

RePro Project

Real-life Business Projects in Multicultural Student Centered learning - RePro has been selected by the European Commission and funded by the Community budget as part of the second phase of the Leonardo da Vinci Community Action Programme on vocational and training. The project has a duration of 37 months starting on 01/10/2004 and ending on 31/10/2007.

RePro Aims

The key aim and innovation of RePro project is to develop a model for producing, testing and using actual business oriented cases and problems in a multicultural learning environment. This is done on one hand by combining educational problems and actual business problems, creating thereby cases that can be used in different types on student centered learning situations and environments. On the other hand, the project takes place in an international learning environment. The main advantage of this setting is that this will enable a large quantity of students, teachers and other involved parties to become aware of cultural differences as far as different aspects of business life and learning are concerned.

The main results of the project are tested case modules (12 REPRO-cases) for student centered learning (SCL), and 2 guide books on how these cases can be used in learning situations. These cases will link real companies and their business problems with learning processes, thereby also combining consulting and learning to give the parties involved new perspectives. The third product is a practical step-by-step model that describes the content and process of developing RePro cases. All these products are different from the traditional case method as we have developed multidisciplinary learning modules which can be used in many different study areas and are related to specific problems of learning tasks.

The RePro case material entails corporate specific information on the business environment, personnel, production, marketing, logistics, accounting and finance. On the other hand the learning task could concentrate on the logistics problems of the firm or on personnel motivation. However, even if the student concentrates on one problem area, she/he has access to the whole case material. This will help the student understand the connection between the different traditional study areas and link the learning process to the real business context.

The results and products of the project will be spread and communicated to all partners and organizations interested in them. The above mentioned results will also be disseminated to the partners' networks of firms and other organizations.

The underlying reasoning behind the project lies in the changing expectations of the business community. It can be argued that the business community expects business school graduates to be self-directed, good at addressing problems, and good at communicating their thoughts both orally and in writing. Students can learn to be more self-directed if they are allowed to practice these skills through different student centered learning methods. Problem solving skills can be developed by training the skills as part of the learning process. Usually this is done by introducing artificial problems, which have been developed by the teachers. Most of the time these problems have no real links to actual multi-disciplinary business problems. This project goes further by developing a model for producing actual business oriented cases to be used in different student oriented environments.

The fact that the corporate environment is becoming increasingly international adds further requirements to business education. This project adds value in this context because the case modules produced and tested by a variety of partners can be used in any country. This will increase the international and cultural awareness of a large number of students, teachers and other involved parties.

The specific aims of this project are:

- to produce real-life international business cases (12 REPRO-cases) to support students' professional learning
- to produce 2 guidebooks (teacher's manual and student's guidebook) to support the using of REPRO-cases in a multicultural learning environment.
- to transfer knowledge between the partners (company-university, university-university) concerning the best practices in student-centered learning methods (e.g. action learning, problem-based learning, case methodology).
- to support the partner companies' learning and participation (e.g. by developing solutions for real-life business problems and setting up development tasks as student projects)
- to create a step-by-step model (REPRO-model) that describes the process of developing SCL-cases in multicultural context.

RePro Target Group

The main target groups are business students in an international context, selected small and medium size companies and their personnel in partner countries (altogether 9 companies) and professional teachers and tutors. The main target sector at the organisational level are partner polytechnics, universities as well as all collaborating companies and co-operators in different business sectors in Europe. However, the potential beneficiaries of this project can be even more numerous. All people looking for professional network and international learning material based on real-business problems can benefit from this project.

The challenge of supporting students' professional learning and development has been widely acknowledged. European professional business education and its learning processes have to be developed as a part of the international professional and academic community. In this context, emphasis on professional education is put on the learning skills and high-level professional knowledge. This means that acquiring of knowledge and its application in a real international business context has become increasingly relevant. Our case approach deals with this problem by offering learning material for students to improve their understanding of how the different functions of business interact and depend on each other. Because this is done by using real business cases, we can also take into account the actual multicultural business environment that impact on business decisions.

Furthermore, the international skills and cultural aspects should be basic elements in all European professional education. At the same time, there is an increasing demand to support entrepreneurship and promote regional development within the local SME sector. However, the knowledge and expertise based on the experience through combining education, learning and real business activities, are still rarely shared and transferred in modern European education.

Given the role of transferring and creating professional knowledge as described above, it is of great importance that professional teachers and tutors pay attention to the requirements of business communities as far as their students are concerned. Based on a number of surveys from recent years (see e.g Pintrich, P., 2000; Pintrich, P. & De Groot, E., 1990; Ruohotie, P., 2002; Zimmerman, B.J., 1998;2000; Schunk, D.H., & Ertmer, P; 2000), there seems to be a need to educate students who are self-directed, good at dealing with and solving problems, good at communicating their thoughts both orally and in writing. Unfortunately, traditional teacher-directed learning rarely reaches this goal. This project focuses on producing student-centred case material, which enables business student's to reach these demanding learning goals by offering learning material for various learning tasks which coach the student's in problem solving skills and finding relevant information to base their decisions on.

RePro Results

There will be different types of results serving the three main target groups: teaching staff and specialists, students and business life. The types of the results are:

- **Tested REPRO-cases** (12 cases) based on multidisciplinary student-centered learning in real business context.
- **2 guide books**; teacher's manual and student's guidebook
- **a step-by-step REPRO-model** of how to create SCL-cases in multicultural context.
- **evaluation reports**; first report on analyzing phase (WP 2.2) and the second reports on the evaluation of the project and its products; self-evaluation report and final evaluation report (see Appendix 4, evaluation plan).
- dissemination material; project brochures and marketing material.

The final products of the project (12 REPRO-cases, 2 guide books and REPRO-model) are available in English in a web-based material package as well as in printed form.

Reports

All reports will be delivered as part of the project work. They will serve especially the teaching staff and other educators but also education researchers. The timing of the reports will be connected with the project schedule so that reports serve also project partners in evaluating the project and developing it further. Reports will be available in the Internet.

Main target groups for the reports are educators and education authorities as well as companies. These reports have been delivered during the first 5 months. Reports of the analysis phase:

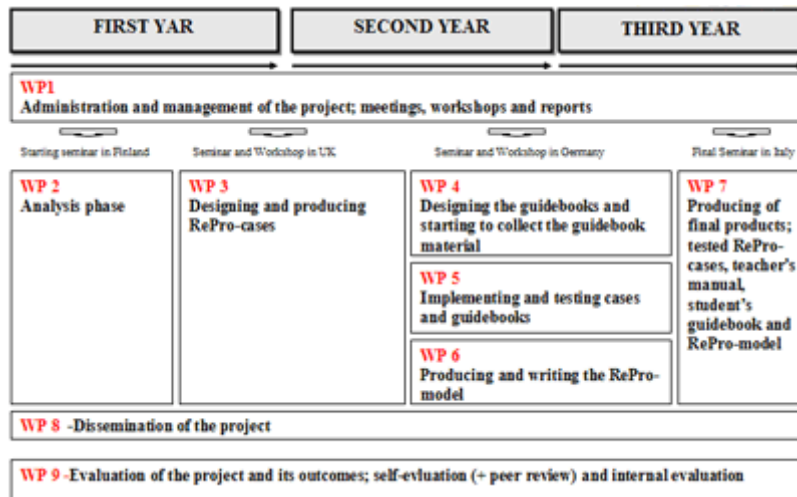
1. **The state of art of SCL-methods**; a report on current knowledge about teaching real-life business topics in partner countries. The situation concerning bridging teaching with real business and working life will be an essential part of the report. This will foster greater understanding in defining the best practices but also aid in embedding context specific background for learning modules and cases developed in the project
2. **Evaluation report of the best practices**, giving advice and hints in using company co-operation in learning. It will point out the benefits and opportunities of student-centered learning to companies and other co-operators, describing the benefits of educational co-operation to the firms.

Reports of the evaluation of the whole project and it' s outcomes

Main target groups for the reports are educators and education authorities as well as companies. These reports will be constructed during the project and published in the end of the project.

1. **Self-evaluation report**; a report on self-evaluation and peer-review during the project
2. **Final evaluation report**; it will point out the quality of the project and its outcomes as well as show the risks of a multicultural project

RePro Project Schedule and Process



Producing Multidisciplinary Learning Tasks on RePro Cases

