connect-VET

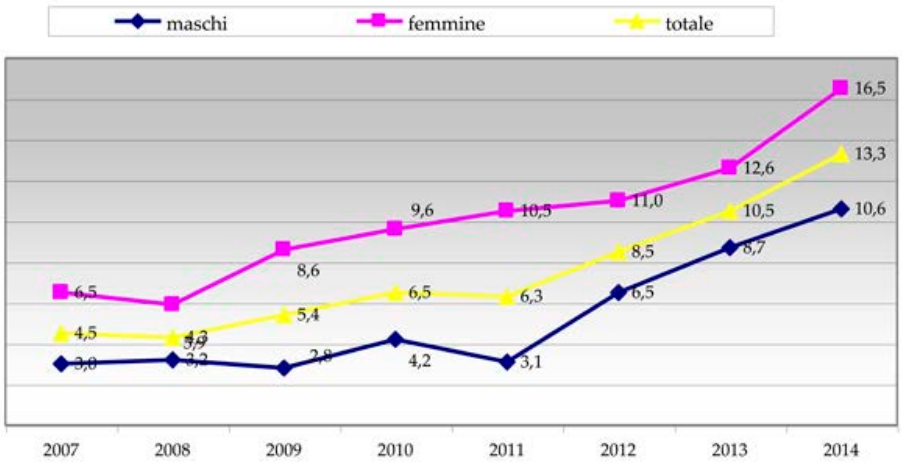
WORK PLACEMENTS

AT ISTITUTO EINAUDI

The pilot is Italy has been focused on how to foster cooperation between rural businesses and higher education and research centres, involved mainly in the field of plant nurseries, with VET providers challenged by government budget cuts and student population at risk. The pilot has shown the challenges on both sides, businesses and educational providers. The small and medium sized businesses are under pressure due to global competition and consolidation processes. The VET providers work in a difficult context, characterized by lower financial resources, decrease in motivation among both students and part of the staff, poor cultural and social background of students.

We decided to adopt as main methodological approach the “work-based learning” as a way to consolidate existing cooperation patterns between businesses and educational providers. Several cooperation models have been used to inspire the activities, including linking with local networks of business, in line with Union of local entrepreneurs (Estonia), as well as adopting new technologies in education, based on Univesity of Florence (Italy) and Pembrokershire College (United Kingdome).

The local socio-economic context is characterized by increasing unemployment rates, also among young skilled and trained people, and among female population.



We realized that even among students with dissatisfying relationships with formal school system and formal studies, work related tasks, practical work and assignments within real working environment are effective ways to motivate them and get the best out of those pupils who would otherwise fail.

We also identified a winning approach in fostering the use of new technologies in the planning and implementation of school activities, as a way of improving attractiveness toward youngsters as well as of innovating ways to approach and interact with businesses.

Lifelong Learning Programme

The partners launched the piloting activities by involving the University of Florence, department of Agriculture, and a further education college, Istituto Einaudi, by looking at how to innovate ways in which students may contribute to rural businesses in the plant nurseries area.

From the first meetings, analyzing typology of work placements, based on the characteristic and study programmes of Istituto Einaudi it emerged a twofold approach: students could accomplish work placements in marketing and promotional field while others, from social sector, could perform activities related with "social green", exploiting the potential of rural businesses in mental, physical and social rehabilitation of vulnerable citizens.

We started by planning a series of seminars, conceived as capacity building sessions, for selected trainers, responsible for either PR, relations with local businesses and work placements. Our aim was to develop, among the participants, awareness on the strengths and weaknesses of their school and jointly develop an innovation strategy which would take into consideration the potential of low budget, though effective, IT solutions. During the seminars we also trained the trainers on ICT, promoting the acquisition of new skills and familiarizing with IT tools. The innovation strategy included the reflection on international relations of the Istituto Einaudi and the opportunity to establish cooperation agreements with businesses and educational providers across Europe.

The immediate practical outcome of these actions has been raising the motivation among trainers, empowering them in the use of IT solutions, promoting a proactive approach in the use of Google education apps and Moodle mobile apps to manage work placements. The improved work flow to manage work placements by using new technologies has contributed to raise the image of the school both internally, toward learners and peer colleagues, as well as externally, with local businesses.

In practical terms, the trainers form Istituto Einaudi have been able during the pilot, with technical assistance from the partners, to set up and configure a dedicated e-learning section, based on Moodle, to assign tasks and monitor progress of work placements of their students. They also learnt how to adopt Mobile apps to integrate with Moodle in order to track progress, achievements and attainment of assignments during the implementation of work placements of their students.

Using new technologies made suddenly the trainers to adopt the same "language" of their students, thus bridging a gap, which sometimes makes it

difficult to ensure full involvement of “difficult” students in formal education.

We believe that the results were positive as the initiative contributed to raise the profile of Istituto Einaudi and to foster relationships between businesses and education.