Competition between learners in classrooms

Over the last decades, competition has become an increasing feature in organizing education. Within the context of competition “Who knows?” is a rather common question inside the classroom.

Behind this question there is a full world of inequalities: between boys and girls, between those who need some time to organize all information in their brains in order to give the right answer and those who have a rather quick system at the moment the question was asked, those sitting in the front and those sitting in the back of the classroom etc.

Throughout the school day there are many moments we bring in competition; sometimes on purpose (“to get better results”, we say) sometimes unconsciously. The question which might come up is: “Which/What learners are in favour of such a teaching strategy?” or is it just that only some learners are benefitting from this strategy. There are lots of (practical) thoughts behind such a question: a check who made the homework, a check about the learners’ memory, a check how the teacher was teaching last time, a check about the knowledge of the parents and their capability to teach their children etc.

The answer to the question means that we know that some are better, are more curious, have a better memory, have got opportunities, have a place at home where they have the possibility to do homework, can concentrate etc. The teacher is focusing on the answer, as s/he based the organisation of the lessons on the actual knowledge of the learners, as a good education theory is saying.

A key question in this respect is: “Do we need such competition as a teaching strategy in the way many teachers/schools are using this or are there different teaching strategies which have a same result (helping me to organise my teaching)? Is helping each other such a strategy, or is ‘our’ teacher against such a strategy, but why? Is asking learners what they would like to learn regarding this or that issue an option? Why not? Or is testing an alternative, asking the same question, but on paper?

Gerard de Kruif
Editor
The House of Europe - The Sustainable Construction Company

The House of Europe is a Leonardo da Vinci partnership project between upper secondary schools in Sweden - The Building and Construction programme at Nyköpings gymnasium, as coordinators, Ireland - LYIT Letterkenny, Germany - Max Born Berufskolleg in Recklinghausen and Spain - IES GENETO (Tenerife).

The aim is to build a small house of 15 square meters in a sustainable way, i.e. using only locally produced environmental friendly material etc. Moreover, another objective is to learn how a sustainable company can be organized and run. What is sustainable entrepreneurship and how this issue is realized in schools is another topic in the project.

This project has been going on for almost two years and will end in July 2014. The House of Europe will be placed at Stockholm Skavsta international airport in Nyköping as an exhibition house open for the public. Opening ceremony will be in May 2014.

The complete house is the result of collaboration between the participating partners. Each campus meeting has focused on different aspects of entrepreneurship and how to create and run a sustainable company. What each country is good at and what we can learn from each other e.g. Spain: solar energy, Sweden: practical building, Ireland: architecture and Germany: art and design.

The students have prepared different tasks beforehand and then presented the results at the campus meetings. Then each area has been analyzed and scrutinized in international mixed groups and presented again. This has been very successful and has strengthened the students’ self-esteem, which has been another objective in the project.

Here are some examples of tasks and questions for the campus meetings hosted by the participating schools respectively:

**Sustainable perspective**

- From a sustainable point of view and perspective:
  - Present energy regulations and systems in your country.
  - How are environmental issues realized in schools and working life?
  - Compare conditions for entrepreneurs and small business firms. Law: Government regulations (membership in a guild, or association of entrepreneurs, certificates needed
  - Describe your work placement system.
  - Design the house and make blueprints. We will build models on campus.
  - Compare materials e.g. insulation, boards, paint and what else that are needed for the house.
  - Define entrepreneurship and criteria for a sustainable construction company.

**Criteria**

This is a list (extract) of criteria that defines a sustainable construction company and is a result of the meetings up to now:

- Use only environment friendly materials.
- Use local DIY stores.
- Always focus on ergonomics, safety and health issues.
- Eat eco-friendly food.
- Use environment friendly energy e.g. solar or wind energy.
- Organize the company with worker participation.

Before each campus meeting, the students write an application explaining why they want to participate, their motivation for this and how they can contribute to the project. In addition, the project benefits social and language practice since the students intermingle, not only in the daytime, but also during their free time and when they return home.

The students also make contact beforehand on the internet to get to know each other before each campus meeting. Cyber ice-breaking! Exciting indeed!

The project has a web site http://houseofeurope.ning.com/ on which the process is described in blogs, videos etc. Please visit! This is also a part of the project. How to set up a site in collaboration.

The project means a lot to students, but also to the teachers who, by participating, bring to reality the school curriculum with this example of how to work with ESD - Education for Sustainable Development in a realistic way.

The whole project will also be reproduced as web-based teaching material, and hopefully published, as an example of, as mentioned before ESD. The teaching material is produced by our creative students in international groups. Keep your eyes open for it!

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The long-term stagnation of the unemployment rate in the EU and the recent economic crisis highlight the need for new competences from workers who want to find, or keep, a job: two of these are flexibility and the ability to accommodate to the fast changing labour market. On the other hand, in order to create new jobs, new enterprises have to be established, based on new ideas. This is why improving creative thinking is becoming a crucial factor in all levels of education, but especially in adult education, which is “directly connected” to the economy.

Based on these observations our project, “Thinking outside of the box”, focuses on how to teach creative thinking to adult learners in order to facilitate their adaptation, foster entrepreneurship and help disadvantaged groups.

Our consortium consists of six different adult education providers from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary and Spain, supported by Grundtvig Learning Partnerships of the Lifelong Learning Programme. Our goal is to introduce and transfer teaching methodologies to develop creativity in our everyday routine and share the best practices at a European level.

Therefore, we aim to give teachers and trainers in adult education useful tools, such as how to encourage people to “rethink” their lives, improve tolerance to changes and challenges, improve creative thinking in order to develop entrepreneurial skills and connect with different groups to get new perspectives, learn from and motivate each other.

We have scheduled six international meetings during the lifetime of the project, each of them dedicated to different approaches to creativity. As a starting point for contextualising, we launched a survey in all 6 countries aiming to gather information about what individuals think about and how they relate to and feel about “creativity”.

During the first four meetings we have had so far, we discussed progressively deeper and more concrete issues on what creativity, creative thinking and acting imply for education. The project started off in Finland, back in December 2012, where we analysed the results of the pre-project survey, using it to establish the basics of our common work by studying the effect of creative approaches on both society and economy. There was an agreement that creativity can be practised and learned. We also took a look at the current situation of the educational system in each of our countries, leading to the shared conclusion that none of them pays enough attention to bring creativity in the teaching/learning process.

At the following one, held in Germany in February 2013, we tried to figure out how talented people can be discovered and managed at schools and the workplace. During our workshops we learnt no such measuring system exists in our countries to find gifted individuals either regionally or nationally - it is each institution’s role to find the talented among their students, and also to find ways to mentor them.

Though there are many ways to facilitate learning to gifted students (special development centres, talent workshops, flexible time distribution, etc.), in all cases, teachers have a very important role, because they are the ones working with the students on a daily basis: thus they have the greatest possibility of recognising talent.

In May 2013, the Estonian meeting was dedicated to the collection of best practices and methods, new approaches to teaching and learning creativity. We engaged in theoretical discussion on why routines are comfortable and then tried different techniques to evaluate how the unexpected can work in favour of a more meaningful education and we shared different experiences and methodologies used in our different countries. Finally, we examined, both in theory and practice, how the influence of arts (drama, music, painting, dancing, etc.) can facilitate non-artist learners’ creativity and spontaneity during our fourth meeting in Denmark, in October 2013.

The two upcoming meetings will be dedicated to ageless creativity in Spain and the possibilities of intergenerational learning, while the last one will focus on the best examples on companies and enterprises that are well known for their innovatory ideas in Hungary, where we will examine whether the school system, moreover the system of adult education, contributed to their success or had rather been an obstacle.

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Interested? Join us. Facebook (TOOB - Thinking outside of the box)
WordPress (grundvigtoob.wordpress.com)
Children’s creativity knows no boundaries. For pre-schoolers, everything has its own meaning; each line drawn on paper has its own story - a simple doodle can come to life and represent a magic castle or a city full of cars and people. Even if the adults can’t see that - for children, simple things have their stories.

I have been a kindergarten teacher for a few years and I can say that the children’s interest for creative activities is growing. Working with pre-schoolers involves a diverse and rich creative activity: from creating attractive lessons up to the choice of various materials and themes.

Besides maths and language education in kindergarten, we held a lot of activities involving practical skills. Those are children’s favourites because they can develop their creativity and their handling skills.

I personally prefer to focus on creative activities because I truly believe that they bring more contribution for the harmonious development of the child’s personality. Creativity implies intuition, problem solving, logical thinking and creative thinking - so, as a result of all this, the child can develop in many ways: he develops intellectually and morally, he has more confidence in himself and in his working skills. He also learns also to self-manage his work.

The fact that children have at their disposal a lot of materials gives them the opportunity to create different works on various topics using their own imagination without the use of models. Working techniques are also different therefore the children can choose their preferred technique.

It is important to give children the freedom to choose and create freely without imposed limits and without teachers to impose their own vision. In this way pre-schoolers cultivate their independent spirit and they learn to make choices that will lead to a positive or negative result.

At the same time they may learn that a mistake can be fixed. For instance if a child had cut the cardboard smaller than he had planned, it is not necessary for him to throw away his work but he can apply in that place another piece of material, a flower or a sticker. The child learns in this way to solve the problem situations he faces in a creative way.

For our creative workshops we use various materials like:

- natural materials: different seeds, corn, leaves, stones, sand, twigs, dried flowers, pine cones, etc.
- materials that are on the market: sheets and coloured cardboard, foam sheets, sticker paper, beads, glue, sequins, colored thread, polystyrene objects, tempera, etc.
- recyclable materials.

In our kindergarten we relied more on the use of the last group of materials, the recycling ones so we have reached several goals that we have set:

- to educate the child to be responsible towards nature and life;
- to educate the child to be aware of the role that people have for the environment;
- to reduce costs for teaching materials both for parents and kindergarten.

We used in our workshops materials as: cartons and plastic boxes, caps, buttons, old newspapers, toilet paper rolls, used clothes pins, pieces of cloth, empty boxes of chocolates, we even used tin lids from candles.

Children’s crafts have an aesthetic role and utility: to decorate the classroom and child’s room or as jar for various items. For this reason the child is working with even more pleasure in making his craft.

It is important to give children the chance to make their own choices, to create and develop their own ideas. As educators we need to be observers and mentors for children and as often as possible we need to organise workshops with the participation of children and parents.

To support recycling, our kindergarten has been involved in many campaigns to support the cause and we arranged in the lobby an eco-area where we make exhibitions with objects made by children. Parents are also involved in these activities as they collect and bring us the materials we need. Any object can be used and embellished and insignificant things can acquire different meanings in children’s delicate hands.

By recycling we empower children to take care of their lives and living things around and we are trying to change the mentality and the behaviour of present and future generations.

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Since the beginning of this century, the Dutch government asks society, including schools, to pay attention to sustainable development. Because of the constitutional right of freedom of education, schools can choose whether and how they pay attention to sustainable development.

In 2012 two parties took an initiative to translate and edit the 2011 UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) ESD teacher competences on ESD for Dutch teachers and teacher trainer students (De Hamer & Leussink, 2012). The two parties were Duurzame PABO - the Dutch ESD network for teacher training institutes for primary education - and the governmental ESD program Learning for Sustainable Development (LvDO). The competences are being used at a growing number of teacher training institutes and primary schools.

The ESD teacher competencies are divided into four dimensions:

1. what you should be able to do
2. how you can work and live together
3. how you yourself are, and
4. if you want to contribute to education for sustainable development.

The competences are not a "minimum standard" that must be met, but it gives you a framework for your professional development. It is not the purpose to prescribe behavior but to inspire. You know how you can opt for sustainable development every day. A better world starts with you!

The dimensions are each divided into...
three essential characteristics of ESD, namely:

a. Holistic approach, which seeks integrative thinking and practice;
b. Envisioning change, which explores alternative futures, learns from the past and inspires engagement in the present;
c. Achieving transformation, which serves to change in the way people learn and in the systems that support learning.

For each dimension we looked for a Dutch best practice. These examples give an idea how realization of these competencies in practice might look like.

The best practice that comes with the dimension learning to do is primary school Kariboe (www.kariboe.nl; only in Dutch). Their motto is: ‘Together we make the future’

‘We want to bring children into contact with nature, let them have fun outside and educate them with respect and love for nature. Research has shown that children, who gain peak experiences in nature, carry those with them throughout their lives... All of our teachers have a green and social heart. With our school profile and new resources we can shape and give direction to our green and social ambitions.’

These are some quotes from the home page of the public elementary school Kariboe from Heemskerk. If you visit their new building, you will see that they are living by these quotes. In the lessons, much attention is paid to sustainability.

The keyword is active participation of the students. And not just during the lessons: during break and playtime the students continue to experience nature on the green nature playground. The building itself has a pleasant interior and yet is very energy efficient.

If you look from above, you see beautiful vegetation on the roof. It is no coincidence that the school chooses to have a sustainable school profile and has joined Eco-schools.

After finishing this translation and editing of the UNECE ESD teacher competences, the authors did many workshops with teachers and teacher training institute students.

They found that more examples are needed and perhaps more adaptation to the typical Dutch school setting is needed in order to have these competences implemented on a large scale. As Prof. Charles Hopkins mentioned during the Learning Teacher Network’s 2013 Conference ‘the UNECE is so diverse... one competence set won’t do for all these different settings’.

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While gathering the children for the class, I sang the song to them. Without shouting with my voice, all the children were lining up one by one immediately.

As I stopped and told them to be a lion, the children became roaring lions right away. When I changed the lyrics from “in a line” to “hand in hand”, the children found the way to hold hands with each other. As I stopped and told them to be a bird, every child stretched their hands. Suddenly the classroom was full with chirping birds.

This is one of my teaching approaches called "Learning English through Music for Young Children". It was developed to assist early childhood instructors in teaching English to preschool Chinese children in Taiwan. It uses the Kulturemusik© method developed by The New York Institute for Social Research to facilitate language and cognitive development in children through the use of music activities. Standard American children's songs, creative music and songs have been taught for the use of teachers in leading group language and music learning exercises.

While the exercises are basic in design and implementation, their use in language learning classrooms has proven to significantly improve speaking and language comprehension in young children. The curriculum framework has been tested by the hands-on teaching for 15 years both in America and Taiwan.

The process went through 4 stages: (1) Pilot Study (Trial Stage); (2) Application (Thematic Stage); (3) Creation & Extension (Combinative Stage); (4) Completion (Establishment Curriculum Stage). The teaching contents include Hello Song, ABC’s Song, Singing & Movement, Musical Storytelling, Music Appreciation and Goodbye Song.

Encouraging language and communication skills in children under six is an essential part of child development. According to the results of my research teaching, they indicate music-related play is an excellent way to accomplish this. Playing games with sounds, singing songs and chanting as well as moving around and dancing to music can all help children to practise specific language skills while benefiting in broader areas as well.

Due to music’s natural expressiveness and its capacity to reinforce language, songs are an excellent way for children to learn new vocabulary. Through the use of songs there are a number of musical activities to assist children in remembering a great many words. Provided below is one of the action songs I used in the class.

**Target Teaching Goals**

**Primary goals:** Language Development

Children will be able to understand and say the words of various movements.

Children will be able to respond to the instructor’s questions by using both of speaking and body language.

**Secondary goals:**

Social Skill: Children will be able to interact with peers and adults.

Cognition: Children will be able to learn the various movements.

Music: Children will be able to identify contrasting music elements of “slow & fast”.

Physical Movement: Children will be
able to do the targeted movements, such as: walk, jump, run, creep, wiggle of slow and fast motion as well as freeze; increase skill areas in a child’s body.

**Teaching Procedures**

**Week one:**
Introduce the rhythmic pattern to show children the concept of slow and fast by doing funny motions.

Show the children entire song and various movements.

**Week two:**
Divide the children into 2 groups and give each group different motions of slow and fast.

Only the targeted group sings the song and does the movement with the instructor.

1. At the end have all children sing together and do the movements of slow and fast.

**Week three:**

[Assessment 1] Will the children be able to do the correct movements while singing the song?

[Assessment 2] Will the children be able to identify the movements of slow and fast?

Music is all around us but it is not being used as much as it should be in the language classroom, especially in early childhood education.

When it comes to language education, as parents and educators we know that we must use every tool at our disposal to help children learn. It is hoped to share this teaching approach of “Learning English through Music” for early childhood educators and parents interested in using music to teach language, rhythm and movement to preschool children.

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168 colleagues in education and training from 24 countries in Europe and beyond came together in Lisbon, Portugal on 26-28 September to participate in the Learning Teacher Network’s 9th International Conference. With the four star Hotel Tivoli Oriente as the conference venue, the delegates could experience the modern Lisbon at the Parque das Nações by the Tagus/Tejo river.

The conference was titled ‘Education for Sustainable Development’, thereby addressing 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.

Five keynote speakers and 42 parallel workshop sessions - led by practitioners, trainers or researchers - portrayed, penetrated and discussed different aspects of the theme.

At the opening session the delegates were welcomed by short greetings from honoured guests: Dr João Casanova de Almeida, State Secretary of the Portuguese Ministry of Education and Culture; Dr. Carlos Nogueira, the European Commission Representation in Portugal; Dr. Paulo Agostinho, Director de Departamento de Educação and António Nunes from the Portuguese National EU LLP Agency.

Mr. Alexander Leicht, chief of the section of Education for Sustainable Development at the Division of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development at UNESCO in Paris gave the first keynote speech at the conference.

Mr. Leicht expressed that today, young people make up almost half of the planet’s seven billion inhabitants. It is young people that will ensure the long-term sustainable development of our planet. And youth are increasingly drivers of educational processes, especially in non-formal areas. Empowering and mobilizing youth through ESD is therefore the fourth priority action area. And in particular, partnering with youth organisations will be crucial to drive this action area forward.

He continued to tell about the draft Global Action Programme, which will follow the Decade for ESD from 2015 and which proposes working with local communities to accelerate finding effective and innovative solutions to sustainable development challenges. Action under this area will include working with local authorities and municipalities on enhancing ESD programmes and developing innovative sustainable solutions.
Mr Magnus Persson addressed the conference in a speech highlighting the Council of the European Union conclusions on education for sustainable development from 2010 and raising the question how the Member States have responded to this agreement. The Ministers of Education in the EU countries have agreed to take measures for policy, regulatory, institutional and operational frameworks to support ESD and also for equipping teachers, trainers, school staff and school leaders with the awareness, knowledge and competences required. Mr. Persson criticized the lack of action and called for more and proper action by national decision-makers.

Prof. Akpezi Ogbuigwe held a passionate speech and unravelled ESD through an excursion into its history and her personal life story. Her mind-awakening words touched the entire audience bringing a true understanding of the 'heart of the matter'.

In yet another keynote, Dave DeLuca explored DoSomething.org's philosophy of engaging teens. From personalization, to mobile communications, to best motivational practices, it explores how and why over a million teens take action through DoSomething.org every year.

Non-profits, educators, and social change activists are always talking about creating movements. But with youth and social change, the movement is already here. This generation of teens are committed to making a difference. For an organization to capture that energy, it must deliver opportunities where young people are and in the ways young people find relevant.

Prof. Tom Tiller spoke of appreciative leadership and learning has been discovered to be the missing link in organizational development. Applying the significance of appreciation in daily management has been proven to radically increase success in academic performance and work satisfaction.

At the end of the conference Prof. Charles Hopkins addressed the conference and came back to the importance of bringing ESD into mainstream education. Mathematics, language arts and other core subjects are indeed important. However, they are tools and skills. They are not the purpose of education. Slowly we are discovering that ESD is not an enemy to PISA scores but is rather a contributor to a new view of quality education.

Regarding the content and focus of the presentations at workshops and lectures we refer to comprehensive information given in the conference brochure and on the network website.

In addition to the rich content of the conference, the participants appreciated the open and welcoming 'climate' at the conference. As both witnessed by many comments during the event and in the conference feedback, the days in Lisbon provided time for learning and reflections, socialising and having a good time together as well as networking but also to many delegates the joy of meeting 'old' friends again.

Full information about the conference is published on www.learningteacher.eu/lisbon-conference-2013

A selection of photos is posted on the network facebook page www.facebook.com/learningteachernetwork
Food for thought in Lisbon

“The purpose of education is to replace an empty mind with an open one”. The quote is from Malcolm Forbes but it seems fair to paraphrase it in order to sum up the 9th International Conference, held in Lisbon, of the Learning Teacher Network.

Although my mind was not completely closed as a Portuguese journalist, some of the keynote speakers really have provided entirely new “food for thought” not only for the work I was entitled to do, but also as a human being, as a citizen and as a mother.

The speech from Alexander Leicht and the way he shared the priorities for the future of ESD - advancing policy, changing learning and training environments, the focus on educators, the empowerment and mobilization of youth as main drivers of educational processes and the work with local communities - is a good reminder that the way to a sustainable development will only be achieved if we have an holistic vision of what it takes to get there and that together we may stand, but divided we all fall. As a result, Mr. Leicht talked to me as a “human being”.

The words from Magnus Persson and the enthusiastic manner he speaks about ESD is a powerful warning that this challenge must be addressed by all of us, in order to build a more sustainable Europe. Maybe within some years we will be able to answer with a big YES to the question posed by Mr. Persson: “Have you noticed this - the Minister of Education’s agreement from 2010 on policy or practice in your own country?” For this particular reason, Mr. Persson talked to me as a citizen.

Finally, the speech from Professor Akpezi Ogbuiigwe, truly inspiring and emotive, reminds us all that “we all have a common destiny”, but also highlighted a truly important question: “How do we educate for a change we don’t fully understand?”

Talking about her childhood, in a small village in Kenya, she said that she has inherited the values of compassion, respect towards the environment, integrity and responsibility, as well as the respect for the community and for the family. “I grew up in a place where women were hard workers, raising not only their biological children, but also the children of the whole community”.

Professor Ogbuiigwe told the audience. And, at that moment, this tough African woman talked to me as a mother, as we have also the responsibility to care not only for our children, but for all the children that will be the leaders of tomorrow and, like Professor Ogbuiigwe also said, “We need to educate pro-environment, pro-respect for our world and pro-responsibility of our actions”.

In what concerns my work as a journalist, I have the good fortune to be able to interview Mr. Persson and also Prof. Charles Hopkins, whose different, but complementary approaches, have also contributed to feed my thought.

For example, as teachers and also decision-makers, in general, have already realized how important education is for a truly sustainable development, Prof Hopkins answered that “Thinking globally, many teachers and education leaders have not heard of ESD or assume it is simply another add-on such as environmental education or global education or peace education”, which is something I believe is true for the great majority of teachers in my own country.

But the good and hopeful news is, as Prof. Hopkins declared, “Once they are engaged they not only realize how important it is but are willing to bring their particular academic strength to the issue”. Prof. Hopkins also called our attention to the fact that “as in the case of the business leaders, unless we re-orientate the entire school system and discuss how ESD can be seen as a purpose of education, we will be relegated to small acts of recycling and planting school gardens”. He also stressed the final aim which is that “we are doing some good work at ‘greening the school’, but we now need to move on to ‘greening the mind’”.

Specifically to the countries that have not started this journey yet and taking account that ESD is not a stand-alone subject, but more a set of underlying principles and values, I have asked the coordinator of The Learning Teacher Network, Mr. Persson, which approach was more effective: to include these principles and values across the normal curricula of education or schools to have an obligatory discipline on EDS, as Maths or Geography. Mr. Persson’s answer was very clear:

“ESD must be a core ingredient and the both underpinning and pervasive value in all interdisciplinary learning, all subjects and all activities in schools and educational institutions,” he said, adding that “this is why ESD knowledge, skills and attitudes, together with awareness, are absolutely crucial when introducing and implementing ESD in a strategic manner in mainstream education. If ESD was a topic in its own right, and put alongside common school subjects, it would never be fully accepted, would not contribute to a whole-school perspective, and would not bring true impact”.

As Professor Ogbuiigwe has also emphasized, the heart of the matter is to “make the change”. Having a network of learning and a network of doers is the only way ESD can lead this radical transformation, in a world that is not finite, but where we also need to believe that “nothing is impossible”.

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PAEDEIA
- A teacher drop-out project in Europe (part 1)

This article is the first of three articles about this project. It is a three year long project and this first article will give some background to the project and give a current status update on its progress.

The triggering factor to the project is the long-term trend of teacher drop-outs in Europe. The drop-outs occur in many countries, and, while the causes are not the same, the phenomena is. In the project we aim to examine the experiences of the new teachers and from this knowledge produce a proper induction program to support the new teachers. We will try to find solutions and tools to bridge the gap between studies and work and in the long run diminish the number of drop-outs. Furthermore we also aim to contribute to the new teachers’ development in a longer perspective. Our aim is of course that their students also will benefit from the project.

PAEDEIA is an international project involving teacher students, newly educated teachers, mentors and school-leaders. In the project teacher students and newly educated teachers from Finland, Turkey and Sweden are participating. Denmark and Portugal are also involved. These two countries contribute to the project by evaluating it and they are also the organizers of one course for the student teachers and new teachers (Portugal) and one in-service course (Denmark) for mentors and school leaders.

The project started the 1st of December 2012 and it will end the 1st of December 2015. During this first year, the planning group has had two meetings one in Ankara and the other in Karlstad. Before the end of this year we will also meet again in Jyväskylä for a third meeting in November. During the spring semester we have also had national symposium in Turkey, Finland and Sweden.

The three countries are very diverse when it comes to school systems and their issues are not the same. Finland has worked with these questions and partly from another perspective for a much longer time than Sweden and Turkey.

We will follow this up in one of the next articles and discuss more about the Finnish and the Turkish situation. In this article we will focus on the Swedish situation.

Since 2006 there has been a lively discussion about crises in the Swedish school. Teacher education has also been criticized, which led to a new teacher education which started 2011. The same year a decision was made about teacher legitimation. All teachers today have to apply to be authorized otherwise they are not allowed to give grades. Additionally new teachers must have a mentor during their first year. The mentor should be supporting the new teacher but also in a way be a tutor and tell the head teacher if the new teacher is suitable to work as a teacher. This means that the school must provide an educated mentor.

In Sweden we have been working with a learning dialogue and reflections on the project. Both reflections and the learning dialogue have so far been about the difficulties one can meet as a new teacher, what expectations the student teacher have and experiences of the new teachers.

There are a lot of questions which are important to discuss, but one of the most important issues seems to be about the relationship with their future colleagues. There seems to be a fear of not being taken seriously and not being listened to. Another issue is about values especially when it comes to the children.

Read more on www.paedeia.net

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Don’t cry – do something
- How economy and school come together

The demographic change in Germany and especially in Saxony makes businessman lament because of the lack of applicants for much needed professions. Therefore lots of activities like fairs and giving out information are begun.

But what is the experience for most of our pupils in the 14 or 15 year age group? Most of them had only rare chances to get an insight what happens in business and production and to learn what it means to work.

Three years ago our school started a project in co-operation with BGH Edelstahl Freital GmbH (the most important employer in our town) to give interested pupils the possibility to get a thorough insight into steel production and the real basics of metal processing.

What are the objectives?
First, it is to learn more about that which happens in the professional field the pupils want to enter after school. Second, it is to make clear and firm decisions which profession they want to follow in the future. Thirdly, and this is very important too, to decide what they do not want to do in the future.

What’s going on?
Every two weeks, 12 pupils go to the factory for three hours to learn sawing, filing and measuring and they help to repair and to manufacture parts of machines. They are accompanied by trainers from the BGH and a teacher from our school who observes the pupils’ work in the factory and ensures the validity of the curriculum which is the base of the learning process. Thus, the BGH can get to know the pupils who are interested in learning in their company.

The pupils, on the other hand, get a clearer perspective for their future. The result is that all of the applicants of our school who wanted to get a professional training at the BGH indeed got one.

Through the last 3 years we found lots of interested firms who co-operated so pupils of the 9th class all have the chance to get an insight into work in hospitals, rest homes, supermarkets, kindergartens, city councils, hair styling, glass and paper production.

The feedback from the pupils is very good and our partners are highly satisfied with their commitment. We know that all our partners make a very good return on their own costs and outgoings from their own initiative.

The network we could establish is a really new form and dimension of co-operation between the economy and schools in Saxony and - a new quality, too. We look forward to making this network strong and durable for the future.

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Creativity and Learning

As a recipient of a Comenius grant, I attended the “Creativity and Learning” training course, held in Malta, on 7-12 October 2013 together with in total 28 participants from 12 countries.

The course was conducted by a course leader team from Malta, Poland and Sweden. The course was divided into 40 hours of training, each module including creativity theory and its application through innovative teaching methods.

The activities linked several methods, such as group work, drama, video presentations, problem solving activities, practical workshops, individual activities and the use of creative teaching techniques.

In addition, we benefitted from one special session at the Institute “Edward de Bono” at the University of Malta, a study visit to the Creativity Centre “St. James de Cavalier” in Valletta and an interesting module held by a lecturer from the Centre for Science in Malta.

We tasted the medieval atmosphere during the trip to the Three Medieval Cities. The last evening was especially memorable and different as the organizers had planned a coastal excursion and a farewell dinner in a splendid location.

Enhancing creativity and thinking skills in students does not occur automatically, as an effect of schooling.

This process requires the presence of a creative teacher who is continuously improving his/her skills, who is implementing an innovative methodology and has the capacity of organizing the framework in order to develop learners’ creativity and intellectual potential (pleasant environment, diversified material resources, offering time, providing positive feedback, allowing mistakes, group discussions, etc.).

Another important factor is to know the learning styles and individual preferences of each person involved in the act of learning.

We worked with a proficient training team, who lit our creative spirit and encouraged us to use the creative teaching techniques back home. I became aware of some of my own dysfunctional mental models and the need for giving them up.

Now, I use drama more often in teaching. This is a holistic method, playful, able to facilitate access to information to all students, especially to those with special educational needs I work with.

My Comenius experience from Malta was full of meaning, of valuable intercultural interactions with our competent trainers and friendly colleagues, from twelve countries.

We were treated with a lot of respect and trust and we experienced moments of great fun.

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The Global Classroom - Educating for a more just and sustainable World

The beautiful sunny island of Malta was the setting for our course held in the Victoria Hotel in Sliema on the 14th to 18th October 2013.

It was attended by 32 delegates from 9 European countries giving it a truly international feel. It was a fantastic opportunity to meet and network with colleagues to discuss global education bringing together learning perspectives and practice.

The course entitled ‘The Global Classroom – educating for a more just and sustainable world’ was delivered to us by Andrea, Magnus, Johanna and Mathias in a very interesting and stimulating way.

Looking at Global Education and Education for Sustainable Development from an International and European perspective helped to put the subject into context.

We were able to explore the various facets of global education through a variety of group activities, role play, presentations and discussions. The activities, video footage, pictures shown and questions asked were very thought provoking and made us view the world in a different way. It was interesting to listen to different perspectives and to analyse other frameworks for sustainable development from other countries.

As the week progressed it was obvious to all that we were being taken on our own global journey which has in turn made us think about how we view the world, how important it is to develop critical thinking in our pupils and how best to move our own schools forward.

During the course we have been given the tools to improve our practice by evaluating where we are now, what we want to achieve, what resources we will need and the time plan to put it into action.

The highlight of the week has been to make friends with colleagues and to plan for future projects. It will give pupils the opportunity to discover different cultures and traditions as well as find out what they have in common. eTwinning-Plus is available to us however the course provided a golden opportunity to join forces on the day with like-minded people and projects are already up and running.

During the week we visited the medieval city of Mdina, the capital city of Valetta and the St James Cavalier centre for Creativity giving us a wonderful opportunity to socialise and network.

The course has provided us with a complete package of course materials, tools to deliver sustainability in the classroom, strategies to evaluate our own action plan and ways to make a difference to our local community. It has been a unique and worthwhile experience and has enriched my understanding of the ‘Global Classroom’ and how to make a difference. Thanks to one and all.

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From Integration to Inclusion?
- A support framework for teachers of new arrival students

In a previous edition of the Learning Teacher Magazine (No.1/2013) we outlined the background to the Portfolio of Integration (POI) Project. This Comenius multilateral project involved five participating countries (Greece, Italy, Poland, Turkey and the UK). It recently concluded the formal phase with an International Seminar in Arezzo, Italy.

The main aims of the Portfolio of Integration (POI) project were to test and validate the Notebook of Integration in different national contexts and to adapt the particular content to such contexts. The Notebook itself is an observational and evaluative toolkit originally developed by Oxfam Italia to enhance teachers’ knowledge skills and pedagogy in order to improve the educational integration of migrant/new arrival school students.

How did the Project fare in achieving these ambitious goals? This article provides a brief review that captures the perspectives from each of the Project partner countries, and looks ahead to some of the ways in which the findings and products emerging from POI might be used to build a sustainable legacy across Europe.

The presence of significant numbers of new arrival pupils in Greece has important implications for the Greek educational system. A simple and easy-to-use tool such as the Notebook of Integration represents a welcome aid, especially for teachers who have no previous experience or training with new arrival students.

The groups of teachers in Greece who experienced the training course and the Notebook found these methods extremely useful for several reasons: they require you to reflect on what is happening in the classroom, within and beyond the learning experiences; they support the emergence and acceptance of children’s biographies; and they support the observation of the different steps of integration and to consider simultaneously all the key dimensions and factors underlying successful inclusion: including L2 learning, the class context, interaction with adults, daily behaviours, motivations and attitudes.

The answers of participating teachers from Italy to the question “What have you learned?” from the POI Project highlighted that the Notebook prompted more subtle reflection and enabled more effective observation, thus enhancing better awareness of the role of teachers in promoting the inclusion of new arrival students. The Notebook might become a sort of “Identity Card” that supports students on their journey towards their social and educational inclusion.

A middle school teacher noted that “the...activities were important because they allowed us to deepen our knowledge about our students and to discover aspects in the dynamic relationships that were overlooked before”.

The relative cultural homogeneity of Poland and the low proportion of immigrant students in schools means that proper consideration of their social inclusion rarely takes place among the majority of teachers. However one recent phenomenon has been the re-migration of children of Polish origin, who were born and started their school careers in different countries in Europe. Working with the Notebook initiated teamwork among the participating teachers, resulting in an enhancement of their perceptions of new arrival students and their educational needs.

The value the participants received by having taken part in the course and tested the Notebook of Integration, is greater awareness of the problems such students face and a recognition of the need to broaden their knowledge about integration and inclusion.

Turkey has a history of external migration, as well as large degrees of internal population flows. It has also recently become a destination for refugees from conflicts in the Middle East. POI participants in Turkey concluded that being a teacher in a multi-cultural classroom has the potential to add value to the wider educational
The Notebook supported teachers’ management of the multi-cultural classes and diversities, improvement of their observation diagnosis capacity and expansion of their horizons as a result of learning about different cultures in a more conscious way.

The UK Partner, University of Glasgow, organised a systematic training course in collaboration with a cluster of schools in the South Lanarkshire region of Scotland. More than 20 secondary teachers with a range of subject specialisms engaged with the training over a series of after-school sessions. A strong sense of positive impact emerged during these sessions and from the post-input evaluations.

These noted the changes in practice prompted by the POI training and the Notebook, while re-stating one of the main themes from the Needs Analysis undertaken at the outset of the Project; namely that teachers in Scotland require ongoing support in developing the knowledge, skills and pedagogies that are best able to support the integration of new arrival pupils.

In reviewing the participants’ experiences across the five countries, it became clear that there is a need to further enrich and adjust the Notebook to suit different educational needs and contexts. It will evolve in more user-friendly directions.

The over-arching need at policy level across Europe is to foster and support such new ways of thinking about integration and inclusion processes. These need to be more systematic, more evidence-based, and applicable across a wide range of contexts. Looking back and forward from this vantage point, it is apparent that, while the Notebook itself does not provide an easy answer to the difficult issue of how best to support the inclusion of new arrival school students, it has the potential to at least be part of the solution.

For more information, background research and evaluation relating to the POI Project, and to download the Notebook itself, you can access the Project website:

http://www.poiproject.org/
or visit our Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/portfolioofintegration

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Erasmus Awards 2013

The 2013 European Erasmus Awards were given on 21st November 2013 to three outstanding higher education institutions funded by the European Union.

The European Commission invited all higher education institutions holding an Erasmus University Charter to highlight success stories involving staff mobility and short intensive programmes like international summer schools.

Independent experts short-listed 20 of the best case studies, from which the three winning institutions were chosen.

- Gold - ERASMUS Staff Mobility - Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu (JAMK University of Applied Sciences), Jyväskylä, Finland
- Silver - ERASMUS Intensive Programmes - Technological Educational Institute of Crete, Heraklion, Greece
- Bronze - ERASMUS Staff Mobility - Universitat Politècnica de València, Valencia, Spain


Correction

In The Learning Teacher Magazine 3/2013 Ms Rita Vasconcelos Oliveira from Escola Secundária Gil Vicente in Lisbon wrote an article titled ‘Introducing environmental education in science classes through a multidisciplinary perspective’.

By mistake Rita Oliveira’s e-mail address was wrong.
Her correct e-mail address is ritatoliveira@campus.ul.pt

We sincerely apologise for this mistake.
Share new learning
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European Gold Award 2009