# **Video Talk 2: Key Points on Teaching Key Competences**

Welcome to this session. Implementing key competences in schools involves not only specifying them in curricula, as we have heard earlier in this module, but also developing appropriate implementation conditions, teaching methods and assessment. In this video we will highlight the main teaching and assessment methods which are conducive to fostering students’ competence development.

Traditional classroom environments are often not the most appropriate context for the effective development of key competences. The key competence approach, with its emphasis on the application of knowledge in real world situations represents a significant departure from traditional content-based approaches where subjects are taught and assessed discretely. The main recommended approach to teaching key competences is through the provision of interactive learning environments in which learners can engage in practical, inquiry-based tasks. These environments present open-ended problems and challenges to be solved through debate, experimentation, exploration and creativity. Educational research by Dewey and Vygotsky promoting a social and constructivist approach to learning emphasizes the importance of competence development within a social learning context, where learners are engaged in active learning in real life situations. Simulating real world contexts has three main purposes: it can motivate learners more than traditional approaches, learners are more likely to remember concepts they discover on their own, and it provides a meaningful context for problem-based learning. Project-based learning is a particularly well suited method for the development of pupils’ competences, as several key competences can be addressed simultaneously in a cross-curricular manner. In Module 2 we will look more closely at ways of implementing project-based learning in schools.

In summary, teaching key competences involves a greater emphasis on interactive learning environments, allowing students to work in teams on multidisciplinary topics, benefit from technology enhanced learning, and have the mental, physical, social and emotional space to collaborate on solving problems. Let’s take a look at a school in Finland which has recently invested in developing a new physical learning environment.

The teachers and students in the Finnish school we just saw are part of a school which understands the importance of interactive learning environments for fostering competence development, and are also lucky enough to have access to financial resources to make this possible. Across Europe, however, a recent online survey found that teachers and head teachers alike rated insufficient financial resources for changing learning environments as one of the top 3 obstacles to teaching key competences. Investment in modernizing learning spaces so that they enable diversified and interactive learning is therefore important.

Let’s now look at eight key principles for teaching key competences effectively:

Firstly, teaching should be task-based. Learners should develop key competences through active, authentic, collaborative tasks based on problem-solving. Problems should be complex and with multiple solutions, allowing students to produce the solution in a variety of forms.

Secondly, teaching should be interdisciplinary: that is, taught through contexts that combine several subject areas.

Thirdly, learning should be both collaborative and individualised: Learners must collaborate to develop social and communicative competences, but also be able to act autonomously and self-manage.

Fourthly teaching needs to be both learner- and teacher-led. For example, while project-based learning encourages pupils to be active and responsible for their own learning, activities need to be supported by guidance and explicit instruction from the teacher where relevant. In particular, learners need support to develop their ability to learn independently; also known as the ‘learning to learn’ competence, which we looked at earlier in this module.

Fifthly, teaching and learning where possible should be technologically innovative: Involving the pedagogical use of ICT and mobile technology can really enhance students’ digital competence, as well as an array of other competences.

The sixth principle is that teaching and learning of key competences should take place both inside and outside of school. A learning environment does not have to be classroom based; it can be outdoors or even virtual. Teaching should harness the potential of extra-curricular activities and after school programmes, paying closer attention to how learners apply their informal and non-formal learning to what they learn in class.

The seventh teaching principle is that teachers should collaborate with the wider community including the social, cultural and business sectors to create more opportunities for real world learning. You will see examples of this in this module as well as in module 2.

Lastly, the teaching of key competences requires teachers to pay closer attention to the social and emotional aspects of learning, including the quality of relationships between and among teachers and learners. This is important as researchers have argued that supporting learners’ social and emotional needs stimulates well-rounded growth in learners, which forms a basis for the development of the full range of key competences. A personalized approach to learning has been endorsed by the new Maltese Core Curriculum Programme, which targets low ability learners at risk of failure, during the last 3 years of compulsory education, between the ages of 13 and 16. Students following the new competence-based Core Curriculum Programme are accompanied by a mentor who follows their progress and is responsible for the students’ holistic development and overall wellbeing. Let’s hear from a head teacher and education officer in Malta involved in the design and implementation of the new curriculum.

To tell us more about effective approaches for assessing key competences, some of which were just mentioned in the Maltese video we saw, let’s now hear from a researcher who has worked on this topic for many years.