Boys

Boys: noisy, impolite, always busy with the wrong things. Don’t like books, like to work with their hands, too quick to have any thought about their tasks, barely doing their homework, aggressive, trouble-makers, etc.

A stereotype? Yes and no. Of course, this image needs to be differentiated. But is there a truth in it? Absolutely. In the distant past, boys were boys and had the opportunity to be like that: taking risks, being irresponsible and so on. It was accepted that they tried to cross borders.

Nowadays they are not ‘street boys’ anymore, but are said to have a condition: they have ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and need to take medication for that (Ritalin).

In The Netherlands some 40,000 children between the ages of 5 and 14 are diagnosed with ADHD. And this behaviour is more and more problematic when we compare boys’ behaviour with girls’ behaviour; girls are much more serious, take responsibility for their homework and learning, are mostly inoffensive and have - in general - better results at school.

Since the 1970’s there has been a shift in the way society views the difference between the sexes and there has been a change in the thinking about the theoretical concept of “nature-nurture” as well. There are now different expectations of boys, more feminine expectations.

Society became more feminine: nothing wrong with that. It is a good thing that more and more fathers are taking care of their children, are feeling and behaving that partners have equal responsibilities and need to have equal opportunities. What we see now is that because of a more feminized society and a society in which diplomas are very important (and girls have these diplomas) boys are falling behind. And maybe we have to accept that boys and girls are different by nature. Maybe separate schools for boys and girls? Maybe some stimulation for boys to look for a school where cognitive tasks are not the main focus?

This does not mean that we have to go back to the 1950’s or so. Boys need to learn to accept that their partner has an equal education and earns as much or more than he does, that his boss may be a woman and that he is equally responsible for the baby. At the same time boys are boys by nature and maybe we have to accept that.

(This contribution is based on the thesis of Angela Crott, Jongens zijn ‘t – van Pietje Bell tot Probleemgeva, Amsterdam 2013; Dutch)

Gerard de Kruif
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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; Dr. 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 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 September. Articles may be submitted no later than August 15th 2013.
Collective Action: Pulling together along the education continuum

When compared to other major U.S. metropolitan areas, the city of Portland, Oregon, USA, takes pride in its “exceptionalism.” Our unofficial motto is “Keep Portland Weird.” We value bikes and mass transit over expanded freeways, and our streets are lined with farmers’ markets selling produce grown on lands we’ve protected from urban sprawl. Our political processes are collaborative and congenial almost to a fault.

But beyond the fawning media coverage and city rankings (#1 for “Best Pet-Friendly Vacations,” Travel + Leisure), lurk stark realities of hunger, poverty, and racial disparities. And now here are these issues more evident than among our young people.

We’re one of the nation’s most educated cities; yet only 65 percent of our children (and fewer than half of African Americans and Latinos) complete high school on time.

Our schools, foundations, health care providers, and social service agencies are awash in data about these at-risk youth. And too often, these organizations work at cross-purposes, tracking inputs and outcomes irrespective of one another’s efforts.

In 2007, leaders from school districts, universities, local government, social service agencies, and businesses throughout Portland and the surrounding Multnomah County came together to try another approach.

What if we began to look at the collective contribution of these organizations to student wellbeing? What if we could harness all of these efforts toward common goals for our children, with progress measured by common indicators?

What if, by working together, we could improve the entire continuum of support and education, from cradle to career?

We’ve turned these “what if”s into an effort called All Hands Raised (www.allhandsraised.org). We established a dashboard of 16 key indicators throughout a child’s development from birth weight to college completion. We track test scores, school attendance, successful promotion and on-time completion throughout primary and secondary school. Research supplements this system by identifying leverage points for success along the way.

Collaboratives

We’ve also formed “Collaboratives” to address areas in which several organizations can take collective action to make a difference. One example is the “Ninth Grade Counts” initiative, tasked with closing the achievement gap between low-income and minority students and their more affluent peers entering high school. Research shows that the “summer slide” is a major contributor to this gap; while the “haves” enjoy travel and enrichment activities, the “have-nots” are left at home under the supervision of their television.

Since 2009, 3,500 at-risk students entering 9th grade have taken part in “Ninth Grade Counts” summer educational activities in small learning groups. Curriculum is reinforced with field trips to businesses and colleges (like Portland State University), afternoon meals and recreational activities that make this more like summer camp than summer school. And, participants earn credit toward high school graduation.

Early results show that evidence-based interventions such as these are making incremental yet sustained improvements. Students in the Ninth Grade Counts collaborative earned more credits than their peers; attendance rates were 2.4 percent higher; and, the percentage of students on track to graduate increased by 12.2 percent.

And this program has shown the power of collective action by more than 30 partners, leveraging over $2 million for student success.
of in-kind support toward a common goal. In Portland, we’re firm believers in the power of exceptionalism. And what would be more exceptional than taking as much pride in the wellbeing and success of our students as we do in our bike paths and food carts?

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Additional Resources
All Hands Raised: www.allhandsraised.org
Strive Network: www.strivenetwork.org/
Get to know your talents and how to use them …

At NHL University¹ we use a talent based way of coaching our students since 2010. We practiced this way of working in a pilot project with our Honours students. In the Honours program we focus on the development of competences in Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

We think students can only become excellent if they use their talents, and don’t focus on their weaknesses.

Therefore we use a talent test: Strengthsfinder 2.0 (Gallup). This is a validated internet test, which gives a personal top five score of Strengths. In workshops we practice with students in Identify, Explore, Utilize and Inspiration. In this article we will share with you some of the exhilarating, funny and useful exercises which one could use with pupils and students of all ages and levels.

The research done by Djoerd Hiemstra (researcher and PHD student) tells us that as a result of talent based coaching, students become more motivated for their study activities and therefore more willing to spend time improving performance. We must all try to stimulate students to become active learners? Have fun!

**Exercises**

Start with identifying the students’ talents. On the internet you can find all kind of tests. When everybody has his or her personal Top Five, you can start.

1. *Speeddate (Identify)*
   In the classroom put two long rows of chairs in front of each other, enough for all students. All students have a note with their 5 Talents. They all take a seat and have conversations for 5 minutes about one of their talents. They should ask questions and interview each other.

   First A interviews B, after 2.5 minute they change roles. After 5 minutes the students in one row change place, so that everyone has a new partner. The teacher should be very strict in time-keeping, and use a whistle or alarm bell after 5 minutes.

   In about 40 minutes, students have spoken with 8 classmates about their talents. In this way, they learn to speak about their own strong points, to be aware of how they use these talents, and also get to know the strengths of the people they learn and work with. The high speed gives a fun element, but also makes it easier to talk about oneself in an appreciative way.

2. *Mood board (Inspiration)*
   Bring a lot of different types of magazines and journals into the classroom, and supply scissors and glue. All students find images, photographs or cartoons to illustrate their ambition or dream, and the talents they use to get there.

   In this exercise one could use the computer instead of magazines: make a virtual mood board, a prezi or an pecha kucha presentation.

3. *LEGO game (Utilisation)*
   For small groups, who have to do an assignment together, the LEGO game is a nice way to start the cooperation. This exercise consists of 5 rounds.

   Give everyone in each group the same amount of LEGO bricks.

   a) Give 5 minutes to build the highest tower possible per person. (only to get the LEGO feeling back in the fingertips)
   b) Give 15 minutes to build a representation of (one of your) your talents
   c) Tell each other about the talent you want to use in this group assignment

---

¹ NHL Hogeschool, University for Applied Science in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands is an university for vocational education in various disciplines: Higher Technical education, Care and Cure, Economics and Management and Teacher Training. About 11,000 students age 18-23 are enrolled in more than 70 different courses.
d) Give 15 minutes to make one big representation of all talents in action in this group
e) All groups present their ‘work of art’ to all other groups.

4. ‘Sandwich Excellent’
Divide the class into small groups and give them an assignment to buy ingredients and produce for their group (and the teacher) a ‘Sandwich Excellent’.
They have a limited amount of money and time to do the shopping and assemble and prepare a presentation on the subject:
a) In which way is this sandwich Excellent?
b) How did we use our talents to come to this result?
Exploring and developing ways to use social software applications in teacher education

University of Eastern Finland, School of Applied Educational Science and Teacher Education is currently engaged in research and development of the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) as part of teacher education.

The aim of this development work is threefold: 1) to study how different social software applications can be used for collaborative learning practices, 2) to study pre-service teachers’ experiences of using social software applications for learning, and 3) to encourage pre-service teachers to test and try different ICT applications for teaching and learning.

Theoretical background of this research and development work relies on collaborative learning, emphasizing students' active roles. Students bring their ideas into the learning situations and share their understanding of the topic, reflecting on what they already know and what they need to know more.

Sharing ideas enhances possibilities for situations where new information does not correspond to one’s earlier knowledge. In order to solve these conflicting situations, students must negotiate with each other and seek additional information. Solving the conflicts will lead to changing of one’s knowledge structures, i.e., learning. (Häkkinen & Hämäläinen, 2012)

Social software applications provide several possibilities for supporting collaborative learning activities. Instead of ready-made materials, social software applications such as wiki-environments, blogs, Facebook and Twitter provide tools for interacting and creating contents in different formats.

Social software applications provide ways to build learning environments for supporting face-to-face or online courses, to concretise mechanisms of collaborative learning. The following illustrations are examples of the ways different social software applications are used in our experiments.

1) Wikispaces was used as a platform for inquiry on a biology course. Prior to the course, teachers designed templates in Wikispaces for scaffolding pre-service teachers work. The aim of employing Wikispaces was to provide pre-service teachers with a shared environment for discovering and building knowledge. (Picture 1)

2) Second life 3D environment was used on a human biology course where pre-service teachers talked about sexuality. They created roles using Avatars and voice changing tools. This way, pre-service teachers were able to discuss and bring up their opinions about a challenging topic anonymously. (Picture 2)

3) Google Map was used on a geography course the topic of which was pupils’ world view. Pre-service teachers ‘pinned’ places in the World map with comments, likes or dislikes. The aim was to bring up pre-service teachers’ opinions and experiences as a basis for further conversation and learning. (Picture 3)

4) Qaiku micro-blog (cf. Twitter) was used during lectures. Qaiku provided an environment for gathering pre-service teachers’ lecture notes to be shared in real time. The notes presented experiences and opinions and showed conflicting views. The method proved interesting for lecturers who were able to see how their ideas are understood by pre-service teachers. (Picture 4)

Results from our research and development work have been mainly positive. One noticeable challenge with our target group, pre-service teachers, is that they do not necessarily always understand the aims of using ICT as part of their studies. It seems as though the connection between the mechanisms of learning on which these experiments are based on and the practical implementation of the experiment is not clear enough.

When this happens, ICT is mainly seen as an extra burden and not as added value for learning. In our opinion, this is an important factor and should be considered when using ICT for learning.

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References
Climate change, conflicts of use during periods of drought ... water is now more than ever at the heart of world ecological news. Water is a major challenge for agriculture - in terms of quantity and quality. Agricultural activities play an important role in the management of this resource, especially around the preservation of water quality, soil erosion, flow control, and the preservation of wetlands. Faced with these problems, agricultural education has been ongoing for many years and ‘water classes’ are organised with the support of the Agence de l’Eau Seine Normandie (AESN).

The citizen’s development in Agricultural Education for sustainable development provides a global and professional awareness along with knowledge skills, and promotes the transition from analytical to systemic methods.

Taking into account the complexity of different situations in France and Morocco fundamental issues are currently used for education in an ambitious plan for sustainable development in agricultural education.

The water sessions (or lessons) are the right way to reflect on teaching methods e.g.: Are all the educational methodologies appropriate when approaching sustainable development education? Does the development of tools and skills promote the acquisition of knowledge?

Since 2010, the Ribécourt school in Oise is involved in political awareness and reforestation of the Moroccan Atlas. It participates in international youth exchanges whose purpose is to encourage students come to Morocco and help teams of Moroccan students to plant trees and create organic vegetable gardens with economical irrigation drop by drop, system.

Similar to every public agricultural institution in Picardie, Ribecourt school is engaged in Action 21 or Agenda 21, which is the local way to set up and enforce sustainable development. Ribecourt school appealed to regional and national expertise: these water specific actions have to make sense in a global approach to education for sustainable development (ESD).

By the way, the analysis of ‘water classes’ (taught) in France, led us to develop a particular teaching and learning device: Story-telling as a tool for professionals.

After a sensitization phase in May 2012, it involved schools and colleges using this training device in the province of Ouarzazate.

During the training of teachers in May 2013 this tool was used for the first time by teachers. The communication’s purpose is to present an analysis of its suitability as a tool for ESD training in French-speaking countries where the way of life and culture are different.

Approximately sixty students (from Atlas El Kebir college in Agouim) and twenty teachers from the Ouarzazate region have participated in this training. During the sessions we compiled an Action 21 awareness programme for 120 people using the “story-telling method”. All participants have enjoyed this training course.

Further actions are currently taking place in construction: partnership between the High Agriculture School in topography and the rural engineering of MEKNES, classes exchanges with the management and water control classes.

For further information
Le RNEDD sur CHLOROFIL
La plateforme de ressources en EDD
http://edd.educagri.fr
L’info des jeunes sur l’EDD

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This past April, Professor Jim Cummins, from the University of Toronto, Canada, visited our school: The International School of The Hague.

Jim Cummins is renowned for his work and influence on bilingual education. His research in this field has inspired countless schools to find better ways of maintaining and supporting students’ Mother Tongue (MT). In addition, he has helped to shape the principles behind many EAL/ESL programmes around the world. It is therefore critical that all teachers working with bilingual students have access to his message.

This article summarizes Professor Cummins’ key points.

Bilingual Benefits

Jim Cummins message is clear – bilingualism benefits children’s learning, and the evidence for this continues to mount. When children are exposed to two languages, especially in the early years, they find it easier to learn another language, develop flexible thinking, and are better at filtering out distractions.

Language skills are interdependent; they are transferable between languages. This explains why the level of a child’s MT development is a strong indicator of success in second language acquisition and academic performance.

According to the research, bilingual children are more successful in schools where effective MT teaching happens, and especially where MT literacy is stimulated. When a child’s home culture and language are affirmed and utilised for learning, children do not feel pressured to abandon their MT in favour of the higher status language of the school. Ultimately, all stakeholders benefit from supporting MT in schools.

Cross-Lingual Transfer

Professor Cummins’ research also reveals that bilingual and trilingual students operate from a central language-processing ability. This is called the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP). Despite the different surface features of each language, students’ conceptual and linguistic knowledge is stored together.

This knowledge is linked and can interact. Therefore, when students are encouraged to work in their MT, they are able to tap into higher-level concepts that they cannot yet express in their new language. Being able to use this prior knowledge from a first language to support another is called cross-lingual transfer.

For educators, the benefits of cross-lingual transfer cannot be ignored. When students can work in their MT to better understand the mainstream curriculum, their language learning and conceptual understanding accelerates.

On a more practical level, connections between one’s MT and a second language can be invaluable. Many European languages share a common root language, like Latin, which can result in similar word formations across different languages. Teach-
ing bilingual children to examine both similarities and differences across their languages (e.g. Bridging, Else Hamayan) will strengthen their total understanding of language, deepening their CUP.

Reading Engagement
Cummins argues that reading engagement is a crucial aspect in language acquisition and academic success. This is because academic vocabulary is generally found in written form.

Recent PISA studies\(^2\) have reached a startling conclusion about literacy: a student’s level of reading engagement is a more important indicator of academic success than socio-economic status. When a student is engaged in reading, skills such as prediction, comparing and scanning are fully developed, and also form part of the Common Underlying Proficiency, promoting cross-lingual transfer.

Reading engagement is therefore critical to a child’s future success: “An administrative priority should be to ensure that schools and classroom libraries are well stocked with engaging books. Print materials (in either student’s home language or English) should be sent home on a regular basis for students to read with their parents.”\(^3\)

Conclusion
Following Professor Cummins’ visit we will be exploring ways to improve and extend the role of MT in our school. His research challenges not just international schools, but also national schools to revisit their language policies in the light of what we now know: affirming identity, an understanding of cross-lingual transfer and reading engagement are all critical factors in students’ academic success.

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\(^2\) Programme for International Student Assessment coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, 2004, 2010a

\(^3\) Literacy Engagement fuelling academic growth for English learners, Jim Cummins
Children in Europe experience ...

A growing European family

After Serbia in December 2011, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in May 2012, on 24 May 2013 Montenegro signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishing its full participation, for the budget year 2013, in all the actions of the Lifelong Learning Programme which are not managed by National Agencies (except eTwinning).

Such a participation, on an equal footing with the Member States, is part of the pre-accession strategy for the countries which are candidate or potential candidates for accession to the EU.

Albania may join the programme during June, subject to a decision of its Government authorising the signature of a such MoU.

Bosnia and Herzegovina opted for participation in 2014 only, in the future Erasmus for All programme.


International observance

International observance (also known as international dedication or international anniversary) denotes a period of time to observe some issue of international interest or concern.

This is used to commemorate, promote and mobilize for action. Many of these periods have been established by the United Nations General Assembly, Economic and Social Council or by UNESCO.

In this case, the lead agency for a particular international observance uses the symbolism of the United Nations (UN) or UNESCO, a specially designed logo for the year, and their infrastructure to coordinate events worldwide.

It also presents a written report about the event. This summarizes the activities that took place around the world under the auspices of the international observance, and makes recommendations for the future.

Below highlighting some days that might be of particular interest to educators and trainers, these dedications have been denoted as international observances by the United Nations or by other organizations that declare international observances, although these are not as widely recognized.

A 2013 Eurydice report, on the impact of the financial and economic crisis on education budgets across Europe, reveals that investment in education fell in eight out of 25 EU Member States since 2010.

The report analyses trends in education spending in 35 European regional and national education systems between 2000-2012. The analysis covers the developments in education funding from pre-primary to tertiary level and provides an overview of the main trends in the adult learning sector in 31 European countries. Topics in the analysis include the economic context; actual public expenditure and national budget developments in education; trends in the funding of human resources; and, trends in funding and national policies for the financial support of students.


Cut downs in education

June 1 – Global Day of Parents, recognized by the UN
June 1 – International Children’s Day
June 5 – World Environment Day, recognized by the UN
June 12 – World Day Against Child Labour
June 20 – World Refugee Day, recognized by the UN
June 21 – World Music Day
First Saturday in July – International Day of Cooperatives, recognized by the UN
August 12 – International Youth Day, recognized by the UN
August 19 – World Humanitarian Day
September 8 – International Literacy Day, recognized by the UN and UNESCO
September 15 – International Day of Democracy, recognized by the UN
September 21 – International Day of Peace, recognized by the UN
September 26 – European Day of Languages
October 5 – World Teachers’ Day, recognized by the UN and UNESCO
October 11 – International Day of the Girl Child, recognized by the UN
October 15 – International Day of Rural Women, recognized by the UN
October 16 – World Food Day, recognized by the UN and FAO

October 17 – International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, recognized by the UN
October 24 – United Nations Day, recognized by the UN
First Monday in October – World Habitat Day, recognized by the UN
November 10 – World Science Day for Peace and Development, recognized by the UN and UNESCO
November 16 – International Day for Tolerance, recognized by the UN
November 20 – Universal Children’s Day, recognized by the UN
Third Thursday in November – World Philosophy Day, recognized by the UN and UNESCO
December 10 – Human Rights Day, recognized by the UN


12 THE LEARNING TEACHER MAGAZINE 2/2013
‘Mother tongue’
- the Basis for all learning

How to maintain and develop the student’s first language - a Swedish model.

In the public schools in Sweden a lot of children from other countries start their education or continue their education that started in their homeland.

All children, refugees or not, are welcome in the school system, from the first week they arrive into the country to the last day before they are deported, although most of them receive a permit to stay in Sweden. If the family refuses to go back to the country that Sweden wants to send them to, the children have the right to education as long as they are in the country.

All scientists are consistent about the value of maintaining and develop one’s first language. Especially when it comes to studies. In Sweden we are very influenced by Jim Cummins and Pauline Gibbons to mention a few. In order to work in the way the scientists describe as successful, the teachers and the mother tongue teachers collaborate daily.

Sometimes this happens in the same classroom, and sometimes the pupils come to their mother tongue teacher with their school assignments to get help. Every school in Sweden is required to help the pupils with their homework at school, after lessons and often one teacher from school is there together with a mother tongue teacher.

Within one week of arriving in Sweden the child must be offered a place in a public school. Often it is a class for newly arrived students where the teachers are trained in mapping the student’s school knowledge. This is done with help from a mother tongue teacher or an interpreter.

Then the education starts. The mother tongue teacher is a great help here.

All immigrant children are offered teaching in their first language, if a teacher with that special language is provided in the community. One hour a week they study reading skills, writing different genres of text, the land that they come from, or their parents come from. Cultural differences and similarities are compared to those in Sweden.

This is a subject as well as any other subject in school. All pupils who attend this voluntary subject also get a mark every semester from age 12. This is the age in Sweden when all children start getting marks in all subjects. Before that, from the age of six to the age of eleven they will get written reviews twice a year.

This is a very good opportunity for these children as well because they often get very good marks quite easily. One rule is that they must speak the language at home with at least one parent every day and the language must be their normal way of speaking.

We offer teaching to very small children in preschool also. From the age of one year a mother tongue teacher comes to the preschool and plays with them. They teach them all the things you normally learn in preschool such as colours, numbers, singing, and reading fairy tales. While playing you learn the most elementary things from the ages of one to five years.

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Situation layout

We find ourselves in a ‘group 8’ 12 year olds, in a primary school located in The Hague, the Netherlands. The teacher is standing at the doorway of the classroom. She’s handing out (fake) airline tickets and (fake) ID cards to every pupil. This is the kick-off of an Amnesty Human Rights project. The ticket and the ID card are part of the project and hold extra assignments.

Meet the Muthuku project

This was the actual start in one particular class (group 8 – around 12 year) in The Hague. The project is called Meet the Muthuku Family.1 It’s a Human Rights Education project developed for pupils aged 10 - 14 years, for both primary and secondary education. The concept of the project is that the student takes a virtual journey to Nairobi, spending a few days with the Muthukus.

During their stay in the Mukuru Kayaba slum, students learn about daily life and the human rights situation there. The project is created around a 10 part television series, also called Meet the Muthuku Family and made in 2011. Together with Amnesty International (Dutch section) and in cooperation with the Dutch television network, KRO, the Kenyan filmmaker Carren Atieno Otieno made this series.

School work

Amnesty (Dutch Section AI NL) works with some 500 guest teachers. They are (mainly) trained volunteers who teach about children’s and human rights in primary and secondary schools.

The volunteers maintain their own school network, where they teach one or more groups every school year. Also teachers from the whole country can apply via the website for a guest teacher2. Or teachers can order the project and carry out the project themselves. In short: Amnesty’s work at schools consists of trained volunteers, quality lessons and campaigning materials, and a matching system: a teacher applies, and Amnesty selects the most suitable guest lecturer for the job.

Teachers can also order the project and carry it out themselves. For teachers from secondary education schools, Amnesty, together with the Anne Frank Foundation and Movies That Matter, organizes a specific one day human rights education training. And for students at teacher trainings education (mainly at Universities of Applied Sciences) a special human rights education workshop has been developed.

For (future) teachers the aim is to explain about human rights, about how the human rights framework operates and the history of human rights. This is followed by the transfer to human rights education; what is human rights education and how does it work in practice?

Building bridges: human rights education in theory and practice

What is Amnesty’s definition of human rights education? What’s the theory? What are the goals?

Human rights education is a deliberate, participatory practice aimed at empowering individuals, groups and communities through fostering knowledge, skills and attitudes consistent with internationally recognized human rights principles.

As a medium to long-term process, hu-
man rights education seeks to develop and integrate people’s cognitive, affective and attitudinal dimensions, including critical thinking, in relation to human rights. Its goal is to build a culture of respect for and action in the defence and promotion of human rights for all.

And then specifically Amnesty International wants to respond, through human rights education processes and actions, to five fundamental purposes, such as combating discrimination and promoting equality.

Although all of the above sounds really good, logic and, ideal, it’s not very hands on. How do we work on all these learning targets with pupils, while lots of other compulsory subjects put pressure on the time schedule?

AI NL has therefore developed a ‘practical vision’ of human rights education. The Schoolwork, our bridges, are based on the following criteria.

- Work from the full whole children’s and human rights framework;
- Work from Amnesty’s strengths: namely thorough research, followed by the world wide campaigns and actions, and Amnesty’s independence;
- Work from Amnesty’s authenticity: real stories told by real people.
- To connect with the national (Dutch) educational curriculum and its learning targets;
- To connect the Netherlands with the rest of the world;
- To connect (if logic and possible), the past to the present;
- To fit in with the pupils’ perception of their environment;
- To work from Multiple Intelligence;
- To work as cross-medial as possible;
- To put the quality of the output above quantity of the output;
- Practice what you preach: all output reflects the vision of AI NL on human rights education.

No human rights in Dutch National curriculum

Despite international obligations considering human rights education, little has been done by the Dutch government to fulfill the (international) human rights education goals.

AI NL lobbies to make human rights education an important part of the national curriculum. Amnesty lobbies in its own right and as a partner of the Platform Mensenrechten Educatie (Platform for Human Rights Education).

And, apart from this ideal, Amnesty has set up a very successful programme for schools, from which the Meet the Muthuku project is just one example.

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7 Organisations that take part in the Netherlands Platform on Human Rights Education are: Amnesty International; Anne Frank House; Centre for Global Education; Defence for Children; Dutch coalition on Disabilities and Development; Humanistic Centre of ethical and worldview education; and the Dutch section of the International Committee of Jurists (NJCM).
8 See for an overview of all materials: http://opschool.amnesty.nl/lesmateriaal/lesmateriaal-acties-gastlessen
In 2011, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) published a report on the state of gifted education in the United States.

In this report, the NAGC detailed the risks to U.S. business and industry competitiveness in the global marketplace due to the neglect of programs for talented and gifted students in the U.S. Specifically, they point out that:

- U.S. students continue to lag behind other nations on a host of international tests in math, science and reading.
- The achievement gap between high-ability minority and low income students and their non-minority peers is widening.
- The nation continues to rely heavily on foreign-born talent, particularly in demanding math and science fields.
- While evidence of the neglect of our most capable students has increased, our collective resolve to address it in a comprehensive and meaningful manner has diminished. (NAGC, 2011, pg. 1)

Also, in 2011, the U.S. government eliminated funding for the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Education Act, the sole federal program funding gifted education. The result of removing these federal funds was that states are not held accountable for the services they provide or don’t provide to high achieving students.

In an era of high stakes testing, the states’ foci has been shifted to providing services for low achieving students, leaving high achievers neglected (NAGC, 2011). The lack of a mandate to provide programming for gifted students, has led to a patchwork of services provided for, and information collected about gifted programs and the students they serve.

With schools inconsistently providing appropriate programming for students of high ability (Moon, Tomlinson, & Callahan, 1995; Reis, Gubbins, Briggs, Schreiber, Richards, & Jacobs 2004), parents in the United States are looking to extracurricular programs and activities to provide academic enrichment and creative outlets for their gifted children.

Extra-curricular enrichment programs have been recognized as providing opportunities for gifted students not typically found in regular education programs in schools. These programs often appeal to those students with exceptional talent and may provide opportunities to those students not usually identified via the traditional identification means.

Enrichment programs offer students opportunities to supplement their educational experience and in some cases provide needed intellectual stimulation. Retrospective accounts of successful people indicate that extra-curricular enrichment activities played a more pivotal role in their success than regular in school programs (Olszewski-Kubilius and Lee 2004). In addition, participation in extracurricular enrichment activities can facilitate the development of parents’ network of resources, further enhancing their ability to provide enrichment opportunities for their child (Olszewski-Kubilius and Lee 2004).

Research has also shown that students who participate, have a better attitude towards, and are more engaged in school. Subsequently, their academic performance is better (Dotterer, McHale & Crouter, 2007). Mahoney, Cairns and Farmer (2003) found that participation in extracurricular enrichment activities have been positively correlated with higher standardized test scores.

In fact, longer participation in enrichment activities has been shown to be more positively associated with life success (Gardner, Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2008). Olszewski-Kubilius and Lee (2004) found that extra-curricular enrichment programs provide academic challenge, instruction to better match student’s learning style, socialization opportunities with gifted peers, emotional support for high achievement.

Further, participation in these enrichment activities can increase the student’s self-confidence, self-esteem, achievement motivation and personal responsibility for learning.

There is great variety in the type of
Conversations with gifted children in the primary school

Although there is a lot of knowledge about gifted children, little of it comes directly from the gifted children themselves. That’s why I wanted to learn what they think about being gifted, about friendships, about what they like and dislike at school …

So I interviewed 13 gifted children (5 girls, 8 boys; 5 accelerated one year; all of them diagnosed with IQ higher than 130) in different primary schools in Flanders. In a semi-structured interview of 30-40 minutes children were asked questions about 10 different issues.

In this article I only present some results about three of them. I hope that their reflections provide instructive insights for teachers to better understand and deal with gifted children.

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About the label ‘gifted’ and the experience of ‘being gifted’

All the interviewees know they are smarter than the other children but most of them are not familiar with the word ‘gifted’. Only one knows her exact IQ-score. Most of them have found out themselves that they are smarter than the other ones. (“I am always ready very quickly and my work is correct.”)

None of the interviewees likes to tell other children they are gifted. They don’t want to brag and they don’t want other children to feel bad or demotivated. I found out that some parents have a problem with the label because they think it gives the children a ‘big head’. In my opinion some degree of ‘labeling’ is essential if gifted children are to grow up understanding how and why they experience the world differently from others.

All interviewees are happy with being gifted. They formulate a lot of advantages. (“You understand everything much easier.”; “You have good school results if you are working”; “You think differently and you understand jokes others don’t understand.”)

Although they all identified a lot of advantages it was easy to identify the disadvantages. (“When we do maths I always have to do extra exercises.”; “Sometimes it’s difficult. Especially when they ask you why you are so smart.” “During group work you always have to do most of the job because the others don’t want to work and they know you will do it.”)

Friendships

All the interviewees have friends of the same age and some have friends who are older. The accelerated ones still have friends of the same age. They all like to philosophize about ‘friendship’.

A friend is important for sharing ideas, keeping secrets, not to participate in bullying behavior but also he/she has to be “someone who understands me, who knows what I mean.” If explicitly asked, they nearly all answered that their best friend is also smart. It’s obvious to stimulate them to meet with peers of the same developmental level and who share the same interests.

Didactic approach

Favourite lessons are mathematics, science, history but also plastic arts and sports. In math’s they prefer problem-solving exercises. They hate drill on spelling, tables of multiplication and they have a lot of problems with religion. (“God didn’t create the world. It starts with a big bang.” “I don’t believe the resurrection because people don’t come back to life after being killed.”)

They all hate more exercises of the same cognitive level. They prefer more difficult ones, but not too difficult. (“I don’t like to think too much. Otherwise I have a headache.”). Gifted children find it very boring to be given long explanations with a lot of repetition and become frustrated if they are not able to work at their own fast pace.

So let’s develop lessons that push them to just beyond their comfort level. Teachers must provide advanced materials and create opportunities for cognitive enrichment. Intelligence is a potential to be nurtured and developed. And never forget: gifted children like to talk to the teacher, but “It depends how smart he is.”

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Key Data 2013 on Teachers and School Leaders in Europe

The Key Data on Teachers and School Leaders survey covers 32 countries and is produced for the European Commission by the Eurydice network. The survey compiles the latest information on teachers and school leaders, from pre-primary to post-secondary education, including data on age, gender, working hours and salaries.

The 2013 edition reveals:
- Induction programmes designed to offer personalised support and advice for new teachers are now mandatory in 15 EU Member States (Austria, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and the UK) as well as in Croatia and Turkey, according to a European Commission report about the conditions of teachers and school leaders in 32 countries. Although these programmes differ in the way they are organised, they all aim to help newcomers adjust to the profession and reduce the likelihood that teachers will leave the profession early.
- Most EU countries have defined competences that teachers must possess to get a job and progress within the profession; these include pedagogical knowledge, team working, interpersonal skills and professional skills. These ‘competence frameworks’ are the basis for initial teacher education in all but 8 countries and regions (Belgium – German-speaking Community, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Slovakia).
- Most of Europe’s 5 million teachers are contractually bound to work at least 35-40 hours a week, which includes teaching time, availability on school premises and time for preparation and marking. The number of hours that they have to be actively engaged in teaching varies widely: the number is generally higher in pre-primary education and decreases at higher levels of education. The average number of teaching hours in primary and secondary education is 20.
- In about one third of European countries, teachers are expected to be present on school premises for around 30 hours a week. There is no set time requirement in Portugal, Sweden, the UK (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and Norway, plus Cyprus in secondary education and Iceland in pre-primary education. In Germany, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia, the number of teaching hours are reduced after a certain number of years of service.
- Across Europe, the majority of teachers are aged over 40. Almost half of teachers are aged over 50 in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Norway and Iceland. The percentage of teachers below the age of 30 is particularly low in Germany, Italy and Sweden.
- In the majority of EU Member States, teachers’ minimum basic salaries are lower than per capita GDP for teachers working in compulsory education (primary and lower secondary education). Allowances, which can make a considerable difference to a teacher’s take-home pay, are usually for overtime or additional responsibilities. Only half of the countries surveyed grant allowances to teachers based on positive teaching performance or student results.

Background
The Key Data on Teachers and School Leaders survey covers 32 countries (EU Member States, Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey). It is produced for the European Commission by the Eurydice network and compiles the latest information on teachers and school leaders, from pre-primary to post-secondary education, including data on age, gender, working hours and salaries.

The report combines data and information supplied by the Eurydice network, Eurostat and evidence from international surveys including the OECD’s Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2008) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2009), and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 2011, International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement).

The Commission’s Rethinking Education strategy underlines the importance of attracting the best candidates to become teachers, especially given the high number of teachers close to retirement. Adequate initial teacher education and continuous professional development for teachers and trainers improve the quality of education in Europe: a highly skilled labour force can only be realised by attracting and training the best educators.

Promoting excellence in teaching is also a priority for the high level group on modernisation of higher education, which was launched by Commissioner Vassiliou in November 2011.


Success www.elitesproject.eu/pathways-to-

Immigration and integration

Following one of the articles in our Magazine on Integration (2013/1, p.17), more details are available in the publications of the European TIES project (www.tiesproject.eu)

"Immigration and the subsequent integration of newcomers is one of the foremost challenges for Europe’s increasingly heterogeneous cities. The integration of the second generation - the children born of immigrant parentage in the country of migration - is crucial to this process, for they constitute a growing share of metropolitan youth today.

The TIES project studies the topic of integration, be it economic, social, educational, or in terms of identity. Since little internationally comparable statistical material has been gathered on the second generation, the main objective has been to create the first systematic and rigorous European dataset of more than 10,000 respondents in fifteen European cities - relevant not only for a better general understanding, but also for the development of policies at all levels of government.

TIES is an international survey on the descendants of immigrants from Turkey, Ex-Yugoslavia, and Morocco in fifteen European cities in eight countries."

Some of the results for education are showing the following: As a Turkish immigrant child the best country to have a chance to follow higher education is Sweden (30%) and only 8% of them are dropping out. In Germany it is only 7% of Turkish students who have a chance to get into higher education.

Germany has the highest percentage of second generation drop-outs (33%). The authors of the report state that many talents are spoiled.

However, in Amsterdam, Paris and Stockholm they found an important middle class which can play an identified role in the emancipation of migrants.

For more information on how the European society is becoming multicultural, see www.elitesproject.eu/pathways-to-success

First pan-European university MOOCs

Partners in 11 countries have joined forces to launch the first pan-European ‘MOOCs’ (Massive Open Online Courses) initiative, with the support of the European Commission.

MOOCs are online university courses which enable people to access quality education without having to leave their homes. Around 40 courses, covering a wide variety of subjects, will be available free of charge and in 12 different languages. The initiative is led by the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) and mostly involves open universities. The partners are based in the following countries: France, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, UK, Russia, Turkey and Israel.

Detailed information about the initiative and the courses on offer is available on the OpenupEd portal, www.openuped.eu/

Courses range from mathematics to economics, e-skills to e-commerce, climate change to cultural heritage, corporate social responsibility to the modern Middle East, and language learning to writing fiction. Each partner is offering courses via its own learning platform and at least in its home language. The current choice is from the 11 languages of the partners (see list below), plus Arabic.

Courses can be taken either in a scheduled period of time or anytime at the student’s own pace. They typically involve from 20 to 200 hours of study. All courses may lead to recognition: a completion certificate, a so-called badge, or a credit certificate that may count towards a degree. In the latter case, students have to pay for the certificate, with the cost ranging from € 25 to € 400, depending on the course size (the hours of study involved) and institution.

Launch partners, contact details and more information are published on the Commission’s website, http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20130423_en.htm

‘eTwinning Plus’ virtual classroom network

The European Commission’s ‘eTwinning’ network, which has encouraged 100,000 schools in 33 European countries to talk to each other via the internet, will now be extended to schools in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The launch of ‘eTwinning Plus’ will enable these countries to join a massive virtual classroom in which pupils and teachers can learn more about their counterparts and take part in interactive projects focused on language learning or maths, for instance. It is also an opportunity for youngsters to discover different cultures and traditions as well as to find out what they have in common.

eTwinning Plus is a pilot project initiated as part of the EU’s Neighbourhood policy, under the ‘Contacts between people’ platform which aims to enhance dialogue with Eastern partners. The Commission plans to gradually roll out the scheme to Southern neighbourhood countries, starting with Tunisia.

To start with, the eTwinning Plus platform will use English and Russian as its main languages, with French and Arabic to follow at a later stage. As well as serving as a meeting point for pupils and teachers to share ideas, it will also enable schools to find partners for joint projects.


The eTwinning portal is http://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm

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

The Learning Teacher Network