mood towards nationalism and 'sovereignism'
- Need to go in the public arena and make the project visible
- Is the report to be research or for practitioners? Need to think about sharing and audiences
- Small communities of intent
- Promoting the system for certification
- Vice-Chancellor wants to create a future teacher education (Sweden) - 100 million SEK (10 million Euro) invested in developing the education
- Potential political influence of the project
- Under build the tool with research but communicate it in an easy way.
- Reduce the complexity of the second paper

- France has contacted the FREREK network throughout Europe and to get interest from them and now they are expecting news and developments. “We have got interest from them and now we need to feed them.”

6. Summary of findings from the Countries Report (Output 1)

The summary of the results of the Countries Report was presented to the group and the following key points of analysis were formulated:

- 6.1 **CPD regulations quite new.** In different Member States different groups have ownership of CPD. For example, in some states, it is very top-down and system-driven, while in other states it is not mandatory and is driven by the needs of the individual or the school. Given this, we will face differing perceptions of desirability to obtain certification. Should we therefore think about making certification optional?
- 6.2 There is a question around lifelong learning – namely, **are we focusing on lifelong learning for pupils or teachers?** How do we recognise other types of learning? The most interesting examples of Lifelong Learning embedded in teacher education came from Ireland. Lifelong Learning does not just occur in formal settings but also in collaboration with businesses, cultural institutions and throughout life in general. Teachers are the focus, but we want to promote the ideal of teachers inspiring or transferring the ‘Lifelong Learning Fever’ to the students. There is a high correlation between Lifelong Learning and self-regulation of teachers and the engendering of those behaviours in pupils.
- 6.3 Respondents favoured using the tool to develop **influential networks of teachers.** In some places teachers would not object to some form of obligation but in other places, any sense of obligation could be highly contentious. In an ideal model, we would want to install a multiplication dynamic (visibility, networking and broadcasting) effect. The reality is that we may need to think about how it can be implemented differently in different countries.

7. Themes emerging

At the end of the interim project meeting held in Italy, the following key themes have emerged for the project:

- 7.1 **Learning-to-learn competencies** should be the focus of the competence framework
- 7.2 There needs to be an additional whole area ‘Number Five’ around **creativity**, including strengthening the whole area of creativity. There is a need to include aspects such as humour, arts, interpersonal development, personality development. Every teacher is an artist - Artistic teaching... Creating joys... Creativity... “My school is into so much creativity we are implementing it every day.” Creativity is a disruptive element.
- 7.3 The tool needs to also look at including more around **ethical and responsible education** e.g. Heart brain academy development. Teaching is about relationships, with the child, with the parents and with the community. Need to focus on transversal skills.
- 7.4 Need to remain focused on enhancing **teacher mobility.**
- 7.5 The use of **the tool must be presented in a very positive way to teachers.** For example, can the tool help teachers to enjoy their teaching more or get better overall results for the children? Can the tool give greater control and autonomy to the teachers? For example, the teachers can choose what they want to learn and improve in. Could there be greater use made of self and peer assessment? Could the tool give teachers access to experience abroad? For example, can teachers apply for a grant to go abroad, or get access free or subsidised projects or CPD? The tool must link to the day-to-day challenges and experiences of the teachers. There must be reasons to participate in the tool and something which motivates teachers to try their competencies. It is better to build interest in completing the tools from the bottom-up, rather than imposing it on teachers. For example, teachers

could do it more as a pledge... Standing for a vision... Stimulating wellbeing of children. Or teachers might use the tool for self-checking, being visible, or getting access to inspiring material. It would be good to get engaged teachers to start networks around the tool.

7.6 We need to think now about **sustainability and the longevity of the project**. Could we work with partners e.g. Education Endowment, OECD (PISA), educational charities? A model like the European Computer Drivers' License (ECDL) could be used. Perhaps teachers could be incentivized by ministries to complete it or through support from the Principals' Council. Alternatively, a model of autonomous management by teachers, schools, heads, local authorities might be more effective. The tool needs to be accessible and cheap and based on community and promoting international cooperation.

7.7 **Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted, counts**. The challenge is that some schools adopt a narrow focus on results whereas we know that schools that offer the balance achieve the best results.

8. The competencies

Considerable discussion occurred about the nature and types of competencies which should be included. The suggestion was that the number and variety of competencies had to be made broader and more inclusive. Moreover, in considering including, or not, a given competency it must be able to be 'measured' in some way to determine if a teacher possesses that competency. It was agreed that while some competencies are easier to 'measure' than other competencies, the ease of measurement should not be used to prioritise (or de-prioritise) certain important characteristics. Throughout this discussion, it also became clear that at times the shared definitions and understanding of some of the terms being used was not consistent. As a result, this section contains some links to articles and definitions related to some of the concepts as well as an overview of the competencies to be included in the tool (see the points noted below).

8.1 Identify the competencies. The competencies need to focus on "knowing how to think and how to learn" rather than focusing on knowledge and learning.

8.2 Motivation and pleasure are important competencies

8.3 Constructivist learning²

8.4 Competencies can be gained during and after school and in the curriculum., in school but outside the classroom, and out of school time.

8.5 Mastery goals versus performance goals for example, Carol Dweck³ on the mastery curriculum.

Not IQ but cognitive strategies and cognitive styles - Metacognition⁴

8.6 Bandura's self-efficacy scale⁵

8.7 Focus on intuition and ways of learning

8.8 Mindset⁶ development: For example, the capacity to 'feel' the outcome and to act in the learning process as if the outcome is already there... Mindset and the start of a lesson...How the teacher already thinks about the child... Train yourself to be the most successful. Much more possible than we bring to reality.

² Please see the following articles for more details

https://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&as_vis=1&q=constructivist+learning+theory&og=Constructivist+learning

³ Please see the following articles for more details

https://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?q=mastery+learning+Carol+Dweck&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholar

⁴ Please see the following articles for more details

https://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0,5&as_vis=1&q=definitions+of+metacognition

⁵ Please see the following articles for more details

https://scholar.google.co.uk/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&as_vis=1&q=Bandura%27s+self-efficacy+scale&btnG=

⁶ Please see the following articles for more details <http://psycnet.apa.org/buy/2013-44711-001>

8.9 Social constructivist⁷ views of education. For example, learning is embedded in practice – learning as lived experiences

- 8.10 Soft skills can be learnt... Promotion of a learning organisation
- 8.11 Continuous education is the most important condition for achieving these goals.
- 8.12 Focus more on theories of learning⁸ than the content of the curriculum
- 8.13 Skills for the 21st language, digital, school work
- 8.14 Skills for inclusive citizenship, inclusion
- 8.15 Personality
- 8.16 Motivation
- 8.17 Emotional intelligence
- 8.18 Leadership
- 8.19 Teacher as researcher
- 8.20 Awareness
- 8.21 Emotionality
- 8.22 Subjectiveness
- 8.23 Aesthetics
- 8.24 Ethics

9. Key Competencies

Reference was made to the summary of key competencies as these had emerged from the London Meeting. This is the list of those key competencies:

- Collaboration, cooperation and teamwork
- Written communication
- Oral communication and presentation skills
- Creativity and innovation
- Empathy including cultural awareness
- Problem-solving skills including reasoning, critical thinking and connecting ideas
- The ability to learn new technologies quickly
- Lifelong learning including autonomy and the ability to learn actively
- Analysis and evaluation skills
- Creativity and imagination
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Information and data literacy
- Leadership, trust and citizenship
- Motivation, initiative and curiosity
- Networking and relationship-building
- Designing and making
- Entrepreneurship
- Risk taking, resilience and learning from failure
- Imagination and perceptiveness

⁷ For definitions and examples, please see the following article
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15326985ep2901_4

⁸ For example, please see the following article
http://web.msu.ac.zw/elearning/material/temp/1310993982learning_theories.pdf

- Independent working and autonomy
- Organizational skills (planning, time management, deadlines, prioritization, multi-tasking)
- Project management
- Attention to detail
- Leadership and people management

10. Going forward: Developing and communicating the tool

The following practical and design considerations are to be considered in the develop and implementation of the tool:

- 10.1 Need to think about how we market the model e.g. how to translate and communicate models for the teacher such as including 2-minute movies.
- 10.2 There are not enough stories of great teaching in the media.
- 10.3 In the tool we need to also put suggestions e.g. “Why not should try this?”
- 10.4 We cannot have a sort of ‘tick box and complete’ model as developing these skills is lifelong work.
- 10.5 The tool needs to focus on celebrating what teachers know and what they have – not just highlighting what they lack.
- 10.6 The tools need to capture something emotional to move people and recruit.
- 10.7 What can I do to promote, develop and empower the potential of my students? - To get the best potential out of every student.
- 10.8 We need to avoid the tyranny of matrix and the marketisation of teaching - Creativity and the arts are the defence against a closed, ‘accountability’ style of education.
- 10.9 Incorporate the enthusiasm of young people to make the world a better place.
- 10.10 Need to appeal to teachers and strengthen their passion for teaching from day one.
- 10.11 Teaching is personal development and personality, and so the tool needs to reveal something already in them – so that teachers recognise their own competency.
- 10.12 Can the tool promote more collaborative schools/teachers? Focus on the teaching personality and the uniqueness of his or her professional characteristics.
- 10.13 Life skills and soft skills
- 10.14 Transversal skills and inclusion

Some factors which need to be considered in the design process include:

- Online help menu
- Capacity for links to networks/groups
- Links to resources
- Glossary
- Authentication
- Presentation of the project
- Registration to TILL community
- Registration to obtain a printable certification online
- Access to external assessment centre (e.g. Universities in the partnership) Anne is against external assessment
- Access to learning resources
- Help on line
- Capacity to do it for personal interest without certification and for certification

- Peer online certification
- Exchanging experiences (e.g. short videos, sharing spaces)
- Taking new approaches emerging from the classroom (e.g. photographs)

Each partner should host multiplier events, bearing in mind the 25 participants to pilots possibly from different education levels. The website and logo will be ready for public events. It is anticipated that the next meeting will be in Lyon in May 2019, with the final meeting in Brussels in 2020.