Art(s) and culture

People often mix up culture and art or arts. There is a global tendency to economize all fields of life. Especially now, with crisis after crisis. It also happens in the field of education, where educational authorities emphasize the basic skills of language and math. These two are the first ones mentioned as a basis for getting jobs. Nothing wrong with that.

However, in viewing art(s) as an expression of our culture and subcultures, and culture as an expression of our daily behaviours, we sometimes forget the important role of art and the arts in education. There are discussions in schools as to whether you should still pay attention to all kinds of cultural expressions while children/youngsters don’t even know the basic skills necessary to have a future in their own society or in a new one.

Yet, art education and arts are in a certain way learning a way of life, looking from a different perspective at what is seen as ‘usual’ or ‘commonplace’. It is learning to think and act creatively. It is learning to find (new) ways for innovation.

It is for this reason that focusing only on the economy of life is short-sighted, forgetting that understanding art, understanding the artist, hearing music, going to exhibitions, learning to be creative, participating in courses leads to creativity, to innovation, and enables us to look at events and society from a different perspective.

And though we know that the majority of us are not creative in the strict sense of the word we have to teach children and youngsters to be open to different ways of looking at problems in our society in order to create a future; a future of hope, a better world.

Gerard de Kruif
Editor
Free Dictionaries for Everyone in Education
- The educational portal, Snar, opens new doors for teachers and pupils in the Faroe Islands

With less than 50,000 inhabitants, the Faroe Islands can be proud of having an educational portal with more than 2,000 visitors daily.

The educational portal, called Snar (Faroese for quick), offers pupils, students and teachers educational resources in their own language, Faroese. These include online books, task sheets, learning games and audio and video resources. Snar is run by the national centre for educational materials, Nám, and is financed by the Faroese Ministry of Culture in co-operation with the Faroese municipalities. The target group is everyone in the Faroese educational sector and Faroese students studying abroad, but since its launch in 2009 the focus has primarily been on teachers.

- Even though our market is limited because we are a small country, we still need as much educational material for every student and every teacher as any other country. We have therefore chosen to focus mainly on the teachers. We want to offer them the best possible service, says Magnus Tausen, managing director of Nám.

The portal is intended to be an online teacher’s assistant, a help for teachers when they prepare their lessons and a resource when they teach in class.

Today most Faroese schools are equipped with interactive whiteboards, and every teacher in the Faroese compulsory school has been offered a seminar in the use of interactive whiteboards. This means that the need for online materials and resources has risen dramatically, and teachers have become much more interested in – and capable of – using the educational portal.

- But we cannot cover every subject and meet every need, so in order to slowly build up our resources, we have chosen to have new focus areas every year. Right now our focus is on history and social science, especially the oldest Faroese history and Faroese statistics, which will be available online in 2012, says Wenche Andreasen, head of the department for online resources at Nám.

Co-operation with other Faroese institutions and other Nordic countries has also been a way to improve services. The Icelandic centre for educational materials, Námsgagnastofnum, has produced the bird site, Fuglar, which is available in Faroese translation on Snar.

The Faroese national radio has recorded lectures at the Faroese University, which are available on Snar. And the organisation has also bought material that is suitable for education from various talented individuals. For instance new and award-winning Faroese short films are available on Snar with additional educational material.

But the most popular and far reaching offer by far is the free access to online dictionaries that Snar is offering in cooperation with the private publishing house, Spratin. The online dictionaries include Faroese/Faroese, Faroese/English, English/Faroese, Faroese/Danish, Danish/Faroese, Faroese/German, German/Faroese, Faroese/Spanish and Faroese/Italian.

Every pupil, student and teacher in the Faroese school system has free access to these online dictionaries, a very important resource when living in a tiny country like the Faroe Islands.

Website addresses
www.snar.fo/fuglar/
www.snar.fo/sjonvarpsendingar/speki/
www.snar.fo/filmar/passasjeren/

Magnus Tausen, managing director of Nám, the Faroese centre for educational material.

Wenche Andreassen, head of the department for online resources at Nám.

Article by Dorit Hansen, Tórshavn, the Faeroe Islands
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The conference programme is composed of 25 sessions with more than 35 presenters from 14 countries, who will contribute with their knowledge and experience in presentations at high quality workshops and lectures.

In addition, we are delighted to welcome six distinguished, internationally recognized keynote and plenary speakers to the network’s 8th International Conference:

- Dr. Edward de Bono (Malta), regarded by many as the leading authority in the field of creative thinking, innovation and the direct teaching of thinking as a skill. He is equally renowned for his development of the Six Thinking Hats® technique and is the originator of the concept of Lateral Thinking;
- Prof. Ursula Staudinger (Germany), Vice President of Jacobs University Bremen and Founding Dean of the Jacobs Center on Lifelong Learning and Institutional Development;
- Prof. Joan Freeman (England UK), Founding President of the European Council for High Ability (ECHA);
- Mr Brian Holmes (the EU), Head of the European Commission’s EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) which manages parts of the EU’s programmes, such as the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP);
- Prof. Charles Hopkins (Canada), United Nations University (UNU) Chair on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), developing Regional Centers of Expertise in ESD globally.
- Prof. em. Harm Paschen (Germany), professor of Systematics of Educational Science at Bielefeld University.

The 8th International Conference in Nice, France on 10-12 May 2012

The Learning Teacher Network’s 8th International Conference, with the title ‘Creating Knowledge and Wisdom in Education and Training’, will be held on 10-12 May 2012 in the elegant environment at the four star Boscolo Hotel Plaza in Nice, France.

The conference programme is published on www.learningteacher.eu/nice-conference-2012

The Nice Conference will be a unique venue for rich learning, sharing of knowledge and experience, networking, enjoying - and a truly international event.

Registration for the conference

Hereby we invite teachers, leaders, trainers, researchers, and policymakers in education and training to the Nice Conference 2012.

The registration period is open until 1st May.

Registration can be made either on-line on www.learningteacher.eu/nice-conference-registration or by submitting the hard copy registration form by e-mail or fax.
We are all a part of a global competition. Knowledge will always be regarded as hard currency in the struggle for work and development. From a cross border perspective to a local perspective the European project Smil(e) wants to give our students the best qualifications to succeed in school and at universities. Schools have to invest in modern innovative learning environments and collaborate with the local community.

The lack of interest for natural sciences, technique and mathematic is striking among students in Europe and the cross-border area Kattegatt-Skagerrack. The lack of interest is specifically striking among girls.

European surveys indicate two major issues:

• The lack of innovative and attractive learning methods, materials and environments. Learning theories without connections with the business sector or a clear connection with the future working life of the students.

• In a long time perspective a negative trend could influence the power of innovation in coming generations within the area of mathematics, technique and natural sciences.

Objective and slogan
The objectives of Smil(e) are:

• To develop innovative pedagogical methods, materials and environments for students between 1 – 19 years, focusing also on gender and ICT.

• To develop collaboration strategies between schools, local businesses and universities.

• To develop a digital platform for cross-border communication for teachers within natural sciences, technique and mathematics.

The slogan of Smil(e) is “Think outside the box” but work “inside the black box”

Challenges
A challenge for Smil(e) is to meet the generation of children and youngsters who are growing up as digital natives. This forces schools to create an environment that integrates the technology the students are already using.

Students should feel stimulated and challenged to use their ICT skills in acquiring knowledge in school. With regards to the gender perspective in Smil(e) we among other things want to address the issue of girls’ lack of interest in technique.

Another challenge which Smil(e) addresses is the fact that too many students at an early stage opt out of studies in natural sciences, mathematics and technique.

At the same time several surveys indicate that young people have an interest in the topics and adapt to new technology very fast but in the learning process at schools they miss the opportunity to reflect on the topics and to see the relevance of acquiring qualifications within these fields. The teaching is often delivered in a traditional way and the result is that young people are loosing interest. Don’t miscalculate the new generation!

The choices of the new generation rely on the values and attitudes in the world that surrounds them and especially the learning environment they experience during their early school life. The educational system needs to develop and improve students’ possibilities for learning.

Schools should be evident in the local communities and the local communities should be evident in schools.

To increase the numbers of technically educated people in society is a big challenge for Sweden, Norway and Denmark. We have a labour force that needs new problem solvers, innovators and programme constructors. To get this we must work on a clear strategy involving kids from 1 – 19 years.

The project Smil(e) is a cross-border contribution between Denmark, Norway and Sweden and the national stakeholders in the field of education.

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Creativity and Learning
- attend the European training course

Paraprofessionals Are Helping Students Learn

Over 200 years ago (~1800) Jean Marc Gaspard Itard, a physician working near Saint-Sernin-sur-Rance, France, employed Madame Guerin to assist him in his work with Victor, the wild boy of Aveyron. Little did he know that he was starting a trend whereby professionals provide guidance to lesser-trained assistants who help them with children who have different types of unique educational needs.

In the 21st century, paraprofessionals or teaching assistants (also known by other titles) are used in many countries to reduce class size, assist with students who have special needs, and assist with language acquisition for immigrant students.

The numbers of paraeducators employed in U.S. schools increased dramatically since the 1990s. Similarly, in Scotland, more than 4,400 classroom assistants were appointed between 2000 and 2001 in an effort to improve adult-to-student ratios without building additional schools. These numbers reveal a vital shift in the way we educate students.

The primary motivations that contribute to the shift in our use of assistants include (1) providing individual attention so that students meet high academic standards; (2) providing appropriate instruction to students with disabilities and; (3) helping immigrant students learn in a new language.

Only a small amount of research has been conducted on the impact of paraprofessionals on student achievement. However, there are some notable attempts to determine effectiveness of teaching assistants. The Scottish program was evaluated systematically.

All data sources verified that the amount of time students were engaged in active versus passive tasks increased as a result of the presence of the assistants, and that the presence of the assistants permitted teachers to improve the quality of their teaching time and to engage in more small group and individual work with students.

Scottish teachers also reported that their expectations of students had increased because of the added support available to them. Students liked working with classroom assistants and appreciated the extra support. Students clearly distinguished between classroom assistants, whom they saw as “helpers,” and teachers.

Many authors in the US and the UK (and elsewhere) remain concerned about the use of assistants who have relatively little preparation for the tasks they perform. Recently, the International Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has adopted a set of standards for the preparation of paraprofessionals in special education. The standards, validated in an extensive process during 2011, are substantially more rigorous than the previous ones. However, until they are put into practice, the fact remains that most paraprofessionals in the US, Canada and the UK have little training and are rather poorly supervised.

A special session at the LTN Conference in Nice, May 10-12, is organized to facilitate the exchange of information about (1) roles and responsibilities, (2) employment, (3) preparation and training, (4) supervision, direction and guidance, as well as (5) difficulties encountered in the employment of paraprofessionals.

The facilitator, Dr. Nancy French, will lead a discussion around these key issues. She will provide a list of relevant research and opinion articles, and electronic copies of the standards adopted by the International Council for Exceptional Children.

All participants are invited and strongly encouraged to bring relevant documents and digital memory devices (flash drives) to exchange documents with other participants.

Prof. em. Dr. Nancy K. French
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European training course
SE-2012-159-001 Creativity and Learning
2-6 October 2012 in Sliema, Malta

The appreciated course will be given for the third year. The course leader team from the network hopes to see you there.

All European professionals in education and training can apply to their National EU Agency for an EU grant to attend. The deadline for applying for EU funding is April 30th 2012, but should be done well in time.

Course information is published in the course database http://ec.europa.eu/education/trainingdatabase/index.cfm?fuseaction=DisplayCourse&cid=32037 and on www.learningteacher.eu/creativity-and-learning
European Teacher Synthesize (ETSıze)

ETSıze is a great example of collaboration between primary and secondary teachers from several European countries together with professors from seven teacher training institutes searching for a European teacher.

What is a European teacher?

In order to give a common answer to this question a group of teacher training institutes joined each other in a Comenius LLL project called: Focus on Awareness and Culture for International Teachers (Face-it). Within the project 27 teachers and professors at teacher training institutes from different disciplines developed a framework and a model for a European teacher. These teachers developed learning materials intended for teacher-training students. The Face-it project was carried out from November 2007 till November 2009.

The products of the project are integrated in the curricula of most of the partner institutes and the Face-it project was highly ranked by the evaluation experts of the EU. Through the Face-it project, a strong promising relationship was built between the teacher training institutes and the idea of a network in which we can stabilize the cooperation and extend it to new countries. As a result, new partner institutes began to grow.

Involving both primary and secondary schools was seen as the first necessary step before applying for a network.

Our first step was re-arranging the European teacher materials for experienced teachers and organizing in-service courses around the four European Teacher subjects: European Diversity, European Identity, European Citizenship and European Professionalism.

The teachers who participated in the in-service courses helped us to transfer our theoretical model to the practical situation in the schools. They showed us through their own reflections and the more general reflections how cooperation can take place, and what the important indicators in content and in collaboration are.

Four e-books
From the learning materials and the projects done by teachers we developed four e-books.

This work was done under the project: European Teacher Synthesize (ETSıze), an ‘accomplish measures’ project under Comenius LLP from November 2010 till November 2011.

In the ETSıze project we rearranged materials for teachers and organized four in-service courses: European Citizenship, European Identity, European Diversity and European Professionalism; in order to interest teachers in improving their international competences. We offered them a challenging learning environment for international activities as well as the opportunity join us in a future network.

In the Face-it project as well as in the ETSıze project our overall aim was to increase compatibility between European qualifications and transparency of graduate achievement at a practical level, that are central to the Bologna/Copenhagen processes.

Our belief is that “the” European Teacher does not exist, or all teachers are European Teachers. Developing the European Teacher competences and working in a European and an international environment makes our professional life as a teacher more European.

For teachers responsible for preparing future generations of Europeans, this we believe is the most important issue for teaching children who will live in a world that’s getting more and more globalized.

Interested? Read more about our courses at our website: www.european-teachers.eu

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Fascination of Flowers

I will be the gladdest thing
Under the sun!
I will touch a hundred flowers
And not pick one.
~Edna St. Vincent Millay, “Afternoon on a Hill”

People from a planet without flowers would think we must be mad with joy the whole time to have such things about us.
~Iris Murdoch, “A Fairly Honourable Defeat”

Flowers don’t worry about how they’re going to bloom. They just open up and turn toward the light and that makes them beautiful.
~Jim Carrey

The flower that follows the sun does so even in cloudy days.
~Robert Leighton
A Brief Introduction to the Recent Pre-school Education Reform in Turkey

Turkey has long been under the process of reformation due to high aspirations of accession to EU. Particularly recent political developments in the neighbourhood and thus strategic conditions such as Turkey as a role model for others and acting as a liaison between EU and surrounding non-EU countries in the region, accelerated Turkey’s accession negotiations in the 2000s.

Consequently, the latest government opened a new office, Ministry of EU Affairs, to manage the negotiations for reform movements since 2009 (see www.abgs.gov.tr/?p=1&l=2).

In the last two decades one of the intensively reformed fields has been education and pre-school education took most of the attention as Turkey lagged behind EU standards in terms of quantity and quality.

With its 74 million population, 9% of which are children under 5 years old, and the fact that only half of this number receives the service, Turkey has been obliged to invest in preschool education.

The latest government has just proposed to the parliament the 4+4+4 model of compulsory school education (4 years of primary school, 4 years of secondary and 4 years of high school education) excluding one year of preschool education.

On the other hand, the 18th Annual National Education Council in 2010 concluded that the national education requirement should immediately be restructured as 1 preschool year and 12 years of primary and secondary school, a total of 13 years of compulsory education.

Though not quite ready yet, Turkey moves towards a compulsory preschool education in the near future by investing in raising the numbers of schools, skilled staff and appropriate learning materials while also increasing parental involvement in education.

Considering the historical background, it is a fact that pre-school education dates back to the Ottomans with the content being basically religious at the beginning. It became a more home-based private education at later stages, around 1910, administered by non-Muslims such as Armenians and Jews with the learning materials coming from Europe, particularly Switzerland. However, since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 the religious discourse has been replaced with westernisation, and even ‘Europeanisation’ significantly since the 1980s.

Historically, the decline of the male breadwinner as the economic model was replaced by women’s participation into the labor market after 1960, which naturally intensified the need for childcare and preschool education.

Due to the increasing demand, the discourse about preschool education has been an important and pressing theme of education reforms.

An analysis of current early childhood educational praxis revealed that in Turkey they follow different models which are institutional practices, home-centered practices, and family- and society-centered practices. Institutional practices are the ones administered by Ministry of Education and thus the focus of recent reforms.

The preschool teacher education curriculum was renewed considering the modifications to the primary school teacher education curriculum, EU guidelines on life-long learning, compulsory school and early childhood education, and the previously reformed national school curriculum of 2006.

Similarly, a harmonization between the first grade curriculum and preschool year was managed via the reform known as curriculum reform in 2004.

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A different view on education
- The theory of multiple intelligences

The listing of Gardner's eight intelligences was provisional. The first two have been typically valued in schools; the next three are usually associated with the arts; two others are what Howard Gardner called 'personal intelligences' and the last one focuses more on the environment. Below you find a short review of Gardner's eight intelligences.

Linguistic intelligence involves sensitivity to spoken and written language, the ability to learn languages, and the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals. This intelligence includes the ability to effectively use language to express oneself rhetorically or poetically; and language as a means to remember information. Writers, poets, lawyers and speakers are professions linked to the linguistic intelligence.

Logical-mathematical intelligence consists of the capacity to analyze problems logically, carry out mathematical operations, and investigate issues scientifically. It also entails the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically. This intelligence is most often associated with scientific and mathematical thinking.

Musical intelligence involves skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns. It encompasses the capacity to recognize and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms.

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence entails the potential of using one's whole body or parts of the body to solve problems. It is the ability to use mental abilities to coordinate bodily movements.

Spatial intelligence involves the potential to recognize and use the patterns of wide space and more confined areas. Working with pictures is very important for this intelligence.

Interpersonal intelligence is concerned with the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people. It allows people to work effectively with others. Educators, salespeople, religious and political leaders all need a well-developed interpersonal intelligence.

Intrapersonal intelligence entails the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one's feelings, fears and motivations. In Howard Gardner's view it involves having an effective working model of ourselves, and to be able to use such information to regulate our lives.

Naturalist intelligence enables human beings to recognize, categorize and draw upon certain features of the environment. It 'combines a description of the core ability with a characterization of the role that many cultures value.'

The appeal of multiple intelligences to educators
Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences has not been readily accepted within academic psychology. However it has met with a strongly positive response from many educators. A number of schools have looked to structure curricula according to the intelligences, and to design classrooms and even whole schools to reflect the understandings that Howard Gardner develops.

Eight kinds of intelligence would allow eight ways to teach, rather than one. And powerful constraints that exist in the mind can be mobilized to introduce a particular concept (or whole system of thinking) in a way that children are most likely to learn it. ... the theory validates educators' everyday experience: students think and learn in many different ways. It also provides educators with a conceptual framework for organizing and reflecting on curriculum assessment and pedagogical practices. In turn, this reflection has led many educators to develop new approaches that might better meet the needs of the range of learners in their classrooms.

All eight intelligences are needed to live life well. Teachers, therefore, need to attend to all intelligences, not just the first two that have traditionally been their concern.

A few examples
- Learning to multiply on a rhythmic way
- Learning some math strategies per two; one is the performer, the other one the coach
- Learning with visuals, drawings and icons for better memorizing and understanding
- Working with and learning in schemes
- Activities where children learn things by moving in place of sitting all the day, etc.

Kurt Teugels
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Trainer Multiple Intelligence and Cooperative Learning at Art De Co Knokke/Heist Belgium. E-mail: kurtteugels@telenet.be
The purpose of these few lines is to present the main ideas of Portugal’s attempt to integrate Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into school curricula. More specifically, we refer to the work that we have recently developed in the context of the “Learning Outcomes” project hosted by the Portuguese Ministry of Education.

The “Learning Outcomes” Project
The “Learning Outcomes” project (PMA) is about developing tools and materials to help schools and teachers make informed choices concerning the national curriculum aims, and thus decide which learning experiences suit them the best.

Advocating a decentralised curriculum development, these resources are to be used voluntarily and freely by schools as part of their pedagogical autonomy. One of the tools developed and already available is the set of learning outcomes for preschool, primary and middle school students (ages 3-14) covering all subject areas.

Moreover, examples of teaching and evaluation strategies were provided for every subject area, so as to help teachers gain a better understanding of how the learning outcomes can be put into practice.

The first PMA phase comprised the drawing up of learning outcomes for preschool and primary school education. Nine teams of experts, coordinated by higher education teachers, came up with nine reference syllabuses geared towards primary teaching and one geared towards preschool education, which were sent to several professional teaching associations and scientific societies for their opinion.

The final versions of the learning targets for each subject or subject area were drawn up after analysis of the contributions received.

Keeping sight of the attempt to bring about innovation and transformation of the curricular practices, as well as recognising the need to acquire and develop the basic digital skills, the idea is above all to work on and mobilise the potential of the digital technologies for the development of a curricular organisation strategy.

More than an autonomous curriculum, the definition of learning targets in the ICT area aim to build a “framework of competences to be included by each teacher in his/her specific area, from the viewpoint of the overall development of the pupil, enabling the teacher to understand and decide, on solid grounds, what materials, for what purposes and how the ICT can be pertinent and appropriately used”.

The proposal began with the identification and reflection on the dimensions of human conduct and on the specific scientific content in which the technologies can add value, but also followed a set of presuppositions that reflected the team’s vision as regards the place ICT should occupy in the school today.

Consideration was taken, firstly, of the ICT as a cross-subject educational area, whereby it was also assumed that the acquisition and development of digital competences should be present throughout the whole of schooling.

Secondly, the acquisition of ICT competences was considered an absolute necessity in school at the start of the 21st century, in response to the challenges of the job market and society in general, constituting essential preparation to equip oneself to exercise full citizenship.

Finally, and in close articulation with the first two presuppositions, the ICT would be attributed not only an instrumental role at the service of other areas of knowledge, but above all would be an opportunity as a strategy for intellectual and social development of individuals, given that the younger generation’s natural affinity with the digital technologies leads to greater motivation and inducement of their development.

Four competences
In order to better clarify the scope of this proposal, it will be useful to remind ourselves of the four core competences around which it was possible to systematically outline and define the ICT learning that the pupils must acquire and develop throughout their primary education, including the preschool education period:

- Information - Ability to search for and process information.
- Communication - Ability to communicate, interact and collaborate using network communication tools and environments.
- Production - Ability to systematise knowledge based on work processes that use the digital resources available and develop innovative products and practices.
- Security - Ability to use digital resources in compliance with security regulations.

Taking the notion of competency to mean the integrated development of skills and attitudes that pave the way for the use of knowledge in several situations, we have...
Digital Competence


The Member States’ initial education and training systems should support the development of these competences for both young people and adults.

Competences are defined here as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.

One of the key competences set out in the Reference Framework is Digital Competence, as follows:

“Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.

Digital competence requires a sound understanding and knowledge of the nature, role and opportunities of IST in everyday contexts: in personal and social life as well as at work. This includes main computer applications such as word processing, spreadsheets, databases, information storage and management, and an understanding of the opportunities and potential risks of the Internet and communication via electronic media (email, network tools) for work, leisure, information sharing and collaborative networking, learning and research.

Individuals should also understand how IST can support creativity and innovation, and be aware of issues around the validity and reliability of information available and of the legal and ethical principles involved in the interactive use of IST.

Skills needed include the ability to search, collect and process information and use it in a critical and systematic way, assessing relevance and distinguishing the real from the virtual while recognising the links.

Individuals should have skills to use tools to produce, present and understand complex information and the ability to access, search and use Internet-based services. Individuals should also be able to use IST to support critical thinking, creativity, and innovation.

Use of IST requires a critical and reflective attitude towards available information and a responsible use of the interactive media. An interest in engaging in communities and networks for cultural, social and/or professional purposes also supports this competence.”

To obtain more information and the key competence brochure in your own language, see http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/key_en.htm
In Norway, as in the rest of the western world children’s play patterns are changing. From being physically active in different kinds of games outdoors many children today spend most of their time indoors playing different kinds of computer games. Many children become more sedentary, and their weight increases. In recent years a great majority of children attend kindergarten, and kindergartens have a special responsibility for children to acquire fundamental motor skills, body control, habits and insights into how they can protect their health and quality of life. Teaching children to be physically active through different kinds of games and play is therefore important in kindergartens. When interpreting reports from students in a work based kindergarten teacher program it seems like the culture for physical activity play differs among the kindergartens. In the next paragraphs I present what students have observed and reflect on how staff and environment can have a positive influence on physical activity play.

In some kindergartens physical activity play is a priority. The staff is competent and they have adapted the environment for play by using furniture and equipment that stimulates physical activity both indoors and outdoors. Movement possibilities and regulations are discussed according to motor development, self-esteem and mastering. Equipment is easily accessible and it seems like children in many of these kindergartens are used to arranging their own physical activity play.

Examples are children arranging their own obstacle course using tables and chairs, bookcases and mattresses and so on. Rough- and tumble play such as play-fighting are allowed. Lines are drawn on the floor allowing for balancing or playing hopscotch. Staff motivate this type of play often by being part of the game until such time as some of the children take over. It seems like involvement and engagement from staff in establishing a culture for this kind of play is important.

How active staff is in teaching children these kinds of play, how tolerant they are of noise and children’s risk taking are themes discussed and understood on the basis of the importance of physical activity play in these kindergartens.

The experience both of fear and excitement and these ambiguous feelings are central motivation for engaging in risky play. The experience of fear is individual, both for children and staff members. A challenge for one child may be boring for another but teachers are responsible for providing the opportunity to develop a positive self-image through physical achievements.

One of the kindergartens had recently been reconstructed, and the topography of the playground changed from only flat to partly flat and partly sloped. The staff was surprised how this slope changed children’s play. The stimulation that the slope provided for running, turning around, jumping, sliding, turning somersaults and the like was much more prominent than the staff had imagined.

Due to the extra stimulation for running and going uphill the children’s heart rate increased and most of the children met the recommendation to be physically active for 60 minutes every day.

In kindergartens where knowledge about physical activity play and motor development are shared and anchored this play has a priority. This knowledge seems to make staff members more tolerant of the alternative use of furniture and noise, and they understand the importance of risky play.

They are aware of different qualities of play, and recognise and stimulate these qualities. The most common arguments for physical activity play seem to be health related where development of both gross and fine motor skills are considered essential as well as the development of self-esteem and social competence.

A common theme supporting the argument is the promotion of physical activity that is in the child’s best interest while developing the child’s physical abilities.

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The benefits of collaborative teaching in the school of Sørvágur in the Faroe Islands

From August 2009, Faroese schools were allowed to have two teachers teach the same class together in a certain number of lessons if the total number of pupils was above 17. If the total number of pupils was 24, the number of lessons with double teachers is 14 out of 24 lessons a week.

I and another teacher were assigned to a 1st grade in primary school with 22 pupils in the subject Faroese. The class had two teachers for 11 out of 24 lessons. In Faroese they had the double teacher system in 6 out of 11 lessons.

In 2nd grade the double teacher system was used in 11 out of 26 lessons. In the subject Faroese the number was 5 out of 11 lessons.

At the same time we received new material for teaching pupils how to read, which we chose to use in our classes. This material is based on the theory of alphabetical reading. The pupils learn what each letter is called, how the letter sounds, and finally they begin to read by decoding the letters/text.

Twice a year the reading ability of each pupil in grade 1 - 4 is tested. Usually 2 - 4 pupils will not get a satisfying test result and therefore need extra lessons in reading. However, when this particular grade 1 was tested in May 2010, each pupil was reading at a satisfactory level and was not in need of extra lessons. Our results, which show clear progress in pupils’ reading abilities, were as follows (table 1):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A1</th>
<th>B1</th>
<th>C1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 2010 (Grade 1)</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2010 (Grade 2)</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2011 (Grade 2)</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2011 (Grade 3)</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The assessment scale identifies A1 as the highest level of fluency whereas C1 means satisfactory (a bit too slow, but no faults) and C3 - the lowest point - means that the level of reading is not satisfactory at all (too slow and too many faults).

We have not compared the results with the rest of the schools in the country, but in our school, it is very seldom that we have A1 readers. What is interesting about the result is that there are no pupils in group A2, A3, B2, B3 or C2, C3.

In Maths the results were quite identical. They also used the double teacher system in about the same number of lessons as we did in Faroese.

Is it possible to talk about cause and effect based on this short teaching course? Would the pupils get the same test results in spite of the double teacher system and the new teaching material? This has not been scientifically researched in the Faroese schools yet.

My personal experience is that the pupils in this class read and write better in general than pupils have done over the last 15 years and we are able to prove this with the tests we have taken in our school. I believe that we have achieved these results by using the double teacher system and the new teaching material.

We believe that there are obvious advantages for the pupils and the teachers by using the double teacher system. Among other things the pupils get more instruction, guidance and help. The system is also a great benefit for pupils with special needs, and it benefits the teachers of pupils with special needs as well, because it gives the teachers more time and possibilities to tend to the extra needs of these particular pupils.

For the teachers it is nice to have the option of splitting the class in half as well as having a colleague there with you, with whom you can share thoughts and ideas about the teaching.

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Codes of ethics, within a number of educational organizations, delineate the collective values, principles, and professional expectations for educators.

While a code of ethics often strives to protect principles within an educational system, the complexities of pedagogical practice can complicate the reliance on a single set of decontextualized standards in diverse academic settings.

In our course, designed to offer preservice teachers an opportunity to explore philosophical issues in education, we reviewed a number of ethical codes adopted by professionals while simultaneously encouraging students to seriously consider the language within these documents.

Our examination revealed a number of potential contradictions and linguistic ambiguities, particularly within our discussion of the Code of Ethics endorsed by the [American] National Education Association. These standards read as a list of imprecise prescriptions for action rather than guidance towards a more comprehensive understanding of ethical practice.

The students noted the recurrent use of “shall not” and questioned the subtextual assumptions about educators’ ability to exercise professional judgment in difficult situations. The following questions posed in response to particular items in the codes acknowledge some of the concerns the students expressed during our discussion:

The educator shall not accept any gratuity, gift, or favor that might impair or appear to influence professional decisions or action.

Who determines the line between decisions that are professional and those that are personal? What types of gifts do teachers traditionally receive? What kinds of gifts might teachers ethically accept? How might a teacher be able to objectively determine whether or not a gift can influence professional action? Are gifts limited to items that can be assigned a monetary value? If a teacher wants to give students pencils, should these items be included in the definition of gifts that could “impair professional judgment?”

The educator shall not assist a non-educator in the unauthorized practice of teaching.

What defines a ‘non-educator?’ How is ‘unauthorized’ defined? What about programs or nonprofit organizations that send volunteers into schools to educate students on a variety of topics?

Could a teacher ethically grant classroom access to a parent or a community member who wants to read a book aloud in a class? Would these situations be considered “unauthorized” practices of teaching? Who has the power to decide?

Rather than developing a conclusive protocol regarding moral conduct among educators, students articulated insightful questions about the values, principles, and ethical practices within the field of education. They noticed and discussed at length that teachers are encouraged to frame expectations of student behaviors in the positive, affirming what they can do stood. In strong contrast, the ethical codes for educators focus on the negative, stressing what teachers cannot do.

Through critical analysis and classroom dialogue, students considered possibilities for professional codes of ethical standards to accommodate the variegated nature of classroom reality. The class session illustrated that simple readings of codes of ethics are insufficient, and demonstrated the necessity of careful exploration of such codes in communities of educators.

To see the complete list of standards, visit www.nea.org/home/30442.htm

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For full information:
www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/

What is ESD?

“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.” Nelson Mandela.

ESD stands for Education for Sustainable Development.

Education is essential to sustainable development. Citizens of the world need to learn their way to sustainability. Our current knowledge base does not contain the solutions to contemporary global environmental, societal and economic problems. Education is crucial to the ability of present and future leaders and citizens to create solutions and find new paths to a better future.

ESD for sustainable development (ESD) is not a particular programme or project, but is rather an umbrella for many forms of education that already exist, and new ones that remain to be created. ESD promotes efforts to rethink educational programmes and systems (both methods and contents) that currently support unsustainable societies.

ESD affects all components of education: legislation, policy, finance, curriculum, instruction, learning, assessment, etc. ESD calls for lifelong learning and recognizes the fact that the educational needs of people change over their lifetime.

ESD has four pillars:
- Improving access and retention in quality basic education
- Reorienting existing educational programmes to address sustainability
- Increasing public understanding and awareness of sustainability
- Providing training
A Small Story About Xploit and Learning Communities

Once upon a time a large number of European lifelong learning projects were launched and implemented across Europe. But along this road the Commission started to reflect on things like resources and sustainability: why go on producing so many isolated lifelong learning resources? Why not also exploit the resources available, resulting from all these projects and initiatives?

So the Commission invited European stakeholders to develop measures to exploit already existing lifelong learning resources: measures to identify, capture, adapt and implement innovative lifelong learning resources produced from the many lifelong learning actions and projects.

The European Xploit project was born to meet this challenge. The idea is to develop collaborations, infrastructures and cross-sector communication that allow the community to benefit from available and qualified lifelong learning resources, for formal as well as non-formal learning.

Such measures do not exist in most communities and cities. If a primary school was involved in a European project, the community would normally not be involved or affected at all. And after the termination of the project, the efforts and results would soon vanish into thin air...

So, the question is: how can a community or a city in a systematic way capture the resources produced by good and innovative European projects?

Very soon it became clear that it was not about more conferences, more workshops or distributing more project folders. Much more fundamental measures were needed.

The individual teacher and individual education projects are not able to meet these challenges in a systematic way. Neither is the individual company or public institution.

This is where the Xploit project and the idea of using lifelong learning resources where they are needed is linked to the concept of the learning community.

Learning communities should put in place and develop collaborative infrastructures that allow the uptake and exploitation of strong lifelong learning resources, including innovative didactics, entrepreneurship and media technologies.

So, in communities such as Swansea in the UK, Udine in Italy, Iasi in Romania and Salt in Spain, lifelong learning teams or learning partnerships are set up to identify the learning needs of the community, with a special focus on disadvantaged youth and adults, and to capture relevant European learning resources to meet these needs. These community teams include people from the municipality, different educations, and cultural institutions and to some extent private companies.

The teams can be facilitated by what we call lifelong learning guides, trained by the project.

At the moment this work is partly funded by the project, but the idea is to make it a permanent infrastructure in the communities.

Such forums act as catalysts, offering for example, educational institutions in the community access to new resources and inspiration that support didactic and pedagogic innovation.

The final outcomes of the project activities include a multimedia website with good practices and a Learning Community Guide offering different models of setting up and practicing lifelong learning in the communities.

The Xploit project has given rise to many spin-off initiatives. One of the most interesting is the European LABlearning project, funded in 2011, set out to develop new laboratory and media based learning facilities for disengaged youth in different countries. This project will precisely build on the resources and lessons learned from similar European initiatives, and thus benefit heavily from decades of experience, projects and innovation.

To learn more about Xploit and its mission: http://xploit-eu.com

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The EU LABlearning website will be launched in spring 2012, but the project material can be accessed from the preliminary and informal webpage: http://www.sosuaarhus-international.com/EUlablearning.htm

Inspiration on laboratory and media based learning can be found on: http://www.sosuaarhus-international.com/LABlearning.htm http://www.sosuaarhus-international.com/Gaming.htm

A selection of papers produced by the author can be accessed from: http://www.sosuaarhus-international.com/jangejel.htm
 Violence in classrooms - a taboo

Each year in the Netherlands the teachers union CNV organises training for teachers to exchange experiences about violence in classrooms. Over 4 years, the number of participants in the course increased by 300%.

Teachers are encountering violence from children and youngsters more and more in their classrooms. Incidents vary from calling the teacher names to insulting teachers, and even comments about rape from one student.

The discussion in The Netherlands became more open, when last November a teacher put a youngster out of his classroom and was subsequently su ed by the parents. Police came to the school and arrested the teacher. The teacher had to stay in the police station for several hours. Dutch society was upset about this.

During the training teachers complain about the lack of support from directors and colleagues. Colleagues often think you are not able to keep order in your classroom. Directors are very much in favour of using the strategy of talking, while teachers would like to see a much more strict policy on any violence.

Holland is not the only country facing an increase in violence against teachers in their classrooms from pupils. In 2009, ‘The Guardian’ newspaper (internet version) reported that 39% of the teachers in the UK are confronted with violence from pupils. In 2009, ‘The Guardian’ newspaper (internet version) reported that 39% of the teachers in the UK are confronted with violence from pupils.

The grey wave: the baby-boomers

A new website has been launched (www.ASLECT.eu) as a learning resource for developing programmes for seniors, emphasising the importance of senior people both as users/beneficiaries of education.

This is a different approach to existing programmes that promote the idea of adult education merely as a way to consume education and culture.

From the perspective of the ASLECT project, cultural organisations must strengthen their capacities to support and promote senior citizens’ integration as active citizens in the local communities.

With this project the Commission is supporting a development in Europe where seniors are becoming a bigger group of which a vast cohort is healthy and vital enough to stay active in life and in the (local) community.

The project focuses on the organisations that target this group and will provide professional training for the organizers of activities and train seniors as leaders. It encompasses the three areas of adult education, community building and active citizenship.

ASLECT will identify a series of good practices on seniors’ involvement in education and cultural life. This requires extending the training materials for cultural professionals, developing more education programmes, and compiling recommendations on a national and European level.

The project runs from December 2010 until November 2012. For examples of good practices to date, please see the website.

Countries involved in the project: Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Italy and Germany.

International Mother Language Day

International Mother Language Day has been celebrated on 21st February every year since February 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.

This year the theme of the International Mother Language day was “Mother tongue instruction and inclusive education”. UNESCO highlighted the importance of mother tongue as part of the right to education and encourages its member states to promote instruction and education in the mother tongue.

International Mother Language Day was first proclaimed by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 17 November 1999 (30C/62). Its observance was also formally recognized by the United Nations General Assembly on 16 May 2009 through its resolution A/RES/61/266 which called upon Member States “to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world”.

Languages are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage. All moves to promote the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education but also to develop fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

Jane Eyre

"Prejudices, it is well known, are most difficult to eradicate from the heart whose soil has never been loosened or fertilized by education: they grow there, firm as weeds among stones." ~Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre

Paulo Freire (2001) called language a "mediating force in education" in which the value of a single linguistic term is determined by its relationship to the political and cultural climate of the environment.

As a developing critical educator, I resist a singularly definitive interpretation and guide my students beyond prescriptive understandings of assigned texts. One year I asked my students to consider the convenient narrative twist at the end of the Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre that transforms a penniless, lonely orphan into an empowered, confident character who has finally been reunited with the man she loves.

The object of Jane's affection, however, has fallen from grace as a result of his own transgressions and Jane, after inheriting a large sum of money from a distant relative, rescues him from a life of solitude and alienation. Though the curriculum guide lauded Jane Eyre as a progressive, proto-feminist novel, many of my students were outraged by the misogynist ideals reinforced by a titular character meant to defy them.

Through critical dialogue and an exploration of various perspectives, my students developed a myriad of alternative analyses, including some connecting the text to the social-political climate of Victorian England.

These multifarious interpretations of the text not only challenged the pretense that absolute truth can be extracted from a single human experience, but also served as a lucid example of how a hermeneutical approach to literature can contribute to an enriched learning environment.

The irony of the epigraph I've included is its inherent truth, but also that Jane, the private tutor in the novel who supports education as a means to foster upward social mobility, also perpetuates the Victorian ideals that affirm the superiority of men in both intellectual potential and social value.

Learners who question, rather than blindly accepting facts as they are dictated to them, are those who can develop the intellectual foresight to see the world more clearly. In my experience, the most authentic form of liberation evolves, rather than from pointed instruction, within people who have discovered societal truths and recognized imposed social constructs through shared reflection.

Educators can, by failing to recognize the deeply personal nature of interpretation, gradually and permanently extinguish student passion for reading and writing by limiting reception to a single, objective method of analysis and understanding.

To ensure equitable access and a nuanced understanding of linguistic form and intention, curriculum and instruction must address the metaphorical component of language construction through collaborative exploration and social investigation.

Though I doubt that many of my students will return to Jane Eyre often over the next ten years, my hope is that they will continue to cultivate an ability to question, to see through the illusions maintained by some educated authorities, and to react against intellectual and social tyranny in all forms.

Reference


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New network website design

The welcome page of the Learning Teacher Network’s website has had a minor but important face lift in order to provide a better overview of content and to easier access the content rich web pages.

Visitors are now welcomed by a slowly rolling slide show, three fixed information boxes and a list of the headings of the latest news. Each of these parts are ‘clickable’ for further information. Furthermore, the website now has the connection to social media for easy exchange of information.

As visitor you may click on the “Contact us” link in order to subscribe for publications, enrol as member or simply ask questions or to be contacted.

The website has 2,000 new visitors every month - many more are welcome! www.learningteacher.eu
European Education report warns of growing teacher shortages

Several Member States, including Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria and Belgium, may face serious teacher shortages in the future, according to a new report published by the European Commission.

The report, entitled ‘Key Data on Education in Europe 2012’, was presented to EU Education Ministers at their meeting in Brussels on 10 February. It shows that the number of graduates specialising in education is falling at a time when many current teachers are approaching retirement age. But it also highlights encouraging signs: funding for education is stable in most Member States and it underlines that higher education remains the best insurance policy against unemployment, with graduates more likely to find a job faster than non-graduates.

The report finds that targeted training for teachers, such as mentoring, guidance for assessment and classroom observation, is now more widespread across Europe. However, these measures have not been sufficient to increase the attractiveness of teaching.

The Commission wants to contribute to the attractiveness and quality of the profession by providing 1 million teachers with opportunities to gain teaching and training experience abroad as part of its proposed Erasmus for All programme.


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)

www.learningteacher.eu

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.

The next issue of The Learning Teacher Magazine will be published in June. Articles may be submitted no later than May 15th 2012.
Pre-school Education in Albania (part 2)

Gradually over the last 5 years the Regional Directorates of Education in Albania have taken over the payment of educators’ salaries under their annual budgets and include the centres in their preschool placement statistics.

The Inspectors alongside Partnerë për Fëmijët’s staff conduct monitoring visits and provide support, advice and guidance to the educators. Many of the educators have changed due to the Regional Directorates of Education’s desire to have more certified educators or unfortunately in some circumstances to re-employ redundant teachers, despite them not having the aptitude nor knowledge to work in a child centred way or understand how children of this age group learn and develop.

Through funding from its main donor Partnerë për Fëmijët provides UNICEF material and equipment to improve the quality of the centres, ongoing support and regular training to enhance the educators’ skills and information sharing exchange visits.

In an effort to build better parent, child, teacher and educator relationships, regular meetings are held between the educators of the Gardens of Mothers and Children Centres and the teachers of the first grade in the elementary schools to follow up on the progress of the new entrants who have moved from the centres to the schools and also to enable the teachers to see the progress and development of their future pupils.

Introductory visits to the schools are arranged for future pupils and their parents so that the changeover is less threatening and the teacher and parents can meet and discuss individual children.

Parents are regular visitors and participants in the Gardens of Mothers and Children Centres as monthly meetings are held to provide progress reports to parents and to encourage them to practice activities with their children in the home, thus enhancing their learning.

The Boards of Parents meet to discuss the purchase of equipment or to provide additional activities to benefit the children. Regular parental contributions are now an aspect of many of the centres funding; not initiated by Partnerë për Fëmijët but by the parents themselves; a positive change in attitude and in motivation to maintain their centres unlike the situation in 2005.

Currently Partnerë për Fëmijët supports, advises and trains 55 Gardens of Mothers and Children Centres in Diber, Has, Kukes and Tropoje Districts in north east Albania.

For more information about the work of Partnerë për Fëmijët please contact the Director Ingrid Jones on ijones_ppf@yahoo.co.uk or www.partnerperfemijet.org

Welcome, Croatia!

On 2 December 2011, Croatia became the 31st European country to open a National Europass Centre. These centres already exist in the 27 EU member states plus Turkey, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

They coordinate all national activities related to Europass documents and are the first point of contact for people or organisations interested in using or learning more about Europass.

The Europass portal allows European citizens to access five types of documents which can help them present their professional and academic skills in a clear and structured way.

Europass was created in 2004 to help citizens promote their skills and qualifications across Europe and it facilitates communication between jobseekers and employers, and can also be a useful tool for students.

The Europass CV template is now used by 15 million Europeans. These benefits are now also available to Croatian citizens.

Croatia is expected to join the European Union in July 2013.

However, it has participated in EU programmes for culture since 2007 and for education, training, and youth since 2011.
WELCOME TO THE 8th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
Creating Knowledge and Wisdom in Education and Training
Nice, France
10-12 May 2012

Full conference information on
www.learningteacher.eu/nice-conference-2012