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“But All We Really Wanted was a Course!”
Teacher Professional Development for Innovative Teaching with ICT

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This article describes a professional development project for teachers that aimed at developing innovative teaching with ICT in a 21st-century understanding of the term innovative. The article describes the result of the intervention and the practice-based method used for this professional development project. Data from teacher planning, observations, interviews and document study are used to describe the poor outcome for the 8th-grade foreign-language teachers involved. We suggest five reasons for why the teachers did not manage to live up to the criteria for innovative teaching but persisted in conducting traditional teaching, where ICT was never integrated in their subject teaching in relevant and appropriate, value-adding ways: First, the students’ level of the foreign language; second, an unstable interaction with consultants; third, the teachers’ struggle to find their roles; fourth, competing rationales; and fifth, a dated understanding of their subjects.

INTRODUCTION

The following three short case descriptions serve to illustrate the problems dealt with in this article:
In their German class, 8A (students aged 14) is beginning their work on the movie Die Welle [1]. As an introduction, the teacher has selected central concepts from the movie, and in groups, the students are to look up, define and explain these German words (without knowing the context) – in German. They are to write their explanations on a teacher-made Padlet [2] that is also visible on the interactive whiteboard (IWB). Students don’t seem to understand the aim of the task. Some take it seriously, and the teacher ends up providing the answers for those who don’t. The teacher speaks German most of the time; the children mainly speak Danish (their L1).

In their English class, 8B is working with The American Civil War. In groups, they have worked with various texts on the topic, and now they are asked to write questions about their texts on a teacher-made Padlet to be answered by other groups. The Padlet is visible on the IWB. Some groups work in the hall or cafeteria, others in the classroom. The teacher monitors the work and progress of the groups via the Padlet and attends to groups with problems. The teacher speaks English at all times, whereas the children do so only when the teacher is within hearing range.

In their English class, 8C is working with Rap and Life in the Ghetto. Having worked with a radio documentary, the students are now to produce their own documentary on life in the ghetto. Most groups take on the roles of characters they have met in their work and record themselves using their smartphones, zealously trying to accomplish the ‘right’ language and accent. They communicate about this in Danish, but work intensely with the English language.

In each their way, these three short case descriptions present their view of ICT-integrative foreign language (FL) teaching.[3] However, in the case of 8A, it is not clear how ICT adds value to the FL teaching. In 8B, ICT offers the teacher a logistics tool helping him to focus his work during class, while in 8C, ICT very much adds value to the subject-specific, relevant activities. However, we do need to note that there’s a marked difference between student competences in English and German as they are in their 6th year of learning English but only in their 2nd year of learning German. As we shall also see later, this, especially the size of student vocabulary, does have consequences for the types of communicative activities that are rendered possible.

1 A German movie from 2008 dealing with demagoguery and forms of government.
2 Padlet is an online, collaborative, virtual “bulletin” board, where students and teachers can collaborate and share information.
3 8A and 8B are from the project at hand, while 8C is taken from elsewhere (Fougt, 2015)
In the following, we elaborate on the difficulties related to the realization of innovative teaching in FL. The article will conclude that the apparent lack of an updated view of one’s subject is an obstacle to the realization of innovative, ICT-integrative FL teaching with ICT. Although our data and examples relate to FL teaching, they are easily generalizable to other school subjects.

THE STUDY

Background

In 2013-2015, as part of its focus on ICT in education, the Danish Ministry of Education financed five large projects aimed at promoting educational media use, promoting the development of 21st century skills (Undervisningsministeriet, 2013) through the development of designs for innovative teaching and learning, and finally generating evidence on what works for whom, how and under which circumstances.

The five projects each had 5-6 case schools that were the targets of a variety of interventions focusing on different aspects of ICT and teacher professional development (Pd), involving some 40 consultants and 40 researchers (Undervisningsministeriet, 2013). The core idea of the projects was that the 30+ schools involved could function as ambassadors or cases that others might learn from.

Out of the five projects, the one in focus in this article, namely ‘subject-specific ICT integration and teacher competence development’, involved 5 case schools and dealt with practice-based teacher PD in various school subjects (Danish, math, foreign languages, science subjects (physics, chemistry), and cultural subjects (religious studies, social science)). The reason why a practice-based approach was chosen as the main approach in this project is to be found in the literature that shows how courses – whether on technology as such or on technology integration – have little or no effect on teachers’ everyday practices (EVA, 2009; Lorentzen & Fougt, 2016; Gynther, 2010; Luckin et al., 2012; L Shear, Gallagher, & Pattel, 2011; Sørensen, Audon, & Leivisn, 2010; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). Additionally, this project was not only about how to use ICT in the subjects at hand; its main focus was on developing teacher competences that would allow for the practice of innovative teaching and the development of 21st century skills.

Currently, there seems to be a strong focus on innovation in teaching among researchers as also seen in the highly acclaimed and influential In-
novative Teaching and Learning (ITL) Research Project (Shear, Gallagher, & Patel, 2011), which describes and compares teaching practices in seven countries to identify the factors that can lead to innovative teaching. In the ITL project, this concept “… refers to three categories of practices: Student-centered pedagogies that promote personalized and powerful learning for students; Extending learning beyond the classroom in ways most relevant to knowledge-building and problem-solving in today’s world; and ICT integration into pedagogy in ways that support learning goals. It is important to note that ICT use is not a goal in itself, but a tool to broaden and deepen learning opportunities.” (Shear et al., 2011, p. 13)

In the context of the project, taking its inspiration from the above sources, innovative teaching was defined as follows:

*Innovative teaching is teaching and learning designs involving ICT-supported learning processes which*

- *show a high degree of student activity with a subject-specific aim*
- *are project-oriented*
- *are collaborative*
- *involve communicative competences*
- *involve the world outside the school.* (Georgsen, Fougt, Mikkelsen, & Lorentzen, 2014, p. 20, our translation)

**Understandings of ICT in the perspective of subject-specific teaching**

When, in this article, we generalize as to how to incorporate ICT in innovative teaching and learning, we find inspiration in two models that each contributes with a perspective on ICT: The TPACK model and The Model for ICT-Pedagogy as an Independent Pedagogy. On this basis, we will formulate The Model for ICT Levels.

According to its creators, Mishra & Koehler, TPACK is a framework related to ICT in teaching and learning and the knowledge teachers need to have in order to teach adequately with ICT. This framework is visualized in the TPACK Model (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Mishra and Koehler identify three ‘primary forms of knowledge’: Technological, Pedagogical Content Knowledge. The main point of the model is that it is only when these three knowledge forms come together that adequate teaching with ICT is possible: “TPCK is a form of knowledge that expert teachers bring to play anytime they teach” (ibid. p. 1030), cf. Figure 1.
The model is an analytical approach to teaching with ICT, and beside the overall representation of the interplay between the three knowledge forms, they can also be identified individually or in pairs: Technological Knowledge (TK), Pedagogical Knowledge (PK) and Content Knowledge (CK). Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), Technological Pedagogical Knowledge (TPK) and Technological Content Knowledge (TCK) (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p. 1026).

Another approach to teaching and learning with ICT is The Model for ICT-Pedagogy as an Independent Pedagogy[4] by Hansen and Misfeldt (2014). The model presents ICT as a subject and in subjects ”... as an intersection between several subject-specific domains – including ICT as a subject” (Hansen & Misfeldt, 2014 - our translation), cf. Figure 2.

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4 The Danish term here is ”IT-didaktik”, ”didaktik” covering the what, why, and how of teaching, in general pedagogy as well as in relation to specific school subjects. This is what we refer to when using the term “pedagogy”.
Figure 2. Model for ICT-Pedagogy as an Independent Pedagogy (Hansen & Misfeldt, 2014, p. 61).

The key point of this model is that ICT is not only perceived as an independent domain and subject, but “at the same time ICT is an essential component of an updated subject understanding as both arts and science subjects are deeply influenced by ICT-based information processing (including e.g. ICT-based simulation, modeling, calculation, visualization, archiving and communication).” (Ibid. p. 62, our translation).

This model is based on the understanding that ICT transforms subjects (cf. Elf, Hanghøj, Skaar, & Erixon, 2015). Hasse states that the content learning and the concept of what a subject is “… is changed over time by new technologies” (Hasse, 2015, p. 25, our translation), and Bundsgaard and Hansen state that

The processing power of computers has changed the conditions for math and science, but also the humanities are deeply affected. Digital reading and translation programs, word prediction (i.e. computer generated prediction), text and image processing, search engines and the digitization of cultural heritage have changed the two basic conditions/characteristics of the humanities: interpretation of and communication with texts. (2013, p. 162, our translation)

The central aspect of the TPACK model is its center, where the three knowledge forms come together, focusing on ICT in subject learning, whereas the Model for ICT Pedagogy as an Independent Pedagogy focuses
on ICT in, as and between subjects. The models thus, in different ways, contribute to understanding ICT pedagogy, its origins and its components.

We consider ICT pedagogy as an independent discipline only regarding ICT as a subject, whereas the use of ICT in subjects concerns the subject-specific pedagogy. Thus, we agree with Bundsgaard and Hansen, in their description of ICT pedagogy as “A temporary campaign concept that can provide an opportunity to discuss the basic pedagogical questions: The objectives and content of teaching, its methods and the role of teaching materials” (2013, p. 161, our translation). They add that the term “... is losing its sense since the issue of information and technology should be an integral part of any general theory of teaching and learning” (ibid.). ICT modifies and transforms the original basis, the content and the conditions of subjects, e.g. through the opportunities provided for authentic communication, involvement of the world outside school, and new, relevant forms of student activity. Thus ICT is a necessary element in a teacher’s updated understanding of a (school) subject.

Inspired by the two models above, we present a third, taxonomic model for levels of teacher competences for the inclusion of ICT in subject teaching (Figure 3), inspired by Ryle’s (1949) distinction between knowing that and knowing how, and Aarkrog and Wahlgren’s (2015) addition of knowing why:

![Figure 3. Model for ICT Levels.](image)

At the lowest level, the teacher knows or is aware of the existence of a given technology or app, of its main function and inherent affordances
(Gibson, 1979) in a typical everyday use. This level is thus about ‘knowing that’ [5]. This is an obvious basic requirement.

The middle level deals with whether a teacher knows how a given technology or app works, i.e. on an operational level. With this knowledge, i.e. ‘knowing how’, the teacher can perhaps also use it. However, we do not see this concrete (technical) operational level as essential or necessary for the third and in this context most appropriate level of competence, namely, where the teacher is able to endow a technology with an academically appropriate value and use, and therefore, this second level can be bypassed, going directly to level three.

At the third level, the teacher is able to envision the application of a technology for a relevant, subject-specific activity with an appropriate objective. Thus the teacher can justify how and why its use is appropriate and adds value to the teaching and learning. Chapelle emphasizes that: “… technologies themselves as well as how they are constructed and configured to create opportunities … are central issues” (2008, p.586). The two-way arrows between level two (the operational level) and level three (the subject specific use) indicate that the teacher could develop from an operational level to the subject specific use – but also the other way around: The subject specific use could induce the teacher to acquire operational knowledge (cf. Fougt, 2015).

The transition from traditional to innovative teaching and learning, aimed at 21st Century Skills demands an updated subject understanding by the teacher as well as courage and imagination. Chapelle & Hegelheimer conclude:

*The opportunities afforded the language teacher by technology at the start of the 21st century require a better-than-ever understanding of the principles of language teaching and a broader-than-ever set of skills and teaching practices. Rather than providing teachers with easy answers and prepackaged methods that they can administer to learners, technology appears to be increasing the range of opportunities and options for constructing learning tasks.* (2004, p. 313)

Based on a review of studies from 2000 to 2005, Stockwell (2007) concludes that “... there still remains an element of failure to stipulate why a given technology was used in achieving learning objectives” (p. 115), just as Pacansky-Brock (2012) presents the same thoughts of explication and justification of choice of technology. In other words, our claim is that if the teacher cannot make this ‘translation’ of a technology for subject-specific use, it will not result in innovative teaching.

5 We do not include technologies specifically designed for a subject, for languages e.g. dictionaries, grammar and vocabulary training programs, etc.
SETTING AND PROJECT

The project at hand involved 16 consultants and 11 researchers and was unfolded in two iterations. In the first iteration, researchers prepared consultants to meet the teachers and work with them, introducing and clarifying the definition above, analyzing good-practice examples, introducing various models describing ICT-integrative teaching (e.g. TPACK (Koehler & Mishra, 2009) and SAMR (Puenteledura, n.d.)). The consultants then sparred with teachers, facilitating their work with their students and the documentation that was to be produced, and the teachers carried out their teaching. In the second iteration, the general idea was that teachers from the first iteration should now take on a role similar to that of the consultants with their colleagues, thus empowering the second-iteration teachers, promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing, and making the school as such increasingly independent of external consultancy. For a closer description of the overall project design, see Georgsen et al. (2014).

This article will describe the unfolding of the foreign language-branch of the project, i.e. the teaching of English and German at two of the five schools. Two researchers (the authors of this paper) and five consultants were involved. The schools involved were schools with 249 and 591 students, placed in semi-rural areas of Jutland and Funen, Denmark. The teaching in focus was the teaching of English in two 8th grades, and the teaching of German in two other 8th grades.

When it comes to the FL subjects in Denmark, the students involved started learning English in 3rd grade (age 10), whereas German (or French) was not introduced till 7th grade (age 13) [6]. This obviously means that an 8th-grader (and his/her teacher) has much less language to rely on in the activities that can unfold in the classroom.

However, it needs to be said that although language is learned through communication and hypothesis testing, there are still aspects that need to be learnt through focused practice and conscious attention, e.g. some aspects of pronunciation, vocabulary, and linguistic form (Henriksen, 2014). These aspects cannot be expected to find their realization as part of innovative teaching and learning and are thus not included in the focus of this article.

In the project, as also described above, different roles were intended for researchers, teachers and consultants, roles that would facilitate teacher PD. The intended roles would have consultants as sparring partners and guides, teachers as willing collaborators interested in changing their practice

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6 Since 2014, however, English is obligatory from 1st grade (age 6) and German (or French) from 5th grade (age 11).
through the guidance and coaching of the consultants, just as the consultants were primed so as to be able to discuss and clarify the project aims and terminologies and bring with them the latest knowledge. However, these roles struggled to materialize for at least two reasons: First, for various reasons, there was a high level of turnover in consultants, and only one was in the project from start to finish. This is something that several teachers comment on as a negative thing in the evaluations. Second, the teachers specifically wanted a course on technology (relevant programs and services and how to use them), and consultants gave way to these expectations and demands, which might have been necessary due to teachers (self-professed) lack of competences in terms of ICT and the subject-specific use of it.

Therefore, consultants ended up being providers of technologies and presenters of theory rather than consultants and sparring help where teachers could test the viability of their teaching plans in the context of the project.

DATA

The data that forms the background of this article stems from the first iteration only. In this, four FL teachers participated: two English teachers and two German teachers. The data consists of the teachers’ structured planning guides detailing the individual phases of the teaching and their specific learning goals; consultant minutes and notes from meetings and workshops with teachers; minutes from meetings between researchers and consultants; researcher observations from 6 lessons and from meetings where teachers were to convey their work and findings/experiences from the first to the second iteration, student products from the teaching sequences, and final (evaluating) interviews with teachers.

The teachers worked in pairs designing three teaching sequences per pair with the intention of exploring the options and possibilities of various technologies in their teaching. For instance, in English, teachers chose to work with a theme on Differences where students were to make short PowerPoint presentations, whereas the German teachers chose to work with Landeskunde [7]. In another English sequence, students made mind maps based on a short film on Mandela, and in German, groups of students worked with Padlet presentations of a ‘secret city’ which their fellow students were then to guess. Finally, also using Padlet, one English class worked on various aspects of American history, culture and society, whereas

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[7] Study of the culture and society of a country
German classes worked with vocabulary in relation to a film, using a shared Padlet as illustrated below in Figure 4.

![Figure 4. Examples of student-produced Padlets.](image)

**FINDINGS**

**ICT in language teaching**

In terms of ICT supported FL teaching and learning, two general strands may be observed: One is a type of usage where the computer or tablet/smart phone becomes an automated trainer, something that is necessary and suitable for some aspects of foreign language learning (Henriksen, 2012). But a different kind of use is necessary to meet the demands of a modern FL teaching, where much more activity and active communication is required (Fernández & Fristrup, 2014; Henriksen, 2014; Richards & Rodgers, 2001) as also detailed in the Danish ministerial orders on the FL subjects (Undervisningsministeriet, 2009a, 2009b). Thus, if ICT is to be used to enhance subject learning, more than mere training is required.

In terms of being able to accommodate and live up to the project’s definition of innovative teaching, there seems to be little in the nature of the FL subjects themselves that would impede this: Language learning requires a high degree of (productive) student activity as language is learned through the formation and testing of hypotheses in interaction and collaboration with others (Gass & Mackey, 2007; Lund, 2015). Additionally, within the framework of the Danish ministerial orders for FLs, there is ample room...
for project-oriented teaching, just as communicative competence is central as both a goal and a means to attaining the goal (Fernández & Fristrup, 2014; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Finally, the world outside the classroom is clearly relevant and naturally included in the teaching as intercultural competence is an important part of communicative competence (Andersen, Fernández, Fristrup, & Henriksen, 2015; Lund, 2015).

However, when we look at our data, we do not see innovative teaching. In the German class that worked with *Die Welle*, students were to write definitions for teacher-selected words and 4-word example sentences on a teacher-made Padlet. During the lesson, much time was spent getting students to log on to their Gmail accounts, locate and log onto the Padlet account, explaining to them how to put content onto the Padlet etc., much of it being done in Danish and with little talking time for the students. This also meant that the teacher – unintentionally – displayed a use of ICT that had a focus on the technology itself rather than its functional, subject-facilitating use. Thus, the open and collaborative approach afforded by the Padlet was not utilized. In fact, the openness merely led to some students obstructing by ‘accidentally’ deleting other students’ content, writing obscenities etc. All in all, this results in a use of ICT that seems to be a contrived add-on with no real function and very much a source of irritation for both teacher and students.

Padlet technology was also used in an English class working with *Aspects of Black America* as their topic. After working with different texts in groups, they now had to formulate 6 questions related to the text they had worked with – for the other students to answer. This was all to be done via a teacher-made Padlet.

The display of students’ work process and progress on the Padlet displayed on the IWB allowed the teacher to follow up on the groups that needed him – either because they didn’t produce anything or because they struggled. However, although the Padlet here serves a function that allows the teacher to improve his performance in the classroom, it is not related to the subject of English but merely a general ‘logistics’ tool, and the potential subject-specific enhancement never materialized.

Another observation is that in most of the teaching sequences we have studied, the use of ICT has led to the students’ spending inordinate amounts of time finding resources or producing technologically based products, e.g. locating pictures, preparing a small movie etc. There is a clear risk that this may actually detract from student language learning, especially as much of it takes place in Danish. The consultants notice this in their notes: “There is a tendency to focus on the technology and forget about subject learning.”

This is also observed by two of the teachers:
I think that in the teaching sequence we had in the first iteration, it [technology] actually stole a lot of time that we might have spent on something else, and we [teacher and students] didn’t get to talk a lot during class; we didn’t get that opportunity because our focus was on the technology. I think that’s a drawback.

They didn’t feel a need to be experimental and find this an amazing program. As they put it: ‘It is, but I don’t need that right now. We need to just talk and read, we don’t need to learn how to use a really fancy program that can do this and that – we just need to sit here and work.’

A third reason why teachers never succeeded in living up to the demands of the innovative teaching definition may be related to the way the intervention was realized for the FL teachers: It seems as if much of the technology integration centered on Padlets, used either as a kind of presentation tool intended as support for an oral presentation or vocabulary work, or as a logistics tool for the teacher. Padlet was one of the specific ICT tools that the consultants introduced to the teachers and instructed them in, very much at the request of the teachers. In this way, the consultants were in a double bind between research team and teachers, where on the one hand, the researchers had expressly stated that the consultants’ task was not to make presentations or talks on specific tools and technologies, but be facilitators of discussions and sparring partners for teachers in their planning of innovative teaching with ICT, and on the other hand, the teachers who explicitly requested (demanded) just this – or even expected to be going on an ICT course, as also expressed by one of the teachers from the 2nd iteration:

Of course, I’m only talking on my behalf, but I would have liked it if people from the 1st iteration had provided introductions to specific programs. We never got that; we’ve actually just used what we knew already. And I think it is nice ... when we are forced to implement something and reflect on why we need to learn it. But we could have used inspiration or a mini course or something. We have used the things we know from Web 2.0 and other things we already know, so nothing much came out of it.

Rationales in teachers’ professional lives

Especially in the teacher interviews at the end of the project, conflicts between different rationales become apparent. In a qualitative analysis of the annual municipal Summer School for teachers in Copenhagen [8], Misfeldt, Fougt, Tamborg & Haugsted (2014), show how teacher thinking and

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8 A three-day, compulsory PD course for all teachers in Copenhagen.
practice are governed by different rationales (teaching rationale, PD rationale, subject (teaching) rationale, workplace rationale) and conclude that the teaching rationale is dominant as it requires teachers to act on the spot: “4B have classes in XX in the 3rd lesson on Mondays. That is non-negotiable” (Misfeldt et al., 2014, p. 61, our translation). Therefore, the other rationales become less influential, among these the PD logic (ibid., pp. 61f and 75).

Several teachers recognize that they do need PD as a natural part of their jobs, but at the same time, they find these activities very time consuming in relation to the teaching rationale:

What's positive is that you get to analyze your teaching really thoroughly. What's negative is that it takes way too much time. That's where I think, 'Wow what a cool tool!' [the planning guide template] I really get to reflect on why we do what we do, what is the point of all this [...] That process takes up a lot of time in relation to the knowledge that I also have other things to do, other classes to teach.

Another teacher describes how the project and the consultants were given little priority due to other, more urgent tasks: “… then there was a consultation with a parent at the same time because that was what suited the parent, and…so… it would have been better if we had been away from the school or had whole working days [in the project].”

Finally, a teacher points to time as essential for collaboration and PD (“Time is an essential factor; we all want to do this, but we need to prioritize our tasks”), just as one claims that the demands on teachers in this particular project had been somewhat overwhelming with its demands for documentation etc.: “All those phases [...] in principle that’s what it’s all about. That everything needs to be made explicit [...] in theory. In practice you need to try to manage with the time available.”

However, despite this incongruity between the rationale of the project and that of teaching, the practice-based approach of the intervention has – by some – been seen as more effective/rewarding than a traditional course as expressed by a teacher here: “This here thing with having time to sit down and develop a plan [together with colleagues and consultants] and ask stupid questions, working in a hands-on fashion, at least for me, that has been just the right way. I learn a lot more from that than from being on a course.”

The teachers have mixed feelings as to their collaboration with the consultants, mainly because there were so many replacements along the way, only one consultant being in the entire project. But at the same time, they appreciate the inspiration and challenges from the consultants: “Well, it was also somewhat in the interaction with the consultants. We did think we
had come up with something brilliant […], and then they look at it and say, ‘Why do this, why not do something else?’”

Apparently, technical aspects also play a role that apparently came as a surprise to the teachers, e.g. that they had to waste time on updating a flash player because the students needed it for screen recordings: “… their flash player had to be updated, and updating a computer takes about 15–20 minutes, and during all that time, the rest of the group are just twiddling their thumbs. There has been a lot of that, I think…”

Another teacher adds:

But these technical things take up a lot of time. Even though you think that these kids are great at technology, then talking a program and moving a file to another program and so on and so forth… we hadn’t allowed for that in our phases 1, 2, 3… there’s almost a phase 4 and 5: technical support!

Instead of enhancing the learning potential, ICT hampers the teaching and becomes an adversary and leads to frustration, which not only reduces student learning, but also the teachers’ motivation for using ICT and seeing the advantages of it. Several teachers suggest that the technical aspects, the use aspects of programs be placed in a special class or subject “so that this is not the determinant from the very start”.

This idea may seem tempting, but it is still the responsibility of the teacher to be in charge of the subject-specific, pedagogically relevant selection and integration of technologies.

The higher level of student autonomy that accompanies a more project-oriented approach to teaching and learning also challenges the teachers by making different demands on them and placing them in new roles: Several teachers mention that not all students could handle the degree of freedom they were given, which e.g. resulted in them using Google Translate instead of writing in the FL. This also caused two teachers to doubt their roles in relation to ensuring the students’ learning outcome:

… it’s this thing with the teacher role that is suddenly in focus, that’s not really something we’re used to thinking about (…) Are we facilitators or … are we just there? Suddenly we had to take a backseat and let them work, and that was as big a change for us as for the students, actually… that they had to take center stage and create a product, and we had to let go and just watch and tell them that we would step in at the end, not during the process.

We were worried about their learning outcomes, e.g. in relation to FL, when they work in groups in various places outside the classroom. And when you go check on them … you’re actually not a continual part of their learning process anymore. We can’t hear them, we can’t
evaluate. We need to trust them when they say they have been com-
municating in English (…) In whole-class teaching, we felt certain
that at least we knew they had heard what we said (…) It is very
difficult to just let go of that.

Not only the teachers feel insecure; one teacher describes how her stu-
dents find security in work sheets with training exercises because the chaot-
ic character of project-based work forms is also a challenge to the students.
This is expressed by a teacher here: “So sometimes they feel that we have
shielded them a little with some grammar work sheets, and it is almost a
relief to some of them that ‘now I just have to relate to this one thing’ (…) [but] you can’t just do the same thing 24/7.”

However, teachers also find potential in the innovative approach: “…
and then I also think that this thing with involving the world outside the
classroom (…) I keep thinking that we must be able to succeed at that (…) I think it’s a very good idea which didn’t quite succeed, but at any rate, it’s
something that I’m going to keep aspiring to.”

CONCLUSIONS

From the empirical data, we are unable to identify the innovative teach-
ing that was the aim of the project. However, overall, our data seem to con-
voy the picture of traditional language teaching. One definition of what
traditional teaching is would be the negation of the definition of innovative
teaching as used in the project (see above under Background), i.e. a teaching
practice that only to a very limited degree live up to this definition.

Another definition can be found in Fougt (2013), who, inspired by Trill-
ing & Hood (1999), defines it as follows:

The traditional educational paradigm is characterized by an element-
based professionalism (Bundsgaard & Kühn, 2007, pp. 28f), where
subject knowledge is defined as concepts, and where the teaching
aims/learning goals involve learning these concepts, e.g. knowing
what a metaphor is. Furthermore, it is characterized by teacher-
controlled whole-class teaching, where the teacher talks most of the
time (cf. Hiebert et al., 2003, and is hunting for “subject-related
finds” (Haugsted, 1999, p.136), using so-called harpoon questions,
i.e. an expression of a positivist view of subject knowledge (Saywer,
2006) and where ”… learners may be spending too much time playing
‘guess what’s in the teacher’s mind’…” (Mercer, 1995, p. 46) (Fougt,
2013, p. 118, our translation).
We can point to several causes: First, we need to take into account the marked difference between the subjects of English and German. In 8th grade, where students have learned German for one year, it was difficult to build up the linguistic level that is necessary for the activities in the teaching to live up to the criteria for innovative teaching with ICT, esp. in relation to the demand for project-based teaching; none of the teaching sequences in our data can qualify as problem-based, but rather as thematic teaching (see (Holm-Larsen, 1998)).

Second, we know that the high turnover of consultants several times during the intervention was problematic; the teachers didn’t get the continual support and sparring that they might have had if there had been more continuity with an unchanging team of consultants. This is something that also the teachers themselves address as being disruptive.

Third, it seems that the consultants have struggled to live up to their intended role, namely that of sparring partners, not as ‘course organizers’ or ‘technology instructors’.

Fourth, there is a clash between the different rationales which teachers have to navigate, among these the rationale of the PD project and a teaching rationale, and this makes it difficult for teachers to find the time necessary for them to feel that they are progressing.

Finally, it seems that teachers do not have a clear idea/notion of the potential contributions of ICT to the FL subjects. They do not convey/show an updated understanding of FL pedagogy, and they do not help and direct their students’ use of ICT.

Therefore, teachers see ICT as a frustrating adversary, which is also clearly seen in our observations. Furthermore, we can observe students who uncritically accept the uses of technology that the teachers present them with – without requesting any kind of explanation of why this particular (use of a) technology can enhance their learning.

There is no doubt that ICT does have a major role in realizing a modern, innovative FL teaching. But the teacher needs to be both daring and imaginative when it comes to the teaching of their subject in order to complete the move from the purely technical and (perhaps) the operational level to the third, subject-specific level (see Fig. 3) where the technology is endowed with relevant affordances that can enhance learning.

References


