



Schola Europaea

InterParents

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Creation of Electronic Books to support the syllabuses of the European Schools

Joint Teaching Committee – Meeting on 8 and 9 October 2020 – Online

Proposal for OPINION

Introduction

Building on the positive experience with Intermaths in the Primary cycle, InterParents invites the JTC to recommend that the IT Ped Working Group (0178)¹ includes in the scope of its work the creation of electronic books/teaching material to support the syllabuses of the European Schools.

1. Rationale

The syllabuses for the European Schools (ES) are, by definition, unlike the syllabuses of any education system in any single Member State. As a result, each year all teachers, especially those entering the system, often seem to struggle to propose school textbooks to support their lessons. Often parents discover, usually when the year comes to an end, that the books are in perfect shape, not because their child took such good care of them, but because a book was un/under-used throughout the year as the teacher opted to use photocopied material from different sources instead, these also to be paid for by parents and not very 'green'. Sometimes, more than one book must be purchased in order to cover the entire syllabus for a subject. Other times, the only textbook that is well aligned to the European School syllabus has to be sourced from the other side of the world, which is very expensive. The root problem is that rarely, if ever, does the content of a single textbook that was devised for use in a national educational setting correspond sufficiently well to the European School syllabus to be of much use.

A textbook should be more than a collection of content. Ideally, it should also contain exercises that correspond to the learning objectives for each required competence as a means for pupils to practise the skills they will need when their performance is assessed. Former pupils have commented on how hard it is to depend on a textbook that is geared to a different educational system, which has different learning objectives and assessment criteria, even when the textbook covers the same basic material.

Considering moreover that turnover of teachers, prolonged absences etc. are structural challenges for the European schools, it would be useful to elaborate additional teaching material within and across the sections. This could be helpful to teachers and students alike.

Furthermore, building upon the 'Digital Education Vision' of the European Schools and in a time where at any moment classes or entire schools could again shift to distance learning, there is now an urgency to advance this project with speed. It would not only help teachers and students to cope with the syllabus in a concrete way; it would also reduce the costs for parents and the weight of school bags whilst also allowing access to school material in case of absent students or sudden shifts to distance learning.

¹ C.f. 2014-11-D-13-en-5, and 2015-04-D-6-en-3

2. Proposed solution

Considering that the syllabus is the same for all sections (with the obvious exception of L1, L2/3/4) and that significant performance variations between sections have been observed over the years, the aim would be to develop common books for all language sections.

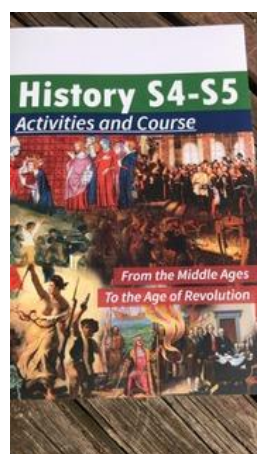
InterParents hopes that the pedagogical subgroup of the IT Working Group ('IT-Ped WG') could provide the logistical and technical frame for this project, (considering that its mandate includes "Evaluate pilot projects [...] involving pedagogical innovation in IT and deploy them in a harmonised fashion in all the schools"; "Propose models for IT use for pedagogical purposes, including for children with special educational needs" and "Put forward recommendations for the pedagogical use of environments for education and training, including remote ones").² Recalling the excellent collaboration that led to the creation of the Inter maths and ES-specific material being used for history, the expertise of the teachers and inspectors will be a crucial pre-requisite to ensure the development of high-quality products. In the following we have started to detail some possible projects:

a) Project 1

History in L2 is one of the most important hallmarks of the ES system, an important strength due to its unique Eurocentric approach. Given that there are in use already some high-quality ES-specific textbooks in some sections/years, the idea would be to make:

- A call to all history teachers of the European School to share (if they have them) their text for electronic books/teaching material created for the ES context.
- An inventory of all these existing textbooks in Human Sciences/History from S3 to S7, which have been created specifically for the ES context.
- A call to create a team with teachers from the vehicular language sections to choose the common textbooks proposed for all languages and years.
- Translations into the missing vehicular languages.

Examples:



Folder of human science in FR/EN/DE.

² 2019-08-D-11-en-3, 2014-11-D-13-en-5, and 2015-04-D-6-en-3

b) Project 2

An experienced former ES teacher has gifted InterParents with the teaching material for the whole Maths secondary syllabus (theory and practical examples). This is available in electronic form in French.

The suggestion would be to publish a call among all maths teachers to put together a team from all language sections to agree on the content and/or update the material. Of course, the material would need to be validated by a specialist/inspector before translation.

It could also be a project opportunity for vulnerable/self-isolating teachers.

3. Proposal

The JTC is invited to give a positive opinion on this proposal: to ask the IT-Ped WG to create and manage a task force to develop electronic textbooks that will support syllabuses of the European Schools, starting with the two 'pilot' projects identified (in History and Maths) and with the development of a project proposal for the next meeting of the JTC in Spring 2021.