Creating awareness

The Magazine is starting its second year. A year in which we think we again can put forward a lot of new solutions to challenges in learning and managing education processes. The Berlin conference showed the energy the network can expose when it comes to innovation and solutions to nowadays problems in education in Europe and beyond.

This power should also be used to meet one of the goals the European Commission has already set in 2009, but has not got very much attention so far. It concerns pre-school education and though 92.3% of 4 year olds are availing of education in one way or the other, there is not enough discussion around the quality of it. European ministers of education set the target for 95% participation in education for children from the age of 4, at the same time that many countries have worries concerning the quality of what is happening in education before compulsory education starts. Because of these concerns the Commission’s proposals will be discussed by the Ministers of Education in May 2011. The commission will focus on:

- “universal access to quality pre-school education, based on stable funding and good governance,
- age-appropriate curricula and care, taking account of children’s needs in a holistic way,
- more focus on the professionalisation of staff with appropriate qualifications, salaries and working conditions,
- quality assurance systems and standards to monitor progress”.

This initiative is closely connected to “the ‘Europe 2020’ strategy - reducing the share of early school leavers to under 10% and to lift at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and social exclusion, as the Commission says.

We think the network is one of the most outstanding places to make professionals aware of this and to support the European initiatives.

Gerard de Kruif
Editor

Content
Social networks as a tool for diversity 3
JetNet lightens up technology 4
Unleashing potential 6
An innovative approach to teacher education and training 7
Learning is fun 8
Teaching creativity and creative teaching 10
Internationalisation in a rural setting 12
Mobile learning in primary education 13
Short News 14
Positive networking in kindergarten 15
Highly successful Berlin Conference 16
European Cooperation: Main policy initiatives 17
Earth Hour 2011 18
Social-emotional competence 19

Authors in this edition
Articles with no author mentioned are produced by the network’s admin team.

Front page photo
Image credit: Jet-Net
Social networks as a tool for diversity

Social networks as a tool for diversity’ is a two-year (2009-2011) project, financed by the Flemish government. The main goal is to find a solution for the problem Flemish education faces: there is a majority of female teachers (up to even 90% or more) in schools.

There are practically no immigrants that choose teaching as a profession. The Flemish government wants the teachers in schools to be representative of the society in Flanders. Therefore the project has 3 main goals:

• An increase in the number of male and immigrant students enrolling in the teacher training college programme.
• An increase in the number of male and immigrant students continuing studies in order to improve their language skills.
• A more extensive use of ICT in classes: new media, social networks (‘facebook’).

Why use ‘facebook’? Research (Sloep, 2009) shows that virtual learning environments are best used for formal learning combined with social networks for informal learning.

We created a facebook-group ‘iwanttobeteacher’. Members are student-teachers (almost 600), meeting and interacting with each other. The group is a platform for exchanging photos, video clips and other information.

Due to the fact that most student-teachers who fail in the first year, have language problems (typically for male and immigrant-students), we also created a website with the same name, that could be reached from the facebook-group.

That website (www.iwanttobeteacher.be), created in Moodle as an open source learning environment, tries to offer students quizzes and exercises related to the language a teacher student needs to know. Student-teachers can improve their language by using the facebook-group and this website.

The language trajectory has as its final level the level that students should have mastered when they start studying at colleges or at university. The feedback is humourous, like on facebook and we expect a lot, but not too much: we want to motivate, not discourage future students.

We also made a youtube movie, about what it means to be a teacher:

• Short movie to attract the attention of teenagers.
• The mixture of students.
• No stereotypes were used: a male kindergarten teacher and a teacher of foreign origins cooperated in the movie. The movie can be seen on youtube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8og9TM4OlYQ

Through the project we hope to contribute to the realization of the networked teacher: http://networked-teacher.wetpaint.com/

Of course using social media, like facebook and youtube, is not without any risk. An ethical code about what is allowed and what is not should be developed. Some institutions (CNV – The Netherlands; Center for Social Media - USA) have already developed some codes for the use of social media. In those codes, some generally accepted issues are described. An example is: sharing information should never harm the organization or the employees. This is of course true, but not limited to social media. Other issues are more detailed but not always accepted and are part of a paradigm shift in the information society.

An example is article 5 in the CNV-code: employees - using social media - respect copyright. Kist (2010) sees plagiarism as a barrier for many teachers who want to use social networking tools with their students (Kist, 2010). Angela Maiers (Kist, 2010, p. 50) however feels that teachers are stuck in an old paradigm in this regard and are obsessed with who owns knowledge. “It’s not only about owning the rights to the content you produce” she says. “It’s what you do with it, and how you share it, and what others do with it.” So the discussion about the use of ‘Creative Commons Licensing’ in education is about to begin.

References


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Many future engineers and research professionals are needed to strengthen scientific, technological and economic innovation in the Netherlands. Shortages in these disciplines are already imminent—as in most Western countries. Therefore, in 2002, a unique partnership between the Dutch industry, the government and the education sector was established: Jet-Net.

Jet-Net is short for Youth and Technology Network Netherlands and aims to create inspiration and motivation for science and technology among students attending higher-general secondary (havo) and pre-university (vwo) education schools.

Jet-Net companies help schools enhance the appeal of a science curriculum by using a great variety of activities and also allow students to gain a better understanding of their future career prospects in industry and technology.

Started in 2002 by Philips, Dutch Royal Shell, AkzoNobel, Unilever and DSM, today some 70 technological companies work together with 175 general secondary and pre-university education schools. These companies organize a wide variety of programmes for students.

These programmes include special lectures, classroom projects, helping students choose subject combinations, offering career-orientation information sessions, giving tours of their facilities and coaching students during interdisciplinary projects.

The companies also organize regional kick-off meetings and teachers’ workshops, occasionally within the framework of visits to their premises.

In addition to programmes between individual schools and companies, Jet-Net also develops general programmes which are particularly geared to help students make better choices in respect of their future studies and careers.

Such general Jet-Net activities are:

Jet-Net Career Day
Every year, students (in their last years of pre-college education), from Jet-Net schools are invited to participate in a major educational event offered by Jet-Net companies. In 2010, some 3,200 students experienced new technologies in many fields and interacted with both young engineers and various technologies. This helped them to gain insight into the prospects of a career in industry and technology.

Meet the Boss
Top managers from Jet-Net companies receive students from various pre-college schools in their region. They discuss industry and technology with the students. This allows students to think about technological subjects, to form opinions about them and then put their ideas into words.

Teachers Events
Jet-Net companies regularly invite teachers to special sessions at both regional and national level. These are designed to further improve their joint programmes and to provide teachers with broad coverage of current trends in industry and technology. The sessions also allow companies to better understand the needs of schools.

Girlsday
Girlsday is a European initiative that aims to create inspiration and enthusiasm among young girls for science, technology and ICT. Girlsday takes place yearly on the fourth Thursday of April (in 2011 in the Netherlands on the second Thursday of April, because of school holidays). At Girlsday Lightens Up Technology
day, young girls can participate in a wide range of activities that are held in companies and organizations. They meet role models and learn the insights of working in a technological environment.

All in all Jet-Net programmes are carefully designed to meet the needs of the schools as closely as possible. Every effort is made to fit the educational activities logically and meaningfully into the students’ curriculum. Naturally this occurs in close cooperation with the schools.

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Quotes:
Martin van Pernis, CEO, Siemens Netherlands B.V.
Role models - The Jet-Net formula appeals to us because we feel very strongly about technologically trained people who work for us acting as role models for students. They are enthusiastic about their profession and connect well with young people’s perception of the environment. This is the fourth school year during which we closely co-operate with our Jet-Net schools in The Hague and surroundings. We are highly motivated to continue this during the years to come.

Kees Grolleman, Science and Technology Coordinator at the Hofstad Lyceum, The Hague
Breaking down walls - The wonderful thing about Jet-Net is that it is as if you’re breaking down school walls. Students look around outside the school building and experts easily find their way in. We’ve been doing this right from the time Jet-Net started. Our first Jet-Net activity was in May of 2002 together with Shell. Our goal is to offer at least one appealing Jet-Net activity per school year that fits the curriculum. Recently we have also been focusing on girls. We’re satisfied, Jet-Net activities are meaningful, cultivating and fun.

Suzanne van der Poel, 6th grade pre-university education student, Hofstad Lyceum, The Hague
Considering technology - What you often hear from other students is: “I had no idea that you could do this with a technological curriculum.” They usually simply imagine a laboratory, while technology is actually an integral part of our daily lives. Just look around you at all the bridges, buildings, mobile phones, television and so on. People don’t really consider that, but as soon as do they realise it they become interested. Through Jet-Net, young people become better acquainted with technology and they give it more consideration. For this reason alone, Jet-Net must be continued.

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission: “By opening the window between the worlds of education and industry, Jet-Net is a powerful example of how Europe can make most of its potential to turn innovation into growth and jobs in the future.”
‘Popstars’, ‘Idols’, ‘Holland got Talent’; every week there is a talent show on the tube. There are ambitions in Holland to secure the Olympics in 2028! In the Netherlands there is the desire to be in the top 10 countries in the world on the international OECD education list. It makes you wonder how we are currently dealing with creativity and talent development... Do we know our own talents and those of the children we train, educate and prepare for their future? Are we doing the right things in the right way?

In many sectors there are teachers, trainers and coaches engaged in the development of children. Whether it is in education, sports, music, dance or whatever, everywhere people are trying to ‘unleash potential’. Apparently we are not able to get this right. Various factors may be at fault; bureaucracy, class size, lack of resources, lack of good teachers, trainers and coaches, etc. However, there is a huge need right now to see the potential of what children naturally have, and to ‘unlock’ it.

How to define talent? I define it as:

‘Talent is something you have before it became a competence or quality; but in order to develop your talent you have to work/train/practice hard.’

What does this mean for you as a teacher? In this era where many ministries of education demand clear output figures, we have to rethink our own mental model about what really matters in school and personal development. Of course we have to train our left side of the brains, but in order to have the answers to all our future problems and sustainable development we also need to develop the right side; we need talented and creative people!

‘Talent has no passport, no religion, gender, or social class’

Are we able to see our pupils really in an unprejudiced way? Do we give children enough space to make meaningful interactions, meaningful learning?

In order to clarify what is needed to unleash potential, you could make talent cards of your pupils (i.e., start with one pupil in which you believe is talented and one pupil whose talents you’ve never considered). Ask:

- What are they passionate about, or highly interested in?
- What are their ambitions?
- Are they ‘good’ at something and love doing these things? (making stories, singing, gardening, drawing, social skills, sports etc)
- Are they committed to train/practice and are they pro-active in doing so?
- Do they have high self-confidence?

The big question is “how can you contribute to unleash this potential?”

I am confident that you can, but the solution will be too comprehensive to be covered in a ‘500 word article’. I also think that this is what makes the ‘teacher’s job’ a very special and important one!

I ‘know’ that creativity and talent development is a necessity for a good future. I hope you will find a way to unleash the potential of yourself and your pupils!

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talentcard

passion

Talent

ambition

skills

Confidence and will to do it
Since 2000 there has been an increasingly positive political and policy climate for global learning in schools and teacher training institutions in the U.K, resulting in a range of government initiatives and policy guidance designed to promote different aspects of global learning.

Research by the Development Education Association (DEA) found that 94% of teachers in England “feel that schools should prepare pupils to deal with a fast changing and globalised world” (DEA 2009:5) However, only 58% of teachers believed that the current education system incorporated this in practice (DEA 2009).

Liverpool Hope University in partnership with Liverpool World Centre, a local development education centre, have just completed a highly successful project on embedding global learning explicitly into its teacher training and education programmes.

A number of initiatives were developed including an attitude inventory, a one day global learning conference for postgraduate trainee teachers and a new module for undergraduate students training to be primary teachers, Wider Perspectives in Education.

These aimed to promote trainee teachers’ understanding of global learning and education for sustainable development by raising students’ awareness of their own role as active global citizens and the underpinning pedagogical approaches to delivering global learning in schools.

Key to the success of these initiatives has been the partnership between Liverpool Hope University and Liverpool World Centre. The Global Dimension Support Officer seconded from Liverpool World Centre has provided critical advice and support, as well as vital links between project activities and practice in schools.

The Wider Perspectives module involves trainees completing a community engagement project. These are very varied and include working with local schools, community groups and NGO’s (Non-Governmental Organisations) to help raise young people’s awareness of issues such as fair trade, sustainable development and diversity.

It was very important to the success of the projects that the trainee teachers worked in conjunction with the providers to develop a project that was mutually transformative.

Evaluation outcomes from both the secondary and primary initiatives have been very positive. A final report completed for the Department for International Development which initially funded the project found that “Student qualitative feedback confirmed the course team had been successful in promoting global learning with local and global dimensions that moves beyond traditional understandings of global education.”

Feedback from schools in relation to the community engagement projects was also very positive: “In terms of the outcomes for the children the project was very successful, raising the understanding of global issues/ fair trade”. Whiston Willis Primary School, Merseyside.

The success of the project has been sustained through a continued partnership between the University and Liverpool World Centre, enabling a network of evolving practice to be developed with schools and support for further developments such as a research programme through the University’s newly established Centre for International and Development Education.

Further information about the project can be found in the paper presented at the Berlin Conference 2011, available online.

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Learning is fun (or it should be!)

It seems clear to me that there is still a large proportion of the educational establishment that has not cottoned on to this fact. There is still the prevailing view that teachers are there to teach (usually by discipline and the imposition of their will and ‘technique’ of teaching) and the kids are there to learn (usually by sitting quietly and respectfully to absorb the knowledge of the expert provided for them).

In my view, it doesn’t take a genius to realise that this doesn’t work for the majority of children, or adults for that matter. Every day we read about how many of our kids are failing. This statement opens up many cans of worms. Failing? At what? Generally this failure is classified as not achieving the nationally dictated point on a statistical scale.

I would argue that the individual’s achievements should be celebrated and then expanded upon in a personalised fashion that acknowledges them as an individual with inherently high capabilities.

This would then allow the student to build upon positive reinforcement of their achievements, the teacher to realise that the child can progress well and for both of them to develop a relationship that encourages each of them to develop positively.

Sadly this does not tend to happen in many places. Sure, we have individual educational plans etc but so often they are an exercise in form filling, to be seen to do the right thing.

In my own establishment, a specialist ICT centre in North East England, I have spent the last ten years using ICT to make learning positive, challenging, engaging and, above all fun. I have combined my love of ICT with an interest in how the brain works (mainly by using Neuro-Linguistic Programming-NLP- techniques) to provide a highly positive environment for children to learn in.

At no point is negative reinforcement used. The children’s work is always ‘perfect’. By this I mean, in a constructivist sense, that the work they are producing is the perfect result of all that has gone on in their lives previously, leading to, for example, an animation.

Clearly it is unlikely that the six year old has produced a fully professional animation that cannot be improved. What we do now is to use reflection to enable the child to develop a vision for improvements.

Some of this will come about from the child’s own internal representations of what they would consider ‘better’. Some of it will probably come from carefully created ‘learning opportunities’ that are presented to the student.

So, the next question that arises is, “Where is the fun?” Actually I think that it is probably the most pertinent question to ask in any sphere of human endeavour. If you think back to your own education, ask yourself which were the most enjoyable subjects and which did you feel you learnt most in.

I suggest there is a strong positive correlation between the enjoyment and the amount learnt. Digging a bit deeper into my own specialisation of innovative learning through technology I now ask how what I do can make learning fun.

The answer is really simple - by making it relevant to each individual child and allowing them to co-create the entire experience. I give them the tools to release both creativity and engagement together with the absolute certainty that they will understand all the requirements of a session and produce a piece of high quality work that they can be proud of.

In NLP there are elements called presuppositions. Two of the most relevant here are; ‘everyone has all the resources they need to achieve (or can obtain them)’ and ‘requisite variety’.

The first point means that inside every person is the ability to succeed. Our job as teachers is to allow the full expression of those possibilities to succeed.

In my view, it doesn’t take a genius to realise that this doesn’t work for the majority of children, or adults for that matter. Every day we read about how many of our kids are failing. This statement opens up many cans of worms. Failing? At what? Generally this failure is classified as not achieving the nationally dictated point on a statistical scale.

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The first point means that inside every person is the ability to succeed. Our job as teachers is to allow the full expression of those possibilities to succeed, NOT to reinforce in kids the impossibility of their goals and ambitions. In our reality they may never achieve whatever kinds of success that we would consider. In theirs this may not be true.

A complete paradigm shift can occur in children by helping them to overcome barriers to learning. This is where the ‘law’ of requisite variety is so vital. This states...
that “The person who has the most choices in their behaviour will be able to adapt best to any situation and so have the most influence on the system.

The more choices you and your student have the more flexible both of you will become.” In plain language, by developing the ability to use different strategies in learning and thinking (by the student) and teaching (by the teacher) then a more positive and fruitful outcome is more likely.

This shared journey to success, where both parties are equal partners rather than a leader and a follower will result in a positive and fun journey for all participants.

Discipline is self-regulated because fun and engagement have taken its place.

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Suggestions for further reading
NLP for Teachers: How to Be a Highly Effective Teacher
http://www.amazon.com/NLP-Teachers-Highly-Effective-Teacher/dp/1845900634/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1298123538&sr=8-1

The Structure of Magic, Vol. 1: A Book About Language and Therapy

NLP Workbook: A Practical Guide to Achieving the Results You Want
http://www.amazon.com/NLP-Workbook-Practical-Achieving-Results/dp/0007100035/ref=sr_1_4?ie=UTF8&qid=1298123614&sr=1-4
Teaching Creativity and Creative Teaching
- principles to follow for an efficient learning process

Teaching is no longer a `one way process` consisting of a wide classroom with children listening and writing and the teacher being the supreme authority. Studies and experience have taught us that learning is more efficient if we, as teachers, exploit children’s talents, abilities, intelligences, creativity and if we don’t see them as objects of our activity, but as a subject; gloriously participating in their own formation.

That is why creativity is the main preoccupation at all stages in the learning system. We are all looking for ways of improving learning and all of them point to stimulating creativity, as the main inner source for learning.

Creativity is not just coming up with something new, but something also valuable and useful at the same time. It is not a passive state of mind and sometimes it is deeply hidden and needs to be brought up. Teachers have to become aware of this task in order to get better results that can also be measured in the quality of their students’ activity.

Not only do students have to be creative, but teachers as well. They have to re-think the whole process so that it no longer applies to the group, but to the individual. Methods that, at some point, offered best results may not be as useful with other individuals, so the teacher must always be inventive, must create new learning situations and environments in order to bring out the best in each student. It is never easy.

There are some principles to be taken into account for better results when trying to be creative in developing creativity in learning.

Creative beings
We are all creative beings, as we “were all created equal”. We were endowed with certain abilities and sometimes this ability can be lost if not properly exploited.

That is why it is very important for a teacher to know his students well, to identify the best ways to work with them, to study their intelligence(s) and stimulate their creative potential. “If you’re not prepared to be wrong, you’ll never come up with anything original” (Ken Robinson, 2006).

It is also important that teachers use their own creative potential so that they can always be “up-to-date” and prevent school from killing creativity. The problem is to keep our ability of being creative as we grow up. “We don’t grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out if it” (Ken Robinson, 2006). That is what we have to change about teaching.

Be careful about imitation
Be careful about imitation. Imitation is a stage in learning at early ages. All children imitate behavior, language, acts and activities, as this is our natural way to learn. But later, imitation can become a barrier because we are “naturally creatures of habit” (Marvin Bartel, 2008).

We look for our previous success or the others’ because we think that if we follow the exact steps only with different material, we can achieve the same results. That’s why giving examples may not always be the best idea.

Students tend to copy examples or create something extremely similar to it, instead of allowing themselves to explore more, because they are afraid of failure. Teachers, on the other hand, have to be careful not to develop mental models which block creativity.

Freedom
To what extent is freedom “‘free’”? Nietzsche said “you need chaos in your soul to give birth to a dancing star”. Is there a limit for creativity? One of its main features is freedom, unleashing your inner strengths. Individuals need to be allowed to be themselves, to have absolute freedom.

As a teacher, however, you have to stick to some requirements, making it easier for the students to focus on the problem in order to find new solutions. The given task is to be very precise, but it has to give them the opportunity of finding their own way to the solution.

When I tried to explain to them about Avant-garde, my students were really surprised especially when I asked them to make a poem, having no other rule than experimenting. One may say there is nothing creative in cutting paper and randomly choosing words to create a poem.

Indeed. But the reflection after the activity; rearranging the verses of the poem so that it can get a meaning, choosing the length of the verse and the punctuation marks that provide different meaning, analyzing the possible value of this kind of a poem, challenges their minds. Moreover, the exercise helped them understand the mechanisms of writing poems as the avant-garde writers did.

Think process, not product
Think process rather than product. When solving Math problems, there are sometimes many ways of getting the final result. There are exercises that already give the answer asking the students to find multiple ways of getting it. This is what lateral thinking is about.

“Too often, we expect students to produce art products before we teach them how to get ideas for the products” (Marvin Bartel-2008). The idea is to help students learn how to generate new ideas because
that is what makes them creative.

Answer questions with questions

Answering questions with questions. Even if sometimes it may be really annoying, this method enables them to find out more than they thought they were looking for. They do not get the information, but they discover it, so it is easier for them to learn.

We are then true leaders and not masters, nor superiors of those whom we teach. We become their partners in the process, so we consolidate the relationship as students hate that “know it all” attitude. They can take credit for all their work and feel proud of getting there by themselves. That is really motivating for their future learning actions. The teacher becomes a guide and supports the learning process “from behind the scenes”.

Build confidence

Remember to build confidence. Many students experience a crisis of confidence. Some of them might feel they are not creative. They should be encouraged to try, pointing out that there is a ratio between nature and nurture, that nothing comes out if you don’t work hard enough. Experimenting and rehearsing help them discover new things about themselves and observation practice helps them gain confidence.

Ingredients

There are certain “ingredients” for creativity that a teacher has to be aware of when teaching. Here are some of them: curiosity, experience, lust for knowledge, proper stimulation and guidance, store of ideas, ability for connections between different ideas. All of them refer both to the student and to the teacher, as they are to be a team in the learning process. Curiosity is essential as it may be the „trigger” for creative activities. Experience is important as new ideas are composed of old ideas, because „nothing is new under the sun”. That is why group work can be very efficient sometimes.

Consulting with others means finding out new possibilities to solve the task. Teachers should be preoccupied with motivating students so that they become eager for knowledge and want to find out more about things and about themselves. Physicist Linus Pauling said „the best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas”. They help find new ways of solving the problem and it becomes easier and more attractive „juggling” with ideas.

Teachers have to remember that „creative teachers make mistakes, but they also search for ways to overcome mistakes” and „if I have a habit of looking for new alternative methods, I am likely to be a creative teacher” (Marvin Bartel, 2008).

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* Dr. Joe Lau, OpenCourseWare on critical thinking, logic, and creativity The Philosophy Department School of Humanities, Faculty of Arts The University of Hong Kong http://philosophy.hku.hk/think/
Internationalisation in a rural setting

Bobergsgymnasiet is a small upper secondary school situated in a depopulating area in the geographical centre of Sweden but with a very active international profile. Since 1997 we have been a member of a global network of schools called the Global Classroom and previously mentioned in this magazine. Within the network we share many projects and meet annually, both educators and learners, at a conference held in one of the partner schools.

At our school we have an international course, in which students can work with international issues in different ways, both with projects concerning the network and outside it such as solidarity projects and Comenius projects.

We estimate that every year, about a quarter of all our 400 students take part in international activities, some that require travelling abroad. The Swedish upper secondary school system has different educational programmes. In our school, the Healthcare and Childcare programmes have developed links with Norway with a focus on work practice. The Rescue Education programme do a substantial part of their work practice in the USA, Canada and Estonia. We are now also building up links with a school in Tartu, Estonia.

Of course, we have also had Comenius projects. The current one is our third and involves schools in Germany, Poland and Austria and deals with European identity. The programmes mostly involved with the project are the Natural Science Programme, the Social Science Programme and the Technology Programme.

Students from many of our programmes take part in a cultural exchange and solidarity project with the “Albor”, a youth organisation that works with culture for young people in Bolivia. In March this year, we will welcome the very first exchange student from Albor, who will be learning Swedish at our school.

Our main difficulties are and have been financial resources – or rather the lack of them. We try to solve these kinds of difficulties in different ways. External funding and sponsoring is used in some cases, but many students also start their own Young Enterprise companies where the profit goes to an international project. Another difficulty is to embed our international profile in the everyday activities in school. It is also a fact that the development of these activities depends very much on people and their passion and enthusiasm, which are not always easy to find and this is of course a weakness. Also, time is a limiting factor. There is too much to do in too little time.

Despite these difficulties, we have over the years seen the students generally becoming more internationally minded and also quite a few have opted for an international career, either academically or in working life which we feel has made all the efforts worthwhile. It proves that a school in a rural area with a low extent of academic tradition can offer extensive international experiences to its students. We know that students from other parts of Sweden have chosen our school because of our international profile.

Nils-Olov Hagman and Leif Thorsson
Bobergsgymnasiet, Ånge
Sweden

“Youth in the world”: Cooperation with countries other than the neighbouring countries of the EU

Within the European programme Youth in Action 2007-2013, the Action 2.3 aims to support projects which promote cooperation in the youth sector between Programme Countries and Partner countries other than those which are neighbours of the European Union.

The cooperation is addressed to persons working in the youth sector, youth workers and youth leaders, young people themselves and other actors involved in youth organisations and structures and interested in running projects promoting cooperation in this field.

Deadline for submission of applications: 6 May 2011 (date of the postmark being conclusive)
Projects must start between 1 September 2011 and 31 December 2011
Duration minimum 6 months and maximum 12 months.
Mobile Learning in Primary Education

Do teachers have to forbid a cellphone, smartphone, … in the classroom? The answer is: No! The Flemish association of the Catholic education (VVKSO) suggests that it’s a challenge for the school to let students use these media in an adult manner.

Before they suggested this, the research group [ED+ict] from the Limburg Catholic University College - http://edict.khlim.be, already worked with those devices on a proactive and pedagogical way in primary education.

300 pupils from several primary schools in Genk, a city known for his coalmine history, were given a smartphone with a built-in GPS. With the smartphone, they could discover the C-mine site in Genk. C-mine is the new name for the former coalmine of Winterslag in Genk.

The heritage-cel in Genk has a large database of videos, images & text, about the coalmine, dating from 1912, all of which are updated. But this rich information is lying under the dust in the ‘closet’! The heritage-cel hoped that it would be used in education.

Therefore [ED+ict] created a digital walk on a smartphone with Mscape. On the smartphone pupils could see the map of C-mine and navigate to several points. At each point the pupil automatically received information (audio, video, text) about the specific point. In this digital walk students learned about History, Cultural Heritage & Geography. They also learned to navigate with GPS and a map.

A second digital walk was created for the Open Air Museum in Bokrijk. It includes 100 historic buildings, rebuilt in their original condition. Even the furniture, the farming tools and the household goods are authentic. The museum is life-like as the old craft industries are shown by people dressed as farmers, bakers, etc…

The smartphone guided pupils to the different houses and asked them questions, showed them a video or a slideshow of old pictures from history.

To create a digital walk, you need a smartphone (with GPS) and the Mscape software (free to use). Before you can start with Mscape you need a map of the region, this can be copied from Google Maps and then imported to the smartphone. After you’ve assigned the GPS-grid to the map, it can be imported to the Mscape software.

In the software you can import audio, video, webpages and flash animations.

As a final step, you have to highlight small regions on the map indicating were you want to see information appear. In these regions you drag the specific information and copy everything to the smartphone. Now you’re ready to go out and explore.

A more detailed guide can be found on the website of Mscape: http://www.createscape.org.uk

Also other subjects can be learned by walking around.

For more information:
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Eurydice: New comparative report on annual taught time in European countries 2009/10

A new Eurydice comparative report exploring curriculum organisation and content for compulsory education has been presented. The title of the report is “Recommended annual taught time in full-time compulsory education in Europe 2009/10”.

The report surveys and describes annual taught time per subject and by country. The Eurydice data collection on taught time targets the recommended compulsory curriculum by grades/stages for full time compulsory education.

The scope of the taught time data collection is the compulsory full time primary and secondary general education as defined in the national education systems.

Read more or download the report as a pdf file on http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/tools_en.php

Note: The Eurydice Network provides information on and analyses of European education systems and policies. See http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php
Diet changes ADHD behaviour

In February 2011 the British Medical Journal ‘The Lancet’ (one of the world’s leading medical journals) published the results of research proving that a strict diet can help children to get rid of their behaviour problems. 5% of all children has a certain variation of ADHD. Lots of parents and their families and teachers meet the daily problems of these children.

The results of having a strict diet can already be noticed after some weeks. And for a certain percentage of the children the diet can replace the medicine (Ritalin) they must use.

One hundred children (age 4-8) were exposed to a hypo allergen diet for some 5 weeks. All food which could arouse a reaction was skipped. If there were no results after two weeks it was only rice, turkey, pear, vegetables and water which were allowed.

After the experiments 2/3 of the children had no behaviour disorders anymore. Children were controlled for one more year. During that year, week after week, certain nutrition was added in order to get a specific diet for each child. How it works is not yet quite clear and neither can it be explained why 1/3 of the children show no behaviour change.

Families and teachers are very enthusiastic: dinners are fun again. At school, tasks were accomplished in a much shorter time than before. Children are making friends again. Classrooms are quieter and transport, but the primary role is for encouraging policymakers and stakeholders at all levels to promote active ageing. The aim is to invite these players to commit to specific action and dissemination of good practice and, most importantly, for encouraging policymakers and stakeholders at all levels to promote active ageing. The aim is to invite these players to commit to specific action and goals in the run-up year 2011 so that tangible achievements can be presented during the European Year itself in 2012.

Active ageing includes creating more opportunities for older people to continue working, to stay healthy longer and to continue to contribute to society in other ways, for example through volunteering but the programme needs to be supported by a wide range of policies at all levels of governance.

The EU has a role to play in areas such as employment, social protection and inclusion, public health, information society and transport, but the primary role is for national, regional and local governments, as well as civil society and the social partners.

Read more on http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=860
Positive networking in kindergarten

We are a fairly big kindergarten in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. We have 6 separate units, with 770 children from ages 1 to 6. Our 140 employees are preschool teachers, administrative staff, cooks, janitors and executive staff.

The character of our kindergarten is best expressed in our vision: “we respect diversity, value creativity and grow together”.

Our programme is based on National Preschool Curriculum. Goals of the curriculum are carried out through different programmes and innovative projects.

In 2011 our kindergarten is celebrating its 80th anniversary. From a little kindergarten with only 18 children we have grown into a big kindergarten. New and older employees formed a working team with its own organisation culture.

Five principals have led our kindergarten. Most of them came from our kindergarten’s staff and they continued the work of previous principals. All of them encouraged affiliation to the kindergarten. With this kind of leadership we maintained values, tradition and focus on development and quality.

Employees found safety and stability within their working environment. The tradition means something very special to us, and there is also commitment to continue in this way.

Quite a few years ago the principal appointed a leading or executive team. Through the years it has become very important in our kindergarten and now it plans, monitors and evaluates kindergarten’s development towards quality.

Through evaluating our work we came to the conclusion that employees are more motivated if they participate in the process of planning changes in the workplace. Because of that our principal formed another team - an extended management team.

In this team, there is the previously mentioned executive team as well as kindergarten teachers that lead professional groups. These teachers bring information from the management team to other teachers and vice versa.

As a result, plans, solutions of issues and major decisions are agreed upon where everyone’s opinion, experience and motivation are considered. Employees feel more competent, important and self-confident. With this kind of cooperation with the principal we increase motivation and cooperation on different levels of our work and the kindergarten is democratically led.

Depending on the issue, sometimes the principal invites other employees to the executive team. We try to use everybody’s potentials, experience, creativity and knowledge in various ways. We try to use all internal resources and knowledge, so we encourage exchange of practice and internal education.

At least twice a year all employees meet and we plan and evaluate our work. These are also occasions where we feel united as one and that means a lot to us.

Another example of positive networking between professionals is project “Quality in Our Kindergarten” that has started in 2006. With this project we are systematically observing our quality and planning activities to improve our work. Gradually the project has extended to all sectors of the kindergarten. We work on few issues every year. Motivation, communication and interaction within teams are a high priority and thus explain why quality is actually increasing.

For many years our main value has been good cooperation with parents. Their trust and support is very important to us, so we try to maintain and cherish them.

As with employees, we try to get the best from parents which means that we use their knowledge, skills, hobbies and social networks. We ask them to participate in celebrations, workshops and activities inside the kindergarten. Many parents voluntarily spend a lot of time cooperating with us. This cooperation with parents is an added value and we are proud of it.

With this kind of leadership and networking, our kindergarten gained many external partners and friends. They are helping us to increase our quality and reputation. We founded the “Association of Kindergarten’s Friends” a year ago, because many former children, parents, employees and other friends of the kindergarten still want to help us.

We believe that good leadership of such a kindergarten is important and therefore the principal has a key role in networking. Networking enables her to have a constant connection with everyone and people form a positive attitude towards her. She knows how staff and parents think and both accepts and understands their opinions. She supports them and takes their ideas and suggestions onboard and as a result issues are solved quickly and amicably.

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The Learning Teacher Network held its 7th Annual Conference in Berlin Germany between the 27th and 29th January 2011. 169 conference delegates from 25 countries came together to hear and to share experiences related to the conference theme “Leadership for an Inclusive and Sustainable World”. There were three keynote speakers over the three days of the conference and forty two individual parallel presentation sessions which delegates were able to participate in.

The opening session contained words of welcome from representatives of the German Senate Department/ Ministry of Education, Science and Research, the European Commission Representation in Germany, Das Landesinstitut (LISUM) Berlin-Brandenburg, Pädagogischer Austauschdienst (PAD) der Kultusministerkonferenz - the German National Agency for EU Programmes, UNESCO, and the President of the Learning Teacher Network. There was a gala conference dinner and also a Reception at the Berlin Town Hall.

The President of the Network, Magnus Persson from Sweden, framed the conference by making specific reference in his opening remarks to the recent Council of the European Union report (2010) of their conclusions on education for sustainable development. He also highlighted the conclusions from what actually brings success in learning according to the large Hattie study based on 83 million students across the world.

Professor Wessel Ganzevoort from the University of Amsterdam held his opening lecture on “Leading Learning Organizations to Excellence” and pointed in particular to the art and importance of the self ‘questioning’ way.

He brought forward additional features for Excellent Organisations, such as a high learning ability, the systematization of feedback processes, the love of perfection, justification of trust and security, belief in one’s own strengths and the result based openness to engagement with hard facts.

Processes are more important in excellent learning institutions than structures. Ganzevoort made clear in his speech that it is important to understand the “essence” of an organization and also to ask: Who are we? What is our essence? and “What is our identity as an institution?” In his view, the important questions that should be asked again and again to leaders are: Why do people want to be led by you? What are you responsible for? What legacy do you want to leave behind you?

Prof. Joan Poline Shapiro from Temple University in Philadelphia, USA, held her keynote speech on “Ethical Educational Leadership: Decision Making”. Shapiro formed her lecture on “Multiple Ethical Paradigms” from various ethical theories and theory-driven, ethical perspectives, as an “Ethic of Critic,” Ethic of Care “,” Ethic of Justice “and an “Ethic of the Profession”.

From selected cases of studies from school management practice, she made it clear that ethical decisions are made not only from these different theoretical approaches, but as always, the intensity of the decision-making plays a major role.

Prof. Christer Fuglesang of the European Space Agency caught the audience with his lecture “Flying in Space for the Benefit of Earth”. He brought a completely new and unusual perspective on the conference theme, namely the insight into the life and work life in a space station.

Fuglesang was crew member of flights to the International Space Station (ISS) in 2006 and 2009. The participants were fascinated to hear stories from the “inside”, especially in terms of team building and leadership processes on board the space station and space shuttle.

Professor Charles Hopkins, UNESCO Chair at York University, Toronto, Canada, and UN Chair of Sustainable Development, updated the conference on the midway point of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, a decade which runs from 2005 to 2014. He spoke particularly about the recent Bonn Declaration. Recommendations focused on five areas: teacher education, senior
European co-operation: Main policy initiatives on education and training taken by the European Union

The overall basis for EU-wide co-operation in education and training is set out in the “ET 2020” strategic framework adopted in May 2009.

On the webpage www.learningteacher.eu/european_main_policy_initiatives you find a compendium of key documents on EU policies in education and training.

With actions at all levels of education and training, there are four objectives to ET 2020: making lifelong learning and mobility a reality; improving the quality and efficiency of education and training; promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; and enhancing creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. Activities also contribute to the Bologna intergovernmental process in the field of higher education.

This comprehensive compendium includes official documents from the three main EU decision-making bodies: the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament:

- The strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (“ET 2020”)
- Policy framework; implementation; EU programmes supporting the policy framework and lifelong learning
- Lifelong learning strategies
- Policy framework: implementation and European tools
- Higher Education Reform
- Policy framework: university business dialogue; programmes supporting higher education, including the Bologna Process
- School education policies
- Policy framework and monitoring instruments: programmes supporting school education
- Vocational education and training policies
- Policy framework and monitoring instruments: programmes supporting vocational education and training
- Adult education policies
- Policy framework and monitoring instruments; programmes supporting adult education
- Facilitating mobility
- Policy framework; mobility instruments
- Promoting multilingualism
- Policy framework; programmes supporting multilingualism
- ICT for innovation and lifelong learning (Information and Communication Technology)
- Policy framework; programmes supporting ICT
- The European Institute of Innovation and Technology
- Measuring progress in education and training (Statistics, indicators and benchmarks)

All links to these comprehensive European Union web pages can be reached through www.learningteacher.eu/european_main_policy_initiatives

Hopkins noted four major thrusts of ESD - that there needs to be access to quality basic education, a re-orientation of existing education, a raising of public awareness and understanding of ESD, and training programmes for all sectors of education.

Overall there were a number of themes addressed during the conference. Leadership, Learning, and Ethics were three key words which recurred in many presentation titles.

The range of presentations covered all phases of education, from the early years to late University years and included straight presentations to workshop participation.

Workshops and lectures on leadership illustrated that school leaders, teachers and trainers have leadership roles and responsibilities. The conference highlighted matters such as coaching in leadership; learning by design; building an effective and sustainable leadership learning community; why and how leadership in schools can be learnt; school democratic governance and sustainable development; perspectives on the intricate issue of “Leadership or Management?”; leading through high performance teams; and, social networks as a tool for diversity. Showing that learning is the key to all success, conference sessions also engaged in questions such as criteria of talent and multi-sided personal development; collaborative learning in rural locations; and, transformational learning enhancing leadership in schools. A couple of workshops addressed the issue of promoting gender equality in the classrooms while other workshops stressed the importance of student participation and making pupils’ voices heard.

A set of interlinking workshops addressed Education for sustainable development (ESD) but also global learning as a concept of sharing perspectives.
Earth Hour 26 March 2011:  
It’s time to go beyond the hour

At 8:30 PM (local time) on Saturday 26 March 2011, lights will switch off around the globe for Earth Hour. This year, when the lights go back on, we want you to think about what you can change in your daily life that will benefit the planet.

Earth Hour is organized by WWF. With almost 5 million supporters and a global network in over 100 countries, it’s one of the world’s largest and most respected independent conservation organizations. WWF’s mission is to stop the degradation of the Earth’s natural environment and build a future where people live in harmony with nature.

Earth Hour started in 2007 in Sydney, Australia when 2.2 million individuals and more than 2,000 businesses turned their lights off for one hour to take a stand against climate change. Only a year later and Earth Hour had become a global sustainability movement with more than 50 million people across 35 countries participating. Global landmarks such as the Sydney Harbour Bridge, CN Tower in Toronto, Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, and Rome’s Colosseum, all stood in darkness, as symbols of hope for a cause that grows more urgent by the hour.

On Saturday 27 March, Earth Hour 2010 became the biggest Earth Hour ever. A record 128 countries and territories joined the global display of climate action. Iconic buildings and landmarks from Asia Pacific to Europe and Africa to the Americas switched off. People across the world from all walks of life turned off their lights and came together in celebration and contemplation of the one thing we all have in common - our planet.

Earth Hour 2011 will take place on Saturday 26 March at 8.30PM (local time). This Earth Hour we want you to go beyond the hour, so after the lights go back on think about what else you can do to make a difference. Together our actions add up.

Link: http://www.earthhour.org/

Welcome as network member

A platform for educational progress

The Learning Teacher Network is an international, educational and non-profit network and association.

As an international platform the network unites professionals in education in the ambition of sharing and creating frontline teaching and learning in order to develop education and training.

Trust, respect and fun

One main characteristic of the network is the welcoming and excellent atmosphere when people communicate and meet. The guiding words that illustrate the network are “trust, respect and fun”.

All professionals in education and training are welcome

The network embraces practitioners in school, trainers, researchers and other educational experts within the whole range of education from pre-school to universities.

The good atmosphere and the composition make the network unique. Membership is open to anyone who supports the objectives of the network.

Mission

The Learning Teacher Network embraces
* Education for all
* Education for lifelong learning
* Education for sustainable development (ESD)

Membership

You and/or your institution are warmly welcome to become a member of the Learning Teacher Network.

Application for membership can be made on-line on the network website or by filling in and returning to us the registration form.

www.learningteacher.eu

The next issue of The Learning Teacher Magazine will be published in June. Articles may be submitted no later than May 15th 2011.
Social-emotional competence in a primary school in Melbourne

In February 2006 my first child started Primary school in one of Melbourne’s eastern suburb public schools. She was five years old and ready for Prep. I had been a relief teacher in The Netherlands for five and a half years and had seen quite a number of schools. However, I was about to be introduced into a different school system. There are many aspects of the school system that I like, and there is one in particular that I would like to discuss in this article: the “You Can Do It! – program” (www.youcandoit.com.au).

The You Can Do It! Program is a social and emotional learning program for promoting student achievement and well-being. This program is used to help students build their social and emotional capabilities, which will lead to improved academic performances, well-being and having positive relationships with peers and the community.

Central to the program are 5 Keys: confidence, persistence, organisation, getting along and resilience. These 5 Keys are supported by 12 Habits of the mind, amongst them taking risks, playing by the rules, giving effort and being independent.

What is my experience with the You Can Do It! program? I have now two children at school and once or twice a year they receive an award. Awards are presented during school assembly, which is every first day of the seven-day school roster. After singing the national anthem and saying the school pledge, the school captains read out loud the names of the children who receive an award and why they earned it. The child comes forward, accepts the award and stays in front of all the teachers, students and parents until all awards have been handed out and after the whole school community have applauded. The awards are always about one of the 5 Keys, which means every child can and will earn one. And they are so proud of themselves!

Another positive experience for me is to see how much my children have grown due to this program. My first child had some friendship trouble at school and her teacher gave her an award stating how good a friend she was. My second child is a boy who had trouble starting his work, because he was afraid to make mistakes. He came home with an award stating his confident approach to class tasks and that gave him an enormous boost. These awards give us something very specific to talk about at home, reinforcing the positive attitudes that are developing.

My third child just started Prep and I look forward to seeing him, too, learning to read, write, do maths and to seeing him grow into a happy, confident and socially competent young man. He can do it!

Ella Heemskerk
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The Learning Teacher Network on Facebook
www.facebook/learningteachernetwork
Welcome to a European training course in Malta on “Creativity and Learning”

Course dates: 18-22 October 2011 (travelling dates 17 and 23 October).
Target group: Teachers, school leaders, trainers and counsellors.
Course leader team: An international course leader team from Malta, Germany and Sweden. Additionally, lecturers from the Edward de Bono Institute and from the Science Centre in Malta will lecture at specific sessions.

COURSE OBJECTIVE
The objective of the Creativity and Learning course is to, by combining theory and hands-on practice, introduce and stimulate creativity and innovation both at the course and to be transferred into classroom and school practice “back home”.

COURSE VENUE AND ORGANISATION
The training course is combined with an “all inclusive” meals and accommodation package which includes 6 nights stay at the charming four star Victoria Hotel, Sliema, Malta - located at the coast and next to the capital Valletta. The hotel is also the course venue.
Website: www.victoriahotel.com

COURSE PROGRAMME

How to register and apply for an EU grant to participate
1. Pre-register with the training organiser/the Learning Teacher Network by submitting either the on-line registration form or the paper version of this form, in order to ensure that a place will be reserved for you.
www.learningteacher.eu/creativity-and-learning
2. Contact your own National Agency to obtain a grant application form and apply for an EU grant to attend the course.
Please note that the deadline to apply for EU funding is 29 April 2011!

Full course information is posted in the Comenius/Grundtvig Course Database: http://ec.europa.eu/education/trainingdatabase/index.cfm?fuseaction=DisplayCourse&cid=28797

COURSE FEE
Course fee 600 EUR
Accommodation and meals 595 EUR
If selected by your National Agency for participation, the entire cost plus the travel expenses will be covered by the grant.

Creativity and Learning
Comenius
European Training Course
SE-2011-135-001
Sliema, Malta
18-22 October 2011

Sliema, Malta
18-22 October 2011