

Research Project

**- VEO as a tool to help teachers evaluate classroom interaction and support of
CPD -**



Seminar: Becoming professional - a media based approach to internalisation and intercultural learning

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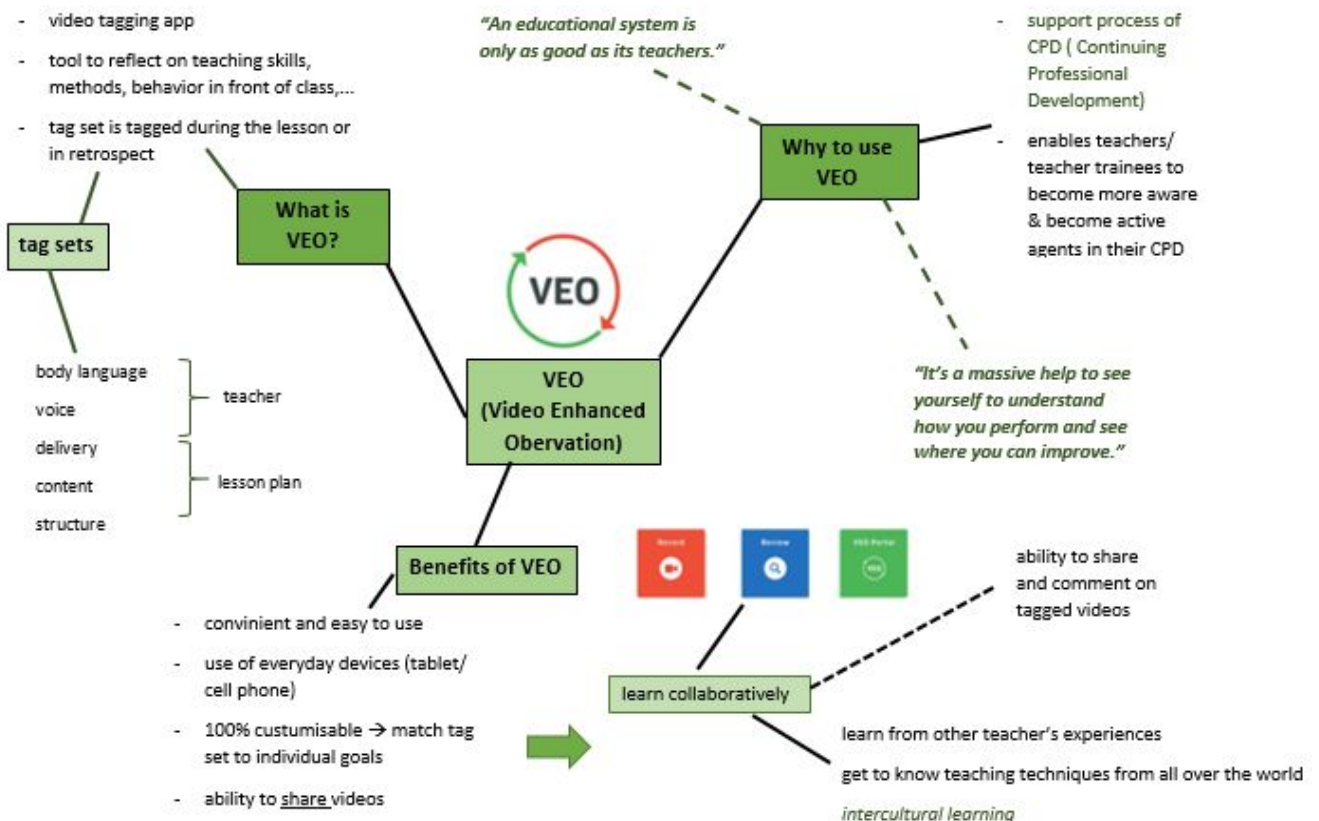
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VEO Europa Project

What is VEO?



VEO stands for **V**ideo **E**nhanced **O**bservation and is an app to record and tag lessons. This tool shall help to reflect on teaching skills, methods, the teachers behavior in front of the class, considering body language and movement or voice and tone. Before one starts to record a lesson you decide on what to put the focus on and on what you want to observe. Therefore you create an individual tag set, which can focus on the teacher as well as on the pupils and their engagement. During the lesson you use a tablet computer to record and simultaneously tag occurring features. Tagging is also possible in retrospect when you rewatch the lesson. Tag sets can always be changed to apply to your needs and the individual lesson. The main aspect of VEO is the recording and the option to rewatch your lesson to support self-reflection and therefore improvement.



To take a look on what the app looks like [click here](#) to see an introduction video.



To find out more about the idea behind the VEO app and its CEO and Co-Founder **Paul Miller**, read through the interview with him where he reveals what led to the development of VEO and what they are trying to achieve.

click: [Interview Paul Miller](#)

Interview with a teacher who worked with VEO

After hearing what VEO intends to support and to initiate, let's check out what an actual **teacher who worked with the app together with students** who were in their internship said about their experiences with VEO.



How did you get to know about VEO?

“I’ll try it with my next student group during their internship.”

I got to know it from Mrs Österle. She kept in touch with me because she knew that I had a student group and then she sent an Email with information about the project and told me that it would be a good idea to do some kind of video with the students because that's a project from here. And she wanted to gain some knowledge about VEO and I said ok and contacted her and said „ok, no problem. I'll try it with my next student group during their internship.“ Then she gave me some details with the password and so on and then I started doing it.

Did you use your own iPad therefore?

“I only had to get the password and the rest wasn't a problem.”

I used my own iPad, but she also offered me to get one from her. I only had to get the password and the rest wasn't a problem.

Why did she want you to work with VEO? Just to gain information for her project or were there any advantages for you as well?

She said that there's a project here at the teacher training college and she thought that it would be interesting for the people who developed the project to know about the experiences of the teachers and how they handled the use of the app and its outcome. I was willing to meet regularly with Mrs Österle and tell her what's good or bad about it. Those informations will be then given to the developers and hopefully help them improve the App.

Are there other teachers at your school who work with or at least tried VEO?

“Most teachers don’t like being recorded.”

Yes, but I also offered it to other teachers to use it for their own lessons. For example, could one teacher come and join a lesson and film the other teacher during the lesson. Unfortunately most teachers don’t like being recorded.

That is actually what the App was initially designed for teachers to evaluate their own teaching.

Yes but I thought it is perfect to use it for the ISP and the students, so that they can observe the lesson better and see themselves afterwards to reflect on the lesson better.

Do you use VEO on a regular basis or only the students?

“The problem is that you would need someone to join your class and film you.”

No, I don’t use it myself. I only use it for the students. The problem is that you would need somebody to join your class and film you. I could possibly ask a student to do it, but I haven’t done it yet.

So you never tried it yourself?

No, not yet.

How would you describe your experiences with the VEO App? Where there any difficulties? Why?



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“They become more aware of their behaviour and what they do unconsciously.”

There were some positive aspects. Recording, is in my opinion always a positive thing because you can see what may went wrong, see your gestures, how you moved or if there are any common mistakes. That’s useful for everybody. On the other hand, I had some problems using the app because I think filming and tagging simultaneously is really difficult and stressful, because you don’t want to miss anything and make sure everything is captured. Especially if you want to take notes- which is possible in the App but very hard to do. For me it is easier to just take a sheet of paper and take my notes on it, I am way quicker that way. I’ve made the experience that it is easier for me to write everything down because I am a quick writer. Although I still think it is necessary and helpful to record the lesson. After the lesson I can tell the students about the things I noticed and what to improve. With the help of the recording I can show them what I mean or in which situation they were when something occurred and so they become more aware of their behaviour

and what they do unconsciously. I also offered the students to watch the complete lesson again alone.

In the app it was difficult to rewatch the lesson and go exactly to that moment you pushed a button of the tag set because it doesn't show the exact time and you aren't able to go forward or backwards. I think it is a five second delay. That is in my opinion a disadvantage. Another downside I noticed was the ability to zoom in, which sometimes is necessary if you want to show what is written on the board. There was the situation that a pupil wrote something on the board and there were some mistakes in it which I wanted to capture but I wasn't able to, the only way would have been to walk to the front but I didn't want to disturb the class. Also the quality of the recording isn't the best.

Ok but you stick to the idea or method to record the lesson with or without VEO?



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“Recording is a good idea.”

Yes definitely. Recording is a good idea I only had problems with setting the tags and actually use it in class. There were for example some tags about how the class participates and you have to press a button „plus“ or „minus“ and I think that you can't say that. You can see that people are raising their hands but the others also focus on the lesson and participate, just without having an oral part. So I think that is something that is hard to observe and then decide on if it was good or bad.

I can imagine that it could be a problem when you set a tag set focusing on body language for example and then you notice something about the students behaviour and aren't able to tag it somehow, would you agree?

Yes I agree. The problem is that when I observe I want to write down everything which is easier on a sheet of paper. I have lots of observations because I see many many things and maybe it would be useful, maybe it's my mistake, maybe next time I could use the app just to focus on one thing, like body language, then it probably would be easier.

Did you receive feedback from the students about how they felt being recorded during the lesson?

“It's perfect for self-reflection.”

I think that is different from student to student. Some say being recorded is a good idea and some are just OK with it and try it, but you can see and feel that they don't really like it. Most students like it and afterwards most of the others say that it was good and helpful to themselves again. It's easier for them to see their mistakes and understand my criticism because one's barely aware of some things one does and often can't believe that they did certain things like facial expressions or movement. That's why it is perfect for self-reflection.

What did the pupils say about it? Did they behave differently?

No. I was really astonished because I first thought that they would „behave“, not do stupid things, and give their best, knowing that they are filmed but most of them acted as normal. That wasn't a problem.

Did you need any kind of permission from their parents because of the recording?

I informed the parents at the parents evening and told everybody that there will be a group of students in class and that we'll sometimes do some videos and then the parents were fine with it. Furthermore the students at our school had to sign a subscription informing them that they may be filmed during class could happen. It is still important to use the videos only for evaluation purposes and not to put them online.

Do you think VEO helps the students to reach their goals or improve themselves? (How?)

“I definitely noticed improvement afterwards.”

Yes, of course. I think there are points like body language and gestures or how you move in the classroom, look at how they explain things to students which are easier to analyse when you can rewatch the lesson. I definitely noticed improvement afterwards.

Regarding classroom interaction, do you know about any methods the students have used to evaluate your lesson in the end to reach their goals or improve any factors? (research, discussions,...) Did you recommend anything to them?

Not really. Someone said they should buy some books about discipline in the classroom but not any other special things except of our reflection with the help of the recordings, which we did right after each lesson. The other students could say something they noticed, sometimes they even had special tasks or topics on what to focus, like body language, how things are explained, the discipline in the class and their participation. After the lesson every student said what was positive and what could be improved and then the supervisor of the PH and I gave our opinion on the lesson. As I said before I then offered the student to watch the video of the whole lesson again, together or alone and focus on the observations I made to point them out. Most of them told me that it is a useful experience.

Would you agree that VEO helps evaluating classroom interaction? (Why? Why not?)

“It helps to become more aware of what is happening in the classroom.”

Yes, of course. When you watch the video afterwards you can see what the pupils are doing. I think that's why VEO mainly helps beginners, so people who just started teaching because they are not used to have their eyes everywhere, although there are some who really can do it and observe everything that is going on in the classroom and may notice that someone has a chewing gum or doesn't pay attention. There are some students who have that and other students who don't. I think VEO can help with that to show you that there are some pupils that do other things as you can see on the video and point out to the students that they did not notice. So it helps to become more aware of what is happening in the classroom.

Can you imagine any further possibilities to use the VEO App besides the evaluation of the teachers behaviour in class? (e.g. pupils use it to analyse and improve their presentation skills?)



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“I could think about the ‘Eurocom’,.. or to learn about how to give a good presentation.”

Yes. I could think about the „Eurocom“, which is a oral presentation in English in class ten. Also in class nine they give a presentation and in all the other classes too of course. I think you could use it to make some videos and to show them to the pupil or the complete class again, to show what was good or bad about it. Some years ago I did a video project which was called „How to give a good presentation“. I split the class into different groups, some focusing on body language, the other on language and voice, one on media use,...and then they worked out what could make a presentation interesting. There was another group focusing on how to start a presentation, because everybody starts with „The topic of my presentation is...“ and that’s boring, so they would work out other ways how to start a presentation. For example they had the idea of a picture puzzle, a quote, a joke or sounds referring to the topic and let the class guess what the presentation is going to be about. I think that was really creative. I did that project with the class and then we filmed everything. We had pupils who had focused on how to start a presentation, others on ways to make posters more interesting or how to make a good powerpoint presentation and so on. Some showed real objects, which is always useful to speak freely. So we filmed everything and put it on DVD, and this is what I show my pupils every year before they give their Eurocom or any other presentation and that really helps. But I could also imagine that the VEO App could help them.

Did the groups then had their checklists and checked what was implemented in the presentations?

Exactly. I gave them some help and wrote down like „Instead of starting with ‚My topic is...‘ – think of other ways to start a presentation“, but they also worked out own ideas which were really good.

Did the class reflect together on the presentation or only the student who held it?

All together. We improved things and then in the end agreed on the best videos and put them on the DVD. We also made some „bad videos“ you could say about things that can go wrong if you do not prepare yourself or the classroom, like the overhead projector was not perfect or the handwriting was terrible. Still those videos are useful to make them aware of such things. I also had a good video of the person who did one of those mistakes to not make them look like they only give bad presentations.

Is there anything you would like to change or add to the App, you think would improve VEO?



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Yes. The issue with the quality of the recording, but I don't know if that has something to do with the iPad. I would also include a zoom function.

The most common mistake is that you set too many tags, so that you just want to focus on too many different things. I would recommend to focus on only one or two different areas to be able to follow and tag everything. I still don't like the fact that you cannot go to the exact scene you tagged due to that five seconds delay, so I would try to fix that and make it more punctual.

Did you make use of the possibility to tag things afterwards again in case you missed something the first time?

No, we only tagged during the class. I think the problem is that when I tag something, e.g. that the task isn't clear I personally want to take notes why it was unclear, whether to be or the pupils, but that's not possible because you don't have time for it. The lesson goes on and you still try to write something down when already the next thing occurs. That's why I think I am way quicker when I write in on a piece of paper. I prefer to watch the complete lesson afterwards again and then stop when I have something to say about it and show it to the student.

Would you recommend VEO to future teachers or people who already are in the job for a while now?



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“A lesson is really complex, so the observer should be experienced.”

I would recommend it if one really wants to focus on one special thing, like pupils not paying attention or participating. In such a case you can think about a specific tag set. But it is still difficult, because there are so many different reasons why a lesson goes wrong. There might be things like a lack of movement in the classroom, the topic of the lesson is just not interesting and motivating enough, unclear tasks, so as you can see there are various reasons that can lead to the problem and you don't know in advance what you have to look for. It may be easier to come to one lesson, record it and watch it, tell the teacher afterwards what went wrong, let him see it himself, tell him what you have observed and then join the next lesson again and see if it helped to improve and change something about it. A lesson is really complex so it still will be hard to tell, therefore the observer should be experienced. It has to be someone, a teacher who is aware of all the influences and lesson structure to be able to tell what went wrong, and also – if you use VEO- the observer should be familiar with the app because it is not that easy to use.

I think it is also not easy to find someone who is willed and free to come to your lesson and tag it.

“Most teachers don’t like to be recorded... and show their weaknesses.”

Absolutely. At school it is very hard to find another teacher who has time when you have your lesson and they don’t have one at the same time. I know some teacher who really came to me and say that they need feedback, but most of the others don’t like being filmed or joined in class because the time of their studies is over and now they don’t have to do it and show their weaknesses to someone. I think the fact that VEO was developed in England plays an essential role. I believe that they have a different way of looking and observing lessons and teaching than we have in Germany. People feel depressed and attacked when they get criticism, but in other countries like England it is normal to get criticism, it’s just part of the way they lead schools.

Is there anything else you want to say about your experiences with VEO?

“I used VEO in PE lessons.”

I have to say that I really don’t like the fact that at the end of a lesson which you tagged with VEO the app wants you to evaluate the lesson and choose a smiley face (bad, average, good), I think it cannot be done like this because it takes more time to a lesson which is not considered. It depends on what you focus on. It was really hard for me to decide that after each lesson – so I never did that and skipped that. Also if the app says that the participation of the class was about 50% I can’t really work with that information because it might be a shy class but students are still very motivated but just don’t raise their hands that often. That’s why I think usual notes are more effective, because you can write down more specific things. There are so many things the app just can’t take into consideration, e.g. if the pupils had sports the lesson before, if they wrote an exam that day or if it is in lesson six on a Friday. All of these factors can influence the pupils’ engagement.

So basically the most important point is that you need an experienced observer for your lesson who can consider all the influences and help you reflect on your lesson. But I also noticed that many observers who come to observe the students, weren’t teachers themselves and focus too much on the language or the grammar of the student and do not look at all the other factors like how to keep the class quiet, which methods to use, how to motivate them and so on. Language does play a role but only hearing what kind of language mistakes you made doesn’t really help the students. The way of how you interact is probably the most important thing, besides paying attention on what is happening in the classroom. Basically the presence of the teacher. Most students already speak perfectly and struggle with being present and that is what they need to learn.

I have to say that VEO is still a good tool. I used VEO in PE lessons and there it is completely different because you observe other things.

That's interesting. What have you been focusing on then?

It is more about the movement, about giving the tasks but mainly it is about the movement in the gym, which is totally different to the classroom. Things to focus on are for example that the teacher doesn't turn his back towards the pupils and has a good position.

Do you think all teachers are willed to try out VEO or don't they understand what they need it for because they have their teaching strategy for years now and want to stick to that? --> convince them?

I think most of the teachers don't like the idea of being recorded, they might think that they have their job now and their studies are over so they don't have to reflect on their lessons any more. There are some that are willed to but not that many. I think most are afraid of being criticised. It depends on the teacher and if they know that they have some problems and want to work on it while others are glad that the classroom door is closed and that they are on their own. There is also the danger that the pupils may think there is a reason or problems why the teacher is recorded. Then I think everybody should be filmed, then it would be easier for the individual teacher.

The VEO App is about evaluating teachers, of course you don't have to use the app like that, you can also use it to improve and motivate you to change something, but I think the problem is that most teachers are afraid of the fact of being evaluated and criticised. No one wants to feel like he is a bad teacher. I also think that when you know that you are going to be recorded most people think the lesson has to be super special and complex, but that is just not the way everyday lessons are. But the teachers that deny being filmed aren't especially the older ones, it really depends on the person.

Could you imagine to use VEO in one of your own lessons?

"I definitely can imagine it."

Maybe I can do it together with my next student group and reflect on it afterwards. I make mistakes too. I think it would help with body language and facial expressions because you don't see that yourself.

VEO Europa Project



VEO Europa is a cooperative project of several universities and organisations aiming for better school education. Six partners from five countries- Finland, England, Germany, Bulgaria and Turkey- strived for the promotion of teacher education with technology. The project ran from September 2015 to September 2017. Teacher education should be improved by the use of the digital and innovative tool, namely the VEO App, developed at University of Newcastle, UK. VEO enables a better possibility for self-reflection and therefore supports CPD (Continuing Professional Development).

for further information about the project and on the partners visit the homepage:
[VEO Europa Project](#)