

DESIRE



Report on the 1st Teacher Online Discussion Event

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1. Introduction

The primary objective of the DESIRE project is to identify how new project results of methods and practices in science education can reach teachers and schools more efficiently. The online discussion events (ODE) of DESIRE are used to facilitate the sharing of experiences between stakeholders in science and math education. The ODEs has the purpose of collecting qualitative material for the DESIRE Project.

This report is a summary of the first teacher Online Discussion Event which took place in the period 11-13 July 2012 and was moderated by Carlos Cunha, teacher of Physics and Chemistry at Escola Secundária Dom Manuel Martins, in Setubal, Portugal.

During the three day event teachers were invited to discuss how they are informed about European and national science education project results. The following sections contain summaries of the discussed themes each of the three days and the outcome of the discussions.

2. Day 1

The first day of the 1st teacher online discussion event had a focus on the various dissemination channels that teachers can access to get results from Science Education projects. To structure the discussion, we mentioned different types of dissemination channels, and invited teachers to point out the channels they prefer to use and why. We also asked for more information on the channels teachers perceive as not working

This first day had a high level of participation and there were especially high interest in discussing the use of Social Media tools as dissemination channels. When discussing their use of Facebook, the majority mentioned that they use Facebook for fun, in informal situations. Nevertheless, some teachers have used it in projects with their students.

Most teachers said they prefer twitter, since *"You can receive information as an audience (if you want) or, on the other hand you can just send information"* and because *"you can choose the kind of information you want to receive. It is very easy and comfortable to use."*

Smartphone news applications was also mentioned as a good tool to disseminate information, they have the advantage of mobility but as one of the participants mentioned *"smart is used quite often, but not at a very large scale because of the relatively high cost"*. It probably will be a good dissemination tool in a near future, if they are not replaced by tablets.

The participants were also invited to discuss Traditional media channels, but here the participation was low. Of the 4 questions proposed by the moderator, only 2 replies were posted by teachers. Participants were invited to mention why they did not participate in the traditional media discussions. This way we could identify if the cause was due to a confusing structure of the discussion event with too many threads or due to an uninteresting subject for them?

3. Day 2

The focus on the second day of the event was to discuss what teachers thought could create better dissemination results when reaching out to teachers with information on national and European science and math project results.

However, more than pointing "Ways to improve dissemination", participants referred to the difficulties and reasons for low dissemination of information and results. Some mentioned that if a teacher is not motivated to new methodologies, he will not look for information about it.

Some teachers mentioned the necessity for project managers to try to find new ways to reach teachers and it was suggested that teachers who go to project workshops and conferences should have the obligation of participating in meetings with local teachers to disseminate information learned from the conferences and workshops on the different projects.

A good example was referred: *"In Romania, every school has a teacher who is a European information multiplier (I am in my school). It's actually a network of multiplier which advises and inform about European projects and International Relation."* - It could be a good idea for other countries.

Some participants expressed difficulties with understanding the languages used in the workshops: It was easier if workshops could be in their mother tongue.

4. Day 3

The third day of the online event tried to determine key information to catch teachers' attention when disseminating project results.

It was mentioned that communication and dissemination of new and inspiring methodologies and resources are more interesting and effective for teachers if they are presented by peers.

"It is important to support the effort of teachers that are motivated to spread out the word on innovative teaching methods and invest in professional development of teachers including in-service training."

It was also said that new methodologies should be at the national curricula of all the European countries.

A factor mentioned to be important to motivate teachers to apply new methodologies to their teaching is the stability of teachers. It is considered as an advantage when a teacher works in the same school over long periods. Teachers can this way find it meaningful to try out new methodologies as they are able to follow the results of the changes of practice on their own students along the years.

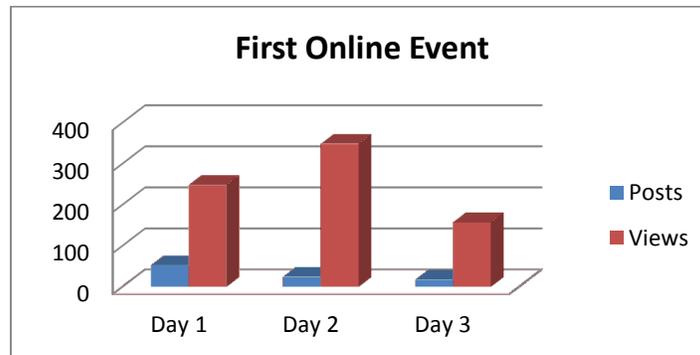
Finally, it was mentioned that if projects encourage competition among teachers, it could work as an encouragement for the participation and application of new methodologies, especially if the prize is teaching equipment for the school: *"it was a project last year about trans-disciplinarily and teachers*

were invited to participate at a competition. Award: equipping schools with labs multi-touch: 8 / country. Thus, we won multi-touch tablets for students. It was very motivating ...”

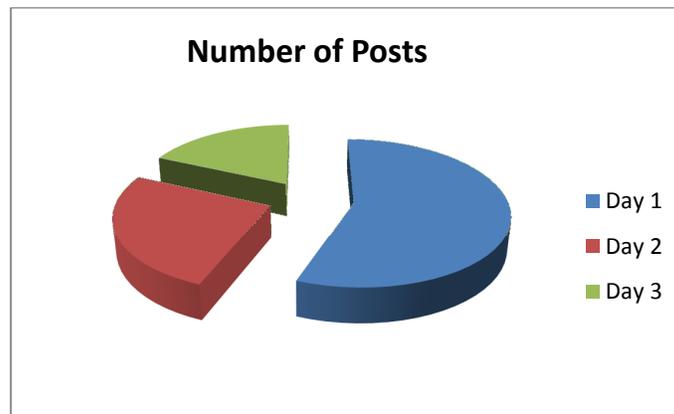
5. Participation

Along the three days event, we had 93 posts and about 753 views. The high amount of views might be interpreted as the result of a successful dissemination of the event. We believe that some viewers might have hesitated to participate due to the language barriers, since we had invited teacher from all over Europe to participate in the event and in other cases because the point of views viewer had already been formulated by other participants.

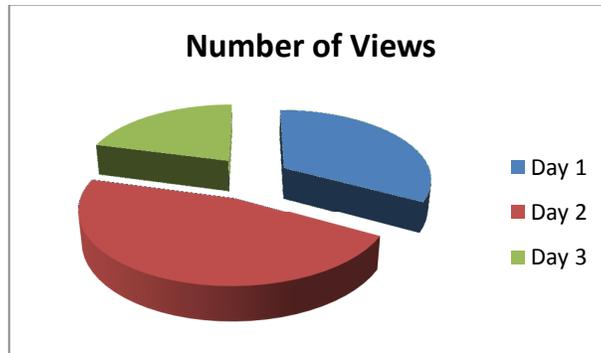
The distribution of the posts and views per day is shown on the next figure:



The first day had the highest number of posts, as shown in the next figure:



The day with more views was the second day:



The statistics from this first teacher ODE show that the event had a reasonable participation level from which we can drag useful ideas and experiences of the participants that can contribute to the identification of better dissemination practices in future science and math projects.

6. Conclusion

It was possible to determine the experience of the participating teachers about all the threads discussed for which we can conclude that the quality of the posts were very good. Furthermore, having the event taking place in a period of the year where most teachers are on summer holidays, participation level was actually surprisingly high.