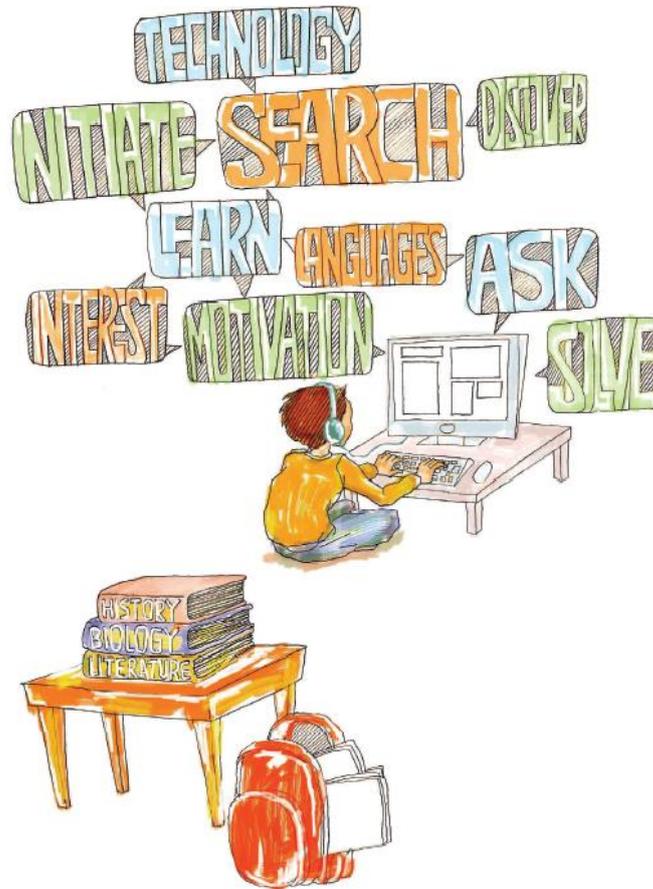




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21st century schooling

Emerging educational entrepreneuring opportunities



What is 21st century schooling?

Policy, researchers, economists and society call for dramatic innovation in schooling: the old basic school institutions must change according to 21st century global reality.

It seems as the young generations are moving far beyond traditional schooling when learning and leading their lives. Traditional schooling seems to become obsolete, outdated and not in tune with how young people learn and live, and what society needs today and in the future.

Even worse, it seems as every time the teachers take an innovative step forward towards 21st century schooling, the young people are already far beyond this step and heading towards new ways of learning, playing, collaborating and living.

Perhaps we imagine that our schools and teachers are step by step catching up with the young generations, but we are dead wrong: for each new step taken by the teachers, the young people are taking at least three steps in new and sometimes unpredictable directions.

In conclusion, the gap between traditional schooling, including “power pointing and facebooking”, and the 21st century youth cultures is not on the decline; it increases day by day.

What is 21st century schooling?

Policy and researchers and educational innovators agree that 21st century schooling is a creative and dynamic mix of the following learning approaches, among others:

- creative and collaborative use of **technology** and **virtual networking**
- fostering **entrepreneurial** mentality and **initiative-taking**
- fostering interest in **innovation** and **change**
- learning through **virtual gaming** networks and gamification
- schools creating **learning partnerships** with society
- learning experience through **real-life** and **real-time** challenges and missions
- practical **internationalization** through transnational collaboration between schools, teachers and students
- learning in **mixed realities** (social / virtual)
- learning through **co-creation**, including of educational content
- creating links between formal schooling and **non-formal and informal learning**
- linking up with the young generations’ learning and living **cultures**

So, this is what the schools should do, including primary and secondary schools, as policy and research recommend fostering such capacity from an early age.



The implementation gap

How are schools supposed to do that?

Schools and teachers have few free resources for such experimentation, if any at all. How do we expect those policy and research visions to be implemented in practice?

Most schools and teachers will not be able to kick-start and drive such experimentation themselves.

Who will drive or co-drive this experimentation towards 21st century schooling?

The distance and gap between the innovation rhetoric of policy and research and the practical life in schools is growing day by day, making it almost impossible for most schools to keep track, to follow or even to start working with a few of these innovative approaches.

What kind of support is offered?

Mostly short-term classroom courses, seminars or conferences; in some cases more substantial further education at the teacher training centre or at the university...

Most of these support activities are carried out in academic circles, are theoretical and a long way from the reality of schools, and most support activities address the individual teacher and the teacher's careering.

Few teachers participate in those activities and even fewer are able to follow them up through practical innovation in the schools.

That's why we talk about an increasing implementation gap between policy/research and schools.



What kind of support and co-driving do the schools need to sufficiently address 21st century schooling challenges?

First of all, the support and co-driving should not be linked to individual teachers' careering, but to *capacity building at team or even school level*. 21st century capacity building can only happen in teams or with larger groups of teachers to be efficient and sustainable.

The needed change is a collective one, not an individual one.

Next, the schools or teacher teams need support along considerable time periods, such as 3 or 6 months or even longer.

This is the only way to start implementing substantial change and open up step by step to practical implementation of elements in 21st century schooling.

In most countries such long-term support does not exist, and if it exists it is impossible for schools to pay for it.

What is the nature of real and useful support services to schools and teacher teams?

First of all,

- the support service must be **qualified** and able to integrate such innovation in the everyday life of schools
- the support service must be **flexible** and adjusted to the needs of different schools and teacher teams
- the support service must be **timely**: available when needed and to the extent needed
- the support service must be able to **accompany** the school or the teacher team along the first important implementation steps, offering support, inspiration and co-creation as needed

As an example it could be agreed that the support service works with two teacher teams in a school for a period of six months to experiment with innovation in science learning.



An open field for educational entrepreneurs

How can such support service be established?

The nature of such services - time, duration, flexibility, etc. - calls for new organisational models, able to provide the services and to create the needed economy at the same time...

Few existing organisations and economic models would allow for such practice, and this invites new innovate and very entrepreneurial models to be developed. This also indicates that different forms of entrepreneurial initiatives might lead to the establishment of different forms of services and organisations and with participation of different resources.

All these obstacles aside, the implementation gap at the same time represents a *giant open field of opportunities* for people who wish to take the risks and work entrepreneurial.

This can be illustrated as follows:



In most cases such services and such new organisations will need to start from scratch, or at least from very few resources. This means that the drivers of such initiatives will need to take the initiatives through a number of steps to build capacity to offer the needed services.

Who are the people who might take an interest in joining such initiatives?

Well, examples could be:

- educational innovators or entrepreneurs
- public players devoted to take action on the implementation gap in new ways
- dedicated teachers
- teacher students
- other resources dedicated to bring about change in schooling

As the services and organisation develops, some people might work for free, some work half time and others full time.

Considerable obstacles should be foreseen when engaging in such missions; on the other hand this giant and unexplored land offers extremely open and interesting opportunities for the right learning entrepreneurs.

A major challenge will, of course, be to define and test new economic models for such services.

Professionals offering 21st century innovation services cannot be expected to work for free.

On the other hand most schools struggle with limited economies.

An organisation providing such services will in general be able to create economies in three ways:

1

Client payment

Along a six months period most schools would be able to pay for the services on non-profit basis, such as financing one professional from the organisation one day a week or similar. Very different client payment arrangement should, though, be foreseen.

2

Public / private sponsoring

Everybody knows about the implementation gap and the problems related to changes in schools, and as innovation in schools is a high priority for many public as well as private players, it might be possible, if well promoted, to obtain some kind of co-financing of the new organisation.

3

National or European project funding

The new organisation might wish to participate in national or European projects that could create some economy for the organisation.

No matter what, the new organisation should be prepared to create mixed and combined economies, most likely constantly adjusting to new obstacles and opportunities.

But this is the very nature of entrepreneuring, isn't it?



Guidance and support for 21st century schooling entrepreneurs

The first challenge is, however, not to deliver the services.

The first challenge is to establish an organisation, an association, an NGO or whatever form the initiative might take on.

This is a considerable challenge in itself, so let's focus on that for a moment.

As always such initiatives must be driven by a few dedicated professionals.

The mission is to provide the described services, but prior to pursuing this mission several steps are needed to establish an organisation able to do this.

This includes identifying and mobilizing sufficient resources, including human resources, to build up the organisation and promote it efficiently across educational communities.

Once the first mission accomplished (the organisation), the second and real mission can be pursued by expanding the activity systematically, including using the first schools and teacher teams as success stories and role models for other schools and teachers, and inviting role-model teachers to join the organisation.

This first mission is not an easy one.

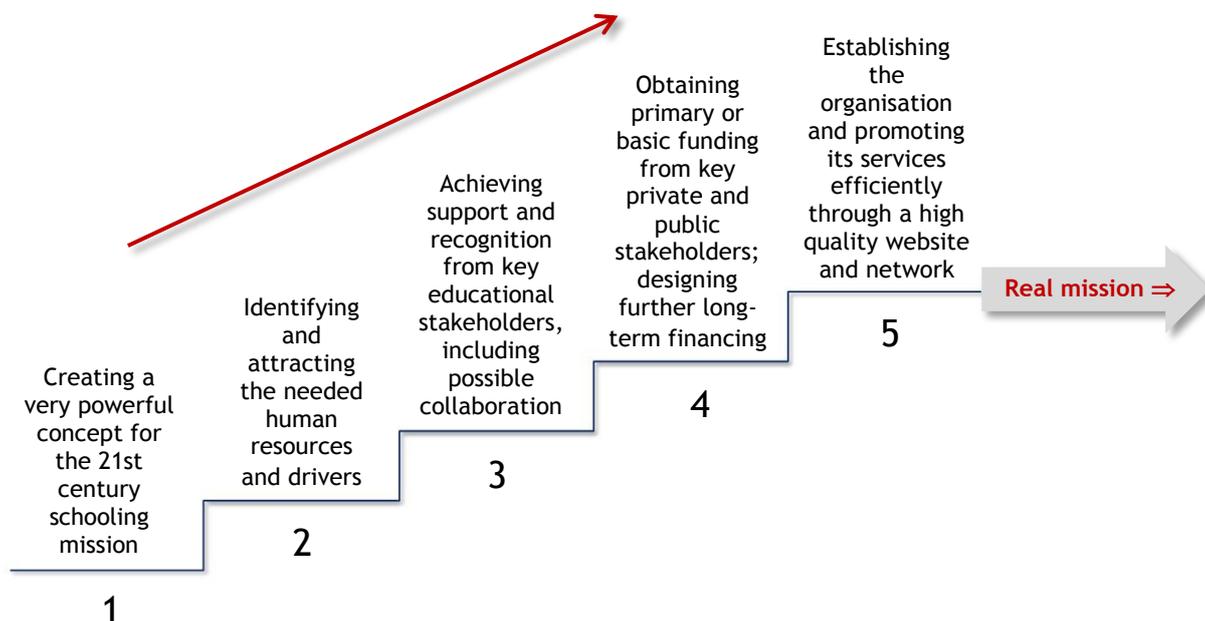
Finding and involving qualified people, promoting the idea of the organisation among relevant stakeholders and achieving basic societal support are considerable challenges and will take considerable effort.

It is recommended to apply a well-organized step by step approach to build capacity among a group of dedicated entrepreneurs when working to establish the organisation.

Once the organisation established its services must appear attractive, credible and highly qualified.

The step by step approach to creating the organisation might *for example* look like this:

Mission “creating the basic organisation”



A similar step by step approach can be drawn up for the “real mission”, for example building up the organisation and its services towards full capacity in five steps.

Once the organisation starts providing its services, success stories will automatically help promote the services and help the organisation develop more substantial resources and infrastructures.

Working with Europe can offer substantial guidance and support to educational entrepreneurs who wish to engage in creating such support organisations and missions, including accompanying the drivers of the initiative along the described steps. Terms and conditions will be arranged in connection with each specific case.

