

Transcript for DRGC Training video #1

Could you please introduce yourself?

Yeah, hi, I'm Simon Harris. I'm the Director of International House Sofia, in Bulgaria.

Okay, and I understand you're the lead partner in a project called Developing Responsible Global Systems.

That's right, yes. It's an Erasmus Plus project, KA2, and there are four partners on the project. And exactly that, it's about producing a curriculum that could be used in English language teaching to make students more aware of the issues, obviously, and challenges that we face today.

Okay, so can you explain what motivated you to start this project?

Yes, I think there were a number of motivations. One of them was that we felt that the materials and course books that we were using in the classroom were a bit out of date. And not only that they were out of date, but there's an inability, obviously, when you've got a paper-based book, there's an inability to keep it up to date. So within two years, a lot of the themes and topics are maybe not current, let's say. So that was one.

Another one was to try and bring in a lot more skills work. So, you know, people are talking about 21st century skills. I mean, these have been around since the beginning of human recorded history, let's say. But having been classified, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, things like that, we wanted to incorporate that.

We thought it was very important, particularly when students started to leave and go into university and maybe into jobs, that there were a number of skills that maybe weren't covered by course books. Project management, to an extent. It's certainly in some course books, but not in others. And then also just taxonomy, which was, for example, assess, evaluate, justify, judge. These require, let's say, different approaches. And so therefore, it's very important that students understand how to use that. And when they get on to university, they need to already be prepared for that.

Can you outline what are the main components of the project? What are the main outcomes?

So the main outcomes of the project are, first of all, that we've produced what we call a syllabus builder. And this is a software programme where you can select Common European Framework descriptions and the Developing Responsible Global Citizen, the DRGC, learning outcomes as well.

And these are under five topics, which we call CHEDI, which are Community, Health, Environment, Diversity, Innovation. And so what you can do as a teacher or a director of studies, is you can very quickly produce a curriculum or a syllabus based around those topics, the CHEDI topics.

Alongside that, obviously, there's a teacher's handbook, which helps to not only explain how to use the software, but also gives you other areas to look at, such as how to run debates, how to put projects together.

And there are also a series of videos, how-to videos, that also support the handbook as well as the syllabus builder.

OK. And what's the thinking behind the CHEDI topics then?

Well, one of the drivers, obviously, and probably the easiest one to refer to, are the European Union and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, of which there are 17. And some of them maybe cross over a little bit, if you've had a look at them. And some of them are maybe a little bit complex for an English language centre, an English language teaching centre. And so the idea was to try and just compress those down to five easy topics.

OK, thank you. And you've also mentioned 21st century skills, so how do you imagine these are going to fit into the project?

OK, so I think if you're looking at particular activities, so for example, the Common European Framework Descriptors will include those in some particular way. So maybe I can discuss, you're talking about collaboration, let's say. I can critically assess, and then you're using those. So that's one way of doing it. Projects is another very important part, and I think projects actually include all of those 21st century skills. As you're looking at moving between the different stages of a project, you're looking at creativity, you're looking at collaboration if you're doing it in a group. You're looking at gaining confidence by presenting in front of a group of people, presenting your idea or presenting your project. So I think project management, which is a key aspect of it, that also involves those 21st century skills.

OK, and this sort of thing would be built into the syllabus that a teacher designs?

Absolutely, it should be, yes. And in the teacher's handbook as well. So the teacher's handbook gives theories and ideas about how you might develop your methodology, as I said, through debates, growth mindsets, creating teams within the classroom. These are all ways that 21st century skills will be extenuated within the classroom.

So how would you like to see teachers or academic managers using the outcomes of this project in the future?

I think that the syllabus build is designed in a way that you could either produce a complete syllabus, which is very much based around those CHEDI topics, or it might be used in combination with a course book. So you might dip in, choose, select some of those. But rather than writing them yourself, they're there to be able to grasp straight away. So I would see teachers definitely using it within the classroom alongside their course book or alongside their course. They may do an hour session, they may base a project on some of those CHEDI topics, the learning outcomes, DRGC and the CEF learning outcomes.

And it may very well be that if you're maybe doing individual tuition, you might sit there with your student or students in a class at the beginning of the course and say, look, what

areas are you interested in? And then you could design that syllabus together. So I would see teachers using it fully or in part.

Okay, thank you. How do you envisage the project evolving in the future?

So at the moment, we're at the syllabus builder level. And as you say, if the syllabus is regarded as the language learning outcomes for a common European framework. So, for example, the language learning outcomes for a 40-hour course of B1, let's say, then the curriculum is a series of those syllabi. I would see the project as going the other way, which is that you don't just have the learning outcome, but then you'll have lessons, links to very useful topics or videos, or worksheets that relate to that particular learning outcome. And then obviously the instructional notes for teachers to be able to use.

So at the moment, the project doesn't include the development of study materials or teaching resources, but there may be reference to them included in the syllabus?

Yes, absolutely. Yes, that's where it is. There will be reference to them at this particular point in time. But we haven't, say, for example, designed the lesson, that's then up to the teacher to do. So this is a prompt, let's say, for what you want to achieve by the end of the lesson. The actual activities, materials, stages to achieve that learning outcome, at this point are up to the teacher completely. There are other projects that are going on where the materials are already there that could easily be implemented. But at this particular point, we haven't gone into the actual lesson plan stage.

So that might be the logical next step?

I think almost definitely. Yeah, yeah, definitely. And it may be that you're presiding over materials or it might be just, you know, follow these five simple stages. But yes, it would definitely be going into more detail rather than expanding it into a larger area.

Okay, thank you. Any other comments or suggestions?

I think, again, it's a matter of just having a go, you know, having a look at how useful it will be to you and the interest of the students as well. It's very adaptable, so you could, for example, you can focus on writing or speaking, or you could focus on pollution, or you can focus on diversity. So it's very adaptable in that way. And I think you want to go in, maybe a needs analysis of your students about the areas that they want to focus on, what they're interested in, what affects them in their daily life. There are a lot of practical things that they can implement practically in their daily lives to maybe contacting, you know, other organisations within their community, having a look at local charities and things like that.

So there's a lot of practical implementation through it as well. So it's a matter of just investigating those sort of different avenues and seeing what's most appropriate for your learners in that respect. And what is within your own interests.

Brilliant. Thank you.

You're welcome.

