

Italian Reflections on the second CORVET workshop in Turkey

CORVET Project 12th to 15th March 2012

The second workshop of CORVET - Project took place in Turkey in early spring. The atmosphere was friendly and we had the opportunity also to visit some touristic places and got the chance to learn more about Turkish culture and history which is important to better understand the Turkish way of life.

The official meeting started on Monday 12th march with a pleasant and cultural visit. After breakfast, we boarded a specially chartered bus to take us to Capadoccia. On the way we stopped by for a guided tour of Hacibektas. After lunch, we were finally on our way to the ancient place of Cappadocia which, in its hey days, accommodated many people, especially Catholics who were escaping Roman persecution.

The day after, the 13nd March, at 9 o'clock all partners were ready to work. The workshop was rich of content and informative.

After the presentation of the results of the German start-up in Paderborn lead by Prof. Marc Beutner in which he pointed out that the participants evaluate the first meeting as a very positive, useful and informative event; all partners shared the Career Orientations within their individual countries.

The German team started providing an overview about the new career orientation approaches in Germany.

In Germany there are different ways to do an apprenticeship. Most of the students try to do an apprenticeship in the so-called dual system. This means that the apprenticeship takes place in both schools (VET school) and enterprises. Every apprentice in initial vocational education in German Dual System has a contract with the enterprise he works in and has to cope with a final exam at the end of his vocational training. If he passes this exam he gets a certificate from the appropriate chamber for example chamber of commerce and industry etc...

Another option is to do a fulltime apprenticeship as a student in VET schools and get a grade as an assistant or to gain a further education degree.

Career orientation in Germany focuses on the individual development. The new orientation approach, will be emphasized via a strength-oriented method which is organized within the curricular modules.

These modules can be defined in: an information phase, a decision phase (analyzing skills and possibilities) and a realization phase. This process is a revolving one in which the students have the chance to improve their basic

skills and prove their occupational choice in the context of practical experiences in enterprises. To achieve this goal the three modules make use of the principles cooperation, individualization, personalization, and strength orientation. The final step is creating a portfolio in which students point out their own strength.

The portfolio work offers a great range of opportunities because it has different components such as reflection and communication, assessment, activity and the learners can use it for example as a working portfolio, a showcase portfolio, a presentation portfolio or an assessment portfolio. One of the biggest advantages of such a portfolio approach is that it documents the individual development as well as it can be used as an initial point to analyses and reflect on the individual development process.

The UK approach has some similarities with the German one; In UK, in fact, all 16 year old students have to compile Portfolio of their career plans after their compulsory education. By the way this probably will change because by 2015 compulsory education in the UK would be extended up to age 18.

Mr Raj pointed out the UK situation. Career orientation in the United Kingdom can be divided into information, advice, guidance (be able to make progress in career planning, facilitating self-awareness and the ability of making decision) and counseling (improve the capacity to face difficulties and resolve problems that interfere with their ability to cope with life). This kind of service takes place in schools, for all ages at any stage available.

Moreover students have to occupy a subject which is called "careers education". This must be studied but may not lead to examinations unlike the compulsory subjects like English, mathematics etc...

In Turkey Career Orientation starts from an early stage. Individual has a great importance and it starts with personal, family and societal goals.

Learners are exposed to career prospects at all three levels and in schools, teachers are asked to deliver aspects of career advice.

Career guidance and information services is coordinated by the Turkish Employment Service Research Centre; It facilitates the training of teachers and career advisors throughout the Turkish territory and it also help to organize nationally psychometric tests available for teachers when needed.

There is a Counseling Department in each school and vocational Centre and it has the role of carrying out the national standardized tests that take place at age 14. Thanks to the scores gained in this kind of tests, learners are guided, on different fields, like arts, sciences, social sciences, foreign languages, Turkish, mathematics and sports etc...

As in UK, Turkish schools have a career guidance focused towards higher education there is a lot of pressure on learners at 14 to do well as the norms of society and expectations are somewhat different.

It also seems that Vocational Education, although widely available, does not take priority and societal views mean it is also considered second rate after the academic routes of sciences and mathematics.

As far as Italy is concerned we pointed out, that there is a very low job mobility due to the school system. At the age of 13-14 the students have to decide what kind of school they want to choose and this has a great impact on the future career.

This system makes it difficult for the employees to change the company they work for or their type of work in an early stage.

In the process of school respectively occupational choice it is therefore necessary that the studies must be in line with the designated profession.

This situation seems more complicated because there is no specific person to help the students in the process of their career orientation. The family plays the dominant and biggest role in this process.

The first contact with the labor market is usually in the last two years of high school in form of a two week internship in a company.

In Italy the work experience program is similar to UK and unlike UK which does not have much of a manufacturing base; Italy's advantage, like Germany and Turkey, is that it also has a manufacturing industry. Learners could therefore, be trained or given work experience opportunities in many sectors, including the travel and tourism sector. Due to the current economic crisis since 2008, employers are reluctant to incur costs for such programs and work experience seems to have fizzled out. Additionally, in the last year, unemployment in Italy has also risen and work experience programs have been curtailed both by the employers and education sector.

Moreover we have to underline the fact that Italian schools seem to be conduct more theoretical lessons rather than the practical experience.

Another final critical that we have to point out is that the students have a very high entrance age at universities and consequently in the world of work.

The Turkish partner organized, for the COR-VET group, a visit at the Technical High School in Kirsehir, the Public Education Center and the KIRSSEHIR MILLI EGITIM MÜDDÜRLÜĞÜ and had a little overview of how the Turkish education system works.

The hospitality of the Turkish team culminates with a pleasant cultural night where different groups of learners gave impressions of their country and what is typical and traditional in the particular national context.

This event was very entertaining and offered the opportunity to become more familiar with the partners and their different culture.

Such kind of experience shows us how are beneficial cooperative projects are. Work together towards a common aim enlarges the personal and cultural horizon of the participants.

Cultural understanding and knowledge enhance giving reasons for a better and deep dialogue between countries and it is fundamental in solving a common issue.

This bonding exercise not only helps in the lifelong learning process but also enhances friendly competition between nations while enhancing individual opportunities.

On Wednesday morning the group worked in two times.

On one hand the core COR-VET partners discussed the questionnaire and survey about career orientation in the participating countries; whereas on the other, learners discussed what could be learned about vocational education and career orientation from the countries within the COR-VET project.

The final conclusion is that every system has to answer the same questions but try to handle it in a similar way with a particular and different focus. They value the COR-VET project as a great opportunity to combine the different ways, develop a common approach and face the challenges of common European questions in the common field of VET.

Un fortunately we lost the final summarizing meeting on Thursday.

We can say to be extremely happy for both the good work and the great hospitality of our Turkish partners who received us in an extremely polite and cordially way.