



esa magazine

AUTUMN 2021

New schoolyear,
old and new challenges



European School
Heads Association

COLOPHON

ESHA magazine is the official magazine of the European School Heads Association, the Association for school leaders in Europe. ESHA magazine will be published four times per school year. You are welcome to use articles from the magazine, but we would appreciate it if you contacted the editor first.

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Carry on in the same old way?

COLUMN ESHA PRESIDENT



Welcome to the latest edition of the ESHA magazine; which I hope you will find of interest. This edition focuses on the new school year. Each new school year presents challenges to school leaders – but have these changed with the pandemic? Do the old ones remain only to have additional new challenges added? Does this make the task of being a school leader even more challenging?

Hopefully we are getting the pandemic under control and life is returning to something close to what it was prior to the Covid outbreak. Education for many students has been disrupted and the education system has had to respond quickly to an emergency situation that had not been anticipated or planned for.

Schools throughout Europe at the time of writing are enjoying a well-deserved break. As is usual, the summer break will fly by and the start of the new school year will be soon upon us. Do we return to how things were prior to the Covid crisis or do we look at turning the crisis into an opportunity? I very much hope it is the latter. After all it is a golden opportunity to review the past and what

has been achieved through the pandemic in order to create a vision for the future that is fit for all students. Students deserve to be offered the education, skills and tools that will provide them with the ability to succeed in this ever-changing world.

The response of politicians across Europe is variable, some have the vision to be innovative but I suspect that they are in the minority. I imagine it will fall to school leaders to reflect and consider how best to recover and to develop a vision for the future. It is a big ask as many in the profession are exhausted, having worked tirelessly to try and meet the demands placed upon them to deliver education during the pandemic. It would be totally understandable if having charged their batteries during the summer in the autumn they would wish to continue to do what they had done in the past. This would be a missed opportunity.

Education institutions need to change because the world has changed and may not return to the way it was before. Working in an office five days a week may not be the new norm. The new norm is more likely to spend three days in the office and two days working at home. Therefore, the ability to use IT successfully is a skill that will be essential.

School leaders should be reviewing what has worked well and build on existing good practice recognising that teachers and students have developed many new skills during the crisis. School leaders need to develop the current practice in their schools and resist inappropriate top-down strategies and initiatives. It is the responsibility of school leaders to ensure that as the school moves forward any changes are manageable and sustainable both for teachers and students. Failure to do so will potentially damage the wellbeing of both groups, as many will remain fragile for some time as we try to return to normality.

For school leaders to be successful in developing their vision for the future they need to be able to communicate this to colleagues and get them to engage and to value their ideas and contributions. For developments to become embedded a sustainable commitment from colleagues needs to be achieved.

In England during lockdowns it became even more apparent that a significant level of social deprivation exists in our society. With schools closed the importance of access to online learning was a key to success that was not available to many children with poorer backgrounds. It is incumbent on school leaders to ensure that the school develops an inclusive plan for moving forward and is available for all students regardless of their backgrounds, their special educational needs or disabilities.

Looking ahead is sometimes complicated and it is difficult to plan for the unknown and uncertainties. One thing Covid has taught us is that the unexpected can happen. It is therefore paramount in planning for the future that we build in resilience and flexibility in order that we try to withstand and minimise the disruption caused by unexpected future events.

It is important for the profession to develop its post-pandemic vision, as I am not sure we can trust politicians to do so. If the profession has a firm, clearly articulated vision it will be in a much stronger place in arguing for the resources in order to achieve success. If the vision for the future has ambition and not just a return to pre-pandemic practice it should be possible to get the support of teachers, parents, businesses and the wider community. The quiet power of parents can have great impact on politicians who will need to provide the resources to help the vision become a reality.

Paul Whitman, General Secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland stated. “If the government genuinely wants to take this opportunity to improve the life chances of all children, now is the moment to be bold. The question that the government now needs to answer is: just how ambitious is it prepared to be?” The challenge in that statement is one that needs to be made to politicians across Europe.

School leaders need to be bold and ambitious for the future. Covid has given the profession a huge shock, now is the time not to return to the past but to build a future that is better than the past.

Professional associations, school leadership unions and academics should actively develop a plan that is fit for the future and to engage purposefully with politicians in order that it is not just planning a catch-up programme for students but an entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum that will enable students to have the skills to apply that knowledge in a rapidly changing world.

Carry on in the same old way? To do this would be a huge disservice to the students who have had their education disrupted over the past two years and also to future students. If the education profession and politicians miss this opportunity to reappraise and plan for a bold future we will all be sorry in the long term. ■

Chris Hill
ESHA President

Strength in competencies: European Education after Corona

The DGBV (“Deutsche Gesellschaft für Bildungsverwaltung”= German Society for Education Administration) is developing many new ideas for the time “after Corona“. In an online forum on May 21st, 2021, these ideas were discussed with over 150 participants. There must be room for innovative learning support systems connected to schools but also for creative projects, sport projects and completely new ideas in education.

JOAN M. KREBS-SCHMID

It is interesting to note that the same ideas are being looked at all over Europe. Seminars and programmes have been offered, for example the “World Cafes“, sponsored by the Dutch school leaders organisations Nuffic and Avs, which were attended by school leaders from seven different European countries. Beside discussing the various difficulties created by the lockdown in education, we agreed on the necessity for an international exchange of ideas, the marked increase of teaching abilities in digital areas and the “open door“: the chance to re-think our educational systems.

What do pupils really need after Corona? Many parents, teachers and even the pupils themselves insist on “closing the gaps“ in the major subjects, the languages, mathematics, and sciences. The German Department of Education, as well as all the states have planned various offerings for tutoring in major subjects. Many children are expected by their parents or educators to attend additional afternoon tutoring programmes. Some states, for example Northrhine-Westfalia, have set up additional education vouchers to be used for deficits in “the difficult subjects“.

However, other education professionals have asked themselves the question, „How does it feel for a young person who has endured a situation like the pandemic to be told that they are “deficient“? During the pandemic and the lockdown many children have had to contend with the fear of illness, social isolation, boredom and anxiety. In Germany paediatricians mention alarming numbers of children struggling with depression and anxiety disorders. To be told you are not sufficient and given additional hours of study and learning may be exactly the wrong approach.

How can we, as a society, really and effectively help the pupils who need help? Simply pouring money into digitalisation is not the answer.

THINK
ABOUT
THINGS
DIFFERENTLY

Of course, it is important not to lose sight of the progress that digitalisation in education has made in the past 18 months. However, many educators put forth the idea that this progress has been greatest in the parts of society that are the most interested in education. Other children, children without resources or children who come from large families, have not been able to profit from these advances. The gap between pupils from complex backgrounds and pupils who can be supported in many ways, also financially, by their parents has only gotten larger. Our experience has shown that simply giving children laptops is not the real solution. Pupils need to learn to work with these tools and to develop individual structures for learning.

For some pupils, school is a place of safety, a place where they have adults who will listen and who will help. For these children, the school closures have had a devastating effect. Another unexpected negative effect of the lockdown is to be found in the alarming number of children who cannot swim. Some local administrators are increasing the number of swimming lessons and swimming teachers, in the hope that this life-threatening gap can soon be closed.

What role does creativity play in the time “after” Corona? Some governments have supported the idea of children engaging in creative projects. Special projects – art, theatre and dance projects – are being instituted in the hope that through creativity, co-operative work and fun, children will be able to build their self-confidence and increase their personal social skills.

Have children lost competencies or won them? Some social competencies have been weakened and must be regained in the course of time as explained above. However, abilities in the area of digitalisation have grown. And some pupils define the time of the Corona lockdown for themselves as a time of strength. They took care of family members and

pets, learned new household skills, tutored and looked after younger siblings. Some children felt taken seriously in a serious situation and felt, for the first time, that their help was useful and necessary. These are competences won.

Are we looking at a “repair shop” for education or genuine effective change? For many of us in Germany Corona has shown us very clearly that the way we educate our young needs to be examined. We are already in the 21st century and the world is changing faster than we can imagine. Children must gain the ability to work independently as young researchers, connected to each other, supported by their education systems in a network which should encompass the whole world. ■

Teachers with a refugee background benefit European education

Employ refugee teachers Now!

MAIJA YLI-JOKIPII, TAMPERE UNIVERSITY
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While the European Union grapples with a historically high numbers of asylum seekers of whom roughly a third are children (Eurostat, 2020), EU member states struggle to meet the UNESCO (2016) declaration according to which educational systems should provide a supportive, inclusive, and equitable learning environment for all learners. For students with refugee backgrounds in EU schools, a gap exists between educational needs and accessibility. Half of refugee children experience disrupted schooling (UNHCR, 2018) worldwide. Furthermore, host country teachers often find it difficult to connect with and include refugee learners (European Commission, 2019; UNESCO, 2020).

Recognizing the challenges host country teachers face in understanding the complexities of forced displacement, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has, among others, developed educational packages that provide teachers with tools, strategies, and concepts to help them connect with refugee pupils. The most dominant question being asked in these packages is: how should a host country teacher teach refugee children? UNESCO, however, recommends that in the education of refugee learners, teachers who themselves have a refugee background are best placed for the job, or should at least play a role in their educational provision (see also Richardson et al., 2018).

A key question thus arises: how can teachers with refugee backgrounds be better integrated into host-country education systems? To answer this question, a consortium of teachers, NGOs and social entrepreneurs

from Belgium, Finland, France, Italy, Romania, and Slovenia have collaborated in the European Union-funded Erasmus+ project: *EMERgenCeS: Merging Refugee-Educators Competencies and Skills* (KA204-060226). Through the lenses of decolonizing and culturally-responsive pedagogies, the project has investigated good practices for refugee teacher integration, leading to the development of a teacher training module for refugee teachers.

Refugee education: decolonizing and culturally responsive perspectives

The *EMERgenCeS* project draws on global citizenship framework combining both decolonizing and culturally-responsive educational approaches (see Haswell et al. 2021). The project recognizes modern European educational systems continuing to be influenced by historical colonial or imperial legacies in a variety of ways, which impacts refugee education through cultural and/or linguistic discrimination. Decolonising pedagogy aims to counter even the implicit colonial or imperial perspectives. Charles (2019: 733), among others, argues that the racial and cultural bias these colonial legacies produce give rise to “white” educational curricula which deprive non-white students of access to knowledge, role models or aspirations relevant to their identities. Additionally, as Battiste (2013: 24) notes, this bias may result not only in academic failure but also in students learning to distrust their own cultural knowledge, wisdom, and worldviews.

As Richardson et al. (2018) have shown, students with diverse backgrounds feel more at ease and connected when teachers with refugee backgrounds are present. Thus, granting these teachers more prominent roles in the educational experiences of refugee students may lead towards a decolonisation of education. Moreover, as leading teachers, or in other in-class roles, such as assistant, tutor or mediator, teachers with a refugee background may offer emotional, linguistic, and academic

support for refugee students who share the same native language and/or a similar type of background.

Expanding the roles of teachers with a refugee background

As part of developing an understanding of good practices in relation to refugee teacher integration, we explored the educational roles host countries currently offer teachers with refugee backgrounds (TRBs), and how those roles allow assisting refugee learners. Interviewing 12 TRBs from each of the participating countries, we asked about the roles they play in both formal and informal educational contexts in their host country, the challenges they face in those roles, and the benefits they think they bring to the educational lives of refugee students.

Currently, the formal roles that TRBs occupy in their host countries included that of autonomous teacher but also various other roles, some of which were pedagogical ones, e.g. co-teacher; practical ones, e.g. special needs assistant, crafts support; socio-cultural, e.g. intercultural mediator; and, finally, roles of an expert, e.g., policy-maker, invited guest for staff or board meetings. Moreover, 5 out of 12 said they were volunteers. Sometimes teachers occupied more than one role simultaneously, and among them were, further, positions in informal education, such as community school teaching, syllabus content development, and social entrepreneurship.

However, TRBs come across an array of challenges when (working towards) working in education in their host countries. In addition to general, structural hindrances – learning the target language, applying for recognition for one’s professional qualification(s) gained in one’s country of origin, and navigating the asylum system as a whole (see Yli-Jokipii et. al. 2021), two types of challenges reoccurred in relation to educational roles in the host countries: (1) the difficulty in gaining knowledge about

host country education systems, and (2) the difficulty in gaining access to schools and establishing professional networks.

The former links with challenges in language acquisition and in the complexities of the asylum process overall. Here, we see a lack of knowledge and simultaneously a lack of strategic guidance on the education system in the host countries. The latter challenge, on its behalf, resulted from a lack of networking possibilities where teachers with a refugee background could meet local school leaders and teaching staff.

To address these issues, the respondents suggested:

- tailoring mentoring programmes for TRBs, including briefings about the educational system;
- providing TRBs with opportunities to use the knowledge and competence they already have;
- creating systemic procedures to help TRBs find the path to gain additional skills needed;
- arranging networking possibilities with school actors as well as informal educational community gatherings;
- increasing TRBs' presence in schools through alternative positions (e.g. observer, assistant teacher, volunteer).

Teachers with a refugee background benefit European education systems

To assess the benefits of being involved in classrooms in European schools, TRB respondents were instructed to choose as many statements as they wished from a pre-set list of statements in a questionnaire as well as to add further options ('Other'). Table 1 presents the statements and the number of responses to respective statements side by side.

Table 1. Benefits of refugee teacher roles in host country education systems: Questionnaire statements and responses.

STATEMENT	RESPONDENTS
More cultural enrichment sharing cultural rituals/practices	9
More pedagogical approaches	8
More understanding among refugee teachers and refugee children	8
More understanding among learners	7
More understanding among parents of refugee children and the educational system	7
The level of education goes up/changes positively	6
More languages are spoken	6
More understanding among learners about the different learning cultures	6
Higher wellbeing among learners	5
Other (reduction of social distancing intended as inequality)	1
Other (helps integration of both refugee teachers and refugee students into host society).	1

In the sample, most teachers agreed that employing teachers with a refugee background into European classrooms grants a “better understanding” in many respects and among multiple parties. This is promising, as ‘understanding’ plays a crucial role in learning overall.

While involving TRBs into educational contexts in Europe is desirable for various reasons, careful consideration should be given to how this is carried out. While their presence does benefit the classroom independent of the exact position they work in, be it volunteer, assistant, or independent teachers, TRBs’ professional status should represent and exemplify equality and equity in society and the labour market through

education. The message sent out this way to refugee learners is that they, too, can do this. They too can thrive. They – indeed, we all – are allowed to get involved and use our skills and competences. ■

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A positive climate...

Not only in the classroom





The Erasmus+ project Reflecting for Change, an educational path called Observatory climate, 50 students of a middle school with their teachers.

The story of a successful experience on activities dedicated to climate change led by Città della Scienza with the participation of an Italian middle school. IBSE, STEAM, RRI, PBL are the educational approaches adopted in this educational path conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to encourage students to have an active role in the big challenges of their life and to think of themselves as part of a community that addresses grand societal challenges.

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Observatory climate, a study case of an effective educational path

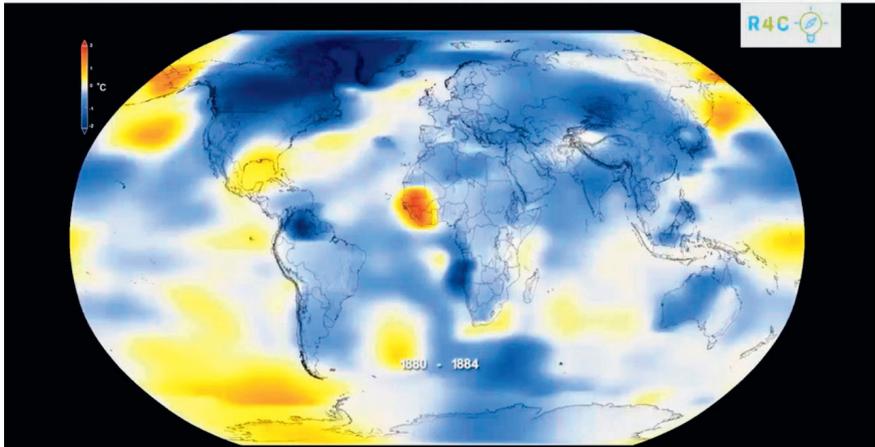
The educational path *Observatory climate* planned inside the framework of the R4C project and described by the project team: a researcher of the educational department of Città della Scienza, a teacher of the Italian middle school Pertini-87°D.Guanella.

A lab activity... at distance. It seems to be a contradiction in words but we have experienced it. Fifty students of a middle school, a researcher and a teacher met at a distance. Obviously, before meetings we took time to prepare, deciding on which educational approaches to adopt, which ICT to employ for planning effective, engaging lab activities and how to use lab instruments.

The first image seen by students was a picture of the South Pole taken close to the Italian station of the National Council of Research. We used this picture as a start of our educational path, because it shows an Italian team in an extreme place, the South Pole. The image shows the possible and the impossible, it is both close and far, so it proved to be very engaging, inspiring for the young people. "Being motivated means both willingness to pursue a goal and perseverance to achieve it. And the willingness to commit depends first of all on two assumptions: the subjective meaning and the fascination that an activity has."ⁱ

The inspired, emotionally involved young students continued managing some scientific data. They watched a NASA video that shows how the temperatures on Earth changed from 1880 to 2018. The study conducted by NASA underline that the Earth's average temperature has already increased by 1 Celsius grade in just over a century! We used this video, because images often convey the message clearer than many words.

In this period of big social changes and technological development that is often called the Information revolution to indicate the broad socio-economic changes brought about by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), we have witnessed the proliferation of information channels. We used this video by NASA to draw the students' attention to fake news, to the problematic nature of the information sources from which we read news.



A video by NASA devoted to temperatures increase

The increase of 1 degree centigrade in just over a century is true information but for climatologists this is not enough to be sure that the average temperature of the earth is constantly increasing. So, we explained that the earth's climate was not constant, it changed, fluctuated over the centuries, over the millennia. This fluctuation made students understand that any real phenomenon was more complex than any explanation, model, rule built to interpret it. Science does not explain reality but it makes models, constructs theories that describe the world around us. But theories and models only remain valid until proven otherwise! Sharing the scientific method with the students is more important than sharing the science content itself. Understanding how to advance science allows us to build the right expectations and makes us understand how it is possible that during Covid-19 different scientists said different things by adhering to different theories.

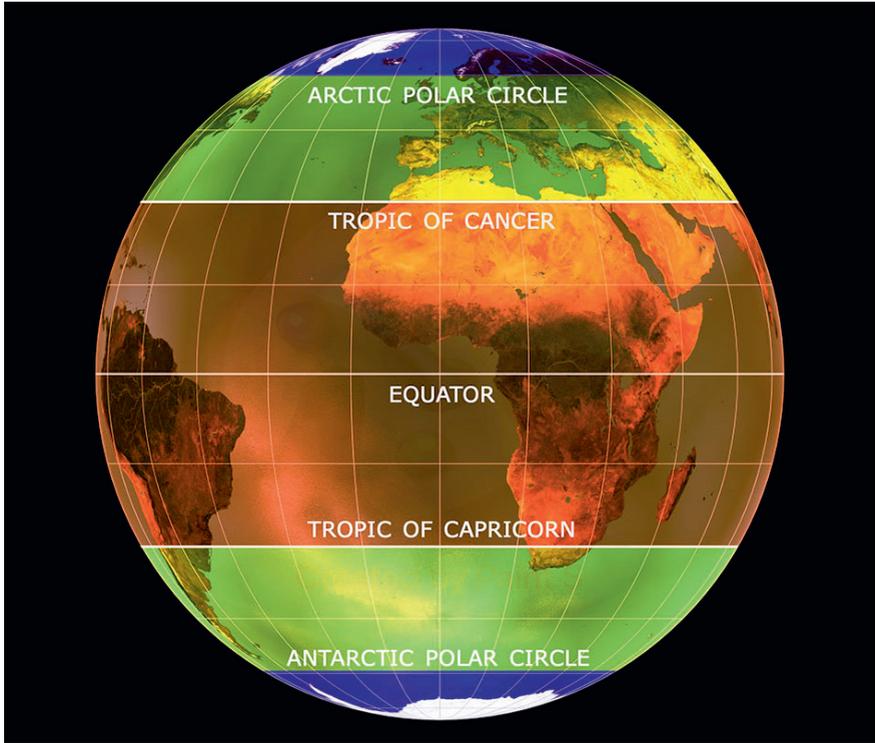
Climate change was chosen as the topic of the educational path because it is a fashionable topic. Scientific careers such as those of climatologists are trendy nowadays. A climatologist must observe nature that records climate data in its own way (called proxy data). This helps the

climatologist to travel back in time and to speak about the Earth's climatic trends. We have no instrumental data prior the 17th century, when some instruments, for example the thermometer and the barometer, were invented. Climatologists can estimate the values of temperature, pressure, humidity that occurred before the 17th century by building mathematical models on proxy data, observing nature.

At the South Pole climatologists study nature, the air bubbles imprisoned in glaciers, the atmosphere that was there on the day of snowfall. If it started to snow, the air that is around us today would remain imprisoned in the surface layer of the snow and the ice of glaciers that were formed today. Yesterday's air is imprisoned a little below the glacier's surface and the air of the day before yesterday is imprisoned below



CNR Italian team builds a wind turbine at the South Pole



The earth's climate zones (<https://catalogue.museogalileo.it>)

that... and so on up to the air of 800,000 years ago! This journey back in time is only possible at the South Pole because there are glaciers that are 3 kilometres thick there.

Our Western culture has an anthropocentric vision of life. Many of us, young people in particular, think of the climate only as affecting their personal life: “if the weather is nice today, I will go out for a ride with friends”. But climate is more than this! The climate decides what kind of trees grow in that zone, what animals live there, what kind of plants can be cultivated, how it is possible to travel and so on. It is important to emphasize to the younger generations that the Earth is not there for our use and consumption and that each of us must do their part. During

Covid-19, some have learned that “an individual behavior if becomes community behavior can be changed everyone’s destinies”. This idea needs to become the students’ heritage, everyone’s heritage.

An activity that is engaging for our students must involve big ideas, big challenges. Challenges are based on learning the framework (engaging, investigating and acting). It “excites and motivates students because they can apply their knowledge and skills to really big problems”ⁱⁱ. The students were fascinated by the extraordinary symmetry of the climate zones. Starting from the Equator, going towards the North and the South Pole, we meet two tropical zones (Cancer’s and Capricorn’s). Continuing towards higher latitudes we meet two temperate zones (Boreal and Australis), and then we find the two Polar zones (Arctic and Antarctic).

We explained to the students the different solar insolation at different latitudes. It’s one of the most important causes that determine the earth’s climate zones. In the picture above (at the Equinox), the same light beam lights a smaller surface close to the Equator than close to



Solar insolation of the earth (<https://tahmo.org/>)



Bike_IT a temporary exhibition in Città della Scienza

the polar zones. This is due to the earth's curvature. With only a flashlight and a globe, we could show students what happened at different latitudes.

Furthermore, using a free app for smartphones that measure light, it is also possible to measure how insolation changes if the incident angle of the light beam changes. We introduced the use of this free app to encourage students to use their smartphone not only for taking videos, chatting, listening to music or playing. "In this decade, it is no less important to teach children how to use their other technology "brains" as it is to teach them to use their physical brains — to ignore such an obvious and powerful augmentation would be irresponsible."^{iv} As Italian students love their smartphone, it's very effective to use their beloved devices to investigate science issues.

The albedo of the Earth is the second fact that determines the climate zones. The terrestrial albedo is the varying ability to absorb sunlight. It is linked to the different colours of the Earth's surface. A white surface, as the surface at the poles, have 85% of albedo. This means that 85% of the sun light returns to space and only 15 % of light is absorbed, only 15% can contribute to temperature. For the sea, albedo is only 7%, so 93% of light can contribute to increasing the temperature. Two bottles (one black, the other white), two laboratory thermometers and a flashlight were enough to simulate the different behaviours of differently coloured areas of the Earth. The white bottle acted like polar areas, the black bottle like oceans.

Weather is a complex machine set in motion by the sun. It is described by many variables: temperature, pression, humidity, wind, rainfall, etc. By studying weather forecasts and the statements of climatologists, we become more involved in the fight against climate change. We pay more attention to consuming less and to waste less and push our politicians to sign international climate agreements and to invest money in research. We encourage our students to be active citizens. ^v

A positive classroom climate...

Fifty girls and boys, students of the middle school Pertini-87°D. Guanella, Napoli participated in the programme with their teacher, Maria Maddalena Erman.

The students enjoyed the activities, as shown in the following quotations from their comments:

“I've been following the activity carefully throughout its duration.”

“A wonderful experience!”

“I really enjoyed discovering new things.”

“I was very curious!”



Class at work at distance

“The lessons were very interesting and I learned many things that will probably help me in my future career.”

“It’s a fun experience that stimulates you to do more.”

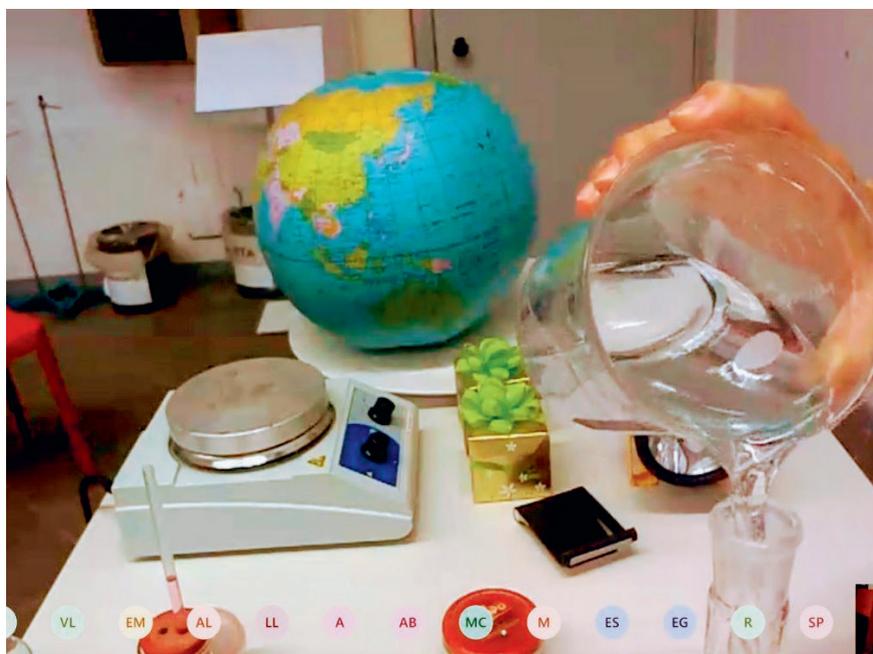
“It makes us reflect on the urgency to be more educated about the planet!”

The school is located in a disadvantaged area of the city of Naples (Italy) characterized mainly by a low economic and socio-cultural context, but innovation, collaboration, and ICT is included in the school’s vision and strategy. It focuses on how to improve learning and how to support personalized learning. The school creates various opportunities for teachers and students to be involved in extracurricular activities, in cooperation with external partners, in educational visits and outings, in national and international projects.

The school has already joined the Open School for Open Societies project and is currently involved in the Reflecting for Change project: two international actions which the school was able to participate thanks to Città della Scienza, the Italian national coordinator of these projects.

The R4C workshops Observatory climate, delivered in this rather unusual school year of 2020–21 in an exceptional context, due to the pandemic Covid-19, could be characterized by the search for a delicate balance between the various forms of learning. The school managed to achieve harmony between the times and forms of activities planned. The integrated teaching-learning process was based on the support of ICT and the online educational platform.

The students participated in the distance activities using two devices: a

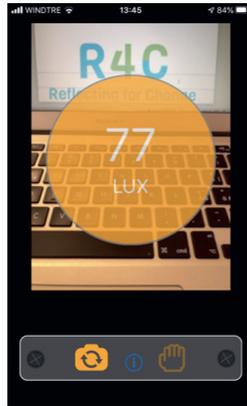


Some experiments during a workshop of the educational path

Condizioni di luce: luce ambiente



Lux Light Meter



Reflecting for Change

Apps for measuring lux used during a workshop of the educational path

computer, tablet or smartphone for attending the online workshop; and, simultaneously, a second device (smartphone) for measuring physical quantities by free apps. Smartphones were used as tools for experiments together with traditional tools and technologies. Also, practical experiments and demonstrations were carried out with the use of different kind of thermometers found by children in their homes.

The activity clarified the difference between meteorology and climatology, and the interrelation of the two sciences in the study of atmospheric weather. Students had the opportunity to analyse, to play and to interact with the perception of temperature and its measurement; they used beams of flashlights projected on world maps and smartphones to observe solar insulation and to reflect, to observe and to understand the reasons that determine climate zones. It was a practical demonstration to explain the melting of glaciers and the rising of the sea level.

The reflections between students and teachers, and the assessment of students' progress with a self-assessment tool show that the activity promoted the principles of responsible research, reflective practice, and inquiry.

Teachers and students have learnt to use collaborative environments for classroom activities: online resources, co-created materials, and self-developed resources that they share with each other.

The school promotes education as an open and inclusive concept and, at the same time, integrates formal, informal and not formal setting experiences in teaching-learning paths.

Given the positive results of the activities, the school will implement the project aiming at the involvement of the community and the dissemination of the results with the school website and its social channel, and in conferences, for example the next SELFIE FORUM 2021 promoted by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. ■

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R4C – Reflecting for Change, an Erasmus+ project

In this period afflicted by the COVID-19, the use of distance learning is intense. This educational workshop is devoted to climate change, it was planned as part of the Erasmus+ project R4C – Reflecting for Change. In R4C approach, innovation is also understood in terms of a school's pathway to digital maturity (e-maturity) and its comprehensive relationship to the use of both ICT and RRI principles. Reflecting for Change (R4C) aims to promote an advanced support framework, as well as a set of core policy recommendations, to schools seeking to introduce a type of holistic change that will ensure a meaningful uptake of sustainable innovation.



For more information, please go to the project website:
<https://reflecting4change.eu/>.

Real change takes place in deep crisis



EDEN Open Classroom initiative presents its next conference entitled Real change takes place in deep crisis with f2f, virtual and inworld participation on 22-24 October 2021.

The event is jointly organised with Ellinogermnaiki Agogi, Athens, the Institute of Educational Policy, Greece, the European Distance and E-Learning Network and the EDEN Digital Learning Europe in the framework of the Reflecting for Change project.

The aim of the OCC 2021 is to explore the idea of “Open School” as an engaging environment that effectively introduces novel methodologies, tools and content by re-designing learning to accommodate and include difference and by bringing together families, community groups, local businesses, experts, universities, into an innovation ecosystem.

Proposals are invited for Papers on the themes of the conference. Abstracts and inquiries about the conference content should be sent in electronic form (by e-mail) to zygouritsas@ea.gr by 19/9/2021.

Registration and further information are available at the conference site: <http://openclassroom2021.ea.gr/> ■

Teach them to sail, you won't to keep them in the harbour anyway





ESHA has recently started a new endeavour in the SAILS project together with organisations from Greece and Spain as well as another European organisation on supporting educators in mitigating risks online and supporting children to do so. Recent restrictions all over Europe have resulted in face-to-face interaction being reduced to a minimum and it has become increasingly common to communicate through a screen. It has changed the lives of millions of students, teachers and families, who have seen that from one day to the next they went from a face-to-face schooling to online classes.

This change, unexpected and hardly planned, has caused numerous problems in education: 1) students who have lost their learning group and their mentors due to connection problems, lack of appropriate and sufficient devices or technological inability to keep up with the pace of online classes, 2) teachers who have had to abandon their face-to-face dynamics and adapt in a few days to huge videoconference rooms full of people who do not know the codes of conduct and communication of remote classes, 3) families overwhelmed by a situation that disrupts all their work and home planning, who find many difficulties to support and facilitate the online learning of young people, 4) school leaders are under pressure to make center-level decisions to address the pandemic

and are often unaware of best educational practices in these cases and are going in blind.

In this rough sea, we aim to provide clear guidelines for sailors to deploy or retract their sails when necessary. The aim of this project is to provide students, teachers, schools leaders and families with tools to make appropriate decisions facing the conflicts that restrictions have caused in the processes of learning, communication and socialization of the school community.

The methodology proposed in this project aims to be radically different from previous attempts to raise awareness among students about good behaviour on the internet, the management of their autonomy and appropriate and safe social relations. With this objective, we will develop a fictitious social network in which we will reliably represent the potentially dangerous scenarios that can occur in this context (IO1). This network will be used as a social sandbox where different automated profiles (social bots) will behave inappropriately and interact with the fictitious profiles created by the students. From the interaction with these social bots, students will be able to understand which behaviours are not appropriate or safe in a practical way.

This will be accompanied by resources for school leaders (developed by ESHA), teachers (developed by EA) and families (developed by IPA).

We have chosen to explain why it is important that the SAILS consortium has decided to implement a risk mitigation approach to online safety in the first entry to our project blog. In the view of Parents International, the author of this article, the answer is twofold. On the one hand it is a major child rights issue, on the other hand they will meet risk and harm, but if you have a risk prevention approach you may not know about it.

Let's start with the child rights challenge. There is no question about a certain hierarchy of child rights: we need to do everything we can to prevent any risk to life. Still, accidents and incidents happen, and children – sadly – die. However, you teach children certain skills for example to prevent them being hit by a car and allow them leave the house every day. Media is full of stories about children being harmed, mostly mentally by online activities. The answer for many is to prevent children from going online or using certain online tools, such as social media. But is it the right approach? Our answer is a definite no. Similarly to navigating the roads, we need to teach our children how to recognise online risk and harm – and thus starting to provide for another basic right, the right to education. We also need to ensure a family and school environment where children feel safe to seek adult (primarily parental) advice if they feel uncomfortable, sad or at risk – thus providing for the basic right to be brought up in a loving and caring environment.

Research has confirmed that for the children of today online and offline presence means a continuum, not two separate fields of life. Online tools, and especially social media provide the platform for getting together, for organising social life, for expressing views and debating them, for widening their horizon and learning about the world around them. Therefore, child rights organisations have highlighted the importance of online access – thus providing for a number of basic child rights such as the right to the freedom of speech, the right to peaceful assembly, and again the right to education. When legislation, family, or school attempts to prevent access, they violate all these rights while their actions are definitely not justifiable by the prevention from harm as a proportionate element. It is important to mention that adult access to mailboxes, social media handles and other personal online spaces as well as most so-called parental control tools are also violating the basic right to privacy.

The basic principle of child rights is that it is closely linked to the evolving capacities of the child. The last 20-30 years has been a period when children in Europe – largely as a result of American influence – have been considered less and less capable of exercising their rights. Let me go back to the road crossing example. At the end of the 19th century, car had been considered so dangerous that in cities the driver was obliged to hire a runner to run in front of the car with a flag indicating danger (and by that also to drive ridiculously slowly). Cars have become much faster and much more numerous, and still people have decided not to lock their children in the house but teach them how to cross the road safely. First you cross together, holding hands and being a role model for your child. Then you ask the child to tell you when you can cross the street after they looked around or checked the traffic lights. And at the age of 6 or 7 (yes, that is the right age, not later, children are capable), you let them go on their own knowing that you have taught them all. Similarly, the first online experiences should be joint ones and important adults (both parents and teachers) need to be role models for their children. At the same time, it is important to create an environment and practices that enables the child to share anything, even being naughty, cheeky or outright bad, without having to be afraid of punishment. Free discussions around the table at dinner has proven to be the best. That way, you will know if something bad is happening to them online or offline, and build trust rather than violate their rights.

Most people are afraid of their children being bullied online, but they don't consider two things. Online bullying is (nearly) always an extension of offline bullying behaviour, and often a sign of the bully being bullied. And sadly, we also need to understand that child-to-child bullying is not the most prevalent. Children are most often bullied by teachers with trusted adults from the family and circle of friends being the second. Another major concern is about pornographic content, but that has been on the table for decades, probably centuries. Children always

found ways to access such content, without adult presence, if forbidden. A third area of concern is being exposed to violence. In this field research is not conclusive, but the balance is dipped towards research results showing that violent content is rarely a trigger for violent behaviour. At the same time, violent games often play the role of a punchbag.

These are some of the considerations that have led us to establish SAILS together with our partners, and in the course of the project these child rights principles will be diligently followed, especially by supporting the adults around the child, primarily their parents and teachers, to exercise their duties and responsibilities in ensuring rights. ■

www.sails-project.eu

New challenge for the Finnish upper secondary education 2021: Asian students



JUKKA O. MATTILA

There is a steady annual stream of students from the emerging economies to the English-speaking countries (USA, Canada, UK, New Zealand). Striving towards a better future, many of them spend their upper secondary education abroad.



Trying to invite part of this global stream to Finland, a Finnish initiative has been founded to provide foreign students with the opportunity to spend their upper secondary education in Finland. Beginning in 2021, the project starts with about 15 students from Vietnam and Uzbekistan. In the next school year, the plan is both to increase the number of students and to expand the intake to other countries.

Due to its success in the OECD PISA learning assessments, Finland has an excellent reputation in education. Therefore, it has not been difficult to convince foreign students to opt for Finnish secondary education.

Even the problem of learning Finnish language has been solved. Finnish belongs to the rare Finno-Ugric language family, which are quite different from the more popular global languages. Before entering Finland, Finnish language has been taught to the students in Vietnam and Uzbekistan.

Photo page 41: Vietnamese students begin their upper secondary studies at Mänttä senior high school, Finland. Luckily, they even received free laptops, because since August 2021 Finland extended the compulsory education till the age of 18. In September, an Uzbek student will join them, so altogether four Asian students will attend Mänttä school.

In a similar fashion, some Finnish upper secondary schools near the eastern (Russian) border have taught their Russian students in Finnish. Also, these students have learned Finnish in Russia, before starting their upper secondary in Finland.

In recent decades, significant urbanization has been experienced in Finland. This has left many small upper secondary schools in the countryside with less students.

According to the OECD PISA assessments, Finland has the least difference between small rural and large city schools in learning results, so most of the Vietnamese and Uzbekistan students are placed to these small upper secondary schools, where they can enjoy the same high standard of teaching as in the crowded cities.

Therefore, for both the foreign students and the Finnish small upper secondary schools, going to school in Finland provides a win-win situation.

According to the decade-long experience gained with the Russian students, about 80% of them have been found to remain in Finland and continue their education in Finnish universities.

The final goal of the project is to see the foreign students as future Finnish citizens, to compensate the declining demographics and aging of the population. ■

Jukka O. Mattila

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European school leaders meet online in World Cafés

In times when meeting physically was not possible, Dutch organisations Nuffic and AVS organised online meetings for European school leaders. In two online World Café meetings they could share their experiences about education during the pandemic. Two more World Cafés around internationalisation are slated to take place in November.



European school leaders were still meeting each other during the pandemic at online congresses and in eTwinning projects but there had not been an opportunity before to meet each other informally like in the World Café meetings on 16 and 23 March. The world café was an initiative of the *Algemene Vereniging Schoolleiders* (AVS), an organisation in the Netherlands for all leaders in primary and secondary education and Nuffic, the Dutch organisation for internationalisation in education.

Pandemic

The pandemic had a significant impact on school leaders, states Petra van Haren, chairwoman of the AVS, “There were so many things that had to be done; from dealing with sick staff and students to online and blended learning. As a result, there had not been a lot of time for reflection, sharing experiences or to learn from each other. Therefore, AVS and Nuffic came up with the idea of creating an opportunity for school leaders to exchange experiences but also to learn from each other. This led to the creation of the World Café; an informal online meeting to talk about each other’s experiences during Covid-19 and other education-related topics.”

Keen to have a conversation with school leaders from other European countries?

World Café Secondary Education:

Tuesday 9 November 14.30-16.00 hrs CET

World Café Primary Education:

Thursday 11 November 14.30-16.00 hrs CET

Sign up for one of these World Cafés by sending an email to svanlaarhoven@nuffic.nl

Lonely

In the first two editions of the World Café, the similarity of challenges that the participating school leaders were facing during the pandemic was striking according to Stan van Laarhoven, project leader of primary education at Nuffic, who moderated the World Cafés. “Whether they were from Slovenia, Norway or the Netherlands, everyone encountered the same issues. Such as, keeping staff and students motivated in these Covid-times or the organisation of online teaching.” Every school leader expressed loneliness at one point in the last year as they bore the sole responsibility for many complex decisions without always having feedback from others.

Internationalisation

The pandemic triggered an increase in working and teaching online, which, in turn, made school leaders realise that it is not always necessary to go abroad to work on internationalisation, emphasises Van Laarhoven. “Because of the pandemic school leaders were forced to think about the essence of internationalisation and to realise that internationalisation is much more than an overseas trip or a physical exchange. In a way, Covid-19 cleared some of the barriers to work and collaborate online. There have been many online exchanges between schools, such as eTwinning. As such, the step to meet international colleagues online has become smaller. Internationalisation in education benefits from these contacts between school leaders from different countries and cultural backgrounds.”

This collaboration is beneficial, suggests Van Haren. “Looking at a different country, another context and culture enables you to look at yourself better. When you talk with school leaders from different countries, everyone is always more curious about each other. What is normal for you may be new for someone else. This is truly the extra value of internationalisation.”

One of the concluding remarks from the first round of World Cafés was that learning from each other's different experiences and practices leads to better education.

This is necessary to let students grow in an increasingly globalised world, mentions Van Haren. "Nowadays, students learn to cooperate internationally in ways the previous generations did not have. Look for example at movements like Black Lives Matter. There are myriad opportunities in education to learn to collaborate with their international peers at a young age."

Upcoming World Cafés

Following the success of the first two editions of the online World Café for school leaders, two more online cafés, which are free of charge, will take place in November. In these online cafés school leaders have the chance to meet their European counterparts, to network, and to exchange good practices in an informal setting. The World Cafés are moderated and the next two editions focus on internationalisation in education and other related topics. Moreover, in order to meet the needs of the participating school leaders, suggestions for topics are collected prior to each World Café. ■

NEXT ISSUE OF THE ESHA MAGAZINE WILL BE OUT IN DECEMBER 2021

The deadline for submitting an article for the next issue is
November 30 2021.

Do you have interesting success stories?

A perfect programme?

Good experiences with the job shadowing project?

Liked a seminar you attended?

Have found a great solution everyone should know off?

Did you do research and found something great?

Found knowledge you have to share?

Found out something great?

An answer to all our questions?

Do you have an upcoming event you want everyone to know?

Something that shouldn't be missed?

A thing you have to go to?

A date which no one should forget?

Or do you want to read something about a certain theme?

Children's diversity

Coaching and mentoring school leaders

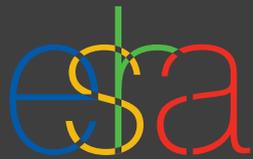
Hybrid integration

Inclusion

Social innovation

....

Please contact (luca.laszlo@esha.org) us so we can make great next
issues of the ESHA magazine for you!



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