European values in times of crisis

Some say Europe as an institution is over. It has failed and proofed to be a complete disaster esp. after the financial crisis and the refugee crisis of this moment. And because of that there is an immense amount of pressure on the common European values, if they ever existed. And that is the question. If we leave out all discussions about decisions or the amount of decisions ‘Brussels’ is taking, were there common values and what are they?

Looking at the refugee crisis we see thousands of people, families, children looking for a better life, after what they have seen: massacres, barrel bombs, prosecution, etc. Reasons: you have a different religion, or you are living in the wrong area, or your opinions are different. Many Europeans must have experienced this before (further in the past or not so long ago), or will have heard about that from parents or grandparents. They know the impact of fleeing. One of the European values was, we thought, solidarity with those who are prosecuted. Some countries showed that solidarity, others did not. Many countries experience nowadays that people are not only having democratic discussions about solutions, but are also seeing negative and violent behaviour of certain groups. And then there is the teacher. What are we thinking- at home and in school? We are the persons to pass on our common values to new generations. What are these values? At the level of Europe, at the level of the nation, at the personal level? What is the value of these values?

Do we have the courage to express ourselves? And what about our educational, human values when it comes to discussions in our classrooms and teacher rooms. Are we teaching European values, national values or personal values. Are there any differences between these. Or do we have to redefine our values? Or is it ‘just’ that we have to make clear what we mean with solidarity, with provide safety, provide a human existence in a house, the right to work and the right to have a future and last but not least: to have the right to get education; just to mention some values. A better Europe ...

Gerard de Kruif
Editor
How to keep more children motivated?

Mathematics is of central importance to modern society in all countries and becomes increasingly essential in many job profiles. Children begin formal education with a very positive view of mathematics and with ‘good feelings about their own abilities’. However both interest and motivation decline as children grow older and especially in girls the positive affect and ‘good feelings’ fade away.

The Process Communication Model (PCM) revealed six types of children, with a different gender ratio and different underlying motivational needs (see Hantson et al., 2015). ‘Empathic’ children or ‘harmonisers’ (30%, more girls) are attentive for the others and sensitive, compassionate and warm. These children are motivated by a sensory stimulation and recognition and acknowledgment as a person.

A lot of elementary school teachers are also ‘harmonisers’. ‘Thinkers’ (25%, more boys) are responsible, logical and organized, performing best in tasks where they can work alone or in a small group with recognition of her/his work and time structure. A lot of secondary and higher school teachers are thinkers. Sometimes we call them ‘workaholics’. ‘Persisters’ (10%, more boys) are devoted, good observers and conscientious children, motivated by an approach where they can work alone or in a small group with recognition of work done and respect for opinions. A lot of secondary and higher school teachers are persisters.

‘Dreamers’ (10%, more girls) are imaginative, reflective and calm, needing an approach where there is a respect for their need of solitude but also an invitation to act. ‘Rebels’ (20%, more girls) are spontaneous, creative and playful, enjoying the here and now and external motivated by playful ‘contact’. ‘Promoters’ (5%, more boys) are convincing, adaptive and capable of achieving things, but need strong sensations and actions as external motivators.

We should try to focus on the different motivational needs of all our children. ‘Empathic’ children are motivated by a well-meaning teaching style, working in groups with a feeling of ‘getting loved by friends and teachers’. ‘I am glad you’re here’ and a small personal compliment involves these children in maths learning. A democratic teaching style is motivating ‘thinkers’ and ‘persisters’, preferring to work alone or with one other person. In addition they need feedback that the teacher finds them competent (for thinkers) or trustworthy (for persisters). ‘You did a good job and it was nicely in time’ motivates thinkers. ‘You did a good job and I am interested in your opinion on...’ motivates persisters.

Promoters learn best from an autocratic teacher and actions and challenging tasks to ‘feel alive’. Rebels learn best with a laissez-faire teacher, with humour and making them feel ‘accepted as they are’. Maths lessons have to be playful environments with group to group tasks. Dreamers are motivated when they get enough time to reflect before they have to answer: ‘In five minutes, I want the answer on this question from you’.

Since most teachers are ‘empathic’, ‘persisters’ or ‘thinkers’, it will be important to make them understand that what motivates them (‘I am glad you are here, you did a good job, I value your opinion) might not ‘reach’ and motivate 35% of the children in their classroom (dreamers, promoters, rebels). If we want all children to be motivated we should also provide reflection time, action and humour in our maths lessons. Only then we will keep the positive view and interest in mathematics. An awareness and training in adaptive communication ‘reaches’ more boys and girls in maths classes.


Edwin Hantson, Claire Van de Velde, Leen De Bie, Tessa De Jaeger, Nele De Coster, Annemie Desoete Education Center and Association University Ghent, Ghent Belgium Edwin.Hantson@stad.gent annemie.desoete@telenet.be
Serbian education has been introduced to a debate as a possible means for formative assessment and one of the best concepts for developing intuitive, critical and lateral thinking by NGOs representing non-formal learning. Unfortunately, the debate could not find its way from non-formal to formal education.

The fact that the students familiar with debate recognized its techniques as the ones that stimulate both thinking and social activism can not be disputed. Moreover, the students were the ones to open a new chapter of education in Niš, one of the biggest cities in Serbia. This is the story of Debattlefield, the project initiated by the students of Gimnazija „Svetozar Marković“ and supported by their trainer Bojana Golubović, as well as by the SUPERSTE programme, developed by ERSTE bank in order to stimulate social responsibility.

For six years now, the debating club, GSM, had become a “hot spot” for good energy, social responsibility and activism. An idea of a global reunion of old and new members transferring values of knowledge, skills and attitudes as competences for the life in democratic societies projected itself in May 2015, when a few members supported by their teacher wrote a project about educating the local community in what debate is, how it can be used and how it can flourish even in primary schools as a tool for developing a culture of open dialogue.

The idea was to educate the first generation of trainers that would continue with the peer education of high school and primary school students. The other set of workshops were meant for their teachers in order to develop the knowledge and the skills needed for setting up debating clubs in their schools.
This network of debating clubs is covered by an umbrella association Debating club of the City of Niš which is responsible for monitoring and supporting the implementation of this idea as well as advocating its further dissemination in the south-east of Serbia with an aim of becoming one of the stakeholders for implementing debate as an important element in the national curriculum.

After the community has been involved in online voting for the best forty projects in Serbia, Debattlefield - the project for implementing debate in the schools - has been presented at the Superste hackathon where this idea has been shaped by advice given by experienced mentors. The challenge of stepping out of the classroom directly to the stage was one of the most exciting adventures that life could offer.

After being able to deal with all the limitations that a five minute presentation can offer, this project has been recognised as one of the best projects in Serbia. The next challenge was to spread the news about the project so that the people would become interested in getting involved with an online community and choose to vote for us. After ten days of well organized marketing, we gathered the biggest numbers of votes in Serbia and obtained the funds to start with shifting the paradigm of battlefield into the field of using arguments as the only weapon.

The pathway from a student's idea to the most recognized Superste project in Serbia for the year 2015 has shown us that when students and teachers support each other through learning together, miracles can happen. From our perspective, enthusiasm is the value that we have been searching for in all aspects of society and it has finally emerged in the process of co-operation.

Bojana Golubović
boka.golubovic@gmail.com
Teacher of philosophy at Gimnazija "Svetozar Marković" Niš, Serbia and debate trainer at "Debate club of the City of Niš", Serbia

The next issue of The Learning Teacher Magazine will be published in March. Articles may be submitted no later than 15th February 2016.
Tournoi Mondial de Français par Internet (TMFI)

A Flemish association of teachers of French established at Hasselt University has launched in 1988 a regional contest of French following the model of the international Olympiad of mathematics. Started as a purely local initiative, the “Olympiade flamande du français” welcomes in 2015 over 7,000 enthusiastic youngsters coming from all parts of the Dutch speaking part of Belgium.

The unrivalled success of their regional initiative stimulated the organisers in 2002 to create something similar for all learners of French between 12 and 24 years old, all over the world. The internet will be the ideal platform for making it possible. And since that year, the French association “Olyfran, les olympiades de la Francophonie” organises every year in March and April the “Tournoi Mondial de Français par Internet”.

Promotion starts in January and participants are registered by “équipes olyfraniennes”, i.e. teams of three youngsters under the supervision of a teacher. The contest itself evolves in two phases: the “éliminatoires” and a “finale”. The “éliminatoires” always take place during two full days in the international week of the ‘Francophonie’. The teams can participate as often as they wish; their results are visible in real time guaranteeing a tough but healthy competition.

After these two days, an overall classification is made with the best score of each team taking into account the five continents and the place of the French language in the participating countries. Based on these results, the best scores of each “zone olyfranienne” are invited to participate in the final. This takes one full day and at the end the best team is awarded the title of “équipe Lauréate olyfranienne mondiale”.

Which contents are questioned in the TMFI?
The TMFI aims at creating a positive atmosphere for the learning of French and at stimulating a good command of current spoken French. The techniques used are very specific multiple choice questions, all resulting from the 28 past editions of the Flemish Olympiad. At this moment, more than 8,000 MCQ are available.

How are the scores calculated?
Three factors are taken into account determining the results of each attempt:
- the level of difficulty of the question (each MCQ is encoded a CEF-level)
- the number of correctly solved MCQ
- the time used to finish his attempt (a default time has been implemented coming from a series of tests with test groups. Doing better, the final result will be proportionally higher and vice versa.)

Which prizes can be won?
The most important reward is, of course, the fact that participants from all over the world meet each other in a stimulating competition bringing them to a better command of French. But the best teams also receive the diploma of TMFI-laureate of their “zone olyfranienne”. Everyone desires further certificates of participation, prizes donated by TV5Monde, the magazine “Le Français dans le Monde”, the service clubs Richelieuurope and the language software producer CommArt International, i.e. French gadgets, language software, CDs, free subscriptions, etc.

Teams can send a short presentation of their school and pictures of their participation in full action. All this information is published on the site of the contest. See www.olyfran.org > Dernières Nouvelles-Tournois > Équipes inscrites.

The calendar of the next TMFI:
Registration of participating teams: 04.02 till 03.03.2016
“Éliminatoires”: 15-16 March 2016
“Finale”: 20 April 2016

Willy Clijsters
willy.clijsters@uhasselt.be
olyfranvl@olyfran.org
President of “Olyfran, les Olympiades du français et de la Francophonie”

écris ton nom
Teachers’ in-service education in Greece - A didactic proposal

All countries pay particular importance to teacher training. One of the main duties of a school counsellor is teachers’ in-service training. The European Council considers teacher training as one of the sixteen quality indicators of school education (European Commission, 2000).

Teachers must renew and enrich their knowledge about various subjects, sciences and didactic methods, because society’s needs are changing rapidly.

This article presents the design, materialization and evaluation of a training seminar, which took place last year in twenty primary schools of the 2nd Educational Region of Primary Education in Achaia Prefecture (Southwest, Greece). Six of them are in working-class urban areas, five in suburban and the remaining seven in rural areas. In these schools, about 180 teachers are serving, the vast majority of them are women (71%) and have served in education for fifteen years (Mean).

The seminar included a 45 minute teaching session from the school counsellor on the course of History in the 6th Grade (elementary) and discussion among the participating teachers. The aim was to highlight target-based teaching, time management, the use of historical sources and of ICT and the advantages of team-work. Also, to highlight the consultative role of the school counsellor, who should ensure the continuous and reliable teacher training.

At the beginning of the year, we communicated and collaborated with the Director and the Teachers’ Association for the seminar. Teachers of the region have participated in training workshops referring to the curriculum of language and mathematics, the investigation and treatment of learning disabilities, the project method, the management of aggression and delinquent behavior in schools, the use of the internet, etc.

The basic concern for the implementation of the action was the possibility to operate negatively, if teachers felt that they had to “follow” the didactic proposal that was presented. We designed the seminars concerning the theory of “transformative learning” of Jack Mezirow (2007), who argues that adult learning is not mere accumulation of knowledge, which is added to as one becomes older, once as adults reframing our experiences.

After the monitoring of school counsellor’s teaching proposal, teachers evaluated the seminar. It resulted that what piqued their interest was the presentation of the objectives of the course, the use of sources and the communication within student groups. They ascertained that noting the objectives of the course helps students to remain more focused on the requirements of the course and to participate actively. This is due not only to the greater use of sources and the organisational integration in lessons, but also the marking of important words or phrases in the text helps students to achieve a better understanding of the lesson. Students also evaluated the lesson immediately after the end of teaching. They answered that the work in groups, the use of ICT and the cooperative atmosphere which had developed, satisfied them.

Teachers tried to implement some of the suggestions in the other disciplines (e.g., Language, Mathematics, Geography, Social and Political Education).

We acted and we operate a wiki in which more than 120 teachers submit suggestions, ideas, comments, submissions, reviews. It functions as a space for thought and debate, not only about education but moreover they disseminate their proposals for theatre, events, books, etc.

It is very important nowadays to work collectively to establish networks of collaboration and interaction, in order for schools to become ‘learning communities’. This school year, most schools of the region have carried out joint teaching visits, undertaken joint programmes and implemented a common annual schedule.

In conclusion, the results are positive. The objectives of the project were achieved. Teachers, in their great majority, have agreed to try our didactic proposal and to consider and adopt items capturing their interest.

Nikolaos Manesis
nmanesis@otenet.gr
Phd in Sciences of Education
University of Patras, Greece
and serves as School Counsellor in Primary Education

Sofia Foka
sofiafoka001@gmail.com
Med. Teacher in Primary Education, Greece
Lately, the Slovak Ministry of Education released the report on a decade of the implementation of human rights education in Slovak schools. Believe or not, no one really paid attention. Maybe, because of the general awareness that human rights education is something very formal and maybe because of the results that were possibly expected and so not surprising. Actually, they were surprising.

The report says that every tenth Slovak pupil lacks knowledge on particular human rights. More than 70% of children just do not know the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the percentage number had increased within the decade. Two thirds of pupils generally know the right to education, but only 3.2% of them recognise other rights, such as the right to identity and acceptance.

Almost 50% of pupils have personal experience of their human rights being disregarded at school - in particular not having the possibility to express his or her opinion on bullying. And the third most numerous children’s answer on how they solve violation if it occurs was not sharing it with anyone. However the majority of Slovak pupils consider human rights education as important to them. 72% do participate in human rights school activities only if they are obligatory and the level of pupils’ engagement is insufficient. It is similar with teachers. The vast majority of them believe that pupils are interested in human rights and the knowledge is important to them. Nevertheless, more than 44% of teachers think that bigger rooms should be provided for human rights education together with wider elaboration of some curricular contexts.

And surprisingly, almost 77% of teachers do not attend any kind of in-service human rights education and training and their participation in activities (intra and extra-curricular) is on a steady decline. In addition, significantly fewer teachers think that human rights education influences pupils’ attitudes in a positive way. (in 2005 a positive influence was recorded by 76% of teachers, whereas in 2013 this percentage was 59.3%).

Something positive intrudes here to say, perhaps about parental engagement. Parents affect the lives of children in a unique way and, as such, their role in children’s empowerment has to be stressed. Parents are actually satisfied with the scope of human rights education and in more than half of families, ongoing discussion happens about human rights, particularly on the right to education and freedom of expression, and generally on human rights and the rights of the child. At the same time, 56.5% of parents lack knowledge about the Child Rights Convention and more than third of children experience rights violation inside the family - lack of privacy, freedom and room to express their opinion.

What message comes out of it? It is recorded that Slovak schools are actually not able to respond to national and international policies fruitfully delivering messages on children and youth empowerment in order to understand the basis of human rights and so became active citizens. Schools obviously lack capacity, and possibly understanding for the implementation of such strategies and ten years of focus on human rights education might also not be enough.

On the other hand, educating the next generation to be able to stand up for their
rights and to protect those vulnerable, to understand self and other identities, to develop intercultural competencies and productive relations should be an issue of wider context of social inclusion and as such the intervention area for other departments of a country’s governance (family, social affairs, security, culture, economy etc.).

What else can be noticed? Non-governmental organizations are usually ones who point out that children and youth policies cannot be formulated and implemented without those who are concerned. Harmful situations can happen if adults transfer their knowledge to children and young persons without changing the learning perspective.

In spring this year, NGOs initiatives brought about the change to the children and youth empowerment and its learning perspective. A Conference “Empowering Children and Youth in Active Citizenship and Human Rights” held in Štrba, Slovakia, hosted many formal and non-formal civic initiatives, including those led by young high school volunteers.

Different perspectives of speakers had created a meaningful mosaic of real children and youth participation. A key conference speech presented by the Icelandic Institute for Financial Literacy stressed the importance of synergy between social and economic empowerment where changing attitudes affect people’s behaviour. As one of the conference results, Slovak NGOs - inspired by Icelandic example - organised training for teachers educating mostly Roma coming from culturally and socially diverse family environments.

Active learning methods used in five modules of balanced social and financial literacy seems to be an effective strategy for children’s empowerment with lifelong learning potential and further labour market participation. Many other benefits (e.g. intergenerational learning) may stimulate adults - family and community members - to gain the same competencies as their children do. Productive relationships and life satisfaction may become the new human rights education approach. Isn’t it what we really need? Let us see in the next decade.

Barbora Vaněk
barbora.vanek@umb.sk
Changes are not always easy to tackle but not to do so in the changing world would be rather unwise. In 2013, a new idea was introduced to the national curriculum of basic school education in Estonia – a creative assignment at the third stage of basic school education as one requirement for graduating from basic school. It might be a known concept for many others, but it was one to make teachers and students ponder across our country.

The main aim of such an assignment is to engage and improve students’ creative self-expression, co-operation and autonomous learning as well as guide the students in better understanding of their own abilities in different aspects of their studies. The more subjects integrated within the assignment, the better. All of this carries in mind the idea of leading the students to a more broadened understanding of their choices for further education.

Aruküla Basic School teachers now have three years of experience in mentoring creative assignments. The whole process is set up in stages as follows:

- Teachers note down their preferences in topic areas;
- Students either pick what’s presented or introduce their own idea when contacting a mentor of their own choice (it all comes down to the negotiation skills);
- The main outlines of the assignment, based on the type (research, project, artwork, etc) and the goals, are set in discussion with the mentor;
- Deadlines are set for the students to present and discuss the progress of the assignment, its goals and outcomes with the mentoring teacher throughout the year;
- By the final deadline the students have carried out the assignment and written a report of the process and outcomes.
- The student presents the creative assignment publicly to a panel of teachers and fellow students.
- The mentoring teacher and the panel give final feedback to the students and decide on the final grade.

How did it go for us? Our school was lucky to have a Comenius project going on at the time of big decisions. It was an obvious move to link the creative assignments with the project work and enjoy watching the students let their imagination and ambitions take over.

Without doubt, this contributed immensely to our project “Let’s Click!” in becoming one of the best twelve projects in Europe in 2014 and to our students in experiencing their capabilities from a whole new point of view.

Four different creative assignments were carried out within the project, all of them having collaboration as the key ingredient of success. The international aspect of the project added to the creative impulses and increased motivation. Two art projects, a concert event and an English language project were carried out.

Art project 1. “Polish national costumes”

As Poland was one of our partners in the project, one student decided to research the history of the national costumes of different regions in Poland and created the “Head in the Hole” (not sure what it’s re-
ally called) plywood boards representing the costumes of the region our partners were from. During the creative assignment the student was fully engaged in the integration of history, art, woodwork and languages. The outcome of the assignment was a great attraction during the visit of all partner schools.

Art project 2.
"Introducing Aruküla" booklet
Two students researched the history of their own home town, creating a booklet including important and interesting information about all the main sights of the area. The booklet was illustrated by drawings of the students themselves and was finally designed using IT skills in practice.

The assignment also integrated foreign languages, since the texts were given in Estonian, Russian and English. The booklet was used in a "Photo Hunt" activity during the visit of all partner schools.

ESL project.
"A Guided Tour in the Old Town of Tallinn", at Town Hall Square of Raekoja
A group of three students decided to try out the job of a guide and did research on the sights of the Old Town of Tallinn. That part of our capital city is steeped in history and old legends. The students planned a route through the Old Town with stops at different sights, during which they spoke of interesting facts about the sights as well as our culture and traditions.

After the tour the whole group of visitors and hosts had lunch at our favourite pancake restaurant and took part in a quiz including information received during the tour. The project was a fantastic integration of history and English language skills. It also gave the visitors from all partner schools a nice overview of the city.

As the coordinators of the project "Let's Click!", we hosted the final meeting of all project partners. One student took upon the organisation of the grand finale of the project as her creative assignment. She contacted all the partner schools in order to find out everyone’s suggestions and contributions to the event, planned out the concert timeline, performances, speeches, as well as decorated the venue, designed the invitations etc. The two project years came to an end with a concert and a banquet at our school, welcoming our partners from Poland, Hungary, Lithuania and Portugal. It was a day to remember!

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As if a Comenius project is not as intense as it is, adding stage 3 creative assignments on top of it at basic school level seemed, at one point, mind-blowingly stressful for both the students and the teachers.

Nevertheless, in hindsight, there could not have been a better learning curve for all, including the school. We were all forced to step out of our comfort zone in order to succeed and in doing so we all had a great lesson in setting goals, time-management, effective collaboration, our own identities and ambitions besides the obvious subject-based knowledge improvement.

The students involved in the project work and the creative assignments will never think the same again and we, the teachers, can be sure they will put in the same effort in everything they decide to do in the future as well. What more is there to wish for a teacher?

Even if, at first, it might not seem to be worthwhile to try something new and laborious – it is! Especially when you have true team spirit among even the smallest part of the staff.

Krista Kuusk
krista.kuusk@gmail.com
Ivika Jegis
ivika.jegis@arukyla.edu.ee
Aruküla Basic School, Estonia
One of the basic rights of the Dutch constitution is the freedom of education. This means that everyone is allowed to establish a new school.

The community of Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands, is willing to establish four new schools for their municipality. These schools can be primary schools (ages 4-12) or secondary schools (ages 13-18). Amsterdam and ‘Kennisland’, an ‘organisation for social innovation for a smart society’ (https://www.kl.nl/en/), launched a contest in order to receive plans for new schools.

Our university-teachers organised a meeting to think about creating a new school. We, as learners were very excited about the contest and this meeting. After the meeting, we decided to specify our ideas and we submitted the following plan:

Since our study, Academic PABO Amsterdam focuses on primary education, we decided to design a primary school. Children start school in September and the school year ends halfway through July. When a child is four years old, they start in first grade. Each year they go to the next grade, until the 8th grade.

Here are the further specifications of our new school:

Our school is evidence-informed (https://www.nfer.ac.uk/research/evidence-informed-education/)

This means that we want to stimulate an attitude of inquiry, not only for the staff members, but also for our learners. Science and technology education will be integrated into the school curricula, because this stimulates children to ask questions themselves. Moreover this means that we value professionalism. We want to teach our learners that people keep on learning their entire lifetime and we want teachers to aspire to this goal as well.

Our school is based on the self-determination theory. (http://www.selfdeterminationtheory.org/)

This theory states that a child has three basic needs: competence, relation and autonomy. These are the core values of our school. Competence means that both learners and teachers have an attitude of inquiry and also the fact that we teach around themes. Relation represents the relations between school and parents and mutually in between children. Autonomy is shown in individual curricula, and also in the fact that the school wants to be self-sufficient with lunch, by maintaining school gardens. The vegetables that grow in these gardens, are prepared by learners during cooking activities and will be served for lunch. All learners collectively eat lunch. All this is to make the learners aware of the heritage of food and to eat healthily.

Besides these three core values, collectivism and individualism have important roles within our school. In the morning learners work collectively in combination groups (1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8) with the central theme for that specific period. Themes last for eight weeks which means that five themes will be presented in one year. In the afternoon the learners work individually. Here the combination groups (1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8) are mixed and they work on their own individual goals. It is also possible for learners to work together with learners from other grades, on a project that matches both learners’ interests. This is how we as a school try to stimulate children to decide for themselves what they want to learn and what they need in order to achieve this.

After the submission of our idea, we were among the last fifty submissions. Initially there were 124 submissions. Unfortunately our plan was not chosen for further elaboration.

Sylvia Drijver & Debbie Vertelman
Students of Academic PABO Amsterdam, the Netherlands
sylvia.drijver@student.uva.nl
debbie.vertelman@student.uva.nl

Teachers’ salaries in Europe 2014/15 report published

A Eurydice annual report provides a comparative analysis on teachers’ and school heads’ statutory salaries and allowances in Europe for 2014/15.

It also includes individual country sheets with detailed information on issues such as annual gross salaries, salary progression and available allowances.

The report covers all the EU Member States as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Turkey.

One of the main findings of this publication is that compared to 2013/14, teachers’ salaries have increased in the majority of European countries in 2014/15, with salary reforms and adjustments to the cost of living mentioned as the main reasons.

Source: Eurydice

Download the Report (pdf) (click)
In the western world, mental health has gained a greater focus than before. A Norwegian survey of teachers, school administrators and school owners shows that the knowledge and expertise about mental health and school life is lacking. There is little clear framework for accountability and how to address this issue.

Mental health is a central and important topic, which increasingly is becoming a greater challenge for the individual human being and society as a whole. There is a lot of literature and research in mental health and pedagogy separately, but little research has been conducted on these fields together. Through our master’s work, we examined the importance of pedagogy with regard to youth and their mental health.

This research is a literature study that examines Norwegian secondary school students and how their mental health is cared for in the Norwegian secondary schools. As researchers, we have an educational philosophical basis and an intention to open up to fundamental questions of the educational work.

In Norwegian secondary schools, it may appear that the student’s academic training is more appreciated than their mental health. The consequences of this may be that their further education and quality of life is impaired. It is scientifically proven that mental difficulties and disorders affect learning and development in a negative sense.

A student’s mental health is often addressed through standardized methods drawn from a medical and psychological perspective. Our research shows that this can become problematic when these methods will be used in an educational context, where all students are unique and have corresponding different needs. We analyse these methods and refer to how and why they are inadequate through analysing the story of the invisible child Ninni from Moomin world.

The invisible child is a short story for children and is written by Tove Jansson. It takes place in a beautiful place named Moomin valley. This valley is a peaceful place where the Moomin characters live in harmony. The story describes how the character Ninni’s mental health is affected by her aunt’s mistreatment, and because of this Ninni becomes invisible to others. The Moomin family take her into their family and give her the time and care she needs to become visible again. This story clearly shows how Ninni’s mental health is affected to such an extent that she becomes invisible. We take part in her journey to the visibility and use this as basis for analysis of how educational institutions can work with young people and their mental health. Care, recognition, hope and confidence are aspects that help Ninni in the journey to visibility.

The pedagogical meeting with Ninni has qualities that do not have a systematic character, but arose spontaneously in the moment. The implications of this story are discussed in a school context. The story of Ninni shows that it is possible for young people to become visible again, but that it requires time and patience. The change will be gradual, but the youth need support from others in that moment a need arises. Through relationships Ninni built up a trust in her "co-Mummies" and it seems to affect Ninni and her mental health.

Gradually the Moomin family got a glimpse of the real Ninni and they continued to give Ninni the time she needed. The patience that is reflected in this story shows that if you never lose faith in the young people, you can be the significant other.

The pedagogical meeting with Ninni has qualities that do not have a systematic character, but arose spontaneously in the moment. The implications of this story are discussed in a school context. The story of Ninni shows that it is possible for young people to become visible again, but that it requires time and patience. The change will be gradual, but the youth need support from others in that moment a need arises. Through relationships Ninni built up a trust in her “co-Mummies” and it seems to affect Ninni and her mental health.

Gradually the Moomin family got a glimpse of the real Ninni and they continued to give Ninni the time she needed. The patience that is reflected in this story shows that if you never lose faith in the young people, you can be the significant other.

Our conclusion is that research can guide us in our educational practice, but it is of the utmost importance that research does not control our approach to youth and their mental health. In other words, it is necessary to have a different approach to young people and their mental health from the traditional one. Teachers and other adults must be conscious of their role when they face youth and their mental health. It is therefore essential to have a pedagogy that sees all of life and all as-pects of life in a context. The safeguarding of young people’s mental health should have preference over the training of academic skills. These skills are important for each individual and for society as a whole. Good mental health can give young people greater opportunities to acquire this professional expertise.

The story about Ninni highlights this in an exceptional way.

Camilla Askevold Saersten
camilla.saersten@outlook.com
Veronicka Ersvaer Ruud
veronickaruud@hotmail.com

Link to the Master thesis:
http://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/handle/11250/275360
70 colleagues from 12 countries attended the Learning Teacher Network’s 2nd International ESD/GAP Seminar on 5-7 November in Edinburgh, Scotland UK.

The seminar started with an instructive and interesting reception at the new, modern and fascinating Scottish Parliament, which is built on transparency both regarding the architecture and the interactivity with citizens.

During the enjoyable seminar days the participants appreciated inspiring presentations by leading experts on Education for sustainable development (ESD), the UNESCO Global Action Programme (GAP) and the Scottish implementation of Learning for Sustainability (LfS) in policy and school practice.

Prof. Rosa Murray from the University of Edinburgh gave the seminar an interesting overview about education in Scotland, the Natural Change Project, sustaining teacher learning, and the standard for career-long learning for Scottish teachers for the 21st century. “If we are not teaching for Learning for Sustainability, we are by definition teaching for irrelevance.”

UNESCO Chair Prof. Charles Hopkins gave a comprehensive overview of the Global Action Programme, and more in depth discussed a domain framework for whole system approach to ESD. In an interactive dialogue with the participants he unfolded education quality as well as ESD pedagogies.

The head teacher, deputy head and in particular pupils from St. Eunan’s Primary School in Clydebank made a marvellous presentation about their whole school approach with pupils’ empowerment and engagement, demonstrating excellent and holistic ESD practice.

In an enlightening way Prof. Peter Higgins from the University of Edinburgh por-
trayed the origins, progress and prospects of Learning for sustainability in Scotland. Dr. Alan Britton from the University of Glasgow followed up on this and elaborated on ‘Can we achieve a coherent policy approach to ESD? What might a coherent policy approach look like?’.

Dr. Martin Fitzgerald from the Limerick Institute of Technology, Ireland engaged the participants in interactive group discussions on the understanding and designing of programmes and curricula in ESD.

The seminar was buzzing with energy and ideas in a lovely atmosphere.
What teachers could learn from animal trainers

Teachers apparently spend less time teaching and more time managing misbehaviour nowadays than they used to, at least in my country. I worry that standard Teachers’ Education does not provide the tools to handle unruly behaviour, and that many teachers flounder. Interestingly, they could potentially have a lot to learn from animal trainers.

Children differ from non-human animals in many respects, but similarities abound, too. Animal trainers cannot use language when teaching, and have developed effective and humane techniques to achieve learning in non-verbal individuals, while still keeping the process fun and engaging. Many of these skills, in my view, would be useful in a school environment, since fundamental learning and decision making mechanisms are the same in puddles, pigs, parrots – and people.

Teaching is about changing the way the learner thinks, or behaves. Animal trainers know how to change behaviour: the type of behaviour, the frequency, and intensity. To bring about behaviour change, the trainer changes the environment.

Learners choose to keep doing behaviours that lead to desirable outcomes, and avoid repeating behaviours that do not.

Communication in animal training is about letting the animal know what works, generally by providing treats when they show desirable behaviour. The cat raises its left paw, we give him some tuna fish. He does some more paw waving, gets more tuna. Do teachers always inform students when they behave correctly? With children, eye contact, a smile or a word of encouragement may constitute reinforcement. However, in a chaotic environment, teachers may focus on undesirable behaviour - an approach which would be highly counter-productive in animal training.

Animal trainers have a whole toolbox to solve problem behaviours, such as teaching the animal an incompatible behaviour. If the cat is climbing up your trousers to get to the food, paw waving would be a better alternative: he cannot sit and wave his left paw and dig those claws into your leg at the same time. In the classroom, a boisterous child may be solicited to help distribute papers.

Punishment is a last resort in modern animal training, for ethical reasons but also because the effects of punishment on behaviour are unpredictable and may damage relationships. Likewise, children may resent a teacher using aversive techniques, and stop focusing on learning.

To conclude, there is a lot that teachers could learn from animal trainers. They know how to communicate, motivate, and solve behaviour problems and the importance of avoiding punishment. To succeed as an animal trainer, verbal language is of limited use and the understanding of learning processes, motivation and the science of behaviour change is vital. I propose that this knowledge would be equally useful in any school.

Karolina Westlund, ILLIS ABC Animal trainer, lecturer, scientist

Positive reinforcement produces motivated learners. Courtesy: Stephanie Edlund.

Communication in animal training is important. Photo graciously provided by Karin Stillberg, Photographer Evelina Rönnberg.

Empowering the Teacher of Tomorrow

The Learning Teacher Network’s 11th annual International Conference will be held at the four star Nordic Hotel Forum in Tallinn, Estonia on 22-24 September 2016 with the title ‘Empowering the Teacher of Tomorrow’.

The focus of the 2016 conference is how to empower and build capacity of ‘The Teacher of Tomorrow’ for inspiring and successful teaching and learning today and tomorrow. The underpinning perspective of the conference will be quality education and learning, and to embrace knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that empower teachers and learners to contribute to sustainable development. The conference programme is currently being finalised. The registration period will begin at the end of 2015. We hope to see you in Tallinn!
Let’s make Earth Day a Learning Teachers’ Network Day!

The Learning Teacher Network is promoting Education of Sustainable Development on many levels, and still developing. The next step, for schools involved in this network, could be a co-operative, active participation in Earth Day, a worldwide yearly event, created back in 1970 to protect the planet and secure a sustainable future. As the next Earth Day is 22th April 2016, there is plenty of time for planning the event.

Environmental issues and development of sustainable education have been on the agenda in the Learning Teacher Network for years, and the network’s efforts and contribution to EDS is increasing, now as Key Partner to UNESCO in the Global Action Programme for Capacity Building of Educators.

Earth Day is a yearly event that started out in 1970. The story goes that in 1969 a massive oil spill in California caused U.S. senator, Gaylord Nelson to announce the idea for a “national teach-in on the environment”. As a result an environmental movement was born, naming the 22nd April “Earth Day”.

Since then Earth Day has been celebrated all over the planet. In 192 countries Earth Day is enhancing environmental awareness on this day, and through education addressing the increasing ravaging of our planet caused by climate change and the need for sustainable living. Earth Day illustrates and reminds us of the need for all of us to protect our environment.

Planning Earth Day in schools is easy, because the Internet offers a lot of help for educators. A search on Earth Day resulted in 208,000,000 hits. On top of the list is: www.earthday.org

My first encounter with The Learning Teacher Network was in Ljubljana 2009, where I attended a conference called: “Creative Learning for a Sustainable World”. It was very inspiring to meet, discuss and talk about development of sustainable education with other educators and researchers from 20 countries, and since then it has remained an inspiration to attend conferences and exchange experiences and ideas for me and my colleagues. My school, Sabro- Korsvejskolen has developed a sustainable practice and this year we participated in the celebration of Earth Day, in co-operation with partner schools in a European Erasmus project, called, “Innovating Teaching Methods for the 21st Century”.

The Earth Day celebration in the Erasmus project was very successful. Our goal in the project is to try out new teaching methods, so we had decided to make Earth Day a Peer Educators’ day. Students from the older classes taught the younger students. Some of the teachers in the project were far from eager to leave their teaching to students, but the result was better than we had hoped. Not only did the younger students pay more attention to the teaching to students, but the result was better than we had hoped. Not only did the younger students pay more attention to the teaching, but the older students really learned a lot about sustainable behaviour and living, because they had to prepare teaching lessons for their peers.

In our school, using Peer Education as a method on Earth Day solved another problem - namely that many teachers had little understanding of the concept and importance of ESD. But the prospect of spending a day preparing other projects and discussing pedagogical approaches with colleagues, because someone else did their teaching job, pleased everyone.

One of the student groups made a short video on their Earth Day teaching, and subtitled it in English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sq-FNZNAsK&app=desktop

Around the planet, political and spiritual leaders are now addressing the increasing climate and resource problems. Among others, Pope Francis issued a papal encyclical this summer, with the message that it is imperative to protect this earthly home created by God for the benefit of man, from the damage done by mankind. Barack Obama has been quoted worldwide saying: “There is such a thing as being too late when it comes to climate change”. Let us as teachers DO something to prevent the damage by helping future generations to go greener!

Birthe Witt Jason
birthewittjason@gmail.com
Sabro Korsvejskolen, Denmark
Focus on Current Events Motivates Pupils to Read

Newswise is a programme for English reading comprehension based on current events, with much emphasis on extending vocabulary. Newswise is a follow up on the successful Dutch reading programme Nieuwsbegrip, which is used in more than 6,000 Dutch schools. The focus on current events motivates pupils to read the texts and results in improved reading comprehension. The underlying idea is that the focus on current topics enhances vocabulary and general knowledge. Exactly these two elements are important prerequisites for reading comprehension.

For whom is Newswise?
Newswise is written for pupils in the upper grades of primary education, secondary education, vocational training and special education. Pupils need at least an A1 CEF (Common European Framework of Reference) level of English. Newswise guarantees an ongoing line from primary to secondary education and meets the requirements of the different levels with which pupils enter secondary education.

How does it work?
Newswise comes out once a fortnight on Tuesday afternoon. The lessons are written at two CEF levels: A2 and B1. The informative texts, based upon current (world) topics, are written by a native speaker. The language used in Newswise is English.

The texts are accompanied by assignments, the aim of which is to teach pupils how to read strategically. In the assignments the following evidence-based reading strategies are used:

- predicting
- making connections
- clarifying
- generating questions

While reading the text, pupils use a step-by-step plan in which the reading strategies have been incorporated.

The website www.newswise.eu was launched on the third of November. The first Newswise issue is about Spectre, the twenty-fourth James Bond film. To give you an idea (text level B1):

“Spectre
In October the latest Bond film, starring Daniel Craig, premiered worldwide. In cinemas across Europe you can dive into the world of the English superspy 007 as he becomes caught up in a threateningly evil organisation named Spectre. Hence the title of the film.

Climax
Far from the simple stand-alone stories of old, this Bond film is the climax of a four-movie saga that started in Casino Royale (2006), followed by Quantum of Solace and Skyfall. The four films, like chapters in a book, have dug into his childhood, loss of love and a mentor. No longer is Bond just someone ‘saving the world and looking good doing it’. This Bond is filled with emotional conflict. He has matured. He has been given a soul. [...]”

And the first exercise:

PREDICT AND READ THE TEXT
1. You are going to read a text. Read the explanation.

2. The title of the text you are going to read is: Spectre. The headings of the text are: Climax, Thrilling, The plot, The Bond formula and Cinema. What is the main topic of the text? What is the text going to tell you about this topic?

3. What do you already know about this topic? What have you seen, heard or read? Have you seen other Bond films? Write down in one minute as many words as you can that have something to do with the topic of the text.

4. Now read the text. Use the Step-by-step Reading Guide. Use the Word help if you come across a word you don’t understand.

5. In question 3 you wrote down words that have something to do with the topic. Which words did you also find in the text? Circle those words.

6. Was your prediction right?

7. Did your background knowledge about this topic help you understand the text better?

Newswise free trial subscription
With a trial subscription you will have a free two month access to the website www.newswise.eu, without any obligations.

Drs. Marianne Molendijk
Projectleader Newswise/Nieuwsbegrip
CED-Groep Rotterdam
M.Molendijk@cedgroep.nl
Costa Rica Center at Osnabrück University
- Interdisciplinary Research Unit

The Costa Rica Center at Osnabrück University aims to promote international and intercultural academic and scholarly exchange between Costa Rica and Germany.

Its transdisciplinary research profile and activities are geared towards innovation and cooperation. The members of the cluster come from different disciplines and fields including biology, educational studies, geography, catholic theology, psychology, literary and cultural studies, sport and movement science as well as economics.

The participating faculties at Osnabrück University are Cultural Studies and Social Sciences, Educational and Cultural Studies, Biology / Chemistry, Language and Literary Studies, Human Sciences, Business Administration and Economics.

The intercultural research at the Costa Rica Center is concerned with value-based and future-oriented issues and debates in the study of society and culture.

The centre’s main research fields include:
- development, education and (dual) teacher education
- values and human rights education
- memoria, compassion and peace
- environment, economy and sustainability
- biodiversity and biosciences
- intercultural economic psychology

The Centre examines pedagogical, socio-political, cultural, religious, socio-ethical, ecological as well as economic standards in their respective contexts, drawing a comparison between Costa Rica and Germany, between Latin America and Europe. The range of subjects allows a differentiated examination of the self-awareness, the development and the changes within the two democracies, the Republic of Costa Rica and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Research focus: values and human rights education

One of the Costa Rica Centre’s focus areas within the field of education is the values and human rights education, which entails comparative research on empathy as well as justifications, forms and contents of a values education in the public education system (ranging from early childhood and school education to vocational training and the universities).

Its goal is the definition of recognized and interculturally comparable standards for an empathy-based values and human rights education within the teacher education and professionalization.

Aiming at a comparison between Latin America and Germany, the Costa Rica Centre and its partner institutions specialising in values and human rights education work on the realisation of their research projects within the higher education system. (Responsible expert: Dr. phil. Susanne Müller-Using)

Projects and activities

Based on their research focuses, the Costa Rica Centre’s members carry out subject-related research and co-operation projects with Costa Rica. In the context of academic exchange, the Centre organizes lecture series, workshops and study trips both in Germany and Costa Rica.

Interdisciplinary summer schools in both countries enable international students to gain a varied insight not only into academic life and the academic offer abroad, but also into the professors’ theoretical and practical approaches. Particular emphasis is placed upon individual encounters and conversations. In every activity, the students and professors benefit from an intercultural dialogue within their own discipline and beyond.

Student exchanges between Germany and Costa Rica are supported by the Costa Rica Center. In cooperation with the Centre for Teacher Education at Osnabrück University and the institutes of educational studies at our partner universities, internships in Costa Rica are arranged, coordinated and supervised. Together with the International Office, the Costa Rica Center answers questions regarding the Bachelor’s and Master’s programs as well as the doctoral programs at Osnabrück University. It also offers help finding a suitable doctoral advisor.

The Costa Rica Centre is as a public-private partnership organization within the University, sponsored by the Sievert Foundation for Science and Culture (Sievert Stiftung für Wissenschaft und Kultur), which has been supporting the University of Osnabrück and the country of Costa Rica for years.

We are interested in cooperation with European teacher training institutions especially for one research project in teacher education on values and human rights education in teacher training concepts.

Detailed presentation of all research areas, projects and activities:

www.costaricazentrum.uni-osnabrueck.de/en

Dr. phil. Susanne Müller-Using
Director of the Costa Rica Center
Costa Rica Center
Osnabrück University, Germany
School of educational and cultural studies
susanne.mueller-using@uni-osnabrueck.de
Welcome to the 11th International Conference
Tallinn, Estonia
22-24 September 2016

Conference information on
www.learningteacher.eu/tallinn-conference-2016