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Sources of knowledge

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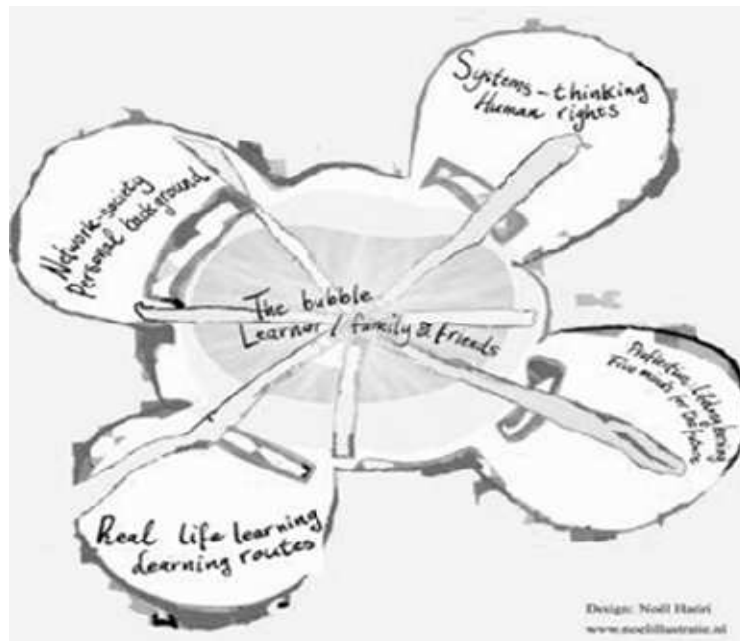
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Gathering knowledge means and needs intercultural dialogue and this paper sets out how learners in the To-Gather project are learning step by step to develop ‘intercultural competence’. At the heart of To-Gather is the need to learn how learners are learning to learn, about different ways of gathering knowledge to understand our multiple society and to create a ‘multiple choice identity’. Knowledge gives learners access to other cultures and their discourses. It is an entry point to different kinds of cultures: ‘the bigger the island of knowledge, the longer the shore of wondering’ (Emerson).

Within all European countries mobility and migration give challenge to old orders, to notions of fixity in identity. Moreover, increasingly society is organizing its relationships with and within electronically processed information networks, gradually replacing or complementing the “old” social networks of personal face-to-face communication. Society is liquid, hybrid, complex. We are living in a virtual biotope: a technological-economical system, dominated by commerce, money and power. Maybe without knowing it, we are connected to a network, a complex technological system where chaos-theory is transferred into reality with the colonisation of the individual in and by the ‘network-society’. In the network-society subjects increasingly have identity choices that go beyond their physical location. Reality and virtual reality are mixed. Post-modern heroes or idols in soaps, sports, music or films exert an emotional influence. Some argue that our inner life is empty, that we’re getting bored more quickly and easily and that many young people are engaged in an à la carte lifestyle, focussed on money, pleasure and consumption. Within this complexity, a main issue that concerns us is how young people communicate and the way they learn and gather knowledges.

Learners can be given opportunity to compare and contrast similarities and differences among the countries in Europe and within their own country. Different kinds of art (music, visual arts, literature, drama, dance etc) can be used as a *sense-opener* and a motivational tool to becoming familiar with different topics such as identity, migrations and mobility, ‘otherness’. Exploration of ‘the Other’ opens up the possibility for ‘multiple choice identity’, encouraging young people to think ‘outside the box’ of their daily experiences and understandings. Young people, belonging to “net-generation”, can freely choose among information available, exchange their knowledge and ideas via internet and at the same time construct new ideas. In helping young people to make such choices, to gather new knowledges and ideas, the To-Gather project draws on theories of multiple intelligences and five minds for the future (Gardener, elaborated as eight intelligences, see below), to provide a learning strategy that fits in a multiple reality. This is about real life learning and lifelong learning, a learning strategy that’s rooted in society, sustainable and meaningful for the learner. In other words: a network-society that fits network-thinking and network-learning.

Network-learning is a form of education, which site of production of knowledge and ideas, their circulation and consumption is the global computers' network. The learning process is "decentralized" and proceeds online. The traditional "top-down" teacher – student education paradigm is thus becoming ineffective and obsolete. This also means that we may synchronise the learner route and the teacher route. For example a sense-opener, multiple intelligences, knowledge, creative learning and systems-thinking are essential for the learner and the teacher. Music may be an important medium between the learner and the teacher. That's why the Field of View (see diagram below) could be linked to the learning style. The learner is now situated in the middle field. The past is his own background or starting point and the future is his future. The upper field is filled with learning theories and theories about society, while practice is in the lower field, down to earth or rather down to the classroom. In this way the Field of View is synchronized with and mirrored in the personal learning process. This means that there are not only many strings between the fields but also inside the fields between the person and the past, present, future.



Field of view of the learner (Variation on the original idea of Henk Visser)

Learn how learners are learning to learn in multiple intelligence, flow and aesthetics way

This educational theory describes an array of eight different kinds of "intelligences" exhibited by human beings:

- linguistic intelligence ("word smart");
- logical-mathematical intelligence ("number/reasoning smart")

- spatial intelligence ("picture smart")
- bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence ("body smart")
- musical intelligence ("music smart")
- interpersonal intelligence ("people smart")
- intrapersonal intelligence ("self smart")

Each individual manifests varying levels of these different intelligences, and thus each person has a unique cognitive profile. The learning routes of the “To-Gather” project are created in a way to stimulate a broader range of human potentials or multiple intelligences.

In To-Gather aesthetics and especially music is used in many ways. It can be a sense-opener, a source of knowledge, a problem-solver, and a way of communication, creation, presentation and reflection.

Another way to look at a subject from different perspectives is ‘lateral thinking’ using the six hats of Edward de Bono. In To-Gather it is used for problem-solving and reflection,

Flow (‘*Crackled learning*’) is the mental state of operation in which the person is fully immersed in what he or she is doing by a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and success in the process of the activity. Flow is completely focused motivation. It is a single-minded immersion and represents perhaps the ultimate in harnessing the emotions in the service of performing and learning. In flow the emotions are not just contained and channelled, but positive, energized, and aligned with the task at hand. To be caught in the ennui of depression or the agitation of anxiety is to be barred from flow. The hallmark of flow is a feeling of spontaneous joy, even rapture, while performing a task.

It is about fascinating young people through a mix of learning styles, images, and work and presentation forms. Aesthetics and especially music is a perfect tool to internalize knowledge, to give personal meaning to it, to transfer it into concrete behaviour and to create the flow.

Learn how learners are learning to learn in aesthetic way.

Henrik Bak emphasizes, that in education aesthetics apparently seem to be an item treated with ambivalence. On the one hand aesthetics as such is regarded a fundamental part of human culture and in our part of the world. On the other hand: when it comes to the role of aesthetics in practice in the schools and in educational context as such (conferences, national and international tests, curriculums and other) the aesthetic subjects very often get very little attention. Actually we observe that both in higher education and in primary, secondary and high schools the lessons in aesthetic subjects are being cut down in order to give more priority to traditional subjects such as mathematics and language.

In the To-Gather project we do not underestimate the importance of traditional skills such as language and mathematics. But we certainly want to give priority to the aesthetic

approach to the learning process. In fact we claim that in order to face the rapid development of the world, the globalization and the environmental crisis the learners must be presented to the aesthetics as mind opener, which means a *source* bringing meaning and understanding to children and young people living in time of rapid changes and globalization.

Apart from this effort is at the same time to teach children and young people how to use the aesthetic *tools* as communicative and innovative tools in order to be able to research, experiment and express them. In other words: It is important that learners of today acquire the skill that makes them able to master the aesthetical modes of expression. Robi Kroflic emphasizes, if art experience is a kind of embodied knowledge about me and the other, then we have to find something in its inner structure that confirms its value beyond a utilitarian criteria. In the RAND study *Gifts of the Muse (Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts)* we find a further explanation of art as a communicative process:

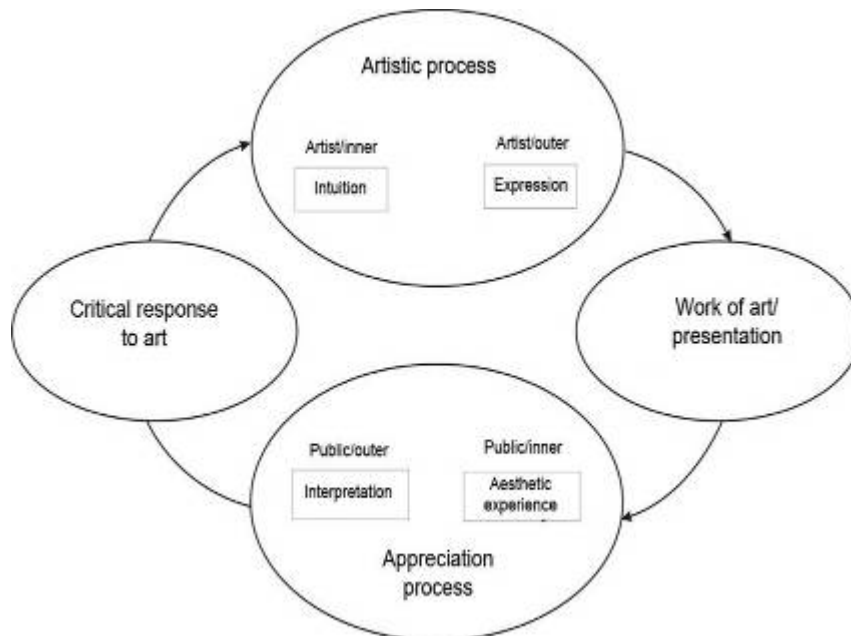


Figure 1: Art as a Communicative Process

Systems-thinking and relational pedagogy – the way how learners are learning to learn.

The development and improvement of multiple intelligence in the study process is one of the modification ideas in education and this idea winds through the existing standards of study subjects. The implementation of these standards is connected with change – to start with school educational programmes and to finish with the teacher's work style. To make the process successful each teacher has to know and has to take into consideration the possible psychological problems as well as understanding that only serious work leads to long-term changes.

The process of change can be formed gradually.

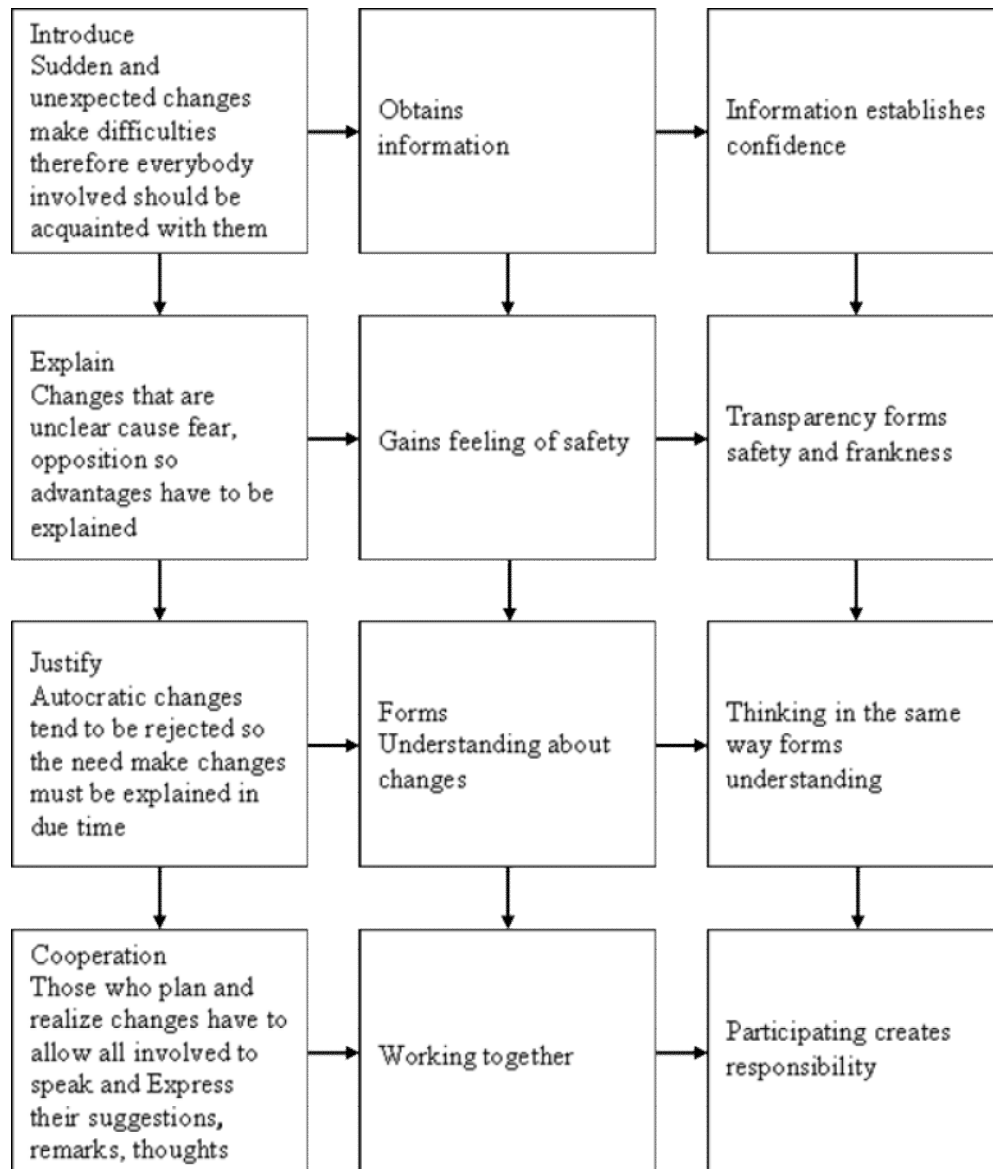


Figure 2. Conditions about process of changes.

Systems- thinking is the process of understanding how things influence one another other within a whole. In nature systems thinking examples include ecosystems in which various elements such as air, water, movement, plant and animals work together to

survive or perish. In organizations, systems consist of people, structures, and processes that work together to make an organization healthy or unhealthy. In To-Gather it is about linking society, young people and learning strategies. How do learners learn to learn? What's the best way to learn? That's why we work with learning routes and steps. That's why we use social constructivism to let the learner design his own world. Systems thinking has been defined as an approach to problem solving, by viewing "problems" as parts of an overall system, rather than reacting to specific part, outcomes or events and potentially contributing to further development of unintended consequences. Systems thinking is not one thing but a set of habits or practices within a framework that is based on the belief that the component, parts of a system can best be understood in the context of relationships with each other and with other systems, rather than in isolation. Systems thinking focuses on cyclical rather than linear cause and effect.

Why is systems-thinking so important? Young people learn to know the worlds as a network, a system in which everything is connected to everything. They understand their own role and become conscious of their view on this dynamic system. It may help to handle the busload of information and to be able to really solve problems and not only to concentrate on the symptoms. The result may be that they are becoming constructors of the system in cooperation with others.

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