Paris

Participants

- Mrs Florence DUPOUY (France)
- Mr Jose-Maria AGUILERA CARRASCO (Spain)
- Mrs Snezhana BLAZHEVA (Bulgaria)
- Mrs Rosalynd BOYCE (United Kingdom)
- Mr Gordon BREI (Czech Republic)
- Mr Nicanor GARCIA FERNANDEZ (Spain)
- Mrs Gabriela KORMANCOVA (Slovakia)
- Mr Robert LAIC (Rumania)
- Mrs Kristine LANGSTRUP, (Denmark)
- Mr Ian LYNCH (United Kingdom)
- Mrs Zuzanna NICOLAJEW (Poland)
- Mr Michael O'ROURKE (Ireland)
- Mrs Elisavet TSIMPLIDOU (Greece)
- Mrs Branka VUK (Croatia)

Link to [1]**TLM flyer pdf**



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A short video illustration of the visit

Draft report

Link to Google spreadsheet with examples of partner good practice. [2]

Findings

Summary of main findings

1. There is more in common between the approaches of participating countries and their broad policy related to the use of ICT to enable student autonomy than there are differences.
2. Where there are differences they are more likely to be due to limitation in implementation due to large differences in the available resources than in aspiration or approach.
3. The examples witnessed and described demonstrate the extent to which learner autonomy can be supported by ICT but some significant changes will have to take place in the pedagogical approach if this is to be translated into routine mainstream practice across the curriculum.
4. The level of understanding of the changes in technology that have taken place recently is the single most important variable at all levels from senior leadership to classroom teachers.
5. The delegates described and witnessed much that is excellent. This has to be seen in terms of the nature of a self-selecting group and can not be treated as a typical sample of the European school and college population.
6. There are concerns in the group about the potential widening of the gap between the best practice observed and and the weakest practice in relation to learner autonomy.
7. The balance between "what technology is good at" and "what people are good at" is just more important than the dichotomy of either or.
8. Places of learning are likely to become increasingly more diverse than the current concept of the school building as a cathedral of knowledge.

2.1 Approaches taken by participating countries in relation to ICT supporting learner autonomy.

- Delegate presentations demonstrated a wide range of expertise, experiences and interests. These include using ICT to support special needs education, using cloud based computing to share resources such as blogs and videos and using technology to support whole class learning with learners leading. The hosts provided an insight into the French education systems including the schools inspectorate and the elements of centralised and decentralised provision.

- Some partner approaches are remarkably similar. The UK partner demonstrated competence based assessment that is the subject of a LDV TOI project and the College Garcia-Lorca junior high school demonstrated a very similar approach to mathematics teaching that had been developed independently. The use of blogging by teachers as a way of providing learners with course materials was demonstrated by the Spanish partners and student blogs as evidence of assessment by the UK. Several partners were using Moodle to schedule courses that could be accessed by learners outside formal curriculum time. All partners were familiar with whole class interactive learning technologies and these are widespread even if unevenly distributed due to equipment costs. All agree that for supporting learner autonomy, it is not just the technology that matters but how it is used. The approach must centre on learner autonomy and not the technologies themselves which are mostly transient and can be used without necessarily making the learner any more self-sufficient.

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- Visits were made to two schools for children with special needs. One for mental disabilities and the other for physical disabilities. Although all participating countries use specialist institutions for learners with special needs there was consensus that there is a shift towards integration of learners in mainstream schools, particularly those with physical disabilities. In all countries, parents are involved in the decisions about the type of institution that the learner will attend and also in their individualised education plans. There is no doubt that assistive technologies enable greater independence for learners and there was no disagreement about this. Probably the most significant issue is in costs related to implementation. In terms of learner autonomy beyond physical limitations there are the same issues in terms of teaching and learning styles and learning how to learn. In general, smaller class sizes and the use of assistive technologies add an extra dimension of complexity when compared to mainstream learners in terms of learner autonomy.

- The Lycee Suger is a vocational school that is in the process of being refurbished and extended to provide a state of the art environment for multimedia productions including digital film, animation and audio. This provision is alongside a more general subject entitlement for the majority. The school located at the heart of one of the most deprived parts of France and the investment of around 25 million Euro provides learning to students from the the whole of France but with a majority from the vicinity of Paris and a small minority from other countries. Relevant industrial partners are within easy reach and they will provide work experience as well as visiting experts. This has some similarities with the original UK CTC programme but for older students and with a much more specialist focus on film production. 25 million Euro would be considered unaffordable for a single school in many of the partner countries but a focus for student autonomy in the digital tools commonly used in related industries is a policy aspect shared by all partners,

- Students spoke well of their experiences and what they learn, some in English as well as French and Spanish. The school provides progression routes directly into employment and to further study. This strong linkage between learning and the world of work gained the strong approval of the group. Learners might, for example, go on to study digital audio engineering at university providing an academic as well as a vocational pathway. To enter the school, there is an interview and prospective students are expected to show "passion" for the subject and a high degree of commitment to hard work rather than to bring particular skills. This is another common aspect with the UK CTC programme of the 1990s. Learners will be expected to work long hours similar to the work place and up to 70 hours a week at pressured times to meet production targets. There was some discussion as to whether these demands might exclude some of those that are the most deprived in the locality in favour of more motivated learners from outside.

- In general the school was considered to be very impressive but the cost-benefit equation would need careful scrutiny particularly in less economically advantaged countries. Small classes mean that teaching costs will be high to an even greater extent than would be the case from the density of deployment of high value equipment and generous accommodation. It is unlikely that the exact approach could be widely replicated in support of autonomous learning across partner countries but some aspects might be.

- The Cite des Metiers provides a counselling approach to solving human problems from domestic strife to gaining employment. It makes use of ICT and has a focus on learner autonomy. It is complementary to traditional schools acting as a community resource and raises the question of where learning should take place. Although delegates have aspects of similar provision through for example libraries, citizen's advice bureaus and employment agencies the approach is unique to the Cite des Metiers philosophy

2.2 Challenges faced in implementing policies related to the use of ICT in supporting autonomous learning.

- The first challenge is to develop a shared understanding of what autonomous learning

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means? Is it a child sitting at a computer responding to a set of instructions? Does it require creativity and original use of technological tools? Can the use of an interactive whiteboard be considered autonomous learning when the technology is designed for groups rather than individuals? Is a learner more autonomous than others if they can support their learning fully using free resources from the internet? There are clearly degrees of autonomy and therefore progression pathways to become autonomous so perhaps a better challenge is to understand how degrees of autonomy might be developed progressively in individual learners. This challenge is beyond the scope of a study visit to resolve. It requires a mix of teaching and learning strategies allied to the ICT context and some method of evaluation to know when such progress in autonomous learning has been achieved

- Funding is an important challenge divided into two aspects, equipment and human resources. Equipment was identified much more prominently by delegates from Eastern Europe than from UK, Spain and Denmark. At a fundamental level, without ready and reliable access to technology, autonomous use can not be started or at best can only be provided for a small minority of users and/or time. However, this is not the entire story since there are many examples of poorly used equipment when teachers are not prepared so that they can change the way they teach. Teacher training and continuing professional development are expensive and so funding - or lack of it has an effect here too.

- Many children are already autonomous learners to at least some degree when using ICT outside school. They use mobile telephones routinely and they often have accounts on social networking sites at ages below what is strictly legal. Yet many schools will ban mobile phones and many of the web sites that children use outside. It is a real challenge to reconcile the different attitudes to technology that permeate society, particularly the traditional controls related to didactic teaching methods and a largely knowledge based assessment culture. Part of the problem of cost of hardware could be resolved by allowing personal mobile technologies into school but there are many complex issues to resolve.

2.3 Effective and innovative solutions

1. Developing a shared vision of how progress towards fully autonomous learning can be achieved (All)
2. Competence based learning as the focus for learner autonomy (UK, Fr,)
3. Blogging as a means of providing learner resources and supporting learner autonomy (Es)
4. Blogging as a means of provision of learner evidence for attainment (UK)
5. Use of assistive technologies to compensate for physical disabilities (Fr, UK, Gk, Cz)
6. Increased emphasis on learners as creators of their own content and content for others (Web 2.0) (UK)
7. Integration of professional development with moderation feedback from sampling learners' work (UK)
8. Increased use of open source software and Creative Commons content to reduce costs (ES, FR, UK)
9. Coherent strategies to move to the web as the platform to prepare children for the future rather than the past and to reduce equipment and maintenance costs.
10. Teaching responsibility rather than blocking web sites (DK, UK)

2.4 Assessment of the transferability of policies and practice.

Most of the practices that are heavily dependent on expensive equipment would be difficult to transfer to all because of budget constraints, The same is true for things that require an excessive amount of teacher training, not only due too cost but also due to the need to take teachers away fro their learners for long periods. practices that can use cloud based freely available tools and that can support incremental takeup have the best chance of more universal take up.

3. Creating networks of experts, building partnerships for future projects.

Possible cooperative activities

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- Developing a shared vision for progression in learner autonomy (Comenius/LDV parternership)
- ECVET/EQF methods applied to the subjects of the high school curriculum (LDV TOI)
- Using moderation feedback as a method for training teachers in assessment for learning (Grundtvig)
- Developing the scope of on-line publishing as a means of motivating learning (any)
- Developing a network focused on progression in learner autonomy. (LDV networks)

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