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## **Pedagogical challenges and possibilities in film and media education with consumer/citizenship education**

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This paper is about my cooperation with the Consumer Agency and *Koulukino* (the School Cinema agency) in a current Finnish project 'Promoting citizenship and civic activity in teacher education'.

Our University, with Taina Männistö (of the Consumer Agency) and Anna-Liisa Puura-Castren (of *Koulukino*), were responsible for this project. The project is a continuation from two earlier projects Taina Männistö and I made with students in kindergarten teacher education during my courses. You can find references to these in the CCN's (Consumer Citizenship Network) conference material: 'Ensuring Childhood in the Consumer Society' and 'Implementations of Consumer Citizenship Education in Early Childhood and growing up to parental engagement'.

### **Project's aims and content**

We created and tested a method of how to take advantage of a chosen film, *Crash*, as a starting point for interdisciplinary learning. The project is one part of my pedagogical subject teaching module 'Cooperation in institutional early childhood education'. The main aim of this course is to approach every day situations from an adult perspective, and to examine the related effects through the students' own reflections and their mutual interactive working.

During the study process of kindergarten teacher education the aim is to integrate the student's personal growth with the social and cultural tasks of the educator and education. Teaching is examined as an ethical profession.

The younger the learner with whom the teacher student/teacher is working, the greater the latter's responsibility for the learner becomes. The teacher works together with the adults responsible for the child. In their work, teachers commit themselves to the norms that define that work, and to the profession's ethics. Teachers develop their work and evaluate their own activities. Teachers accept their fallibility and are ready to revise their viewpoints (Teacher's Professional Ethics.)

One emphasis in our government program is media education. In our teacher education our aim is to further increase the integration of media education to different learning objects. This project is one of my answers to the challenge.

Project planning already began in autumn 2005. We agreed to try specifically through shared experimental study to examine and to reflect, and to promote discussion. A central issue is to consider one's own actions as an active, responsible consumer citizen and contributor. The aim of the process is to enable growth in the role of teacher through reflection. A responsible teacher will find the opportunities to act and contribute as an

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activator of the students and to work himself as an active consumer citizen and professional in society.

Once again we must mention that the outcomes for Citizenship education are not academic marks. As students become active members of society, they move from the relationship between lessons and marks and link this to the relationship between the personal, local, European and global connections. It's not enough to read/study about multi-professionals issues. The best way is to study trying to understand the links between Citizenship education and personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Understanding the relationship between consumer Citizenship education and multi-professional work is one very important outcome.

One element of teaching in Finland naturally includes the use of networks. The prerequisites for prosperity are created as a result of the successful cooperation and interaction between different actors. For teachers it means the opportunity to use experts from different fields to support their work.

In teaching, the treatment by authorities has perhaps traditionally left learners with an external, fragmented entirety of the different actors and areas of responsibility (just to read about issues). At the same time the interest to find out about the opportunities on offer for network - based cooperation has been missing. There is also a risk of categorizing, whereby the customer/consumer perspective remains unlearned. This project utilizes learning through experience to respond to the challenges.

## Crash

The themes in the film *Crash* are racism, insecurity, marginalization, social differences and fear; these are central elements of traditional social work. However, even more important in this film is the individual's role and the diversity of the reference groups. For example, the same person may in turn be a service provider and at the same time also a customer of another service provider. The individual's field of experience is formed of these experiences as an individual person and a service provider.

This film was chosen because it contains all the elements that help the learner to firstly analyze different themes throughout the film, and later also to reflect on their own actions.

Students were given very good lessons about media/film education and told about Media-Muffins which starts next autumn as a part of our government program. Media education is a very important way to work with children and parents. There are for example subjects about which the child has either little experience, or that are difficult to deal with. The matters that are learned/dealt with within the film have a natural use as a life skill, such as consumer, media and Citizenship skills. Film analyzing methods have received quite a lot of attention in studies. Students have good tools for analyzing films with children, too.

After watching the film students were asked to work on what they had seen and to analyze the theme/themes of the film from the educator's perspective. They were also

asked to consider their own role in society as an educator and to reflect on their own activity as an educator through the film. During orientation lesson students had been given some suggestions for themes such as good/bad, crime, racism, fear, death, career, family. They were asked to deal with these themes within the frames of reference of media and cinema education, and consumption and markets.

In respect of the themes that arose, the students were asked to prepare questions they thought could be handled in a way that they, as teachers, would find useful in teaching. They were told that the material would be used in making learning materials based on *Crash* for teachers. They were also told that the learning experiment would be presented at an international conference. Students were all time very motivated and they really appreciated that their work is becoming more visible.

### **Evaluation of the learning experiment**

In choosing *Crash* to be analyzed, we succeeded in combining several important skill objectives in terms of education. Also foreign students had the possibility to join us and see the film at the same time and they have made their written task about *Crash* and we had very good discussions during the Citizenship education course. (All arrangements were very practical, cheap and during lesson time near our department, thanks to *Koulukino*). Cooperation in institutional early childhood education includes only a few teaching sessions but anyway now we were really concentrating on an integrating subject. The students were very happy. They had to work quite hard. They said that it was very good way to meet, handle and develop what they had learned.

With regard to cinema education, a totally new perspective was opened to the students. They were grateful to have had the opportunity at an adult level to examine issues, recognize their own attitudes and think about the partnership in this context.

We have certainly analyzed children's films, but now we were put in a different position. We had not previously been able to expand on the action of analysis. We have now received a lot of tools for more extensive cinema education.

I have one hour of feedback discussion concerning the whole course with each student (about 60). In their own portfolios students have honest, reflective, sometimes even argumentative and 'balanced' discussion.

The most difficult thing for students was at the beginning finding themes of consumption and citizenship in the film. The customer themes of consumption as a provider and consumer of a service became clear for most only during the final common discussion in Consumer Agency when they were analyzing the film together. The students had not necessarily considered their own role as a kindergarten teacher and provider of a service to customers.

Also new was the point of view concerning marginalization, students had not thought it possible for a dependent to lack consumer skills. It is one concrete challenge for early childhood education in general, too. We all agree *Crash* has earned its Oscar and we had a feeling that 'we made it, it was our choice'.