CLOSING SEMINAR FOR NORDIC-BALTIC PEDA.NET PROJECT – TALLINN, ESTONIA

Thursday - Saturday April 24 - 26, 2003


Aims
- to present new ICT tools with usage examples
- to promote networking

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I Introduction

Our Comenius 1 project, the Multimedia Culture Network, started in March 1998 with Denmark, Austria and Norway. Multimedia, as well as network co-operation, were at the time quite unknown for most of the teachers, but we knew that pupils were very eager to use the new technology and that many of them already were quite acquainted with a lot of the possibilities that the ICT tools open for. Having a project applying ICT tools would in a very high degree appeal to the pupils and represent a new way of thinking project work. At the same time the teachers really started to explore the possibilities of the ICT. In the News from the European Schoolnet the Prometeus project about the memorandum of understanding underlines the importance of creating consensus about the use of new technologies for education and training. The MCN strengthened this point of view. The first year, introducing the multimedia programme Medi8or, was a success. The students burned their own CDROMs which they sent to their partner schools, and they loved to work with this programme.

II Progression

The next year, after having presented our project at the CoMuNet conference in Barcelona in –99, Pentti Pirhonen introduced me to the CCE-Magazine, developed at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland in co-operation with the European Commission and the National Board of Education. The CCE-Magazine, as you will know, is a net-based magazine where the students can put their articles, pictures, drawings, statistics etc. The third year, 2000/2001 we wanted to elaborate the CCE-magazine, because we saw that it was a tool with potentials that we had not exploited. According to our ideal of continuously exploring new tools, we added discussion board to our repertoire. This discussion board requires a password, which you can get from the cce.peda.net http://www.eduprojects.net/peda/projects.html

IIa Examples from the CCE-Magazine

The students in the three countries, Denmark, Norway and Austria, cooperated upon certain provocative statements which they presented in the CCE-Magazine, see example from MCN – national identity: http://cce.peda.net/magazine/index.cgi?mode=read&id=mcn2&page=154 http://cce.peda.net/magazine/index.cgi?mode=read&id=mcn2&page=150 http://cce.peda.net/magazine/index.cgi?mode=index&id=mcn2
IIb  Example from Discussion Board

Re: 3: United States of Europe?

Posted by Kåre Nielsen and Morten Jensen on Thursday, 12 October 2000, at 2:42 p.m., in response to 3: United States of Europe?, posted by MCN on Friday, 6 October 2000, at 1:47 p.m.

We have discussed a lot, and we have come to the conclusion that a United States of Europe is a good idea. We both think that a common language and a common capital and president could be a step in the right direction towards a better future.

The borders of this "new" Europe should be the Ural-mountains to the east, the Mediterranean sea to the south, Nordkap to the north and Greenland as the border to the west. The "new" Russia should be a big part of Europe stretching from the Ural-mountains to the border to the west that it has today, and still having Moscow as "statecapital".

The other big cities of Europe f.x Paris, Madrid or Rome should all be capitals of each their state. The overall capital of all the United States of Europe should be Prague becuase of its central position in Europe.

The common language should be English, because it is the most spoken language in Europe today, and we think that it could be nice with a common understandmentship. Each state f.x Denmark, Norway or Austria or even a smaller part of Germany should have their old language but still speak english on vacations and in tradingpolitics.

Responses

- Re: 3: United States of Europe?
  Thomas, Jürgen, flo -- Tuesday, 24 October 2000, at 1:25 p.m.
  - Re: 3: United States of Europe?
    Kåre, Morten and Jonas -- Thursday, 26 October 2000, at 2:28 p.m.

III  Consequences on a learning environment based on ICT

The multimedia form of presentation requires creativity. ICT based environment leads to a more active style of learning. This is based on the active exploration and construction of solutions rather than on the passivity of lecture attendance and textbook reading.

A  The passive consumer?
We did not want the passive consumer, which we often see when students use the computer as a resource bank for information, for games, net surfing and chatting. One of the dangers linked to the use of the new technologies is that the tools take over for the academic outcome.

**B  The creative thinker**

For us as teachers it is of vital importance that the students learn what they are supposed to learn, history, math, English and writing etc. We want them to enjoy the learning, to be fascinated, to come to love to learn.

By means of ICT tools we have seen that the students not only improve computer knowledge, but we have experienced that uninterested and not very skilled pupils work more eagerly, even with other subjects, included in the project.

To produce something the students have to think by themselves – they cannot just copy a text from the internet. When they discuss a provocative statement with students from other parts of Europe, they have to mean something, to discuss with their fellow students at their own school first, and then write their opinion in English.

I will underline the fact that these tools, as a conclusion, are still what the word says: just a means of getting somewhere.

**C  The active producer**

The ICT tools that we used have something in common: they make the student an active producer. Our students saw concrete results from their working. In the CCE-magazine they could read their own articles on the web, being aware that people all over the world could read what they had written, not only the teacher – that’s a great difference and very motivating. They could even show pictures of themselves. This makes the acquisition of knowledge more authentic.

Before starting to exchange opinions at the discussion board the students learned the theory on how to argue, they worked with text construction and composition. They had to use this knowledge to take part in the discussion and that came out to be a success. I will say that the teachers were very happy with this, because it forced the students to concentrate upon the text production in a very targeted way.

**IV  Differentiation**

Usually the most skilled pupils get the highest score in all sorts of intellectual work, but we observed that many of these pupils had some problems reducing their text. The very skilled pupils still did good work, but the pupils that are tired of reading and writing theory, enjoyed the work and especially Medi8or as a tool, very much. The new learning environment facilitated the learning process. We see that the consequences for these pupils have been very positive. While they were working on the Comenius project, and also after having finished it, many of them have worked with greater enthusiasm with other schoolwork, and they have improved their scores in different subjects.

The pupils’ ability to work in groups has improved, and they understand how to raise an issue. When they start working with new tasks in groups, they are more efficient, they know what the aim is, and they reach it. They work faster and more effective when they work on the computer. The teacher has become an instructor to a greater extent than before. There is no longer need for the strict control with the pupils – how they work, if they work, what they are concerned with, and so on. The pupils know what to do when they get a new task and they are much more efficient.
The teachers have also registrated a greater interest in other subjects. I dare say that the Comenius project stimulated the pupils to work harder. The pupils were also very proud to be chosen to take part in an international project. This is very important. We take the pupils and their work seriously and that is vital for the result.

V Location and ICT-equipment

Our school is an upper secondary school with about 420 pupils. We are 45 teachers and we have 145 computers for the pupils, all connected to the Internet. The teachers have 30 computers and the library has 6 computers with Internet connection. The school location is urban, in Drammen, a medium sized town in eastern Norway, with approximately 60 000 inhabitants.

VI TeLeCom

– a school development project: Teaching – Learning – Communication

TeLeCom: http://www.stromso.vgs.no is a web site for 5 partner schools in Poland, Finland, Austra, Belgium and Norway. In order to develop strategies to adapt and differentiate education according to the needs of individual pupils, this three year project has been launched. TeLeCom is a Comenius school development project for sharing and exploring teaching methods, for pedagogical discussions, for information and building up a database of good teaching practice and suitable links.

It is a challenge to engage our colleagues to involve themselves in the project. Since we started in 1998 the computer has been a natural tool in our work, but still there are teachers who have not seen that the computer can be a useful tool in their daily work. We hope that our project will be incorporated in the general life of the school and that the TeLeCom becomes a project of the entire school. The most important means of reaching this aim is to show that you can find useful ideas for your own teaching on the web site.

The Act relating to Primary and Secondary Education states: § 1.2 “…Teaching shall be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of individual pupils, apprentices and trainees…” We have started this project, among others, to develop strategies to adapt and differentiate education according to the needs of individual pupils through giving each other information and inspiration.

We also see that the development within teaching methods in Norway is more and more to include the use of the new technology, with for instance extended use of the intranet and with web based national tests and exams. Through continuous discussions and joint efforts we can keep up with this development and meet he modern challenge within education.

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