



**TeachersPRO**®  
Empowering Effective Learning

Certified by:



# Description of TeachersPro Challenges and abilities' contents

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# CHALLENGE: ASSESSMENT BY COMPETENCIES

Competence: Students assessment

Through this Challenge you will learn to value evidence of competence learning acquired, with the purpose of recognizing the process made by your students, to take account of their progress, to compare the initial state of each student and the progress made throughout the process.

## ABILITY: HOW TO ASSESS COMPETENCIES



**OBJECTIVE:** Identify and use assessment criteria, indicators and standards to select appropriate tests and instruments for competence assessments.

The model of evaluation focused exclusively in the learning of content has been of important validity for quite some time. Its use, however, has also had negative consequences on the teaching-learning process, because once students discovered what they would be evaluated on, they interpreted that that is what they had to study, meaning that the evaluation conditioned what students ultimately tried to memorize for a test. On the other hand, there was a high level of subjectivity in practice on behalf of teachers, regarding the assessment of students' work as it was not based on previously established criteria, that was objective and shared by all, as well as known by the learners.

It has, therefore, become necessary for teachers to carry out an objective evaluation of learning, which uses learning objectives as a reference, and that is done based on evaluation criteria, indicators, or standards, in order to determine students' level of achievement or performance. Furthermore, dealing with competencies requires assessing students' acquired capacity to apply knowledge, abilities, and attitudes toward solving a specific problem or real-life situation, in a determined context, and emitting a grade.

Being aware that it is difficult to guarantee the objectivity of the evaluation, not even in this way, given that we are human and therefore we will always be influenced by variables that are

hard to control, we must try to focus the evaluation on what students “produce” and not on them.

## ABILITY: PHASES OF EVALUATION



**OBJECTIVE:** Incorporate the three stages of formative evaluation into the design of teaching unit plans, in such a way that the units can be modified to customize each student’s learning, and to develop the skill of learning to learn.

The term “evaluation” is frequently identified with the term “grading” by teachers as well as students. Nevertheless, besides having a rating function, evaluation has to contribute improving the effectiveness and quality of the teaching and learning processes, and students as much as teachers can learn from it. The students, through the modalities of self-evaluation and co-evaluation, will learn to control their learning, to be autonomous and to develop strategies for learning to learn.

The teachers can gather valuable information from the evaluation that helps them to make decisions about the learning scenarios that they will apply and how to customize them for each of their students. This means that they can use the evaluation to regulate the teaching and learning processes.

It is, therefore, necessary that an initial, formative, and summative evaluation is developed in a systematic way, for each lesson plan, where through various instruments and modalities, the learning process is adjusted, simplified, or grows, in line with the possibilities of each student’s zone of proximal development.

## ABILITY: ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING



**OBJECTIVE:** Master the planning of the initial activities in the teaching sequences to allow the collecting of information about students' previous knowledge. Doing so enables us to adapt the activities in the teaching sequence to the students' needs, and to later connect them to new learning.

One of the first thing a teacher must accept is that in the classroom he/she will find great diversity among the students. Each student has a different character and their own personality, a different pace and rhythm of learning as well as a unique set of experiences and previous knowledge. Therefore, each teacher must accept diversity among the students and select the necessary strategies to enable each of the students to develop their competencies.

In relation to this, one of the psychological and educational criteria that must be considered in the planning phase of a sequence is to carry out an assessment for learning to be able to gather the necessary information to respond to this diversity. This diagnosis will allow us to make decisions on revising or amending the initially planned sequence.

To develop this skill, the concept of assessment for learning is introduced, showing the main advantages of integrating it into the planning of the sequence, and presenting what information to collect, as well as the best strategies and kind of activities to carry it out.

# CHALLENGE: AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

Competence: Students Assessment

Through this Challenge you will learn how to achieve your students' planned learning objectives, beyond the results and qualifications reflected in the information provided by, primarily through the report card.

## ABILITY: EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS



**OBJECTIVE:** Master the obtaining of evidence from different types of learning students have acquired, by the use of different techniques and instruments in an appropriate way, in order to provide an objective judgement and make relevant decisions about the teaching and learning processes.

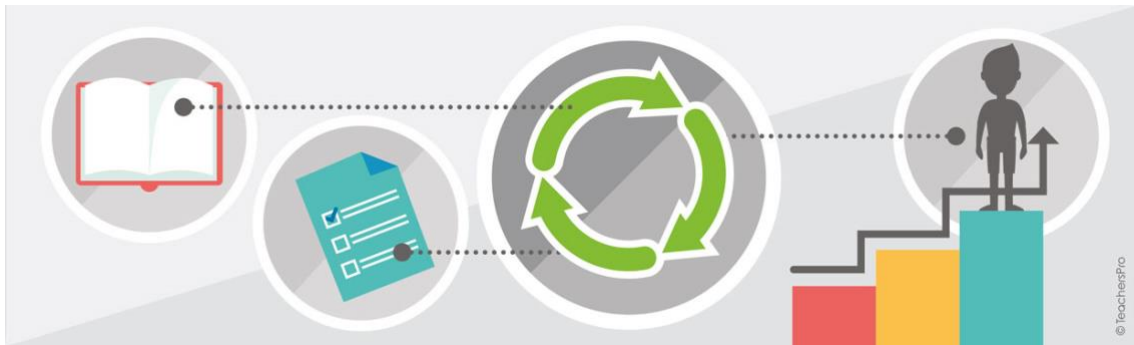
For a long time, evaluating students has been reduced to doing written exams to assess all types of knowledge. In this sense, more or less complex written tests have been assimilated into evaluation practice, directed at assigning a grade to the achieved outcome.

Nonetheless, an evaluation should not only consist of the assessment and grading of the results each student obtains on a specific test. It should also consider the processes and should essentially be geared toward decision-making.

For this reason, it seems logical to learn and apply different evaluation techniques and instruments, which are most appropriate for each objective, that go beyond traditional written exams, basically related to the evaluation of conceptual content. These diverse techniques and instruments allow teachers to evaluate different types of learning, such as procedural, attitudinal or complex performance, and not only assign a fairer grade, but also make decisions that are well-founded.

It therefore seems quite necessary to design and use varied evaluation instruments, in line with the nature of the objective being evaluated and students' learning process. We must be aware that not all instruments are useful for evaluating learning objectives. Hence, we will have to learn about the potential and weakness of each technique and tool, in order to later select the more appropriate one in each case.

## ABILITY: TYPES OF EVALUATION FOR LEARNER PERFORMANCE



**OBJECTIVE:** Use the different types of evaluation with precision in relation with determined learning objectives.

While evaluating is a common practice in the education system, it is very often related to control, sanction and aimed at pointing out mistakes and omissions. There is some confusion when trying to define the different types of evaluation, or at least the type of evaluation we are talking about and how it is implemented.

Despite a general agreement on the importance and the need to evaluate, and of the evaluation being a fundamental tool to improve teaching and learning processes, there is no doubt that a low evaluation culture is a generalized characteristic of the teaching practice. Many teachers only appreciate the need to evaluate as a formal requirement to mark, with little or no learning involved. It may be because it always appears last, but the truth is that too little time is devoted to evaluation, in comparison to how important it is to regulate teaching and learning processes.

Moreover, there is a large number of misconceptions about evaluation, generally implicit and subjective, that strongly influence most teachers' behaviour. That is why it is important to explicitly state such conceptions to analyse them and consider possible alternatives.

While developing this skill, we will cover the different types of evaluation with the aim of focusing on some of the questions raised when attempting to describe what kind of evaluation we carry out with our students.



## ABILITY: THE FUNCTIONS OF ASSESSMENT



**OBJECTIVE:** Use information obtained from an evaluation to make decisions with the aim of improving the teaching and learning processes, student's outcomes, and if possible, families' involvement.

In recent decades, there have been significant advances in evaluation practice. We have moved from traditional evaluation, assessing only the activities students carry out with the aim on assigning a grade, to evaluation of student performance with a much broader vision, that allows to apply different purposes and objectives.

Nowadays it is, therefore, necessary for teachers to know how to use the different types of evaluation in gather pertinent information, analyse it and act accordingly.

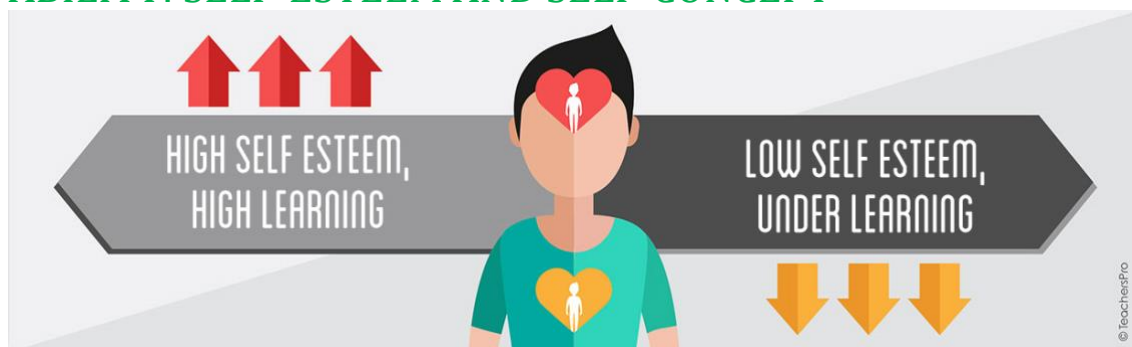
Hence, the evaluation has become a formative instrument that integrates other elements as part of teacher practice, which provides a guide and necessary direction for adapting teaching interventions based on students' learning needs – individual and collective – in order to make the most pertinent decisions in each case, and to inform about the obtained outcomes to learners and to all members of the education community.

# CHALLENGE: AUTONOMOUS LEARNING

Competence: Learning Process

Through the Autonomous Learning Challenge you will learn to create the appropriate conditions so that your students can learn to learn, determining the necessary incentives to achieve the objectives that you propose, awakening interest, motivation and curiosity to achieve new learning and thus giving Collective sense of daily class work.

## ABILITY: SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-CONCEPT



**OBJECTIVE:** Master the planning of learning experiences and activities that contribute to strengthen self-esteem and to build a positive self-concept among students.

Self-concept and self-esteem play a very important role in people's lives. Successes and failures, self-satisfaction, psychological well-being and all the social relations leave a distinctive mark in each person. Having a positive self-concept and a high self-esteem is crucial for everyone's personal, professional and social life.

Frequently, self-esteem and self-concept are confused and used as synonyms. However, although both concepts are related, they are not equivalent. Self-concept is mainly about the cognitive dimension, whereas self-esteem is more about the affective dimension and related to value.

Regarding the learning process, self-esteem and self-concept play a very important role, since they may affect the adequate development of such a process. Frustration or motivation have a direct impact in the way new learning is built in the students and may influence their capacity to put it into practice.

While developing this skill, we will learn what self-esteem and self-concept mean and how to take them into account when planning the teaching sequence.

## ABILITY: AUTONOMOUS LEARNING



**OBJECTIVE:** Designing, proposing and managing classroom activities which encourage students' autonomous learning.

The pace of everyday work in the classroom does not often allow us enough time to verify the learning acquired by our students. This implies that the student is not able to carry out a personal reflection about what has been learned and how he or she has succeeded.

This way, students cannot become autonomous enough over their own learning in a world where information is close at hand, and the skills and abilities to convert this information into knowledge are essential. In our daily task of developing students as competent citizens in several areas, we cannot forget that learning to learn is one of the core competencies to take into consideration when designing and implementing meaningful learning experiences.

Several strategies which will help us foster this ability in a proper way will be discussed, so that students could gradually develop autonomous learning (Learning how to learn competence).

## ABILITY: MOTIVATION AND INTEREST IN LEARNING



**OBJECTIVE:** Include, in planning, activities and strategies that awaken students' interest in new learning contents.

With the purpose of achieving meaningful learning, the teacher should be able to capture students' interest and promote a positive attitude toward the material, in such a way that it is

maintained throughout the teaching-learning process. In addition to interest, motivation also plays a key role in this process as the motor that moves students to carry out assigned tasks and activities.

Etymologically, the word “motivation” originates from the Latin “motivus” (movement) and refers to that which causes action. It is no coincidence that the term **motivation** shares etymological roots with the word **emotion**, which as is currently well known, is an essential element for learning.

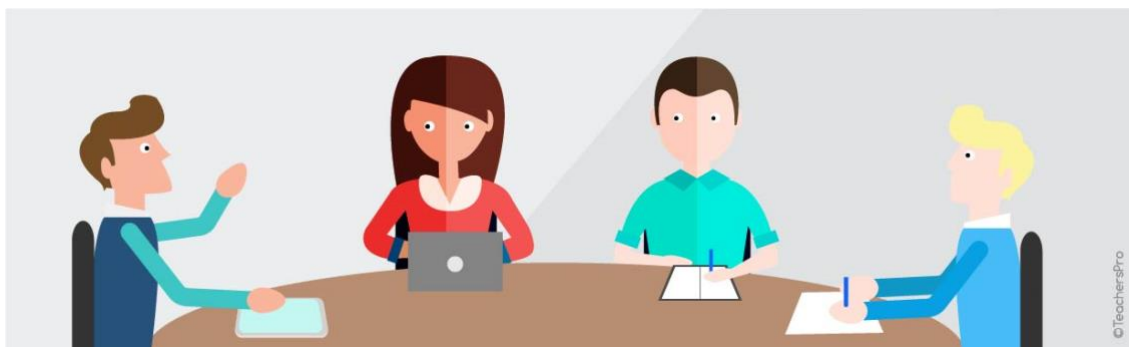
Motivation is understood as the impulse that leads people to act and to carry out a specific action. In the educational setting, it can be said that motivation is the impulse that makes one pay attention or show interest in what one desires to learn. It is important to keep in mind that students possess motivation and that it is a reaction that everyone has. In the development of the current ability, different strategies that teachers can use to promote and stimulate motivation and interest in their students will be shown.

# CHALLENGE: COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Competence: Social Organization of Classroom

With this challenge you will learn to respect the basic principles and objectives of peer learning, to: A) Plan clearly work to be done, B) selecting the techniques according to the characteristics of participants, program objectives, your experience and available resources, C) delegate responsibility in the class group, D) rely on roles of group members to achieve common goals, assuming individual responsibilities, and E) performing a shared assessment between you, individual students and the class.

## ABILITY: COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM



**OBJECTIVE: Master the implementation of cooperative learning techniques in the classroom.**

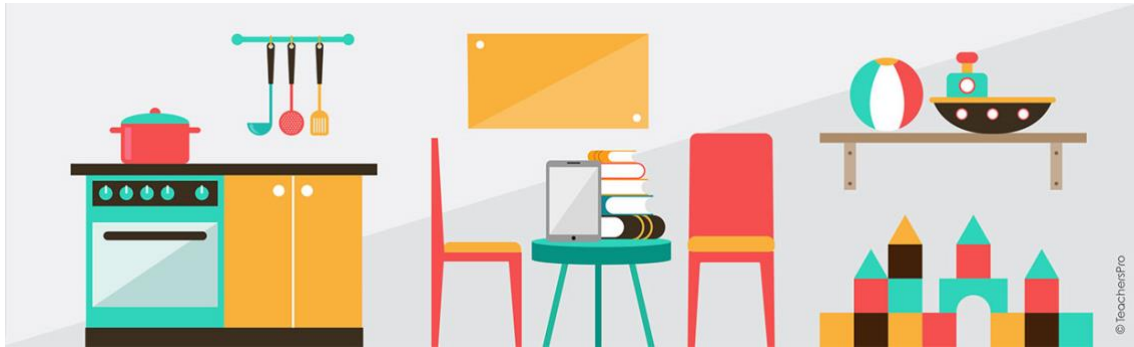
Cooperative learning is a learning methodology based on the social organization of the classroom where students collaborate in order to learn, in a planned and structured way, as they learn how to work together as a group.

Initially proposed as a way to improve the schooling of pupils with disabilities in integrated classrooms, cooperative learning has proven to be an effective methodology for all students' learning. The methodology promotes the development of social skills, autonomy and personal responsibility.

On the one hand, the implementation of cooperative learning in the classroom requires well planned-out steps: prepare the group of students, organize stable mixed teams and adapt the learning activities. For the teacher, its implementation also entails an important change in the teacher's traditional role in relation to the accompaniment and guidance of students. This change should be accompanied by a reflection on one's own teaching practice, particularly, of optimizing group work between teachers.

Cooperative learning achieves a greater efficiency in terms of the attention to students' diversity, a better educational setting and a higher quality and depth of learning.

## ABILITY: FLEXIBILITY IN THE USE OF SPACES



**OBJECTIVE:** Use the spaces in and outside of the classroom in a flexible way to facilitate the learning objectives and content, as well as the needs for attention to diversity.

When most people are asked to think about or draw a classroom, they think of a structure similar to the following: a board and a table next to the teacher, and in front of these two elements are usually found students' individual desks positioned in well-organized lines.

The distribution of the classroom consciously or subconsciously transmits a series of roles within the classroom that go unnoticed by most people, but that influence in large part, the type of methodology used in the classroom. It is the teachers' task to transform the space and make it sufficiently flexible so that it can be adapted to the students' requirements as well as to the learning objectives that are meant to be reached.

In the development of the current skill, the role of the use of spaces within the educational centre, and how these spaces can be used to benefit students' learning, will be presented.

## ABILITY: ONLINE COLLABORATIVE LEARNING



**OBJECTIVE:** Implement enriched learning using the Internet as an alternative to traditional learning and making possible the interaction between students in and outside of the classroom.

Internet has become a window into the world. Thanks to this online network, the classroom opens its doors to the outside with certain opportunities and benefits. Additionally, the use of technologies with a connection to the Internet promotes social relations, collaborative learning, and new ways of thinking and building knowledge and the development of competencies of the 21st century, such as communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking.

A new concept therefore emerges, that of *connectivism*, which is a model of learning adapted to a new way of working in the twenty-first century. According to Siemens and Downes, connectivism is a theory of learning for the digital era and it serves to explain the effect that technology has had on the way we live, how we communicate with each other and how we learn. This theory aims to overcome the limitations of contemporary learning theories (behaviourism, cognitivism, constructivism), conceiving learning as a training process in networks.

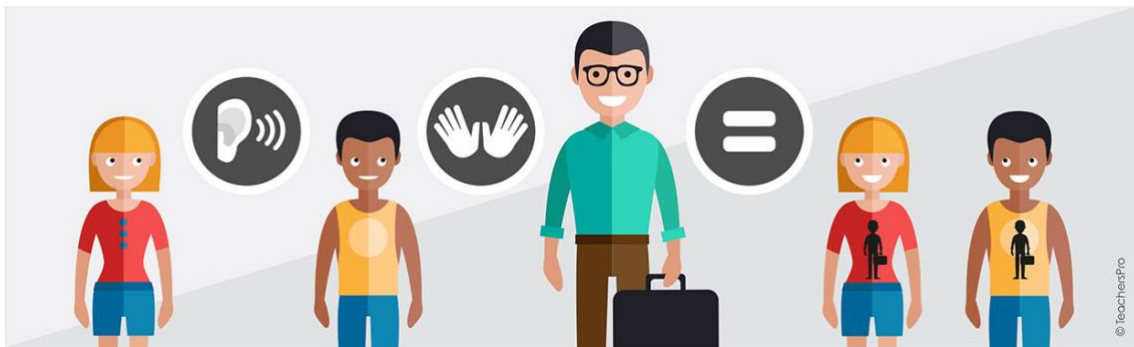
In this context, the new function of the teacher is to be a facilitator in the construction of new knowledge, using innovative tools that ensure meaningful learning, and one of their functions is to teach how to construct networks and take advantage of learning opportunities.

# CHALLENGE: EMOTIONAL EDUCATION

Competence: Interpersonal Relationships

Through this Challenge, you will learn to work emotional intelligence, taking advantage of the activities and proposals related to any specific curricular content, as well as activities clearly focused to work this kind of emotional skills. Examples of types of activities you will learn to work are identification or emotions activities, activities that promote social skills, activities that promote active listening, expressing feelings and activities that promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

## ABILITY: EMPATHY AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION



**OBJECTIVE:** Establish a close relationship between the teacher and the students, creating an atmosphere of confidence and effective interpersonal communication in order to generate a positive learning environment in the classroom.

The work overload, size and diversity of the classroom population, disruptive behaviours, daily routines, fear of losing authority and the constant pressure to keep up with schedules, are some of the factors that can interfere with the development of a proper environment that promotes active learning in the classroom. Under these circumstances, it is not uncommon to find unmotivated students in the classroom. They appear to have lost their desire for knowledge and consequently become easily distracted, disruptive and uncooperative with the activities proposed in the classroom. In most cases teachers become increasingly distant and are perceived as demanding in their attempt to control the situation, generating the opposite effect on their students as the one intended.

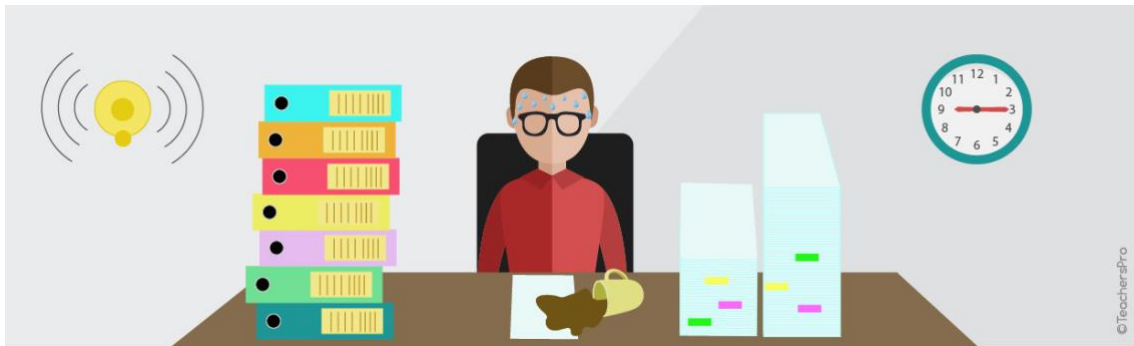
All of these factors can interfere negatively in the learning process, due to the fact that, as demonstrated in several studies, students only learn if they 'want' to. We might think that this only depends on their intrinsic motivation, but what is certain is that it also depends on the teacher's attitude and his/her ability to care for social-emotional aspects rather than just



focusing on attaining academic goals. In this context, empathy, defined as ‘the capacity to recognize emotions in others; to understand their reality and points of view and to be able to ‘put oneself into the other person’s shoes’, is an essential skill that the teacher can and must develop.

Throughout this course, we will introduce you to the concept of empathy and will show some of the main benefits of an empathic attitude. Also, we will present you with some strategies so as a teacher you will be able to contribute to the development of an empathetic classroom.

## ABILITY: MINDFULNESS, STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING TEACHERS’ AND STUDENTS’ STRESS



**OBJECTIVE:** Master how to focus attention on breathing, bodily sensations, thoughts, emotions and sounds, and to be able to observe reality with an open attitude, curiosity, avoiding judgements and expectations.

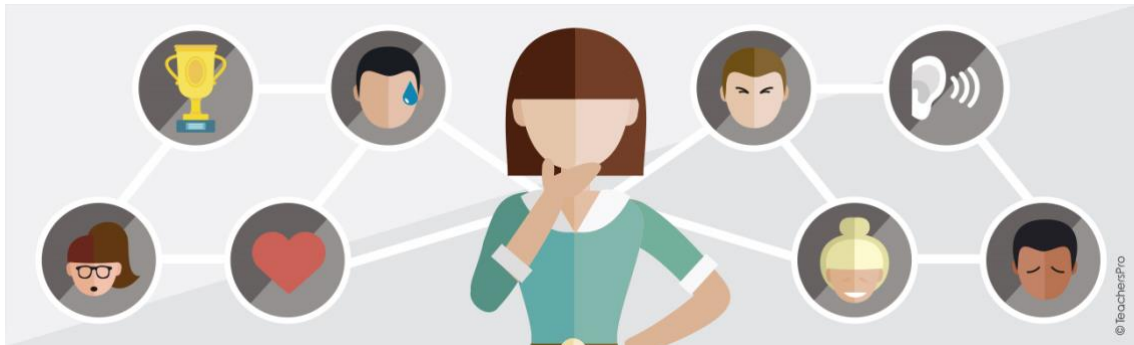
The practice of *Mindfulness* makes it possible to be more aware of our reality, providing us with the opportunity to effectively manage our stress and the challenges in our life. It is therefore a practice. It is also the innate capacity that all people have to be completely present in their actions with an attitude of kindness, curiosity and nonjudgment.

The following are some of the other benefits of *Mindfulness*:

- Bully fully present, in the here and now.
- Less reactivity when faced with unpleasant experiences and awareness of what one is avoiding.
- Connecting to one’s self, with students and our surroundings.
- Greater awareness of judgements and self-observation.
- Increase in awareness of our body and our self-knowledge.
- Less identification with thoughts (I am not what I think). Disconnect, dis-identification and cognitive defusion.
- Recognition of constant change (thoughts, emotions and feelings) and of impermanence.
- Greater concentration in the classroom and improved academic performance.
- More tranquillity, relaxation, calm and inner peace.
- More acceptance and self-compassion toward one’s self and toward the students.

In the development of the current skill, you will learn about and experience the benefits of Mindfulness in the classroom as well as in your personal life.

## ABILITY: EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT



**OBJECTIVE: Master the skill of identifying and managing their own emotions and help to express and understand student' emotions.**

Increasingly more researchers are showing that the Development of Emotional Intelligence (IE) is a key factor in students' learning, wellbeing, academic and subsequently professional success. Being aware of this, those responsible for educational policies have started to suggest (and at times demand) that teachers contribute to the development of their students' emotional competence.

Nonetheless, when doing so, they seem to forget that being an adult does not guarantee that one has developed their own Emotional Intelligence and that at the same time, most teachers have not received the necessary training to confront this demand. The development of Emotional Intelligence is, therefore, a process that should start with the teachers themselves.

Convinced that this is the right path, in the current course we don't draw from teaching considerations, but rather from historical foundations and practical suggestions so that each teacher can take the initial steps in this difficult but important task to identify and manage their own emotions, and eventually contribute to the **emotional literacy** of their students.

# CHALLENGE: LEARNING BY PROJECTS

Competence: Learning Process

The Challenge of Learning by Projects allow teachers to develop the integration of subjects, the connection between contents to work and their real-life implementation, as well as social skills related to teamwork. It also helps to combine different types of learning content: conceptual, procedural and attitudinal, and promote key skills in the students, such as creativity, individual responsibility, collaborative work, critical thinking skills and decision making, among others.

## ABILITY: PROJECT-BASED LEARNING



**OBJECTIVE:** Practice the Project-Based Learning methodology, and critically reflect on traditional educational practice and the design of innovative educational techniques that promote more active and cooperative learning.

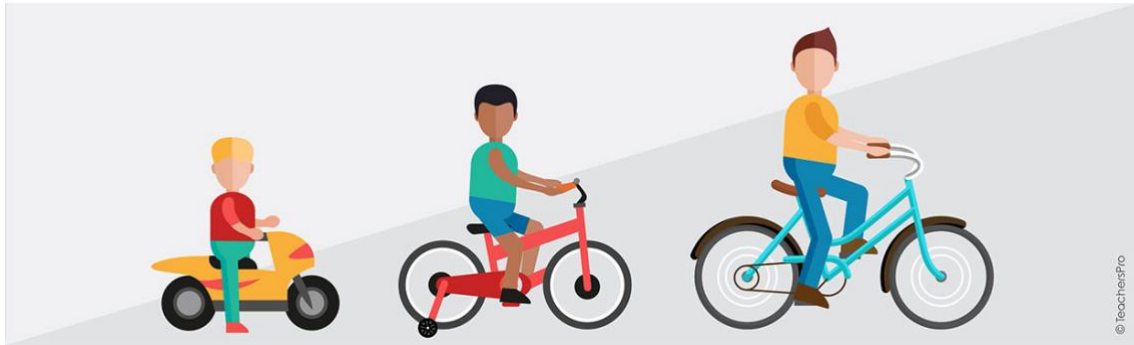
Our current society is living through a time of change across all areas, and, despite the evidence, the main part of the educational reality continues to focus on transferring knowledge to students. Nonetheless, currently the school is not the only, nor the best institution to offer knowledge, and above all, it is not desirable to reduce education's mission to this simple action of transferring. Schools need another focus.

Among the current formative requirements, students are expected to develop their competency to creatively solve situations and problems, not only to reproduce information. Hence the importance of giving priority to other teaching approaches which allow to prioritize more effective skills in this knowledge society.

One of these approaches is Project-Based Learning that, while still a methodology, implies an important change as it shifts from a paradigm focused on the transmission of content, to one centred on the creation of learning experiences for developing competencies. Thinking about projects is not the same as thinking about teaching (from a traditional perspective of the

term), so the teacher who starts using this methodology must be prepared to face many changes. Let's begin this journey.

## ABILITY: ACCESSIBILITY OF ACTIVITIES



**OBJECTIVE:** Design activities that are accessible to students recognising that these can be adapted to their mastery of content, their abilities, and their level of cognitive maturity.

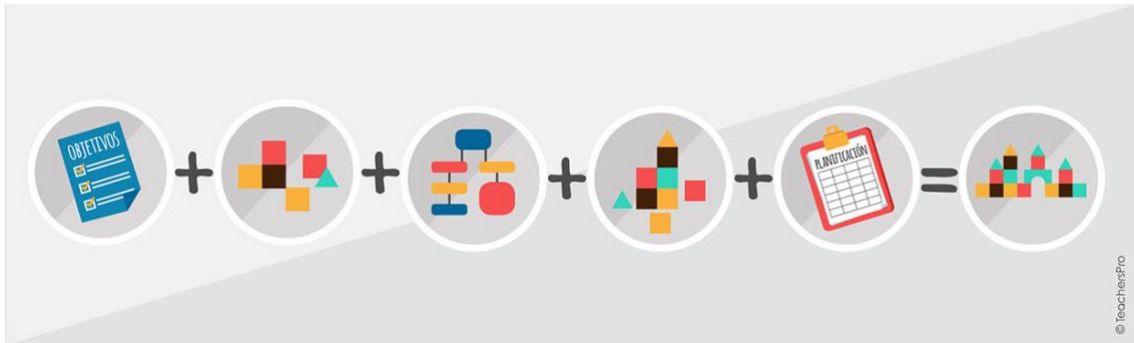
In educational establishments, it is relatively common to find students who have difficulties with carrying out certain assigned tasks. These difficulties are normal and even desirable, given that they encourage and confront the students' previous knowledge with new content. They also help activating the mental processes which are necessary for the construction of new knowledge.

Nonetheless, at times, the challenge that such activities present for students could be insurmountable due to different factors: a lack of previous knowledge required to complete the task successfully, inappropriate level of cognitive development for carrying out the necessary mental processes, etc.

In such cases, when students are faced with an unachievable challenge, this can make them feel intensely frustrated and demotivated. In all cases, this is counterproductive when it comes to the construction of new knowledge and prevents any meaningful learning to occur in students.

For those reasons, in order to develop a skill, a series of guidelines will be shown, which should be considered when designing activities to make them accessible for students. Furthermore, several tools will be presented that may prove useful to identify students' prior knowledge of content and how activities can be adapted or modified to respond to the different levels of knowledge that can be found in a classroom.

## ABILITY: PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES



**OBJECTIVE:** Master the planning of the initial communication and negotiation activities to get students to take part in the objectives, contents, activities and evaluation.

On many occasions, students carry out the activities and tasks their teachers propose within the teaching sequence routinely, without reflecting on the purpose or the usefulness of the tasks and activities. Their participation in the learning activities is therefore “automatic” and they only act in order to get a good mark from the teacher.

Doing so, drastically reduces the chances to achieve meaningful and lasting learning, since the students do not reflect over their own learning and are not made aware of the reasons why they are assigned certain tasks and activities.

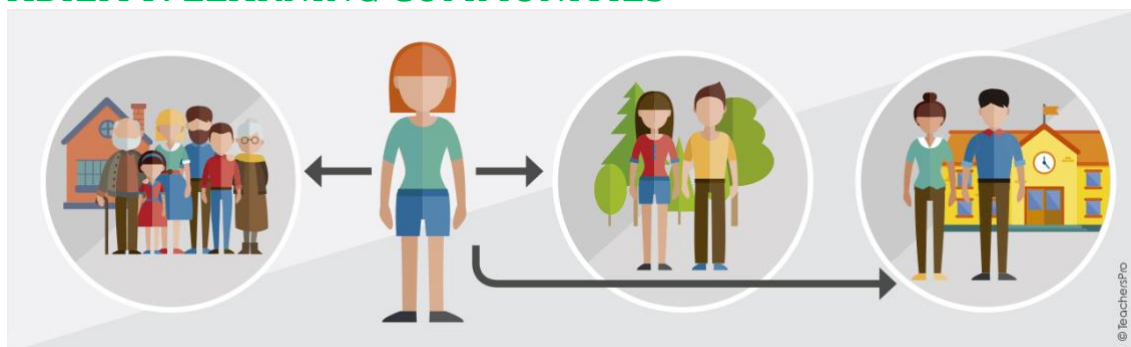
Through the process of developing this skill, we will focus on some of the strategies that we can use to further engage our students in their own learning process thus reaching a more participative and reflective type of learning. These strategies will help students become aware of the reasons why they are presented with certain learning activities, since the learning objectives, the contents and the evaluation criteria have been previously agreed with them.

# CHALLENGE: LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Competence: Organisation of Teaching

With the development of this Challenge you will be able to create the conditions to develop learning activities that involve all the educational agents of the context, taking advantage of the resources provided by institutional alliances, as well as the internal resources to improve teaching practice, such as rigorous reflection, analysis of the students' results, and the development of the professional learning community.

## ABILITY: LEARNING COMMUNITIES



**Objective: To recognize, value and develop pedagogical activities that involve the different collectives, groups and institutions in the surroundings of the educational activities of the teacher and the centre in order to enrich and promote the quality and relevance of their students' learning.**

Since the 1970s, Vigotsky's educational contribution has pointed out the relevance of the student's interaction with the surrounding environment as a necessary condition for activating internal processes that allow for meaningful learning and high significance in the learning experience.

Despite this, the fact is that for reasons of time, the breadth of the curriculum, a variety of efforts that do not focus on the progress and development of the pedagogical effort, along with many other situations faced by the complex reality of education and teaching, there are few spaces for strengthening the link between agents, students and the social environment.

There is great consensus regarding the importance of this dimension in learning, but there is also widespread agreement on the great difficulty of truly designing, planning and implementing pedagogical activities that strengthen the links and interaction between students, their families and their surrounding environment.

However, there are international experiences that have shown that, if the teaching community focus their efforts on strengthening this link in a large learning community, the quality of learning outcomes improves substantially.

An example of this is the experience of the Learning Communities of Harvard University or the Integral Program for Educational Equality promoted by Argentina, on which more in-depth information is available during the development of this ability.

## ABILITY: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHING PRACTICE



**OBJECTIVE:** Make changes in teaching practice that lead to continuous improvement, making timely and relevant pedagogical decisions based on the information that comes from the teacher evaluation system considering the level of satisfaction and compliance with the expectations of the entire educational community.

For more than three decades, different countries have made a sustained effort to implement teacher evaluation systems that allow them to verify their results and promote improvement. The relationship between evaluation and improvement of practice is a binomial that is gaining more and more strength.

Throughout this time, the focus of attention and the mechanisms to implement improvement have been diverse. Among the focal points are those that place their attention on results (external view) and those that have done so through the commitment and involvement of the subject (internal view). Among the mechanisms that exist are standardized evaluations (as the first focal point) and self-evaluation (the second focal point).

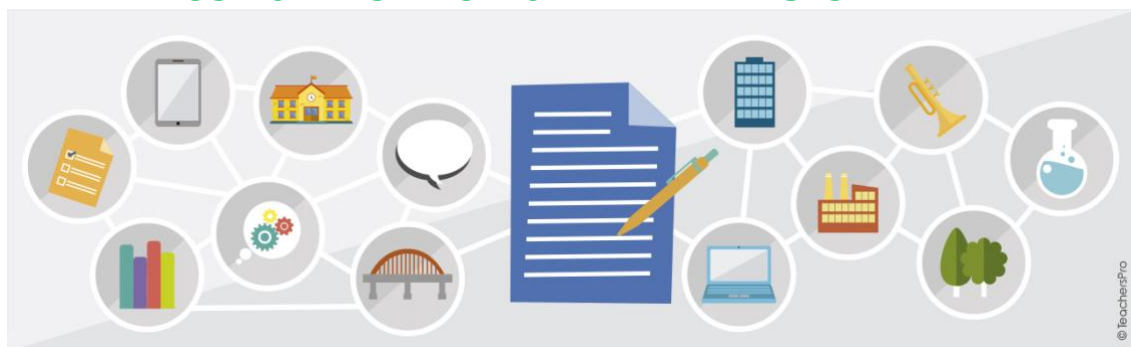
In any of the cases that combine efforts of the two focal points, what must be taken into account is what is to be achieved through the evaluation. From here it is argued that the main purpose is to enable the continuous improvement of teachers in their own practice as part of the “system” in which teachers participate.

The fact of gathering relevant information regarding the students’ learning outcomes, their own reflections, and, as a whole, regarding teaching practice and compliance with



the standards proposed in the external evaluations, makes it possible to create a system that must be offered to the teaching staff to find the most appropriate ways of implementing continuous improvement.

## ABILITY: USE OF INSTITUTIONAL ALLIANCES



**Objective: Identify and plan learning activities using the various alliances the institution has as educational resources in order to achieve the expected objectives taking into account the quality of the students' learning.**

On very few occasions are teachers able to identify the real learning opportunities that may exist using institutional alliances as a relevant teaching resource. In general, teaching practice focuses its action on what happens or can happen inside the classroom or the school as a learning space.

On the other hand, the authorities of educational entities strive to establish alliances and links that strengthen the relations between their organisation and its surrounding environment and that ultimately are beneficial for the members of the educational community.

However, teaching practice experience difficulties when it comes to using these institutional alliances as learning opportunities and as a function of the achievement of the objectives proposed in the curriculum. In general, the intensity and high demand of activities make teachers concentrate their pedagogical efforts inside their classroom without seeing how enriching it can be, both for them and for their students, to consider those institutions as didactic spaces with which their organisation has an agreement or alliance.

Foundations, ideas and innovative ways for teachers will be presented, in order to plan their pedagogical experiences, taking into consideration links with institutional alliances, in terms of the quality of their students' learning, which connects with the environment, with the surrounding reality, and weaves a cognitive framework that gives meaning and relevance to the curriculum.

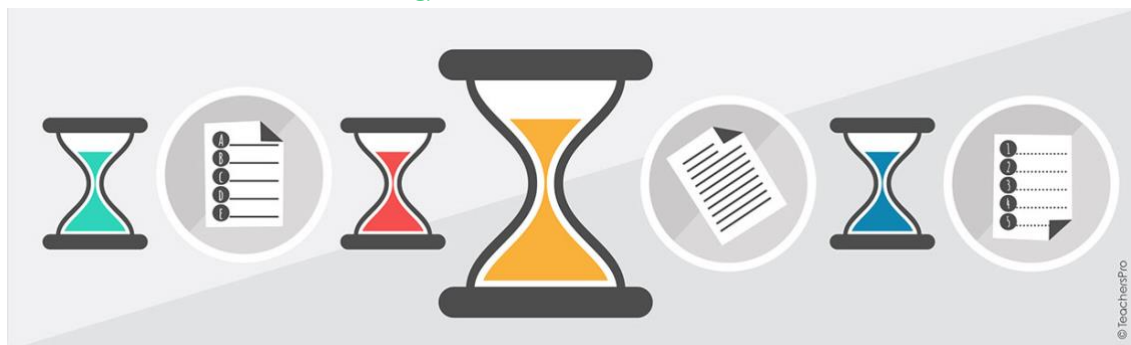


# CHALLENGE: PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP

Competence: Professional Development

Through the Pedagogical Leadership Challenge you will learn to guide your professional development towards updating those latest knowledge on the subject you teach, on the teaching methodology and on the way in which people learn, providing you with an intrinsic motivation for achieving your goals.

## ABILITY: TIME MANAGEMENT



**OBJECTIVE: Manage time effectively in order to be more productive and obtain better results.**

Being a teacher has become a challenge in a context as complex as the current one. It seems that demands have multiplied in teaching practice and it is common to come across teachers who feel that there is never enough time. Often, we hear statements such as the following:

- “I’m stressed, I run around all day and the tasks seem to accumulate with lesson planning, meetings, paperwork, evaluations, interruptions, publications...”
- “I’d like to have more time for me and for my family, but this job consumes too many hours”.

Many teachers agree that their work is exhausting. Living with the sense of having no control of the time we dedicate to work can generate high levels of stress and frustration, reduce motivation, and directly affect one self-esteem. Furthermore, it can cause one or several of the following problems: lack of clarity regarding the objectives and purpose of one’s work; confusion about priorities; improvisation in behaviour; accumulation of pending tasks and responsibilities; delay and procrastination of tasks; a perfectionist attitude or difficulty in decision-making.

The good news is that it is possible to develop strategies to better manage time at work, and consequently, to overcome the negative stress, as well as to find a balance between one’s work and personal life. Simple suggestions to take the first steps toward doing just that, will be presented.

## ABILITY: PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING



**OBJECTIVE:** Implement observation processes between teachers in the classroom, using appropriate instruments and techniques to facilitate learning among peers, and to improve professional practice.

Peer observation is a learning technique used to improve professional performance. In non-educational settings, such as in the health sector, it is common to see in university hospitals, doctors visiting their patients while being accompanied by their students or specialists who take note of their interventions, in order to share them with peers and comment on the cases together. In the teaching profession, classroom observation is not yet such a common practice.

When peer observation is carried out with a well-defined objective and focus, in a setting of confidentiality and respect, it becomes an effective tool for the spread of the best professional practices, and for improving the quality of teaching.

Reciprocal observation between professionals follows certain defined steps that begins with planning the process and consensus from both teachers on what will be the focus of the observation. The focus is important, as the classroom is a complex space where many interactions occur simultaneously involving people, materials, times, activities, etc. It is therefore necessary to focus our gaze on one aspect that is agreed upon between the observer and the observed, to stick to it during the observation, and to plan a follow-up interview afterwards which the focus of the conversation is the same as that of the observation. A description of such techniques will be presented.

## ABILITY: EFFECTIVE EVALUATION MEETINGS



**OBJECTIVE:** Coordinate and/or participate in an evaluation session of a teaching team, as a space for teachers to come together, to analyse the teaching-learning process, students' evolution and obtained results with the aim of promoting the improvement of learning.

The development of teaching team evaluation sessions, in practice, has focused on assigning grades to students than on carrying out a reflective and rigorous analysis of the reasons and causes that facilitate or make students' learning more difficult. The debate and discussion based on teachers' subjective opinions and visions of each student, have often impeded taking advantage of an excellent occasion to face a rigorous analysis of teaching practice that allows us to get to know students better in order to guide them and suggest actions to improve their learning and personal development. In addition, these sessions are conditioned by aspects such as the lack of time or focusing on the debate on talking about anecdotes, personal and social issues, or students' families, that are often not very relevant to the learning progress or performance.

It is therefore considered that during an evaluation session, what should be analysed are the type of teaching and evaluation actions of students that should be followed and that have led to the obtained outcomes, in addition to a reflection on the evaluation of teaching practice. Academic results are the product of our work as teachers, of the working conditions we create on a daily basis in and outside the classroom, on the commitment and work of students and their families, etc. We must, therefore, focus only on some of the factors that influence teaching performance.

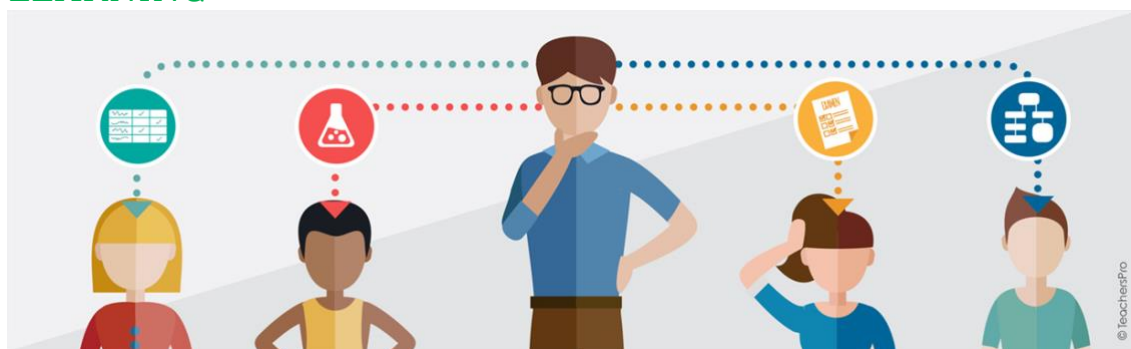
An evaluation session should finalize with some clear and specific conclusions on the decisions to adopt in order to strengthen what has worked well and to modify and adjust what we consider could be improved, in order to fulfil the proposed learning objectives. All agreements should be written down in a meeting notes to assign responsibilities and carry out a timely follow-up. Specific techniques related to those *clinical sessions* will be presented.

# CHALLENGE: PERSONALISATION OF LEARNING

Competence: Personal Assessing and Tutoring

The realization of this challenge will allow you to delve into a practical and grounded way in the complex task of accompanying the student in the learning personalization process. All this in order to establish learning processes that fit the needs and interests of each student, in addition to providing the motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic, that the apprentice needs in the long process of their integral development as a person.

## ABILITY: ADAPTATIVE RESOURCES FOR PERSONALISED LEARNING



**OBJECTIVE:** Choose, design and adapt learning resources to adjust them to each student's level and rhythm of learning.

The diagnostic evaluation is the beginning of a continuous adaptation process in personalizing learning. The teacher must find where the student is, create a space that facilitates knowledge of their starting point, their motivation and interest in what they are going to learn, as well as foresee the difficulties that each student may have.

The teacher has a large number of resources to carry out the diagnostic evaluation individually and effectively. For greater success, it is a good idea not to link a numerical mark to this process, whilst involving the student in their diagnostic process, making them participate, comment and reflect on their learning situation, throughout the process. The teacher also has tools and strategies that will help do this.

The diagnostic evaluation must lead to action. The teacher will adapt the learning process for the student, using the selection, design or adaptation of the most suitable learning activities for each student. At this stage, the teacher will bear in mind procedures such as focalization, extension, simplification, correction, modelling, reworking the task and transfer to other

contexts. These procedures will be applied depending on the contexts and needs detected in the diagnostic evaluation and will be regulated throughout the learning process.

## ABILITY: DIDACTIC CONTRACT AND OTHER STRATEGIES ONE-TO-ONE



**OBJECTIVE:** Implement the use of a teaching contract and other personalized work plans as a means to determine a manageable challenge in each student, as a function of their learning possibilities and pace, committing each student to their own progress.

The learning contract is, in essence, **an alternative way to structure a learning experience: Substituting a content plan for a process plan** (Knowles (1991). Hence, it is an interesting instrument for a context where one wishes to put an emphasis on the processes and not so much on the final results.

A learning contract is the **fruit of a negotiation** between the teacher and student, whereby **the following are planned: what will be learned, which support the students will have, and in what way that learning will be assessed.**

The learning contract is a planning instrument of learning that **promotes students' autonomy and the teacher's role as a guide.** It therefore implies a change in the traditional conception of the teacher's and student's role, that promotes the student's responsibility and emphasizes the dialogue between teacher and student. **The common goal is to improve students' learning and autonomy** during their own learning process.

In terms of **personalizing learning**, the work contract makes it easier to explain objectives, means and evaluation processes between the student and teacher.

## ABILITY: PORTFOLIOS OF EVIDENCE FOR THE AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT



**OBJECTIVE:** To incorporate the use of the portfolio of evidence for the evaluation of each student's advances as a function of their possibilities, measuring personal progress between the start and the end of a learning process, over a specific period of time.

When personalizing students' learning, it is suitable to have evaluation tools that help the teacher as well as the student in this task. Personalizing the methodology, activities or contents for a student is not very useful, if afterwards the evaluation system is the same for all members of the group of students without distinction. This sends students an incoherent message in terms of what is valued in learning.

The teacher has various evaluation instruments that help to personalize students' evaluation and personal follow-up. The portfolio is one of them. Specific elements are to be considered by teachers when implementing portfolios for their students: the context and their aims; the portfolio contents and structure; and of course, the planning of time and spaces for the elaboration of portfolios and personal follow-up.

The portfolio is an evaluation instrument that involves the student from the moment it is suggested. The student will reflect their interests and motivations in it, as well as their achievements and personal reflections. It is a very appropriate instrument for one's self-evaluation. Lastly, the portfolio is an excellent instrument for the qualitative evaluation of students, that provides valuable information on their progress during learning.

# CHALLENGE: PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

Competence: Learning Activities

The Challenge of Problem-Based Learning will allow you to structure knowledge so that students can use it in real contexts. It will give you a clear view on how developing effective processes of reasoning, how to develop self-regulated learning skills, and how to improve the motivation to learn and to develop the ability in your students to work in groups.

## ABILITY: PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING



**OBJECTIVE:** Apply Problem-based Learning methodologies in order to promote a change toward more active learning so that the student assumes responsibility for his/her learning process through effective, critical and creative reasoning, while stimulating the search for a common goal.

Although educational establishments nowadays may seem equal to those of the past century, we live in a world that is exceptionally new, in the so-called “knowledge society”. We are immersed in changes that affect many aspects of our lives; the way we communicate with each other, the way we relate to one another, the way we work, teach and learn. In our era, change is the constant, and therefore new competencies, referred to as 21st Century Skills are required, which include capacities such as creativity, critical analysis, collaboration and basic communication, among others, in order to address the challenges of a *hyperconnected* information society.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is a “learning method based on the principle of using problems as a point of departure for the acquisition and assimilation of new knowledge” (Barrows, 1986). Hence, we encounter a pedagogical experience organized to research and solve problems that are contextualized in real-life scenarios, that generates meaningful learning. This methodology allows for the development of capabilities related to the research and analysis of information;



critical and creative thinking; decision-making and problem-solving; group work; independent learning; an openness to learning from others, and to sharing knowledge.

This methodology and the advantages of using it will be presented, as well as how to apply it in the classroom.

## ABILITY: MEANINGFUL AND FUNCTIONAL LEARNING



**OBJECTIVE:** Master the planning of activities that provide functionality and psychological meaning to the student's learning process.

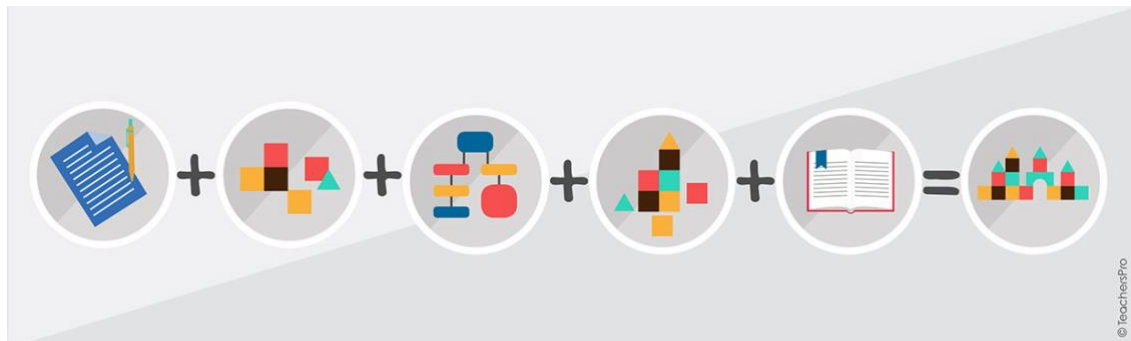
Generally speaking, learning is widely considered as a process through which people acquire and build new knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Such a process may be carried out in different ways (study, teaching, experience...) resulting in different teaching methods. Against this background, Ausubel (1963) coined the concept of meaningful learning to define the opposite of repetitive or “mechanical” learning. This author considered meaningful learning as the possibility to establish meaningful links, not purely arbitrary, between students' existing knowledge structure and what he/she is about to learn. That way we can bring meaning to what students learn.

On the other hand, we believe learning is functional when the learner may apply what he/she has learnt in a given situation to solve a concrete problem. Such use allows using what has already been learnt to address new situations, and therefore to foster new learning.

To avoid turning teaching into a mere repetition of contents focusing mainly on learning by rote, which kills students' interest and motivation, it is important to bring functionality and meaning into learning. Developing this skill, how to plan sequences of activities taking into account both of these components will be addressed.



## ABILITY: COGNITIVE CONFLICT AND MENTAL ACTIVATION



**OBJECTIVE:** Design learning activities that to provoke cognitive conflict (doubts, questions and personal reflections), that mentally activates students, with the aim of getting them to relate new content with their previous notions.

Often, during the development of the educational process, a teacher realizes that his/her students are not able to retain what they have learned; students memorize only to forget, after a while, what they have studied. In the cases where a teacher identifies this, he/she could conclude that what the students have learned has not been acquired correctly for different reasons. The most common reasons are usually that what is learned is considered irrelevant, lacking meaning or apparently useless. However, there is another reason why from the beginning of the learning sequence, students do not manage to engage in meaningful learning, and that is the fact that they have not been challenged to confront their prior knowledge and validate it in relation to new content or learning situations.

Another reason why students do not achieve meaningful learning could be because during the sequence of activities they have not been allowed to put into operation the mental processes that are necessary for the correct construction and elaboration of knowledge, so that in time, students forget what they have learned.

On the one hand, in the development of the current skills lies the importance of these mechanisms, cognitive conflict and the activation of necessary mental processes. On the other hand, what is important is how to work on them in the classroom through the planning of learning activities that incorporate the fundamental elements for meaningful learning.

# CHALLENGE: TEACHER'S DIGITAL COMPETENCE

Competence: Learning Resources

Through this Challenge you will learn to design, choose and implement technological resources that help strengthen, develop and enrich the teaching and learning processes, applying different and innovative methods to generate knowledge, promote motivation and increase student expectations, improving quality of their learning.

## ABILITY: DIGITAL COMPETENCE FOR TEACHERS



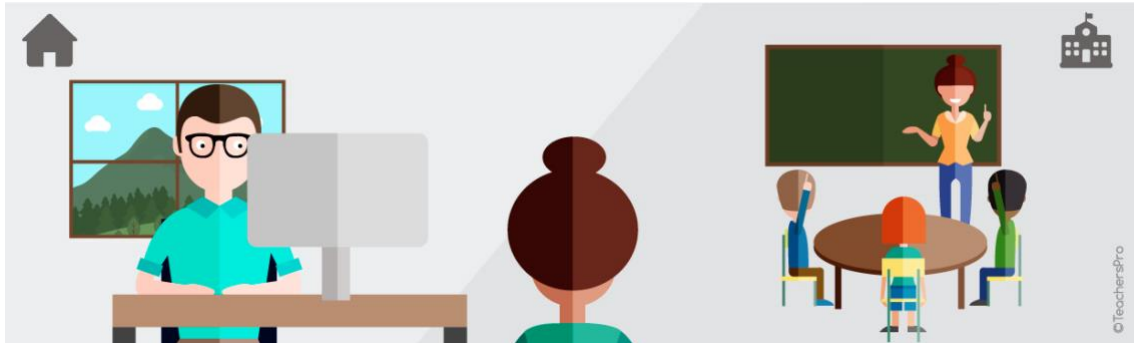
**Objective: Identify, verify and improve one's own digital competence as part of teaching functions.**

Digital competence has become a fundamental aspect of education for all citizens. Developing this competence is part of the professional challenges of citizens and is also a very important challenge for teachers. To know how to leverage technology in teaching it is not enough to have technological skills, but rather it is necessary to be competent. What does that mean?

According to the European Union (DIGCOMP), digital competence implies knowing how to manage information, communicate effectively, create content, possess notions on safety and be able to solve problems with the support of digital technologies. It is not simply about being able to use the internet or a technological application, but rather about developing abilities that allow us to take better advantage of the potential of the digital technologies in the teaching and learning processes.

To be competent, teachers need to identify, evaluation and leverage these dimensions, as well as bring them to the forefront of educational activity. Each participant should be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses, as the first step in developing this ability.

## ABILITY: FLIPPED LEARNING: HOW TO FLIP A CLASSROOM



**OBJECTIVE:** Become familiar with, design materials and strategies, and put into practice the Flipped Learning model in the classroom, acting as a guide for the group during the whole process.

The *Flipped Learning* model consists of transferring certain teaching processes to the home (explanations and transmission of content), mainly through videos, whereas work traditionally carried out at home (homework), it is now done in the classroom under the teacher's supervision and assistance.

In this sense, traditional teaching models are inverted. The teacher no longer lectures but turns into a guide who provides help to students while in class, proposes problems for them to resolve together, carries out group activities using different collaborative and cooperative work techniques, organizes debates, etc. Students are required to watch videos, read documents and consult resources at home as well as before coming to class.

In practice, the teacher, who has free time in class that was previously dedicated to the instruction of students, can now focus on attending to individual learning needs and responding to the diversity of different learning rhythms. The teacher also facilitates cooperative learning settings, contributes to the development of skills such as learning to learn, involves families in the whole learning process, and shares all content that he/she has generated with the educational agents, so it can be accessed at any time.

*Flipped Learning* is considered one of the most effective models or strategies for students' active learning along with BPL, cooperative learning, or gamification.

## ABILITY: CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF DIGITAL RESOURCES



**OBJECTIVE:** Create learning activities that promote the use of web resources selected and evaluated using rigorous criteria.

Internet forms part of our daily work, as well as our leisure. Today, more than ever, it seems fundamental for students to know how to use this tool in a critical way in their learning processes. It is not only necessary that they know how to look for information, but that they also know how to analyse it, select it and take advantage of resources that are available.

Currently, it is understood that a student does not have memorize certain concept provided by the teacher, given that they are available on-line. On the contrary, we know that we have to provide students with strategies that promote independent and self-controlled learning. In this way, the student takes ownership of his/her own learning and builds knowledge through activities and collaborative work.

As teachers we must design teaching and learning activities that promote the research and reflexive analysis of on-line resources. To do so, we not only need to develop resource search and evaluation strategies, but we also need to be familiar with and use resources that lead students to practice research, extract useful information and to solve problems. Such kind of resources and specific strategies to use them, will be presented.

# CHALLENGE: THINKING-BASED LEARNING

Competence: Learning Contents

During this Challenge, you will have the opportunity to integrate into your teaching practice the mental skills and processes that allow the individual to develop the ability to Observe, Analyze, Reflect, Synthesize, Infer, do Analogies and be Creative. These capabilities focus on adapting to your environment, problem solving, and decision making.

## ABILITY: DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL THINKING



**OBJECTIVE:** Use graphic organizers among other specific techniques as instruments to develop critical thinking.

Critical thinking is an objective that all students should aspire to and that teachers should facilitate. Among the many ways to achieve this goal, we find the use of graphic organizers by students as a basic resource among others.

Graphic organizers are thinking strategies that are particularly appropriate for more visual learning styles. Combined with other hearing or manipulative strategies, they will assist different profiles of students to improve the visual structuring of information, ideas, knowledge, thoughts, etc., that they are learning.

When planning the educational use of graphic organizers, teachers should first know how to elaborate them and be familiar with the cognitive processes or thinking skills that each one requires. Consequently, they should program them regularly in their classes to create a habit among students.

To ensure a significant improvement in the quality of learning and skills of thought like organization and structuring, it is necessary for the students themselves to elaborate the

organizers (instead of copying from the board), that they are done on a regular basis, and applied to different types of contents and learning phases.

## ABILITY: DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVE THINKING



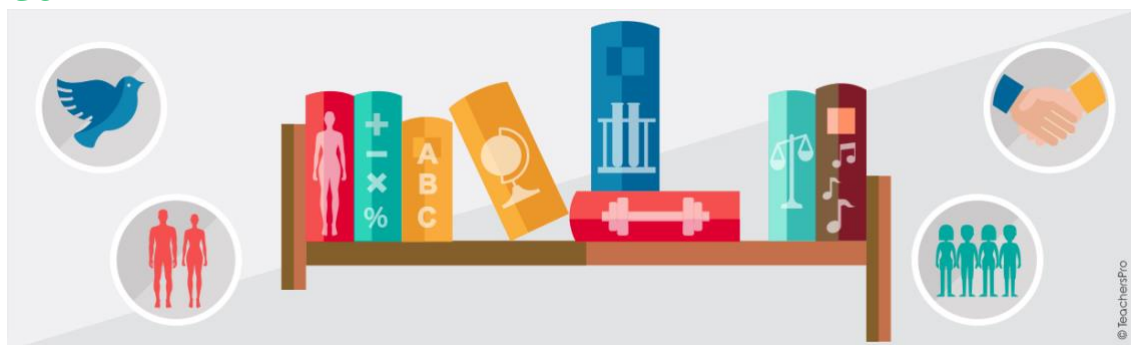
**OBJECTIVE:** Become familiar with and apply strategies to develop critical thinking.

The majority of people associate creativity with the arts, for example, with the possibility to write a novel, paint a painting or compose music. These are without a doubt, creative activities; however, they are not the only ones. In fact, many jobs require the ability to think creatively, even if they are not related with the arts. We can be creative in math, science, dance, teaching, engineering, etc., given that creativity is simply a process to have new and original ideas that allow us to do things differently across activities.

Nonetheless, creative thinking is more than having original ideas. Given that some of these ideas are truly unfeasible, an essential part of creative thinking is the evaluation. If you are working on a mathematical problem, you will constantly be evaluating your decisions and thinking “am I doing well?”. If you are composing a musical piece, one part of your brain will be imagining and another judging if the combinations of notes that you select can be played by the person interpreting it (each instrument has its limitations).

In few words, we can confirm that creative thinking means thinking about new things or in an original way. It means “thinking out of the box”. In this sense, creative thinking involves what Edward de Bono denominated lateral thinking, meaning, the ability to organize thinking processes in order to look for unorthodox solutions, that normally would be overlooked by logical thinking. All people are creative in their own way, and creative thinking is a skill that we can improve and strengthen with practice. Some strategies to take the first steps, will be shown.

## ABILITY: PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING CROSS-CUTTING CONTENT



**Objective: Develop the capacity to plan, teach and evaluate crosscutting contents in accordance with the educational context.**

The presence of cross-cutting contents in the curriculum acquires an explicit importance in the 90s, although in a way their presence dates back to before that time. Cross-cutting themes arise from the social need to attend to aspects, values and attitudes not included in curricular areas and subject matters that are part of learning objectives of more and more educational institutions. These topics, according to each context, cover subjects whose cross-cutting treatment is considered indispensable in all areas of the curriculum, which are not included in any one in particular. Cross-cutting topics include peaceful cohabitation and democracy, training on the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, education for peace, gender equality, tolerance, civics, etc.

The way that their inclusion in the curriculum has been conceived, meaning their planning, teaching and evaluation, however, has not always converged. Mainly, these topics have been included in planning, especially in school/university plans, in two ways: one that is not very coherent with the term “cross-cutting”, that consisted of creating new areas to teach them. The other, coherent with what we think it should be, consisted of gathering a series of topics of interest in curricular norms, not contents in the subject areas, based on the time and context, and in asking teachers to plan them and teach them across all curricular areas, with the aim of a more comprehensive training for students.

Their transcendence and importance lies precisely in the fact that since all of us teach certain values, explicitly as well as implicitly (hidden curriculum), with our behaviour, our value judgements, etc. before the facts that occur in and out of the classroom, the best is to be aware of this hidden curriculum and make it explicit in order to know how we contribute to the learning purposes of educational institutions.



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