Digital learning


16,000 teachers in 46 states took part (on the internet). But what is digital learning? It could be said that schools and institutions now have the tools required for internet learning (e.g. the e-learning). The basic facilities are in principle more or less organised.

More and more schools have half or the full equipment required for children to learn by using computers and internet. We also have had the basic discussions about the dangers of internet. Programs have been developed to create balanced use of the internet by children and youngsters and there is protection for children and the rules/laws for privacy have been constructed. That is the technology taken care of.

But what about the content of the digital knowledge available on the internet? Is there enough time for educators to focus on the content of this knowledge? Who are the producers of this digital knowledge? Who makes the digital knowledge available and what knowledge are we talking about? Is all knowledge free?

Why do we have to pay for knowledge (courses of university’s)? Does someone have ownership of digital knowledge (like study books?)? It seems not: Google and Wikipedia provide knowledge for free. Or is this just popularized knowledge with numerous reductions of the ‘real knowledge’?

And what are the reasons for famous and less famous universities opening up their knowledge temples and offering us the opportunity to learn their ‘real knowledge’ (udacity.com, edx.org and coursera). Is science at last coming out of its ivory tower and is knowledge becoming democratized?

If this is true, then teachers need to be educated in quite a new way: as intermediaries between the free knowledge and the act of obtaining this knowledge. Students need to learn how to access knowledge from a reliable source and verify this knowledge.

Teachers need to be facilitators of this student learning while keeping in mind the fact that the learner may be the best person to decide what s/he will learn?

Gerard de Kruif
Editor

The Learning Teacher Magazine

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Courtesy by Areté Youth Foundation

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Material Designs in Education
- Examples from Material Designs of Turkish Pre-Service Teachers

Teaching materials are among the most effective resources teachers have in concretizing abstract knowledge. Involvement of the different sensory organs in learning renders subjects more attractive and permanent for students.

Pre-service teachers should be encouraged to develop teaching materials and to utilize them in trainings and especially in their professional lives in order to eliminate their deficiencies in teaching.

This study involves examples from materials designed by Turkish pre-service teachers for different courses and different age groups. In these designs, first, pre-service teachers select the subjects that they want to teach among courses such as social studies, mathematics, science, music, drama etc.

After determining the age group to which they will teach the subject, they plan materials by taking into consideration the developmental characteristics of that age group. They design their teaching materials by sewing, gluing or attaching different materials. For example, the above model “sailboat” was prepared for students at the age group of 7-9 years.

A wooden material was used in the body of the sailboat, matchsticks were used for the sides, and colourful cardboard and pencil were used for accessories inside the sailboat. The aim of this design was to diversify teaching materials and turn teaching of the subject of “marine transportation vehicles” into a game.

In the train model designed for the subject of “teaching numbers” in mathematics course, it was aimed to teach numbers (from 1 to 10) to students at the age group of 3-6 years in an entertaining way. In this design, sponge was used to stuff the wagons whereas cotton was used to stuff numbers and wheels.

Fibre was used for wagons and numbers, whereas felt and crayon was used for the ground. In this material, the sequential relationship between numbers was taught to students through numbers carried by wagons.

The material called “My body” was designed to concretize a subject of the English language course for children at the age group of 6-9 years. For the ground, Styrofoam equipment was covered with cardboard.

Then, a clown, which was prepared using colourful cardboards, crayons, a half ping pong ball (for the nose) and raffia (for the hair), was put onto the cardboard. To render the material more durable, the whole board and post-its were covered with sticky acetate.

On this board which teaches parts of the body in English, the teacher asks students to find body parts through several questions such as “What organ does the clown use to hear?” The photo shows the solved version of the puzzle.

In this material designed for children at the age group of 0-3 years, multi-functionalism is at the forefront. The aim of this material is to teach colours, figures, animals and fruits to children. Of this tripartite cube; the smallest part has sun, moon, star and cloud on each of its sides, whereas the yellow cube has strawberry, melon, apple and orange; and the blue cube has fish, cat, dog and bear on each of their sides.

The material that appeals to the sense of touch was prepared by sewing each part in order to enable the child to play comfortably. Durable cardboard was cut and given the shape of a cube for the internal part, and then it was covered with sponge. On the top surface, durable and colourful fibre material was first cut and then previously-prepared objects were blind-stitched to each side.

On this board that shows “the circulatory system”, the journeys of arterial and venous blood in the body are taught. The board was prepared for children aged 10-11 years. Styrofoam equipment was covered with white fabric, on which the human body was drawn.

Then, transparent thin pipes were put onto the entire body, and water was put inside the pipes to represent blood circulation. The external sides of the pipes were painted with an acetate pencil in the shape of strips. While red strips represented arterial blood, blue ones represented venous blood. This board is very effective in that it renders a highly abstract subject understandable and concrete for children.

The common purpose of the above-listed materials is to make the invisible visible, the unintelligible intelligible and the abstract concrete. Material development, which is a part of learning by doing for pre-service teachers, is an opportunity for them to synthesize their individual talents with professional knowledge and skills.

It is of utmost importance for them to continue developing materials throughout their professional lives, use them in their classes, and share their knowledge and experiences with their colleagues.

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This article aims to get teachers familiar with innovative teaching and learning tools, such as webquests and help them successfully integrate the Internet into teaching in order to enhance their students’ motivation and interest in learning.

For your information, in July 2012 I completed a Comenius funded teacher training course (with financial support from the European Commission within the Lifelong Learning Programme) focused on the methodology involved in Inquiry-based Learning for teaching English as well as other school subjects. The course was organised by ITC -International TEFL Certificate and held in Prague, the Czech Republic.

One of the training modules focused on integrating webquests into teaching. Webquests are great inquiry-based learning tools, which promote cooperative learning and help students develop their higher order thinking skills (comparing, classifying, inducing, deducing etc.) as well as their communication and research ones.

**What is a webquest?**
It is an inquiry-based learning activity which asks students to use the Internet in a guided and meaningful manner in order to learn about a specific topic or to solve a problem. It involves group work and provides students with a scenario/roles to play as well as detailed information on the steps learners should go through in accomplishing an authentic task.

**Webquest structure**
There are six basic sections of a webquest: introduction (which provides background information and a scenario/roles to play for students as well as learning goals), task(s) to accomplish, process (the steps learners should go through in accomplishing the tasks), resources (links/bookmarked websites) needed to complete the task, evaluation (a rubric for assessing students’ work) and conclusion (it encourages students to reflect on what they have just learnt).

**Guidelines for creating webquests**
Here are some guidelines which can help teachers create webquests:
- select the topic that fits into your curriculum
- decide on an appropriate task that addresses the higher-level thinking skills of Bloom’s Taxonomy (see http://webquest.sdsu.edu/taskonomy.html)
- get familiar with the online resources related to that topic
- select only those resources which are appropriate for your students in terms of age and level of knowledge and skills
- use a template as it saves a lot of time (see http://webquest.sdsu.edu/LessonTemplate.html) or use the free WebQuest creation tool (see www.zunal.com)
- make sure you have presented the information in a logical order.

**Why use webquests?**
Firstly, webquests increase students’ motivation and interest in learning as most tasks are designed to address real-world problems.
Secondly, students have the opportunity to use updated resources (links/bookmarked websites) instead of dated textbooks and gain valuable research skills.
Besides, webquests involve cooperative learning, requiring students to work collaboratively (in pairs/groups) and play certain roles in order to accomplish specific tasks. In addition, webquests can help teachers successfully integrate technology into teaching, providing students with the opportunity to develop their digital skills, too.

The best place to start when looking for webquests is Bernie Dodge’s Matrix of Webquests examples (http://webquest.org/).

**Disclaimer**
The information and views set out in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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The Learning Teacher Network on facebook
www.facebook/learningteachernetwork
The Lisbon Conference: Education for Sustainable Development

We are delighted to welcome all colleagues from all levels of education and training, and from Europe and beyond, to the Learning Teacher Network’s 9th International Conference. The conference will be held at the modern, four star Hotel Tivoli Oriente in Lisbon, Portugal on September 26-28, 2013. The title of the conference is “Education for Sustainable Development”.

Education for sustainable development (ESD) is a matter of rapidly growing importance, concern and recognition on international, European, national and local levels. In all countries and cultures, education and training is the key in order to describe, re-orient for and build knowledge, understanding and action for a sustainable future.

Education for Sustainable Development allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. ESD means including key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning.

The conference will therefore portray a range of pedagogical angles and elements to such sustainable teaching and learning. Within the topic of the conference, thematically the programme will address ecological, social and economic perspectives on ESD.

The conference topic will be introduced by internationally recognized experts in this focal area of the conference, followed by parallel sessions of lectures and workshops led by practitioners and researchers.

With deep appreciation of the many colleagues who will present and share their knowledge and experience, we are delighted to announce a conference programme that includes 40 quality sessions given by more than 70 presenters from 15 countries in Europe and beyond.

Alike the previous conferences, we look forward to welcoming colleagues from all levels of education and training in Europe and beyond to a golden opportunity for gaining new knowledge and sharing experience in a good and friendly atmosphere in an international setting.

Keynote speakers

Ms Soo-Hyang Choi, Director of the Division of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development at UNESCO; Prof. Akpezi Ogbuigwe, former Head of environmental education at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); Prof. Charles Hopkins, UNESCO Chair on Reorienting Teacher Education to Address Sustainability and United Nations University (UNU) Chair on Education for Sustainable Development, York University in Toronto, Canada; Prof. Tom Tiller, University of Tromsø, Norway; David DeLuca, DoSomething.org, USA.

Read more on the website

Full and comprehensive conference information is published on the network website, see:

www.learningteacher.eu/lisbon-conference-2013

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 2013.
European training courses autumn 2013

You are warmly welcome and invited to participate in European training courses arranged by the Learning Teacher Network. The courses are published in the European course database.

You may apply to your National EU LLP Agency in order to obtain an EU grant to attend. In most cases the EU grant covers all costs (course fee, meals and accommodation, travel costs). The training courses target teachers, teacher trainers, head teachers, counsellors and other educational staff at all levels of education and training.

The deadline for applying for an EU grant to participate is 30 April 2013. You apply to your National EU LLP Agency and before that you register with the course organiser in order to reserve a place.

Creativity and Learning

The Creativity and Learning training course will be given again in 2013, for the fourth year in a row.

The objective of the course is to introduce and stimulate creativity and innovation both at the course and to be transferred into classroom and school practice “back home”.

Course location: Sliema, Malta
Course dates: 8-12 October 2013
Course venue: The Victoria Hotel, www.victoriahotel.com
Course number: SE-2013-181-001

Course information is available at www.learningteacher.eu/creativity-and-learning where you also find the link to the course in the course database.

The Global Classroom

- Educating for a more just and sustainable world

This course addresses global education and how to successfully work with education for sustainable development in classrooms and schools.

Course location: Sliema, Malta
Course dates: 14-18 October 2013
Course venue: The Victoria Hotel, www.victoriahotel.com
Course number: SE-2013-186-001

Course information is available at www.learningteacher.eu/course-the-global-classroom where you also find the link to the course in the course database.

New report on taught time in the European countries 2012-2013

In which European country is the total amount of annual taught time for the 2012-2013 school year highest? How many hours do students spend on specific subjects, such as mathematics or natural sciences?

A new Eurydice publication on recommended annual taught time during compulsory education gives quick answers to these questions.

More precisely, the publication contains annually updated facts and figures on the amount of time allocated to core subjects by grade/stage in full-time compulsory education. Information in the publication is divided into the amount of time allocated to individual subjects, such as literacy learning, mathematics, or physical education and also by country. The report also covers the number of taught days and weeks per year, as well as the number and length of the class periods.

More information


Also from Eurydice can be downloaded the Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe 2012. This new Eurydice report traces the context and organisation of foreign language teaching, student participation levels, as well as the initial and continuing education of foreign language teachers.
A Boy Becomes a Pilot: Thank You, Teachers

Thank you, teachers. The education and ideas that you gave my son, years ago, enabled him to become a pilot.

Second Lieutenant Justin Maddox recently graduated from the Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training Program at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas, and soon he’ll be flying both an F-15 jet and a commercial airliner.

Teachers taught him the basics, so now he is succeeding; and teachers hosted special projects, so now he is fascinated by flying. I thought that you would be interested to see where one of your ripples went...a ripple created by one of the pebbles that you tossed in the water, years ago.

Teachers at the Montessori School in Naples, Italy hosted a science fair when Justin was in the fifth grade. He and his best friend Onur (from Turkey) demonstrated how wings, when moving through the air, generate lift. The boys researched, drew, constructed, learned about planes, and had fun.

A teacher at the U.S. Department of Defense middle school in Okinawa, Japan hosted a flight club on Wednesday nights for seventh and eighth graders. The boys and girls learned about propellers and engines, lift and thrust, and on weekends they visited the Kadena Air Force Base and explored Cessna planes, C-140 transports, and F-15 fighter jets. Seeds of interest were planted in fertile minds.

Other teachers taught him about science and flight, and gave him the tools to pursue his ambitions. Classwork and homework in English, Italian, writing, math, science, history, social studies, health, and other subjects — with many teachers involved — gave him the knowledge and discipline that he needed to complete the many flight texts and tests that are part of jet-pilot training.

Playing soccer and other sports during his elementary, middle, and high school years — with many coaches involved — taught him teamwork, and it instilled in him habits of physical fitness. Playing drums in middle school band — with a band leader and music instructors involved — challenged his mind to process complex relationships of notes and chords, melodies and rhythms, and it showed him the synergy of instruments coming together to make music.

A multicultural education helped with his current multicultural work. At a school concert one evening, I remarked to a neighbor about the mix of races of the students on stage: white, black, Hispanic, and Asian. They represented the melting pot that is the United States.

At the Montessori school in Naples, the children were from many nations of NATO: Turkey, Italy, the United Kingdom, Greece, Germany, the United States, and others. As a boy, Justin learned to play and work with boys and girls from many nations and cultures. Not surprisingly, as a man, he is comfortable playing and working with men and women from many nations and cultures.

Teachers imparted ideas and skills to my son that have significantly impacted the vision he has, the course he will pursue, and the contribution he will make to society. Teachers do this for many children.

Thank you teachers...for the teaching!

Michael Maddox
E-mail: gnafswo@gmail.com
Doctor of otolaryngology
Naval Hospital, Naples, Italy
Talent Development = looking at differences!
‘On a normal Monday morning children aged 4 and 5 begin with a group discussion about what happened at the weekend.

A number of children like Sharon and Erik are eager to tell their stories. If it’s Sharon’s turn, she tells her story with much feeling and dramatic expression. Anouk and Patrick are, however, quietly waiting their turn. If the teacher asks Anouk what she has done this weekend, she gives a short and to the point answer.

From her answer, it is difficult to establish if she has found it fun or not. When it’s Patrick’s turn he does not know what to say. He has done so much over the weekend that he does not know what to choose. Afterwards the children can choose a design. Annette likes to work only with a beaded board. In contrast, Sharon and Erik prefer to work with other children. Sometimes there is more talk than work in that group. Patrick likes to work quietly in the building corner. He finds it difficult to choose a design. Before he begins, Patrick asks what existing building he can build.’

By linking differences in abilities and interests of students and by anticipating learning needs and development directions, the teacher has a better chance of addressing the many differences in talent among students. Therefore a good teacher has several communication and coaching styles.

In this article, based on a number of short examples from the practices in the primary school, we outline differences between pupils.

We do this through looking at the most common ‘personality dynamics’, based on the idea of Human Dynamics, which contains 3 central fundamental and universal principles (qualities): mental (thinking), emotional (feeling) and physical (doing).

Mental - Physical
Jordi may work very well independently. He is comfortable with commands and resolving issues. He can spend hours puzzling over and organising things. But group discussion and dance expression cost him visible effort.

If other children play together, Jordi does not participate. When the teacher asks him why he did not play with the other children, he says that he does. His play consists of observing.

Students with this personality dynamic are quiet and deliberate. In dealing with others, they are distant, and it is difficult to see their emotions expressed in any way. For their learning it is important that they receive objective information with a clear purpose. Then they prefer to work alone. Their approach is logical and linear. The development direction of these students is on the relational level: collaboration and sharing opinions and emotions.

Emotional - Mental
Monique is an independent learner who likes to take the lead when working in groups. She is often very involved in her work, but sometimes her thoughts are elsewhere. She is either completely involved or totally not involved.

Monique needs space to give shape to the task. In definite assignments which she has already done, she is not interested.

Students like Monique are passionate and direct. In dealing with others, they often take the initiative or leadership. In their communications, they are open and direct.

These students learn by discovering. They need a brief explanation of an enthusiastic teacher and then they go to work. The more challenging assignments are formulated, the greater is their enthusiasm. Their approach is associative. The development direction of these students is that of peace installation, the importance of finishing things and sometimes even reflection on themselves and others.

Emotional - Physical
Every morning Remco chats with the teacher, telling her what he has done or what he has brought. One day the teacher observes that Jim does not pay attention.

He is not alert and seems to worry. She asks him if there is anything upsetting him. He says no. Then the teacher realizes that she was focused on Remco that morning and barely paid attention to Jim who was with her.

She goes to Jim and tells him that she was very busy earlier but she is very curious to see what he has done. She sees that Remco heaves a sigh of relief. He says: “I thought you were mad at me.”

These students are personal and need social interaction. A positive relationship with others is essential for their learning to flourish. In order to learn they need to have a personal relationship with the subject matter, connecting their personal experience or skills as they learn.

These students are sensitive to (emotional) stimuli and have a short concentration span. Their development direction lies in setting boundaries, distance and learning to focus their attention.

Physical - Emotional
Mariska is a quiet child who does not predominate. If a question is asked Mariska rarely puts her hand up.

You often see her still thinking while
Social studies in secondary education in Sweden: Student democracy in practice

If you are young today the problems of the world can be somewhat overwhelming. There are so many different problems that need to be addressed for the future of this planet.

Therefore the subject of social studies can become something of a challenge for the simple reason that it is easy to become pessimistic. Yet I find that being a teacher in social studies with students between 16 and 18 years of age can be one of the most rewarding things you can do as a teacher.

The reason for me saying this is that you get to be a part of the journey these students have embarked on to become adults and take on their responsibilities as members of the society. What could be more important?

One way to do this and one that works for me as well as my students is to find their personal interests and start the journey from that point of origin. If there is someone who is interested in skating, for example, and they do not have any place to go skating in their community, we try to find a way to make this happen. In my experience as a teacher you need to get close to the students reality in everyday life in order to find their motivation to learn about certain things.

If the students find out that they have the tools to make a difference in their own life by, for example, influencing their local politicians in order to get something they need, in this case a skating ramp, they will take a much larger interest in the subject at hand.

Another way that I use in my teaching is to let my students have real influence over their lessons, day by day. We work out the working order together and decide on the type of tests they think will work and so on.

By doing so they will get a feeling of how democratic practice works in their life but also how it can be used later on in the society they live in. I have the responsibility to give them the goals for the course and what they need to have understood in order to pass the course, but the way to get there is not set in stone. By giving the students the opportunity to influence how to reach their goals they will be much more motivated to really make an effort to do their best in the process.

By using this way of teaching I want to give my students the tools to navigate their own way into society when they graduate. There are a number of different areas where they will need my guidance and knowledge. But it does not necessarily mean that I always have the answer to their questions.

Very often I will tell them what an excellent question they have put forward and challenge them to find the answer together with me. I do firmly believe that in order for my students to understand the democratic process they have to live by it in their everyday life, in this case the classroom.

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THE LEARNING TEACHER MAGAZINE 1/2013 9
Utilizing the capacity of the Roma community

Founded in 2005, Areté Youth Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization supporting high-potential youth who are limited by social and economic barriers in Bulgaria and the Balkans. “Areté” (from the Greek): Being the best you can be; reaching your highest human potential.

We envision a Roma community of engaged citizens and positive role models who support each other to achieve educational, financial, and personal success. Our Mission is to build sustainable social networks that encourage educational pursuits, instill a culture of giving back and promote mentorship.

In 2010 Areté Youth Foundation Bulgaria started working on a project called Role models for tomorrow, funded by America for Bulgaria Foundation. The activities of this project are directed towards overcoming social inequality and discrimination against Roma youths and their active inclusion in the civil and political life of the country. The programs of our foundation motivate the young Roma to continue their education and develop as better people and professionals.

At the moment Areté Youth Foundation has three programs:
• “Zaedno Napred”, whose purpose is to increase the number of students from Roma origin, who graduate Senior High School.
• “Educational and Information Hub”, whose purpose is to increase the number of university students of Roma origin, who graduate higher education.
• “Roma Professional Network” aiming at decreasing the number of unemployed Roma.

A major priority for the “Zaedno Napred” program is organizing the Roma youth camps. The purpose of these camps is to motivate young Roma to continue their education and develop as better people and professionals. “Zaedno Napred” summer camps were started in 2002 and “Arete” Youth Foundation has been organizing them since the beginning of 2011. In the last two years there have been 6 camps - 2 in 2011 and 4 in 2012. A total of 180 youths took part, aged 16-21 from all over the country.

Camps continue for 7 days with intensive training in the field of Roma history and culture, formation of leadership skills, the value of volunteering, presenting the ways to prevent discrimination and overcoming stereotypes. In 2013 there are going to be 3 more camps with participants from all over the country.

The Areté Youth Network was established right after the camps held in 2011. It is used by young Roma to implement different initiatives and campaigns throughout the country.

The “Roma Education and Information Hub” program has the following main goals:
• Making High School students acquainted with opportunities to obtain higher education in Bulgaria and abroad, as well as opportunities to receive a scholarship;
• Creating a network of at least 50 students from different universities and offer them mentors;
• Developing a partnership network in Bulgaria, Europe and the US in order to support the education of young Roma;
• Creating and maintaining a blog, which interested young Roma can use to be informed about up-to-date educational opportunities.

“Roma Professional Network” program aims at encouraging contacts between young Roma professionals, by providing opportunities for professional development in the public and private sector. The network was established in 2011 and has been gradually growing ever since to reach the current number of 170 people. The registration in the online community of the RPN gives access to a set of information and posts, where each member has the floor, can share information about different opportunities, events and trends.

So far 11 events have been held throughout the country. Over 130 people have benefited from different training courses, which have provided the participants with enough skills to successfully go through job/internship interviews, as well as develop their own businesses.

At the moment Roma Professional Network is conducting meetings with young Roma in the larger towns of the country, in order to assess the needs of those, who have completed their education and the difficulties they come across when looking for employment. The RPN team is going to use this information in order to design services, which are going to be tailored to address the most current problems and needs of network members.

The team of "Arete" Youth Foundation believes that we need to invest in initiatives directed towards young people and supporting efforts which provide opportunities for making the leaders of tomorrow.

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CAVA is an EU-funded DAPHNE project that focuses on Changing Attitudes to Dating Violence in Adolescents. The main teaching tool that will be used is an immersive and engaging video game that will appeal to young people, and which will be the first of its kind in Europe.

The game includes:
- Scenarios for different stages of a relationship typical of the age range;
- Simulated role play to provoke awareness of issues of violence in dating scenarios;
- Modelled scenarios where the player is the male/female or friend of the player in the game;
- 5 lessons:

‘Healthy relationships’
The aim of this lesson is to get students to think about what relationship values they have and what for them characterises a healthy relationship. The computer-based scenarios will form one component of the broader classroom-based curriculum.

‘Abuse and warning signs’
The second lesson will focus on abuse and possible warning signs of abuse. Students will need to log into the computer at the start of the lesson. The confidentiality rules will need to be revisited from the session before. The students will engage with both computer mediated and classroom discussions regarding the nature, dynamics and early warning signs of dating violence and abuse.

‘Risk factors for abuse and violence’
In this lesson students will maintain confidentiality rules, recognise at least two factors that contribute to abuse, construct stereotypical images and discuss their origins and examine the relevance of stereotypes to abusive behaviour. The students should present their homework with a few students showing the stereotypes they have chosen to represent.

‘Achieving healthy relationships’
Students will engage in a computer-mediated presentation of conflict resolution techniques and will have the opportunity to practice these skills through computer-based role-play. In this lesson they will practice identifying healthy behaviours.

‘Safely seeking help’
The aim of this lesson is to enable young people to understand the defences used by other people in abusive relationships and to help them determine how they may respond and seek help should they find themselves in a position where a friend is involved in an abusive relationship.

During the game feedback will be given regarding the impact of courses of action on the target group, the appropriateness of the course of action selected and rewards for the selection of the most appropriate responses.

The game will also signpost the players to support agencies.

The game can be downloaded or can be played online. Teachers need to register on the following website to start using the game: www.cavagame.eu/cava/login/register-form.php

This project was made together by the Coventry University (UK), Serious Games Institute (UK), Greater Birmingham West Midlands (UK/BE), Friedrich-Alexander University (GER), Högskolan Väst (SE) and the Katholieke Hogeschool Limburg (BE).

The CAVA game, designed to help adolescents learn about dating violence, has been launched as a pilot exercise and has been tested by secondary school pupils from Belgium, Sweden, UK and Germany. For the teachers the possibility exists to login to the e-learning platform to find manuals and notes about the topic.

Link: http://cavaproject.eu

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Colégio Vasco da Gama is a Portuguese private teaching institution which is 53 years old. We have around 800 students attending the school from pre-school up to secondary school.

Our aim is directly related to quality teaching as well as to an effective learning process on a sustainable basis.

In 2010 Colégio Vasco da Gama entered into an International Project called Eco-Schools. This project is based on improvement actions not only in environmental behaviour, management of school space and community awareness but also on the practices that actively involve all the children and teenagers, therefore, motivating their families and the community surrounding our school.

These activities are taking place over three years, when we collect recyclables, for instance, corks (partnership with Greencork), plastic tops, batteries, etc.

The recollection of corks is aimed at helping the various species of trees. Each kilogram represents the plantation of one tree. The recollection of plastic tops has a solidary fund, as it helps to buy material for disabled children.

This year we are also collecting pills and other out of date medicines through partnership with ValorMed. We already have around 400 bags filled with medicines, which we will hand in to pharmacies.

As a consequence of this project, our school was able to economize on ink and paper, as we started using our email to send the copies to the reprography. Our paper consumption diminished by half, in comparison with the previous year.

This year we also started working with an electronic administrative platform Ino-var, where teachers write the summaries from each lesson, record the students who are missing school, send messages to parents and even the final marks are launched through this platform. Again, as a result, ink and paper use will diminish this year.

Moreover, we have two educational platforms (one for little children - Meduc; another one for older students - Escola Virtual) where teachers put worksheets, contents and communicate with the children online.

Beyond the selective recollection of materials we also get our pupils involved in other activities.

For instance, they have participated in the Environmental Olympics, where about 90 students went through the first part; ending with the best student who went to the National Finals together with 24 best students from other schools around the country.

We also created an ecological group, where students participated in projects of sustainability. These students’ enthusiasm made them work even during their lunch break.

Last year we had the chance to participate in Rock in Rio’s Gincana which highly motivated students, as the prizes were tickets to go to the concerts. The Gincana consisted of several tasks, where students had to gather plastic or sell bracelets and the money went into solidary projects.

All the information related to this article is available on the school webpage www.colegiovascodagama.pt; in a blog http://ovasquinhoeverde.blogspot.pt, and in Facebook www.facebook.com/colegiovascodagama

We strongly believe ourselves to be working towards a sustainable future and teaching the importance of it to our students.

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Eco Schools in Portugal
The Sustainable Education Group – Nepal (SEG-N) organised a one day conference titled ‘Education for Sustainable Development: Nepalese Perspectives’ on 9th January 2013 in the Lecture Hall, Nepal Tourism Board, Bhrikutimandap, Kathmandu.

The conference was expected to serve as the ‘declaration platform’ of Nepalese stakeholders in ESD to urge the UN and the member states to keep up the agenda even after 2014 (DESD).

It was also intended as a platform for aspirant students who wish to take on the academic challenge: moreover the challenge of environmental education for sustainable development (EESD).

A total of 30 participants from various institutions took part in the event. The attendants were students, teachers and other stakeholders.

Parbat Dhungana, a highly experienced lecturer at Kathmandu University, was the keynote speaker at the conference. He highlighted the possible ways of going through the path of sustainable development establishing that education was the particular path he had chosen.

All the presenters explained their views in layperson’s terms. Speaking at the conference, the keynote speaker stressed the importance of critical thinking, participatory class and interconnectedness among knowledge, skill, attitude and behavior. Moreover, he encapsulated the category of development in different terms and contradictions regarding the definition of development.

Other presenters came up with their presentations on various aspects viz. one village – one entrepreneurship school, ICT in teaching and learning, climate change adaptation education, accessible quality education for sustainable development.

The conference concluded with participants putting hands up altogether to agree on the slogan ‘Let us carry on our ESD agenda even after 2014’ being aware that the UN decade for ESD (DESD 2005-2014) was coming to an end.

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One Day ESD Conference Accomplished in Kathmandu
Edublogging: World and Nepal

One needs to understand the meaning of 'weblogs' before we go insightfully into edublogging. Weblogs are the pieces of writings on the internet which can be viewed by any member of the public around the world who has access to the internet.

Blogs were considered as 'weblogs' during the days the term was coined. Slowly, the word was shortened to 'blogs'. Websites where weblogs are primarily related to education are termed as edublogs.

Edublogging is the process of writing online (in the WWW) by somebody who has an interest in education; moreover it is done by teachers on every issue like:
- curriculum
- teaching experience
- lesson plans
- school projects
- teachers' professional issues
- and many more

What actually is 'edublogging'? 'Edublogging' comes from two words: education and blogging. The concept edublogging came into practice when the education enthusiasts began to write and share their views, experiences, lesson plans, classroom activities, educational technologies and opportunities over the internet.

Blogging (writing to show up in the internet world) incorporates general social issues. Since the 1990s blogging on the issue of education slowly got recognition as 'edublogging'.

Open to everyone Anyone with an interest in education who wishes to contribute to the development of academia with or without being part of an academic institution or governing institution can take part in edublogging. As blogging is an outpouring of expression, edublogging should consider the 'right to expression'.

Edublogs are 'posted' by edubloggers on a regular basis. Otherwise they could be considered as short essays. An edublogger is just like a regular columnist in a printed daily paper who regularly writes something on education.

Weblogs have existed for close to two decades. However, it wasn't until the second half of the 1990s that weblogs began to grow in popularity. The new use of 'weblogs' before we go insightfully into edublogging were estimated 3 million blogs and as of July 2011, there are an estimated 164 million blogs. Edublogs did not feature much initially. However, teachers and aspirants have begun networking among each other creating something innovate.

The Edublog Awards, the international and community based awards programme for the use of blogs and social media to support education, runs annually online across a range of platforms. The Awards were founded by James N. Farmer in 2004.

Edublogging in Nepal Nepalese enthusiasts on WW started blogging at the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century. That time was the period of political deadlock due to polarization between the then monarchy and political parties. Also, the country was not in an easy position to secure human rights issues as military/police searches and militia campaigns of the then rebel group, the Maoists, were commonplace.

The end of that decade arrived with positive signs due to the voluntary end of the monarchy and the end of the Maoist insurgency. The blogs were basically written for social reasons. We cannot find a significant number of edublog websites in Nepal. Some teachers may have created their individual websites and have not come to the attention of the researcher – myself.

The initiative called 'Nepalese Teacher Network for Sustainable Education' [http://www.nepaleseteacher.org/] was founded as a program of an NGO. The website has a significant number of edublogs written by different authors basically serving academia.

Edublogs develop interest and are important for communication

Edublogs archive and support student and teacher learning by facilitating reflection, questioning by self and others, collaboration and by providing contexts for engaging in higher-order thinking.

Blogs can be useful tools for sharing information and tips among co-workers, providing information for students, or keeping in contact with parents. Common examples include blogs written by or for teachers, blogs maintained for the purpose of classroom instruction, or blogs written about educational policy.

Blogs can also act as a means of parent teacher communication and as an archived reference for students and other teachers. Blogs can be an opportunity for teachers to develop communication skills and literacy (language skills).

Moreover, it can be an opportunity to develop interests of students who literally end up playing e-games at home and become addicted to e-media.

Challenges

There are number of challenges in edublogging:
1. Validity of content: The information provided by a teacher blogger or anybody who writes on ‘education’ may be questioned by others.
2. No access for all: The internet connection, laptops or computers, electricity, and other arrangements cannot be available to all owing to the digital divide.
3. We cannot find any world level guidelines/convention/agreement and consequently Acts/Regulations to address reliability/validity/authenticity issues.
4. We cannot assess the increased motivation of current ‘edubloggers’.

The developed world has gone much further in edublogging with the individual efforts of teachers and other enthusiasts in education. However, the proper guidelines and incentives could be missing even in the developed world.

Increasing involvement

Other parts of the world have a very small number of edubloggers. It would be much more helpful to make better use of internet technology in educational development by actively involving teachers and other aspirants in edublogging.

In the context of Nepal we have a habit of developing websites for each and every local office. Local authorities can keep an edublogging section in municipal/VDC’s websites and resource person and school inspectors can moderate those blogs.

New jobs (subject wise) can be created to moderate the teacher bloggers and to regulate (and/or in some cases inspire) the independent edubloggers.

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EU leading action to boost literacy in developing countries

In addition to efforts to improve levels of literacy in the EU through its ‘Europe Loves Reading’ campaign, the European Commission is also at the forefront of action to tackle the problem in the world’s developing countries. Since 2007, the Commission has invested €4 billion on education and literacy in 48 partner countries, enabling more than 9 million pupils to enrol in school and more than 720,000 primary teachers to receive training.

1. The importance of literacy for development
   • Literacy empowers people. Women who take part in literacy programmes have better knowledge of health and family planning. Literate parents are more likely to send their children to school and to help them with their studies.
   • A child born to a mother who can read is 50% more likely to survive past the age of five.
   • Literacy develops societies on political level. Literate people are found to be more civically engaged – whether in labour unions, community activities or politics.
   • Literacy is crucial for economic development and fighting poverty. Literacy has been found to have a positive effect on GDP per capita. If all children in low-income countries could read, it is estimated that poverty could drop by 12%.

2. State of play and challenges in literacy
   • 775 million adults, two-thirds of whom are women, still lack basic reading and writing skills.
   • Most countries will miss the Education for All Goal 4 on adult literacy, some by a large margin. Of the 40 countries that had an adult literacy rate below 90% in 1998-2001, only three countries (Bolivia, Equatorial Guinea and Malaysia) are expected to meet the goal of reducing their illiteracy rate by 50%.
   • Illiteracy tends to prevail in low-income countries where severe poverty is widespread. Literacy is poorest in sub-Saharan Africa and in South and West Asia. Adult literacy rates were below 50% in several countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Haiti, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Sierra Leone), with even less than 30%, such as Niger.
   • Progress is slowing, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected countries - where 42% of the world’s out-of-school children live (and this percentage is growing).
   • There is an acute shortage of teachers in developing countries. For example, to achieve universal primary education an additional 1.7 million primary school teachers are needed by 2015.

3. How the European Commission is responding to these challenges
   Thanks to the joint effort and action done within the Global Education Partnership, which includes other donors, UN agencies, NGOs, private sector and partner countries, 19 million children have been put into school. 300,000 additional teachers were hired and 30,000 classrooms were built over the last 10 years.

   The European Commission supports literacy through its support to the national education strategies - as sector budget support, pooled funding or project support. The EU is committed to education: the Agenda for Change (the Commission's blueprint for development policy, in which it prioritised its work to focus on the countries and sectors where it can make the most difference) recognises our commitment to education and the need to enable young people everywhere to have access to quality education.

   Last year, Development Commissioner Andris Piebalgs announced that 20% of EU aid will go to Human development in the next EU budget - education constitutes an important part of that.

Country examples
   • Somalia: has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world: more than an estimated 80 percent of Somalis are not literate. The Commission has funded several youth and adult literacy projects and the support to the education sector in Somalia. Since 2010 the European Commission has helped out so that more than 40,000 students have gained access to basic, primary and secondary education, more than 330 classrooms were built or rehabilitated, 4,000 primary and secondary teachers qualified and 5,280 trainees were enrolled in vocational training, ensuring the development of skills and promotion of employment.
   • Afghanistan: the Commission supported a project to provide street children in Kabul with a basic education and vocational training once they had left school. Decades of conflict in Afghanistan have led to widespread poverty which means that many children are forced to help support their families. Our project provided 9,115 vulnerable street or working children with an education and a better start in life. The results were great to see - the children really enjoyed their time learning and 96% of them reported that they were rarely absent from the centre because they liked it so much.
   • Swaziland: the Commission financed a project to improve access to primary education, to increase quality of education and to support the reform of the education sector. Fees are an obstacle for the poor to attend schools. The project helped to pay fees for 26,000 vulnerable children in 558 schools, to construct 58 classrooms and 36 teachers’ houses in schools and to finance the equipment for two vocational institutions.
   • Namibia: the European Commission has been supporting a comprehensive approach to the education sector by providing sector budget support. One of the priorities has been early childhood development and pre-primary education, which help to lay the foundations for acquiring basic literacy and numeracy. The increased attendance of pre-primary education since 2008 is building the foundations for quality education and has already resulted in reduced drop-out rates in the first grade. Also reinforcing school attendance is providing school meals. In fact, the number of children with access to the provision of meals programme has increased from around 200,000 in 2008 to around 270,000 in 2012.

Finally, the EU has been instrumental in the piloting of an early grade reading assessment in several regions, as a tool for measuring literacy learning.

Source: Euroepa Press Release, reference MEMO/13/20, 21/01/2013
Supporting the educational integration of new arrival school students

It is widely recognised that the nature of the school population in many European countries is rapidly changing. A combination of increased inflows of third country nationals into the EU, together with greater internal mobility across Europe in the wake of the two most recent enlargements, means that many schools are experiencing a rapid growth in the number of children who might be termed “new arrivals”.

The OECD PISA survey on standard academic skills of 15-year-olds confirms that new arrival pupils in this age group tend to perform systematically less well than host country pupils across the assessed subject areas and, most strikingly, in reading. These students are more likely to leave school early in almost all countries.

Data from PISA suggests that attainment gaps in certain countries can actually worsen from the first generation of new arrival students to the second. This suggests that many educational systems around Europe are failing to resolve the gaps in educational attainment, and thus contributing to a downward spiral of social exclusion.

The presence of significant numbers of new arrivals therefore has important implications for education systems. Schools have to acknowledge and react to their presence and to support their particular needs, while at the same time ensuring high quality and equitable educational opportunities for all students.

Integration at class level (whether successful or unsuccessful) often seems to constitute a microcosm of integration in wider society.

Education therefore has the potential to play a very constructive role in helping new arrival students to become integrated, successful and active citizens of the host country. Education can challenge the often entirely negative accounts of migration in some quarters, and can contribute to more positive outcomes both for migrants and for the host country.

Integration can also enrich the educational experience for all: linguistic and cultural diversity; and the creativity and life stories of new arrivals, can bring added value to schools, if teachers know how to exploit these often untapped resources. Given the right support, teachers can develop their intercultural skills alongside their pedagogical skills. However this can only happen where such support for teachers is in place.

Recognition of the need to help teachers address these issues was the starting point for the Portfolio of Integration (POI) Project. This is a Comenius Multilateral Project (2011-2013), initiated and led by Oxfam Italia, an NGO with a well-established track record in providing social and educational support for new arrival families in Italy. The Partnership also incorporates organisations in Greece, Poland, Turkey and the UK.

This breadth provides opportunities for comparative study, given the different histories and contexts of each country in relation to migration. The idea is to build on these different perspectives and experiences in order to refine and customise the observational methodologies and tools POI has developed to support the inclusion of migrant pupils.

At the core of the POI project is a course of teacher professional development adapted from the Book of Integration, designed by Oxfam Italia and previously utilised in Italy by many Educational and Local Authorities.

This instrument is currently being piloted with schools and teachers across the Partner countries. The impact of the use of this instrument will be assessed to see if it can be adapted for use more generally within and across European contexts. All POI training materials will be made freely available for open use at the conclusion of the Project.

If you wish to receive further information and updates, please contact the lead co-ordinator (details below), or visit the Project web site:
http://www.poiproject.org/index.php

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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 front-line teaching and learning in order to develop education and training.

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

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.

The next issue of The Learning Teacher Magazine will be published in June. Articles may be submitted no later than May 15th 2013.
New focus on the teacher profession

Of late the Teaching Council of Ireland organised a conference on the policies that support teacher educators in how to improve school education. Many policy makers and education practitioners were present.

One of the speakers was Mr. Xavier Prats Monné, Deputy Director-General for Education and Culture at the European Commission, who said: “The time to support the teaching professions in Europe is now. Developing the competences of teaching staff and school leaders - including those who have been in the profession for a long time - must be a continuing and increasingly urgent priority in all EU Member States.”

The EU website states: “The quality of teacher educators has been identified by the EU Member States and the Commission as an important contributor to the overall quality of education systems. The aim of the conference was to bring more clarity to the kind of policies that can support the selection, induction and further professional development of teacher educators.”


The document is about “policies that reinforce the recruitment, initial education, induction and continuing professional development of teachers and trainers; the practice of school leadership; and the profession of teacher educators.”

The Commission has made an analysis on the actual situation of teachers in the European member states and describes the shortcomings and the good measures of the member states have taken. Talking about ‘good teachers’ the Commission composed a new set of key competences for teachers. It also points out where the challenges lie e.g. when it comes to the induction of new teachers (p.34), and more.


Joint action on literacy

The European Commission and UNESCO have called for joint action to reduce the number of young people and adults lacking basic reading and writing skills, both in Europe and world-wide, at a meeting in the European Parliament on 22 January.

Androulla Vassiliou, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, outlined what the EU can do at the political level to boost literacy. She underlined that, in addition to investing in education, everyone can contribute to improving literacy levels, from parents to employers and health services.

H.R.H. Princess Laurentien of the Netherlands, chair of the EU High Level Group on Literacy and special envoy for UNESCO on Literacy for Development, presented the main findings of the group’s report, which includes recommendations to policy-makers covering all age groups from young children to adults.

Mmantsetsa Marope, Director for Basic Learning and Skills Development at UNESCO, presented UNESCO’s strategy to improve literacy-rates through formal and non-formal programmes. The event was hosted by MEP Marietje Schaake.

To find out more:

- See also the adjoining article to the left.
- The European Literacy website: http://ec.europa.eu/education/literacy/index_en.htm

International Master in European project planning and management

It is now possible to enroll in the second edition of the International Master in European Project Planning and Management.

The objective of the Master is to provide participants with the skills to successfully work in the field of European cooperation, through the use of funding made available by the European Commission.

The target group of the Master are students who have obtained a university degree in any discipline.

The Master course’s programme is organized in two main modules:
- European Project Planning
- European Project Management

The teaching staff is composed by experts with over 15 years of experience in European cooperation representing several European countries.

The International Master, that will be held in Florence (Italy), has a total duration of 5 months (800 hours).

The language used in the Master will be English.

The Master offers all participants the opportunity to carry out a three month internship abroad, in one of the European Union’s countries, in an organization with long experience in planning and managing European projects.

For further information on the International Master on European Project Planning and Management, please see the Master course’s web site (http://europplan.pixel-online.org/MST_intro.php).

# Learning Teacher Network

Read more news on
www.learningteacher.eu
Welcome to the 9th International Conference
Lisbon, Portugal
26-28 September 2013

Full conference information on
www.learningteacher.eu/lisbon-conference-2013