

# LABLEARNING

## MEDIA BASED EMPOWERMENT FOR DISENGAGED YOUTH



## THE LABLEARNING GUIDE COLLECTION



### NR 1

## The complete LABlearning Guide to media based learning for disengaged youth

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The LABlearning Guide Collection offers inspiration, tools and principles to establish empowermental media based learning facilities for disengaged youth.

The Guide Collection offers around 20 different guides, including the full collection of guide material. The media based learning initiatives are contributing to re-thinking learning and to the creation of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning opportunities for young people.

The LABlearning Guide Collection is synthesizing theory and practice from such approaches as media learning, game based learning, project based learning, entrepreneurial and community based learning. The Guide material emerges from extensive literature studies, the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network's 20 years of experience, as well as from LAB practice in Catalonia Spain, Holland, Italy and Denmark.



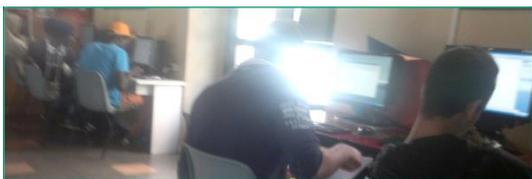
The LABlearning Guide Collection is produced by the Comenius LABlearning project 2011-13, funded by the European Commission. The material is openly available to all non-profit users. More information about the project and the partners on [www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu)



## The complete LABlearning Guide to media based learning for disengaged youth

The aim of the LABlearning Guide Collection is to offer institutions, communities, teachers, mentors and youth workers an opportunity to work on their mindsets and to be motivated to establish such empowermental facilities for disengaged youth.

This Guide is the complete Guide Collection.



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## . . . Introduction

*Teachers cannot teach how to be entrepreneurial without themselves being entrepreneurial*

EU Commission - Entrepreneurship Education: A Guide for Educators, 2013

The same is true for creative media laboratories for disengaged youth: teachers, mentors and youth workers in the LABs must be as experimenting, open and curious - and learning - as the young people.

This is why you will not find manuals or templates in the LABlearning Guide Collection.

Firstly, because media based learning can take on so many different forms, shapes and structures that it is impossible and irrelevant to offer instructions.

But most of all because it would contradict the very meaning of media based learning, as adult staff is expected to learn alongside the young people and take part in their missions, quests and empowerment.

*The adults in the LABs are senior learners and explorers.*

There are many parameters at stake in what we pragmatically call media based learning, and also many discourses intersect in such environments. Many principles and practices are borrowed from various theoretical frameworks.

This is why no simple and straightforward guidance is possible either. And this is why the LABlearning Guide Collection is precisely a *collection*: a collection of different types of guidance from different angles and perspectives, trying to cover the most important topics linked to creative media based learning.

*The aim of the Collection is to offer institutions, communities, teachers, mentors and youth workers an opportunity to work on their mindsets and to be motivated to establish such empowermental facilities for disengaged youth.*

They will not be short of challenges.

Educational disengagement among youth is, for many different reasons, expected to increase along the next decades.

Neither nature, nor economy or technology will solve these problems. The problems will only be properly addressed once the communities start to offer youth what they need and what matches globalization and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.

*At the end of the Guide Collection you will find information about how the LABlearning consortium and its networks can support you.*



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# LABlearning In short

## LABlearning In short

The LABlearning In short is a 1 page hand-out for large-scale distribution. It is presented at the forefront of the Collection to strike the media based learning chords and to allow the readers to start getting in flow with creative media based learning for disengaged youth.

# LET US GUIDE YOU TOWARDS WORKING WITH MEDIA LABORATORIES FOR DISENGAGED YOUTH

The EU funded LABlearning project has produced a [Guide Collection](#) for teachers, mentors, youth workers, schools and colleges - and educational policy-makers - on how to establish empowermental and creative media laboratories for disengaged youth to change their mentality and re-build their learning capacity and motivation.

You can access the entire Collection from the opening page of [www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu) including material from media LABs in Italy, Catalonia Spain, Holland and Denmark.

However, the consortium offers much more:

## [Counselling](#)

on media laboratories for disengaged youth for national and European educational policy-makers

## [Collaboration](#)

on the establishment of media laboratories in formal and non-formal contexts with institutions and communities

## [Training](#)

in managing media laboratories for disengaged youth for teachers, mentors and youth workers

The LABlearning consortium offers its services on non-profit basis and helps linking the media laboratories to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.



## THE 10 PRINCIPLES OF EMPOWERMENTAL MEDIA LABORATORIES FOR DISENGAGED YOUTH

- The young people should work with creative media, linked to own interests and without limits
- They should work in team-based projects with epic dimensions to allow immersion
- The media projects should link to real-life and to the surrounding community
- Creative media LAB projects can easily be linked to curricula and societal challenges
- The media LABs should foster entrepreneurial mentality, initiative and risk taking
- Gamification and creation of digital games can be an important driver in the media LABs
- The LAB environment must be based on flexibility, tolerance, patience, trust and mutual respect
- The media LABs should be strongly supported by the community and the community should join forces and ensure sustainability
- Empowermental media LABs should be available in formal as well as in non-formal settings 24/7
- Whenever possible, the media projects should link to international collaboration and networks



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# The basic LABlearning Principles

## The basic LABlearning principles

LABlearning is a pragmatic mix of problem based learning, media based learning and collaborative learning principles, and... In this text we describe the basic principles of LABlearning in very few words. LABlearning is not about theoretical dogmatic, but about exploring a variety of creative, inclusive and productive learning practices.



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### ...Re-think learning

*To take full advantage of new technologies, we need to fundamentally rethink our approaches to learning and education— and our ideas of how new technologies can support them.*

Mitchel Resnick, MIT Media Lab - *Rethinking Learning in the Digital Age*

What motivates LABlearning is the fact that in many member states, many young migrants and youth who need special attention are not doing well in the education system.

This poses a great and serious challenge to EU education systems, especially for primary and secondary schools as well as initial vocational training.

Most research as well as everyday evidence confirms the general impression of the existence of an increasing mismatch between the media culture of young people in the new generations and the classroom didactics, the traditional way of organizing education in EU throughout centuries.

Moreover, much evidence indicates that these groups of young people are, in fact, able to learn, and often quite talented.

But they learn differently from the standard-students of the traditional education system.

LABlearning will take the learning into the media world of youth at risk, instead of asking them to leave their media world and enter the old classrooms.



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### ...Hard fun

#### ENTERTAINMENT?

When we change the traditional classroom teaching into active and project based media labs, are we doing this to make the learning more *entertaining*?

Do we need to change the classrooms because the young people are *bored*? Because they are used to music, films and YouTube all day long? *Is that it?*

Perhaps many young people really *are* bored in the classrooms, but that's not the point. The media labs are not created to entertain the young people.

Some people think of the media labs as a place where the young people can do whatever they like, play computer games, search the YouTube and play with music and update their Facebook.

Some people think we make media labs to *please* the young people... To be more "like them" and their life...

However, this is not the case. On the contrary.

### MORE CHALLENGING, MORE WORK...

In fact, the young people will be working much harder than in the classrooms. Some of them might not like that at the beginning, but the media projects must be so exciting, so *seducing*, that the young people will slowly start to engage themselves more and more in the project missions. The idea is that they will experience *immersive learning*. Learning that makes you forget that you are learning, forget yourself...

The extensive use of all sorts of state of the art media is not to entertain the youth teams, but to allow them to unfold and express themselves - and to start learning with the media tools they use in their social lives.

Most young people, and disengaged young people in particular, are not used to do this. They might be media fluent as to specific social ways of using media, but they are certainly *not* media fluent for learning...

For many young people learning with media and in media projects will be very hard work. They will be challenged in the media projects in ways they have never experienced before. They will be taken seriously, and they will be seriously challenged...

*Why do we believe that they will engage in such challenges - instead of quitting and dropping out...?*

### THE PROJECTS

Because they will experience a new way of feeling personally involved in all parts of serious projects.

They are not used to this.

The projects are real-life projects, often defined and carried out in collaboration with people or organisations from the community - a bank, a kindergarten, a school, a theatre, the local NGO for sustainable energy, an elderly centre, etc.

The youth teams will be engaged in defining the mission, in the project planning, in the research, in the dialogues with the clients, in advanced media work and in producing and presenting the outcomes of the projects.

*They will not be able to do this. Neither will the mentors. But they will learn to do it on the flight - they will learn by doing...*

The important thing is that the projects must be *real-life* projects, have a *clear mission* and must deliver useful *outcomes* for the students, the school, the client or the community.

### HARD FUN

Media is used extensively in all phases of the projects, because it allows a great variety of expression forms and the youth teams to form and unfold content in all sorts of ways.

And the extensive use of media encourages critical dialogues on design, usability, aesthetics, etc. - This is hard fun.

It is not entertainment, but hard work that is also fun. It can be hard work to learn to edit a video at high level, but it is also fun. Not entertainment, but fun, pride, overcoming obstacles, taking new steps, showing your work to other people... using your own special talents, or finding new...

And first of all: *feeling involved, accepted, respected, dedicated, almost forgetting yourself...*

The Intel Computer Clubhouse Network offers 20 years of experience in this field. And bottom line is: yes, it can be done, yes it is happening...

So, hard fun. Does this mean that the young people cannot play computer games in the media labs?

No. They can use computer games for learning. Or, they might design a game themselves. Or design some of the projects using strong game principles from good digital games. *Production, not consumption...*

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## ...The basic LABlearning principles

### [SET-UP]

LABlearning is not about classrooms and teaching. LABlearning is about establishing a laboratory of learning in which the learners take part in all processes, including defining the learning missions. The laboratory metaphor signals experimentation and exploration and trying out different pathways, including taking risks.

### [PROBLEM BASED]

LABlearning includes learners' participation in defining and understanding the learning missions, as well as participation in the organisation of the learning activities. LABlearning sets out from a problem or a group of problems, from which the mission can be defined.

Learning based on problems and challenges, and not on the consumption or transfer of ready-made knowledge, aims to increase the *learning to learn* capacity and motivation of the learners.

### [LEARNING AS PRODUCTION]

LABlearning is about a laboratory in which knowledge and competences can be produced, instead of being re-produced. The production of knowledge and competences encompasses both the mental and collaborative construction of knowledge from a variety of sources, as well as the production of digital and physical products.

### [PRODUCING FOR OTHERS]

As much as possible, the learning productions should be made useful to other learners, or to people in the community.

The *producing for others* should not be reduced to simulations, but should as far as possible aim to create and circulate real and useful knowledge and competences in the community.

### [OWN TALENTS AND ASPIRATIONS]

No matter the topics and contents of the learning, the learning should link to the learner's own talents and aspirations: to what the learner is good at, and to what the learner *would like to* be good at.

This includes technological talents, artistic talents or different forms of technical skills - or entrepreneurial talents...

### [COMMUNITY APPROACH]

LABlearning should open the doors to relevant resources in the community that might be included in the learning mission, or might benefit from the produced knowledge and competences.

### [MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY]

LABlearning should include all sorts of state of the art, emerging and social technologies to allow the learners to be creative and express themselves to the max, collaborate in virtual environments, to enhance the learner's mastery of

media technologies, and to exploit the great learning potentials of interactive technologies, including media production and digital games.

[ATMOSPHERE]

LABlearning should not smell like “school”, but should offer an open environment, based on mutual interests, trust and respect, in which the different players jointly pursue their learning goals and help others reach theirs.

The supportive LABlearning environment should be accompanied by clear and strong challenges and hard fun, demonstrating that learners and learning missions are taken very seriously.

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Much more on [www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu)



# Empowerment media didactics for disengaged youth

## Empowerment media didactics for disengaged youth

This comprehensive guide offers building blocks to create media based laboratories across all sorts of learning activities in formal as well as in non-formal education and linking strongly to what we call 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. The guide elucidates what media labs are about from different angles and perspectives, never by enforcing manuals but by offering open inspiration



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. . . **Why media based learning works for disengaged youth**

**THE WHY**

Traditional education didactics is outdated for all learners, not just for youth at risk.

All learners could significantly improve their learning outcomes, their competences and their creativity if offered explorative and productive media LABs instead of teaching and lecturing.

Nevertheless we argue that media LABs are of special importance to youth at risk. Why is that?

Strong, self-confident and academic learners can manage their learning pathways even if offered outdated education settings and methods. They might not be able to unfold their talents to the full, which they should in the knowledge economy, but they can manage their learning in a somehow acceptable way.

This is not true for youth at risk.

What does *youth at risk* mean in this context?

- › Young learners from non-academic communities and families
- › Young learners with low qualifications in the traditional subjects, such as reading and writing and math
- › Young learners not able to learn in the classroom
- › Young learners with low self-esteem when it comes about schooling
- › Young people who cannot, from their life perspective, value the theoretical learning offered
- › Activist and media entertainment addicted young learners
- › Young learners with very little support from family and friends as to learning
- › Young learners not aware of what they would like to do with their future life
- › Young people easy victims of drug and alcohol abuse
- › Young learners typically dropping out of secondary school or vocational training, often more than once
- › Young people being trapped between unsuccessful basic school and the lack of ability to attend secondary high or vocational training

As can be seen we are a long way from the above mentioned strong learners not able to fully unfold their talents.

These large groups of young people are in need of very powerful initiatives to overcome their so-called educational deficit. If not, they are lost for life, and lifelong learning will turn out to be life non-learning.

*Why do media LABs make a difference, then?*

Let's point to some of the most important factors.

- › The work processes are practical, action oriented and product oriented
- › Reflections are in a natural way inserted when needed as time-outs in the practical work flow
- › The young learners are not passively listening and responding to teacher initiatives, but design their own mission and work flow

- › The learning is not based on academic skills and qualifications, but on own talents and action learning
- › The young people are engaged in defining the projects, their missions and their work methods prior to engaging in the activities; missions are not felt as externally enforced and irrelevant
- › Even though most young people do not know how to learn with media and technology, they are familiar with technology and feel they are on safe ground
- › To a great extent the learning activities are based on the known talents of the young people, or based on the development of new talents
- › The learning process is not divided into isolated academic topics, but represents a long coherent work flow
- › The learning potential of the work processes is not depending on your academic and theoretical capacity, but on a diversity of very different capacities
- › The use of high-end media is well-known to be highly respected among these young people, and they are well-motivated to work hard to get more media skills
- › The work flow is to a large extent based on interacting with external professionals, the community and social networks
- › The work process has a clear final goal: to produce a product or service of high quality to be used by other people in the community; often the young people take pride in their products and the fact that other people need them
- › No formal teaching takes place in the LABs; the learning is indirect and emerges through the practical project work
- › The media LABs do not smell like education, but more like an open, action-based and productive workplace
- › The young people are at the centre of all the phases in the projects: from mission design to delivery of the products; they acquire a deep understanding of their different roles in these phases and of production processes
- › Basically the young people are recognized for *what they can do* and for *what they would like to do*, not for *what they should be able you do according to the formal education system*



## • MEDIA LAB PROJECTS

It is interesting to describe the typical work flow in such media LAB projects for youth at risk. Such a description tells us about what kind of learning, skills and competences the young people will need to develop along the media projects.

Media LAB projects are, of course, very different, but it is possible to outline the most typical phases, as there is a certain “logic” involved in projects and in media projects as well.

**Of course, the description below depends on the size and scope of the project and on to what extent it is possible to carry out these phases in the practical learning situation.**

*Media LAB projects should not be “dogmatic”, but pragmatic: you do your best in the actual situation and with the resources available.*

The young people might, most likely, not be able to carry out the different tasks in the work flow, but they will learn a lot from trying and from being challenged by all these activities.

One of the great advantages of this didactic is that everybody around the young people are taking them seriously, which will encourage the young people to start taking themselves seriously.

## MISSION

Depending on the formal or non-formal context, the young people will be invited

to discuss a given or new mission they will be engaged in as a team or as several teams.

The mission must be real and important and challenging. It must make sense and motivate the learners.

*Main skills to train*

Develop ideas, construct, plan, reflection on other people's needs and what you can offer, establishing relevant teams, defining a project, designing work flow and tasks

## RESOURCES

The young teams will find out what resources are needed to carry out the mission. This includes own skills and training needs, support from external professionals, counselling from different people in the community, media needs and resources, available mentors and process supporters, time and costs to take into consideration.

*Main skills to train*

Reflecting on what we can do and not do, what we need to learn and why it is necessary, identifying support resources and even partners, planning of work flow and work tasks, discussing the team's capacity and deficits and what to do about it

## FIRST DIALOGUES

The young learners will contact people they need to collaborate with along the project. They must expose the project and the reason why they need support or collaboration. They also need to explain the benefits for the approached resources and for the community. Moreover, they need to explain what kind of contributions they need from the collaborators and how the team will receive the support. The people to approach might be working in a private enterprise, a health institution, a cultural institution, or they might be media professionals or technology supporters.

The initial dialogues might include discussions with the end users of the final products of the project.

*Main skills to train*

Communication with different people in the community, explaining your cause and your mission to other people, describing what you need from other people and why they should help you, planning how to use these resources during the project, identifying the needs and interests of possible end users

## FIRST DESIGN

Then the young teams will, supported by mentors and professionals, engage in the first work tasks and some training activities are inserted when needed - knowledge and skills are created when you need it.

The first steps often include finding knowledge, using existing material and resources and trying to outline and visualize what the product or service should look like.

The first steps will normally reveal additional training needs and additional support needs.

*Main skills to train*

Internet search, selection of useful resources, elaborating on material, estimating what we have and what we need to create, visualizing plans, flows and outcomes, creating the first concrete visions of the products, including already at this stage: what kind of things would the end users like to have and how the users will use the products in practice

## SECOND DIALOGUES

Now the youth teams will establish dialogues with their mentors and collaborators about the first design steps. They will also communicate with possible end users about their ideas, now starting to take on more concrete forms.

The feed-back from these dialogues will go into the further design steps.

*Main skills to train*

Presenting ideas to partners and users, receiving feed-back, managing the frustration when feed-back is unexpected, learning how to use the feedback from different sources to take further design steps, most importantly learning to

adjust own ideas and expectations to partners' and users' needs: differentiate between what I would like to do and what they need...

## SECOND DESIGN

The time has come to start producing some of the elements for the production. It might be a video, an interview, a piece of music, a web framework, and some photos, whatever. The young people will engage deeply in this work if properly guided.

The big challenge is for the team to coordinate all this and to remember to work together even if the team members are working on different elements.

This phase might require a lot of media work and training, and strong mentoring and guidance will be needed.

At the end of this work process, the team will bring together the different elements and construct the first version of the product or products.

The material must be presented in a way that makes it possible for other people to discuss it and perhaps test it.

*Main skills to train*

Designing and producing with all sorts of media, taking ideas into concrete media elements, coordinating different project and media tasks in teams, seeking advice and guidance when needed, putting together different pieces of content into a meaningful flow, getting new media skills on the flight, ensuring the testability of the produced material, product or service

## TESTING

The first, and of course un-finished, material should be "tested" by or presented to the people or the institution who will use it. The team of young people should try to make the first version testable or at least discussable to allow a fruitful dialogue with end users.

It will be important in this activity to listen well and capture the feedback from the users, and, afterwards, to reflect on what kind of adjustments or further developments might be needed.

*Main skills to train*

Presenting material in a way to allow testing or discussions, strong listening and capturing skills, constructive dialogues with users, understanding the needs and ideas of the users, making user feedback operative to the final productions

## FINAL PRODUCTION

Based on the testing or dialogues with the users, the youth teams will start producing the final outcomes of the material, products or services.

This process is demanding and will require considerable mentoring and professional guidance. The young learners' critical competences will be challenged in this phase.

The youth team should feel proud in the process of finalizing the work.

*Main skills to train*

Media skills, coordinating skills, critical and self-critical approaches, agreeing with the team, open to ask for help and guidance, take pride in your work

## DELIVERY

The final material, products or services should be delivered to the users. It can happen in the form of an event, a celebration or in a very informal way. The youth team will need to present their work to the users and perhaps offer guidance on how to use the material.

The learners should make sure to organize feedback from the upcoming user experience.

*Main skills to train*

Presentation to users and perhaps other audiences in the community, guiding users towards a proper use of the outcomes, making users interested in evaluating their user experience, and perhaps making them interested in further collaboration

## EVALUATION

If possible in the specific learning context, the delivery should be followed up by a double evaluation activity. Normally young people are not interested in

evaluations, but when the evaluation is about their own work, the interest will change.

On one hand, the youth teams should evaluate their own work process: what did we learn, how we learned, what worked and what did not, and what would I like to learn more about (the topics, media tools) and how can I do that.

On the other hand, the learners should plan and carry out an informal evaluation of user experience.

Main skills to train

Reflecting on your own learning process, reflecting on your new talents and needs, reflecting on teamwork and reflecting on user satisfaction, planning further steps in your learning journey based on what happened in this project

And always: meeting a need by producing products or services always produces new needs... How can we create and approach new needs?



### . A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Most of the above described activities might not be possible in a specific context. The young learners might not be able to carry out all these different tasks.

This is not so important.

The overall aim is to offer the young learners a new learning experience, very different from their almost always rather negative classroom experience: to show them that learning can be different, joyful and exiting, and that they are not stupid.

What is important is the young learners' feelings about the project: do I feel proud, did I take new steps, did I occasionally forget myself during the work flow?, have I developed new talents or ideas, do I feel encouraged to take new or further steps, did I have fun during the project, did I like this kind of work, etc.

Clearly, media LABs are not so much about subject learning, but much more about the famous key words: empowerment, self-confidence, learning re-motivated, discovering skills and talents, renewed energy to take further steps.

If *some* of the young people feel *some* of these things, your media LAB was successful.



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## ...Horizons of media based learning for disengaged youth

### THE RHETORIC OF TECHNOLOGY

It was hoped, from the early days of information technology, that it would revolutionize education.

It did.

It offered knowledge to millions of people, it offered online communication and e-learning and it offered measures to make education more efficient.

But it was a “traditional” revolution. Lots of technology optimists still believe that technology has basically changed education.

But it has not.

In most cases technology has been integrated into traditional didactics. Some teachers and learners benefit from this, some not.

All evaluations agree: the more privileged a learner, the more benefit from technology.

Technology itself is not revolutionizing the way most people learn, especially not the way youth learn. And it will not. The learning potentials of technology will only be unfolded when integrated in new didactics, in new ways of learning, shifting the focus from the classroom to actively producing learners: 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.

Technology itself will not produce one milligram of learning. On the other hand, some technologies offer incredible rich tools for learning if integrated in creative learning processes. These learning processes are, though, not derived from technology, but derived from knowledge and experience about what learning is. Socrates pointed in the right direction 2000 years ago with very limited technology.

In fact both the misuse of technology and the unmanageability of available “knowledge” might very well disturb learning rather than facilitate it.



### . THE EDUCATION CRISIS

Europe has experienced deep crisis in its education systems for more than a decade. High drop-out rates, early school leaving, disengaged youth, etc.

The new generations of learners have exposed the conservatism of the education systems - neither able to meet the young people, nor able to link to the new realities of learning and work.

Many attempts to change the old classrooms have been made over the last 10-15 years, some of them quite successfully, but basically the education system remains unchanged.

Policy-makers, educational professionals and stakeholders seem unwilling to give up the formal control of the system, its work methods and its outcomes.

The education crisis is about new generations of young people not willing to passively receive “knowledge” from the teachers, sitting in the classroom for hours, days and years. They do not have the *industrial discipline*, they do not want to have it and they are not able to; neither the so-called smart students, nor the so-called weak students.

The new generations are active, networking, self-centered, technologists, “undisciplined”, rapidly bored and lacking the old conservative education virtues.

The education system at large is not able to respond to this profound cultural change.

In fact, most students have been bored in the classrooms for ages, but perhaps it was less visible in the old days. Technology and technological youth seem to super-expose the failures of the traditional education system.

*Technology did not revolutionize learning; it simply made visible its failures.*



## . DIDACTIC DAWN

Technology and technological youth seem to super-expose the failures of the traditional education system, so we said.

But, in fact, we have known for decades, if not for centuries, what good creative learning is about.

Socrates did not offer answers, but only new questions. Freud did the same in his field of work, and the constructivists followed these pathways in more systematic ways.

But the industrial era called for mass educational solutions, not new questions, later on accompanied by the democratic movement's pseudo-dialogues with the learners: enlightenment, but not empowerment, and mostly for the middle class. The creative learning environments were always and are still found in the fields of non-formal learning, such as the Nordic folk high schools and the global Computer Clubhouse Network.

No doubt, the didactic dawn is highly influenced by both the communication technology itself, as well as the new generations' technology cultures.

It has become clear throughout the last decades how outdated the traditional educations are when confronted with the potentials of creative technology and huge challenges of globalization.

Today, everybody seems to concur: innovation is urgent in the European education sector. The new technologies are seen as key drivers in this innovation.



## . TECHNOLOGY AND DIDACTICS

But, technology cannot define innovation in learning. Innovation in learning must be based on knowledge about how we facilitate good and creative learning. Good and creative learning was possible long before the emergence of Facebook and computer games.

This means that innovative didactics are to be based on non-technological principles. On the other hand, technology offers rich access to all sorts of creative tools, and properly used technology can make creative learning processes unfold to the max.

Examples of core and non-technological principles on which creative learning should be based might be:

- › The learning environment must be open, explorative and open-ended
- › The learning must be linked to the interests and aspirations of the young people
- › The young people must be involved in defining problems and missions
- › The learners must critically explore the knowledge available
- › The learners must interact with external experts and community resources in the learning process
- › The learners must learn to organize, elaborate on and present the knowledge
- › The learning outcomes could benefit other learners or citizens in the community; often the young people take pride in their products and the fact that other people need them
- › The learning process should be product-oriented, as it offers the young people concrete, focused and practical perspectives in the learning

- › The learners should use a variety of expression forms along the process and when delivering the final outputs, as using different forms of expressions help the learners develop different forms of intelligences
- › The overall learning process is open-ended
- › The learning should be linked to real tasks, not to artificial or simulated tasks.

All this can take place without the use of any of the new technologies, but it is very clear to what extent new technologies can dramatically increase productivity, creatively and motivation in such processes.



### . WHAT DOES MEDIA MEAN

When we talk about media - as in media based learning -, we mean all sorts of new technologies fit for learning: text editing, digital photography, video, animation, social gaming, serious games, social networking, all sorts of useful software and hardware.

But in our context we talk about media for learning. Media for entertainment might be different. PlayStation might not be relevant to learning, whereas Facebook and Photoshop might be extremely relevant.

Defining media for learning includes challenging one of the great myths of our time: the idea of “digital natives”.

Most young people might be “fluent” as to PlayStation and Facebook, but they are not at all “fluent” when it comes about learning with media. Not that they are not technically capable, they are, but they do not know how to learn with the technologies at hand.

Therefore, in learning with media nobody is “fluent”: neither the teachers, nor the learners.

We are all in the same boat: we must learn to learn with any media available, and we must learn to base the learning principles on knowledge about learning, not on technology. Any available creative technology should support creative learning, not the other way round.

Thus, the term “media based learning” is actually “wrong”: the learning is based on creative learning principles, but the practical learning is based on extensive use of creative media to enhance productivity, creatively and motivation.



### . MEDIA BASED LEARNING IN FORMAL SETTINGS

It can be expected that innovation in learning will emerge from bottom-up initiatives: good practices demonstrating the benefits for the young learners as well as for the institutions.

Therefore it is urgent to organize a variety of laboratory and media based learning processes in formal education. As long as the creative learning initiatives remain isolated in non-formal settings, assessment requirements are quite low or even non-existing in these settings, the strong potential of creative media based learning in formal education will not be demonstrated.

Creative laboratories of learning can be established at all levels and in different scales in formal education. It can even be done without disturbing the formal assessment rules and routines. It’s not about WHAT to learn, but about HOW to learn.

There is a wide range of opportunities to establish media based settings: from a group work to a class project to a large cross-subject and cross-class thematic community learning initiative.

The wide range of opportunities is described later on in this paper.

The aim of such limited media learning laboratories is to enable young people, teachers and institutions to learn to innovate the traditional classroom didactics. This is done by learning from practical experience and by telling the success stories to a wider audience.



#### . MEDIA BASED LEARNING IN NON-FORMAL SETTINGS

Many young drop-outs, young unemployed, street youth, etc. are in great need of after-school and 24/7 learning provisions, and different laboratory settings can be established in youth clubs, in community centers or in public or private institutions.

As no or very few formal requirements are forced upon such settings they can develop into high-powered and very creative media learning incubators for young people, and have a huge impact on youth performance in school.

One of the advantages in such non-formal settings is that the laboratory must finance itself, in full or partly. This is a great challenge to the young people working in the facility, as they will learn to contribute to their own laboratory by producing useful projects or products or services to organizations in the community.

The sense of ownership resulting from such activities is quite amazing, and this kind of ownership is only possible to a lesser degree in formal education.

In such non-formal settings it is easier to link the media projects to the community, to interested institutions and to real needs in the city, including the labor market.

The aim of such non-formal settings is to re-motivate and re-engage youth at risk by offering creative and relevant media learning projects, but also to use such facilities as an inspiration to the formal education sector.

*The formal education system can learn a lot from these settings, and the idea of linking formal and non-formal youth settings closer to each other is extremely interesting.*



#### . THE PRINCIPLES OF MEDIA BASED LEARNING

Turning to the practical use of media in laboratory settings, we should define the most important media learning principles, not to be confused with the basic didactic principles described above. It is important to notice that neither the young learners nor their teachers can be expected to know how to work in media laboratories!

The sense of experimentation is therefore fundamental to the labs.

- > The use of media should be guided by the learning needs and the missions of the project undertaken
- > The media is not for entertainment, but for learning; hard fun
- > The learners must have access to all state of the art media tools for creative learning; they should not be limited by lack of access to quality tools
- > The mentors are learning mentors, not technology experts

- › The learning settings must have easy and flexible access to media professionals for inspiration and help, as well as to technical support
- › The most important media resources are tools with which you can express yourself creatively
- › It is important to the young learners that they learn to reflect critically on why they are using the different media tools and for what purpose
- › The media labs are based on production, not on consumption: you cannot play computer games, but you can create a game
- › The choice of media should reflect the target and purpose of the produced outcomes
- › The media work should link as much as possible to the local community, including private enterprises, cultural institutions and educations
- › The media work should be based on the personal interests and talents of the young people, and should link to non-technological creativity, such as drawing, painting, playing music, crafts, etc.
- › The mentors should ensure the quality of the learning and offer guidance on the quality, relevance and usability of the outcomes produced
- › Networking with peers in social networks should be encouraged



#### LESSONS LEARNED FROM MEDIA BASED PRACTICE

Let us try to sum up some of the negative lessons from youth media projects over the last two decades.

When we analyze the evaluations of the practical experiments, we will notice a clear pattern: most evaluations focus on a limited set of obstacles or roadblocks, seriously damaging the expected outcomes of media labs for youth at risk.

Here are some of the typical obstacles to successful media LABs:

- › Professional staff not ready to let go of the traditional control
- › Professional staff not really interested in learning with media, more like simulating an interest
- › Young learners not understanding what the media LAB is about and how they can benefit from it
- › Lack of patience on the teachers and mentors side, but also on the side of the institution
- › Lack of support and inspiration for using hardware and software
- › Lack of technical support when needed
- › Learning projects not sufficiently based on the interest of the young learners
- › Not interesting missions, or not sufficiently promoted
- › Isolated learning space, not linked to the community or to creative environments
- › Too much time pressure, not allowing time to learn to work in the media LAB both for learners and mentors
- › Tight work schedules, not allowing the learners to unfold or follow ideas and interests and getting in flow
- › Not enough time to train complicated hardware or software
- › External partners not seriously interested in the young people's work
- › Professional staff not really dedicated to exploring themselves, just pretending to do so
- › More time needed to make the young learners feel ownership to the media projects
- › Overestimating the young learners' technology fluency
- › Learning processes too abstract and academic, dropping of the non-academic learners
- › Learning projects too ambitious, too far away from the learners' potential

In conclusion, such lists should call for strong and serious reconstruction of the media labs. With youth at risk you can only fail once or twice. Too many failures, game over!



#### . HARD FUN

Are we promoting “more fun in education”? Are we giving in to the entertainment culture of the young people?

Not at all.

The learning innovators at the MIT Media LAB use the expression “hard fun”. What do they mean by that?

They clearly promoted fun in learning, or “fun learning”, for example in collaboration with the LEGO company. Having fun, feeling good, feeling pleasure seems to be contradicting serious learning, at least when serious learning is based on discipline, self-control and abstinence?

The joy of learning seems more “acceptable”, but it really means the same. In fact, one might argue that “learning without joy” is simply not possible.

The deep feeling of satisfaction when engaged or immersed in challenging learning activities is the real driver of lifelong learning interest.

Therefore, we do not agree that “fun” should be opposed to serious learning, in fact we argue that fun, and pleasure and joy are preconditions for sustainable learning processes: real learning includes the whole person.

When MIT use the expression “*hard* fun”, they did it to show that in successful media based learning the young people are challenged much more in all dimensions than in the classroom. Media based projects, when based on the total engagement of the young learners, are *hard work*: you need to learn so much and so many different things, most of them being quite different from remembering what the teacher said in the class.

This is why young people at risk can grow in media LABs: if they are successfully engaged in the learning projects, they will grow precisely because they are challenged, and precisely because they are following their own interests and using their own talents.

Thus, media LABs are not more entertaining or easy going than the classroom. On the contrary, the LABs are far more demanding than the classrooms. And, it is precisely because of the “fun”, the “pleasure” and the “joy” of working that makes the young learners work so hard!

Therefore, once again: you cannot play entertainment games in the media LABs, but perhaps you can create your own computer game?



#### . THE INTEGRATION OF LEARNING AND WORK

It is important to realize that not only is the traditional education system not tuned in with the new generations; it is also not tuned in with the labor markets of globalization.

What is learned and assessed in traditional education?

Traditional “knowledge” and traditional “skills”, very different from the competences needed in the labor markets of the knowledge society, and assessed by traditional methods, such as multiple choice tests.

Today it is possible to be successful in the education and totally fail in the labor market. And the other way round.

So, the traditional education system is challenged from both sides: from the new generation of young learners and from the 21<sup>st</sup> century labor markets!

Lately it has become a transversal key priority in the EU Commission's educational programs to develop projects and practices integrating learning and work.

Media LABs offer this integration in several ways:

- › The missions of the media projects are linked closely to the community resources in the learning process, and could benefit people from the community, i.e. children, elderly, other young people, or the community at large
- › Many media projects link directly to mentors or collaborators in the private sector, such as sponsors, media professionals and project partners
- › The LABs invite several resources other than educational professionals to participate in the media projects
- › Many of the skills needed in the media learning processes include skills highly needed and acknowledged in the labor markets, i.e. planning, problem solving, production, delivering, entrepreneurship, taking risks, etc.
- › The media LABs smell much more of entrepreneurship, risk taking and production than the classrooms that in general isolate themselves from the community and the labor markets



#### . INNOVATIVE EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT FLUENCY

We all know that one of the great obstacles to innovation in learning is the demand for *control* from the formal education system and powerful communities in the society at large.

This control is practiced in the form of formal assessment and validation systems. The learning and the curricula are directed towards those formal assessment and validation systems.

Most assessment systems are controlled by national governments, and the local education can do very little about it.

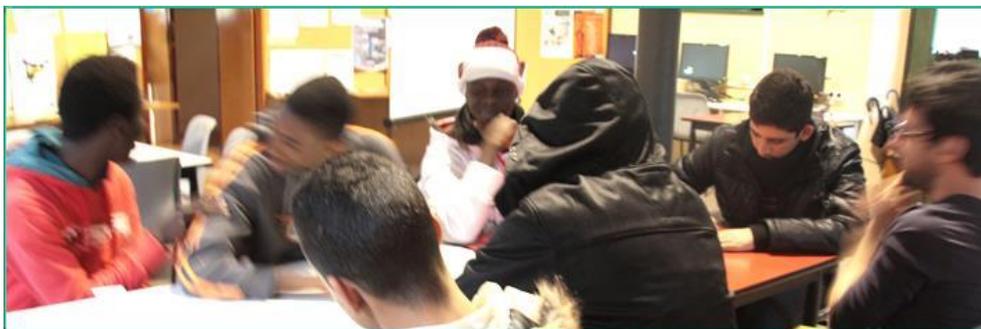
So, on one side the institutions need to establish innovative learning settings within the traditional education system, on the other side the education system needs to develop innovative and relevant assessment methods that meet the challenges of the new learning processes and of the modern labor markets.

The new assessment methods are likely to be process based, self-evaluative and team based, and to be able to assess the quality of an entire learning process, not just the results of the learning process.

The EU Commission has paved the way for such innovations by launching the learning outcomes based assessment: what should be assessed is not how many books the learner has been reading, or how many hours the learner has spent in the classroom, but *what the learner is able to do as a result of the learning process*.

To assess what the learner can do, we need to monitor and assess the entire learning process within for instance a media based project. This is quite different from a post festum multiple choice test exam.

To make the assessment measures fluent with the new learning processes, we need a top-down approach (national governments changing the assessment methods) as well as a bottom-up approach (LABlearning settings demonstrating the strengths and relevance of alternative work and assessments methods).



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## ...Teacher or mentor - Freud, Socrates...

There are many obstacles to innovative didactics: national policy-making, conservative educations, reluctant or insecure teachers, the learners' traditional expectations, just to mention a few.

One of the most severe obstacles is, of course, the teachers.

Most of them are not used to work in media LABs, give up control and emerge into exploration side by side with the learners.

For many years public policy has responded to this by offering more teacher training: you must learn this and that to update your teaching skills.

This is mission impossible, as new technologies and new social practices are emerging all the time, and change has become the rule, not the exception. The teachers will, unless they are natural users themselves, never "catch up".

The good news is that they don't need to.

It goes without saying that teachers of today should take an interest in the world of creative technology, but they do not need to be technology experts at all. It is not their most important role.

Most teachers ask: what must we do to be able to manage these new media, these new learning settings...

But perhaps it is not about *what you should do*, but about *what you should not do*.

Shifting from teaching to mentoring, and that is what is needed in the media LABs, means NOT doing a lot of things you used to do in the classroom. Thou should not teach, Thou should not organize, Thou should not take the scene, Thou should not control the learning process, Thou should not direct all activities towards the final tests; Thou should not be... a teacher.

It's more like the famous Freudian rule of abstinence. The rule of abstinence is not about drinking or smoking, *but about not giving in to your desire to tell the "patient" how things are*.

The patient can only heal himself by constructing his own story about his mental life.

The same is true for the learner, and even more so for the young learner: she can only learn from constructing her knowledge and experience, and especially from doing this in real-life situations.

The teacher cannot replace this process. The teacher cannot transfer the needed knowledge and experience to the learner, as Freud could not transfer his knowledge about the patient to the patient. In fact, he could, but he found out that it did not help the patient. Neither will it help the learner.

*So, the basic rule of mentoring in media LABs is the rule of abstinence.*

Mentoring means waiting, hesitating, watching, reflecting, - and then stepping in when the learners need guidance or mentoring.

The mentor learns with the learners. Therefore the mentor should never engage in the same projects several times. If so, he will lose his learning drive and motivation to explore.

*The mentor is a senior learner.*

The mentor is experienced in learning, not in media. He can help you when you get stuck, when you need a push to go on... Or give advice in complicated matters or situations. But he will never take over your learning process. Like Socrates: he will answer your question with another question, allowing YOU to learn.

Let us point to some of the important qualities in a media LAB mentor:

- > Focusing on facilitating the learning of the learners
- > Avoiding taking over the learning of the learners
- > Willing and able to explore with the learners
- > Deeply interested in creative media, but not needing to be an expert
- > Sharing the mentoring with non-educationalists from the community
- > Intervening when relevant and constructive: just in time
- > Offering his experience when useful
- > Demonstrating patience and acceptance towards the individual learner
- > Watching the learning process, stepping in to let it progress
- > Offering time-outs and dialogues when things get stuck

- > Making needed resources available during the work process
- > Offering critical and useful input
- > Not giving in to “populist” behavior to please the learners
- > Making sure that the learners’ ambitions are challenging and realistic at the same time
- > Encouraging the learners to make mistakes and to take risks
- > A protagonist of and role-model for “hard fun”

Basically, mentoring cannot be learnt in theory, but only by practicing it, and sharing your experience with peer mentors.

To quote the European Commission: only entrepreneurial teachers can foster entrepreneurial mentality.



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## . . . Key approaches to LABlearning for disengaged youth

### MISSION

The media laboratories will re-engage young people not learning well in the classrooms by letting them work with all sorts of media tools and social media in teams and projects, linked to real life and community.

The laboratories will allow the young people to discover that they can learn, that leaning can be fun and exciting - but also *hard* fun.

The laboratories will help build their self-confidence by offering immersive learning, sometimes taking on epic dimensions, in an open and creative learning environment, build on respect and trust.

The laboratories will enhance the young people's learning capacity and motivation, as well as make the young learners more attractive to future employers.



### . LABORATORY

The media laboratories can be established in all sorts of formal and non-formal education and training contexts.

The laboratories offer the young people creative work facilities with state of the art media equipment and access to mentors, media professionals and community networks.

*Laboratory* signals research, exploration, experimenting and working together in project teams with clear missions and goals.

The key driver in the laboratories is the young people's own interest, curiosity and personal aspirations.

The laboratories are not classrooms with teachers, but open work places where projects can start, be carried out and made useful to the community.

The laboratories are populated by mentors, junior mentors, media people and community collaborators, not by traditional educational staff roles.

The atmosphere of the laboratories will be welcoming, creative and encourage team based work and projects - more like a film studio or an atelier than a classroom.



### . TECHNOLOGY

The key principles in the laboratories are about how to learn, how to be creative, how to follow ones ideas, not about technology.

Technology is used to allow a high degree of creativity, self-expression and communication, and because technology is the natural language of the young people and holds the future keys to education and labour market.

The laboratories will offer the young people high quality and open-ended (unlimited) media tools, allowing the young people to follow their talents and interests wherever it lead them.

Technology is not taught, but explored, not instructed, but mentored, not isolated, but collaborative.

The laboratories will offer readily technological support and creative media inspiration, but will also invite the young people to find their own solutions, individually and in teams.



## . LOCATION

A media laboratory might be placed anywhere in the community: in a school, in an after-school facility, in a community centre, in an old factory or closed super market - or linked to a sport club or to a cultural or educational centre.

Media based learning can flexibly take on the form of a place, a situation, a process, a project, a room, a mission, a building...

The young people should be involved in designing and re-designing the lab space themselves, asking the question: what should a creative media work place or process look like and why?

Any facility, educational activity or building can be re-organized to host a media lab.

The lab space should meet the needs of the young people's project and team work and should smell of creativity and community.

Many people from the community will be invited to visit the media lab and propose useful activities.

If possible, a full media lab should be place at the centre of the city or the community to allow everyday and fluent personal contact to other people, families and friends and institutions.



## . THE YOUNG PEOPLE

The labs might first of all address disengaged young people between 12 and 20 from disadvantaged communities and families, and in danger of dropping out of the educational system or simply not being able to link to education or labour market.

These young people are invited to join the media laboratories in the school, in the after-school facility or in the community centre.

There are no requirements, no tests, no conditions for joining, except: interest and curiosity.

Nevertheless there are conditions for *participating* in the laboratory activities. Agreements are made between the youth teams themselves and between the youth teams and the mentors on how to work responsibly in the laboratories.

These values cannot be taken for granted, but must be developed among the young people - along with an increasing motivation to work in the projects.

Most of the time the young people don't know what to do in the laboratories, except play with the technology. They need to be guided and to learn to find, follow and trust their own interests and talents.

And if they have no talents, they will develop some.



## . STAFF

The laboratories will be populated by other adults than in the classroom, as no teaching takes place in the labs.

Teachers will shift their roles to mentors, working side by side with the young teams, some of the most dedicated young people will work as junior mentors,

media professionals will inspire and collaborate, and people from the community will join in when they are needed to carry out the media projects.

The laboratories will ensure that qualified mentors are the key references for the young people, and the mentors are expected to be able to work fluently and patiently with young people that might have personal, social or learning problems.

Mentors are not required to be media experts, but to take a personal interest in exploring all kinds of media - and be able to work in open laboratories and be focused on guiding and facilitating the different ways the young people work and learn.

Mentors and youth teams will establish useful contacts to professionals and interested institutions in the community.



## . COMMUNITY PROJECTS

The projects in the laboratories will as often as possible be linked to real needs or to innovation in the community.

It will be smaller or larger projects, depending on the circumstances. And it will be projects with all sorts of institutions and people, depending on the interest of the young teams.

Projects might be with energy companies, kindergartens, art institutions, banks, sport clubs, elderly, etc.

It is important to the laboratories that the learning and the media exploration are linked closely to real-life challenges, not to examples in a text book.

A part of the growing self-confidence in the young people comes from making useful things for the community, things people in the community need and appreciate.

Community projects are not based on a fixed curricula, but on a combination of different topics and fields of knowledge, defined by the project and the mission.

When the laboratories demonstrate their value to the community, the community can be expected to support the laboratories - whether in formal or non-formal settings.



## . THE SOCIAL DIMENSION

The media laboratories are also social networks.

They offer young people, often with social or personal problems, a strong social network of friends, team members and adults - all of them working for the same thing: using creative media to produce interesting things for themselves and the community.

The social bonds emerging in the laboratories are based on collective work: you are respected for the way you contribute to the team mission, and for the way you explore new ways of doing things - not for your parents' job, not for your academic virtues or the color of your skin.

You might even be respected for being a little bit "crazy" and have "crazy" ideas... And for being different.

The social and psychological factors in the laboratories are important, as they contribute to building up trust and respect, and also contribute to the re-motivation of many young people.

The media laboratories will ensure that the adults in the facilities are aware of and able to manage these social and psychological challenges.

Such life and youth skills are more important than the academic knowledge of the mentors.



## . HOW TO LEARN

The key mission of the media laboratories is to offer disengaged young people with poor future perspectives *deep learning experiences*, in which they forget that they are learning.

Therefore the projects in the labs are based on strong and well-researched learning approaches, and are totally different from the traditional classroom, including what is called “group work”.

The young teams will explore their own interests and talents, define and design their own projects, search and give form to useful materials and knowledge, engage in a strong and demanding production process and present the results in creative ways, exploiting state of the art media.

They will link to supporting mentors and the dedicated collaboration of professionals, and link directly to the realities of their own community.

They will, in short, explore, design, produce and present.

They will do that while exploring and exploiting creative media in small teams collaborating with relevant professionals and institutions.

The laboratories’ learning and work methods are inspired by the Computer Clubhouse Network’s long-standing experience with disadvantaged young people from across many continents and cultures.

The learning by designing and producing principles are valid for all disengaged young people whether they are learning in formal or non-formal settings.

The ultimate success criterium of the media labs is that they are able to engage the young people in creative and immersive learning processes, in which they rebuild or build their learning capacity and motivation, and in which they overcome their resistance to learning and towards education and start building sustainable self-confidence.

*Deep learning must take on epic dimensions...!*



## . GOING EPIC

*To be able to offer the young people immersive learning experiences, the learning space must take on epic dimensions, we say.*

What does that mean?

When something takes on epic dimensions it means that the activity or event is played out on a dramatic scene, including different phases, conflicts, missions, interaction with different players and persons, and that it has epic structure: setting out from a shortage, a shortcoming or an important problem, travelling through different stages of elaboration and ending in some kind of conclusion, synthesis or new equilibrium, this ending being perfect or imperfect, perhaps leading to a new drama with epic dimensions...

*The epic dimension means that you are deeply personally immersed in the mission.*

If we assume a pragmatic standpoint for a moment, what does this mean in everyday media labs?

We need to ensure lab processes of a certain *length*. Epic learning needs a certain amount of time to be played out. So does true learning. Small projects for a few hours or days will not be sufficient.

We also need to ensure strong *missions*. If the missions are not strong, relevant and do not trigger the participants, the missions are not powerful enough and epics will not emerge.

We need to give *space*: to allow different things and actions in physical and mental space to let the drama play out. This includes available media tools.

We need to *interact* with other people than in the traditional classroom. We need to put new people, resources and players on the scene. A new stage, a new theater.

We need good *mentors*. Not media experts, but mentors capable of setting the scene, supporting the different stages and interaction, and silently, discretely, like an invisible hand, pushing the young teams towards solutions or elements of solutions.

The strong mentor knows how to balance frustration and success among the youth teams. Too little frustration makes them lazy, too much frustration make them give up. Too much success, and too early, makes them lazy again, too little success discourage them.

**Perhaps this is the true art of being a media lab mentor - and it is not about knowledge, but experience and... art! The art of mentoring...**



#### . HARD FUN

The media laboratories are not about pleasing disengaged youth with media entertainment.

Fun and excitement is different from entertainment.

Entertainment means passively consuming things others have made. Like films or computer games. Or easy knowledge... All this being, by the way, ok - like after a long work day. The young people can watch all the films they like, but not in the laboratories.

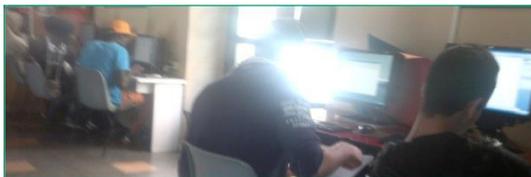
In the labs you don't play computer games, you make your own. You don't watch YouTube, you make your own videos.

This principle - not playing computer games - is not a moralist one. It's about how you learn and work. And if you, after all, will engage in computer games in the lab - it is precisely because this game offers you productive, immersed learning and social networking. You are, in this case, on a mission that goes beyond the game itself.

The laboratories will challenge the young people, not please them.

But the challenges will be meaningful and relevant, exciting and engaging, based as they are on the young people's own interests, talents and aspirations - and linked as they are to state of the art media tools.

The projects in the laboratories are not entertaining, they are *hard fun*, and the young people will be much more challenged and hard-working than in the classroom.



#### . WHAT TO LEARN

The media labs are primarily about HOW to learn, HOW to work in teams and projects, and HOW to produce useful media products.

The driver of the labs' re-motivation capacity is in the HOW.

But the WHAT is equally important, as the HOW cannot unfold unless the young teams are working with challenges that interest and excite them, and challenges

that they see as meaningful and useful - and will produce respect and appreciation among their friends and in the community.

The WHAT is therefore about having a clear mission.

Creative learning processes are useless without a clear mission, without clear aims and without challenges to explore and problems to solve.

The media labs will offer the young teams real-life challenges, meaningful challenges, challenges important to the community and challenges that demands strong team work and creative use of media. Challenges can might *change* something...



## . TALENT

Academic, theoretical and traditional literacy based competences have nothing to do with talent.

You can be talented in many different ways, also intellectually and artistically. And you can unfold and develop such talents in all sorts of ways.

Not all types of talents are acknowledged in the formal educational system.

Many disengaged young people might be talented. Or they might be able to grow talents. But they find it difficult within the traditional educational system, or the system is not offering them the opportunities to find, unfold or develop such talents.

The media labs offer disengaged young people the time, space and opportunities to find, define, explore, unfold and take further all sorts of talents - and link these talents to the exploration of creative media and social sharing.

Or, the labs might simply offer the young people to *grow* talents - out of personal interests or aspirations. Or dreams...

Unfolding talents and interests might lead to learning, to positive work experience, to entrepreneurial ideas - or simply to more self-confidence.

Unfolding talents will, always, lead to an increasing learning capacity and motivation.

The adults in the media labs will have a special focus on the individual talents of the young people, and facilitate and encourage taking such talents further. And they will enjoy seeing the young people grow...



## . MANY WORDS, MANY WAYS

There are many strong and creative approaches to learning, such as Problem Based Learning, Collaborative Learning, Constructivism, Game Base Learning, etc. In total: 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.

The laboratories build on many inspirational sources, but are basically promoting a pragmatic approach: what is possible, what might be combined and how can we offer young people with poor learning and life perspectives experiences of deep, creative and immersive learning?

Academic dogmatism has never offered young people anything...

The laboratories are deeply inspired by the Computer Clubhouse learning approaches, developed at the MIT Media Lab many years ago.

This approach is called *constructionism*, not to be confused with Piaget's constructivism being in itself a great step forward for the understanding of learning.

The difference between the two approaches is rather important for our non-academic learners: Piaget is talking about mental constructions only, whereas the MIT approach is arguing that the strongest learning takes place when the

learners are actually constructing things in the real world, such as artefacts, programs, services or media presentations.

The involvement in producing real products of different kinds invites the young people to be part of, not only a mental process, but a project with different and often quite demanding phases and tasks.

The most important learning principles in the media laboratories can be short-listed like this:

- Learning is not delivered by teachers or books or ready-made materials, but is a result of the young people's active exploration, construction and collaboration
- Learning is not seen as an individual accomplishment, but as the results of a dynamic team work
- Learning is not necessarily based on academic skills and competences, but on a variety of work methods and expression forms and collaborations
- The learning is not anchored in a curricula, but at the intersection between the young people's interests and aspiration on one side and community needs on the other
- Learning does not take place as artificial and abstract processes, but is embedded in and emerge from real-life projects
- The teacher roles are replaced by mentors, media professionals and community collaborators - and volunteers dedicated to the mission...
- Learning is deeply linked to personal self-expression, motivation and empowerment
- The learning should be creative and fun, but always in the meaning of "hard fun"
- The young people work in community projects, and are themselves responsible for the design of the projects, the collaboration and the outcomes

Design and creative shaping, forming and articulating in different media and languages and art forms are celebrated as great learning resources in the laboratories.



## . COMMITMENT

A key and transversal word in the laboratories is *commitment*.

The young people will be motivated to commit themselves to the projects, the teams and the lab community.

The mentors must be extremely committed, curious, open and very flexible. They must be able to encourage experiments and to accept mistakes, failures and dead-ends...

But the managers and owners of the school, youth facility or centre must be equally committed: if quality facilities, media equipment and mentors are not available, the laboratories will not be able to work, and the impact will be lost.

Commitment at all these levels means: putting in resources, offering open spaces and opportunities, developing a strong mentality and ensuring sustainability.

Commitment is vital at personal, mental, social and community level.



## . DESIGN, CONSTRUCT, PRODUCE

But what are the young people actually doing in the labs?

They are discussing what they like and desire. And their ideas. And the needs of the community. And what the state of the art media tools can be used for. Then they design projects, find collaborators in the community and support from professionals. Then they construct knowledge, forms and figures, films and music, and they produce something useful to themselves and their community.

*That's all.*

The different projects might last 3 weeks or 3 months, or more...

So, this is what they do.

They design, construct and produce.

And therefore they learn.

And the mentors work side by side with them to make all this possible.



## . SOCIAL SHARING

The laboratories promote a sharing spirit.

Sharing your skills - help the others. Sharing your knowledge - open up and get more back! Sharing your mistakes - the others can learn from them. Sharing your successes - celebrate each other.

The young people will be encouraged to share: their problems, their challenges, their solutions, their results. With the other teams, but also with the community. They will be encouraged to share their efforts and accomplishments with peers through their usual online communities and networks.



## . THE ROLE OF AESTHETICS

Few people in the educational sector are concerned with the field of aesthetics in learning processes. And if they are interested, it is mostly because the topics they work with are about art, and in that case art is “content” not the act of designing.

Aesthetics is exterior to learning, we think. Maybe even in opposition to learning, if learning is mostly linked to the idea of *science*.

Of course, we might understand that when we work with media, we need to pay attention to the way things look - a video, a photo series, an animation, a Power point, a website, etc.

In fact, what is typical to our mindset, and corresponding to the reality to a certain degree, is that the more a product is text based the less we are concerned with aesthetics, and the more the product is based on other media forms the more we are concerned with the “feel and look” of the things.

Many educationalists do not care for aesthetics at all: the only thing that matters is the knowledge, the “content” and stuff like that.

This mindset denies any internal or immanent relationship between learning, knowledge and the “form” in which the so-called “content” is delivered.

So, form and content are not really related. This statement is what we do not agree with.

*In fact we consider form, design, structure and organization as elements at the heart of the learning process.*

From a media lab point of view it is evident that **active designing and aesthetic reflections** are basic elements in the production of interesting digital material for the schools and the colleges.

But it might as well be a project for a bank, a kindergarten or for the local theater or energy company.

A useful example is a group of young people, from a very deprived community, collaborating with the famous Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam: the young people were invited to study and explore the paintings at the Museum and to express their personal experience of Van Gogh through all sorts of modern media.

*So, aesthetics is not about making something look nice.*

On the contrary it represents very basic learning processes connected to design and production.

Imagine the same questions in a project with elderly from the community, but now linked to the production of a website...

Aesthetics is not extrinsic to learning, but at the very heart of the learning process:

- How can certain “things” be designed and expressed and given form?
- In what ways is the “form” interacting with the “content” of the messages?
- How can different expression forms and media be combined to produce powerful communication?
- How will backgrounds, colors, shapes, space and time influence and contribute to the total expression design and strengthen or weaken the messages?
- How can we use basic story-telling principles to support the interaction of form and content?



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## . . . A platform for media LAB learning for disengaged youth - for policy-makers, educational managements and teachers

*This section offers a possible platform for the establishment of media laboratories for disengaged youth. It can be used by for instance policy-makers and institutional managers to make informed and qualified decisions.*

### PARENTS

At school level it is essential to develop a model for working with parents of children in risk of school dropout.

The platform should include principles on linking media laboratories both in formal and non-formal settings to the young people's families and friends. Projects might be developed about the family background of the young people, migrants or natives, and family members might be involved in some of the projects.

*Attention should be paid to the fact that some family members might have resources, skills or talents that might be useful to the projects in question.*

Projects might also be about certain needs in the family that could be addressed through the laboratory activities.

The same could happen in connection with friends of the involved young people.

The rationale of this principle is to

- establish dialogues with the young people's families
- allow the young people to feel pride and respect towards their own and others' families
- exploit useful and creative resources in the media projects
- establish a very concrete and important relation to the community
- demonstrate the open learning environment in the laboratories



### . TEACHER RESOURCES

It is very important that teachers are given the possibility and are stimulated to work additionally with children at risk of dropout, adapting the study program to and content to their particular needs.

The platform should include principles on initial and ongoing stimulation of teachers and mentors working with disengaged youth in media laboratories.

The teachers and mentors should be allowed to reflect on their experiences and learning with peers both at institutional and community level.

The stimulation and reflection activities should be integrated in the everyday laboratory practices, not organised in traditional course settings.

Social networks on the internet might be taken into account as reflection forums, but face to face activities should be given high priority as well.

A major challenge is to what extend media and technology training or stimulation should be a part of such activities - or teachers and mentors should learn together with the young people in the projects.

The platform should make clear and explain that the teachers and mentors working with the young people are the key to successful laboratories. The staff members are challenged with tasks that go far beyond traditional teaching. It should be recommended that the laboratories include adults with long-standing experience with marginalized youth, as social, family and many other issues will be raised in the laboratories.

Once we open up the learning settings, we leave the relatively safe classrooms, thereby invited many personal and social structures to be visible and have an impact on the activities.



## • TECHNOLOGICAL EXPECTATIONS

Even those young people who are typically most at risk of disengagement from learning expect technology to play an integral role within their daily lives.

They also expect it to play an integral role in their learning. Young learners want and expect flexible and engaging learning environments that effectively use ICT.

An environment of this kind is communicative and inclusive. It features a high degree of collaborative learning, interactive content, as well as interactivity among learners and between learners and practitioners. It also connects learners to the world beyond the classroom or conventional learning settings. It pays attention to individual learner needs, values and interests and ensures that the content and mode of learning is relevant to learners' lives. It enables learners to build on their existing skills, reflect on their own learning and become self-regulated and self-directed. This kind of learning environment has been shown to have a direct and positive effect on the engagement and retention of young learners.

In too many instances, however, young learners experience an environment in which technology is used in limited ways. They are unable to rely upon the provision of appropriate technology by their educational organisations. They also describe a significant gap between their own digital literacy and technological proficiency and that of their teachers and trainers.

The platform should include principles on linking media laboratories not only to high-end media technology, but also to the state of the art technology of the young people.

Even though most young people are fluent as to everyday social technology, they cannot be expected to have any experience in more advanced technology such as video and animation technologies. They might be able to record and circulate videos, but not to edit them and present useful content.

In general young people are open to and interested in all kinds of media technologies; however they are not familiar with using the technologies for *learning* and more systematic activities. A major challenge for teachers and mentors is therefore to motivate the young people to take deeper steps into the world of learning with technology.

Young people should be stimulated to take their technology interest beyond what they use in their everyday social life.



## • TECHNOLOGY IS NOT ENOUGH

Bridging the "digital divide" is more complex than providing hardware and software to community-based organizations that serve youth. Just providing computers, internet connections and technology training will do little to give young people the skills they need to succeed in the new economy. Rather, it is about offering opportunities to use the technology in innovative learning programs and to establish meaningful relationships with other children and adults in the community.

The platform should include principles on the necessary balances between access to technology and learning with technology.

On one hand technology must be available to learn with technology and to be free and creative, but on the other hand the availability of technology will not in itself motivate the young people to learn with technology.

The focus should therefore always be on the collaborative, communicative, community-based and relevance of the laboratory activities, not on the technology itself.



#### . TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Reliable and quality technical support is critical for all programs. Too often, centres must rely on volunteers or overworked staff to provide technical support to maintain the network, hardware, and software. When the equipment is not functioning effectively, young people quickly lose interest and staff loses confidence and become disenchanted with the technology.

The platform should include principles on the availability of technical support. Technical support, both covering the hardware and software fields, should be readily available, however it is an important principle that the young people and the mentors should take an interest in solving technical problems themselves - and learn from the technical support.

This “training” will support the laboratories’ independency and the young people’s independency, as well as encourage the young people to be curious and explore the world of technology beyond using it.

This discussion also raises the question: what kind of adults, professionals or resources should be working in the media laboratories? Should a mixed team of mentors, technicians and media professionals inhabit the laboratories? Should we re-think the meaning of “educational staff”?



#### . POSITIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

One step towards social inclusion is to undergo positive learning experiences and thus (re)engage school dropouts in learning processes. For marginalised young people those experiences have to be outside of the formal education system and have to happen in alternative forms to traditional ways of teaching at school. Thus, one of the demands for a new pedagogical approach is to make use of the fun aspect of young people’s devices, using attractive means of technology, and extend their interests from pure consumption of content to the creation of content.

The platform should include principles on both using media laboratories in formal education for preventing drop-out and using media laboratories in non-formal settings for re-motivation, re-engagement and second-chance activities.

The principle of shifting from consumption of content to creation of content is key to all laboratory settings. It represents the very core of the media laboratories: do not play computer games, make them.

The most important thing is not to develop advanced technological skills in themselves, but to develop self-confidence and to receive respect from your peers, your mentors and your community. New learning motivation can occur and can be sustainable when self-confidence and respect are linked to the learning activity.

The mental and social aspects of laboratory learning should be taken very seriously.



#### . VARIOUS COMMUNICATION AND EXPRESSION STYLES

The platform should include principles on re-thinking what communication is about.

In traditional education most learning and activities are based on written texts. In the laboratories all sorts of communication should be encourage and equally respected and celebrated. Sound and pictures, animation and video should be equally important as texts and words.

To many young people these communication forms are more meaningful than long texts, and the laboratories should encourage a variety of non-traditional communication, also between the mentors and the young people.

A very important form of communication should be the combination of different communication forms: combining animation and words, texts and videos, etc. These combinations strongly support traditional as well as media literacy and fluency, and they definitely enhance the young people's creative and critical thinking.

Such principle might very well be linked to encouraging expressing yourself with a variety of art forms, such as drama, drawing, painting, music, etc.

Projects linking to art forms might be established in the laboratories, involving local resources, and the mentors might witness the emergence of hitherto hidden talents or aspirations among the young people.



#### . IMMERSED LEARNING

The shooting of videos requires tactile-kinaesthetic perception and handling of objects and thus it supports different learner types. To have a virtual stage fostering personal creativity and self-expression might have a stimulating effect and provoke positive learning experiences with flow character. According to this notion, in a stage of flow, people are fully immersed in their activities and experience deep enjoyment, creativity and complete involvement with life. When people experience flow their attention is completely focused and the working or learning procedures themselves are sufficient as sources for motivation, no external motivators are required.

The platform should include principles on learning activities leading to immersion and flow. Experiencing immersion and flow is one of the most important elements in learning to enjoy learning. Many young people experience this when playing complicated and demanding computer games, but it is indeed possible to experience such states of mind when creating content and not consuming content.

If the laboratories succeed in establishing activities in which creation and production is linked to immersion and flow, the laboratories are performing at their maximum, and the activities will have a tremendous impact on the young people involved, as well as on the mentors.



## . BRIDGE TO THE JOB MARKET

Furthermore, video-based documentation of their everyday life's cultural practices, interests and expertise are seen as a possible bridge to the job market especially for at-risk learners. Learners may select and comment their videos to create portfolios and submit them to potential employers.

The platform should include principles on how to link the laboratory activities indirectly or directly to further formal education and labour market, especially paying attention to possible entrepreneurship opportunities.

Some activities in the laboratories might even develop into small incubators, in which a group of young people develop important skills that could be useful to entrepreneurship or labour market contacts.

One of the advantages of entrepreneurship is that it sometimes can be linked directly to the young people's personal interests and talents.

Although the laboratories should never push the young people towards further education or labour market, it is of great value to use any opportunity to link the laboratory projects to real life, to opportunities in the community and especially to entrepreneurship initiatives (taking into consideration the lack of emerging job opportunities in today's Europe).

Although the laboratories should primarily be considered learning motivation incubators, they in fact support the learning of many basic skills called upon in the ever changing knowledge economy, such as learning to learn, working in shifting teams and projects, exploring the benefits of new technologies - and at the personal level self-reflection and self-regulation.

Developing personal or team based portfolios, perhaps through the social networks, is a very strong way of making the young people visible, to themselves and to the community.



## . COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The phenomenon of learning within social communities on the internet can generally be conceptualised with *communities of practice*. Communities of practice are informal groups of individuals or networks with common goals and interests who communicate with each other over a longer period of time, who exchange experiences, who commonly solve problems, who collaboratively collect and build knowledge and learn from each other:

- Common goals, interests, needs or activities of the members;
- Repeated and active participation of the members;
- Intensive interactions, strong emotional relationships and shared activities among the contributors;
- Access to the shared resources with clearly defined rules of access;
- Reciprocal activities like exchange of information, support and services among members;
- Common rules of activity and common language;
- Voluntary membership.

The platform should include principles on open communication and collaboration. This means that the communication in the laboratories should never be closed and isolated in online forums not visible to the social networks used in everyday life by many young people.

In fact, networking and open communication in the social online networks should be encouraged at all stages in the laboratory projects. This practice will also equip the young people with very useful social networking skills, crucial to all modern learning and labour market environments.

To many institutions this open networking is new and challenging. Both formal and non-formal educational settings must learn to support, explore and benefit from such communities of practice.



## . THE BASICS

*Create*: a basic element in a constructionist learning environment is to allow learners to create their own contents. By creating an external representation they make parts of their internal world model explicit.

*Construct*: instead of accumulating unrelated bits of knowledge, students need to construct a deeper structure connecting their own and other students' representations. They should identify parallels, connections, dependencies, and conclusions as well as omissions, contradictions, or errors.

The platform should include principles explaining the most basic principles of media based laboratory learning: the activity of exploring, constructing and creating is at the heart of the laboratories, not the transfer of "dead knowledge".

Creating and constructing covers all fields of learning: constructing knowledge, creating physical and digital artefacts, constructing things or services, creating new partnerships and links to the community.

The key is reversing traditional education: production instead of consumption, constructing instead of receiving.



## . UBIQUITY - RE-LINKING TO SPACES

Mobile and location-aware internet technology provide a basis for *ubiquitous learning infrastructures*. Such infrastructures support on-site learning-by-problem-solving approaches by providing pervasive access to learning communities and re-attaching persons and knowledge to *real places*.

The platform should include principles on taking the media into life instead of taking life into the media.

This means that the laboratories should not close themselves around digital computer production, but link to the surrounding realities. The realities include the community, the family, nature, the different physical spaces in the city, etc.

This principle is extremely interesting and calls for a lot of reflection: the laboratories replace the classrooms by expanding the actions in both directions - deeply immersed learning with media tools and opening up to and connecting to the realities around the learning setting.

Accordingly, the laboratories should take an interest in using and exploring media tools that can facilitate both immersive learning and can connect to physical spaces and activities in the community realities.



## . COMPUTER CLUBHOUSE LEARNING PRINCIPLES

Activities at the Computer Clubhouse are guided by the current educational research that shows that adolescents learn most effectively when they are engaged in designing and creating projects, rather than memorizing facts or learning isolated skills out of context. The Clubhouse fosters a learner-centred, informal educational approach that encourages participants to discover their interests and apply their own ideas. Given the support and freedom to pursue

their own ideas, young people get beyond their disinterest and apathy about learning, and develop the internal motivation to learn and grow.

The Computer Clubhouse gives participants the opportunity to become *designers* and *creators* of technology. The Clubhouse provides high-end resources, materials, and tools for young people to develop projects based on their own interests. Rather than playing games with computers, young people learn how to use professional software for design, exploration, and experimentation. In the Clubhouse, young people can learn what it is like to be an architect, engineer, composer, artist, journalist, scientific researcher, computer programmer, and a wide array of other professions in the modern workplace.

The Clubhouse educational approach is based on research that shows the importance of interpersonal relationships and community in the learning process, particularly for youth. Young people are influenced a great deal outside of school by the people around them, peers as well as adults. In the Clubhouse, young people interact with other youth and adults who are enthusiastic about learning and are interested and invested in their work. Clubhouse members become part of a community that values and respects hard work and the pursuit and sharing of ideas and knowledge.

This structure is led by the youth themselves, but guided by staff, adult mentors, and youth peer leaders who serve as coaches and catalysts, providing members with inspiration, mentoring, and organizational support.

*Learn by Design*

Put technology directly into the hands of the youth, to lead as designers, inventors, and creators.

*Follow Your Interests*

Provide opportunities for choice, where youth care about what they are working on, are willing to work longer and harder, and learn more in the process.

*Build Community*

Create a community with a culture of peer learning and equal opportunity, where young people work together with one another with support and inspiration from adult mentors.

*Respect & Trust*

Create a stable environment in which participants feel safe to experiment, explore, and innovate and are given time and space to play out their own ideas.

The expected youth impact from our learning model includes the ability to:

- > express oneself with technology
- > collaborate, communicate, work in teams
- > solve complex problems
- > develop, plan, and execute complex projects
- > express self-esteem and self-confidence

The platform links directly to, explains and explores the Computer Clubhouse learning and social principles, as they represent 20 years of designing creative learning laboratories for disadvantaged or disengaged youth.

The platform explains how these principles are relevant and useful also to formal youth education.



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## . . . Many different approaches to media based learning for disengaged youth - some scenarios

*Media based learning* and *LABlearning* are our pragmatic names for learning processes using media work as a motivator, driver and organizer of learning outside the traditional classroom.

Our young “digital natives” are experts in social media and media entertainment, but certainly not in *learning with media*. Most probably, neither are our teachers; nor are we, the frameworkers.

*Media based learning* and *LABlearning* aim to motivate, engage and activate young and adult learners at risk of drop-out or with poor education experience, but can enrich any learning process for any group of learners...

*Media based learning* and *LABlearning* are also very powerful activities in lifelong learning centers and community centers fostering lifelong learning and inclusion through learning.

The examples in this section are taken from social care educations, but might have referred to almost any educational context.



### . MEDIA SUPPORTED LEARNING

#### *Description*

In different kinds of settings the learners will use digital media on every occasion possible - to search knowledge, to organize knowledge, to discuss knowledge and to present knowledge. Media elements such as internet, social media, Word, Power Point, design tools, video tools, etc., can be used by the learners to produce knowledge.

#### *Use of digital media*

The learners use all kinds of available media tools at different levels, depending on their media skills and interests, and on what tools are available.

It is important that the use of media includes being creative with media and the use of a variety of expression forms.

#### *Didactic capacity*

Media supported learning does not offer a didactic framework for learning, but it can support and make more interesting different learning approaches, such as problem based learning.

#### *Example*

Based on the challenges *Why do some young people suffer from lifestyle diseases*, the teams of learners search basic knowledge on the internet, organize the knowledge in Word, Power Point or design tools, discuss the problems in social platforms, produce a few videos with young people and present the full material on the institution’s website.



### . MEDIA PRODUCTION LEARNING

#### *Description*

The learners work in teams to produce learning material on the relevant topic. They plan the production, they search raw material, they organize the content, they design the presentation forms, and they establish dialogues with the people

who are expected to use the material.

The learners learn, not from using media material, but from producing useful material for other people, for example younger learners or families.

#### *Use of digital media*

The learners use media tools to produce material and therefore they will also have to use advanced media tools, such as graphic editing and web editing. Relevant media tools should be available to the learners and technical training at hand.

#### *Didactic capacity*

Media production learning can offer a strong didactic framework, able to organize the entire learning process in different phases.

The didactic drive is the logic of media production, but the subject-related learning outcomes can be very strong.

Often it is necessary to include professional media designers in the process.

Sufficient time must be allocated to the learners' media training, if needed.

#### *Example*

A team of learners is given a mission: in one month you should produce a high quality multimedia material on dementia and how to communicate with people suffering from dementia.

The material will be used by younger learners and by learners in secondary school.

The learner team designs the material, supported by the teachers, and carry out the needed research and dialogues. They use the most relevant expression forms to present the content.

Finally, and supported by a professional media designer, the learner team produces a high quality material on dementia communication, combining different elements and forms of expression.



## . COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING

#### *Description*

The learners address the health needs of groups of people in the community and establish a number of dialogues with groups of citizens and with different stakeholders and players in the field.

The learning mission is to provide the community with alternative or innovative information, material or other forms of input that can help groups of people change or better manage their situation.

The learner team collaborates with the community all along the process.

#### *Use of digital media*

The use of media is not the key focus in this process. But on many occasions the creative use of media tools will improve the quality of the collaboration and the final outcomes. Media tools should be used to communicate with the community, search knowledge, organize knowledge and present knowledge to the community.

A special attention should be given to the creative use of media to offer the end users alternative ways of understanding the problems in question.

#### *Didactic capacity*

Community based learning is indeed capable of offering a strong didactic platform for the learning process. Community collaboration can cover all the phases of the learning process and offers a clear mission and structure to the learners.

The community didactic is characterized by setting up a mission beyond the world of the learners themselves: they are working and learning to benefit the community.

At the same time this framework offers many opportunities to use media in very

creative ways.

*Example*

The learners are given a mission: school children are spending a lot of time using computers, mobile phones and other electronic devices. Some of them get very little physical exercise. Give the community some new input on, how this situation might be changed.



. **PROBLEM BASED LEARNING**

*Description*

The learners are given a team challenge. A health problem in the community or among themselves is described.

The challenge to the learner teams is to find out how they will learn about the problem, and what they are going to do about it...

Therefore the learners need to discuss and to find out, how they are going to organize their learning of this topic. What will you do, who will you talk to, where will you find, how will you discuss, and how will you present the results of the learning.

The teacher acts as mentor and counselor, but does not interfere with the learning.

*Use of digital media*

In fact, the learners do not have to use media at all in this process. Nevertheless, the process will be far more creative, efficient and interesting if a wide range of media tools are involved. Relevant media tools can support the research, the planning, the communication, and the presentation of the outcomes.

*Didactic capacity*

Problem based learning is a strong didactic platform for the organisation of the learning process. The focus is on the *learning to learn* challenges, not primarily on the topics. Yet, strong subject-related outcomes can be expected from such a process.

The teachers and mentors involved need to be confident as to the practical use of this method, as the learning process can sometimes appear quite chaotic and full of roadblocks.

*Example*

It is a problem to the primary schools that many migrant families do not participate in the school's family events. It makes it difficult to support the migrant children's learning and integration.

The mission is to plan a learning process through which we will come to an understanding of the problem, from different points of views, and that will eventually propose some possible solutions to the problem.



. **GAME BASED LEARNING**

*Description*

The learners use video games to study a topic, or a mosaic of related topics. The learners can work individually or in teams. The learning process should establish a strong interaction between the video game world and the learning environment surrounding the game world.

The gaming might include the critical analyses of the game and the ways in which

the player interacts with the game.

#### *Use of digital media*

Interacting with video games, or learning games, offers a highly concentrated and challenging use of digital media. Many skills and competences can emerge from the gaming activities. However, working with video games is not necessarily that productive, meaning that video gaming should be accompanied by active, productive and designing use of media tools along the learning process.

#### *Didactic capacity*

Only in the case where the games employed are of a very high quality and covers many aspects of the learning process can game based learning offer a strong didactic platform. In most cases video gaming will be an element in the practicing of other didactic principles not specifically related to video gaming. Good learning games do, though, often offer excellent learning experiences, not obtainable elsewhere in the learning process.

#### *Example*

The learners use a video game offering missions from within the human body: the body is influenced by different environmental sources and the learner must find out about the impacts on the different elements of the body and try to combat the damages inflicted.

The game is structured in different levels, taking the learner to more and more complex tasks and demanding solutions.

The body game offers experiences that cannot be obtained in the real world.



## . GAME DESIGN LEARNING

#### *Description*

Learners can learn, not only from playing video games, but also, and perhaps even more so, from designing video games on different topics.

The process of designing a learning game is very demanding and complex, and it requires a variety of activities, most of them involving the use of digital media.

The design process is balancing between the learning of game design and the learning of specific topics or knowledge fields.

#### *Use of digital media*

Even though the design of learning games will often set out using paper and pen and a lot of discussion, the creative use of digital media might be very creative and demanding.

To illustrate the gameplay the learners will need to use graphics, progression tools, animation tools, perhaps web based tools and most certainly elementary game programming.

The learning process might end at the point of the production of a demo, or it might go all the way and include the production of the full game or parts of the game.

In all cases, professional game designers should be involved and collaborate closely with the learners and the teachers.

#### *Didactic capacity*

Game design learning offers a very strong didactic platform, as the learning process can be organized according to the phases of game design.

The teachers involved should collaborate closely with a professional game designer to help the learners organize the process.

Although the learning process seems to be focused on game design, a lot of subject-related challenges will occur along this process, and eventually lots of good learning can result from such processes.

*This leads to a piece of serious knowledge: the didactics of the learning process does not in any way need to be linked to the topics at all to offer strong subject-related learning outcomes.*

Designing learning games is an excellent example of this.

*Example*

The learners are challenged with designing a video game on burnout. Many teachers in primary school suffer from burnout symptoms and in some cases they lose their working capacity for a long time. The video game should offer a game environment challenging the gamer to find creative ways of avoiding being a burnout victim. The game should be developed in collaboration with, tested and used by primary school teachers.



## . SOCIAL GAMING LEARNING

*Description*

The learners are engaged in online gaming activities, in which they play a significant role in the progression of the game. The social gaming might take the form of a serial, progressively feeding the learners with new content elements and challenges. An important part of the gaming is the discussions between learners and players: how to collaborate, how to solve, how to progress... Such social gaming processes can be established at high level, including long-term planning and plenty of resources, but it can also be designed as small in-school or between-schools scenarios, using quite simple media tools. A groups of teachers should work together to design such social gaming processes.

*Use of digital media*

The social gaming activities are mostly focused on the use of social media and communicative tools, but might include missions of producing media elements to progress in the game world. The social gaming environments offer strong media based virtual collaboration competences, being key competences in the knowledge society. Different forms of text based or video based synchronous communication might also be included.

*Didactic capacity*

The social gaming learning might simply be an element in learning processes organized by other principles, or it might constitute a regular element in any learning process. But, in fact social gaming might also, at different levels of ambitions, be used as an organizer of the entire learning. The teachers and mentors need to be familiar with such learning tools and be highly motivated to participate themselves.

*Example*

A game series in 12 episodes is produced by a group of schools in collaboration with a social game designer. The process will take 12 weeks and is about why many young people drop out of school and what happens to them afterwards. The learners take active part in the discussions of the scenarios presented, and work together in teams competing on finding the best solutions and how to make the social game progress. The winning teams might be offered an opportunity to produce a new social game in collaboration with the professional social game designer. Alternatively a group of teachers and learners can work together and produce such a series of scenarios at lower level and using the school's own web environment or online forums. Social gaming learning might be carried out within popular virtual worlds, such as Sims or Second Life.



## . SOCIAL NETWORKING LEARNING

### *Description*

The learners are engaged in online platforms, game-like or not, with learners from other schools or even countries. The learners are constantly challenged with problems, situations or scenarios they have to find out about and communicate about.

The discussions and activities in the platform might include media productions to be discussed with other learners.

Social networking learning is different from social game learning as it does not include gaming, but is focused on exploration and collaboration in virtual platforms.

### *Use of digital media*

The learning process will be focused on the use of virtual communication and collaborative tools, but the learner missions should also include the production of small media products, such as Power Points or videos as integrated elements in the virtual collaboration.

Different forms of text based or video based synchronous communication might also be included.

### *Didactic capacity*

Social networking learning might be used as an organizer of the learning process, but in most cases social networking would be an element in a learning process organized by other principles. In such cases social networking might offer a strong collaborative dimension.

Social networking learning also offers strong and interesting opportunities for the learners to collaborate with learners from other schools, from the community and from other countries (for example in the case of language learning).

### *Example*

The learning teams in a Danish college are challenged with collaborating with a Spanish college exploring and discussing the alcohol habits among young people in the two countries.

The learners are expected to collect evidence and produce multimedia material explaining the different alcohol habits, and to discuss the problem and the material in English and in Spanish.

In advanced cases such learning processes might result in the production of a joint website with relevant material.



## . SCENARIO BASED LEARNING

### *Description*

Scenarios are very different from games. Games are quite demanding as to rules, gameplay and programming, whereas scenarios are short narratives demonstrating a life situation or a fictive situation.

Scenarios can be produced with simple tools like Power Point or any digital storytelling tool available, it can be set up as a website - or it can be a series of small videos.

The learner teams' mission is to work with the scenarios, respond to the scenarios - and to produce new scenarios taking them further.

If resources are available, scenarios might also be produced at high level with professional media tools. Normally this would include collaboration with media designers.

#### *Use of digital media*

The learners engage in learning with simple media tools and communication tools, but they should also respond to the scenarios presented by developing new scenarios with a variety of simple or advanced media tools.

The focus might be put on expressing oneself with the most relevant media available, and to explore how different media could be used to develop scenarios.

#### *Didactic capacity*

Depending on the ambition level of the scenarios such activities might form the backbone of a good learning process. It might as well, though, simply be a learning activity among others in settings based on other principles.

In advanced cases the scenarios might work as an organizer of a full learning process.

Scenario based learning offers the teachers and learners a variety of simple and more complex opportunities to simulate real life challenges.

#### *Example*

An elderly citizen suffers from severe diabetes.

A series of dramatic scenarios are developed, using drawing, text or small videos, in which the elderly citizen is not caring well for his diabetes, but bringing him in difficult situations.

The learners will work with the scenarios, and produce new scenarios to present their solutions to the difficulties.

Advancing this example might mean the production of a series of video based scenarios.



## . VIRTUAL SIMULATION BASED LEARNING

#### *Description*

Simulations are not games. They present a part of life in digital format to explore.

Many such virtual worlds are simulations. The freedom of action for the learner can be very different, but the basic idea is to allow the learner and the team to explore often complex situations that cannot be explored directly in real life, for different reasons.

The simulated world might include challenges and tasks, and even larger missions.

The virtual world might represent a very small part of real life, or it might be historical simulations over time.

A simulated world might be about how to communicate with a citizen suffering from dementia - or it might be about the functioning of an entire hospital or work place.

Quality simulations are quite demanding to design and produce and therefore quite expensive.

It is, in some cases, possible to construct such simulated worlds in existing platforms such as Sims or Second Life.

#### *Use of digital media*

The learners will be working a lot with media in virtual worlds. They will learn to construct, problem solve, navigate and collaborate in virtual environments.

Usually they will not produce with digital tools themselves, but it is possible to include digital production in the missions of the virtual worlds, or in connection with the activities in the surrounding real-life learning environment.

### *Didactic capacity*

Simulation learning might be used as an element in different kinds of learning processes organized by other principles, but in the case of a high-level epic virtual world, the entire learning process might be linked to and embedded in such a structure. In this case virtual simulation based learning might constitute a strong didactic platform.

### *Example*

The human body has been animated into a simulation world and the learners can travel along the natural transportation infrastructure of the body to explore different elements in the body, such as the heart, the liver, the blood, etc.

The simulation world can offer open exploration, or it can include different emerging challenges and missions, for instance emerging from outer world incidents impacting the functioning of the body.

In fact, there are no limits to the scope of such simulations and missions, but such simulations should be targeting large-scale audiences, as they are very expensive to produce.



## . TRAINEESHIP BASED LEARNING

### *Description*

Many educations include periodically traineeships in which the learner practices skills and competences in real-life work situations.

During the traineeship the learners might be challenged with producing evidence of their experiences. They might use different media tools to explain what they are learning and what problems they encountered. The media products might be discussed with other trainees from time to time and be presented to new learners to prepare them for the traineeships.

In fact, the media products might also be presented to the work places to invite them to learn to better mentor and support the trainees.

The same is possible in for example transnational learner mobility activities.

### *Use of digital media*

Besides online communication with people from the education and the work place, the learner will be challenged with finding out how to best organize and present the work place experience: how can I make others understand my learning and my problems by using the most expressive and relevant media?

Should I use texts, pictures, drawings, videos - or should I combine different expression forms? And how to illustrate and express different forms of experience?

### *Didactic capacity*

Structuring and presenting one's experience might very well be a strong organizer of the traineeship. The entire traineeship could be organized into challenges linked to structuring and presenting what you learn and what kind of problems you have during the traineeship.

Presented in this way, the experience would be more interesting to people involved in the traineeship, and to new learners.

Of course, media work in traineeships might also simply be carried out at lower level at milestone points, or as post festum reflections on the traineeship outcomes.

### *Example*

A young migrant is engaged in a traineeship in a centre for elderly.

Some of the elderly have great difficulties with the young migrant's language and accent, as they suffer from reduced hearing and concentration.

The young migrant agrees with the school mentor to illustrate and present these experiences by video interviews with some of the elderly and by producing a media log during the traineeship.



## RESEARCH BASED LEARNING

### *Description*

This learning pathway focuses on using digital media to search useful knowledge, to review useful knowledge critically, to organize useful knowledge and to present useful knowledge in user-friendly ways.

The internet is the basic tool, and the mission is to find the most relevant knowledge on the topic in question, but also to identify different expression forms in which this knowledge has been successfully delivered. This, then, includes critically media reflection: how is this knowledge presented in the best way to people expected to use the knowledge?

This critical reflection leads to the second part of the mission: how can we organize the knowledge in a new way, using different media, to allow a better understanding of the topic among the users?

Actually, the title of this pathway might be: how to work with and form different forms of knowledge?

### *Use of digital media*

The learner will use the internet in many different ways, and become an “expert” in the quest for relevant knowledge. Such a mission might benefit from gamification.

But the learner will also engage in critical reflections on different forms of media expressions: how might the users of the knowledge benefit from certain forms of presentations and not from others?

Finally the critical reflection should lead to a process in which the knowledge elements are combined and presented in a new way, taking into account the profile and needs of the users. In this part of the process, the learner will choose the most relevant media and produce a media product presenting the knowledge in a new way.

### *Didactic capacity*

It is obvious that such activities can be integrated in many different learning processes, governed by different principles.

But in fact, research based learning might offer a strong didactic framework, as the knowledge work might structure the entire learning process.

In this case research based learning provides a very strong didactic platform.

### *Example*

Cancer patients in hospitals are often presented with piles of information. A lot of this information is bureaucratic, unorganized and very difficult to digest for a patient in the middle of a serious crisis.

The team of learners is challenged with this mission: find the relevant knowledge that need to be transmitted to the cancer patients (or a sub-group of cancer patients), analyze critically the quality of the information taking into account the situation of the users, and produce an alternative way of making the patient aware of this content.

Discuss the outcomes with the hospital staff responsible for the production of cancer patient information.



## . “COMPUTER CLUBHOUSE BASED LEARNING”

### *Description*

A Computer Clubhouse setting is not a “didactics” -or, is it?

In a Computer Clubhouse the media interest is not linked to a specific topic forming part of curricula as in formal education. Instead the media interest is linked to... media. And, especially to the personal interests and talents of the people working in the clubhouse.

The clubhouse offers the learner time and space to explore how media can be used to take your talents or interests further - and to engage in in-depth media learning.

The clubhouse is often used to motivate or re-motivate young people, and to allow them to build reinforced self-confidence and a number of important basic learning to learn skills.

### *Use of digital media*

The learner engages in all kinds of media learning, such as graphics, animation, video, music, etc., including social networking, and explores what media can do for the learner and her personal talents, aspirations or secret hopes.

The focus is on media work and how to express oneself and ones “cause” in the most creative way. The clubhouse activities are linked to community networking.

### *Didactic capacity*

The Computer Clubhouse “didactics” is based on a series of principles allowing the learner to explore media tools and media expressions.

The clubhouse environments are non-formal learning settings and the learners attend out of their free will.

The clubhouse world can be established as an after-school provision, or it could be integrated in formal educations in the form of “free space for media exploration”.

Very often such provisions are addressing young people not working well in formal education, early school leavers, or learners at risk of dropping out.

### *Example*

In a vocational center the drop-out rate is very high. Many young people enroll in the education without really knowing why and what it’s about.

Instead of accepting drop-out, the VET college might establish a “Computer Clubhouse” at the heart of the college or in a neighboring building. The clubhouse should be open every afternoon and can be used by learners at the College at risk of dropping-out, and by learners having recently left the education.

The clubhouse environment is an alternative to dropping-out and to continue to mal-function in the classes.



## . WEB BASED LEARNING

### *Description*

This media learning pathway is about changing traditional education material and classroom teaching into media based materials and collaborative team work.

The education produces a world of web based multimedia material, in some cases including learning games and social networking platforms, often in collaboration with media designers.

The learners will explore this material, typically organized in sections with facts, narratives, scenarios and links, combine the material in a useful way, and add new elements from online search.

The learners will produce media products as outcomes of the learning and thus contribute to the variety of material in the web world.

*Use of digital media*

Learners will use all kinds of digital materials in the learning process, including collaborative communication tools.

Learners will train their ability to combine digital material and also combine knowledge embedded in different “languages”, such as texts, videos, scenarios, graphics, links, etc.

Last, but not least, they will be encouraged to use media tools to present the outcomes of the learning.

In certain cases, the learners are encouraged to take their media skills further and explore more advanced media tools.

*Didactic capacity*

The established “world” of web based multimedia material might very well constitute a well-functioning didactic platform, encompassing the entire learning process.

The media didactics of “find-organize-present” can be a strong organizer of the team learning.

The advantage of this pathway is that it can be used at different levels, without compromising the very idea of the principles. And, it can form a part of any learning process governed by other didactic principles.

*Example*

Working with and supporting people in deep crisis, due to severe illness, can be very demanding and complicated.

To support the learning of the students the media team produces a large and very qualified material for the learners to explore. The material is designed in close collaboration with teachers, and it also includes video interviews with people in severe crisis situations.

As the institution owns the productions, it can decide to further develop the material, to include productions from the learners or to share the material with other educations.



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Much more on [www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu)



# Teaching and mentoring in media LABs - interactive tool

## Teaching and mentoring in media labs for disengaged youth

Teaching or rather mentoring in media laboratories for disengaged youth is very different from classroom teaching.

Teachers and mentors and youth workers need to acquire new skills and competences, and first of all new mentality, to face these challenges. The guide offers good advice on mentoring along with a tool for reflection.





### . MEDIA EXPERT?

Most teachers are not familiar with these roles. They are used to be in “control” of the learning processes; they are used to *organize* the learning processes. And most teachers are not comfortable with projects based on extensive use of all sorts of state of the art media.

It is of great importance that teachers involved in media labs are given time and space to train the new roles, to discuss their new roles with colleagues and inspirators - and to have time-outs for reflection during the media projects.

Many teachers are afraid to work in projects with advanced media. They feel unqualified to guide the youth teams.

Of course, the mentors should be interested in media, and they should learn about media tools and their potentials along with the youth teams, but the mentors are not expected to be media experts. The key role of the mentors is to support and guide the learning process, not to offer professional media support to the teams. Therefore the media labs must be populated by other professionals, such as media mentors, media designers, game designers, etc, and the mentors should collaborate closely with such resources, whether those resources are contracted, sponsored or volunteers.



### . WHO'S LEARNING?

So, on one side the former teachers should learn to collaborate with youth teams and media professionals, and on the other side they should learn to involve the community in the projects. Community players might be end-users of the project, private enterprises or cultural institutions - or professionals needed in specific phases of the projects.

*So, who's actually learning the media labs?*

Everybody! The learning is no longer limited to messages from teacher to student, but is distributed among many different players and situations. The youth teams are at the centre of the learning and of the projects, but many other players might be deeply involved in the learning, including the mentors themselves.

So, in short, the mentor will find herself managing two new major roles: project coordination and team learning guide.

*Once the former teacher has become familiar with these new roles, she will no doubt enjoy them... and learn a lot!*



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. . . **Media lab reflections for teachers and mentors**

**WHY?**

Because the teachers’ reflections on what happens in the labs are among the most valuable resource in the media labs.

What you have in your head is extremely useful and valuable.

But if it stays in your heads it is not useful and valuable.

We need you to “materialize” your thoughts in such a way that we can share them, work with them and learn from them...

And to help increase the quality of the outcomes of the LABs...



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**A REFLECTION TOOL**

This small tool can help teachers and mentors in media labs to reflect on and “evaluate” what is happening in the LABs, including their own roles as teachers and mentors. The reflections should be shared among peers, and also among LAB youth!

<p><b>Guiding theme</b>  <b>REFLECTIONS ON DESIGN OF THE LAB WORK</b>  <i>How did you imagine the labs when you started to plan them?</i>  <i>What did you need to reconsider or change during the activities and why?</i></p>
[Your text]
<i>New peer question</i>
[Your text]
<i>Summary</i>

<p><b>Guiding theme</b>  <b>REFLECTIONS ON THE NEEDS OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE</b>  <i>How did you reflect on the needs of the young people and how the new ways could meet these needs?</i>  <i>Disappointments? Surprises? “Revelations”?</i></p>
[Your text]
<i>New peer question</i>
[Your text]
<i>Summary</i>

**Guiding theme**

**REFLECTIONS ON THE USE OF MEDIA**

*What kind of media did you wish to use with the young people and why?  
Why did you believe that these media tools would help you accomplish what you set out to do?  
Did it work with these media tools? Did you change your directions? New media ideas?*

[Your text]

*New peer question*

[Your text]

*Summary*

**Guiding theme**

**REFLECTIONS ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE LAB ACTIVITIES**

*Why did you organize the concrete activities the way you did?  
What were your reasons and ideas?  
How did it turn out? Did it work? Did you change something along the way?*

[Your text]

*New peer question*

[Your text]

*Summary*

**Guiding theme**

**REFLECTIONS ON YOUR LAB ROLES**

*How do you feel about your new “mentor roles”?  
What were the most important challenges for you?  
Did you change your roles along the way? Why?*

[Your text]

*New peer question*

[Your text]

*Summary*

**Guiding theme**

**IMPACT REFLECTIONS - REACTIONS**

*What were the reactions of the young people to your suggestions? Why?  
Did different young people react differently?  
Did you need to overcome resistances? Which and why?*

[Your text]

*New peer question*

[Your text]

*Summary*

**Guiding theme**

**IMPACT REFLECTIONS - MOTIVATION**

*Did you succeed in motivating the young people to take serious part in the activities? How did you do that? The role of the media?*

*Why was it possible or not possible to motivate the young people?*

*Can you identify “typical” groups of young people in need to be motivated differently?*

[Your text]

*New peer question*

[Your text]

*Summary*

**Guiding theme**

**IMPACT REFLECTIONS - MENTALITY**

*Did you observe a different mentality among the young people, as a result of the new way of working? How did it appear to you? In what ways were different groups of young people engaged or dis-engaged?*

[Your text]

*New peer question*

[Your text]

*Summary*

**Guiding theme**

**IMPACT REFLECTIONS - SUSTAINABILITY**

*Do you see the changed mentality as something temporary and superficial - or something more sustainable? What will it take to make the mentality more sustainable?*

[Your text]

*New peer question*

[Your text]

*Summary*

**Guiding theme**

**IMPACT REFLECTIONS - WHAT WORKS?**

*What kind of media based work processes do you see as the most engaging and powerful? Why are these media based work processes so engaging and motivating for the young people?*

*Do you have visions for media work processes you are not able to practice at the moment?*

[Your text]

*New peer question*

[Your text]

*Summary*

**Guiding theme**

**REFLECTIONS ON OBSTACLES - GENERAL**

*Why did some of your ideas not work?*

*What are the main obstacles to getting the young people deeply engaged?*

*Are there big differences between different groups of young people?*

[Your text]

*New peer question*

[Your text]

*Summary*

**Guiding theme**

**REFLECTIONS ON OBSTACLES - YOU**

*Were some of the obstacles linked to your own professional or personal limitations?*

*What kind of professional problems do you feel you are struggling with when working in the labs? What could be done about that?*

[Your text]

*New peer question*

[Your text]

*Summary*

**Guiding theme**

**REFLECTIONS ON OBSTACLES - THE SCHOOL SYSTEM**

*Did the traditional school system - with its norms, routines and rules - make it difficult for you to put your ideas into practice? In what ways?*

*What can we do about that?*

[Your text]

*New peer question*

[Your text]

*Summary*

**Guiding theme**

**REFLECTIONS ON OBSTACLES - MEDIA**

*Would you like to be able to use other media tools than available to you?*

*How do you think such new media tools and work processes would make a difference to the young people?*

[Your text]

*New peer question*

[Your text]

*Summary*

Guiding theme

**SCENARIO 1**

Can you describe a scenario in which young people were deeply engaged in the media projects? Details are welcome, if possible...

[Your text]

New peer question

[Your text]

Summary

Guiding theme

**SCENARIO 2**

Can you describe a scenario in which you did not succeed in getting the young people engaged? Details are welcome, if possible...

[Your text]

New peer question

[Your text]

Summary

Guiding theme

**SCENARIO 3**

Can you describe a scenario in which you were deeply surprised about the young people's engagement, motivation or accomplishments? Details are welcome, if possible...

[Your text]

New peer question

[Your text]

Summary

Guiding theme

**WHAT CAN LABLEARNING DO?**

What could happen in the LABlearning project to help you overcome some of the obstacles? To make some of your ideas possible?  
At local lab level, or at community level?

[Your text]

New peer question

[Your text]

Summary



[Free reflections]

*Summary*

[Free reflections]

*Summary*

[Free reflections]

*Summary*

[Free reflections]

*Summary*



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# The epics of immersive media based learning

## The epics of immersive media based learning

*To be able to offer the young people immersive learning experiences, the learning space must take on epic dimensions, we say.*

What does that mean?

This guide explains the basic principles in learning going epic...



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. . . **The epics of immersive media based learning**

*To be able to offer the young people immersive learning experiences, the learning space must take on epic dimensions, we say.*

What does that mean?

When something takes on epic dimensions it means that the activity or event is played out on a dramatic scene, including different phases, conflicts, missions, interaction with different players and persons, and that it has epic structure: setting out from a shortage, a shortcoming or an important problem, travelling through different stages of elaboration and ending in some kind conclusion, synthesis or new equilibrium, this ending being perfect or imperfect, perhaps leading to a new drama with epic dimensions...

This is also the famous an almost eternal model of true story-telling.

True story-telling and epic learning need to include some basic characteristics, such as:

- > A shortage, a problem, a dilemma, or a conflict
- > Time and space to work in depths on this opening situation
- > Several phases and progression towards solutions
- > Interaction with different players and persons and functions
- > A drama which is of personal interest to the players involved
- > A drama that calls for *need to find out* and *desire to progress*
- > A situation that after the working-through can lead to a new situation, a new level or a new challenge

Some will recognize in these criteria the models of not only narrative, but also for instance “life” itself and even the best digital games!

But what has all this got to do with learning?

Everything.



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Traditional classroom teaching in its different versions, including a little group work from time to time, does not include an epic dimension. The many years in school might be presented in epic form, but not the learning itself.

Traditional teaching is basically academic, meaning learning by working with theory and knowledge and texts.

Academic theory and narrative are mutual exclusive!

Academic theory is abstract, based on the logic of language and thinking, whereas narratives link closely to life, persons, drives and desires - and drama.

The Computer Clubhouse learning environments are powerful example of epic learning.

The creative use of media all along the epic learning process offers a strong story-telling dimension: you use different media and expression forms, not only to work with knowledge and information or content, but to tell the story of the learning drama itself, including the story of yourself and how you changed. This strongly supports the dramatic and creative dimension of learning.

This means that there are always two intertwined dimensions at stake in the media based learning process: working with the mission, the topic, the problem, the content; and the drama taking place inside and around this work process: the scene itself.

The media tools address both dimensions: the content work and the story-telling. What kind of story-telling or drama or epics around the learning process are we talking about?



Let's list some of the most important epic elements in media based learning that makes this kind of learning *totally different* from traditional classroom teaching:

- › The learning is embedded in and driven by a mission that the participants are deeply personally involved in
- › The mission must include some kind of content, social and real complexity, but need to be within reach
- › To work with the mission you need to go through different phases to build up solutions, and you need to design these phases
- › The work process must include a need to interact with different players on the scene (in the community), also deeply interested in the mission
- › You cannot accomplish the mission alone! You need support from your team, mentors and often from professionals
- › You need to tell the story about your work process all along, and you need to do it with the most useful and expressive media tools, and you need to design how to tell the different parts of the story and how to make the story meaningful to other people
- › You need to produce an ending to the drama: knowledge, products, services, networks, whatever, end you need to design those endings

The criteria for the young learners' immersive learning experience is that they feel deeply engaged and even lost in a longer work process that demands their full attention, their resources and their skills; and that they, looking back, feel that this learning process was like a journey, a film or a theater play.

Only when looking back, they can see the full contours of the drama, in which they were deeply immersed.

Probably they would say, when looking back: *I didn't know I was learning!!*

In the classroom they never questioned that they were "trying to learn". Now they didn't notice it at all. Why? Because this time, they were really learning...



If we assume a pragmatic standpoint for a moment, what does this mean in everyday media labs?

We need to ensure lab processes of a certain *length*. Epic learning needs a certain amount of *time* to be played out. So does true learning. Small projects for a few hours or days will not be sufficient.

We also need to ensure strong *missions*. If the missions are not strong, relevant and do not trigger the participants, the missions are not powerful enough.

We need to give *space*: to allow different things and actions in physical and mental space to let the drama play out. This includes available media tools.

We need to *interact* with other people than in the traditional classroom. We need to put new people, resources and players on the scene.

We need good *mentors*. Not media experts, but mentors capable of setting the scene, supporting the different stages and interaction, and silently, discretely, like an invisible hand, pushing the young teams towards solutions or elements of solutions.

The experienced mentor knows how to balance frustration and success among the youth teams. Too little frustration makes them lazy, too much frustration make them give up. Too much success, and too early, makes them lazy again, too little success discourage them.

**Perhaps this is the true art of being a media lab mentor - and it is not about knowledge, but experience and... art! The art of mentoring.**

If we take a closer look at the things we have been talking about in this section, we notice a very strong and always underestimated link and interdependence between *learning and narrative*.

Most learning theories never understood this. They never understood the link between life, people, emotions and... learning.

Therefore narratives and other art forms are often more interesting as reflective approaches to learning than science.

Not because the learning content, the mission, is about art or literature, but because deep learning must take on the *forms* of narrative and drama to be deep learning.

And we should never forget the ultimate mission: young disengaged learners need this kind of learning to build learning capacity, interest and trust in learning.

*We should definitely invite many more learning professionals to study good learning in the light of narrative and drama.*



Some people have precisely been doing that: the people who are promoting computer game design as a most interesting and powerful model for... deep learning.

In other sections of this Guide Collection we refer extensively to some of these efforts.

In fact, good computer games are organized exactly like the media lab learning processes described above: mission, frustration/success, personal involvement, levels, collaboration and interaction with friends and enemies, challenges within reach, clear goals, etc.

Therefore good computer games are a very powerful inspirational source to immersive learning processes:

1. As model for the organization of the learning itself

2. As content (learning games)
3. As work process: design of games

But how can we be surprised?

Computer games are situated precisely at the intersection point of **narrative**, **learning** and **media**.



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# The role of aesthetics in media based learning

## The role aesthetics in media based learning

Is aesthetics only for higher educated people - or for artists? Why on earth should aesthetics be relevant to lab learning for young people...?

Is aesthetics not simply about making things look nice, but basically an unnecessary interest?

This small input is not an extensive presentation of all sorts of complicated aesthetics, but simply a small input to allow reflections on *active designing and aesthetic reflection*.



### . . . The role of aesthetics in media based learning

Is aesthetics only for higher educated people - or for artists? Why on earth should aesthetics be relevant to lab learning for young people...?

Is aesthetics not simply about making things look nice, but basically an unnecessary interest?

This small input is not an extensive presentation of all sorts of complicated aesthetics, but simply a small input to allow reflections on *active designing and aesthetic reflection*.

In fact, active designing and aesthetic reflections can be some of the most powerful learning experiences for non-academic learners - it can add epic dimensions to the learning



### . WHY TALK ABOUT AESTHETICS?

Few people in the educational sector are concerned with the field of aesthetics in learning processes. And if they are interested, it is mostly because the topics they work with are about art, and in that case art is “content” not the act of designing.

Aesthetics is exterior to learning, we think. Maybe even in opposition to learning, if learning is mostly linked to the idea of *science*.

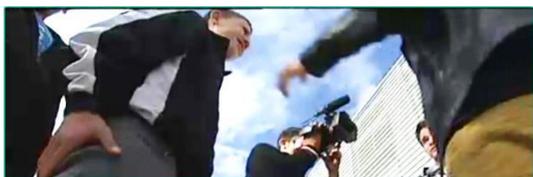
Of course, we might understand that when we work with media, we need to pay attention to the way things look - a video, a photo series, an animation, a Power point, a website, etc.

In fact, what is typical to our mindset, and corresponding to the reality to a certain degree, is that the more a product is text based the less we are concerned with aesthetics, and the more the product is based on other media forms the more we are concerned with the “feel and look” of the things.

Many educationalists do not care for aesthetics at all: the only thing that matters is the knowledge, the “content” and stuff like that.

This mindset denies any internal or immanent relationship between learning, knowledge and the “form” in which the so-called “content” is delivered.

So, form and content are not really related. This statement is what we do not agree with. In fact we consider form, design, structure and organizing as elements at the heart of the learning process.



## . WHAT IS AESTHETICS?

Often we think that aesthetics is about making something already existing appear nice. We could put some nice graphics in a Power Point to make it look nice. Perhaps these graphics have nothing to do with the texts in the Power Point. They just look nice; perhaps even motivating for the audience.

In this case, the aesthetic critique would be harsh: the graphics should add new dimensions to the total message of the presentation, or enable the audience to perceive the message in different ways. There should be an interaction between the texts and the graphics and the total expression should allow a deeper understanding of the message than its individual elements (the text, the picture, etc.).

We have an interesting parallel to this in the world of digital learning games. The people who developed “edutainment” games precisely wrapped traditional educational content in more or less entertaining forms (the “gaming”). It didn't work well. The result was educational, but no games. What was missing was exactly the immanent interaction between the educational dimension and the gaming dimension: the content was given entertaining forms, but totally extrinsic to the content.

So, perhaps we can define aesthetics, not as the form in opposition to the content, but precisely as the intrinsic and immanent interplay between the “content” and the “form”.  $1+1=3$ .

Aesthetics is, then, about the totality of the expression, the totality of the message, including both content and form and their interplay, and the quality of the deep relationship between this content and this form. The form should never be accidental, but express structures in the content itself.



## . AESTHETICS AND ACTIVE DESIGNING

So, aesthetics is not about the form of the content, but more about the *interaction* between form and content - if we accept that form and content can be, at least in theory, isolated.

This leads us to the *act of designing*. Aesthetics might, then, be: how do we actively and intentionally design the interplay between “form” and “content”?

We are not saying “design”, but “the act of designing” or “active designing”.

There is a reason for the Computer Clubhouse learning principles always, again and again, referring to “design” as the key word in their learning principles.

Design, in this sense, means constructing, bringing different elements together, planning and elaborating, expressing things like knowledge or experience in the most powerful ways, etc.

Many people now use the word “design” in a much broader meaning than the traditional way: to design a chair or a house. They talk about educational design, social design, design of innovation, etc.

**Aesthetics is the quality of and reflection on how powerful we design and construct the interaction between the “content” and the “form”, or the “media”.**

The design of an interview with some old people: is this design satisfactory from an aesthetic point of view? To what extent is the interplay between the “content” and the “form” really bringing out, expressing and unfolding the “messages” of the interviews? Is it powerful or weak?



## . AESTHETICS AND EXPRESSION

A group of young people set out to make a very interesting interview with some old people about how they manage all the new technologies. Older people feel excluded from the community because they cannot manage the new technologies.

The young people would like to present the voices and opinions of the old people themselves. The results of the interviews will be used in schools and colleges in the community.

The *mission* and its messages are to give the old people's own personal experience a voice, instead of being a number in the statistic surveys.

The *content* is yet unknown, but would probably be linked to the statements in the interviews.

But not only. The young team might decide to include other elements in the final product, accompanying the voices of the old people. So, the content might be subject to different design ideas.

The *form* is totally open: a text for a newspaper, a photo series with quotations from the interviews, a video focusing on the speeches of the old people, a dramatized video or photo documentary including other elements than the voices of the elderly? Or a sound file focusing on the old people's voices?

The young team must, then, go back and reflect on the mission: what is the idea, the purpose, the aim of this production? How can we make the most powerful interaction between this content and that form or media? And how satisfactory would this interaction be - measured against our mission and expectations? In short: how will we design the interaction of form and content, and what is the expected aesthetic quality (= how does the total product really express what is important?)



## . AESTHETICS IN THE MEDIA LABS

So, aesthetics in the laboratories?

The youth team will produce material about old people's personal views on how they feel excluded by the new technologies.

The youth team must reflect on:

- What will be useful to the schools and colleges to hear from the old people?
- How can we create this dialogue with the old people?
- How should we set up the interviews?
- How are we documenting the interviews? Video, sound, texts, photos? And how could we combine these expression forms?
- In what ways will the media combinations bring forward and make clear the personal experience of the old people? How can we at the same time make the messages clear and useful to the receivers?
- How can we design the visual or sound environment surrounding the interviews? How should we create the "look and feel" of the scenarios to make the statements from the old people authentic, personal and strong, and at the same time motivate the users (schools, colleges) to engage in the material?

So, the aesthetic reflections penetrate all the phases needed to produce the final outcomes.

*The active designing must include aesthetic reflection.*

The youth team is thus challenged with a number of basic media reflections about target groups, end users, combination of media, the different techniques of photography, video, story-telling, etc.



## . AESTHETICS AND LEARNING

From this small example it is evident that **active designing and aesthetic reflection** are basic elements in the production of interesting digital material for the schools and the colleges.

But it might as well be a project for a bank, a kindergarten or for the local theater or an energy company.

A useful example is a group of young people, from a very deprived community, collaborating with the famous Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam: the young people were invited to study and explore the paintings at the Museum and to express their personal experience of Van Gogh through all sorts of modern media.

*So, aesthetics is not about making something look nice.*

On the contrary it represents very basic learning processes connected to design and production.

Aesthetics is not extrinsic to learning, but at the very heart of the learning process:

- How can certain “things” be designed and expressed and given form?
- In what ways is the “form” interacting with the “content” of the messages?
- How can different expression forms and media be combined to produce powerful communication?
- How will backgrounds, colors, shapes, space and time influence and contribute to the total expression design and strengthen or weaken the messages?
- How can we use basic story-telling principles to support the interaction of form and content?



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Much more on [www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu)



# How to capture the youth voices

## How to capture the youth voices?

Mentors and youth workers are in constant dialogue with the young people in the media labs, but from time to time it is very important to establish small time-outs and in a more systematic way try to evaluate the impacts of on the young people - in formal as well as in non-formal settings.

This guide offers a little input on this.



...

## ... Constantly dialoguing with the young people involved

We must practice what we preach.

It is not useful to initiatives like LABlearning to deduct the laboratory and learning principles from a theoretical framework and then force these principles upon the youth groups.

Therefore such initiatives should link directly to the needs and interests of disengaged youth by capturing the voices of the youth, in informal as well as in formal ways.

In order for the dialogues to develop along broadly similar lines and to provide guidance for teachers or mentors who might need it, we provide the following list of Guiding Questions.

Please be aware that the way you put these questions might vary considerably from the expression forms used in this paper. A question can be put in many different ways and should be very *context sensitive*.

The context must be very informal!

And anonymity should be an option, if so wished by the young people.

Also, we don't believe that you can really go through all the individual questions during a dialogue, as there are just too many. So we group the questions under titles which make explicit the "ultimate aim" of each set of them. It will up to you to select and articulate the specific questions as you feel more appropriate.



## PART 1

### CURRENT SITUATION AND EXPERIENCE IN THE "TRADITIONAL SCHOOL" PERSPECTIVE

Perceived strength and weaknesses of the (current/recent past) school/education situation

1. How do you feel being a student here?
2. Do you like being a student; do you like what you are doing?
3. How do you feel about being in a class and about the teaching?

What/how do you like to learn things + perceived personal strengths/abilities?

4. *What kind of “learning” do you like; what kind do you not like? Why?*
5. *What kind of activities in the school do you prefer?*
6. *What do you feel you are good at and not so good at?*
7. *Are there things you really like or that you are good at that you cannot work on in the school?*

Current use and desired/potential use/knowledge of digital tools/media

8. *Do you like using computers, mobiles, internet and things like that?*
9. *What are you using these things for?*
10. *Have you tried to work with computers in other ways, like more for learning something, more challenging?*
11. *Would you like to use more technology in school, and for what?*
12. *Would you like to learn more about computer programs, video, animation or things like that? Why?*

## PART 2

### BEYOND THE “TRADITIONAL SCHOOL” PERSPECTIVE

Learning elsewhere and learning differently: does it happen, could it happen?

13. *Do you think you are learning anything outside the school?*
14. *(in case of negative answer) Do you think you could learn something if you were not in a classroom?*
15. *Can you think of other ways of learning things?*

Could this different perspective be brought into the school, and how? Ideas, suggestions, desires...

16. *If you could choose, how would you like to work in the school?*
17. *How would that be good for you, why would it make you interested?*
18. *Would you like to be involved in such projects, like working more with computers, multimedia, etc.? Why?*
19. *Would you like to work more with computers, video, animation, etc. after school? What kind of things? Where?*
20. *If there were no “teachers”, how would you learn something in school?*
21. *Would you like to try to organize the things in school without a “teacher”?*
22. *What would make you like “learning”?*

Leading to post-meeting documentation

23. *Do you want to talk more about all this later? How can we do that?*
24. *Would you like to describe what you have said with some kind of media? Like what? How would you like to do that?*



One or two adults engaged in the project invite the young people to talk about school, being a student, the classroom, the teachers, and what they think about all this, and especially how it might be different? The Guiding Questions above should help in this.

*If the young people have nothing to say, it might be because you are not asking them the proper questions - or perhaps you are doing it like a teacher!!*

## ADULTS' PRESENCE AND ROLE IN THE MEETINGS

Adults working with the young people (teachers, mentors, whatever...) can be present in the dialogue (they are highly likely to request this), but they should not be left alone to run the meeting. A LAB coordinator should participate and actually "guide" the discussion. We need someone with a solid understanding of the purpose of the Youth Voice "operation" and able to guide the interaction towards its intended aims.

## ABOUT RECORDING THE EXCHANGES DURING THE MEETING AND AFTERWARDS

Some adults involved might prefer not taking notes during the dialogues, whereas others would rather do it. We recommend talking about this with the young people at the beginning and agree with them about whether and how to record anything DURING the dialogue with photos, video or by taking notes.

For sure, the young people should be invited to express what they have said with whatever media they prefer also AFTER the meeting. A clear DEADLINE should be given for this - one week might be enough.

Such post-meeting activity would be extremely useful for documentation purposes and because even in small groups some people might refrain from speaking or from thoroughly expressing their views, so having a "second chance" to do this on their own might produce more interesting and authentic narratives. Of course, we cannot oblige anyone to do it, but we should strongly encourage participants in the dialogues to produce such follow-up contributions.

For this, after raising the issue with guiding questions 23 and 24, the message should be "We would very much appreciate if you could provide us with some additional and/or more precise views, ideas, comments etc. about the things that you feel are most important among those that we discussed today".

Since the dialogues will most likely produce disparate materials, we propose the following structuring and processing of the dialogues' outputs so as to make it easier to analyse and consolidate them.



### Q 1-3

#### **Perceived strength and weaknesses of the (current/recent past) school/education situation**

Please summarize what is the prevailing student/young peoples' opinion about their school and their student experience.

*First select one of the following options and then provide a more qualitative description.*

- › The opinions of most participants are negative
- › The opinions of most participants are positive
- › Some participants have a prevailing positive opinion and others a negative one
- › Participants mostly have a mixed/balances opinion; they see both negative and positive aspects

#### Qualitative observations:

*Free text ⇒*



. **Q 4-7**

**What/how do you like to learn things + perceived personal strengths/abilities?**

Please summarize what is the prevailing student/young peoples' opinion about their day-by-day learning experience at school.

*First select one/more of the following options and then provide a more qualitative description.*

- Most participants enjoy the activities they do at school
- Most participants do not enjoy the activities they do at school
- Participants are divided on this aspect (some are positive, some negative)
- Participants mostly have a mixed/balances opinion; they see both negative and positive aspects
- Most participants feel that they cannot do at school the things they like best or are good at
- Most participants feel that they can do at school the things they like best or are good at

Qualitative observations:

*Free text ⇒*



. **Q 8-12**

**Current use and desired/potential use/knowledge of digital tools/media**

Please summarize what is the prevailing student/young peoples' situation with regards to current and desired/potential use of digital tools/media.

*First select one/or more of the following options and then provide a more qualitative description.*

- Most participants use computers, mobiles, internet etc. regularly
- Most participants do not use computers, mobiles, internet etc. regularly
- Participants are polarized between intensive and low ICT users
- Most participants usually use computers etc. only for recreational reasons with no specific purpose
- Most participants use computers etc. not only for general entertainment, but also with a specific purpose: media creation (blog, video...) , art creation (music, graphic, ...) , computer programming ...
- Most participants are aware about the potential of computers, media and internet
- Most participants are not aware about the potential of computers, media and internet
- Participants are divided between high and low awareness of ICT potential
- Most participants would like to use and learn more about computer programs, video etc.
- Most participants would not like to use and learn more about computer programs, video etc.
- Participants are divided about more ICT use/learning (some very keen, others not interested)

Qualitative observations:

*Free text ⇒*



. **Q 13-15**

**Learning elsewhere and learning differently: does it happen, could it happen?**

Please summarize what is the prevailing student/young peoples' opinion with regards to traditional class-based education and alternative approaches.

*First select one/or more of the following options and then provide a more qualitative description.*

- › Most participants think that they learn almost nothing outside the school
- › Most participants think that they learn something outside the school
- › Most participants think that they learn a lot outside the school
- › Participants are divided about learning outside the school
- › Participants have no idea about other ways of learning things
- › Participants have a lot of ideas about other ways of learning things

Qualitative observations:

Free text ⇒



• **Q 16-22**

**Could this different perspective be brought into the school and how? Ideas, suggestions, desires...**

Please summarize what is the prevailing student/young peoples' opinion with regards to non-traditional learning approaches, and the potential use of media.

*Answers in this section are particularly difficult to summarize, except for the following three aspects. Please select one/or more of the following options and then provide a more qualitative description.*

- › Most participants are willing/interested to work more with computer, media etc.
- › Most participants do not want to work more with computers, media etc.
- › Participants are divided about working more with computers, media, etc.
- › Most participants would like to use computers etc. also after school time
- › Most participants would not like to use computers etc. also after school time
- › Participants are divided about working more with computers etc. after school time
- › Most participants would like to experiment learning without a teacher in school
- › Most participants would not like to experiment learning without a teacher in school
- › Participants are divided about experimenting learning without a teacher in school

Qualitative observations:

Free text ⇒



• **Q 23-24**

**Leading to post-meeting documentation**

- › Most participants do not want to use media to express their point of views
- › Most participants want also to use media to express their point of views
- › Some participants express their point of views better with media than in a group dialog.

Qualitative observations:

Free text ⇒



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. . . Facilities for media laboratory learning for disengaged youth

Setting up such youth facilities in non-formal settings - in a youth club or a community centre for example - might be complicated, but less complicated than in formal settings.

In non-formal contexts it is very much a matter of decision and financing, whereas in formal settings we will be facing the entire system of formal education: class organization, curricula, tests, time control, teacher practices, institutional routines, etc., etc.

We cannot change an educational institution or the institution's practice.

What we can do is to establish different forms of laboratory experiments integrated in formal, semi-formal or non-formal settings.

Such laboratories might vary considerably as to local situations, resources - and the will to make decisions.

So, what kind of formal, semi-formal and non-formal settings are possible?

Below we offer some examples - most of the practical solutions will probably seek to combine and mix these solutions. Or adapt them to local contexts.

*What can easily be seen from the examples below is that media based learning can be extremely flexible and can be integrated in almost all forms of education and learning.*

We will list some of the options going from *formal to non-formal*.



## . . . Some ways to set up LABlearning facilities - interactive tool



### . A CLASS AS MEDIA LABORATORY

The school can decide that a class, for example a new class, will be organized partly or in full according to LABlearning didactics and principle for a shorter period or for a year.

*Describe how you could do this*

⇒



### . A CURRICULUM AS MEDIA LABORATORY

A certain subject for one or more classes or groups might be organized according to LABlearning didactics, for instance English, Information Technology, Communication or History.

*Describe how you could do this*

⇒



### . A CROSS-SUBJECT CURRICULUM AS MEDIA LABORATORY

It can be decided that a class or a group will use LABlearning didactics and principles to learn about a cross-subject theme, such as climate change, in a shorter or longer period.

*Describe how you could do this*

⇒



### . A CLASS PROJECT AS MEDIA LABORATORY

A class can work in a LABlearning setting on a special project within a curricula subject.

*Describe how you could do this*

⇒



. **A PROJECT GROUP AS MEDIA LABORATORY**

A group of learners can work in a LABlearning setting on a special project within a curricula subject.

*Describe how you could do this*

⇒



. **A PROJECT GROUP AS MEDIA LABORATORY**

Within a subject or within the curricula in general a special group of learners (perhaps at risk learners) are formed, and are challenged to work in LAB settings in parallel to the class.

*Describe how you could do this*

⇒



. **A MEDIA LABORATORY FOR EDUCATION SUPPORT**

Some institutions offer preparatory or support education for students who are not yet ready to enter a secondary or vocational study, and such support educations might be perfect for laboratory based learning.

*Describe how you could do this*

⇒



. **AN INTERNATIONAL MEDIA LABORATORY**

A class or a group of learners are challenged with working with a subject or a cross-subject theme by collaborating virtually with one or more schools in other countries. The project might include language learning and might be set up according to the LABlearning didactics.

*Describe how you could do this*

⇒



. **A SEMI-FORMAL MEDIA LABORATORY WITHIN SCHOOL HOURS**

In support of at risk learners, or to get drop-outs back into learning, the institution can establish in-school media lab facilities and invite groups of learners to work in these facilities in parallel to class education.

*Describe how you could do this*

⇒



. **A SEMI-FORMAL MEDIA LABORATORY IN CONTINUATION OF SCHOOL HOURS**

The institution might decide to open part of the building for after school media laboratories, especially for youth at risk. The activities in the media lab might be linked to the school work, but it does not have to be. Opening hours might be on work days from after school to 8 or 9 in the evening. Some institutions might even consider opening hours during the weekend.

*Describe how you could do this*

⇒



. **A NON-FORMAL MEDIA LABORATORY IN THE INSTITUTION AFTER SCHOOL**

The institution might decide to establish a genuine media lab in its premises - for young people attending the school, and for other young people in the community. This facility might be open in the evening and also in the weekend. In extreme cases, an educational institution might decide to establish something like a Computer Clubhouse linked to but not controlled by the educational institution.

*Describe how you could do this*

⇒



. **A NON-FORMAL MEDIA LABORATORY IN A COMMUNITY CENTRE**

One of the strongest non-formal solutions is to establish a media lab as an integrated part of a community centre - or the use a media lab for young people as a catalyst for establishing a community centre!

The media lab will profit from being directly linked to the community - and several synergies between the activities in such a centre can be expected.

Describe how you could do this

⇒



#### . A NON-FORMAL MEDIA LABORATORY IN A MEDIA EDUCATION

A media education, such as a multimedia university, a media vocational college or a media based high school, might offer its premises to establish a media lab in support of the learning of youth at risk in the community.

In certain cases such an initiative might develop into a computer clubhouse facility.

Describe how you could do this

⇒



#### . A NON-FORMAL MEDIA LABORATORY IN A YOUTH CLUB FACILITY

Many communities have some kind of youth facilities or youth clubs. Such facilities might partly or in full be developed into a LABlearning facility, closely linked to the community.

Describe how you could do this

⇒



#### . A NON-FORMAL MEDIA LABORATORY IN A PRIVATE ORGANISATION

A strong private enterprise might offer to use its premises for establishing creative media laboratories for youth at risk and for young people in general.

Often this will be private companies with strong corporate social responsibility programs - or companies directly interested in youth and media.

Describe how you could do this

⇒



#### . A NON-FORMAL COMPUTER CLUBHOUSE

The high-end non-formal solution is, of course, to establish a genuine computer clubhouse in the community, supported by major stakeholders in the community. Such a solution requires long-term planning and preparation, but in the long run it represents a very strong and sustainable solution.





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# Digital gaming in media LABs for disengaged youth

## Ways to media labs for disengaged youth - interactive tool

This guide aims to offer some inspiration as to the many ways to establish LABlearning facilities for (exclusion threatened) youth - in formal as well as in non-formal settings.

The tool is interactive...

How does it fit with your ideas and mission?



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. . . **Digital gaming in media labs for disengaged youth**

#### ENTERTAINMENT OR HARD FUN?

Traditionally games and learning belong to two different worlds: the classic world of academic education and the wild world of entertainment markets.

This has dramatically changed. Many serious and social games are developed and education is taking an increasing interest in using games to change traditional classroom teaching and to offer youth more engaging learning experiences.

The best serious and social games fit perfectly into the learning principles of media labs: they offer clear missions, step by step training, immediate response, trial and error, social dialogues, teamwork, strategic thinking and often very qualified simulations of real-life - or, link directly to real-life.

And first of all, they offer exciting visual and interactive narratives, totally different from the old text books.

Good serious and social games are not entertainment. They are *hard fun*. They encourage immersive learning, long-term investment of energy, sustained interest and social dialogues.

*Good serious and social gaming is therefore a great resource to the media labs, especially media labs for disadvantaged or disengaged youth.*

#### USING DIGITAL GAMES

Of course, serious games might be strictly subject-related: you can learn math or language through digital games, individually or in teams.

But the best digital games for the media labs are games offering youth teams to explore different forms of worlds, such as energy, politics, healthcare, etc. - or games offering research and detective challenges linked to complicated topics, often connected to conflicts, change or dilemmas.

The best serious and social games do not invite the young learner to hide behind the computer or the television or the handheld game device, but offer the youth teams social dialogue with community stakeholders or with other young people through the games' online platforms.

Such digital games can be great resources to the media labs and to project and problem based learning, especially for disengaged young people.

And today, more and more serious games invite the youth teams to contribute to the game, to interact with the gameplay and to take the game world further.

#### DESIGNING DIGITAL GAMES

The most interesting way to use digital games in the media labs might, though, be to involve the learners in *designing, constructing and producing* serious games - closely linked to the topics in question and to the learning needs of the youth teams.

Of course, this is impossible. Mission impossible!

*Not necessarily!*

First of all, the media labs are not only inhabited by mentors (the former teachers!), but also by media designers and media professionals.

This means that it is possible to establish projects in which youth teams collaborate, dialogue with and learn from professional game designers, or, perhaps even better, from young game developers in need of training and practice.

Designing digital games takes the young people through all the challenging phases of learning, and it offers young people the opportunity to get deep into the processes, forgetting that learning actually takes place and in more powerful ways than in the old classrooms.

Many disadvantaged, disengaged or drop-out young people have *talents*. These talents might not be recognized in the classroom, but might very well be recognized and unfolded in game design projects.

### BEING A DIGITAL GAME

The most dramatic use of digital games is to design the project, the education or the school as a digital game!

You may think: hey, this is too much! Using games is ok, but designing a school as a game...?

In fact they do this in New York City: The *Quest2Learn School* is one of the first schools to explore how digital games can be used to design curricula, learning projects, missions, entire school environments, etc.

*Take a look yourself on <http://q2l.org/>*

For most people turning your school into a digital game might be too much! Perhaps a strategic perspective...

But what about exploiting the great learning principles in digital games to design a project?

*How would you design a four week project for a youth team based on the principles of digital gaming?*

If you do that, please let us know! Games go didactic!



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. . .

### . . . Designing games in the LABs?

In this context we are talking about serious games, not all sorts of commercial games.

The use of serious games and the development of serious games is becoming a big thing in Europe these days - in very many and very different contexts, including education and empowerment...

LABlearning has been involved in preparing new Commission policies and support programs for serious games for empowerment and inclusion, and it is highly recommended to take this very seriously in the LABs and in future projects and youth initiatives.

Media lab initiatives should follow these movements closely and be prepared to work with these new funding opportunities.

Of course, using serious games in the LABs is interesting in many different ways, especially if the use of the games is linked to creative youth projects.

Even more challenging is obviously the development, design or even production of serious games in the LABs.

Basically, the LABs are not expected to produce serious games, as this is a rather complicated process including many different professional competences.

On the other hand, why not?

Developing serious games offer extremely powerful learning processes, including subject-related learning.

Developing games is really what we call Hard Fun! It takes a lot of time, reflection, planning, knowledge and collaboration; not to mention technical skills.

The background to all this is that game development can mean many different things, so let us briefly mention the many different options.

We hope this is useful to media labs, at least as a first orientation in the landscape.

So, imagine one of our LABs. A group of young people wish to work with the design and production of a serious game.

The mentors say: ok, you need to take a 2 year programming course and then come back. Or: no, we can only offer a very small and primitive piece of game design software, but you are welcome to play with it.

The reaction should be more open and flexible, and offer more options.

How, then, could young people work with game design and even game production in the LABs - taking into account that this is actually not possible?

Let us take a look at some of the options:



#### . FINDING GAME SOFTWARE...

If the young people need game software, why not let them find it themselves? They can go to internet forums, use networks, contact game educators and all sorts of things. It can be a project in itself - and let them produce some material about game software at the end. That would be useful for many young people and for other LABs, not always pleased with software like Scratch or GameMaker.



#### . COLLABORATING WITH YOUNG GAME DESIGNERS...

In all countries and regions and bigger cities there are many young game developers trying to find out how they can use their game skills. Find them and integrate them in the LABs and let them work with the young people - perhaps even inspire or train some of the young people to take steps into the game design world.



#### . COLLABORATING WITH GAME INCUBATORS...

In more and more cities and regions game incubators are established. Game incubators are facilities in which young game developers or small game companies can get support, networks and contacts - and learn more about how to make their talents useful, also economically.

Many game incubators would welcome invitations from EU projects, LABs or educators, by the way.

Such collaborations will also help the young game developers learn more about the potentials of serious games.



#### . WHAT IS A SERIOUS GAME, ACTUALLY...?

Another thing: what is a serious game? A digital game, yes. But many new serious games are not simply console games or computer games. Serious games and gaming can be distributed across a wide range of activities: computer, internet, social networking, interactions between digital and physical spaces, etc.

This means that serious games do not necessarily need hard-core programming or advanced animation: if you can tell an interesting story and gamify it, then you can use a mix of digital and real-world measures to create your game, your quest, or whatever it ends up looking like...

A website, some strange videos, a little text, some sounds... And you might have a good serious game, about politics, energy, health, sports or whatever.

It is very important to understand what a game is and can be!!



#### . PARTNERING WITH GAME EDUCATIONS...

Most big or mid-sized cities have game educations now; different kinds of game educations, but still game educations.

Why not partner up with such game educations and see what it might bring along: perhaps some of the students would like some interesting assignments, perhaps the education would like to help out the young people in the labs, and perhaps the education has an interest in developing European projects on serious games...?



#### . OFFERING INTEGRATED TRAINING...

If some of the young people are serious about the game development, why not consider offering them professional game design training as an integrated part of the LABs? Or even continue the game design training in non-formal contexts in the afternoon or in the weekend?



. **DESIGNING, NOT PRODUCING...**

It is also important to be aware that game design of serious games can be extremely exciting and offer powerful learning processes - without actually producing the game.

The design of a serious game is in itself a big challenge for both young people and mentors, and it produces a lot of learning and a lot of transversal skills.

Then, perhaps it is possible to contact young game developers or companies and discuss with them, if it would make sense to actually produce the game.



. **EMPLOYING OR CONTRACTING A PROFESSIONAL...**

We must get used to the fact that other professionals than teachers should inhabit our educations, whether formal or non-formal.

We need media people and game designers working closely with teachers, mentors and students, and it is an extremely interesting idea to employ or contract a professional young or more experienced game developer.

Such professionals will end up financing themselves, as the drop-out rate decreases...



. **OFFERING MENTORS SERIOUS GAME TRAINING...**

Why not consider including game design and game production in the future competence profiles of mentors working with youth in media settings, LABs or even in more formal settings...

It would offer unseen opportunities for the education, and the institution might even make a business case out of this, offering other institutions game pedagogical development services!



. **USE PROBLEM BASED LEARNING!**

A radical but most powerful solution would be: if the young people need game software or to produce games, then let them solve the problem by designing a project: how will you search for software, how will you test the software, how will you evaluate the software - and what have you learned about game software in the end? And: how will you use this new knowledge?



### . THE GAME OF THE GAME... GAMIFICATION

If the LABs are very creative, they might say: the search for game software is in itself a game! Or rather, it could be turned into a game!

The first game is therefore about game software...

How would you design the *Quest for Dsign Software*? How will you make it interesting and exciting? What can you gain from playing this game?

*Remember, games are not opposed to learning, they are simple a special form of learning, and often a much underestimated one: the kids must stop playing when the leave the kindergarten and enter the school...!*



### . . . How can educations establish collaboration with game designers?

The idea is to include one or more game designers in the media based learning teams, working side by side with teachers, mentors and young learners.

Not necessarily every day, of course, but perhaps one day a week or organized in certain clusters along the LABlearning activities.

*Such collaboration might offer tremendous and powerful learning opportunities for everybody, including the game designers!*

The problem is, of course, that it is not easy to establish this kind of ongoing collaboration: in fact, we are talking about developing a *new culture of learning*! The teachers don't know how to do it, neither do the game designers.

They need to learn to work together, to create a common language, common missions.

It should be noted that such activities are very close to the promotion of entrepreneurial mentality, thus targeting yet another high priority for education in Europe. Why? Because perhaps game design leads to social innovation or the development of resources for different people in the community...

And, because learning through game design develops strong entrepreneurial competences among the young learners.

Let's roll out some options:

The game design activities should be integrated in the everyday learning activities and be about the education's key topics.

The game design activities should include teams of teachers, students and game designers.

The game design activities should be based on a joint mission, for example to help solve a problem in the community, or to produce innovative material for other learners (primary school, elderly, patients, whatever...).

The game design activities should involve game developers with a clear interest in new types of jobs or creating new markets for their professional competences, first of all in the field of serious games.

The media lab might wish to approach one or more of the following local or regional game design environments:

- Game design or multimedia educations (⇒ the students need real-life cases and practice during the education)
- Game design incubators (⇒ the young game designers need start-up projects, practice and networks)
- Small game companies (⇒ looking for new markets, new customers and new opportunities)
- Universities with game or multimedia research departments (⇒ interested in real-life projects and in linking their research to social reality and users)
- Well-established game companies might also be addresses (⇒ due to an interest in new markets, new opportunities)
- Informal communities of young people interested in or with a talent for game design (⇒ they would love being involved in real-life projects)

It is very important that the collaboration with such resources can run smoothly, meaning that the geographical distance and time available must be realistic.

It is of the utmost importance that the game designers can see the perspective and can benefit from the collaboration, as to future employment, European engagement or being included in new networks (for example educational networks) with further market perspectives.

Local or regional youth (un)employment provisions might be interested in supporting such meetings between game designers and educations.

Pro-active educations might wish to include game developers or multimedia designers in their staff: instead of 50 teachers, 48 teachers + a game designer + a multimedia designer.

Pro-active educations might wish to train a team of teachers in developing serious games as a part of their further professional training, or to spot talented students wishing to be trained in game design in parallel to their vocational studies...

- As you see, there are many opportunities and some of them could be combined. They all call for *new ways of thinking, pro-active mentality, strong local and regional networking* (linking educational activities to game designers and community missions), but: this is exactly what the European Commission calls for!



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. . . **How can it be funded?**

Most of us would reply: yes, we see the opportunities, but who will pay for these activities?

So, funding.

Creativity is needed, but in fact there are many opportunities, especially for those institutions and media labs wishing to engage in learning through game design in a strategic perspective, meaning: focus on this field for many years ahead.

Let's list some of the opportunities, as we progress from the simplest to the most complex funding:

- ~ Game designer students in education, in practice or in labour market incubators are often free of charge, or might receive a limited payment, as it is a part of their education and training
- ~ Unemployed game designers might wish to engage on short-term or step-by-step conditions
- ~ Young game companies or teams or individuals might accept a limited payment in the first experimental phases of the collaboration, especially if promised better conditions if the collaboration proves successful to all parties
- ~ The education itself might wish to invest in part-time contracts with game designers (1 or 2 days a week, for example), or to plan more mixed staff (not only teachers should be working in education)
- ~ The local or regional authorities might be interested in supporting activities fighting youth unemployment and opening new markets and employment opportunities (sometimes specific and open funding is available)
- ~ The education's labour market stakeholders might be interested in supporting such innovation, and even in using the outcomes of such activities
- ~ Community stakeholders, to which the education is linked, might also be interested in providing financial support
- ~ Local or regional companies, such as banks and insurance companies, often have social responsibility programs for young people, and the game design activities are perfect for such programs, as they include entrepreneurship
- ~ Local or regional educational and youth authorities might have an interest in supporting such innovative approaches and benefit from them
- ~ In a further perspective, it will indeed be possible to fund such innovation through the European programs (at regional as well as European level) in all or most educational sectors, which means continued development of high quality and forefront European projects is still of high value

Such steps might be combined with different forms of community initiatives: if there are no incubators available, or there are no labour market measures installed for youth in the community, maybe the education or the media lab could kick-start such processes, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders in the community.

But, it also true that we are at the doorstep of exploring all these new ideas in Europe.

Perhaps other ways are more efficient or relevant or useful. Europe will be looking for such examples for many years ahead. Digital games for learning, inclusion and empowerment is one of the most important emerging fields in Europe and at global level - now and will continue to be so for many years.

It is important that pioneer work and innovative practice is linked to all kinds of educations, not simply imprisoned at the universities...!



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Much more on [www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu)



# Inspiration from the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network

## Inspiration from the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network

One of the most important inspirations behind the European LABlearning initiatives is the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network, operating more than 100 media clubhouses for disadvantaged youth worldwide and for more than 20 years. In this small guide you can be introduced to the basic principles of this initiative.



## LEARNING BY DESIGNING

Research has shown that people learn best when they are actively engaged in exploring, experimenting, and expressing themselves, not just passively receiving information.

More and more schools are focusing on learning-by-doing, involving students in hands-on activities. Computer Clubhouses follow a similar strategy, but go a step further: members don't simply get their hands on computers, they use computers to design, create, and invent things. It's not just learning-by-doing; it's learning-by-designing.

As Clubhouse members design their own illustrations, animations, robotic constructions, and music compositions, they learn valuable technical skills while also learning about the process of design and invention: how to conceptualize a project, how to make use of the materials available, how to persist and find alternatives when things go wrong, and how to view a project through the eyes of others.



## FOLLOWING YOUR INTERESTS

When people care about what they are working on, they are willing to work longer and harder, and they learn more in the process.

Clubhouses provide members with a great deal of choice, so that members can find projects and activities that they really care about. Members choose when to come, when to leave, what to work on, who to work with.

But running a Clubhouse is not simply a matter of letting youth do what they want. Clubhouses need to provide a great deal of support and structure to help youth identify their interests, turn them into meaningful projects, and learn from the experience. Clubhouse structure comes in many forms: the selection of software, the arrangement of furniture, the collections of sample projects, the support materials, the guidance from staff and mentors. The key is to provide choice plus structure, so that members have the freedom to follow their fantasies, but enough support to turn those fantasies into realities.



## BUILDING A COMMUNITY

When people think about thinking, they often imagine Rodin's famous sculpture *The Thinker*: a solitary figure, sitting by himself, with his head resting on his hand. But in the past decade, educational researchers have increasingly focused on the importance of social interactions in the ways people think and learn.

Clubhouses are designed to foster the growth of a learning community, in which youth of different ages share ideas and work together on projects, with support from staff and adult mentors. No one is assigned to work on any particular team. Rather, communities emerge over time.

Design teams form informally, coalescing around common interests. Communities are dynamic and flexible, evolving to meet the needs of the project and the interests of the participants.

Through their interactions and collaborations with a diverse community of members, staff, and mentors, Clubhouse members gain new perspectives for thinking about the world around them - and also new ways of understanding themselves.



## RESPECT AND TRUST

Communities flourish only if they are built on a foundation of respect and trust, in which people respect one another's ideas, opinions, and values.

At Clubhouses, young people are treated with trust and respect - and are expected to treat others the same way. In many settings, youth are reluctant to try out new ideas, for fear of being judged or even ridiculed. At the Clubhouse, the goal is to create an environment in which participants feel safe to experiment, explore, and innovate. Youth are given the time they need to play out their ideas; it is understood that ideas (and people) need time to develop.

Clubhouse staff and mentors do not simply dole out praise to improve the "self-esteem" of the youth. They treat youth more like colleagues, giving them genuine feedback, and pushing them to consider new possibilities. They are always asking: What could you do next? What other ideas do you have?



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Much more on [www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu)  
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..... And, **MUCH MORE** about the Intel  
Computer Clubhouse Network on  
[www.computerclubhouse.org](http://www.computerclubhouse.org)





# Basic evaluation platform for media based laboratories for disengaged youth

## Evaluation tools for media based laboratories for disengaged youth

In this paper you will find guidance on how to evaluate outcomes of media based laboratory learning for disengaged youth.

The evaluation approach is qualitative observation and based on observed differences between *expected* and *de facto* outcomes.

The approach is simple and can be used by all staff in media labs.



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. . . **Expectations about youth outcomes and labs didactics as evaluation tools**

## **YOUTH MOTIVATION AND INTEREST IN LEARNING**

### **EXPECTATION**

*The young people demonstrate an increasing interest and involvement in the learning processes during the LABs activities*

LAB activities will offer the young people opportunities to “make things”, socialize, explore new technical tools ... in ways which entail learning as part of the process, and not always easy learning: LAB activities will be designed to be “hard fun”. As proof that this offer is working, we expect young people to show interest in this learning experience, reflected into growing involvement and participation into the LABs activities.

Observable aspects to document are:

- the young people attendance in LABs activities and the intensity/duration of their presence
- their ability to sustain involvement in learning activities for longer periods
- the active participation in LABs tasks and related enjoyment( shown or declared)
- the evolution of effort and roles played in the activities (so called “trajectories of participation”) from more passive and peripheral positions to more active and central ones

Attendance may depend on LABs organisation and rules. Young people may or may not be able to choose if to attend LABs activities and for how long.

Attendance tracking tools used by mentors and trainers should provide evidence of quantitative aspects of participation (including drop-out rates).

### **EXPECTATION**

*The young people demonstrate increasing self-esteem and self-confidence*

Increased self-esteem and confidence - and agency to follow on own interests- are expected to stem from several processes and events such as: reaching the goals set in a project by the young people; being effective in presenting them and receiving a positive feedback from others; getting encouragement and support by mentors and trainers and peers in addressing setbacks; and so on.

Observable aspects to document are:

- the change in youth perceptions of their self-esteem and confidence and their awareness and agency to follow on own interests
- the processes and events like those mentioned above that are deemed relevant as change drivers

### **EXPECTATION**

*The young people demonstrate a change in their general attitude towards learning and related “hard work”, and towards education in general*

This expectation refers to a broader change of mentality; beyond the specific LAB experience (see expectation 1), w.r.t. the role/value of learning in young

peoples' life: from "It's not for me. I am not good for it!" before, to "It can be important to me. I can make it!", afterwards. This change is expected to stem from a positive experience made by the young people in the LABs - which should prove to them that learning "can be different"- and from the young peoples' personal development (see expectation 2) leading them to feel that learning can also be for them.

Observable aspects to document are:

- the change in youth discourse towards school, learning and education in general
- the youth "sense of" and expectations about the future
- the youth "satisfaction" with their LABs experience



## MEDIA CREATIVITY

### EXPECTATION

*The young people are able to use technology for creative production*

This expectation refers to the diversification and enrichment of technology use by the young people. A consumerist attitude and strictly entertainment and personal communication purposes dominate media practice among young people. The expected shift should be toward the "production of something" that reflects the interest, talents and aspirations of the creator/s. The LABs will offer several opportunities to undertake creative production activities. This evolution in technology use is desired because it stimulates and entails acquiring important abilities (see other expectations below) and should contribute to the change of young peoples' motivation and interest in learning discussed before.

Observable aspects to document this outcome are:

- the products, material and other evidence from the young people's projects
- the reflections that young people will make about the character, motivations and purposes of their projects/results, including in public presentations

### EXPECTATION

*The young people are able to explore, learn about and use (including in unexpected ways) a variety of media tools in their projects and teams*

This expectation refers to what is also known as "technology fluency", i.e. the capability of using existing resources and developing the additional skills required for applying technology in projects and towards goals which users find interesting and valuable. Technological fluency is developed by learning other complex skills beyond technical ones, such as: the ability to learn collaboratively; problem solving and project management skills; self-expression and communication abilities; learning to learn.

Observable aspects to document this evolution are:

- the breadth of technology use (i.e. the range of different technical activities young people engage with, and tools they use); their learning achievements; and unexpected outcomes: "I never thought I could reach that" ...be that an acquired skill or a product feature
- the reflections that young people will make about the technical activities they engage with, the tools they use and their learning experience, including in particular with respect to peer support and collaboration in technology learning
- what will be said/showed about these aspects in the presentations that young people will make about their projects/results
- technology use related to LABs tasks taking place not just in the school/educational context but also in a continuum with other situations

## EXPECTATION

*The young people are able to better express themselves and communicate in new ways*

LABlearning puts much emphasis on creative expression/production (as many results might consist of media content of some sort, a video, an art work etc.) and on the communication by young people of project ideas, reflections, results etc. hence on the development of the very skills that make them possible. On the other hand, the use of new media in LABlearning is expected to support and enable the young people in expressing themselves in more creative ways and communicating more effectively. For these reasons, expression and communication skills (among other Life or 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills) are highlighted and specifically addressed in the evaluation.

Improvements in these dimensions can be observed similarly to expectation 4 and 5 - they are after all an important component of creative production and (collaborative) technology learning/use - in:

- what the products, material and other evidence from the young people's projects show about their expression and communication abilities
- the content and medium used for the reflections that young people will make about their LABs experience
- most of all, the presentations that young people will make about their LABs experience, as communication abilities are a fundamental aspect of these deliverables/events



## COMMUNITY INTERACTION

### EXPECTATION

*The young people are increasingly able to establish contacts with people and professionals in the surrounding community that can make a positive contribution to their projects*

LABs activities are expected to stimulate and encourage young people to look for and take advantage of external resources that may bring useful input to their media projects. This expectation thus refers to the development and application of young people abilities in searching, making contact and carrying on effective relationships with professionals and other people living in the local community and beyond (important links may also be established at a distance through the internet). This evolution implicitly reflects a growing acknowledgement by young people of the value of such relationships.

Observable aspects to document this evolution are:

- the breadth (number and variety) and depth (intensity) of involvement of external resources in young people projects

### EXPECTATION

*The young people show an increasing interest in making their work useful to people in the community*

This expectation refers to the growth promoted by LABlearning among young people of authentic problem solving abilities and constructive social awareness. These can be developed by applying the young peoples' efforts and skills in addressing substantive (usually complex) social and other issues which affect the community where they live, rather than artificial tasks.

Observable aspects to document this evolution are:

- the interaction (especially in the project definition phase) with people in the community to understand their problems and needs
- the nature of goals ultimately set by young people to their projects

- the involvement of local community members in the presentation of project results and feedback gathering processes



## LAB DIDACTICS

### EXPECTATION

*The human resources in the laboratories have enacted pedagogical principles that foster motivation, learning and creative production among the young people*

This expectation refers in particular to the following principles:

- Mutual trust and respect - participants in the LABs should feel confident that their ideas, contributions, and comments are treated with respect (this engenders self-esteem of the young people who have most of the time a poor image of themselves as learners)
- Relevance - participants in the LABs should as far as possible be allowed to define their project and learning goals w.r.t. what they find relevant in life
- Challenge and support - participants in the LABs should face challenging, but manageable tasks. Failure should be accepted and learning from mistakes encouraged
- Self-guidance - participants in the LABs should be allowed as much self-guidance and self-directed learning as possible. Patience and asking questions rather than providing assignments are key ingredients for this
- Ownership - participants in the LABs should feel that they are in control of the learning they do and have a sense of ownership (this should stem much from the previous three principles)
- Collaboration and sharing - participants in the LABs should be prompted and supported in working with others and sharing openly what they do and learn
- Reciprocal relationship where participants are both teachers and learners should be acknowledged and encouraged

The application of these principles is expected to shape the “atmosphere”, rules and organisation of LABs activities; the goals and execution of young people projects; the relationships among participants and most other aspects of the LABs. For this reason, attention to the application of these principles and to the likely obstacles faced will be included across all project documentation processes.

In particular, mentors and trainers will be asked to consider/refer to these aspects as systematically as possible in the documentation of their activities and in their reflections. Interviews with mentors and trainers addressing specifically these aspects are also envisaged.

The point of view of young people on these aspects is also very important and should emerge from their reflections and interviews.

### EXPECTATION

*The laboratories are able to offer the young people a variety of relevant media tools and adequate conditions for their use*

Providing young people with a rich and fully operational mix of technical tools and services for creative production is a fundamental aspect of the LABlearning approach.

Observable aspects to document this expectation are:

- the mix of media tools available in the LABs
- the presence of conditions needed for their regular and full operation, in particular: timely technical assistance, adequate broadband connectivity, access from the LABs premises to relevant online services (e.g. social networks)

*The laboratories are able to link the projects to the community and to interact with relevant players outside the laboratories*

The openness of the LABs activities and the promotion of exchanges with the local community are also important features of the LABlearning approach.

Observable aspects to document this expectation are:

- the inclusion of community members in LABs activities
- the organisation of outreach activities and visits in the community
- the establishment of some form of collaboration with external organisations



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Much more on [www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu)



# Making LABlearning processes visible

## Making LABlearning processes visible

A major challenge in the LABlearning project and in innovative didactics in general, is to document the young people's work processes, changes, motivations, empowerment, learning, etc. in a creative way.

The result of a media project is interesting - a video, an animation - but it does not document the empowermental processes well.

This is a pragmatic contribution to, how it might be done. You can easily find other ways...



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### . . . How to make the LAB learning processes visible?

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- . Avoid standard evaluation measures, as they create a false scenario
- . Do not let your attention be controlled by filters or criteria, indicators and pre-fabricated questions - all this will weaken your authentic attention
- . Pay attention to what the young people say, show or demonstrate, not how their evidence fit into pre-constructed formulas
- . If you wish to synthesize, formalize or categorize, then do it when all the raw material is available - and be very critical towards, how you process the young people's evidence
- . If possible, extract the organizing principles for the synthesizing from patterns in the youth evidence itself



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### . . . IDEAS

Interview them in the beginning, middle and ending of the project, write short statements and add some photos

Let them interview each other in pairs at the end of each project week, record as sound and edit at the end of the project

Introduce the culture of taking meta-notes every day after the work session, store the notes, and let them comment on the flow at the end of the project

Let the mentor write down impressions on youth work performance and changes at the end of the day or week in the project period - review, edit, insert photos

Ask a “process journalist” to make small video recordings along the work flow, edit and comment at the end of the project

Introduce the culture of ending the day or the week in a team meeting, briefly talking about not the What but the How - take notes or video record and edit

Introduce the culture of the How as a dimension when discussing with the mentor, with the team or individually - take notes, record and edit

Insert an assignment in all projects: you must add a How to your work results in all cases, and include your feelings of the work process

Let the mentor make spontaneous personal in-depths interviews at certain points, but unprepared - take notes, photos or video record

Let someone interview a peer group on the How: she will learn as much as the group, and include ideas for how to capture and present

Let teams peer-share how they worked and how they felt about working, and let one group capture the experience of the other

Insert in-depths personal dialogues at the end of the project and go deep; involve her in how to capture and present the experience

Let him or the team make a note on the wall, a photo or whatever each time he or they are stopped by an obstacle; analyse the notes or photos together

Invite her or her team to discuss what it actually means to learn and give her or them an assignment: illustrate your states of learning without words

Let the team play with making sound and video recordings about how they work - let them compare the effects of the sound and the visuals

Let her or her team interview the mentor on his or her learning: how are you learning with us? Capture and edit



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### . . . **Carpe diem, capturing, editing, communicating**

*Carpe diem* is to find the right moment for the reflections on how I work and learn. *Capturing* is demanding: writing, sound, video, notes, or photos? - How to make sure the important words and feelings are captured? *Editing* is cutting and arranging the raw material so to highlight the important things in short form. *Communicating* means sharing the final outcomes with others...

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Much more on [www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu)



# 10 Quality Assurance questions for media LABs

## 10 Quality Assurance questions for media LABs

For various reasons we need to assure the quality, impact and outcomes of the media labs for disengaged youth.

In this small paper you will find narrative based quality assurance questions, allowing you to reflect and react to what happens and what does not happen in the labs.



How do you know that your media lab projects are working well?  
Try to use these 10 questions...

<b>1</b>	<i>Are the young people more engaged and motivated when working in the LABs?</i>
 Achievements	
 UNDER CONSTRUCTION Challenges	
 Obstacles	

<b>2</b>	<i>Is the media work linked to subject-related tasks and learning?</i>
 Achievements	
 UNDER CONSTRUCTION Challenges	
 Obstacles	

3	<i>Are the young people developing a solid learning interest through the LABs?</i>
 Achievements	
 Challenges	
 Obstacles	

4	<i>Are the media projects linked to the community?</i>
 Achievements	
 Challenges	
 Obstacles	

5	<i>Are the young people expressing themselves creatively with media?</i>
 Achievements	
 Challenges	
 Obstacles	

6	<i>Do the young people take initiatives of their own in the LABs?</i>
 Achievements	
 Challenges	
 Obstacles	

7	<i>Are the young people offered sufficient and qualified support and guidance?</i>
 Achievements	
 Challenges	
 Obstacles	

8	<i>Are the LABs sustainable - can they continue working in and after the project?</i>
 Achievements	
 Challenges	
 Obstacles	

9	<i>Are the LABs able to offer further challenges to the young people?</i>
 Achievements	
 Challenges	
 Obstacles	

10	<i>Will you be able to expand the LAB activities and facilities in the community and in the formal and non-formal settings?</i>
 Achievements	
 Challenges	
 Obstacles	



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Much more on [www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu)



# Lessons Learned from LABlearning Practice

## Lessons Learned from LABlearning practice

For various reasons we need to assure the quality, impact and outcomes of the media labs for disengaged youth.

In this small paper you will find narrative based quality assurance questions, allowing you to reflect and react to what happens and what does not happen in the labs.



# Lessons Learned

from LABlearning

# Practice



# Lessons Learned

from LABlearning

# Practice



# Lessons Learned

from LABlearning

# Practice



# Lessons Learned

from LABlearning

# Practice



# Lessons Learned

from LABlearning  
Practice



# Policy Paper

# What disengaged youth need



## Policy Paper

### What disengaged youth need

The LABlearning project wish to send direct messages to member states and Commission educational policy-makers to encourage strong and urgent action towards offering 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and empowermental media laboratories for disengaged youth



Policy-maker!  
You really need  
to read this

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.  
. . . **Policy Paper**  
**What disengaged youth need**

Dear policy-makers!

We know you are busy people, and we respect your efforts.  
Therefore our voice is clear, brief and direct.

**WHAT WE KNOW**

The new generations and their learning and work styles do not fit well with the traditional education system. An increasing mismatch is observed all over Europe.

What we sometimes forget is that the traditional education system does not fit well with the new labor markets either.

We know that an increasing number of young people belong to exclusion threatened groups, nowadays called disengaged youth, disadvantaged youth, NEET youth, including drop-outs, early school leavers and young people with poor educational outcomes.

We also know that adjustments to the education system is not enough, it will not work. It has been tried for decades, and there are few results from this adjustment strategy.

This is why we agree with the EU Commission's "We need to re-think education and learning".

Furthermore we know that throwing technology at these youth groups will not solve the problem either. The problem is lifestyles, learning styles and mentality, not technology in itself.

And therefore we agree with MIT Media LAB Mitch Resnick's "Access [to technology] is not enough".

Bottom line, we are talking about millions of young people in Europe not being able to contribute to their own lives or to European innovation and growth. Everybody agrees that Europe cannot accept and afford this.



**WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW, - OR DO WE?**

... is what to do about the increasing number of disengaged youth..  
At least we are not doing it.

Because, perhaps we do know. Experiments, research and projects along the last two decades point jointly towards: these young people need very different learning opportunities from traditional education. They need what we call 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and 21<sup>st</sup> century employment.

Open and explorative media laboratories are examples of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning with the capacity to re-engage and re-motivate even street youth, normally out of reach to formal education.

So, perhaps we sort of do know. We are just not doing it.  
It can be estimated that 95% of educations in Europe are based on traditional industrial parameters and changing in turtle-like ways.  
And the increasing budget cuts in education along with the increasing academification of education are not making the change processes easier.

The EU LABlearning project funded by the European Commission and similar initiatives have clearly demonstrated what works for these youth groups, documented in an extensive Guide Collection available from the project website.

The changes in education are urgent. Social reality is pushing forward at exponential speed, while education still discusses what to do at well-organized conferences.



You see the picture.  
The cheetah at high speed, exponentially driving forward...  
The turtle, surprised, "what happened?"...  
Imagine what will happen in the next scenarios...  
Pictures tell more than a thousand words sometimes.

What is needed is scaling up tremendously changes towards 21<sup>st</sup> century learning in the formal system and offering rich provisions of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, such as open media laboratories, in non-formal after-school settings.  
The global Intel Computer Clubhouse Network has for 20 years demonstrated successfully how this can be done - in all sorts of communities and social contexts.

In Europe we need to learn from these 20 years of experience, and we need to go beyond after-school provisions and into the formal school system.  
While oceans of academics in Europe are discussing learning theory, Intel Computer Clubhouse Network along with initiatives such as the EU LABlearning project have demonstrated in practice that these approaches work for disengaged youth.  
We need fewer books and more practice.

The LABlearning project would like to support the European Commission's *re-thinking learning* mission.  
We would like to do that by sending a number of clear messages to policy-makers in the member states and in the Commission.



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## POLICY MESSAGES

For national educational policy-makers

We encourage you to speed up 21<sup>st</sup> century learning in the formal education system, with a special focus on reaching disengaged youth

We encourage you to help schools and colleges in their efforts to make the educational processes more flexible to allow initiatives of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and in support of attracting and retaining disengaged youth

We encourage you to launch and fund systematic exploration of what 21<sup>st</sup> century learning means at different education levels and to sustain the results

We encourage you to help schools and colleges to mainstream the results of learning experiments for disengaged youth funded by the European Commission

We encourage you to fund 21<sup>st</sup> century learning ambassadors to speed up and support educational change in the different educational sectors, including in support of outreach to disengaged youth

We encourage you to celebrate strong and useful initiatives and to use them as demonstrations to other schools and colleges

We encourage you to support the establishment of non-formal open media laboratories in after-school settings (including evenings and weekends) for disengaged youth to help them build 21<sup>st</sup> century learning capacity outside the formal education system

Finally we encourage you to work closer with the European Commission in support of the implementation of the re-thinking learning mission



## For European educational policy-makers

We encourage you to pursue the re-thinking learning mission and to enforce the practical implementation through the European social and educational programs

We encourage you to make the European funding schemes more flexible towards experimentation and exploration to avoid the loss of freedom degrees as policies and priorities are transformed into Calls and funding procedures

We encourage you to ensure proper funding measures for special programs addressing the urgent needs of disengaged youth to build 21<sup>st</sup> century learning capacity and motivation- across the traditional sector programs and including formal as well as non-formal approaches

We encourage you to put pressure on the member states to remove obstacles to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning experimentation in the formal education system and to celebrate such initiatives among schools and colleges

We encourage you to put more focus on practical experimentation accompanied by field research and less focus on traditional academic research

Finally we encourage you to avoid the pressures of the “we must find new things to fund all the time to look modern and up to date” pitfalls: 21<sup>st</sup> century learning for disengaged youth should include funded experimentation and implementation for several decades; 95% of all European educations are not influenced by 21<sup>st</sup> century learning



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### . . . WHAT WE OFFER

The LABlearning resources offer the following services after the termination of the project:

*Collaboration with the Commission to form policy and funding measures for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning for disengaged youth*

*Counseling to the Commission, national educational authorities, to research groups and European networks on 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and media laboratories for disengaged youth*

*Collaboration with and counseling of European networks, projects and initiatives aiming to establish 21<sup>st</sup> century learning for disengaged youth*

For dialogues on these services, please contact directly  
Coordinator *Mireia Masgrau* on [mireiamasgrau@gmail.com](mailto:mireiamasgrau@gmail.com)

Co-coordinator *Jan Gejel* on [jan.gejel@skolekom.dk](mailto:jan.gejel@skolekom.dk)  
You will then be guided to the proper LABlearning resources persons or to resources in the LABlearning network.



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Much more on [www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu)



# Youth Voices from the media LABs

## Youth Voices from the media LABs

Besides doing formal evaluations from time to time it is most important and useful to capture the free and spontaneous voices of the young people along their project activities and to allow their direct and authentic words to be visible and valuable in the media LABs and among LAB stakeholders.

This small paper summarizes some of the voices.

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Here we present a few summaries of what the young people stated during the youth voice activities:

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### . . . USE OF MEDIA TOOLS

All the young people like and use the new technologies for various purposes: research, to be connected (chatting, calling, sending messages), watch videos, listening to music, etc. They use the computer at home to play games, edit photos with free programs, Facebook, YouTube.

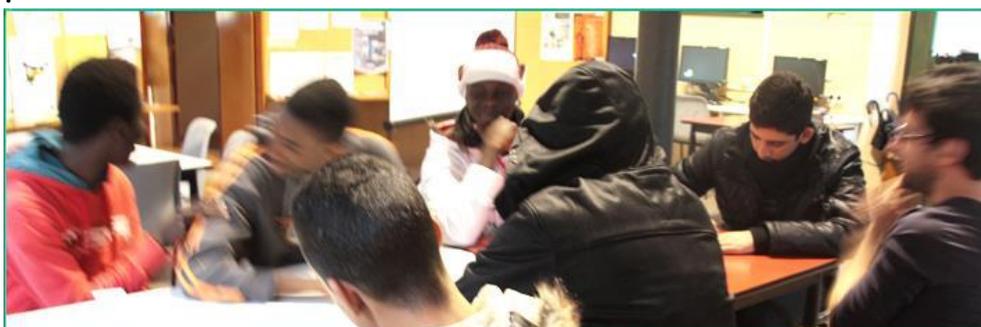
Inside the school ICT is very little used. Some subjects (programming, cad/cam design) foresee compulsorily the use of computers, but for the rest students hardly ever use these technologies. There are only a few exceptions, which are welcomed positively by the students.

They enjoy working with media, and they would like to go deeper and learn more than just the basic ICT things. They like participating in projects involving media. Some of the young people who have worked in media projects with the teachers at school (making movies and more) think that it was ok, but it became a bit boring in the end, like routine.

Most young people are not at all familiar with project and problem based learning with media. It is not obvious to most young people that the social media and the technology they use can be used for learning.

Most young people clearly separate what is happening in school and what they are doing after school - with media and technology and in general.

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### . . . FORMAL EDUCATION

When talking about formal education, in general they do not like to attend classes.

Most of the young people, especially the “disengaged” ones, stated that they do not like the type of learning used at school. They prefer active learning activities to passive classroom listening.

They would like no subjects and learn more practically, like learning some trade, for example.

They would prefer a practical type of teaching (laboratories, workshop) instead of traditional lessons. Laboratories are scheduled in their study plans, but the hours used for these activities are very few. The positive things of the more practical learning methodology are the simplicity and the speed you learn at, the retention ability of information, a more relaxed and calm climate, the individual management of working time and the methodology (they can have their voices-opinions).

This type of learning occurs autonomously, and the teacher is available in case of need.

The the young people are free to move and they are not obliged to remain seated and listen to the lesson which is almost never interesting.

The young people have a negative opinion about their school. The main reason is that they have poor impressions of their teachers. Surprisingly, the poor impressions are linked to the fact that they consider the teachers unprepared in the subjects they would like to go deeper into.

Secondly they underline the relationship difficulties. Some teachers are strict and they do not succeed in creating a positive and stimulating dialogue with them.

The few teachers that do so succeed in reaching greater results from the students. These teachers succeed in creating a relationship which goes beyond the school environment.

According to the voice of the young people most of the teachers do not succeed in motivating them sufficiently.

Another problem they see and link with the low engagement of the teachers is connected to the fact that the time of the teaching is too dense and without breaks.

On the other hand another group of young people finds it hard to imagine other ways of learning - clearly linking learning to school, teacher and classroom.

This means that not only teachers and institutions are bound by traditional educational concepts, but also the young people, the students.

Especially disengaged youth has a strong need to do something, to learn, to be engaged, involved in something, to be busy, to share with their peers, to spend time working with them, to talk and work about their future plans....

They all have a strong need to be involved in things that can be useful to other people, because above all what they need is to feel, to know that they are part of the community, they are included in the society.

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. . . **LEARNING ELSEWHERE AND LEARNING DIFFERENTLY**

They have the impression that it's possible to acquire knowledge outside school: learning through experience.

Some of the students had the opportunity to work in real life and experienced the quantity of knowledge you can acquire and that can be learnt outside the school.

Young people learn through the exchange of ideas with friends, through information from television and internet (tablets, smartphones...).

Nevertheless, although everybody states that they can also learn a lot outside the school, the concept of learning remains for most of them linked to the school environment.

Only a few of them are aware of the informal and non-formal learning processes they take part in every day.

When asked about the way in which they feel more comfortable to work, almost all of them agree that the way they like is working in groups, avoiding the theoretical classes and lectures.

They would like to do more group work because they consider peers to be a help and that working with peers makes it easier to understand things.

The idea of being independent from the teacher is appreciated by all the young people and they all explain that they work and learn better on their own or in small groups.

Take a look at the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network impact studies to learn more about how disengaged youth reacts to media based learning laboratories:

[www.computerclubhouse.org/content/our-impact-around-world](http://www.computerclubhouse.org/content/our-impact-around-world)

[www.computerclubhouse.org/content/success-stories](http://www.computerclubhouse.org/content/success-stories)

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Much, much more on [www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu), including youth voice videos and other forms of evidence...



# The social ethics of media based laboratories for disengaged youth

## The social ethics of media based laboratories for disengaged youth

The LABlearning project and similar initiatives are, partly inspired by the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network's 20 years of experience, trying to create open media laboratories for what is often called "disengaged" youth.

Often such formal or non-formal settings are not geared to allow the young people the time, space and personal development they need.



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. . . **The social ethics of media based laboratories for disengaged youth**

Who are they, the famous “disengaged” young people? Who are they?

They are a highly mixed and non-homogeneous group. One size fits all does not apply to this group. No single profiling possible...

What we do know, however, is that more and more young people belong to this group of “disengaged youth”.

There seem to be two explanations to this:

- the new generations and their lifestyles, including how to learn and work do not fit well with the traditional education system
- groups of non-academic young learners are increasingly excluded from the more and more theoretical education system (the academification of learning)

The last group is the primary concern of LABlearning. These young people face a double exclusion threat: the general lifestyle and education mismatch, which they share with most young people, and a special threat caused by specific “disengagements”.

Even if disengaged youth is the primary concern of LABlearning, it is important to make clear that the new generations in general are in urgent need of dramatically different learning environments than what is offered by the traditional education system. They need open and explorative media laboratories, they need 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.

Traditional education is not bringing out the best in our new generations.



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Besides the general lifestyle and education mismatch the disengaged groups of young people are disengaged for many reasons:

- they are not able to manage the formal classroom situation
- they are not confident working with theory, books and exams
- they might come from disadvantaged social and economic communities and families
- they might be migrants with language difficulties and difficulties in “adapting” to the Western education culture
- they might have a record of early school leaving and drop-out
- they might be NEET youth, neither in education nor in the labor market
- they might not be able to learn in the academic ways required in our education system
- they simple might have troubled lives with aggression, hatred or violence
- and they might simply have a very low self-esteem, which is likely to get worse along the broken educational pathways

So, our young LAB people might be “disengaged” for many different reasons.



But, are they really “disengaged”? Why are we calling them “disengaged”?  
Because they ARE disengaged - from the point of view of the classroom and traditional education system...

They don’t fit in. They cannot sit still for hours, they are not listening, they are disturbing, they are restless, they don’t care about their homework, they cause conflicts in the class, they prefer to play with their technological toys, they cannot even read a novel and explain the meaning, they cannot...

And many of them demonstrate a most hostile attitude: I don’t give a shit!

The strange thing is, though, that outside the classroom, and once something raise their interest, they are deeply engaged, deeply immersed into problems, situations, challenges.

The “problem” is not, then, that they cannot engage. The “problem” is that they cannot engage in traditional academic education and sometimes not in traditional jobs either.

*There is considerable evidence that media laboratories of learning can re-engage or engage almost all these young people.*

However, explorative media LABs are not only about technology, computers, digital gaming or project based learning.

A very important dimension in such open explorative learning environments is what we call *social ethics*. It’s about the young people’s mentality, behavior, feelings, social situation, etc.



Let us be direct.

If your baggage is full of

*Bad experience from different schools*

*Lack of self-confidence as soon as you enter a school building*

*Feelings of being a loser*

*Experience of a lack of respect*

*Troubled family relations*

*Lack of economic and social resources*

*And burdened by always covering all this up...*

Then you are not likely to fit well into our classrooms and formal educational environments. You are not likely to behave well.

And if we add to all this that the general lifestyle of the new generations is moving further and further away from what was once considered normal industrial mentality, then we must admit that we are facing a dramatic double mismatch between these young people and the educational establishment.

Our educational establishment reacts with theoretical understanding: we write books and organize conferences on this mismatch, but educational practice seems to change the turtle-like way.



Some young people simply join the media LABs and eat it! No problem, they work full speed from day one.

But there are many other scenarios.

And this is where *social ethics* comes in.

Many young people entering open and project based and explorative media LABs seem not to appreciate these new provisions. Some are reluctant, some are not interested, some don't want to engage, and others simply behave in strange ways and disturb the work processes.

Some teachers may get angry: why are they not grateful?

The thing is that it might take a long time for some of our young people to engage, to enjoy, to relate, to immerse, - or simply to find out that the media LABs are not yet another classroom.

And, remember: the baggage that some of these young people carry with them are still there! A troubled life or lack of self-confidence does not disappear just because you enter a media LAB!

What does all this mean? Where does it lead?

It leads to the *social ethics* of media based laboratories.

To be successful the media LABs must offer a special atmosphere, very different from traditional classrooms.

The adult mentors and the work processes must be extremely flexible and tolerant. The individual young person should be allowed the time and practice needed to accept and enjoy the new opportunities. Even though also media LABs should be governed by basic social rules, many forms of behaviors must be accepted and tolerated, such as:

- temporary dropping out
- lack of interest
- discussions and quarreling on behavior and peer relations
- outbreak of anger or sadness
- lack of trust in mentors and peers
- disruptive behavior
- periods of doubts, relapses and disengagement

Even though the environment must be governed by social rules and agreements, the individual young person must be allowed time to change, time to find his or her way and without constantly being judged or rejected.



The social ethics in question are not about pleasing the young people, mothering them or showing endless tolerance towards whatever behavior.

Nice pedagogies do not work with these young people.

The mentors must be open, direct, transparent, clear and frank. But at the same time they must show respect and allow each and every young person to find his or her way of re-engagement and re-motivation.



This is where many experimenting media provisions for young people fail. Often they employ too many “teachers” and too few “youth workers”, too many “educators” and too few “non-pedagogical professionals” from the different companies or institutions involved.

Some provisions offer rich technology, but are not able to manage the mentality of the young people.

Some provisions are not allowed the flexibility to help some of the young people to change, to grow, to feel differently.

This failing happens in formal media LABs as well as in non-formal after-school media provisions.

But it is very clear that formal educational frameworks show great difficulties in offering the needed flexible and tolerant learning environments. Formal education is precisely a *system*, and the system is not geared to allow flexibility in time, space and personal development.

And one thing is sure: the increasing demand for short-term efficiency in the education system will not make things better.

This means that there is an urgent and increasing need to establish non-formal open media LABs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning for all sorts of “disengaged” young people. Unfortunately this does not seem to happen, even though we know that this is one of the only long-term efficient ways to re-engage and include millions of young people in Europe.

Turtle Europe.



Much more on [www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu)



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# Outside looking in

## Interview with the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network



### Outside looking in

Interview with the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network

The Intel Computer Clubhouse Network, based in Boston US, with more than 100 media exploring clubhouses for disadvantaged youth worldwide collaborated with the LABlearning initiative and offered extremely valuable inspiration.

In this interview we ask them to describe how they see the LABlearning initiative and collaboration - *from the outside looking in...*



*Gail from the ICCN explaining the key principles of a Computer Clubhouse*

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## ... Outside looking in Interview with the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network

	<p><b>Which are the most important things that European media learning initiatives for disengaged youth should learn from the ICCN experience?</b></p>
	<p>Your text</p>

	<p><b>How do you see the European attempts to establish such media laboratories for disengaged youth in formal school settings?</b></p>
	<p>Your text</p>

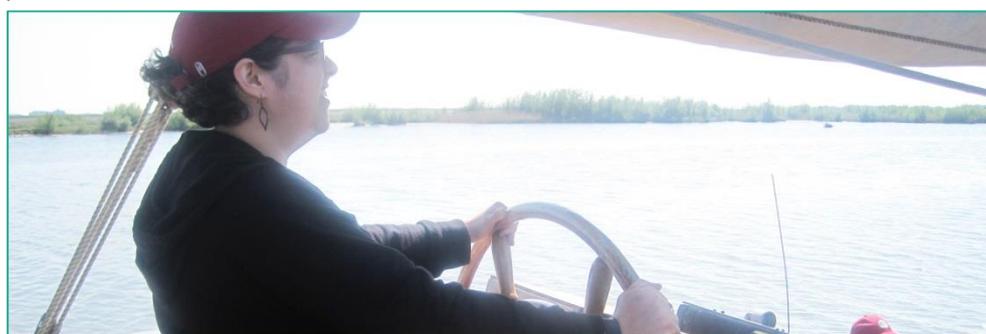
	<p><b>Is the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network engaged in initiatives trying to take the clubhouse didactics into formal school settings?</b></p>
	<p>Your text</p>

	<p><b>As to media based learning for disengaged youth, do you feel there are different mentalities in the US and in Europe?</b></p>
	<p>Your text</p>

	
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	<b>In what ways have the Computer Clubhouse media approaches changed during 20 years of practice?</b>
	Your text

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*Danielle in total control...*

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	<b>From your point of view, which are the main obstacles to establishing media laboratories for disengaged youth in Europe?</b>
	Your text

	<b>Do you see Europe and European partnerships as possible future collaborators for the ICCN? In what ways?</b>
	Your text

	<b>In Europe we talk a lot about entrepreneurship mentality in all forms of educations... How can this from your point of view be linked to the Computer Clubhouse approaches and practice?</b>

	Your text
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	<b>Both in the US and in Europe there is a very optimistic attitude towards the empowermental potentials of serious gaming and gamification, in connection with disengaged youth in particular. How do you see this in the ICCN?</b>
	Your text

	<b>Mitch Resnick from the MIT Media Lab once stated <i>Access is not enough</i>. Could you elaborate a little bit on that?</b>
	Your text

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Media fight: US vs. EU

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	<b>Many Europeans ask: why do you believe that media laboratories, such as the Computer Clubhouse, are especially powerful in connection with what we call disengaged youth?</b>
	Your text

	<b>If you were to offer straightforward and simple advice to future European initiatives about media labs for disengaged youth,</b>
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	what kind of advice would you give?
	Your text

	<p>Could you briefly reveal some of the future plans or initiatives from the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network? And perhaps add a few words about how such initiatives might be of value to future European LABlearning initiatives?</p>
	Your text

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*Danielle and Gail discussing with their European colleagues in Salt Catalonia ES*

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Much more on [www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu)

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The LABlearning consortium offers

**Counselling** on media laboratories for disengaged youth for national and European educational policy-makers

**Collaboration** on the establishment of media laboratories in formal and non-formal contexts for institutions and communities

**Training** in managing media laboratories for disengaged youth for teachers, mentors and youth workers

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The LABlearning consortium offers its services on non-profit basis and always links the media laboratories to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.

. . . . . And, **MUCH MORE** about the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network on [www.computerclubhouse.org](http://www.computerclubhouse.org)



THE INTEL COMPUTER CLUBHOUSE NETWORK  
[www.computerclubhouse.org](http://www.computerclubhouse.org)

Take a look at the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network impact studies to learn more about how disengaged youth reacts to media based learning laboratories:  
[www.computerclubhouse.org/content/our-impact-around-world](http://www.computerclubhouse.org/content/our-impact-around-world)  
[www.computerclubhouse.org/content/success-stories](http://www.computerclubhouse.org/content/success-stories)



## ... What we offer

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Official LABlearning contact  
to the consortium and networks:

**Mireia Masgrau**  
mireiamasgrau@gmail.com



LABlearning - appreciated by European youth

# 21<sup>st</sup> century learning in action

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## LABLEARNING



MEDIA BASED EMPOWERMENT  
FOR DISENGAGED YOUTH



Penja un vídeo ▾



Experience the direct voices of the young people on



With English subtitles

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The 37 minutes video **Joves i Futur** is created, designed and produced by young people in Salt-Girona Catalonia participating in the EU LABlearning project. Their work is much appreciated, as are their open statements in the video.

The project wishes to thank both the youth teams and the mentors working with them!

The video, other videos and 20 different LABlearning Guides are openly available on

[www.LABlearning.eu](http://www.LABlearning.eu)