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MATH IS FUN

The Learning Teacher magazine

THE LEARNING TEACHER NETWORK NO 3/2010

Sustainability in Action

**COLLEAGUE
COUNSELLING**

UWC-IBO Initiative

Real Life Learning

**EXPLORING SCIENCE
WITH FRIDOLIN**

Innovation

Today, we teachers see ourselves as a special group of professionals. And we are right in that.

Teachers disseminate national culture and European culture for future generations. And all of us have a personal opinion on how to do that. And we do so with a lot of enthusiasm and idealism.



Innovation is important if we wish to stay in touch with new generations. But innovation is sometimes difficult to realize.

It demands that we are informed about what is new and at the same time it demands stepping back and viewing from a distance to see what is really useful and what is just hype.

And here is the difficulty: do we have time enough to study innovations? Do we have money enough to ensure that we are informed about new ways of teaching, new approaches etc.

Many of you will have a negative answer to that, due to the situation of your school, and that of local and national authorities. However, finding new ways, being creative, reading, reflecting and doing or trying out can sometimes be very helpful in fostering a good feeling about what is achieved.

While this focuses on the teacher as an individual professional it might be very useful to involve colleagues and even the target group (children, youngsters, adults) in reflecting on innovation. The Magazine strives to give all of us involved in education, small impulses to start or to continue renewing current education processes.

Gerard de Kruif
Editor



Content

Real Life learning	3	Flexibility for an authentic learning space	12
Sustainability in action	4	Visible Learning	13
The Life school for all kids	5	A Survival Kit for European projects	15
Short news	6	The importance of drama club	16
Exploring science with Fridolin	7	Intercultural communication	17
UWC-IBO initiative on BiH	8	The chef's work	18
The European Year 2011	9	International anniverseries	19
Coileague counselling	10		

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Real Life Learning as part of (Education for) Sustainable Development



July 11 2010: World Cup Soccer Final: Netherlands V Spain: the world goes mad, no one works anymore, motorways are empty and the pubs are packed: the whole world is involved with this one game. How can such an involvement be created for important issues like caring for our own living environment or the whole earth?

Real Life Learning (RLL) can create this necessary involvement by tapping into the real world of children that is the world they live in and have a natural relation to. RLL is learning from the real world instead of learning from books or TV.

Children go outside to learn from nature about nature or to museums to see the real art for themselves. They go out into a construction site and discover themselves how structures are built and what choices must be made.

To become a critical, conscious citizen, there is no richer learning environment than real life Knowledge through first-hand experience of living and the natural environment, combined with a positive attitude to it, are essential for sustainable development.

It makes it possible for children to create a connection with their environment and with nature. Research has shown that students become more engaged, learn more and change behaviour due to RLL.

We conducted a study to investigate the incidence of RLL in The Netherlands. A questionnaire was presented to eighty primary school teachers. Furthermore, a group of twelve student teachers were

followed during the development and execution of an outdoor learning activity.

This part of the study showed difficulties of a personal and external nature in the development of the student and highlighted the supervision needs of the students.

However, the results of the questionnaire show some surprising results: teachers leave the classrooms more than we had expected. Furthermore the attitude of most teachers towards RLL is positive: the majority of teachers enjoy teaching outside and they are convinced that RLL is important.

On the other hand teachers find RLL hard to organise and are somewhat scared of losing 'control' of the children. External obstacles for RLL in school practice are: time in the school schedule and curriculum, money for activities, transportation and help from parents. Some internal barriers are: low self-efficacy and lack of knowledge about RLL possibilities around the school.

Jim Martin (2001) describes four phases on a learning curve that a teacher moves through when he is confronted with RLL: the logistical phase, the exploitation phase, the conceptual phase and the pedagogical phase. We used this model to assess the progress the student made during the assignment.

We found that the twelve student teachers experienced similar problems when executing their Real Life Learning assignment. How students coped with

these problems varied and to create an optimal learning experience the teacher trainer had to adapt to the individual needs of the student.

For example: one student needed training on how to organize a RLL-activity whereas another did not consider the world outside as a learning environment at all and needed didactical ideas and an open eye to the opportunities.

These results provide the teacher trainer college with opportunities to enhance RLL and the way pupils perceive and value their environment. If this vision is realised the world will not only be coloured with orange or yellow-red flags for World Cup Soccer Games, but also with green flags for the survival of our planet!

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Gert van der Slikke, Ilonka Prins, Mart Ottenheim and Ellen Sjoer
Centre for Science and Technology West, Research group: Knowledge infrastructure for Science and Technology, The Hague University, The Hague; Delft University of Technology, Faculty Technology, Policy and Management, Delft.

Sustainability in action



In this article the issue of raising the awareness and knowledge of bachelor students (age 18 - 23) on sustainable development is addressed. The experience of NHL University of Applied Science on this subject may be interesting for other schools. With approximately 10,000 students, NHL University is a medium-sized university of applied sciences, offering higher professional education programs which prepare for particular professions. The NHL is located in the Northern part of The Netherlands and offers Bachelor studies in four main areas of Healthcare and Welfare, Technology, Business and Management and Education and Communication.

As a result of an interactive development of a group of six students and approximately ten lecturers, the Minor Global Sustainability began in February 2008. Our motto is Think Global, Act Local. The minor programme takes about 4 months and is worth 30 ECTS. The idea was to give students a quick start of 6 weeks theory about sustainability, followed by a practical assignment with an external client from the local area. The assignment is tackled in multidisciplinary groups of 3-4 students.

Since 2008 a diverse range of real life cases have been worked out by the student groups:

- How to turn an existing recreation park into a sustainable site (Architect group);
- How to make a mixed residential/recreational area CO₂-neutral (Burdaard);
- A search for alternative biological degradable plastic packaging material

(Ecostyle);

- Temperature monitoring of heat pumps in houses (Witgaard);
- Negotiate and develop a draft Climate Agreement for companies and the municipality of Leeuwarden;
- Feasibility studies on application of wind and solar energy devices for several clients.

This year the NHL executive board also requested an internal study on how sustainability is addressed at the university.

Furthermore we have noticed at the final assessments that the conduct of students has changed considerably. They feel more responsible for their own behavior and eating habits. Some even start to grow their own vegetables or eat vegetarian food only.

The number of participating students has grown to approximately 15, but aims to target approximately 25 each year. We think the slow start is due to the fact that the NHL-wide Minor Global Sustainability is relatively unknown. The minor programme is not embedded in the main stream of study programmes.

Participation therefore depends on the enthusiasm of a small group of lecturers and students. However, all students who have completed the minor GS are very positive, and our clients are happy with the results of the assignments.

We would like to share our opinion on the Key Success Factors. We think other teachers and schools, both in primary and secondary education and also in universities can use this experience. Key Success Factors are in our opinion as follows:

- The mix of a brief but comprehensive

theory block, with excursions, guest lecturers, and a group of NHL-lecturers addressing sustainability from various angles (economics, ethics, environment, techniques).

- Furthermore, the excitement of working on an audacious goal for an external client is important. Results are relevant to the clients and students feel that their report will not end up in a desk drawer.

- Students also appreciate working in mixed groups: it poses an extra challenge for their social skills. They realize how a problem can be addressed in very different ways according to one's background and education, and they learn a lot from each other.

To transfer these success factors to other schools, we would like to recommend the following:

- Form interdisciplinary teams of teachers (who teach various subjects and various disciplines) who are intrinsically interested in sustainability.

- Invite interesting guest lecturers, who like to share their experience for free: parents, entrepreneurs, teachers from other schools

- Find real assignments in your region: ask the local entrepreneurs, shops, municipality etc. for small projects

- Use a group of students or pupils to organize this programme, as we did.

- Form mixed groups of students: various ages, profiles, boys and girls, to get a broad input

- Celebrate the launch of the programme, and have a 'success party' at the end where students and pupils present the outcome of their assignments to the external contractors, other students and teachers and perhaps even parents or people from the neighborhood

The internal NHL study this year revealed that about 70 % of the students think that sustainability is an important factor and about 80 % of the staff think similarly.

Maybe this programme would suit your school's population too! We are confident that the minor programme will be even more successful in the future, and we wish you much success with the important issue of Global Sustainability.

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The Life school for all kids Foundation

- Cameroon

The LIFE school for all kids foundation is founded by Reinier van Milligen, Alexander van der Harst and Karin Nieuwenbroek. Together with the great support of their friends they are working hard for a sustainable solution to the 'dying' LIFE school project in Bafmeng, Cameroon.

This is in the English speaking Western part of Cameroon. The aim of the foundation is to provide a healthy financial situation and didactic support to the life school project. The foundation is also planning to build a new school building which meets the requirements to get support from the Cameroon government.

Paul Poh Chesi (originally from the region, but an immigrant of The Netherlands) started the LIFE school project in Bafmeng, Cameroon together with a Dutch priest. These schools were established for kids whose parents can't afford to send them to a school, due to the cost of school fees, uniforms, schoolbooks etc.

In 2006 Paul Poh Chesi contacted The Hague University and a group of teacher training students went to Cameroon to further support the Project. Amongst them was Reinier van Milligen, now one of the 'founding fathers'. When he came back he was restless and kept dreaming of a sustainable solution for the survival of the

schools. His stories inspired his friends and they as a group had the idea: it must be possible to continue the work of Paul Poh Chesi.

When Paul Poh Chesi died suddenly in 2008, the LIFE school project slowly died with him. His sister, Beatris Chesi, tried really hard, but it proved very difficult for her to sustain the work.

When the government turned their back on them (they claimed the schools did not meet building standards for schools), new financial problems arose. Four of the schools were forced to close and the teachers began to drift away, leaving only four teachers behind for two schools and some 300 children.

When he learned what had happened, Reinier knew it was time for he and his friends to act. A group of nine people, which included a wide variety of young professionals in different expertises, went back to Bafmeng in Cameroon to try to support Beatrice.

Back home they immediately started to collect money with which they would try to solve some of the biggest and most urgent problems. In just two weeks they were able to build a new wooden school building and supply new schoolbooks. This success made them realise that it was

within their capabilities to come up with a permanent solution.

Coming back to Holland, Reinier, Alexander and Karin immediately started working on the establishment of a foundation. Relying on great support from their travel companions and also their field experiences they found the right concept: establishing a foundation which would raise funds from donations and gifts to realise its goals during the coming years. For the next two years the foundation will use the funds to pay the teachers salaries and collect enough money for a bigger and permanent school building. When this is realised the foundation will go further and set new goals for the future, especially in relation to the quality of education that the children in the schools receive.

Reinier Milligen and friends

For more information visit www.lifeschools.nl/ or contact at info@lifeschools.nl

There is also the possibility to follow us on twitter. [www.twitter.com/st.lifeschools](https://twitter.com/st.lifeschools)

Short News

The Singapore Method: Math is fun!

In 1995 Mr. Ban Har Yeap discovered that primary school children in Singapore were much more able to master math problems than anywhere else in the world. Comparing statistics on math he discovered that 40% of the Singapore children could solve math problems while only 4% of the children in the rest of the world could do so.

Since his discovery in 1995, Mr. Yeap is travelling around the world to explain 'the Singapore method'. The heart of the method is the visualizing of the math problems.

Example: Suppose $X+Y=11$ and $X+3Y=29$!!

Maybe you are becoming a little stressed on seeing this? In Singapore children at the age of 8 can solve this. Mr. Yeap 'translates' this math problem into two drawings: one of a boy holding a suitcase of 11 kg and a girl holding a suitcase of 29 kg. The clothes of the girl are three times as heavy as those of the boy. And so, the rest is easy.

For Singapore children age 9, finding 351:3 is easy. The figure is divided in: 300, 30 and 21. Children think in blocks and images; no abstract thinking. This is a much more natural way of doing math, Yeap says.

Many math methods in the world focus on children who are already good at math and the weaker children are forgotten. It is not only the Asian culture of hard work that helps the children to get such good results. It is the method AND also the teachers who are guided intensively and trained while in service, in math each year for approximately 100 hours!

This method of teaching math is conquering the world. Teachers in Australia, Canada, the US and Europe and also teacher trainers in The Netherlands (The Hague) are now prepared to use the method.

For further information:
www.singaporemath.com/
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singapore_Math_Method
www.marshallcavendish.com/education/
<http://www.greatsource.com/singapore-math/>

Record number of ERASMUS students

More students than ever went abroad for studies and company placements with EU support through the Erasmus programme in 2008/09. Almost 200 000 higher education students received grants to study or train abroad. This represents an overall increase of 8.7% on the previous academic year and means that more than two million young Europeans have benefited from Erasmus funding since the programme's launch in 1987.

Erasmus studies

168 200 students received Erasmus support to go abroad for studies and spent an average of six months in the host country, which is an increase of 3.4% compared to numbers in the previous year.

Erasmus company placements

Since 2007, Erasmus has offered students the opportunity to go abroad for placements in businesses or other organisations. This saw an increase of more than 50% on the previous year, to 30 400 students in 2008/09. A desire by students to increase their job prospects through practical work - as shown by a Eurobarometer survey in 2009 - is seen as a main reason behind the increasing popularity of Erasmus company placements.

Highest number of Erasmus students

The countries sending the highest numbers of Erasmus students were France (28 300 students), Germany (27 900) and Spain (27 400). The most popular destinations for Erasmus students were Spain (33 200 students), followed by France (24 600) and Germany (22 000).

Staff mobility

During the academic year 2008/2009, Erasmus supported more than 36 000 exchanges of staff from higher education institutions (up 13.6%).

Read more on http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/news2418_en.htm

Communication is the key

The level of communication with young children is more important than the language in which the communication is performed.

Dutch pedagogue, Anna Scheele finalized her PhD studies by comparing the development of the language of young children of 58 Dutch, 55 Turkish and 46 Moroccan-Berber children, aged 3 - 6.

The language capacity of the Turkish and Moroccan-Berber children falls behind, because they have to concentrate on two languages.

It appears that the amount of time spent on speaking Dutch in the Turkish and Moroccan-Berber families is less important than the level of the use of the language. Reading books and talking with the children on a variety of issues in whatever language, is helping children to overcome deficiencies in the other language.

Research proved that Turkish children in general master a higher abstract level of Turkish than Moroccan-Berber children. The reason for this is that there are more books/newspapers available for children in Turkish, than there are in the Moroccan-Berber language(s).

Earlier research also supports this theory: the higher the level of the mother tongue language the quicker children master the national language i.e. Dutch.

Volkskrant 050610; Dutch national newspaper

Comment: There was a time in The Netherlands all non-Dutch children had the right to learn their mother tongue during school time. Because of low results and complaints from Dutch teachers that these children missed so many lessons in Dutch, mother tongue lessons in primary education were skipped.

Several video's of Singapore math's in classrooms:

www.google.nl/search?hl=en&lr=lang_en&rlz=1T4GGLJ_en-GBNL310NL310&as_qdr=all&tbs=lr%3A1ang_1en%2Cvid%3A1&q=Singapore+Math&aq=f&aqi=g10&aql=&oq=&gs_rfai=



Exploring science with Fridolin

Competences for sustainability in early childhood education

Bringing Science Competences to the Children Thinking

A range of competences are necessary in a future-oriented, democratic society so that we are able to deal with the manifold challenges of our time responsibly and competently.

In this context, the OECD (2005) defines a selection of key competences that are considered crucial: the ability to act in socially heterogeneous groups, autonomous organizational and action abilities, and the interactive use of media and tools.

In order to sustainably operate in a self-determined manner in a world shaped by the natural sciences, aspects of scientific literacy must also be considered, in particular the acquisition of scientific action capabilities (see <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/36/35693281.pdf>).

However, the prerequisite for the acquisition of these action capabilities is that the relevant primary experiences can be achieved as early as pre-school and primary school in order to acquire the necessary central basic competences.

Thus, for the development of competences in measuring, ordering and experimenting, for example, it is imperative that the child possesses basic competences in comparing, perceiving differences and recognising relations (larger, smaller, equal).

Exciting Adventures of Exploration with Fridolin

The Fridolin Programme of the Graz School Biology Centre begins at pre-school and primary school age, and supports schools and playschools in the development of competence-oriented science and technology lessons for the long term in the form of a year-round educational partnership (see <http://www.naturerlebnispark.at>).

In a combination of various constructivist teaching models such as anchored instruction, problem-oriented learning, puppet science, a complex, experience-oriented learning scenario is created, which is supported by narrative, dramatic elements:

In various frame stories, Fridolin, the



mascot of the School Biology Centre, experiences exciting adventures of exploration and is faced with problematic situations that can only be solved with the help of the children.

In this way, all activities and all content that is examined have a meaningful context and a higher significance. The stories are designed in such a way that several paths are possible to reach a goal. Decorations and props support identification with the narrative scenario. As an identification figure, Fridolin quickly manages to appeal to the children emotionally and to arouse their attention. With the help of Fridolin it is also possible to involve otherwise reserved children in conversations and to encourage communicative abilities in many ways.

The "challenges" that the frame stories contain can only be solved by the children themselves in an exploratory manner, i.e. by constructive, active acquisition of knowledge and by using the resulting conclusions.

How competences in experimenting can be taught with the Fridolin programme?

The four most important approaches, which scientists also use to gain knowledge, are introduced in a child-friendly form:

- * Scientific discourse: "Chatting to Fridolin"
- * Literature studies: "Fridolin's clever book"
- * Create, perceive, document phenomena: "Observe and try out"
- * Hypothesis-led experimentation: "Fridolin's experiment".

The learning process is thus designed as a problem-solving process, during the course of which children test lines of action in a structured way, gradually acquire competences of knowledge, action and evaluation, and develop self-confidence.

"Fridolin's letters" and the material provided for lessons ensure that the activities in the School Biology Centre also continue in class and enable the learning process to be designed with a long-term focus.

Conclusion

Accompanying studies by the University of Graz verify the high level of acceptance of this educational partnership among the teachers (<http://www.uni-graz.at>). Very positive results have been revealed in relation to the long-term development of interest as well as the development of competence among the participants, in particular girls. The self-evaluation integrated into the programme provides important knowledge about the effectiveness of these kinds of research-discovery lesson approaches.

*Gerhild Bachmann, University of Graz, Department of Educational Sciences, Austria
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UWC-IBO Initiative on Bosnia and Herzegovina



Bosnia and Herzegovina faced a tragic war between 1992 and 1995. The Dayton Peace Agreement brought an end to the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina with preserved external borders. The new constitutional setup divided BiH into two entities, ten cantons and one district, with minimal state level powers. Education became a matter involving all the decisions of thirteen ministers of education!

There is no national curriculum nor any national criteria of assessment. In-service teacher training in BiH is weak and teachers lack seminars where modern methods of teaching and assessment are presented.

Due to the described situation students are attending schools according to their national background. The segregation of students is normally accepted as a constitutional right. The title »two schools under one roof« most properly describes the real situation in schools: one floor for one nationality, the second floor for the other

one. Students and teachers don't mix, each school has its own administration

In 2005, the UWC - IBO Initiative in BiH was established. The aim of this initiative, is to contribute to the integration of the three ethno-religious communities in the post-conflict development of Bosnia and Herzegovina through international education and to enable teachers to avail of modern in-service teacher training.

Two part initiative

The Initiative has the following activities:

- United World College in Mostar which is opened to all three national (or ethnic) groups and also to the students from all over the world. Students from more than 30 different nationalities are attending the International Baccalaureate Program for their last two years of secondary education. Students stay together in dormitories. More than 300 students graduated in the last three years. Young people are well equipped with the knowledge, skills and

international understanding necessary to bridge the persisting ethnic divides.

UWC in Mostar proves that education which is not based on national (or ethnic) background in BiH is possible and shows the way for an alternative, better education in BiH

- Centre for Professional Development of Teachers (CfPD) delivers in-service teacher training in student-centered teaching methodologies and modern methods of assessment for gymnazia teachers across BiH. The IB program is used as model of a modern program. CfPD organizes workshops and study visits to Slovenia for teachers of different subjects. More than 400 teachers participated in seminars, some of them for the first time after many years

- Support to IB school in Banja Luka and Sarajevo by providing financial resources.

Unique and important

The UWC- IBO initiative is almost the only Initiative in BiH which brings students and teachers together across all BiH in a real educational situation.

Students and teachers responses prove that the Initiative is very important for BiH and that it needs a better support from the BiH authorities and foreign organizations.

Ivan Lorenčić

*Director of Centre for Professional Development of Teachers
UWC- IBO Initiative in BiH*



2011 to be the European Year of Volunteering

The European Commission has decided to propose that 2011 be designated the "European Year of Volunteering".

In the European Union, millions of citizens are volunteering. People of all ages make a positive contribution to their community by investing some of their free time in civil society organisations, in youth clubs, in hospitals, in schools, in sport clubs, etc.

For the Commission, volunteering is an active expression of civic participation and strengthens common European values

such as solidarity and social cohesion. Volunteering also provides important learning opportunities, because involvement in voluntary activities can provide people with new skills and competences and can even improve their employability.

Volunteering has a great, but so far under-exploited, potential for the social and economic development of Europe. Dedicating 2011 to the topic of volunteering will help Member States, regional and local communities and civil society achieve the following objectives:

1. Work towards an enabling and facilitating environment for volunteering in the EU;
2. Empower volunteer organisations and improve the quality of volunteering;
3. Reward and recognise volunteering activities; and
4. Raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering.

Read more on http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/news/news820_en.htm



Colleague counselling

Key factors and benefits

The work that my colleagues and I do as counsellors for preschool teachers and assistants in the kindergartens, can sometimes be a somewhat "lonely" job, in the sense that we spend a lot of time visiting different kindergartens.

In the kindergartens, we are to some extent considered the "experts"; the ones who are often expected to answer almost any question and the one who is there to see what can be done to improve the pedagogical practice in each kindergarten.

Therefore, no one is "supervising" the job that we are doing, when we visit the kindergartens. Colleague counselling is therefore also functioning as an internal quality control, ensuring that we give the children and the adults we work with, the best support possible.

Twice a month, on a Tuesday, we four counsellors meet for two hours. We bring our coffee cups and water bottles, but this is not a meeting of the knitting society! This is far more serious; it is time for colleague counselling.

The format and content

On the first colleague counselling mee-

ting this semester, we took some time to decide the format and the content of our meetings. Basing the plan on how it had been done last semester, and with minor adjustments, it did not take us long to plan it out

1) We start with a round table discussion. In addition to presenting a case or topic, a preferred method of counselling is also presented, e.g. is direct advice needed, are good questions to stimulate reflection necessary, or is an open discussion best suited for the case/topic in question?

2) On the basis of the short presentations of cases and topics; we establish what we learn from the meeting, i.e. is there enough time for everyone at this meeting; which topics or cases are urgent, and which ones can wait until next time?

3) We decide how to structure the meeting and when to take a small break.

4) Cases and topics are presented and discussed. When the discussion of a topic/case comes to an end, the person who initiated is always asked: Was this of any help to you/was the advice useful? Did you get the answers/the advice that you needed?

Key factors for successful colleague counselling

On the basis of my experience with colleague counselling while also experiencing the absence of such a programme, I have identified key factors which contribute to making the counselling useful and time-efficient:

1) Consensus about what the goal for colleague counselling is (see Benefits), and also agreement about the format and the content of the meetings.

2) Meta-communication: In what way do we wish to communicate with each other during the meetings? When working out the format and content of the colleague counselling meetings, we also addressed this topic, and agreed to communicate in an open, honest and professional manner. In addition, it was stressed that the current case or topic should always be the focus of the meeting. "Chit-chat" belongs to the coffee-break.

3) Regular meetings: When the meetings are held at the same time and on the same day every week, every other week or every month, it is more likely that no one forgets or are busy with other ap-

pointments. Regular meetings also send the signal that colleague counselling is considered important and a natural part of the job.

4) Preparation: Before each meeting, everyone should prepare a case or some questions to bring to the group – that is, of course if there is something you wish to present at the meeting. Not everyone feels the need to present something every time. There is rarely time for everyone to get a thorough consultation at each meeting anyway, and it is preferable to pose specific questions that do not take too much time to answer.

5) Commitment: The most important factor for successful colleague counselling, is that each and every one in the college commits to making an effort, contributing, and taking the colleague counselling seriously. This, in addition to the factors mentioned above, will enable the colleague counselling meetings to be time well spent, to be enriching and to improve the quality of the work that we do.

Benefits

The benefits of taking time for colleague counselling are many, probably more than this article can include but here are some:

Quality control

When sharing cases, successes and challenges we meet in our daily work, we make our practice transparent and open to criticism and improvement. Listening to our colleagues sharing their experiences, stimulates reflection and gives us good ideas on how to improve our own practice.

This kind of openness also contributes to representing the workplace as a whole, as everyone gets insight into each other's way of working. This is important when it comes to gaining trust and cooperation from the people we meet every day, both children and adults.

Empowering your colleagues - and yourself

There is invaluable support in knowing that twice a month, I have the chance to get advice if I need it, or to contribute to supporting my colleagues if they need advice. It gives a feeling of being an important part of a college, and of being competent in the sense that someone else is in the need of my knowledge.

For me, it has been particularly empowering to experience that the colleagues whom I look up to, and who have far more experience than I do, can learn something from my experiences, knowledge and thoughts.

When I started working at the Educational Counselling Centre (ECC), the colleague counselling meetings provided me with a lot of the support that was necessary when I was new at the job. At the same time, some of my more experienced colleagues emphasise the positive effect of "fresh eyes".

In addition, we have a great culture for supporting and empowering each other at ECC, and at the colleague counselling meetings sentences like "great job!" and "well done!" are often heard. It might seem unimportant, but the collegial support that is enabled by prioritizing colleague counselling meetings (even at busy times), is of great importance in staying motivated and inspired in a job that can be hectic and often challenging.

Inspiration and update

There is no doubt that you can get inspiration from colleague counselling. It is inspiring to listen to your colleagues share their experiences, and it is also inspiring to observe the reflection and discussion you can stimulate by sharing your own thoughts and experiences. In many cases, as at ECC, a group of colleagues have different educational backgrounds and per-

spectives.

The effect of getting someone else's perspective on your thoughts and questions should not be underestimated. In addition to diversity when it comes to educational backgrounds, people making up a college always have different experiences, lives, and beliefs etc. – everything that constitutes a perspective that is different from yours.

When listening to your colleagues, there is also a great chance that you will hear about cases that are new to you. In that way colleagues can share knowledge about specific types of diagnosis, challenges or methods.

In addition, and this is especially relevant to people who work with diverse pedagogical material, you can share tools, plans and material that already exist, instead of having to develop something new every time a fresh challenge occurs.

In this way it is possible to save a lot of time, and at the same time be sure that the method or material you use is appropriate and useful. In this way, colleagues can keep each other up to date, and also avoid being set in their ways of working. With the help of each other, and by opening their eyes to new perspectives, colleagues can keep developing throughout their professional lives.

In the same way that we use colleague counselling for inspiration, I hope that this article can inspire you to see and make use of the benefits of colleague counselling. Thanks to my wonderful colleagues, Sigrun Karlshusbund, Inger Olaus Nordstad, I. Charlotte Aune and Kirsti D. Hillidge, for high quality colleague counselling.

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Flexibility in planning for an authentic learning space

How can we organize and plan our teaching in order to help our students develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge to make informed decisions for the benefit of themselves and others, now and in the future, and enable them to act upon these decisions?

How can we help our students maintain their desire to learn, this love of learning that fills every first grade student but so very few carry with them when they leave the educational system, and without which the Lifelong Learning Programme has but a poor chance of success?

When entering a classroom, we are met by complex structures, and within the framework of these the teacher has to create room and space for learning. The best way to do this is to allow the pedagogical and didactical considerations to determine how the timetable is going to look for any specific day or period.

Flexibility in Planning for an Authentic Learning Space is centered on the concept of allowing pedagogy to dictate the frames for learning. This means a clearly formulated outlook on education and learning, authentic teaching, an authentic classroom and authentic planning - a psychological as well as a physical space.

Authenticity

The concept of authenticity can be defined by three sub concepts: personal authenticity, social authenticity and professional authenticity.

Personal authenticity means that the teaching has to have meaning for the student. They have to be able to relate to the subject which usually only happens if they can perceive it as relevant to their every day lives outside the school and they must feel a sense of ownership in relation to the subject content.

Social authenticity is determined by the social and societal relevance of a topic. It has to be 'real'. Therefore, instead of picking any current topic as a pretext for a given problem it has to grow naturally from a societal context. It can also be relevant in relation to the democratic decision-making processes or democracy in general.

Professional authenticity means that the core areas of the subject are taught and processed in a professionally realistic way.

Perceiving something as meaningful is essential to learning as meaning has the

innate duality of -

- 1) motivating interest in dealing with that of personal or social relevance, and
- 2) understanding, which presupposes a connection to existing knowledge (as a hermeneutic learning spiral).

If we expect our students to relate to new knowledge, we have to ensure that they are familiar with the necessary tools in the shape of methods and possibilities.

The existing laws and articles in the field of education provide schools with a framework of core values within which to operate. This set of values determines the outlook on learning and runs as the main thread through the school and manifests itself through the management of the school, the division of work tasks, the organization of each day and the individual teacher's pedagogical choices.

Of course there are numerous ways of organizing within this overall framework. There is a direct line from the organization form to the individual teacher's pedagogical options.

Things (as well as thinking) take time and perhaps a school day divided into individual lessons acts as a hindrance to losing oneself, becoming fully absorbed and soaking oneself in a given subject or area of interest.

Offering a challenging learning environment

Flexibility in Planning for an Authentic Learning Space is based on a pedagogical ideal which has the development of the students' life options as its pivotal point and the autonomous teacher team as the basis for cooperation around the organization of teaching in order to create room and space for learning.

The students are offered a challenging learning environment where the teaching alternates between specific subjects, interdisciplinary areas and projects. The organization of the teaching is decided

by the teaching team who involve the students in setting targets for their own learning.

It is of utmost importance to create a school with a manageable and safe environment. This can be done in a variety of ways. One way is to create smaller manageable units to which the students can feel connected.

Furthermore it is crucial that the team has both time and the financial resources at their disposal as the various teaching periods (based on their content) are organized within the team.

This means that it is necessary for the schools to formulate a plan according to the entire year's standards, which then can be used flexibly. In that way the students' timetables become the expression of the pedagogical and didactical elements considered by the individual team concerning the teaching in a given period of time and therefore ensuring greater coherence.

The schools share the responsibility and co-creation of the individual's continuous desire to learn and thus create the preconditions for Lifelong Learning as a leading educational principle.

Through ongoing dialogue we can create a teaching based on the core values of democracy and support the development of the multifaceted potential of the students.

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"It is of utmost importance to create a school with a manageable and safe environment"



Visible Learning

The largest ever evidence based research into what actually works in schools to improve learning

Professor John Hattie at Auckland University, New Zealand, authored a study (first published in 2009) on effective teachers all around the world.

Through 15 years research he synthesised 800 meta-analyses on the influences on achievement in school-ages students and built a story about the power of teachers, feedback, and a model of learning and understanding.

The research involved 83 million students and represents the largest ever evidence based research into what actually works in schools to improve learning.

Six signposts towards excellence in education

The research found six evidence based signposts towards excellence in education:

1. Teachers are among the most powerful influences in learning.
2. Teachers need to be directive, influential, caring, and actively engaged in the passion of teaching and learning.
3. Teachers need to be aware of what each and every student is thinking and knowing, to construct meaning and meaningful experiences in light of this knowledge, and have proficient knowledge and understanding of their content to provide meaningful and appropriate feedback such that each student moves progressively through the curriculum levels.
4. Teachers need to *know the learning intentions* and success criteria of their lessons, *know how well they are attaining* these criteria for all students, and *know where to go next* in light of the gap between

students' current knowledge and understanding and the success criteria of: "Where are you going?", "How are you going?", and "Where to next?".

5. Teachers need to move from the single idea to multiple ideas, and to relate and then extend these ideas such that learners construct and reconstruct knowledge and ideas. It is not the knowledge or ideas, but the learner's construction of this knowledge and these ideas that is critical.

6. School leaders and teachers need to create school, staffroom, and classroom environments where error is welcomed as a learning opportunity, where discarding incorrect knowledge and understandings is welcomed, and where participants can feel safe to learn, re-learn, and explore knowledge and understanding.

In this, also note what is *not* said. Nothing about additional structural resources; nothing about class sizes; nothing about which subject is being taught; etceteras.

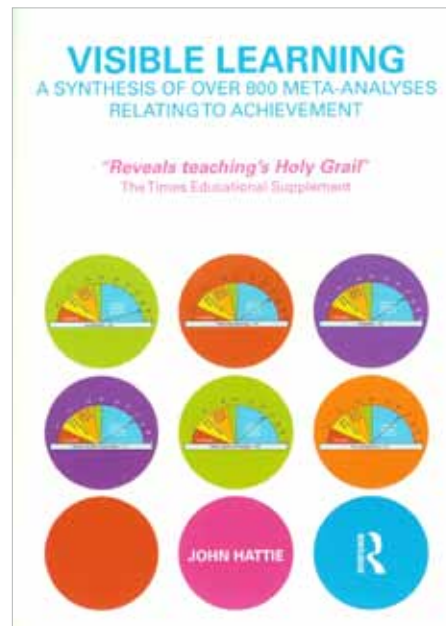
This study/publication can be recommended for further studies, discussions and reflections.

Hattie, John A.C. (2009): "Visible Learning - A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-analyses Relating to Achievement" (Routledge, New York)



Reference sites:
www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415476188/

www.amazon.co.uk/Visible-Learning-John-Hattie/dp/0415476186#reader_0415476186



EU consultation on new educational programmes: - Make your voice count!



The European Commission has just launched a series of public consultations on the next generation of the various EU Programmes (to run from 2014), including Comenius, eTwinning, Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus.

New programmes are planned to replace three existing programmes from the beginning of 2014.

This has been accompanied by a Commission Communication accompanying

the launch of the Youth on the Move initiative - which, along with New Skills for Jobs, is one of the European Commission's key flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy for the new programmes.

There are now three separate consultations on the future of:

* Lifelong Learning Programme (which incorporates Comenius, eTwinning, Leonardo da Vinci and Erasmus)

* Youth in Action

* Erasmus Mundus

Anyone can take part in the consultations - individuals, associations, organisations and stakeholders - simply by clicking on links on

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/consult/index_en.html

The consultation will run until 30 November 2010.

Welcome as network member

A platform for educational progress

The Learning Teacher Network is an international, educational and non-profit network and association.

As an international platform the network unites professionals in education in the ambition of sharing and creating front-line teaching and learning in order to develop education and training.

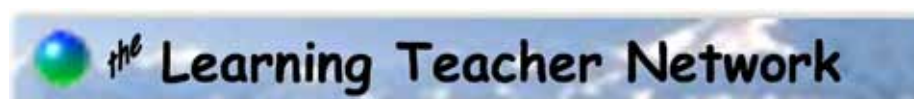
Trust, respect and fun

One main characteristic of the network is the welcoming and excellent atmosphere when people communicate and meet. The guiding words that illustrate the network are "trust, respect and fun".

All professionals in education and training are welcome

The network embraces practitioners in school, trainers, researchers and other educational experts within the whole range of education from pre-school to universities.

The good atmosphere and the composition make the network unique. Membership is open to anyone who supports the objectives of the network.



Mission

The Learning Teacher Network embraces

- * Education for all
- * Education for lifelong learning
- * Education for sustainable development (ESD)

www.learningteacher.eu

Membership

You and/or your institution are warmly welcome to become a member of the Learning Teacher Network.

Application for membership can be made on-line on the network website or by filling in and returning to us the registration form.



The next edition of The Learning Teacher Magazine will be published in December. Articles may be submitted no later than November 15th 2010.

A Survival Kit for European projects



Are European education projects adventure trips with an uncertain outcome? The title of a new project management publication, "Survival Kit for Multilateral Projects in the Lifelong Learning Programme" (LLP) may suggest this.

But in fact the authors, a partnership led by the Austrian education provider die Berater® and funded by the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme, do not consider European cooperation terrain to be such a dangerous jungle. They simply aim at supporting project actors in meeting common challenges in EU projects.

The planning challenge:

European projects are complex undertakings which require considerable planning. It is challenging to prepare a detailed project proposal with a diverse consortium of partners with different institutional backgrounds, from different education sectors and in different countries.

The administrative challenge:

The administrative requirements and regulations of the funding programme are considered to be rather rigid and burdensome

by many project actors. A relatively high administrative work load with regard to documenting and reporting of the project's activities and costs has to be dealt with.

The co-operation challenge:

A co-ordinator of a Multilateral Projects in the LLP is confronted with diverse motivations, interests, and organisational cultures in often so-called mixed partnerships of institutions with complementary expertise and different approaches. This concept of creating innovation from diversity constitutes a challenge as well as an opportunity for learning.

It is not only the institutions, but also the people working together for the first time, (most likely of different professions, age, experience and status), who need to be transformed into a committed and high performing team.

The intercultural challenge:

The project partners are not only located far away from each other, but come from different countries. This involves cultural differences with regard to values, attitudes and beliefs, which will show up in the joint work.

The co-ordination and leadership challenge:

The co-ordinator of a Multilateral Project has to have the technical skills to be an efficient project manager and the personal qualities of an inspiring and assertive project leader.

The virtual challenge:

As opposed to in-house projects, the team in a Multilateral Project is geographically dispersed all over Europe. Consequently, frequent or spontaneous face to face meetings are not possible. A consequence of the distance between partners is that communication and collaboration are

mostly done virtually, supported by ICT. This requires good user and facilitation skills in relation to ICT.

The quality challenge:

Expectations of the funding programme for Multilateral Projects are high. Consequently, quality management and evaluation need to be taken seriously in every project.

The impact challenge:

It is not deemed sufficient that a project partnership would develop something valuable and profit from this activity. In the participating countries, if not in Europe as a whole, the educational community concerned should benefit. A project needs to make a real effort to reach these target groups and to make sure that they use the developed products.

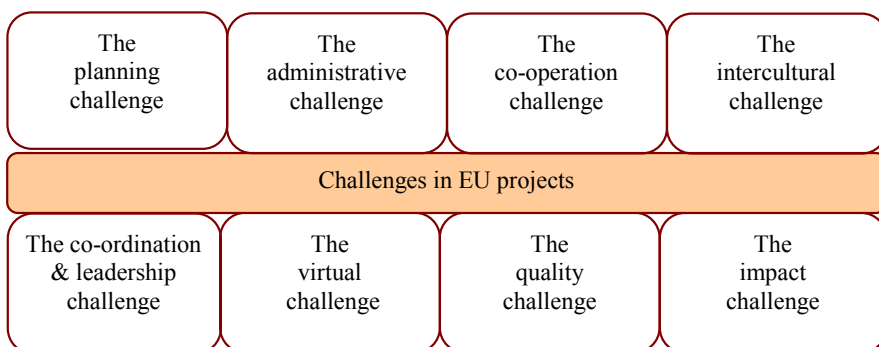
The Survival Kit addresses these project management challenges. It consists of two parts: a guidance publication and a collection of project management tools.

The publication is available in print (English), and as PDF document in English, German, French, Romanian, and Italian. It covers different aspects of European project management, including planning and organisation, project administration, effective collaboration and team building, an intercultural dimension, ICT in EU projects, quality and evaluation, as well as dissemination and exploitation of project results. A special chapter is devoted to the starting phase of a Multilateral Project, when the success or failure of a project is already determined to a large extent.

The publication can be downloaded from the project website www.european-project-management.eu, together with the second part of the *Survival Kit*, a collection of practical management tools. Project co-ordinators can access templates, examples and resources like partner agreements, planning forms, reporting sheets, checklists, or tools for evaluation and dissemination.

Holger Bienzle
Survival Kit Project Coordinator
E-Mail: h.bienzle@dieberater.com

Full information is published on www.european-project-management.eu



The importance of drama club for (development of significant competences in) primary school children

Several years of experience in leading a drama club made me think about the importance of this activity for psychological and social development of primary-school children. I find that in co-creating plays and performing children learn various skills, develop a variety of abilities and get to know themselves. Besides, their work in the club triggers positive transfer to class. I will try to explain why interest, and not talent, is of key importance in drama activity, why children with special needs enter the club, what my methods of work are like, and which competences pupils develop through their work in the club.

It is important that entering the club is based on one's own interest. Talent and age are of secondary importance, since motivation is an excellent condition to begin work. So I invite children with learning, speech or behavioural problems. These particular pupils usually show a great deal of persistence, responsibility and even talent. Sometimes there is positive transfer to school work, but while performing everyone certainly experiences success, which gives one the courage to take risks and try to succeed in areas, where before

they were less successful. The feeling of success helps improve one's self-image.

An important aspect of work is learning from one another, since pupils are the best mentors to one another. Doing this, they are original, relaxed and immensely enjoy it. The mentor's approach is explicitly individualized, as it is based on the children's personality and helps them to express themselves through acting. For me, the essence of acting is heartfelt expression, so I use humour and playfulness to create a relaxed atmosphere. Children's mutual incentives and help, gain ground, and as a result the mentor's role becomes reduced to directing and correcting.

Pupils are co-creators of the play, since they participate in choosing or writing the text, and change the play according to their wishes. This kind of engagement heightens motivation in pupils and at the same time strengthens their commitment to the project and team, and encourages originality. Because they feel safe and accepted in the group, pupils are creative and present bold ideas without inhibitions.

As pupils have different wishes, there are also conflicts. Through negotiations

they learn the skill of constructive problem solving and grounded persuasion; thus they learn to be tolerant. They learn to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, become familiar with teamwork and they contribute to a common goal.

Work in the drama club makes it possible to link knowledge gained in different subjects, giving pupils - especially those with several talents - an opportunity to develop various talents simultaneously. Staging a play is namely an interdisciplinary activity.

Being the mentor of a drama club, I seem to have developed a more personal relationship with pupils, which makes me more connected with them. After all, we are all on the same team fighting for a common goal, sharing efforts and joys. In class, motivation and commitment of pupils increase, which tells me that I am on the right pedagogical path.

*Nataša Arčon Triler
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Welcome to the Berlin Conference

The registration period for the Learning Teacher Network's 7th international conference has started.

We hope to see you at this high quality event, where four internationally recognized keynote speakers and more than 70 presenters from 19 countries will contribute to the content of the programme.

Read more and register on www.learningteacher.eu/berlin-conference



Intercultural communication in the Meuse-Rhine Euregio (INTERcCOM)

Problems in practice

The Meuse-Rhine Euregio (Belgian Limburg, Dutch Limburg, the region of Aachen, the province of Liège and the German-Speaking Community of Belgium in the so-called East Cantons), a region uniting 3 countries, is part of a unique reality: 3 European languages are being used as a local language within relatively short distance. Furthermore, no less than 5 different cultures exist alongside each other.

Apart from these native languages the EMR is also testimony to a broad demographic diversity.

Population prognoses up until 2050 point out a new intake of Turkish, Moroccans and Polish in particular.

The BAMA-structure simulates a geographical mobility in higher education. Studying or taking up an extra educational program abroad and seeking employment in a different country or region are after all enriching in several ways. Even at present we can state that an increasing number of Central European students come to the EMR to study at a college or university.

This linguistic and cultural diversity of the Meuse-Rhine Euregio can be a real asset, economic or other.

Nevertheless youngsters, mostly native, often have a negative perception of their knowledge of the two other languages of the Euregio. Another difficulty they might encounter: even if they master a foreign language up to a certain level, they often struggle with interference and other subconsciously recurrent mistakes. The linguistic 'false friends' stand out most and often lead to embarrassing miscommunication.

Day-to-day reality shows us that misunderstandings that can be attributed to cultural differences between the regions are widespread. Even worse, negative stereotypes demotivate us to undertake something together.

Goals

INTERcCOM therefore aims to improve mutual communication and hence simplify studying and working in the EMR.

We try to achieve this goal through scientific research in which we seek an answer to the following questions:

Language

Which interference mistakes and other recurrent mistakes do native youngsters



www.przl.print.nl/images/euremarij2.gif

make in other region's languages?

Which interference mistakes and other recurrent mistakes do Polish and Turkish youngsters make in all three EMR languages? To what extent are they similar to those of native youngsters?

Culture

Which are the cultural characteristics of each of the regions and of their native youngsters in particular?

To what extent do the regions differ in the cultural sphere?

Which are the cultural characteristics of 1st generation Polish and Turkish youngsters?

In what respect do the cultural characteristics of Polish and Turkish youngsters differ from the cultural profile of each of the regions?

Do the 2nd and 3rd generation Turkish and Polish youngsters in the EMR take over the cultural characteristics of the region concerned?

Based on these research results, 5 e-learning modules "language and culture" will be developed. Each module will be subdivided into 6 sub modules. Upon conclusion of the project, 20400 of these learning modules will be distributed for free in the whole Meuse-Rhine Euregio.

These innovative, multimedia instruments will be used for students in high schools and higher education systems to reduce language deficiencies.

They are adapted to the daily needs (now and in the future) of youngsters studying (or planning to study) in another region of the EMR.

In this way mutual understanding of each others language and culture in the EMR will be increased. Moreover newcomers from Poland and Turkey can prepare themselves optimally for their stay, temporary or permanently, in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine.

The INTERcCom project is co-financed by INTERREG and the regional governments of the EMR.

For more information concerning this project: www.uhasselt.be/ctl (Projects)

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Sustainability, stereotypes and orientation in the chef's work

In my bachelor project with three other girls we were in cooperation with teachers and chef students from CHC . www.hrs.dk/english/copenhagen-hospitality-college.aspx

Our project began as an inquiry about the media's presentation of chefs and their work culture in restaurants which appears to be a hard profession both mentally and physically.

The media, in a way helps to celebrate the roughness and the military-like shape of culinary leadership, through popular TV-shows like Hell's Kitchen and Kitchen Nightmares. Top chefs like Gordon Ramsey (UK), Wassim Hallal (DK) and René Redzepi (DK, Noma) have reached star status, and these men and their way of leading serve as a model on how to do it and how to succeed.

This representation made us wonder about sustainability in this profession on several levels: sustainability in terms of the chefs being worn down, and sustainability in the sense that chef students do not stay in the profession for long.

The students spend more time becoming a chef when they have finished school, than they do in the profession later on. It seems like the training of chefs has become a self-realization project. This is coherent with the way that employees act

today. Today employees are more involved in their work than employees of yesteryear which makes it difficult to maintain the distinction between their private and professional lives. It is very much about shaping identity.

The media's presentations of the chefs as being military-like attract certain students. The media portrays chefs like Wassim Hallal (DK) and Gordon Ramsey (UK) as being "the typical chef". The chef schools and the media use this way of seeing the chefs as a way to attract more people into this profession. In reality they have created a stereotype which helps to deadlock the chefs and their work.

This can be exclusionary because people who would otherwise be good at the job, cannot identify with one or more of the characteristics associated with this stereotype. Stereotypes can be both positive and negative. The positive side is that it can make the world seem less complicated and the negative side is that it can be deadlocked and be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Keeping the military stereotype means that the students have no voice and cannot see the need to read the relevant psychology, knowledge of which would lead to a good mental working environment. It also makes it difficult for the teachers to

give their expertise in this area but in our work with the chef students, we found out that a focus group interview made them see the need for studying psychology.

The students liked to sit in smaller groups of chef students from all grades and discuss all kinds of areas relevant to the work of a chef. They said it was important that we were there because otherwise they would not have talked about the things they did, they would have acted macho.

Both the teachers and the students tell horrible stories about tyrannical chefs and this maintains the stereotypes of 'the chef'. Making changes in this profession is difficult because we have to change the stereotype before we can make the mental and physical environment more sustainable.

Even though the chef students have a safety net against tyrannical chefs through their unions, they do not use them because they are afraid of being black-listed. If a student is treated badly in his or her apprenticeship they refuse to say anything to the unions because they know that they will lose their apprenticeship and it will be difficult for them to find a new place.

If the students complain about how they are treated at their apprenticeship



they know that their employers will call all other restaurants and warn prospective employers about this student. This creates a lot of sustainability problems because then the tyrannical chefs can keep

treating their students as they like and the environment will never get a chance to change and this profession will never be sustainable.

Copenhagen Hospitality College is familiar with some of the problems the chef students are facing and they have therefore decided that they will enter into a tripartite collaboration between the school, the union and the apprenticeship. This way they can get a better understanding

of each other and this can help to create a better and more sustainable environment for students, cooks and unions.

To make this profession a sustainable one, there must be something done about this industry in every country.

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International anniversaries

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

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

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

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

and makes recommendations for the future.

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

October 24 - United Nations Day, recognized by the UN

October 24 - World Development Information Day, recognized by the UN

November 16 - International Day for Tolerance, recognized by the UN

November 20 - Africa Industrialization Day, recognized by the UN

November 20 - Universal Children's Day,



recognized by the UN

November 25 - International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, recognized by the UN

December 1 - World Aids Day, recognized by the UN/ WORLD AIDS DAY

December 2 - International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, recognized by the UN

December 3 - International Day of Persons with Disabilities, recognized by the UN

Source: Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_observance

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