

ESTONIA [1] - 2012

ICT MANAGEMENT AND ASSESSMENT MODEL FOR SCHOOLS

A. BASIC INFORMATION

Country:	Estonia
Title of initiative:	[EE] <i>IT juhtimise pakett koolidele</i> [EN] ICT management and assessment model for schools
Coordinator/ Organization:	Tiigrihüppe Sihtasutus (Tiger Leap Foundation - TLF)
Key competences addressed:	[EE] <i>digitaalsed kompetentsid</i> [EN] Digital competence; [EE] <i>algatusvõime</i> [EN] Sense of initiative; [EE] <i>probleemi lahendusoskus</i> [EN] Problem solving; [EE] <i>riskianalüüs</i> [EN] Risk assessment; [EE] <i>otsuste langetamine</i> [EN] Decision taking; [EE] <i>kooli juhtimine</i> [EN] School management;
Type of initiative and channels used for implementation (e.g. curriculum reform introduced through legislation etc.)	Curriculum reform – ICT should be used as a teaching and learning tool in all main subjects. Informative seminars in regional centres, TLF website.
Partners:	Schools (administration and ICT departments)
Scope: (student/teacher/school lev- el; local/regional/national)	Teachers, school level and local
Learning context: (formal or non-formal)	Formal and non-formal
School education level/s: (primary, lower secondary, upper secondary)	All education levels: primary, lower secondary, upper secondary
Target groups:	School administrations, ICT department (or person responsible for ICT in schools)
Time frame: (start and end date)	Start: May 2011 (developing the assessment model) 2012 – pilot year 2013 – full programme
Relevant links:	Self-assessment link: http://tiigrihype.mobra-online.com:4007/ Handbook for ICT management: www.tiigrihype.ee/sites/default/files/file_attach/tekstifailid/ITkogumik.pdf

B. SUMMARY

The ICT Management and Assessment Model for Schools project was developed by Tiigrihüppe Sihtasutus (the Tiger Leap Foundation) with the aim of encouraging and improving the use of ICT resources in the teaching and learning process. The project also enables the sharing of best ICT management practices between schools with the help of external ICT management consultants.

The main competence developed through the project is digital competence, with school administrations establishing and working towards the achievement of new ICT goals for their schools in order to support learning; the project also helps to develop a sense of initiative, and problem solving, risk assessment, decision taking and school management skills.

Every school that takes part in the project completes an online self-assessment regarding its ICT management, following which members of the school administration and ICT department are offered ICT management training and all participants receive a best practices in ICT management handbook. Following this training schools undergo a deeper process of self-assessment regarding their ICT management and are provided with an external ICT management consultant who provides feedback and advice according to the results of the self-assessment. External consultants help to identify the gaps between schools' self-assessment and external assessment. All ICT personnel who have participated in the initial training will then have the chance to become an external consultant for another school, giving them an opportunity to discover best practices in ICT management from other schools and to gain a better insight into ICT management in general.

The project is still in the initial pilot phase and has not yet been introduced on a wide scale. Pilot schools have received feedback from external ICT management consultants and the Tiger Leap Foundation is working on summarising all the results

In 2013 the Tiger Leap Foundation intends to launch the full project for any schools who are interested in participating, for which there will be a project cost applied (30% of the project cost should be paid by the school). An Annual Excellence Award will also be given to schools with the most innovative ICT management system.

C. IN DEPTH INFORMATION

Rationale/contextual background/motivation for introducing the initiative/reform:

There was a real demand in Estonian society, particularly from school children and their parents, for a more conscious implementation of ICT in schools, while schools themselves have also expressed dissatisfaction with their ICT infrastructure and services. This project therefore intends to implement curriculum reform that will ensure the use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool in all main subjects. The new curriculum will be introduced in a pilot phase from September 2012.

Objectives:

The main aim is to encourage and increase effective usage of ICT resources in the learning and teaching process.

The project also aims:

- to provide schools with a tool for the systematic assessment, analysis and development of ICT management;
- to develop the ICT skills of staff (teaching and administrative);
- to share best practices.

Dimensions targeted by the initiative/reform (e.g. student curriculum, assessment, initial/in-service teacher education, school autonomy etc.):

Student curriculum; school self-assessment; professional development for teachers and school administration

Overall approach (e.g. holistic – existence of an overarching strategy, or targeted approach focusing on a specific dimension etc.):

The overall approach is a holistic one, focusing on the professional development of teachers and the school administration, as a result of which children will be provided with better conditions for learning and development.

Through developing the understanding and knowledge of ICT of the school administration, the local public administration will have more information and better knowledge of schools' needs in terms of development.

Detailed explanation of the key competence/s concerned:

Digital competence – School administrations and ICT departments at schools are more aware of schools' specific needs and competences and also have a better overview of future plans and needs. With this project they can begin to establish new ICT goals for schools. The project is also important for teaching staff, who are becoming increasingly aware of ICT usage in the classroom and how it supports children's development, by enabling them to carry out more innovative work.

Sense of initiative – School administrations and ICT administration will have to set a concrete goal regarding the development of part of their ICT infrastructure and services or the ICT skills of personnel, etc., which must be accomplished within a short time.

Problem solving / risk assessment / decision taking / school management – School administrations and ICT departments need to decide together the best solutions to the ICT problems faced by the school and should also consider alternative solutions (i.e. they need to be aware of the results of current research on a national and international level). One big part of these competences is communication and all schools will have an external ICT consultant who will help to identify the immediate problems to be solved as well as how the solution to a problem will affect other areas within the school.

Specific subjects concerned or cross-curricular approach:

School administration; professional development for teachers on ICT; making ICT part of the teaching and learning process.

How the initiative/reform is being implemented (e.g. process followed, political commitment, consultation with stakeholders and their respective roles, incentives for stakeholders, dedicated funding, teaching material, definition of goals and standards, assessment and evaluation mechanisms, impact on teacher training/professional development and school practices/leadership, scaling-up approach, based on research/evidence? etc.):

In May 2011 we began to develop the assessment model for schools with an expert group of 15 people, including representatives from TLF, ICT professionals from private companies and ICT managers from schools. We developed an online self-assessment for schools and a best practices in ICT management handbook; discussed the contents of a training program for ICT management; developed an external consultant system for schools and drew up a broader self-assessment form for schools and an external evaluation form for consultant teams.

In March 2012 we began to look for suitable pilot schools. The pilot program was launched in May 2012 with 20 pilot-schools. There are currently 12 schools remaining in the pilot project.

In 2013 we plan to implement the ICT management project in all schools that are interested in participating and will give an Annual Excellence Award to the school with the best and most innovative ICT management practices.

Present stage/phase of implementation:

The pilot-phase is currently coming to an end and we are drawing up assessment reports.

Pedagogical issues (issues related to how key competences are being taught to students and how are teachers being prepared to teach them):

Some schools have issues related to the ICT skills of their staff (teaching and administrative). Some teachers do not see the connection between ICT and the teaching and learning process (i.e. they do not understand how it is possible to teach mathematics or geography with the help of ICT).

In order to overcome these issues the school administration and ICT department will receive ICT management training that will give them a broader picture of ICT management and of the process itself (why it is needed etc.).

What works well (to identify enablers):

The ICT department representatives who have followed the basic ICT management training will then have a chance to become an external consultant for other schools participating in the project. Being an external consultant will give them a broader understanding of the process as they have the opportunity to see other schools and their best practices. Learning through experience and giving feedback to schools about their observations gives consultants a chance to think about ICT management at their own school and therefore to improve its implementation.

Challenges and how these are being addressed (to identify obstacles and solutions):

The concept of ICT management is still foreign to many members of school administrative staff and it is therefore difficult to raise their awareness of the need of ICT management through ICT services and processes.

We have had many meetings with schools in which we explained the added value for schools of ICT management through “real-life” examples and also informed them how they can use their ICT needs to request budget increases on a local administrative level.

Monitoring & evaluation so far/planned, and which methods are being used (e.g. internal/external quality assurance, inspection, national assessments, international tests, self-evaluation, formative or summative evaluations):

We plan to evaluate the success of the project through the number of participating schools.

We are currently evaluating feedback regarding training and the best practices handbook, the online self-assessment tests, and reports from external ICT management consultations. We are also evaluating the feedback we have received from users of the best practices handbook, concerning what information they found easy to use, what was more difficult to access, and what could be usefully added in the future. From this feedback we hope to see the progress schools are making in understanding the concept and use of ICT management as a way to improve teaching and learning. We are also using feedback from school administrations and ICT specialists about the progress of ICT management at schools (in order to determine the most common problems, etc.)

Impact (e.g. any planned impact assessment?):

The impact of the project cannot yet be measured.

However, administrators of pilot schools have been very satisfied with the project and have demonstrated a broader knowledge of why school ICT management needs to be well structured. In other words the project has helped school staff to see the connection between ICT and the teaching and learning process. Initial feedback also shows that the project has made school administrations aware of how to explain to local level administration the need for ICT management in order to receive budget increases for the school's development.

Communication of the initiative/dissemination of outputs and activities:

The best method of dissemination of the project has been feedback between TLF and schools, ICT experts and external consultants.

We have also established a Facebook group, where all the pilot schools and consultants can communicate and find solutions to problems encountered. Upcoming events are also announced here.

Next steps/follow-up:

In 2013 we are planning to open the project to all the interested schools. We will also launch the Annual Excellence Award for schools with the most innovative ICT management system.

Next year we also plan to implement a project cost: 30% of the cost of the project should be paid by the school.

The KEYCONET project has been funded with support from the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission. Responsibility for this publication lies solely with the author, and the Commission is not responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.