



TRAINING OF SCHOOL TEACHERS AND MANAGERS

E-STEP Training at the International Summer School 2015

A dedicated workshop on parental engagement was organized in the frame of ODS Summer School 2015. Thirty four teachers from several European countries participated in this event.

Steps for school innovation

The Open Discovery International Space Summer School 2015 was organized by Ellinogermaniki Agogi, in Mati, Greece, from July 12 to July 17th 2015. The aim was to support school innovation and to train school leaders and leading members of school staff to promote the development of their schools into open learning communities, and thus improve the quality of all aspects of schooling.

To this direction, this year the Summer school addressed 3 par-

ticular areas that are viewed as key for school innovation:

- Training teachers in Educational design, with particular reference to Universal Design for Learning Principles.
- Opening the school to the community and engaging the parents.
- Introducing game-based learning elements in educational design and teaching.



An overarching goal was also to support creative thinking in order to promote all these three innovation components and develop even further teachers' educational design competences.

Parental engagement a key in school development

Parental engagement was also addressed as a key factor for school development and thus the

fourth day of the course focused on engaging the parents to schooling. It was a dedicated workshop, which examined perceptions about parental engagement, included teachers' presentations of good practices of parental engagement and hands-on activities for addressing any barriers in schools' and parents' partnerships. The practical objective of the workshop was to equip the participants with skills in order to effectively engage pupils' parents in their school activities and the implementation of their educational scenarios, so as to benefit in various ways, depending on the context and background of their schools.



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National Case Studies and Approaches in Parental Engagement

In the following we present exemplary case studies implemented in schools about parental engagement in several partner countries.

Case Study from Greece

Primary School of Highland Zone is located in the village of Aghios Leontas in the western, mountainous, side of the island Zakynthos. The village has 415 inhabitants and its location (26km) from the capital of the island makes the school hard to be accessed by pupils who come from other neighbouring villages. The school has 6 members in its staff, 4 General Education teachers, 1 Physical Education teacher and 1 English teacher. Multiculturalism is the main characteristic of the local community, due to the popularity of Zakynthos as a touristic destination, which has resulted in a big number of mixed marriages. The school principal, Mrs Xanthie Chouliara, has organised several events in the school in order to bridge the gap between pupils' and parents' different nationalities, cultures and languages, which were welcomed by parents and had very positive results. This has been also welcomed by the majority of parents who are familiar with technology and online communication. The school is generally active in addressing issues of variability and conflict resolution and was granted an excellence award at national level among 1035 schools for a project against racism. This news

was also congratulated and disseminated by the Parents' Union in Zakynthos (http://enosigoneon.blogspot.gr/2013/12/blog-post_4.html).

The school is also active in using technology, to the extent that the school equipment allows this, and E-mail is used on a daily basis to update the parents on school activities, curriculum issues and homework. Their E-STEP activity focused on E-safety and extended in 8 two-hour training sessions for parents that were delivered by 3 teachers.

The key priorities they set were:

- Raising pupils' and parents' awareness on the potential dangers when using the internet.
- Informing parents and pupils on cases of cyber crime and digital terrorism and how to deal with them.
- Dealing with addiction to facebook and over-exposure of personal information.

The overarching approach was that technology and the internet have numerous benefits, however parents and pupils should be adequately informed on how to protect themselves from dangers. Through the seminars they organized in school they also intended to enhance parents' overall digital literacy and specific skills, and to actively involve them in an ongoing strategy of the school for safety on the internet. Other stakeholders were also involved

such as the Greek Cyber Crime Unit

(<http://www.cyberkid.gov.gr/>)

and the local School Counsellor. Google hang-out was used for parents who could not attend the face-to-face meetings, which were recorded and openly accessible on Youtube. The training materials they used in their meetings with parents were also posted on the Greek digital community of E-STEP on the ODS portal. The activity was also disseminated through the national e-safety organization. The main benefit that was reported from the overall activity was that the school adopted a holistic approach towards e-safety and parents participated as a very active target-group in it, since they were persuaded about the importance of e-safety both for them and for their children.

Case Study from Austria

The school is one of the basic and most important educational institutions of our society. The private new middle school and high school Marianum Steinberg in Burgenland in Austria try to offer their pupils the best possible education, motivated by the Christian view of man and in cooperation with all school partners. The school do not want the pupils to just give the legally prescribed substance, but to prepare them for secondary schools, in their profession and later stages of life.



That is they attach great importance to holistic education.

The parents are a mainstay of the school partnership. Together, the school strive for the welfare of their students. The goal is to talk to parents and teachers, better learn to know each other, learn mutual support, and information exchange of needs and ideas.

The learning management platform LMS.at was expanded into an interactive communication and information platform for parents (https://lms.at/lmsteam/download/file/info_extern.pdf). On this platform, information can become recurrent questions, and problem solving suggestions, retrieved and entered automatically. In further development it should be available for communication between teachers and parents. The new communication technologies (circular mail, digital music books, chat, news, calendar, etc) enable parents to support the learning process of their children more effectively. The challenge is to initiate this type of communication and make it so that parents recognize the benefits and also accept.

The introduction of LMS.at platform is part of the school development and is based on the proven concept of implementing the LMS.at platform. From the use of the LMS.at platform in addition to the teachers and students also benefit the parents and the school management.

Parents receive an access and safety training to the LMS.at platform. Parents support their children in the learning process and discuss these regularly with the help of the tools offered by the LMS.at platform.

Case Study from UK

Wilson Stuart is a Special School catering for 173 pupils aged 2-25 years. The school is located in Perry Common, Erdington in the north of Birmingham in the West Midlands of England. Some pupils have additional difficulties including sensory impairment, learning difficulties, communication difficulties or complex medical conditions. The school has outstanding purpose built facilities and highly trained, enthusiastic and committed staff. This combination enables them to provide the specialised individual programmes required by our pupils. Wilson Stuart nursery accommodates up to 12 children. We have separate Primary and Secondary Departments. The sixth form programme (for young people aged 16-18) is supported by The Premier League and Aston Villa Football Club. The school has a classroom at Aston Villa and students complete placements at the Club. September 2013 saw the launch of a vocational programme for students aged 19-25, which has been developed in partnership with University College Birmingham. The last 5 inspections by the English national inspectorate, OFSTED, have all resulted in an 'Outstanding' report the latest

taking place in February 2015. We are very proud of our achievements and strive daily to maintain our excellent standards. "The leadership and management of the school are outstanding at all levels. The work with parents and numerous community partners is first class." – Ofsted February 2015.

Involvement in the ESTEP was driven by the Deputy Head teacher, Chris Wilson and the ICT co-ordinator Aron Davies as an outcome of a consultation with parents in June 2014 that indicated that parents wanted better, more efficient communication with the school.

Wilson Stuart decided to make use of Twitter to enable parents to better understand the day to day of their children so that they could support learning at home in more purposeful ways.

Case Study from Bulgaria

51 Secondary School "Elissaveta Bagryana" in Sofia is a school with rich history and traditions. It is 53 years old and is situated just 2 km away from the ideal center of the city. From 1991 an "Arts" profile is studied in the school and many activities are oriented to arts and creativity. Currently school has almost 1200 students from first to twelfth grade. The school team consists of 85 people, including 70 teaching staff. There are also 15 children with special educational needs for which a special care is taken.



The school participates in the E-STEP project from the very beginning and has already hosted two workshops. Due to the active involvement and participation of school staff four new Facebook pages were created by teachers (in addition to the main one "School 51") where there is an active dialogue and exchange of views between parents and teachers. The pages are as follows:

- "initial stage" - <https://www.facebook.com/51sou>
- "junior" - <https://www.facebook.com/progimnasia51sou>
- "high school" - <https://www.facebook.com/gymnasium51sou>
- "healthy life" - <https://www.facebook.com/Здравословен-начин-на-живот-за-ученици-родители-и-учители-на-51-COY-317462978413943/timeline/>

For the past period daily attendance doubled every three months to reach in September 2015 respectively 420, 280, 240, 180 visits per day. In 24 of the 42 classes, parents and class teachers themselves created closed Facebook groups to exchange information. The number of absences between the first and the second term decreased by 6% and the average grade in school increased by 7 percentage points

due to the increased interaction between teachers and parents and broader involvement of parents in schooling activities. These numbers are real proof of the dedication of the teaching staff in parental engagement issues and the improvement of school results due to the coordinated effort and the use of new innovative ICT and social media.

Case Study from Ireland

Killinarden Sacred Heart Senior National School (SNS), a primary level school, is located in West Dublin, in a large urban area. The school is a 'senior' national or primary school, so it operates from third class to sixth. There are 290 pupils, with each year having three classes, each class at that level denoted by the teacher's name rather than being classified by number. There are 12 classes in total.

The school has been using Edmodo, the educational social media tool, with teachers and students. The school has also begun using Class Dojo. The school is a participant in the Digital Schools of Distinction programme.

Edmodo began last year with the older children in sixth class. Students took to it immediately, loving the new way of working. As it has proved successful the use of Edmodo is being extended, with the teacher, Kevin, who led it

previously with 6th class now working with the new intake in 3rd class, where it is hoped that the children will become familiar with this social media tool at an earlier stage.

As part of the E-STEP action the school introduced some of the parents of the children in 6th class to Edmodo as viewers of the activities. The initial response gave good feedback, however as the religious cycle of confirmations began in the late spring for students, the time was limited and active feedback dropped off. With the expanded use of Edmodo in the school, it is planned to encourage and engage more parents to participate with it.

The other Social Media engagement with parents has been through Class Dojo. This operates as a behavioural rewards system in App form, and allows texts with parents. Through this involvement parents could see the homework being set, and were better able to support their children. This has proven successful, as they liked this option. Social media engagement with parents was slow to start, however the variety and attractiveness of the social media tools being used is proving effective and will hopefully grow.



E-STEP at the 8th International Conference in Open and Distance Learning 2015

The conference about **Innovation and Research in Open & Distance Learning and in Information Communications Technology** will take place from 6th to 8th of November 2015 in Greece.

The overall conference is organized by the Greek Network for Open and Distant Learning and the Greek Open University and the workshops and presentations of E-STEP are organised by Ellinogermaniki Agogi.

The E-STEP conference will be on the 7th of November 2015 in the framework of the International Conference in ODL. Schools will present case studies about their implementation of social media in parental engagement.

You may register on the first day of the Conference, either in person at the Secretariat or via bank transaction. Further information can be found at the following link

<http://www.openet.gr/8th-international-conference-in-open-and-distance-learning-icodl-2015/>.



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Open Classroom Conference, 18-21 September 2015, Athens, Greece – Call for Contributions

The co-organised **Open Discovery Space** conference in the series of EDEN Open Classroom Conferences has the scope of "Transforming Schools into Innovative Learning Organisations".

<http://eden.ea.gr/>

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Web-Links

The following Web-Links refer to interesting sites which are important collections of information for everyone who is interested in parental engagement:

E-STEP on the ODS Portal: <http://portal.opendiscovery.space.eu/node/831244>

European Parents Association: <http://euparents.eu/>

Working with E-STEP from the Birmingham City University:

<https://workingwithestep.wordpress.com/>



e-Safety and Safer Internet

In many activities parents are involved via the web and social media the topic e-safety and safer internet is a very important topic. We tried to collect some weblinks mostly from the participating countries Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Ireland and UK, where teachers and parents can find appropriate information and ideas about safe use of the internet.

Safer Internet Greece: <http://www.saferinternet.gr/>

Greek e-safety organisation:

<http://www.saferinternet.gr/index.php?parentobjId=Page157&objId=Category307&childobjid=Category307>

Safer Internet Austria: <https://www.saferinternet.at/>

Safenet Bulgaria: <http://www.safenet.bg/>

E-Safety for Kids, Austria: <https://www.werdedigital.at/2014/06/e-safety-for-kids-linz-2014/>

Office of Internet Safety, Ireland: <http://www.internetsafety.ie/>

Webwise Ireland: <http://www.webwise.ie/>

UK Safer Internet Center: <http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/>

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a free to download messenger app for smartphones. WhatsApp uses the internet to send messages, images, audio or video. The service is very similar to text messaging services however, because WhatsApp uses the internet to send messages, the cost of using WhatsApp is significantly less than texting. It is popular with teenagers because of features like group chatting, voice messages and location sharing. Some schools use this messenger application to engage the parents in schooling.

Parents, Explainer: What is WhatsApp?: <http://www.webwise.ie/parents/explainer-whatsapp/>

WhatsApp erlauben – ja oder nein? (WhatsApp yes or no?) Tipps for parents

<https://www.saferinternet.at/news/news-detail/article/whatsapp-tipps-fuer-eltern-und-lehrende-353/>



Parents Academy

In order to motivate the online interaction between parents and teachers, the partners need to develop an approach that demonstrates the value of using such a Web 2.0 tool for the promotion of parent-teacher collaboration. Providing to parents and teachers interesting material on contemporary related issues (such as internet safety, bullying, etc.), as well as innovative good practices and ideas has the potential to attract the interest of targeted stakeholders. Such material is already available on the ODS portal, in a section called "Parents' academy" <http://portal.opendiscoveryspace.eu/parents-academy> and will be also introduced to the pilot schools so that they promote this to the parents.

Supporting materials and services for schools

Trainer's and Trainee's Guides

The trainees guide accompanies the E-STEP training framework and is supported by a trainer's guide and a suite of learning activities. Together these resources will support schools to develop, implement and evaluate strategies to engage parents more actively and effectively in the work of your school through use of social networking technologies. Further information at E-STEP website under http://www.estep-project.eu/?page_id=257 (see D2.2 Initial Trainees' Guide)

e-Twinning Kit

The E-STEP project prepares also an "e-twinning Kit" that will be made available for future use for schools participating in e-twinning projects.



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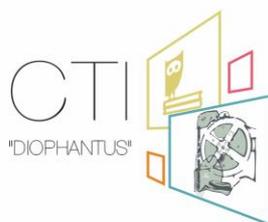
<https://www.estep-project.eu>

Project Coordination:

Computer Technology Institute & Press "Diophantus"

<http://www.cti.gr/en/>

<http://westgate.gr>



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