Western and Northern Europe

Case Study 7: Future Learning, an education programme for English Language students using advanced technology enhanced learning - based in Donabate, Co Dublin

Future Learning has confidently classed itself as being different, innovative and exciting" David Ganly, founder of Future Learning

Success factors

- A unique approach to teaching English language through technology
- Paperless lessons
- Use online platforms for communication between students, teachers and parents
- Harness the power of mobile technology
- ePortfolios display students' work instantly online and allow friends, family and classmates to view it all over the world.
- Technologically advanced building with 100 Megabyte Broadband, a wireless infrastructure which can cater for up to 10,000 mobile devices, classroom facilities with top of the range interactive touch screen boards and computers
- Web design modules

About the project

Future Learning was established in June 2014 by David Ganly and Anne Rautkoski and its focus is to provide top quality and unique summer programmes. Peter Lahiff joined the organisation in its first year and brought his experience of running summer language programmes to bear on the implementation of the concept of a technology enhanced language programme. David Ganly said it was evident from his experience of both second level schools and summer language programmes, that there was a growing need for change among summer courses, most notably in adapting teaching styles to teenagers' needs: "Students are now arriving in Ireland each year with improved levels of English and they now have increased expectations on the use of daily technologies both inside and outside the classroom', he said.

The entire schooling at Future Learning is centred around harnessing the everyday devices which students are familiar with and eager to use in the classroom. These devices include tablets, mobile phones, desktop computers, laptops, interactive and touch screen boards. Future Learning only works in schools and institutes that can cater for their learners' needs and provide modern 21st Century learning

environments.

In addition to unique high end junior summer programmes Future Learning also offers year round mini stay programmes, year round academic year placements in top Irish schools and innovative teacher training.

Project achievements

With the outstanding success of year one in terms of student and agent feedback leading to a significant growth in student numbers, Future Learning has now become a recognised name and has expanded into the UK, where a second centre opened in Canterbury in 2016. Future Learning also operates two additional summer centres in Athlone and Sligo. In addition, Future Learning has delivered its unique teacher training programme to schools in Europe, Asia and of course Ireland.

Technology infrastructure and devices

The centre in Donabate Community College is one of the most technologically advanced buildings in Ireland with 100 Megabyte Broadband, a wireless infrastructure which can cater for up to 10,000 mobile devices and classroom facilities with top of the range computers. Devices include tablets, mobile phones, desktop computers, laptops, interactive and touch screen boards.

Digital pedagogy

The entire schooling at Future Learning is centred around harnessing the everyday devices which students are familiar with and eager to use in the classroom. Future Learning run project-based courses, where the students are using their devices as tools for the completion of individual and collaborative projects. Students use their devices to communicate with each other, with their teachers and with their parents back home. For example, every student creates and updates their own ePortfolio and shares daily activities with their friends and their parents back home. These can include short diaries (blogs), videos and photos from their sightseeing and cultural trips the day before. On a more formal level, students break into teams to research various topics of interest in Ireland e.g. theatre/music/sports/culture and each group reports back with a slide presentation on their findings. 'Tech support' teams roam the buildings and students use WhatsApp to contact them and communicate when they need help and support each other.

Teacher confidence and use of technology

The teachers working at Future Learning are part-time workers on summer contracts. All of the teachers recruited have advanced technology skills and are both comfortable and confident embedding technology in both learning and extra -curricular activities.

Teacher Professional Development

Future Learning offers innovative courses for teachers including one and two week courses on 'Making Technology work in the Classroom'. English teaching across Europe is being transformed by the use of technology to enhance language learning although this varies from country to country. There is also a movement towards content integration, which has seen English become the medium of instruction for a proportion of all subjects across the curriculum. The Future Learning in-service teacher training courses are designed to introduce participants to developments in these areas in a practical way.

The in-service teacher training courses are designed for second level teachers who are interested in how technology enhanced learning can be put into practice in their classroom. They consist of workshop-style sessions that focus on allowing teachers to experience the techniques involved. These courses also aim to get participants involved in developing and trying out materials, tools and techniques for use in their own classrooms, whether they teach English as a subject, or use it as a medium of instruction.

EU funds are available to send teachers abroad for professional development in 2017 and Future Learning assists schools in delivering in-service language, culture and methodology training, and in facilitating pedagogical exchange with European educators in their Dublin training centre.

Technology use across the curriculum

Future Learning students study ICT in the mornings where ideally they spend about a third of their time on a 1-1 device, a third using group devices and the final third without a device. This last element involves content integration where subject teachers from across the curriculum give students a taste of subjects like woodwork, electronics, home economics and art. The students spend afternoons away from the classroom doing physical/outdoor activities.

Unusually for a language school, Future Learning assesses learning equally in terms of language skills, technology skills and collaborative skills under a range of criteria drawn from internationally referenced scales. These areas are further divided into topics where students are rated as basic (B), independent (I) or proficient (P) as in Table 1.

Language Skills	B	I	P	Technology Skills	B	I	P	Collaborative Skills	B	I	P
English Communication Skills				Information				Shared Understanding			
Listening Comprehension				Searching				Establishing it			
Reading Comprehension				Storing				Maintaining it			
Spoken Interaction				Organising				Planned problem solving			
Spoken Production				Reliable Sourcing				Establishing it			
Spoken English sub-skills				Selecting				Maintaining it			
Range				Communication				Team organisation			
Accuracy				Interacting				Establishing it			
Fluency				Behaving				Maintaining it			
Coherence				Sharing				Taking initiative			
Control (pronunciation)				Collaborating							
Written English sub-skills				Content Creation							
Range				Producing							
Accuracy				Editing							
Fluency				Modifying Programme Setting							
Coherence				Changing file formats							
Control (spelling)				Knowing Copyright							
				Understanding Programmes							
				Digital Safety							
				Taking care of devices and information							

			Avoiding bullying							
			Problem Solving							
			Asking for support							
			Deciding on action							
			Using creatively							
			Learning skills							

Table 1: Assessment of language learning skills

When students complete the course they receive a certificate like this: