THINKING Classroom

MISSION STATEMENT

Thinking Classroom serves as an international forum of exchange among teachers, teacher educators and others interested in promoting democratic teaching practices. The publication encourages professional development, research and reflection. *Thinking Classroom* features articles that foster learner-centered teaching strategies including critical and creative thinking, active and cooperative learning, and problem solving. The journal also publishes articles about the institutional structures that support these practices.

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ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION

The International Reading Association is a nonprofit service organization dedicated to improving reading instruction and promoting the lifetime reading habit. The Association publishes professional books and five professional print journals: *The Reading Teacher* (about learners ages 1–12), the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, Reading Research Quarterly, Lectura y Vida* (in Spanish), and *Thinking Classroom* (also published in Russian as *Peremena*). The Association also publishes the electronic professional journal *Reading Online* (http://www.readingonline.org) and a bimonthly newspaper for members, *Reading Today.*

THINKING Classroom

A Journal of Reading, Writing and Critical Reflection

Departments

Features

Letter from the Editor

The end of the old year and the beginning of the new is traditionally a time to reflect on our lives and work, on what we have gained and what we have lost. At least there is such a tradition in Lithuania—all the family members and dear friends sit around the table and talk together.

For almost three years, *Thinking Classroom/Peremena* has served as a kind of holiday table for the community of the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking project. It is a place for people from different parts of the world to meet and share common ideas, values, and approaches. The history of the journal has been both interesting and challenging. It seems strange to say "history" to refer to such a short time, but for those involved it has been a quite remarkable time.

Three years ago, we could hardly imagine how the journal would look, who would produce it, what perspective it might have. The geographic area was so big, the traditions and cultures so different. How could we create something interesting for all of them? We had plenty of good ideas and good will, but not so much experience in publication.

Now we can laugh as we remember how the inaugural issue was published, but in fact it was a nightmare. We were lost among the different submissions. Many of them required not just careful editing but extensive rewriting.

Fortunately, that first issue was not the last, and the journal has found a loyal following.

Its articles are shared with colleagues and cited in other publications. Some have already become "best sellers," used in seminars and lectures. Readers value *Thinking Classroom's/Peremena's* international character, accessible style, openness to dialogue, and practical orientation. Teachers find ideas that can apply to their own classrooms and improve their professional competence.

Since the very beginning steps, *Thinking Classroom/Peremena* has gone through two significant stages. As an RWCT project journal, *Thinking Classroom/Peremena* published many interesting things and had an enthusiastic audience, but it was dangerous to live in such narrow surroundings—we might end up reading and writing only for ourselves. So at the beginning of 2001, the Editorial Advisory Board and Editorial Associates decided to shift to a broader perspective. The new mission was to be an "international forum of exchange among teachers, teacher educators, and others interested in promoting democratic teaching practices."

Part of this mission has involved working with new authors to develop their skills, which is quite a complicated process. A peer review system has been added to help the editors, and the reviewers contribute invaluable professional insights and recommendations. Authors from outside the RWCT project have been attracted to the journal, and more and more of their work has been included, taking the journal step by step toward our new vision.

Last July *Thinking Classroom/Peremena* entered a third stage of its development: It became an official publication of the International Reading Association. What does this mean? New challenges and new possibilities. I have no doubt that, as part of the Association, our journal will find new friends, colleagues, readers, and authors to join us at the holiday table. As we meet our new challenges and share fresh ideas around this table, we can see that, by following our new direction, we are not losing family members, we are gaining friends.

Daiva Penkauskiene

What's New?

Albania:
Opening Borders, Changing Minds

A regional workshop on higher education, "Opening Borders, Changing Minds," was held in Albania 23–25 October 2002. The workshop was organized by the Center for Democratic Education (CDE) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science of Albania and the State University of Elbasan "Aleksandër Xhuvani." Support was provided by the Open Society Institute, International Reading Association, East-East Program Budapest, Tempus Program Albania, and Catholic Relief Services Albania.

As stated in the Bologna Declaration (19 June 1999), "The importance of education and co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies is universally acknowledged as paramount, the more so in view of the situation in South East Europe." The regional workshop was intended to promote cooperation among professionals and the reform of higher education in the region.

Participants in the workshop came from the Albanian Ministry of Education and Science, University of Montenegro, University of Pristine (Kosovo), Kosova Education Center, University of Tirana, University of Shkodra, University of Elbasan, University of Korça, University of Vlora, and University of Gjirokastra in Albania. Speakers at the plenary session were Charles Temple, Ph.D., co-director of the RWCT project; Dr. Bardhyl Musai, executive director of Centre for Democratic Education; Dr. Vasil Qano, Director of Tempus Program Albania; and Dr. Eduard Andoni, Albanian Deputy Minister for Higher Education.

The city of Elbasan, where the workshop was held, is known for its traditions in education, culture, and science. Aleksandër Xhuvani University was the first national teacher-training institution in Albania, and has taken a leading role in the critical thinking initiative in that country.

Czech Republic:
Rainbow Conference

In the Czech republic, as in many other countries, there are several innovative educational reform programs with similar aims, built on the same pedagogical philosophy. While they benefit by preserving their individuality, cooperation among these programs is crucial, both for the organizations themselves and for the schools and teachers who participate in them. To foster such cooperation, three organizations—Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking, Step by Step Czech Republic, and Health Promoting Schools—held a common conference in October 2002. The three-day event offered workshops, plenary meetings, and discussions. At the end of the conference a declaration was published calling for changes in both the teacher-training system and in-service professional development for practicing teachers.

Latvia: Second RWCT Conference

The second conference of the RWCT project in Latvia was held in October. The main aim of the conference was to evaluate the achievements and strengths of the project and ensure further dissemination of the program.

Plenary presentations were given by SFL program coordinator Irena Freimane and Ministry of Education and Science representative Zinta Valdmane. Keynote speakers were Alan Crawford, professor of California State University and RWCT volunteer in Kyrgyzstan and Guatemala; and Faye Brownly, educational consultant in Canada and RWCT volunteer in Latvia. RWCT Board members Inga Pavula and Sandra Kalnina acquainted the conference participants with textbooks and study materials published in Latvia that use the critical thinking framework.

Baltic Region: The Role and Influence of NGOs on Higher Education Reform

Representatives of schools and NGOs from Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Byelorussia, and Kaliningrad region assembled on 21–25 August in Trakai (Lithuania) to share their experiences and to discuss possibilities of mutual cooperation. This summer gathering to discuss current issues in education has become an annual tradition in the Baltic States since the first such session in Estonia in 2000. Eigil Kjaergaard, head of the Danish Norre Djurs Youth School and a lecturer at the Lithuanian College for the Promotion of Democracy, led a two-day workshop on "Development of Democratic Society." The participants developed schemes for cooperation on multicultural education, higher and secondary education, and

European Union projects. Sponsors of the gathering were the Open Society Fund Lithuania, "East-East" program; Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science; and Lithuanian College for the Promotion of Democracy.

Children and Books: A Worldwide Challenge—IBBY Celebrates 50 Years

The International Board for Books on Young People (IBBY) celebrated its 28th Congress in Basel, Switzerland, from 29 September to 3 October 2002. At this special 50th anniversary of IBBY, special guests of honor included the Empress of Japan, the First Lady of Egypt, and the former president of Switzerland. Each gave a moving presentation on the importance of reading and books in their personal lives and their countries.

The 2002 Hans Christian Andersen Awards were presented to author Aidan Chambers and illustrator Quentin Blake of England. Often called the "Little Nobel Prize," this biennial award honors lifetime contributions to children's literature worldwide. The IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award was presented to the director of the project "Por el Derecho a Leer/For the Right to Read" of CEDILIJ (Centro de Difusión e Investigación de Literatura Infantil y Juvenil) in Cordoba, Argentina. Speakers included award-winning children's authors, illustrators, and translators as well as professors of children's literature from many countries. The 450 international delegates represented a microcosm of today's diverse and changing world.

The next IBBY Congress will be hosted by South African IBBY, in Cape Town, 5–9 September 2004. For a full report on the Basel Congress and other information about IBBY, see http://www.ibby.org/.

Tanzania: Active Learning in the Classroom

In 2001 and 2002, International Reading Association, by invitation of UNESCO and the Tanzanian Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), organized a pilot program, "Capacity Building in the Teaching of Reading," for trainers of primary school teachers. IRA volunteers Charles Temple, Codruta Temple, James Wile, and George Hunt conducted the workshops. In June 2002, the Tanzanian MoEC invited the team back to conduct research and follow-up visits with workshop participants and to propose a larger program.

The Tanzania program is one of several being used to develop a model for preparation of teachers of early literacy skills. Best practices are also being drawn from RWCT experiences in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and Latin America, and from recent activities with the Children's Book Project (Tanzania) and Read Educational Trust (South Africa). For more information about these programs, please contact International Reading Association's International Development Division at intldev@reading.org.

United States: Award for International Reading Association's RWCT Program

In August 2002, the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) awarded one of its first-ever *Associations Make a Better World* awards to the International Reading Association. The award, in the category of Social Achievement, was in recognition of the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking program, and noted, "Operating in 28 countries worldwide, the RWCT program [has] trained 25,000 teachers who in turn have reached over 750,000 students worldwide."

The *Associations Make a Better World* awards recognize outstanding examples of association programs, projects, and activities that make a significant contribution to societies and economies worldwide.

International Reading Association: New Special Interest Group (SIG)

Interest in forming international partnerships to work on literacy issues is growing worldwide. International Reading Association volunteers and their professional colleagues in 29 countries with developing economies planted the seeds for such partnerships by implementing Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT). To support and expand such partnerships, International Partnerships for Critical Thinking & Active Learning: A Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association was recently created and approved by the Association's Board. The first meeting of the group was held in Edinburgh, Scotland last summer at the 19th World Congress on Reading. Those interested in joining should request an application for membership by e-mailing acr9944@earthlink.net

Look Who's Talking

THE QUESTION:

A lot of what we read in connection with our jobs is soon forgotten. What have you read recently in the field of education that has really made an impression on your thinking and your work?

Ulla-Britt Persson

Linkoping University, Sweden

Recently I read a report that compiled research about economic resources in schools: their impact on what goes on in the classroom and the pedagogical results of these activities. It demonstrates very clearly that the most important factor for children's learning in school is the TEACHER and her/his competence. Also important are teachers' opportunities for in-service training and support from leaders and authorities. The teacher is a much more important factor than, for instance, class size, although a combination of small groups and effective teachers seems to give the best results, especially in the lower grades and in socially disadvantaged areas. However, in most countries the number of well-trained and competent teachers is not sufficient for this optimal situation to occur. The authors also point out that there are several factors to take into consideration when school effectiveness is studied, and that policy makers often seem to concentrate on short-term rather than long-term effects.

The report is written in Swedish but refers to both Swedish and international research. The authors are educational researchers at Gothenburg University, and the report was commissioned by the Swedish National Agency for Education.

> Gustafsson, J-E., & Myrberg, E. (2002). *Ekonomiska resursers betydelse för pedagogiska resultat. Stockholm: Skolverket* [How economic resources influence pedagogical results].

Gerry Shiel

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St. Patrick's College, Dublin 9, Ireland

I recently read an article on assessing attitudes to reading by Michael McKenna, University of S. Georgia (U.S.A.) and his colleagues. The article outlines the importance of developing positive attitudes toward reading in children; and examines links between attitudes toward reading and reading achievement. Of particular interest was the steady decline in attitude toward recreational reading that was observed throughout the elementary school years, particularly among the least able readers. Also of interest was a gender difference in attitude toward reading recreational texts that favoured girls. The challenge that now faces educators in many countries is to find ways to encourage older children (and boys, in particular) to maintain positive attitudes toward reading both recreational and academic texts, and to build on their early interest in reading as they move towards adolescence.

> McKenna, M., Kear, D.J., & Ellsworth, R.A. (1995). Children's attitudes toward reading: A national survey. *Reading Research Quarterly*; 30, 934–956.

Maya David

Faculty of Languages and Linguistics
University of Malaya
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I read about Schema Theory years ago and was very taken by this theory. I religiously used it in the selection of texts for my reading classes. But more recently I have started questioning the use of the theory, especially in the light of my reading on cross-cultural communication and my teaching of courses like "Communication within and across Cultures." If we implicitly adhere to the concept of

the schema, how can we open up new world views to our learners?

I guess what I am saying is that when we make links between what we have read previously and what we have read recently, we can start thinking and questioning critically what we may have earlier accepted unreservedly. I now introduce texts beyond their known schema in order to open up new world views to my students.

Zuzana Srankova
Orava Association for Democracy in Education, Slovakia

Reading Thinking Classroom *is always a big treat for me, bringing inspiration from colleagues from other countries. I am also very pleased to say that our [Slovak national RWCT] journal* Notes *has become a great and constant source of my readings on education, with the writings of educators from all around Slovakia. Most of the authors are teachers who describe their practical experiences using innovative methods of teaching and learning to support critical thinking with their students. I am often amazed at the creativity of these teachers who keep building on the original ideas, and who have become a source of inspiration for others. Articles by university faculty cooperating with schoolteachers often offer excellent reading, providing the theoretical rationale to support the practical*

applications. Recently I especially enjoyed an article written by one of my colleagues that examined student attitudes toward the new teaching strategies. A brief survey among students at an elementary school in Eastern Slovakia showed that students do notice an innovative teacher, and they prefer instruction that encourages and enables active learning, rather than more traditional instruction. Students indicated that learning with the new methods is simply "more fun" and repeatedly said, "now I learn things quickly and remember them for a long time." I think this validates all our efforts.

Melina Porto
National University of La Plata Buenos Aires, Argentina

Reading Elizabeth Moje's article "'I teach students, not subjects': Teacher-student relationships as contexts for secondary literacy" in Reading Research Quarterly *was a turning point in my life as a teacher. At that time I worked—and I still do—in an environment that focuses on the grammatical and lexical accuracy of both oral and written student productions, with little concern for students' interests. This article shifted my perspectives on teaching toward a humanist philosophical conception, oriented toward my students' needs and concerns. It encouraged me to*

make an effort to understand what it meant for my students to be successful in relation to their frames of reference. Since then, I have focused on instruction that puts the emphasis on meaning and making sense of things, not simply achieving and getting good grades. I try to see my students as individuals rather than as subjects, and make serious efforts to build relationships. Although I read this piece quite a long time ago, I feel it is still a driving force that guides my teaching practices.

Moje, E. (1996). "I teach students, not subjects": Teacher-student relationships as contexts for secondary literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly, 31,* 172–195.

A question for the next issue:
I hate it when students ask me, "Is this going to be on the exam?" The implication is that if it's not, they won't bother to learn it! I want them to see their learning in the context of larger, personal goals. How can I help them set their own goals?

Readers are invited to respond to this question, or to suggest questions for future issues. The editors will select items for printing. Please e-mail your answers and suggestions to: bmichaels@reading.org

Classroom Tales

Communicating With Life:
Special Needs Education Benefits
From Internet Access in Central Asia

David Mikosz

Children at Boarding School #61 for the Hearing Impaired in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, are studying a new subject this year: computer science. This is due to a unique combination of a commercial company's generous donation, a U.S. Department of State-funded Internet program, and one very dedicated volunteer, Amina Shevelkova. As a result of this cooperation, local education officials were able to create and fund a new computer-science teaching position at the school.

This is not a unique event—in Central Asia, educators from a variety of different environments have shown an impressive ability to incorporate the Internet into their curricula. Even more remarkable is that these stories have occurred in schools that have been virtually ignored since the collapse of the Soviet Union: special education facilities for the deaf. In locations ranging from the east of Kazakhstan to the south of Uzbekistan and as far west as reclusive Turkmenistan, the Internet has been used to further the educational progress of the deaf.

The disabled typically account for ten percent of a country's population. Given Central Asia's estimated population of 60 million, this means at least six million people. That makes the region's disabled population larger than the entire populations of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, or Turkmenistan. In Soviet times, the disabled were usually given only vocational education and were hidden from society—the deaf in particular were known for making light bulbs. One of our program's pioneer deaf trainers from Uzbekistan has faced an extremely large hurdle in finding a U.S. university that will accept his technical-school qualifications as evidence of sufficient higher education. This is an area of education reform that needs more attention.

This article, however, will focus on three particular successes of the Internet Access and Training Program (IATP) in Central Asia. The IATP is administered by the U.S.-based nonprofit International Research & Exchanges (IREX) Board and receives its funding from the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs. The IATP currently has 49 access centers throughout Central Asia—the program also exists in the other regions of the former Soviet Union.

> *In Central Asia, educators from a variety of different environments have shown an impressive ability to incorporate the Internet into their curricula*

The lessons from these schools suggest that the Internet can greatly affect the education of the disabled, and that local teachers are capable of incorporating the Internet into their curriculum. In this article, we will look at Samarkand School #61 in Uzbekistan, the Almaty Boarding School for the Deaf in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and the Ashgabat School for the Hearing Impaired in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.

Samarkand, Uzbekistan

For School #61 in Samarkand, the story begins in June 2001, when the IATP regional program manager met a Hewlett Packard representative at an awards ceremony in Tashkent. After some discussion, HP agreed to donate a computer to Boarding School #61. IATP administered that donation, agreeing to install the computer at the school and connect it to the Internet via a dial-up connection to IATP's Internet access center in Samarkand.

School #61 was established in 1946 and has 298 students, between the ages of five and 17. The students live on the school grounds and are supported by 182 employees (62 teachers and 56 tutors). The staff had no previous experience with computers and lacked the money to purchase them themselves. Unfortunately, the school's original plans to use the donated computer stalled because of a lack of qualified experts and the timing of the donation—it was summertime, so school was out of session and experienced computer trainers were unavailable.

Things began to change in September 2001, at the start of the new school year, when Amina Shevelkova participated in the Central Asian-wide volunteer event "IATP in the CommunITy." As she helped out at the IATP public access center, she met children from School #61 who were very curious about the computer at their school. As Amina wrote,

> After the event I asked myself, "What if I conduct computer training for deaf children?" I graduated from the Samarkand State University with a bachelor's degree in applied mathematics, so my education allowed me to teach. I lived near where the boarding school #61 is situated. I lacked experience in training of hearing impaired children of course, but I wanted to help these children. I constantly thought about it. I visited the boarding school several times. After talking with the IATP Samarkand Public Access Center administrators and also with the administration of the boarding school, I decided to start training. From the very first lesson I was convinced that I had made a correct choice. It is impossible to express how glad the children were when I arrived, and my work gave me a huge moral satisfaction.

Thus, a unique partnership was born.

After beginning her teaching, Shevelkova began the more difficult task of learning sign language, which was made easier with the assistance of several of the school's teachers. Shevelkova found teaching computer use to be very challenging and had to begin with the basics: Skills such as turning the computer on and off and using a mouse were unknown to her students. But by the end of the year, her students had drawn pictures, created documents, and filled in tables. In her words, they became "real users."

The school administration was so impressed with Shevelkova's classes that they created a new teaching position: computer science teacher. In the fall of 2002, Shevelkova began regular employment at School #61. She passionately believes that for deaf students, the Internet is an invaluable tool. As she observed, "With the Internet, deaf children can receive the latest news; (Uzbek) TV does not provide sign-language translation of the broadcasts. Also, the Internet allows them to communicate with other people and raise their level of knowledge without experiencing any psychological inconveniences."

Almaty, Kazakhstan

In Almaty, a similar story occurred on a larger scale. Here the story begins in November 2000, when the IATP sent a deaf trainer from Tashkent in Uzbekistan to the Almaty School for the Deaf. The deaf students became regular users of the IATP Public Access Center and two of their teachers participated in regular IATP courses. Over the next year, the school was able to get computers donated by local businesses and set up one of the first computer labs for deaf students in the former Soviet Union. After winning a small grant from the IATP, the school went on to create a website that defined in Russian sign language, for the first time, the technical terms needed to understand the Internet—such words as "browser," "host," or even "Internet" (a report on this project can be found on the BBC's website: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/sci/tech/1879158.stm).

Since that early success, the main catalyst behind the project, teacher Elena Mastyayeva, has found the subsequent

work difficult. She helps her colleagues use the Internet to find information to enlarge their libraries and pedagogical resources. But unfortunately, most of the work is still done by her. She sees the need to provide training for her colleagues, but this has proved challenging. As she noted, "Teachers have a great interest, but Internet work takes time, and not [just a] little (I mean their time and mine especially)." So she functions as a busy gateway to the Internet for her colleagues.

For the students, the Internet is an important and popular part of their education. The school offers both courses within its regular curriculum and special evening training programs for older students. According to Mastyayeva, the students start their computer instruction in the 5th grade as an optional course. But, as she noted, "children are very interested in this course and their attendance is great." Only later, during the 8th–10th grades, do they use their school webpage, which contains a considerable amount of information about the Internet. (The webpage for the school is http://www.sluh.freenet.kz.) Mastyayeva points out that at the beginning, the Internet is a particularly challenging medium for deaf students because the vocabulary in use online is much more complicated than what they are accustomed to from their textbooks.

The students who have undergone the Internet courses have clearly benefited from them. The first benefit is a clear response to the problem identified above: The students' vocabulary increases greatly as they educate themselves in order to be able to understand the content on the Internet. Several of the students have not only taken the courses but have also participated in training their peers. One group of students even traveled to the capital of Kazakhstan, Astana, to conduct training sessions there (http://www.iatp.kz/news/?sendnews=24). Mastyayeva characterizes the changes in these students: "Internet especially influences our trainers. Young trainers buy computers and exchange their news via e-mail. They become more interested, as we see by the fact that they ask lots of questions. They even ask us to give them

new and updated information. The trainers are very hardworking as they design webpages, create virus databases, etc. The principal of this evening school is pleasantly impressed with the children. She has told us that that was the first class in her career with such organized and well-prepared children."

But similar changes are also evident in many of the other students who have attended Internet courses. So it is fair to conclude that the Internet has allowed all the students opportunities to improve their skills.

The parents of the children have played a large role in their children's success as well. They have purchased the computers and paid for the Internet access for their children who attend the school. Indeed, Mastyayeva noted that several parents have chosen not to move to other cities because of the computer science facilities at the Almaty school—even in the glittering new capital of Astana, such facilities for deaf children are nonexistent. On a more personal level, several of the teachers have commented about how the behavioral problems of the students—often spoiled by their parents who do not know what to do with disabled children—have essentially vanished. The parents now know more concretely how they can assist their children—through the purchase of computers and Internet access. And these children, in the words of one teacher, "behave better—they think of the outside world much more now."

In summary, in Almaty it was again the work of one dedicated person, plus a combination of donations, IATP training and grants, that created real change for the deaf students. There are still problems: Elena Mastyayeva works almost alone as a gateway to the Internet, the equipment is getting old and there is simply not enough money for the school. But these latter two are problems that almost all teachers in Central Asia face. The reason this project works is because of people like Elena Mastyayeva. As she observed, "in all cases we are trying to do our best, sacrificing our time, life and even salaries, because the pain of our children is also our worst pain."

Ashgabat, Turkmenistan

The situation in Ashgabat is not as well developed as in other countries, but similar inferences can be drawn from our experiences there. Here the IATP has depended on the volunteer work of a group of young U.S. government exchange program alumni. These alumni, who number several thousand in Central Asia, are playing a surprisingly strong but under-reported role in their societies. (An article on this topic can be found at: http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav030701.shtml.)

In this case, our partnership with the deaf began when a group of these young students received a grant from the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat to assist the Boarding School for Hearing Impaired Children. One of the major audiences of the IATP is alumni of just such exchange programs. For these young people, we have operated what is called an Alumni Resource Center in Ashgabat since 2000. As almost the only working Internet center in Ashgabat, it has been extremely popular with the alumni. The group of students who won the grant from the Embassy requested the support of IATP in their project.

These alumni trainers used the Resource Center to teach the hearing-impaired children how to use computers and the Internet through sign translators. Most of this training was extremely basic—a very popular first course in all countries is learning how to use the "Paint" program. We have found that this program serves to familiarize people with the mouse and at the same time removes their fear of doing some irreparable harm to the computer. Parents would bring their children to the training

Photo: RWCT Moldova

sessions, where they watched their children's development with computers. The parents showed amazement at their children's creativity as expressed in their computer-generated paintings and photo-collages. They also learned more about their children's interests by observing their activities online.

One of the teachers, Tatyana Borisovna Sedova, noted, "Such lessons are necessary for deaf children. We found new character traits of children during the trainings: an interest in new subjects; cooperative skills; a desire to win and keep the confidence of the teachers; an ability to analyze and synthesize information; and a new pride and confidence in life. The trainings help to concentrate attention, and as a whole, develop children in a way different from school. The idea of training is excellent as it teaches deaf children to understand outsiders. In other words, the school program communicates with life." This is a good encapsulation of what the Internet has offered to other deaf students in Central Asia.

Conclusion

In summary, it is possible to see that the disabled in Central Asia can greatly benefit from the Internet. There seems to be enough anecdotal evidence to suggest that the use of computers and the Internet can increase students' vocabulary, reduce their feelings of isolation (thereby reducing behavioral problems), and reveal their innate creativity. Thus far our successes have relied on dedicated individuals who have been able to leverage the resources of the IATP to achieve more than just what our program provides.
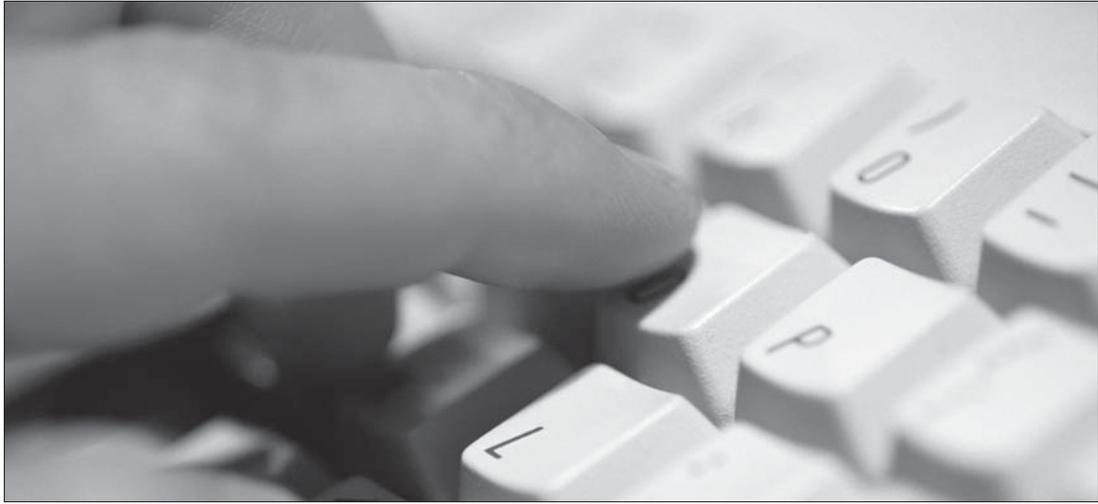
The challenge now is to extend this initiative into the schools' and local governments' administration. The example of Uzbekistan is particularly heartening in this respect, as it shows that these institutions can respond to successful pedagogy. The participation of parents and their reactions is also very interesting—the parents of disabled children are often themselves victims of prejudice. By watching their children master a technology such as computers, they learn about their children as well, and begin to recognize that while these children are disabled they are in no way less creative individuals.

As for the IATP, we plan to continue to work with the disabled in all the countries where we operate. In the coming months, we plan to expand training for the deaf into Kyrgyzstan. Recently, the Almaty School conducted an Internet "chat" for deaf students in Almaty, Karaganda, and Aktobe—cities in Kazakhstan that are thousands of kilometers apart. In addition, we are installing wheelchair ramps in as many centers as it is possible to do so. Our work with the physically disabled has promised similarly significant results—indeed, in Tashkent, we have already set up a small access center for the physically disabled. After reaching out and indicating we wanted to work with them, we have already had physically disabled users in several of our other access sites as well. We expect to learn more about how to work with this audience in the coming months as we work with our Tashkent partner. The existence of disabled access ramps—which may seem incredibly basic—is in fact an extremely rare occurrence in Central Asia. Even such progressive institutions as American Embassies rarely make provision for wheelchairs. Fortunately, again, the local governments are receptive—in Guliston, Uzbekistan, the chief architect for the soon-to-be opened regional library included a ramp in the new building at our request.

One last thing to emphasize about this project: This is not a charitable project, although our partners could surely benefit from assistance. State Department programs are forbidden to engage in charitable activities. Rather, we are giving local "social entrepreneurs" the tools to achieve goals using the Internet. It has been illustrative for us to see how people can appropriate the new technology and to use it to surprising benefit. We hope that these lessons will be useful for others as well.

Additional information online:

Networking Central Asia's Silk Road
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1628525.stm

The Internet Access and Training Program (IATP) operates in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. For information see http://www.iatp.net/

Dr. David Mikosz is the Central Asian Knowledge Coordinator for the World Bank. Previously he was Internet Access and Training Program (IATP) Manager for Central Asia, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Tashkent Club Brings Disabled Children Into Mainstream Society

by Natalya Kurochkina

The Tashkent Club KRIDI, a voluntary group for parents of children with disabilities, was founded in March 1995. Its main goal is to change people's attitudes toward disabled children. Society will not change until individual attitudes change. Until parents of disabled children or the disabled themselves are allowed to participate in government-funded activities such as social security and education, there is no realistic chance that they will ever be fully integrated into society.

Originally KRIDI was based in the Mirzo-Ulugbek neighborhood of Tashkent and supported only area families. Thanks to the work of the club's activists, which was well publicized in the local media, people from other neighborhoods of Tashkent and other provinces of Uzbekistan learned of our work. Soon, parents and relatives from all over the country reached out to support the club. Since 1997 we have had a citywide office and branches in eight neighborhoods, with activity areas such as music rooms where children can learn rhythm and listen to records, and outdoor areas for therapeutic horseback riding.

Today, the club has a computer database with records of over 3,000 families who have disabled children. Our main activities include:

- Helping relatives of disabled children solve problems connected with raising special children, such as health issues, study and learning decisions, psychological and social adaptation, and understanding and defending the social and human rights of the disabled;
- Teaching parents and children to master rehabilitative skills in domestic conditions, to acquire principles of independent living, to become acquainted with disabled young people with work skills, to participate in cultural activities and sports, and to fully join in with normal life;
- Integrating limited-ability children into society;
- Working to form more humane attitudes within society toward the disabled;
- Offering assistance, in the form of wheelchairs, dietary products, clothes (through an agreement with Counterpart Consortium), and acquisition and distribution of medicine;
- Teaching computer literacy;
- Publishing the informational bulletin "Our Times" in both Russian and Uzbek.

In order to include people with limitations in mainstream society, it is necessary to start integrating them early. At the KRIDI Club we have a lot of experience involving children who have limitations from a young age. Our children are mainstreamed into standard kindergartens. As practice shows, disabled children of that age don't sense their limitations and interact with healthy children as equals. And able children strive to offer them help. But difficulties do arise, as children get older. The goal must be to create positive conditions that benefit typical children and disabled children equally.

We would like to see the integration of more disabled children into the school system, but only a small percentage of disabled children have the ability to learn effectively in typical schools. Unfortunately, today's multi-story school buildings do not have accessible entryways, classrooms, and bathrooms. For this reason most disabled children must study at home. Children not given access to education at all often find their abilities left untapped and their entry into society barred. Worst of all, they have no chance to interact with peers in their age group or others in the outside world. From such children you can expect only a withdrawn, introverted personality, a person who will suffer psychologically thinking he is lost to society and worthless.

Our experience has shown the importance of training parents to develop the creative potential of children with disabilities. This can be accomplished through a new kind of school, where parents are given appropriate training to educate their own children in a manner that positively develops all aspects of their personality.

For example, working with the international NGO World Concern, KRIDI prepared a group of parents to set up their own school for their unschooled disabled children. The parents themselves serve as teachers, helping the children play a variety of therapeutic games, practice using pens and pencils, create artwork like mosaics, and read books. The school emphasizes the importance of giving children the opportunity to feel meaningful, to develop their abilities, to become independent, and to demonstrate that children previously diagnosed as unable to learn still have the power to master some tasks—proof that they deserve to ultimately be integrated into society.

Natalya Kurochkina, who has been disabled since birth, is the daughter of Grenada Kurochkina, director of KRIDI. Translated by John Deever.

Service Learning in the University: A Case Study

Daria Rovan and Vlasta Vizek Vidović

Schoolchildren with special needs call for school psychologists and teachers with special skills. But can university psychology courses help future educators acquire a capacity for empathy and a sense of social responsibility?

Of the many problems faced by school psychologists, the most challenging involve educating students with exceptional needs. Every school psychologist must have the basic knowledge and skill necessary to understand the problems of these students, help them to cope with their difficulties, and help them integrate well with their peer group. Moreover, school psychologists must find ways to support and counsel the teachers and parents of these children.

Before they can even begin to use their knowledge and skills effectively, practitioners must develop an openness and sensitivity to the needs and worldview of these children. In addition, would-be practitioners must become aware of the kinds of problems that the children and their parents have to cope with in their everyday lives. To help prepare future school psychologists for these challenges, we have designed a new course in educational psychology, which we call "Children with school problems." The new course, offered by the University of Zagreb Department of Psychology, lasts for 12 weeks, 4 hours per week. Previously, the topics covered in the course were dispersed among the standard developmental psychology and educational psychology courses and mainly taught in a traditional lecture format.

The challenge we set for ourselves was to design a course that would take seriously the notion of education for social responsibility. More specifically, we wanted a course that would develop students' capacity for empathy, enhance their effectiveness, raise their awareness of the relationship between their own lives and society at large, and develop a clearer and more honest connection between their beliefs and their actions (Temple et al., 2001).

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) provided us with a sound basis for designing such a course. It provides a holistic model of the learning process and a multilinear model of adult development, both of which are consistent with what we know about how people learn, grow, and develop (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001). As is evident in the name, this theory assigns a central role to experience in the learning process.

ELT describes the learning process as consisting of four phases that are cyclically interrelated: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation. In light of this theory, the case study method appears to be the best choice to assure students' involvement in every phase of the cycle. Deciding on and analyzing a research problem covers the phase of abstract conceptualization, and developing the research design leads students to the active experimentation phase. During their fieldwork they are plunged into the concrete experience phase, and this experience drives their need to develop answers to their research questions, a necessary part of reflective observation phase. In explaining their results from a theoretical perspective, and identifying implications for educational policy, students once more approach the abstract conceptualization phase, thus

completing Kolb's cycle of experiential learning (Kolb et al., 2001).

According to Cowan (1998), the most important parts of the model proposed by Kolb are the lines between the words. Much of the task of the facilitative teacher is to encourage movement through the cycle, i.e., movement along these lines. This task is easily accomplished using the case study method, because the sequence of problems faced by the students is determined by case study methodology. Thus the students' work fosters their movement from one phase to the next; and their focus on their goal—completion of their case study—assures smooth transitions.

> *The challenge we set for ourselves was to design a course that would take seriously the notion of education for social responsibility*

Drawing on numerous studies, Kreber (2001) proposes that experiential learning promotes higher order thinking and learning. She points out that it requires the ability to assess both the validity and the value of one's own learning efforts, and also develops critical thinking skills. Those two educational outcomes must be recognized as key goals for higher education, particularly at a time when rapid social, political, and technological change will inevitably render current content and factual knowledge obsolete for our future professionals.

Course design

The main goals of our new course were to help students develop empathy and to raise their awareness of issues concerning the mainstreaming of children with special needs. Different perspectives were to be considered: those of special-needs children, their peers, teachers, school psychologists, and other experts.

In addition to gaining insight into the world of children who have difficulties in school, participants in this course would acquire knowledge of the etiology of specific difficulties and approaches to the assessment of pupils' needs. They would

be able to recognize intervention approaches and choose the optimal approach to help children with specific kinds of difficulties.

To ensure that our students would really experience the problems faced by children with learning, emotional, or behavioral difficulties in the context of the real world, we had to introduce some new teaching strategies. Traditional university teaching is designed to emphasize abstract conceptualization over concrete experience. According to Kreber (2001), the university instructor's goals rarely include such concerns as fostering internal reflection on the meaning of an event or experience, or testing understanding of ideas in the external world. Even when there is abstract agreement that such goals are important, they are not an explicit part of the instructional process.

We decided to take a fresh approach. We introduced experiential learning as an important part of our course. For that purpose we chose the case-study method. We believed that by conducting case study research, our psychology students would get to know all the relevant aspects of a particular child's situation. Case study method requires the learner to analyze the case and determine the underlying problem, its symptoms, causes, and possible solutions. The ultimate task is to apply theoretical knowledge to a "real life" situation. Moreover, Kreber (2001) emphasizes that the case-study approach to teaching, if appropriately facilitated, involves students in genuine experiential learning, and thus fosters logical reasoning, creative thinking, and, ultimately, greater self-direction in learning.

Our course consisted of two mutually interrelated parts: theoretical—to give students a theoretical basis for understanding core problems; and practical— to relate that knowledge to practice.

The theoretical component took the form of weekly lectures, which provided basic background knowledge on three main topics. First, we addressed the problem of mainstreaming children with learning disabilities. Second, we explored various types of learning disabilities, including approaches to assessment and strategies for working with children with various disabilities. And finally, we

focused on emotional and behavioral problems, again including assessment and treatment strategies. The theoretical part of the course was designed to give the students a framework they could use as they explored specific issues within the main topics.

The practice-oriented part of the course was designed as a group project—a case study of one child with a particular school problem (e.g., ADHD). This structure provided our students with an opportunity to learn experientially about the problems of special-needs children, and to be introduced to basic problem-solving strategies in the field. They would also be required to learn qualitative research techniques. So the process-oriented course objectives included learning the skills needed for project planning, research, presentation of research findings, and, last but not least, working together as a team.

Fieldwork for the projects took place in schools and referral institutions, with our students divided into small autonomous groups. During the fieldwork, teachers met with the students weekly to help them with questions of methodology and organization. These meetings also offered students a chance to share their personal experiences with members of other groups and with the teachers.

Miller et al. (1998) emphasize that successful group projects are likely to have the following qualities:

1. The problem to be solved is an example of the type of problem found in the community.
2. Solution of the problem requires the use of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are part of the students' curriculum.
3. The problem can be solved by a small team of students, none of whom possess the necessary knowledge or skills to solve the problem alone, yet each member is able to contribute to the solution.
4. Decisions regarding investigative methods and the respective tasks for each team member are the responsibility of the group rather than being decided by the teacher.
5. The final report needs to be brief and suitable for presentation to an audience (of other class members). It

should be possible to judge the relative value of each student's contribution to the project, and assessment procedures should be such that they will be accepted by students and faculty as valid and reliable.

We tried to follow these guidelines. In order to keep track of their progress, each week students were required to submit a short two-page report, describing what they had accomplished, what objectives they were not able to carry out and why, what they had planned for the next week, how they had managed team work, and their overall level of satisfaction with the group processes.

Implementation of the new course design

In the first year of the new course, we had three groups of four students. The groups chose the following topics for their case studies: attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and mild mental retardation. Project work was divided into three phases: designing the case study, collecting the data, and preparing the report.

In the design phase, after forming small groups and choosing their topics, students were simultaneously introduced to case study methodology and to the theoretical literature on their selected topic. Our role, as teachers, was to assure that the phases of the case-study design were coordinated with our methodology lectures, and to guide students in their progress. As students gained knowledge in the lectures, they could immediately apply it in planning their research. With each step forward, new questions were raised, and in the next class those new issues were addressed. In this fashion we covered five topics relevant to case study design: the basics of qualitative research, research design, observation, interviewing, and data analysis.

As the first step in the design phase, students decided on their research topics. After being introduced to techniques commonly used in the case-study approach—observation and interviewing—they proceeded to construct instruments for data collection. Their case study designs evolved from a rough outline to a carefully prepared and detailed plan.

Each group then presented their final case-study design to the class.

The data collection phase was composed of observation in schools, interviews with professionals who work with special-needs children, and a visit to a specialized referral institution. In this phase we continued to supervise the students' progress. To help coordinate their fieldwork with our weekly meetings, we assigned deadlines for each stage of the data collection.

Before they could begin collecting data, each group selected one particular child who manifested the kind of school problem they wanted to explore. Then they spent two days in the school observing the behavior of that child and his/her interactions with teacher and peers. Observation focused particularly on specific behaviors connected with the research topics. After the observation period, students interviewed teachers and the school psychologist, to explore their viewpoints of the child's problems. Interviewers were especially interested in the various approaches and interventions the teachers and psychologist had used with the children.

To achieve an even deeper understanding of the issues, students visited referral institutions specializing in the difficulties exhibited by the child they were studying. They interviewed a psychologist who was an expert in the field of their case study. They collected information about diagnostic and treatment opportunities offered by the specialized institutions.

During our weekly meetings with our students, we were delighted to notice that all of them displayed a substantial amount of empathy with the children they had observed. They talked about these children with special care: "All the children in the class are very close, they all play together, but OUR Lana is always somewhere on the sidelines." They were sincerely concerned with the lack of support given to these children, and with their limited opportunities in the absence of adequate treatment.

In the last phase of the project—writing and presenting the report—the goal was to integrate all the information collected and use it to illustrate the selected problem. When such a study is properly designed, writing the report is a fairly simple task, but it is still an important one. All the groups submitted very well-written reports, and the presentations were very carefully prepared. The students showed a thorough understanding of their selected topics, and genuine empathy for children with school problems. We must highlight the fact that all of the students also showed a substantial amount of creativity in their work. What is especially impressive is that, apart from the techniques that we had offered (observation and interview), the students added original contributions to the methodology of their case studies (projective techniques for the ADHD child study, dictation for the dyslexic child study, and a social skills inventory for the study of the mentally retarded child).

In all the reports, students presented the perspective of the individual child, as well as the perspective of the teachers, parents and relevant professionals. They also analyzed the response of society to these problems, in terms of educational and health care policies. One of their conclusions was, "Work on this project has helped us gain a broader insight into the problems of children with difficulties, especially the problems of mainstreaming mentally retarded children. We discovered many problems that these children, their parents, and professionals who work with them face every day. It is the duty of all of us, as individuals and as a community, to accept people with mental retardation and other disabilities with understanding and respect, and to include them in the community."

Throughout the group-work phase, our students were encouraged to reflect on their progress, achievements, and group interaction. To foster their consciousness of group processes, we required them to monitor and report on these processes at each phase of their work. We consider these skills to be another important component of their future professional lives.

Course evaluation

Judging by the quality of the case study reports and presentations, we can only conclude that our course was very successful. However, this conclusion would be incomplete without asking students how they felt about this course. We were not interested in knowing just whether they had liked the course and found it useful. We also wanted to find out whether they preferred this project-oriented approach to the conventional course design.

The evaluation forms consisted of four parts: course plan and lecture organization, motivation and learning opportunities, relationships with participants in the educational process (course instructors and other students), and overall evaluation. Each student was asked to rate two courses: our case-study course and a conventional course of their choice.

The course plan and lecture organization were very highly rated, significantly higher than in the conventional courses. That result can be attributed to the effort we invested in specifying the course objectives, planning the course structure, and preparing the relevant materials. Because of the demanding requirements of the course, we planned the sequence of our assignments very carefully. Our effort was recognized: "What I found especially beneficial were the very explicitly specified expectations of our performance in each phase of the practical work. Setting intermediate goals with deadlines made the organization of our work much easier."

> *All of them displayed a substantial amount of empathy with the children they had observed*

In the second part of our evaluation form, we asked our students about motivation and learning opportunities. Again, we received some very high ratings. The majority of the items were ranked higher than for the conventional course. We found it especially gratifying that they gave the highest possible rating for the statement—"The effort made in attending lectures and completion of assignments is worth it."

In the evaluations of "relationships with participants in the educational process," we noted two different tendencies. Relationships with teachers were ranked highly, while the quality of the teamwork with other students received low scores. Students had been randomly assigned to their groups, to foster a workplace atmosphere and prepare them for "real life" situations. Our students strongly disliked this arrangement, despite recognizing that they had acquired new teamwork skills and experienced both the good and bad aspects of teamwork: "This course gave me an opportunity to work in randomly assigned groups, and to experience all the difficulties and

challenges of this kind of work (finding the balance between personal aspirations and the aspirations of other group members)."

In the final part of evaluation, students demonstrated very high overall satisfaction with the course, again higher than with the conventional courses. They noted the extra time they had to devote to their projects ("In comparison to other courses, this one was really demanding—3 hours of lectures weekly, plus almost all of my free time during the fieldwork"), but nevertheless they felt that it had been worth all the effort. The aspects of the course that they found most valuable were the very same aspects that we considered in our decision to design the course around experiential learning:

"At last, something we can use in our future practice."

"Insight into real situations and problems that we ordinarily just talk about."

"What I perceive as a major benefit from this course is the experience of concrete fieldwork and research planning, which was demanding, but extremely useful. I am very pleased with my new knowledge and experience."

It is important to emphasize that the students recognized the worth of experiential leaning, even when it meant much more hard work for them. They also appreciated the effort that we teachers had put into developing the course: "I would like to praise the creativity in designing the course. This is something completely new, a new approach to teaching."

Conclusion

As teachers we have gained significant insights as a result of our work in this course:

- Project work motivates students to become active learners. They achieve a deeper understanding of problems and a greater awareness of the social issues inherent in the subject matter.
- Working in teams is a valuable experience for students. It helps them learn about relevant organizational issues and prepare for future professional roles and challenges.

- As instructors in a project-oriented course, we got to know our students better, to learn about their interests, competencies, motivations, and values.

Based on our own observations, the students' progress reports, and the course evaluations, we plan to introduce certain changes the next time the course is offered, to enhance both motivation and learning. Since students strongly disliked the random group assignments, we have decided to allow future participants to choose their own groups. A second issue that caused debate among the students was the lack of opportunity for peer evaluation. In response, we hope to develop a system of anonymous peer review that would allow the group members to estimate the relative contribution of their colleagues.

A final change under consideration concerns the status of the course itself. It was originally offered as an elective course, but as we proceed with planned reforms in our department curriculum (adding a fifth year of study for different specializations) this course might well become a requirement for students choosing to specialize in school counseling or educational psychology.

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Experience and Learning: Living Education

Joby Taylor

Daria Rovan and Vlasta Vizek Vidović's project exemplifies the field of community service learning, which is rapidly expanding in higher education. In an effort to enhance the preparation of their educational psychology students, they have integrated a theoretical classroom curriculum with field-based experiential learning and reflection on social responsibility. "Service Learning" is a flexible term that is variously used to describe a philosophy of knowledge, a type of program, and an approach to pedagogy, what Lori Varlotta refers to as the "tripartite form of service-learning" (1996, p. 26). The common denominator for its various modes is the direct linking of academic learning and problem-based social practice. Its constructivist epistemology (philosophy) implies directing attention and drawing lessons within socially situated learning contexts. In other words, in this pedagogy, programs emerge from their social context.

While the term *service learning* was not in common use until the 1960s in the U.S., the concept of learning while participating in community service has deep roots in the progressive educational philosophy of John Dewey. In the early part of the 20th century Dewey was an important voice in the American philosophical school known as Pragmatism (other notables were Charles S. Peirce and William James…Dewey alternately called his philosophy Instrumentalism or Experimentalism to the same end of announcing the practical nature of knowledge). Pragmatism forwarded a strong critique of traditional Western epistemology. Specifically, it opposed the mind/body dualism, dominant at least since Rene Descartes. According to Descartes, knowledge is considered the privileged domain of mind, produced (deduced) through abstract conceptualization. Since abstract knowledge is the goal, increased distance from perception (i.e., from experience) becomes the means; hence our still pervasive decontextualized classroom settings and didactic pedagogy. As service-learning practitioner Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich describes, in academia "what stubbornly persists is the hierarchy of theory and (i.e., over) practice, knowledge and experience" (1999, p. 13).

In response, pragmatism offered an instrumental view of knowledge. Eyler and Giles, premier service-learning researchers today, note that "what is central for Dewey is that thinking and action are inextricably linked" (1994, p. 80).

Knowledge is the practical means by which we negotiate our world; it's a tool for life. This implies two important things. Knowledge begins with experience, not abstraction; and knowledge is contextual, not absolute. Knowledge is what we construct as we experiment and relate in a complex and messy world. It is defined and valued according to its usefulness and it can only be measured through our situational mastery, our ability to put it into practice. In Deweyan pragmatism the question driving the conversation changes from "Is this certain?" (i.e., knowledge as its own end) to "Is this working for us?" (situated knowledge as means to building community). Citing not only John Dewey but his recent interpreters such as Paulo Freire, Jürgen Habermas, Thomas Kuhn, Richard Rorty, and Cornel West, service-learning theorist Goodwin Liu supports service-learning pedagogy and program development with deep philosophical roots. "Pragmatism shifts our epistemological aspiration from finding objective truth to sustaining a meaningful conversation" (Liu, 1995, p. 12). I imagine Dewey's response to Descartes' "I think therefore I am" as "I interact, therefore, I become." Essence and Mind are replaced by Process and Community.

Such a view makes it difficult to separate and bracket out our life activities; in fact, one of the hallmarks of Dewey's philosophy is that his views on politics, ethics, education, and knowledge are all intertwined. In his 1897 credo on education he says, "I believe that the individual who is to be educated is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals…. Education, therefore, must begin with psychological insight into the child's [student's] capacities, interests, and habits…these must be translated into terms of their social equivalents—into terms of what they are capable of in the way of social service" (Dewey, 1897, 1998, p. 230). It is this inseparability of the individual and society, of ethics and learning, that underpins service learning as a pedagogy.

In Dewey's often-cited phrase, this means that "education is not preparation for life *but life itself.*" "If we want students who are life-long learners, can use what they know, and have a capacity for critical analysis, then programs like service-learning, which help them construct knowledge from experience and reflection, should form the core of their educational experience" (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p.188).

Students learn through community service involvement because it immerses them in complex social problem-solving scenarios whose real consequences and tangible outcomes provide an intrinsic motivation and an immediacy to learning. The specific learning in service learning can be directed by constructing service situations in which the problems posed relate to a defined academic curriculum. For example, in Rovan and Vidović's course design, a pedagogical goal is to teach specific material about students with special needs.

In addition to matching an academic curriculum with a community service experience, there is an intrinsic ethical dimension to service learning, a broader social curriculum about issues, inequalities, and personal involvement. Service learning situates learning not just experientially, but, more specifically, within the context of a particular community need requiring reflection and resolution. To the pedagogical concern for disciplinary knowledge are added concerns for human understanding (in the strong sense of the verstehen tradition) and interpersonal empathy. Rovan and Vidović describe this as "education for social responsibility." If understanding and empathy are desired pedagogical outcomes, then "being there" is a necessary component of education. This goes beyond a simple call for field-based study; service learning places students in direct relationship with others and makes reflection upon the processes of community building an explicit component of the experience. It also gives us a lens to interpret our own activities, for as teachers advancing this engaged model of education, we too immerse ourselves in lifelong practices of serving and learning. In Dewey's words, "the teacher is engaged, not simply in the training of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life…every teacher should realize the dignity of his calling, that he is a social servant" (1897, 1998, p. 235).

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Classroom Tales

Case Method in Teacher Training: An Estonian View

Hiie Asser

The successful professional development of teachers depends largely on their ability to analyze and reflect upon their teaching. Case studies offer an effective way to direct student teachers toward self-reflection. With this in mind, guided by an article by Janet Richards (2001) in this very journal, I decided to use case writing as one of the assignments for teacher training students at the University of Tartu during their practice teaching in 2001/2002.

Teaching cases are focused, engaging narratives, varying in length from one to thirty pages, usually written in the first person, that describe "a wide variety of (authentic) situations, decisions, dilemmas, and difficulties that confront teachers and teacher educators" (Sykes, 1992, p. ix). They have become popular in many countries (Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA) as a format for documenting teaching activities and as a method for promoting self-reflection by teachers (Richards, Viise, Holschuh, & Asser, 2000). There is currently no fixed terminology within the Estonian pedagogical community for "teaching cases" since the genre is not particularly widespread. If we look for parallels from other fields, however, teaching cases might be compared with medical case histories: Both seek to document progress and describe ways of influencing the process and the results.

Using teaching cases for reflection and research

Case-method teaching
- develops teachers' ability to define pedagogical problems,
- helps teachers analyse and reflect upon problems that occur in school practice,
- helps teachers seek solutions to the problems,
- helps teachers understand that often there is more than one solution to a pedagogical problem,
- helps teachers realise that they are problem solvers, and
- helps teachers recognize their responsibilities regarding their students' academic and personal development.

Using teaching cases as a method of pedagogical research

- helps determine the most problematic areas of teaching practice, and pinpoint problems that occur in certain subject areas, with certain teaching methods, etc.;
- demonstrates teachers' ability to analyse and reflect upon their own work;
- provides information about the level of teachers' theoretical knowledge and their understanding of the goals of education; and
- provides additional material for theoretical courses in teaching methodology.

In general, teaching cases can be divided into cases that deal with the academic aspects of teaching and those that concern social aspects.

A teaching case
- **is based on a pedagogical problem;**
- **describes a real-life school situation or incident;**
- **is written in first person, in a clear and straightforward style;**
- **includes authentic dialogue;**
- **is introduced by a description of the main problem of the case;**
- **provides adequate background information for understanding the problem; and**
- **includes explanation and analysis of the problem and possible solutions.**

The Estonian education system is comprised of three levels: elementary, secondary or vocational, and university. The nine-year elementary level is compulsory. There are both Estonian- and Russian-language schools. (Estonian is the official national language.) All schools follow the same national curriculum, and teachers for all schools are educated at universities and teacher training colleges whose work is coordinated by a central Ministry of Education.

Description of Teaching Cases in this Experience

This article describes my initial experience using the case-study approach, analyses the themes and problems raised in the teaching cases written by the students, and considers the solutions they offer as well as their analytical skills in general. To this end I examine 39 cases that broadly correspond to the format described above; that is, they include the description of a concrete situation, discussion, and conclusions. Future teachers in Estonia have the opportunity to do their practice teaching in different types of schools, according to their specialty; but in addition all trainees are required at some point to practice teach in upper elementary school. Thus a large number of the cases presented are from grades seven through nine.

The cases are distributed as follows:

	Grade 4–6	Grade 7–9	Grade 10–12
Elementary and secondary school 36 cases	9	21	6
Vocational school 2 cases			
University level 1 case			

The cases describe incidents in classes of literature (9), handicrafts (7), biology (3), health education (3), natural sciences (2), physical education (2), Estonian as a second language (taught in Russian-language schools) (2), German (2), English as a foreign language (1), Estonian as a mother tongue (taught in Estonian-language schools) (1), Latin (1), art (1), geography (1), economics (1), philosophy (1), garden design (1), and 1 case about the teachers' work outside of classroom.

It is somewhat difficult to classify the cases by problem focus since many of the situations described involve more than one area of concern (e.g., discipline and motivation, choice of method and discipline). However, based on the authors' characterizations, I divided the cases into the following thematic classes:

Cases that focused on the activities of the teacher	
Choice of teaching methods	8
Following the lesson plan and goals	6
Choice of teaching materials	5
Structure of the class, including planning time	4
Assessment, including giving credit and punishment	4
Stories about being a teacher trainee or teacher in general	4
Teacher's ability to assert him/herself	2
	33

Cases that focused on the activities of the pupils	
Discipline	2
Pupils' motivation	2
Differences between pupils	2
	6

Thus we can observe that teacher-centred activity dominates the discussions of teacher trainees. To some extent, this is an artifact of the assignment itself—to write a teaching case. It is also important to remember that most of the case authors are beginners who tend to concentrate on their own activities. In some cases the authors explicitly expressed this point:

> Although I did not manage to do exactly what I had hoped at the beginning of the class, it was still a quite pleasant and interesting experience. I could test myself, feel myself in the role of the teacher, although the students were not focused on learning.

The attitude expressed here is widespread—the pupils are not really present in the discussion, but are mentioned only peripherally.

Teaching Materials and Methods

The majority of the cases deal with the trainees' choice of teaching materials, methods and planning. In the cases about their choice of teaching materials students recognize that they have failed

to assess the level of difficulty properly, or that they have not correctly identified the interests of the class. Two cases that strike a more positive note describe how the trainee or the pupils found connections between the material being studied and real-life phenomena, which made the learning process more successful and more enjoyable.

Other cases involving the choice of materials described how the trainees had failed to take into account what the pupils had already studied. One author used the assignment to remind herself that before meeting an unfamiliar class, one should seek advance information and prepare alternative plans.

> I believe that almost every teacher who starts teaching a new class, or replaces another teacher, will encounter the problem that the pupils have read or studied something already. This can be determined by leafing through the class register, but I did not even think of that when I was planning my class. I also did not have an alternative plan ready, and could not move on to another topic, as a more experienced teacher would have. This was a very useful lesson: I will now go to class with not one script but two.

In another case, there was a thoughtful analysis of how the media can cause pupils to form skewed, preconceived notions. Here a trainee reflects on his attempt to teach ancient history:

> Thus a teacher must accommodate himself or herself to the idea that information—and often incorrect information—comes from sources other than print. But making people take a critical view of the information they have already acquired—or are acquiring—is an art I could not master. This is, in my opinion, one of the primary tasks of a practising teacher in light of today's ever-increasing flow of (false) information and globalisation.

Judging by the cases that deal with the choice of teaching methods, the trainees are not inclined to question their choices, but focus instead on the pupils' ability to complete the planned activities. For example, the authors note that 7th grade pupils did not manage to copy lecture notes on literature from the overhead projector slides within the allotted time, or that 10th grade pupils are not as enthusiastic about Hamlet as the teacher

had expected! These novice practitioners seem unable to question their own choices—such self-justification is normal in teachers who have no prior teaching experience to rely on.

Fortunately, most of the cases included thoughtful discussions of why and when particular methods failed to work, e.g., "the task had been worded in an uninteresting way," "routine exercises call for new or amusing approaches," or "group work does not succeed in every class, and sometimes the teacher cannot manage to organise it at all." Competitions and quizzes, or even a call for summaries of the information learned—strategies that seem perfect toward the end of a semester—do not always work smoothly in the beginning. All in all, the student teachers usually coped well with difficult situations, and their few failures did not deter them from trying more interactive methods in the future:

> Despite the fact that the [planned] competition became a tense battle at times, I still think that the pupils learned from it. They could review the study material and identify gaps in their knowledge. How can order be maintained in a competition? I think I should have been more determined and not let the pupils dominate the situation. The pupils should have the rules in front of them at all times, in order to avoid misunderstanding. I should also be more ready for the unexpected: for example, think of several ways different of dividing pupils into groups, to avoid later confusion and re-grouping. Should I give up on competitions? Definitely not, because, despite the discord, the pupils seemed to like this lesson plan: it was exciting and enjoyable, and at the same time it educated the students and encouraged their thinking.

Assessment

Assessment was not dealt with or viewed as a problem in many cases because of the short time the trainees worked with the class. In fact, many supervisors do not even trust trainees with the responsibility of assessing students, and instead do this themselves. One case, however, described in detail the tension that arose between a trainee and a pupil who was failing—before the actual marks were assigned. I was heartened by the author's attitude towards the situation:

Now that my first emotions have passed, I am happy that I held firm to my position and did not give in. In fact, I am excited about the next semester, to see what my relationship with [the failing pupil] Siim will be like, because I feel that the story is not over yet. The teacher shapes the pupils—their behaviour and worldview—but the pupils also influence the teacher. I learned that, as a teacher, I could not be manipulated.

A physical education trainee also described a successful educational solution to an assessment problem: If the students did not wear appropriate clothing, she did not give them bad grades, but instead excluded them from class.

Lesson Plans

"Why wasn't I able to follow the lesson plan and realise the goals that I had set?" was a theme that clearly emerged in our cases. Frequently, trainees pointed out, the pupils ask all sorts of questions and thereby distract the teacher from the lesson. Teachers were also called upon to make some unexpected adjustments, e.g., a fire drill in the preceding class led a trainee to change the topic from "Water as a solution and solvent" to "Water and other fire extinguishers." In another instance, sewing students focused more on the yarn bullfinches that the trainee had made to decorate the classroom than on the lesson at hand. The trainees in these cases tended to justify their own responses, pointing out that the off-topic conversation or activities allowed the pupils to learn something that interested them at that moment, or that the social skills acquired in the situation compensated for the lack of factual content. Still, in most cases the trainees were led to consider how often such a situation could or should occur without damaging the study process. Some even asked whether distracting the teacher might be a clever strategy used by pupils to avoid boring or difficult subjects.

Lesson plan adjustments were also needed when the student teacher misjudged the pupils' learning capacity, the scope of the material to be introduced, or the effectiveness of a particular method of presentation. Often the trainees used methods that the pupils were unaccustomed to. What happened in these cases? What conclusions did they draw?

> The greatest problem was the use of time. When I asked after the planned 30 minutes, "Which group is ready and would like to start?" all answered that they needed extra time. I had planned 5 minutes for each group's presentation, but now it turned out we would be lucky if even one group managed to introduce their text and deliver their presentation. Analysing these two classes in retrospect, I think that I tended to overestimate my pupils at first: their independence, interest and willingness to work together and, above all, their efficiency. If even university students tend at times to digress during group work, we should not expect anything different from secondary school students—particularly since this was essentially their first experience of group work.

> For the future, it is useful to know that pupils are prepared to work and open to new things, but the tasks have to be appropriate for their level; we should not hurry pupils along with time limits and teacher's demands, since these will kill the joy of thinking for themselves and doing things independently. Everything takes some getting used to, so tasks chosen to introduce a method should be more simple and straightforward.

Some cases on lesson planning included a kind of reprimand for supervisors who either "did not help to plan the lessons" or, on the contrary, "dictated the content and course of the lesson or gave contradictory instructions." But perhaps the following conclusion offers a more profound insight:

> When I thought back, I concluded that everything grew out of the fact that I stood in front of the class as a student, not as a teacher responsible for what goes on in the lesson. The teacher trainee has a double role—he or she is a teacher for the pupils, but at the same time he is also a student. In the beginning it is very difficult to put oneself in the position of teacher and act accordingly. I have subsequently reminded myself that I am the one in charge of what goes on in the classroom, the one who controls the class, who directs the whole process.

Being a Teacher

"Am I really suited to the teaching profession?" trainees asked in a variety of ways. These trainee stories seized

upon some perceived failure or miscommunication to question their own competence and character, i.e., their own suitability as teachers. My own analysis reveals a hefty dose of panic on the part of the authors, and too little rational analysis. I found these cases to be particularly effective in helping students reach a better understanding of themselves and their role as teacher.

There were also cases where trainees presented themselves as "born teachers" and made no mention of the source of their knowledge. Their write-ups revealed no problems: Everything ran smoothly; their decisions were always correct. In fact, they even offered advice to practising teachers: One should be composed, kind and moderately strict; …because there are pupils who probably cannot believe that, instead of the elderly teachers who have worked in their school from time immemorial, they could be taught by new and possibly more interesting teachers, teachers who are much younger, have different habits, a different manner of speaking. Such evident self-confidence, while helpful in achieving classroom success, would be more convincing if moderated and based on real knowledge and experience.

Pupil Behaviour

A small number of authors chose pupils, usually problematic ones, as the main characters of their stories. Four such stories described classic cases of discipline and motivation. In one case the story dealt with a single student, in the other cases with a group or a class. Three authors used their background knowledge of the pupils' motives as well as their own creativity and intuition to create a positive result; in short, they practiced good analytical thinking. In the other case, certain background conditions that had led to the situation effectively prevented any solution based solely on the trainee's initiative.

Only two teaching cases took note of the fact that all classes include some pupils with special needs. The most eloquent of the cases concerned a left-handed pupil in a handicrafts class. It was a revelation for the teacher trainee that left-handed children would need special training in handicraft classes, because the tools are created for right-handed people. This was also one of the few teaching cases that concentrated on the problems of pupils rather than problems of the teacher trainees themselves. For the trainee, the story highlighted the fact that each pupil is unique, a fact that had been emphasized in methodology classes.

Unique Role of Teacher Training Students

Virtually all of the cases reveal the special nature of practice teaching: fragmentary presence at school, lack of familiarity with classes and students, the status of being "not quite a real teacher" and the resultant insecurity. Still, 20 of the 39 cases had a positive ending: That is, it can be said that the trainees, through their efforts, mastered the situation and shared a positive emotion with the reader. Eight cases ended on a negative note, with descriptions of failure. Nevertheless, even in these cases the student was usually able to analyse the failure, citing both objective factors (such as lack of information about the pupils' background) and subjective factors (such as stage fright) that contributed to the situation. Therefore these trainees will likely be able to avoid repeating their unfortunate experiences.

Analysis of Cases

I assessed the students' analytical abilities as follows: 10 cases were excellent, 19 were good, and 10 were marked satisfactory. An excellent teaching case was one that adhered to the prescribed format, with a clearly described situation and an analysis that took into account various perspectives. In some cases the students' analyses referred to the professional literature on methodology. This, naturally, had a positive effect on my evaluation of their work.

The works assessed as satisfactory failed to reflect the connections between the author's line of reasoning and the described situation, and were found lacking in clarity of thought and wording, but they still presented a situation worthy of consideration. Many of the cases made for exciting reading. Some of the more intriguing titles: A Troublesome Pupil; Environmental Protection Fails; The Conquest of the Star; The Ancient World or the Adventures of Xena, War-

rior Princess; It Could Have Been Worse; Teacher, Are You a Spy?; Chaos or Experiment; and In Vino Veritas?

Teaching Cases and the Teacher Training Lecturer

For the instructor, assessing student writing is also an indirect form of self-assessment. As a teacher educator, I derive extensive information about the abilities of the students, their problems and attitudes, from reading their case studies. This helps me decide which areas or topics to emphasize in future lectures. These case studies have also led me to reconsider certain aspects of my own teaching:

- I teach the so-called standard models of lesson-planning and teaching/learning strategies, but I have not devoted much attention to dealing with the unexpected. In the future I must pay more attention to atypical situations, to help my trainees develop flexibility.
- Despite the fact that all theoretical courses stress that the teacher should "observe the student and consider his or her reactions," we need to add practical examples and discussion of this point.
- Trainees need more discussion about their unique status/role at school during the practice period. This role should also be discussed with the supervisors who direct the trainees' work in the schools.
- The quality of the practice-teaching experience depends to a large extent on the quality of the trainee's communication with the supervisor, school administration, and other school workers.

Teaching cases are an incredibly rich source of such information.

As we as teacher educators incorporate teaching cases into our own research or practice, we could benefit by considering the following questions:

- What areas cause the most difficulties for the trainee in the course of practice teaching?
- At what level are the trainees best able to describe and analyse their experience?
- Can trainees explore connections between pedagogical theory and practice?
- Which thoughts and themes from their pedagogy courses have been most influential?
- What are the attitudes of the trainee towards school and the profession?
- What is the attitude of the schools toward the teacher trainees? What limits are placed on their activities? In what areas do trainees have limited or no access?
- How can case studies (through indirect references) be used to learn more about the school culture in general?

An additional benefit: In working with case studies, the teacher educator assembles a collection of incidents and stories that can be used as a teaching resource in the future.

We need to remember that a single case does not provide an adequate basis for assessing a teacher trainee's professional development, since it identifies only one particular moment in the process of becoming a teacher. Further research could be conducted, however, using teaching cases written by teachers who have worked for a year, three years, and so on, which would enable us to follow the continuing process of professional development.

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Reflections

Teachers Talk…

Olga A. Meyer

We want our students to think independently and come up with original ideas. We want them to speak freely and fluently. We want them to be interested in their studies. We want…but here we throw up our hands—it just isn't happening! The students are immature and unmotivated; they cut classes and are rude to their teachers. Do we blame all this on punk rock culture and the influence of other fringe elements?

As teachers, we do our best. We prepare for class, seek out interesting materials for our students. So what is the problem? We admit that we need to re-examine the instructional process. So programs are restructured. Pedagogical theories wax and wane. But now let's give some thought to how we teachers interact with the actual students in our classrooms. Let's paint a verbal portrait of a teacher. Maybe this will shed some light on the question Why don't students think independently and speak freely?

A teacher comes into the classroom, and immediately launches into a flurry of verbal activity. In the course of 45 minutes we teachers manage to ask questions, convey new information, and review old material. During these activities we demand various specific responses from students: intellectual ("Be sure to remember this!") and physical ("Underline the following…"). We manage to appeal to their consciences ("How dare you…!"), praise them, and scold them. We interact both with individual students ("Ivanov, how much is…?") and with the class as a whole ("OK, everyone look at the board!") You might even say that the teacher is a sort of one-man band. Classroom teaching is a specific kind of instructional interaction. Even among instruction-based communicative situations—lectures, seminars, study groups, private tutoring—the school classroom occupies a special place. When we enter the classroom, we speak in a completely different manner from the way we would speak to colleagues in the teacher's lounge or to relatives in our homes. Even our one-on-one conversations with our students have a different tone from our classroom speech.

> *Now let's give some thought to how we teachers interact with the actual students in our classrooms*

The specific features of this classroom speech are evident on various linguistic levels. For example, teachers tend to use certain grammatical forms. To initiate activities in the class, we like to use the inclusive imperative: "Now let's all pay close attention to the teacher (to me!)"; or other inclusive forms: "Now we all need to quiet down here!" These sorts of constructions would never be heard outside the classroom. Similarly, teachers' questions to students often have a peculiar syntax: "And the plants started to grow where?" "And we indicate the adverbs how?"

However, it is in the contour of the phrases (the prosody) that the peculiarity of teachers' speech is especially evident. These peculiarities can be shown with examples of basic speech acts: statements, questions, and commands. The

following observations are based on audio recordings from school classrooms, as well as the author's observations of her own speech in the classroom. So, let us listen to ourselves.

Statements

The predominant speech act in the classroom is statements made by the teacher. The teacher speaks in declarative sentences when explaining new material, quizzing students, checking homework assignments. A teacher's statements are different from ordinary informational utterances, primarily because the teacher is reiterating already-known facts (when Pushkin was born, how to reduce fractions, etc.). This very situation precludes creative, critical processing of the information. Neither the teacher nor the student is approaching the information in terms of a problem. When we talk to one another in everyday conversation, we provide specific information as requested by our conversational partners. Students, on the other hand, are expected by their teachers to "absorb" everything.

Teachers make various kinds of statements, and their speech strategies are likewise varied.

For example, when explaining new material, the teacher stresses the important information.

> So, in the Russian language there are **three basic tenses**. As you know, Russian speakers are lucky in this regard. We have just three tenses altogether, while in English, as you know, there are four different forms of the past tense alone. And we have just one. Now, French has five past tenses. And there is even a tribe in Papua New Guinea whose language has ten tenses. Imagine how complicated that would be! So remember, we Russians are lucky!

There is one statement that carries the primary information, shown in bold face type: "in the Russian language there are **three basic tenses**." A statement conveying this type of important information is characterized by a high degree of speech activity on the part of the teacher, expressed through the prosody. In the given instance the teacher emphasizes each important word. Each word has a separate intonational stress. It is as if the teacher is verbally drumming the information into the students' heads.

The information about other languages is supplementary, so the teacher gives the students a chance to relax a little. The rhetorical tension lessens, and the teacher adopts a more light-hearted, familiar tone (phrases such as "we Russians are lucky"; "Imagine how complicated that would be!" and even "a tribe in Papua New Guinea" contribute to a sense of relaxation).

Here is another example:

> "In English, names of nationalities and languages are **ca–pi–ta–lized**."

Here the most important part of the statement is a single word. But if we want to "drum it in" we emphasize every individual syllable. (In ordinary speech there is a single intonational center for the entire sentence.)

Of course, we'll achieve our objective: The students will remember those capital letters or verb forms. Even if they don't understand them, that verbal signal will always raise a red flag, and the fact thus marked will be permanently etched in their memories. But this is not knowledge that they have obtained on their own—it has been handed to them, wrapped up and tied with a bow.

So the question arises: Would it be possible to speak differently? Of course it would (although this article will not attempt to propose a methodology for doing so).

A lesson plan is a strategy for live interaction. In class people talk about trivia, make jokes, contradict one another.

Let us observe how a teacher contradicts popular opinion regarding fame and talent when talking about Lewis Carroll:

> Carroll taught mathematics at Oxford University. Physicists make discoveries about physics, and biologists about biology. But it was not as a **mathemati[/]cian** that Carroll made his mark.

After noting that Carroll was a mathematician, the teacher introduces the "unexpected" fact: "it was not as a mathematician that Carroll made his mark." Popular opinion is wrong! We are contradicting it! Study of English prosody shows that polemic is marked by elevated pitch on the stressed syllable of the key word. And indeed the teacher

uses a sharply elevated pitch when relating an argumentative, unexpected fact. The teacher's intonation alerts his listeners to the polemical nature of the statement. The statement comes across as lively and energetic. This is not to suggest that every teacher will use identical prosody in this context, but rather that such material will be presented with a distinctive intonation so as to encourage controversy.

Now let us look at how a teacher takes issue with something a student has said. The teacher's objection can be expressed either gently, offering a correction, or emphatically, as an order. We will consider both possibilities.

> Teacher: What gas is released by the process of photosynthesis?"
> Student: Nitrogen.
> Teacher: No, not nitrogen. It's **o—xy–gen**.

The teacher draws out the "o"("ah") in "oxygen," as though giving the student time to recognize his error.

In the case where a teacher is voicing his or her objection insistently and authoritatively, the linguistic strategy changes. Let's look at an example. A student has answered the question, "Where is the Nile river?" incorrectly. The correct answer is Africa. Insisting upon this answer, the teacher increases the level of rhetorical activity. This is done via a typical means of increasing pressure on the listener, using syllable-by-syllable stress on the word in question. All three syllables receive virtually equal emphasis.

> Teacher: Where is the Nile River?
> Student: South America.
> Teacher: No! You should know where the Nile River is. In **Af**–**ri**–**ca**.

Which method of voicing objection is better? That depends on what sort of relationship we establish with our students. My only advice is: Listen to yourself, analyze your sentence intonation, be as critical of your own speech as you are of your students'. (Imagine one of your students speaking to you with word-by-word or syllable-by-syllable stress: "I'm telling you, Mrs. Miller, **I lost my note-book!** Have I made myself clear?"

Now let us analyze how we ask questions in class.

Questions

When a teacher asks a student a question in class, it is not a normal question. In fact, it is far from normal. Actually it is not even a question! When we ask someone directions to the subway station, or the cost of a pound of cheese, we are asking something we really do not know. But as teachers, when we come into class and ask a student when Pushkin was born, or what "x" equals, we are actually asking something completely different. We are asking whether the student knows the answer. And although all teachers' questions share this trait—that they are not genuine questions—they come in many different varieties.

When quizzing students directly, we pose questions differently from when we introduce a question in passing, in the course of an explanation. In addition, there are requests masquerading as questions, and prompts masquerading as questions. Each has a specific function in the classroom, and they have very different intonational contours. Some examples follow.

> In our last lesson we were talking about parts of speech. So, **what–is–a–verb?**

Every word of the question is accented, and the pace slows. This draws attention to the significance of the question. It is our opinion that the students should know the answer to the question, and we demand it from them by means of ponderous rhetoric. Are these same means used in ordinary speech? Of course, in another context that presumes both an inequality between the participants in the dialogue, and an obligation to answer: "The defendant will answer the question: **Where–were–you–that–afternoon?**"

When we are explaining new material we pose our questions differently. We do not wish to disturb the tempo of our speech, so a question might be posed as an aside. Such question introduced in passing has a lesser status, and the teacher delivers it quickly [q], at a low pitch [L]. Students are expected to answer immediately, from their seats. For example:

The Roman and Carthaginian armies met at Cannes. By the way, who was the leader of the Roman army? [q, L]. Let's quickly go over that.

This kind of question may even be inserted in the middle of a sentence, and pronounced very quickly.

Here are two simple clauses—do we need a comma? [q]—that are joined by the conjunction "and."

Thus the listeners are held in the ongoing narrative mode. Is that a good thing? It is, in my opinion. In this way the teacher maintains the flow of the presentation.

Sometimes the teacher switches to a particular kind of cooperative dialogue with students. In place of traditional demands, s/he uses gentle requests, which are a sort of linguistic mask. This approach is usually used with elementary school students. In this style, wh-questions are marked by a lowering of the voice, with a rising pitch [/] on the question word.

In the fairy tale Prince Ivan met a wolf, and he helped the wolf. Now why-y[/] did he help the wolf? What do you think?

Finally, we turn to questions that are actually prompts, which are very typical of teachers' speech. Let's look at an "or" question:

Did Archimedes determine that buoyancy depends on weight or on <u>vol</u>–<u>ume</u>?

The teacher hints at the correct alternative ("volume"), emphasizing it by means of tone: the word is pronounced more slowly, with a falling pitch.

Another question containing a hint:

A triangle has two equal angles. Is it an **i**-<u>sos</u>[/]-**celes** triangle?

Here the stressed syllable is drawn out and marked by a rising pitch. Question asked and answered!

Commands and requests

In our classrooms we are constantly telling students what to do: write, don't write, listen, answer, underline, no talking. The speech act for all of these activities is the imperative, or command. In some classes, a quiet tone may suffice to convey the teacher's desires; in others, the teacher must expend considerable effort to overcome the students' resistance. So we know that in class "A" we may speak softly; but class "B" requires a different rhetorical tool kit—we need to take an active and assertive role, and not let them get away with anything. Again the means of control is tone of voice. The more active the teacher's rhetorical stance, the more intensively he or she makes use of various intonational tools.

So, for example, in giving directions the teacher emphasizes each word:

Mark the **ac**-cented **syl**-lable in **ev**-ery **word**.

In the following example, the teacher is calling for attention. The speech strategy here is different.

Now, pay at-**te–n**-tion!

The accented syllable in "attention" is said more slowly, with a higher pitch. Also, the teacher pronounces the entire phrase more loudly and intensely.

What other prosodic means do we resort to when we are implicitly demanding submission? We emphasize every word, "drumming it in," increasing the range of pitch within the phrases and increasing the volume, adding additional syllabic stresses [\]. You will have no trouble recognizing these examples:

Stop[\] that[\] noise[\]!
Let's[\] get[\] star[\]-ted here[\]! Move[\] a[\]-long[\], please[\]!

Another verbal signal teachers may use is to change to a higher or lower pitch. To point out an error on the board, the teacher might switch to a lower pitch.

Now look at the board! [low] See what Billy wrote? Is that right?

The low tone marks this as a negative evaluation, and everyone understands that what is written on the board is incorrect.

A higher pitch is used to draw attention to positive information.

Now see this? [high] I've written "Earth" with a capital letter!

The duration of a word can also be verbal tool, used to emphasize means of action. For example, to introduce an extended activity we might prolong the vowel sound in a command:

Do you all have your pens? OK, le–t's write!

On the other hand, to indicate that an action must be performed quickly, the teacher may introduce it by "giving an order," sharp, short, and intense [*], perhaps even accompanied by an imperative gesture:

Begin writing now! [*]

Conclusion

Speech acts in the classroom—statements, questions, commands—are quite distinctive. They are marked as conveying a didactic purpose. The marking is evidenced in the prosody. The examples presented here are by no means an exhaustive list of all the rich prosodic resources employed by teachers.

The intention of this article has been to draw a linguistic portrait of a teacher and thus to encourage teachers to reflect on how they speak to students in the classroom. It is quite possible that teachers will recognize themselves in this portrait and smile—either proudly or ironically.

> *Listening to our own patterns, let us ask ourselves, Who am I? The teacher as commander-in-chief, or the teacher as collaborator?*

Although I am a teacher myself, in no way would I contend that any particular prosodic resources—resources that we all use in conversation—are absolutely **in-ap-pro-pri-ate** in the classroom!

At the same time, a teacher's speech is not some sort of specialized language. The prosodic resources discussed above are an integral part of our everyday speech: We often employ word-by-word stress (*The dead[\]line is[\] tomor[\]row!*); we prolong vowels (*I won't tell a—nyone.*); we bark out commands (*Get to work!**) These prosodic resources are everywhere, but in the speech of teachers they are highly concentrated. In the limited space of this article, I have tried to show the intonational richness of teachers' speech, the vivid and assertive use of rhetorical tools in the classroom setting.

Let us listen to ourselves. Each linguistic portrait will be dominated by some particular prosodic patterns, and these patterns will reflect the pedagogic strategies favored by that individual teacher.

Listening to our own patterns, let us ask ourselves, Who am I? The teacher as commander-in-chief, or the teacher as collaborator?

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Lessons

Exploring Values in Popular Music

Nancy Douglas, Maysam Baydoun, and Lydia Falk

Popular culture, and popular music in particular, is a powerful force in shaping the lives of students. In some cases, music and celebrities exert more influence on shaping children's identities than does the school curriculum. By bringing popular media into the classroom for critique and reflection, educators may begin to bridge the gap between "real life" and "school life." But how might teachers use lyrics, music, and images of artists to promote critical thinking and active learning? Is popular music, in fact, worth using?

In their book, *Popular Culture in the Classroom: Teaching and Researching Critical Media Literacy*, Alvermann, Moon, and Hagood note that "To be literate in today's highly complex and technologically advanced society, it is important to read the signs of our times with a critical awareness that is equally applicable to school-sanctioned texts and those of contemporary culture" (1999, p. 10). As a professor of literacy, I wanted to encourage some of my students to become involved in some aspect of critical media literacy, to help them see this area of study as a legitimate exploration of the authentic literacies of today's youth. This article describes an action research project I conducted with two of the graduate students that sheds light on the questions raised above.

Participants

The middle school in which we worked is located in the city of Dearborn, Michigan, just outside metropolitan Detroit in the U.S. In the past 50 years, thousands of Middle Eastern people have immigrated to the area. In fact, Dearborn now has more Arab American residents than any other community in the United States. The student population of this middle school is approximately 66% Arab American and 32% Caucasian American.

The classroom teacher involved in this project, Mrs. Maysam Baydoun, was born in Beirut, though her family moved to Dearborn when she was six months old. Mrs. Baydoun is "bicultural" in that she has participated in both American and Arabic cultures her entire life. In her classroom, she addresses the importance of respecting differences in culture and values, not only through her choice of materials and assignments, but through discussions about the religious and cultural differences in the surrounding community. The other researchers, including the main author, were Caucasian, and we shared a belief in the value of respecting cultural differences.

Getting Started

We kept three principles in mind as we planned the project. One, espoused by Fiske (1989), is that young people are not the gullible consumers of popular culture adults often make them out to be. Rather, they accept or reject music and other trends according to their own background experiences, values, and the surrounding social milieu. Therefore, we wrote our discussion questions to encourage the students to use their backgrounds and values in interpreting the artists' songs and images and to use these interpretations to guide their judgments.

We also sought to create an environment in which the students could freely exchange their ideas about various artists. Knowledge about popular culture, we believe, is socially constructed and is the "natural way" in which we form opinions about the media. For this

reason, focused discussions were teacher facilitated but not teacher led. Moreover, we were careful not to interject our personal likes or dislikes.

Our third undergirding principle centered on our commitment to the open exchange of information and ideas. There is some risk in asking students to critique artists whose music they enjoy. We were careful in our selection of artists to include performers students said they liked as well as those they disliked. Knowing that students often tell teachers what they think they want to hear, we informed the students that they didn't know what we wanted to hear and that we expected them to be truthful in their responses.

Lesson Planning

To make sure that the lessons and activities would teach the state-mandated curriculum, we examined the Michigan English Language Arts Standards and identified five that could be addressed by critical media literacy lessons. Additional descriptions of critical literacy helped us develop two other goals, perhaps more specific to what we were trying to accomplish. Therefore, we decided to use the Michigan standards and the two additional descriptors in formulating the following list of critical thinking indicators:

1. Investigate through literature and other texts various examples of distortion and stereotypes. Examples include those associated with gender, race, culture, age, class, religion, and handicapping conditions (Michigan Department of Education, 2000).
2. Synthesize content from multiple texts representing varied perspectives in order to formulate principles and generalizations (Michigan Department of Education, 2000).
3. Analyze themes and central ideas in literature and other texts in relation to their own lives (Michigan Department of Education, 2000).
4. Develop critical standards based on aesthetic qualities and use them to explain choices in reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and representing (Michigan Department of Education, 2000).
5. Examine texts by asking questions such as "how is this text trying to position me?" (Luke & Freebody, 1997)

6. Reflect upon incongruous perspectives (Lewisen, Leland, & Harste, 2000).

We began by conducting a survey in Mrs. Baydoun's 7th grade class of the children's musical likes and dislikes (see Figure 1). Analysis of the completed surveys revealed that the tastes of these 12- and 13-year-olds were diverse; favorite genres ranged from pop (Britney Spears, Pink, Jennifer Lopez, Destiny's Child, *NSYNC) to alternative (Linkin Park) to rap (Nelly). We decided to include all of these artists in order to foster comparisons in values suggested by the artists' images and lyrics. In another year or another place, different artists or different types of music might become the subject of such lessons. The main point is that throughout the world, the media offers teachers material that can be used to help students explore their own values and those that are evident in the culture at large.

Figure 1 Music Survey

Name_____

Write the name of your three favorite artists or bands and explain why you like these artists or bands.

1) Band/Artist
   Why I like this band or artist

2) Band/Artist
   Why I like this band or artist

3) Band/Artist
   Why I like this band or artist

Write the name of your three <u>LEAST</u> favorite artists or bands and explain why you dislike these artists or bands.

1) Band/Artist
   Why I <u>dislike</u> this band or artist

2) Band/Artist
   Why I <u>dislike</u> this band or artist

3) Band/Artist
   Why I <u>dislike</u> this band or artist

We gave the students the option of using their own values to think critically about the artists. Specifically, we asked them to (a) compare the artists' lyrics with their images, (b) identify values suggested by the artists' lyrics and images, and (c) compare their own values with the values suggested by the artists' lyrics and images or discuss the influences these artists were having on adolescents. Just as important to us as teachers was another goal: We wanted the learners to have an opportunity to engage in expository writing.

Days One and Two: Introducing the Topic, Viewing, Listening, and Journaling

Mrs. Baydoun told the students that they would be examining and writing about some of the musical artists they listed on the music survey. She urged the students to freely express their ideas and told them that the unit would culminate in essay writing. The first day the students were shown several Power Point images of Britney Spears, Destiny's Child, Jennifer Lopez, and Pink (all downloaded from the Internet). They also listened to and read the words to songs performed by these artists. Then, the students were asked to respond to the following questions in their journals:

1) What music celebrity would you like to spend the day with and why?
2) List at least 3 questions you would ask him or her.
3) What celebrity best represents you and your values? Why?
4) What 3 qualities about this person especially represent you?
5) What celebrity does not represent you and your values? Why?
6) What 3 qualities about this person are especially unlike you?
7) What do these answers tell you about the qualities you value in others?
8) What do these answers tell you about the qualities you value in yourself?

The same process was repeated using the male artists *NSYNC, Linkin Park, and Nelly.

Day Three: Whole Class Discussion

Class discussions, which followed journal writing, focused on comparing and contrasting artists, comparing messages derived from song lyrics, and considering whether or not the artists were good or bad role models. Because I facilitated two of these discussions, Mrs. Baydoun was able to take notes and reflect on what had occurred: Through this work I gained insight into students' perceptions and their ability to think critically about media. In regard to Pink and Britney Spears, students emphasized the relevance of knowing whether the artists wrote their own songs. The students believe that artists who write their own songs are more credible, and artists who allow someone else to write their songs don't really care about the message of the song. Students repeatedly expressed their admiration for Pink's individuality. In contrast, Britney Spears was criticized for her changing images. For example, Britney had an innocent image for "Sometimes I Run," but a bad-girl image for "I'm a Slave for You."

One student commented, "Britney is supposed to be a virgin, but I don't think she is because of her image." This comment prompted students to share additional thoughts such as, "What kind of virgin sings, 'I'm a Slave for You' or 'Hit me, baby, one more time'?" Students noted the strategies used by Pink and Britney Spears to get attention. They described Spears as "provocative," and said that she attracted little girls and guys her age. They described Pink as a "real" type of person that girls could relate to. Students shared a myriad of possible reasons why Pink would sing a song about hating herself. Some possible reasons included the following: (a) It was simply a good topic for a song, (b) she may have known someone who felt this way, (c) she based the song on the way others treated her, or (d) she possibly just sang this song to win an award and make money. One student said she related to J. Lo because she would marry someone for love. In response to this comment, one girl exclaimed, "How do you know it is not just a song?"

In writing their essays, the students were encouraged to think about the comments made by their peers during the discussion. We, the researchers, used the six indicators to gain insight into the extent to which the learners engaged in critical thinking.

Figure 2 Essay Questions:

Read the choices below. Select one question to answer in a five-paragraph essay. Think about our class discussion, what you wrote in your journals, and choose the question you are most comfortable with.

1) Compare and contrast Pink, Britney Spears, and Destiny's Child, or just two of these artists. Think about their images, their song lyrics, and anything else you may know about them. Tell how they are alike, how they are different, or both.

2) Compare and contrast Linkin Park, *NSYNC, and Nelly, or just two of these artists. Think about their images, their song lyrics, and anything else you may know about them. Tell how they are alike, how they are different, or both.

3) Who is a better role model: Pink, Britney Spears, or Destiny's Child, and why? Support your position with the images they project, their song lyrics, and anything else you know about them.

4) Who is a better role model: Linkin Park, *NSYNC, or Nelly, and why? Support your position with the images they project, their song lyrics, and anything else you know about them.

5) Which celebrity or celebrities do you relate to? In what ways do you specifically relate to them? Use specific examples from their images and song lyrics to support your answer.

6) Think about the core values: integrity, respect for self and others, responsibility, and honesty. Which of the celebrity(ies) seems to stand for one or more of these values? Support your answer with information about the celebrity including images and/or lyrics and anything else you know about them.

Are They Thinking Critically?

What follows are excerpts of the students' essays that exemplify one or more of our critical thinking indicators as described above. All students' names are pseudonyms.

If readers are not familiar with these artists and wish to follow our students' discussion more carefully, they can check the relevant websites, although again, the artists themselves are less important than the critical discussion they evoked.

Fatima (Question 3)

In Britney's song "I'm a slave for you" the message is really bad in my opinion because women shouldn't be slaves to men. In addition Britney is starting to dress more inappropriately. For example when on stage her clothes are ripped and most of her body is showing. The problem with this is that some kids are starting to dress like her…. Destiny's Child is the best role model for young girls because most of their songs are about how women are strong. For example in their song "Survivor" the song says that women can survive by themselves. I think Pink is a bad role model because she is always depressed in pictures and TV. My other reason for saying that Pink is a bad role model is because like Britney Spears she dresses inappropriately. For example in one of her pictures her belly button is showing and in my culture girls aren't suppose [sic] to show their belly button. Also she is a bad role model because in some of her pictures she is showing hate and anger by ripping her clothes. In my opinion Pink is a bad role model and a bad singer.

Comments: Fatima has rejected the female stereotype of women being subservient to men (Indicator 1). Fatima has synthesized content from three songs and images in order to form generalizations (Indicator 2). She has related themes from these songs and images to her own life and values (Indicator 3). She has also developed her own critical standards to decide on which artist is an appropriate role model (Indicator 4). Finally, she has reflected on the contradictory messages sent by these musical artists (Indicator 6).

Sahar (Question 5)

In Pink's song "Don't Let Me Get Me" she sings about how she feels very ugly and that sometimes she can't stand herself and

her life. Most of the time that is how I feel. Pink is unique and I think that I am unique too. Britney Spears relates to me because of the song "I'm not a girl, not yet a woman." I sometimes feel that I'm a woman but I still act like a girl. Jennifer Lopez seems to be the kind of woman who looks for a man who makes her feel good; she doesn't look for someone who has a lot of money. I would choose a man that would take care of me instead of a man that would buy me things.

Comments: While only exemplifying Indicator 3, Sahar has been very thorough in relating each of the artists to her personal life.

Kathy (Question 4)

Pink definitely isn't afraid of what people think about her. Therefore many teenagers look up to her and try to be like her. Pink seems to express her true feelings by her songs. Even though she probably doesn't mean what she says, she puts a lot of passion in her songs to make them seem real. For instance in her song "Don't Let Me Get Me" the lyrics "I'm my own worst enemy, it's bad when you annoy yourself… so irritating…I don't wanna be my friend no more, I wanna be somebody else." In my opinion those aren't really true. Pink probably loves her life, being famous and all, but rather tries to relate the song to other people when they get down, or sad about themselves. When the public looks at an image of a pop star they get first impressions. They can guess how that person's personality is just by looking at their facial expressions. An image can tell personality, but at the same time it can be deceiving. For example, if Britney Spears was wearing a halter, and some tight jeans for her new video "I'm a Slave for You" people would get the idea that she's sassy, but in real life she could be a real nice person and not really care for that "sassy" look. In her songs, Pink expresses her dislike for herself, and how she may feel alone at times when nobody can understand her. At times I can very well relate to that where as she says "everyday I fight a war against a mirror, I can't take the person staring back at me." Even though Pink doesn't really mean that, sometimes it means a lot just to hear that someone else feels the same way.

Comments: Kathy demonstrates Indicator 1 by saying that female artists "play up" a provocative image to cater to what the audience wants. She achieves Indicator 2 in her comparison of Britney Spears and Pink. She relates to Pink's lyrics, exemplifying Indicator 3. Indicator 5 is evident in Kathy's discussion of how these artists play the roles their audience expects of them. Finally, Indicator 6 is achieved through Kathy's comparisons of Britney's and Pink's images.

Carl (Question 4)

Many of today's recording artists have traded values for recording sales. Even though swearing is beeped out in the songs on the radio, you still get the point of what was said. Not only are the foul words not necessary, but singing of drug use isn't either. Nelly sings about getting high in more than one of his songs. One example is "light it up and take a puff, pass it to me now." Listeners of Nelly's lyrics hear many phrases like this. The negative influences are also heared [sic] in Nelly's descriptions of women in his songs. Women have been called "hoes" and "b——es." Not only are they referred to these words but they are also seen as only good for sex. Linkin Park is my choice of a role model. Their songs are not offensive to hear.

Comments: Carl has conveyed a sense of the male stereotyping common in the images projected by male artists, in this case rap versus alternative (Indicator 1). He has developed his own critical standards to make a judgment regarding what a good role model should be (Indicator 4). Moreover, Carl has noticed the contradictory perspectives projected by Nelly and Linkin Park (Indicator 6).

Patty (Question 1)

Pop stars are one of the most influential types of celebrities out there right now since so many people are listening to their songs, watching their music videos, and going to their concerts. Their outfits (Britney Spears and Destiny's Child) are often very sleazy and revealing and are not meant to be worn everyday. Pink fans also like the fact that they can relate to her songs like "Don't Let Me Get Me." This song is about someone struggling to accept them self [sic] for who they are, a problem many people face. If you sat down and listened to the message the song is sending, you may have a new perspective on whose music you really like. Pink tries to send a message to her fans through her music that being different is OK and in fact a good thing. They [Pink's dance moves] were not provocative and inappropriate like Britney Spears' or Destiny's Child sometimes were. They were

just normal dance moves like you might see at a regular club. I think pop stars like Britney Spears and Destiny's Child should be more aware of the role models they are being to younger kids.

Comments: Patty recognizes the sexism portrayed in Britney's and Destiny's Child's dance moves and apparel (Indicator 1). She has synthesized information about these three artists and reached a generalization that Pink is a more appropriate role model (Indicator 2). Indicator 6 is indicated by Patty's noticing the contradictory messages being sent by both Pink and Britney.

Jason (Question 5)

Kids in middle school make a big deal about whose [sic] going out with who and whether you have a girlfriend or boyfriend or not. They so called "argue" over stupid things and think they're cool because they have a girlfriend. When they "break up" no one cares. It reminds me of the Linkin Park song "In The End." Because truly, "In the end, it doesn't even matter." In their pictures they seem gothic and scary, but honestly, they're just like your everyday people.

Comments: Jason has clearly related song lyrics to his own life and the lives of those around him (Indicator 3). He has also used his own critical standards in choosing Linkin Park as his favorite band (Indicator 4). He has also, to some extent, reflected on the contradictions set forth by Linkin Park's images versus their "true" personas (Indicator 6).

Conclusion

We were heartened by the confirmation of our belief that pre-teenagers are not mindless consumers of popular music. We were also encouraged by the way in which the students openly shared their likes and dislikes about these artists. Although some students vehemently disliked their classmates' favorites, the discussants were tolerant of each other's viewpoints. This, in itself, is a key element of critical thinking—the ability to listen to and tolerate opinions that conflict with one's own.

In an age when many think that young people rebel against the values of their parents to forge new identities for themselves, we were also struck by the degree to which students internalized their parents' values in deciding whether the artists were good or poor role models. In her essay, one student quoted the adult TV news show *20/20* which had done an exposé on Britney Spears and other artists. In supporting her thesis that Britney was not a good role model, she took on the opinions of the adults (mostly parents) who were interviewed on the show. This deference to the adult media, rather than the media geared toward teens, was interesting to note.

We believe that popular media can indeed be used to promote critical thinking and active learning. The students in our study were able to reflect upon the media that is targeted at them. The enthusiasm of the students as they discussed and wrote about these musical artists indicates that bringing "real life" into the curriculum is a worthy endeavor, not only to engage students in discussions, but also to enable them to think critically about their own media environment.

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Interview With Julian Nakov

Deputy Minister of Education, Bulgaria

Julian Nakov currently serves as *Deputy Minister of Education in Bulgaria; his role in the Ministry is to focus on secondary schools. Mr. Nakov began his teaching career in 1983, after graduating from Sofia University, where he majored in Bulgarian philology. From then until August 24, 2001, when he was appointed Deputy Minister, he taught Bulgarian language and literature in a secondary school. He also worked as a part-time Assistant Professor at Sofia University, Department of Literary Theory, Faculty of Slavonic Studies.*

Mr. Nakov has participated in the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) Project since 1997 and has served as a teacher, a trainer, and editor of the journal "Critical Thinking," the Bulgarian version of "Thinking Classroom."

Why do you believe you were chosen for your job in the Ministry?

It all began when Mr. Atanasov, the Minister of Education, asked me to join his expert team. What he made clear on a number of occasions was his intention to give a practicing teacher the chance to oversee and manage the functioning of secondary education, since a teacher would be most familiar with the workings of schools.

As far as talents and particular interests are concerned, I would say that I have surely spent the most active years of my life in school and I'm well acquainted with what goes on there. I would venture to say that the school system also knows and thinks well of me, my abilities, and talents—at least that's the feedback I get from the students, parents, and colleagues with whom I've worked.
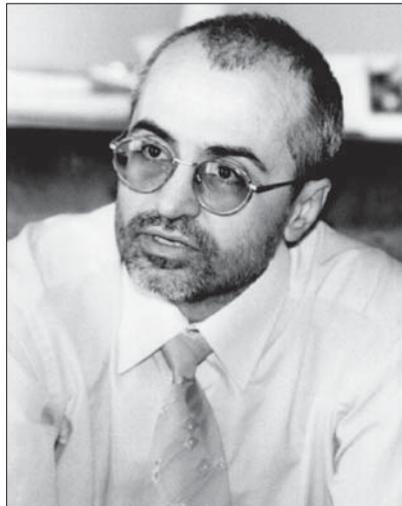
In terms of personal characteristics, I tend to be rather critical of myself and am always on guard against complacency. Learning for me is a lifelong endeavour. My present work puts me in the position of a learner rather than a "know-it-all" and I find this extremely rewarding. I believe that routine responses and activities that can be performed without thought are often the source of serious flaws in one's work. The need for new and creative solutions, that constant striving for success, is the position I prefer.

What are the educational challenges facing Bulgaria at this time?

Obviously critical are the problems and challenges of "integrated" education. We are at the very beginning of making the changes needed in the system. To date, there has been an unjustifiable segregation both of Roma children and of children with disabilities, and this segregation has hampered their development and limited their opportunities for growth. In the past few years of economic and political transition these pupils have faced many hardships.

The situation looks like this: Due to financial difficulties, Roma kids voluntarily enter schools for the mentally retarded

because there they get food and shelter for free. Disabled children, on the other hand, find themselves segregated because of limited mobility, unable to attend schools that are not handicapped-accessible. Segregation prevents both these groups from socializing and integrating into normal life. They have few opportunities to learn to adapt to life outside school…either now or in the future.

Segregation in the schools is exacerbated by what we term the "educational minimum." Currently teachers give exams and decide whether or not students have met state curricular standards; in the near future we will move to standardized tests to judge students' skills. In reality, this "minimum" is not realistic and is practically impossible to meet, even at the primary school level. Many people have expressed concern that adhering to such unrealistically high standards puts off those students who are less gifted. In other words, there's no chance for most children to find their achievements rewarding, and they come to view success in school as reserved only for the chosen few. Segregation, in this sense, arises partly from an excessive elitism. This problem must be tackled at a future stage. At this point in time, our goal is to lay the foundations of reform in educational policy, however slow and laborious the process might prove.

We can say that change is already under way, although only recently has it become an issue here. On an institutional level, at the start of this academic year, we will look closely and specifically at the problems encountered by children from ethnic minorities and those with special educational needs. In addition, a strategic program has been devised specifically geared to Roma children. The program is due to be widely discussed, and only then approved as an official document.

Another big issue for Bulgarian education has to do with working out an operational program and an educational strategy for the use of information and communication technologies (IT). The former ministerial team drew up a document similar to the one we are proposing, but it was not made known to the general public and, what's more, it has not been implemented. Ironically, according to their proposed schedule, all Bulgarian schools were to be fully computerized by the start of 2002/2003 academic year, which was hardly the case.

Moreover, some other serious problems in the system have been neglected for years. As early as 1991 major objectives were set for the development of uniform state educational standards for all aspects of secondary education. One of the pressing problems is teacher training and qualification. The Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) project, in which I myself have been lucky enough to work as a participant, is an outstanding example of a beneficial, practically oriented teacher-training program, rated highly by teachers of different subjects across the curriculum. However, much to the regret of the teachers who have experienced the program, the appropriate state officials and institutions have not adopted it as a model worth implementing and replicating on a wider scale.

What do you see as the major accomplishments of RWCT in Bulgaria?

So far, the major accomplishment of the program in Bulgaria has been the bringing together of a team of people who share common objectives despite divergent interests. They are well regarded in their respective fields and have considerable experience working to publicize the program and training second-generation participants in it.

Another important area of achievement concerns creating and publishing textbooks and teacher's manuals that are used in schools across the country. The first of these was a methodological guide for teachers of Bulgarian literature. It is based on specific authors and works that are a mandatory part of the curriculum. The guide includes concrete suggestions for interactive and student-centered teaching and learning. The next book was a philosophy textbook, followed a year later by a philosophy reader, authored by two practicing teachers—an RWCT trainer and certifier, and one of his trainees. The reader consists of original texts, each accompanied by practical suggestions for additional study. It is organized according to the methodological foundations of the RWCT project.

Last but not least, we are proud of the great number of student teachers at the University of Veliko Turnovo who have been exposed to the RWCT methodology

and have started introducing it in their teaching practice. There is a ripple effect—as the student teachers work in the schools, under the guidance of their university professor who is an RWCT trainer and certifier, the regular schoolteachers also get introduced to methods associated with critical thinking and active learning, even though they have not been specifically trained.

However, there's a lot of work remaining and the major achievements are still to come. The great delay in introducing the program on a wider scale in Bulgaria is due to a lack of institutional support from the Ministry of Education over the past few years.

What can you tell us about the Bulgarian Reading Association?

The newly established Bulgarian Reading Association will also have to take its rightful place as an organization involved in the research and dissemination of innovative teaching methods. Presently, a large number of its members are RWCT participants. They hope that through BulRA their work in introducing the program to a wider audience will finally achieve its overriding objective— raising the RWCT program to the status of a teacher-training course in the framework of the official teacher certification system in Bulgaria.

A change in the mechanisms of teacher training and certification is due and, hopefully, it will lay the foundations of a market for educational services in Bulgaria. I strongly believe that with the help of our U.S. consultants for the joint project "Modernization in Education," funded by the World Bank, these long-awaited changes will take effect as early as this academic year. I do hope that all this will happen, and that it will lead Bulgarian education in the direction of modernization and democratic reform, and initiate Bulgarian educators into the internationally accepted best practices in the field.

How does the Ministry work with teacher-training institutions? What are the over-riding goals for this work?

Unfortunately, it seems that for years the overriding goal of both sides has been self-preservation rather than adaptation to change. That is why there is a mismatch between supply and demand for teacher-training services, and a mismatch between the services offered and present-day realities in the schools. There is a need for radical change in the teacher-training system, which currently involves the Ministry of Education and the teacher-training departments alone. We should strive for flexibility, efficiency, and modernization, in accordance with the needs of educators. No doubt, the RWCT project could play a key role in cracking the conservative mindset on a wider scale.

How might an administrator foster critical thinking and active learning in schools and universities?

Simply by not standing in the way of change. This might sound much too simplistic but I believe that not being an impediment to change is more than enough—the power of critical thinking is so great that it is virtually impossible to stop its expansion without purposefully trying to do so. This new approach based on problem solving, which relies on an individual's ability to analyse and reflect, either individually or as part of a team, is essential to the functioning of both secondary and higher education.

How does the "global community" affect your work and goals?

I feel a part of this global process, which makes me confident in my decisions and reinforces the need to push forward the agenda described above. The numerous contacts, the constant exchange of ideas, and our common commitment to the pressing problems of our times give all of us a sense of purpose and help to alleviate our sense of isolation and provincialism. Communicating globally saves us the time and effort of discovering long-established truths on our own and encourages us to learn from one another. Our situation today calls for pragmatism and teamwork; these will be the major achievements of our era.

What do you see as your own biggest or most important challenge?

What is most important for me is to continue being a teacher, even though my present job is mostly an administrative one. As I already mentioned, what brought me to the ministerial position in the first place was my place in the profession. That is why I am determined to do everything in my power to make Bulgar-

ian secondary schools better places for students, to provide a state-of-the-art working environment and to raise the qualifications and status of Bulgarian teachers. This is something that they deserve and expect as a reward for their largely selfless work during the past few years of hardship and economic crisis.

For the regular classroom teacher, what has changed in the past 10 years?

Unfortunately, the classroom teacher has had to face a lot of hardships in the past 10 years. The catastrophic slump in the standard of living and the severe economic crisis have led to the disillusionment of both young and old and greatly distorted their values. Far from being a haven in these circumstances, the school has suffered most from the social atmosphere in the face of this dramatic and ruthless deprivation.

One of the changes that has negatively affected the school system is the loosening of school discipline. Naturally, this happened as a result of the changes that took place in our society as a whole. The pendulum has swung from one extreme to the other. We are still searching for the right balance, the truly democratic model. School discipline should be maintained, a certain level of order is part of democracy and we definitely need it to ensure an efficient working environment. It is only natural that sometimes students, parents, and teachers react negatively when discipline is called for. This often presupposes some personal and behavioural changes, which might not always be pleasant but they are certainly beneficial.

I would like to mention some changes that, though incremental and slow, lead us in the direction of progress and reform. First, there has been gradual standardization of the evaluation and assessment of students in the secondary schools, one element of which is the introduction of compulsory national matriculation exams (final exams leading to the official granting of a high school diploma). Educational standardization is a relatively new model for us— it was launched only in 1999 with the development of the "state educational standards for the curriculum." Before then the only element of standardization had been the textbook. The process of reform, however, does not always go smoothly, and we face a number of challenges—people's fear of radical change, their unwillingness to take on responsibility, and their propensity to focus on narrow personal interests.

Bulgarian secondary schools are at a crossroad, characterized by an unwarranted nostalgia for the past, an irrational call for an illusory harmony, and a fear of the impending future for which we feel totally unprepared. It is extremely difficult to be a teacher under these circumstances—one lacks sound support but must still act as a source of strength for the students, who are badly in need of direction and encouragement. It is extremely difficult, but like everything else that is difficult in life it holds a certain attraction for those who carry the missionary spark. Even the smallest achievements are truly rewarding and make you feel the beauty of your calling.

Students in every generation are rebellious; they seek to break free from the past, to create an image of themselves that distinguishes them from the preceding generation. For this reason, young people tend to appreciate innovative teaching methods, and we in education seek to respond by introducing changes to the school curriculum. If we do not listen to their calls for a more responsive school environment, they may well begin to show disrespect to both teachers and the subject being taught. When students do not accept the teaching model in the classroom they might also become apathetic.

In spite of the above-mentioned difficulties, what makes me optimistic about the future is the fact that the school system never really ages because our students remain young. We emerge again and again like the Phoenix rising from its ashes. The dark overtones only serve to describe its current state, but they are not its essence. The young people of Bulgaria are calling for change and it will take place sooner or later. It is inevitable.

This interview was arranged and prepared by Lydia Dachkova, project director of the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Project in Bulgaria, and Milena Panayotova, Project Assistant with the Bulgarian Reading Association.
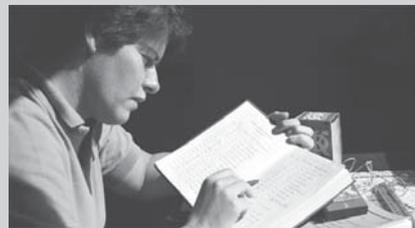
The Question Board

Charles Pearce

As children explore and play in their worlds, they use language to share their discoveries and to formulate new questions to investigate. The small child watching autumn leaves fall, turning to ask a parent, "What will happen to the leaves after they fall?" is using observation as well as language to help organize his search for information.

Questions come from many different places—materials that are of interest, surprising events, books, illustrations, conversations. For me, questions are at the heart of teaching. I want to capture and dignify children's authentic curiosities and the Question Board has been one way of doing just that.

"The best questions are your own questions" reads the Question Board in my room—a simple piece of laminated tag board about 24 x 36 inches [60 x 90 cm]. The board is posted in the classroom with an accompanying marker. A chalkboard or sticky notes could also be used—anything that allows for easy removal of old questions and addition of new questions.

The board is displayed in a prominent place in the classroom, and beginning on the first day of school the students are invited to write any questions that come to mind.

To get the process started I model for the students just how the Question Board can be used. On the first day of school I show the board to the class and describe its use, and then we go on to other activities. Among those activities is a read-aloud. Here is the perfect opportunity for students to see how I, as a reader, think in response to what is being read. I like to periodically stop and think, speaking while looking up at the ceiling as though the students were not even there. Usually my thoughts are some kind of question. One year our first read-aloud book was *A Dolphin Named Bob* by Twig C. George. The story begins with a dolphin being washed ashore during a storm. The storm's waves had left her stranded on a sand dune. I stopped reading and wondered aloud if it was unusual for dolphins to be washed ashore. I asked a student sitting near the Question Board to write my question along with my name. I then invited the students once again to add any questions that they might think of. That was all it took.

As I continued the read aloud, several students quietly went back to the Question Board to write their own questions. "How is it that dolphins live in the ocean but breathe air?" one wrote. "Can veterinarians take care of dolphins?" asked another. Some seemingly unrelated questions appeared. One student wrote, "How big can waves become and how do they form?" Within days the Question Board became nearly full with questions about dolphins as well as other topics about which the students were wondering. Small groups of students gathered around the board, reading and discussing the questions that were posted and adding new ones.

When the board is fairly full, I ask for a group of 2 or 3 volunteers to transcribe the questions and type them on a list to be distributed to the class. Once recorded, these initial questions are erased from the Question Board to make room for more queries.

We make use of the Question Board throughout the year. Not only does it provide a way for the children to publicly share the questions they have, but it also takes the pressure off of the teacher. Praising a student's question and suggesting that he/she record it on the Question Board offers a strategy for teachers who may not know or may not wish to offer answers. Personally, I want students to realize that they are capable of finding out what they want to know and that not all answers emanate from their instructor. The teacher can also use the Question Board to model his/her respect for thoughtful answers, noting that the first, easy answer is not always best, and that sometimes to answer a question one needs time. By using the Question Board, students are encouraged to put their oral questions into written form, write clearly, and use specific language. However, the greatest value of the Question Board lies in the many activities and insights that develop from these student-posed questions.

Having a readily accessible Question Board enables teachers to notice and track student queries. Some teachers have made note of the topics appearing on the Question Board and have placed selected books from the li-

brary near the board. It was interesting, they report, how many students "discover" the books and begin reading them for authentic purposes. Other students have used their queries to develop hands-on experiments—"Can you make chalk out of talcum powder?" And still others have been led to observe more carefully: "Can I predict when the sun will set on Wednesday if I observe when the sun sets on Monday and Tuesday?"

A colleague suggested transcribing the questions from the Question Board onto index cards and placing them in a box in the classroom. In this way, students who have completed their work early will have the opportunity to choose a question they might like to pursue. Alternatively, these index cards might be given out for homework. As students begin to gather information they can write what they have learned and the source they used to find it, so that others interested in the same topic can trace their intellectual steps.

Thus, in various classrooms, Question Boards have become communication centers in which language is used purposefully and interaction through conversation, reading and writing is enhanced. Not only are the questions saved, but the center becomes a place for students to further examine, analyze, investigate, and research possible answers. In my own classroom we often sort questions by type: Which questions are testable and which require book-based research? It is interesting to see how one question leads to another.

As a springboard for authentic writing, Question Boards provide several possibilities. A teacher and student may draw up a contract for a writing assignment that requires the student to select a question and then research and write a science article in which the question is answered. In the contract, the teacher specifies the ways a student may locate answers and document information. A contract may also provide scaffolding for writing a coherent article analyzing the information used in the answer. In my classroom, students' completed articles written under such contracts are made available for the class in a magazine format, with a student-designed cover. These articles are especially interesting for those who originally wrote the questions. Parent volunteers have graciously provided the help to col-

late and assemble the finished product.

Question Boards can also be used in other curricular areas. A mathematics teacher was so impressed by a students' query, "How many seconds are there in a year?" that she began a Question Board in her room. Nearby she set out rulers and a timer to help students in their calculations. In her case, she is as interested in the process as in the answer, so she has asked students to describe to another child how they might go about answering the question, rather than simply providing the answer.

In social studies or literature class, the Question Board may lead to important discussions of motive or "What would happen if…?" Questions posted are also an excellent source of topics for composition or subjects for debates.

Providing avenues in our classrooms that help students become better and more frequent questioners is an important part of the teacher's job. Learning how to question is an important step in the spiral of developing both literacy and thinking skills. In my classroom, use of the Question Board has been a vital means of linking questions posed by students to the literacy-based means of finding answers and gaining understanding.

Charles Pearce is a classroom teacher in Carroll County, Maryland, USA. He is the author of Nurturing Inquiry: Real Science for the Elementary Classroom *(Heinemann, 1999).*

Photo: Giedre Punkaite

Evaluating Web Sources for Research

Jill L. Hutchison

With computers in classrooms, libraries, and kids' bedrooms, students are relying more and more on the Internet and the World Wide Web for research projects. The Web has great potential as a powerful research and communication tool, bringing billions of pages of information from millions of sources around the world in reach of anyone with a computer and a modem. But how do your students use the Web for research? Do they log on, type "butterflies" in a search engine, click on some links, and seize upon the first web page they find with enough butterfly facts to fill a report? Is their only criteria "does it say what I need it to say?" and "is it easy to find?" Is the extent of their citations, "I found some information about butterflies on the Internet"? Do you worry that your students are swallowing bogus information, or that Internet research is too easy? That it's not *real* research?

What about you? Do you use websites as teaching tools, or as sources for lesson plans and supplemental information? How do you find the good sites among the garbage? How do you know you're using accurate information, when anyone who can type can publish anything they like online?

Teachers and students alike can raise the level of their Internet research by learning to carefully evaluate web sources. Take some time to ask critical questions about a web page you've found—

Is it authoritative, objective, accurate, reasonable, and built on solid sources? From the website evaluation checklist below, select and adapt the questions that are appropriate for your purpose and your students' level. Even very young students can learn to ask many of these questions in simple terms, and sharpen their comprehension and critical thinking in the process.

- Whose website is this?
  - Can you identify the author? Can you identify the organization sponsoring the website? If the author and/or sponsor are not clearly marked with a name and/or logo, is there a way to find out this information?
  - Is there any information about the author? The sponsoring organization? Look for biographical information, credentials, or an "about us" page.
  - Is the author or organization an *authoritative source* on the topic of the website? Do they know what they are talking about? The Chesapeake Bay Foundation's website is probably more authoritative than a "Bubba's Bay Facts" page assembled by some guy in a web-design class.

If you can't determine who wrote or sponsored a website, or whether they are qualified to write on the topic, then it is probably unwise to trust or use the information it contains.

- Is this website an objective source, or is it biased?
  - What is the purpose of this site? Was it written to inform, to sell a product or service, to persuade the reader, to change or form an attitude, for entertainment, or for some combination of purposes? Is it a joke, satire, or hoax?
  - Is there evidence of bias? Does the author or sponsor have a conflict of interest? If the author or sponsor seems to focus on or strongly favor one side or aspect of the topic, issue, or story, and leave out or downplay other perspectives; makes fun of, attacks, or exaggerates opposing points of view; uses strong persuading language; is trying to sell a product or service; or will otherwise benefit if you believe, follow, or act on what the website says—these are clues to beware of bias and look for additional sources.

- How accurate is this website?
  - How old is the information on this website, and how important is its age? Old sources, or undated sources, may be outdated even if they were carefully written and accurate when new. Try to check older sources against newer information. Timeliness is much more important for certain topics and types of information than for others; an essay about the seasons of the year from 1973 is probably still perfectly good, while a rating of the best new home computers written in 1999 is almost useless.
  - Are there mistakes in the information, data, or analysis

included in the website? Does part of it conflict with what you already know? Do the numbers add up?

- Is the website consistent? Does it say one thing in one place, and contradict itself in another?
- Does this information match up with other sources?
- Are there sloppy mistakes in spelling and grammar, missing sections and pictures, broken links, or other signs of carelessness? How confident are you that this website's author was careful, responsible, and knowledgeable?

- Is the information on this website reasonable?
  - Does it include overclaims, exaggerations, and sensational statements? ("Millions of American children are kidnapped every day!")
  - Does it make sweeping claims? ("This idea will revolutionize the widget industry!")
  - Does the author use strongly emotional language or images?

- Does the website make generalizations? Watch for statements with words like "never," "always," "everyone," "everyone who cares about___," "the entire Republican Party," etc.
- Does the author use vague terms like "thousands and thousands" instead of specific details?
- Does it make sense? Sometimes the truth is surprising, but claims and information that seem outrageous or even "just not quite right" need to be verified carefully.
- Are the arguments and conclusions logical?

- Does the website give evidence for claims and arguments? Are the sources of information identified?
  - Ask, "Who says so?" Where did the author get the information?
  - Is there a bibliography, endnotes, or in-line citations? Are the citations complete, or is important information about the sources missing? Statistics and factual data especially need cited sources.

- Can you find and check the sources? Are the sources authoritative, objective, accurate, and reasonable? Did the author represent them accurately?
- Are the sources balanced and diverse? If all of the information on a website comes from members of the same or related organizations, the information may be biased or incomplete.

Learning to evaluate websites and choose sources thoughtfully will elevate the level of student research projects, but also encourage close and careful reading, strengthen critical thinking, and reinforce other reading and writing concepts like persuasion and argument, the use of evidence, references and citation, and reading and writing for a purpose. If your students use the Web for research, take the time to model and teach this important skill.

There are many, many resources available online about evaluating Web sources. A few especially valuable sites include:

Eleanor DeWolfe Ludcke Library at Lesley University's "Evaluating Web Sites" page: http://www.lesley.edu/library/guides/research/evaluating_web.html

A "Web Criteria Unit" by Karen Carpenter, of the UMBC English Department: http://www.research.umbc.edu/~carpente/web_criteria_unit/web_criteria_unit_2.htm

"Evaluating Information Found on the Internet," from the Sheridan Libraries of the Johns Hopkins University: http://www.library.jhu.edu/elp/useit/evaluate/#top

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Who says so? Does the website cite the source?

"Increased amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are causing higher average temperatures around the world."

   -Unsupported statement

"According to the Environmental Protection Agency, increased amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are causing higher average temperatures around the world."

   -Better

"According to the EPA's 1999 report, *Greenhouse Gases and Global Warming* (citation follows), increased amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are causing higher average temperatures around the world."

   -Best

Announcements

13th European Conference on Reading:

Reading—Writing—Thinking will be held in Tallinn, Estonia, 6–9 July 2003. Themes include Literacy and Democracy, Multiculturalism and Language Learning, Literature and Libraries, Literacy and Technology, and Schools Where Literacy Thrives. The Conference is organized by the International Reading Association and the Estonian Reading Association (Eesti Lugemisühing). Registration deadline is 1 April 2003. For information visit http://www.konverents.ee/reading or e-mail reading@frens.ee

Summer Course for Teachers: Strategies Promoting Critical Thinking

Modern Didactics Center is now accepting applications for a summer course to be held 9–13 June 2003 in Trakai, outside Lithuania's capital city. The course, designed for educators who seek to support the democratization process through classroom instruction, will provide tools for reshaping classroom instruction to promote critical thinking and independent learning; and will also offer models and methods of staff development that can be used after the course is complete. The workshops are designed to model interactive instruction and learning. They are built around demonstration lessons, with opportunities for discussion, practice, and questions.

Maximum number of course participants is 25. Course price: 650 EUR. Teachers in EU countries (or EU candidate countries) may apply to their national Socrates agencies for a grant to attend this course. Application deadline 1 March 2003.

More information and registration forms are available in the Socrates course database (http://comcdb.programkontoret.se/CourseManagement/ASP/CourseSearch.asp) and on the home page of MDC http://www.vpu.lt/sdc

Contact information: Daiva Penkauskiene; e-mail: daiva.dc@vpu.lt

Call for Papers: EUROSLA 2003

Papers are invited on empirical and theoretical second language acquisition research for the Annual Conference of the European Second Language Association to be held in Edinburgh, UK, 19–21 September 2003. The Conference is organized by the University of Edinburgh and Heriot Watt University. Following association policy, EUROSLA 2003 will be a multilingual conference: Presentation in any European language is acceptable, although presenters should bear in mind the usefulness of attracting a wide audience for their ideas. A selection of the most innovative papers will be included in the EUROSLA Yearbook, published in English by the John Benjamins Publishing Co.

The selection of papers will be carried out anonymously and priority will be given to abstracts that can be identified with the conference theme "Formal and Functional Approaches to SLA," although other topics are also very welcome. Each author may submit no more than one individual and one co-authored abstract. The paper must not have been previously published. Deadline for abstract submissions is 31 January 2002. For more details concerning the conference venue, travel, and accommodation please refer to the Conference website: http://www.hw.ac.uk/langWWW/eurosla/ For more information on submission of abstracts see http://linguistlist.org/issues/13/13-2561.html#2

Call For Papers: Storytelling for Cultural Identity and Survival

Conference to be held 26–28 August, 2003 at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. The primary focus of this conference is the power of storytelling in the recuperation of memory, collective identity formation, resistance to globalitarian homogenization, and the prophecy of new horizons. All forms of storytelling—narrative (oral and written), performative, cinematic, musical, and hybrid as well as methodologies (linguistic, sociological, political, anthropological, etc.)—will be considered as long as they relate to the framework of cultural identity, survival, and freedom. Talks may be preformed as stories or presented as theoretical commentary.

The deadline for receiving abstracts and a concise bio is 31 January 2003. Abstracts should be sent to ics@www.brocku.ca

The 30th Finnish Conference of Linguistics

will be held in Joensuu (Finland) on 15–16 May 2003. The abstract (one-page, e-mail) submission deadline will be 1 February 2003. For preliminary information, please contact: KTP2003@joensuu.fi, or jussi.niemi@joensuu.fi.

Call for Papers: 10th International Conference "Crimea 2003":

Libraries and Associations in the Transient World: New Technologies and New Forms of Cooperation. This IFLA Conference, organized by the Russian National Public Library for Science and Technology, will be held in Sudak, Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine, 7–15 June 2003. Conference topics include: Worldwide Information Infrastructure and Interlibrary Cooperation in the Information Society; Information Support of Education and the Information Society; Libraries, Museums, and Archives in the Global Information and Cultural Environment; Children, Computers, and the Internet; and Problems of School Libraries. The Organizing Committee seeks original research and application-oriented papers, not previously presented elsewhere, which make new contribution to the Conference topics. You are invited to submit an abstract of your proposed paper for consideration by the Conference Program Committee in electronic form.

Conference languages: English, Russian, Ukrainian. The deadline for the receipt of abstracts is 15 March 2003. Details are available at http://www.gpntb.ru/win/inter-events/crimea2003/

Call for Papers: Caucasus & Central Asia in Globalization Process

Qafqaz University, with the support of the Azerbaijan Ministry of Education, is organizing an international conference on the topic "Caucasus and Central Asia in the Globalization Process," that is scheduled to be held in Baku, Azerbaijan, 12–13 May 2003. Transformation from strong central government and planned economy into democracy and free market economy requires institutional, structural and cultural reforms. The aim of this conference is to discuss in an academic environment the transition period of the Caucasus and Central Asia countries, their economic, political, and cultural changes and reform efforts, evaluation of the results and effects of the globalization process in the area.

Abstracts must be submitted by 3 February 2003. Presentations could be in Azery, Turkish, English, or Russian. For more information contact Osman Nuri Aras at aras@qafqaz.edu.az or Vefa Abbasova at vefanur@hotmail.com. The University website is www.qafqaz.edu.az

Call for Papers: 12th Workshop on Formal Approaches to Slavic Linguistics

will be held at the University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada, 9–11 May, 2003. Papers on all topics dealing with formal aspects of any area of theoretical Slavic linguistics (synchronic or diachronic) are welcome. Deadline for receipt of abstracts: 21 February 2003.

For further information on FASL-12 e-mail romlab@aix1.uottawa.ca

Website: http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~fasl12

Special Session on Slavic Psycholinguistics

As a one-time event, there will be a special poster session at FASL-12 on Slavic Psycholinguistics, including but not limited to first and second language acquisition, language attrition, processing, language disorders, and neurolinguistics. Abstracts for the special session will be refereed separately from the abstracts submitted to the general session. For further information on special session on Slavic psycholinguistics e-mail shorts@uottawa.ca

Website: http://aix1.uottawa.ca/~fasl12

### Sixth International Conference on Language and Development

will be held 15–17 October 2003 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, under the auspices of The Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education of Uzbekistan and the British Council, Tashkent. The broad themes of the conference will be Language policy and its relationship to broad issue of national development, language planning, educational provision and multilingualism; The effective design, implementation and evaluation of language; and Literacy curricula in development contexts. The 2003 conference is the sixth in the series, which commenced in Bangkok in 1993 and was followed by Bali in 1995, Langawi in 1997, Hanoi in 1999, and Phnom Penh in 2001.

For additional information contact Martin Seviour, Deputy Director, British Council, Tashkent. E-mail: martin.seviour@britishcouncil.uz

Unesco Conference on Teaching and Learning for Intercultural Understanding, Human Rights and a Culture of Peace

will be held in Jyväskylä, Finland, 15–18 June 2003. Educators involved in intercultural education, multicultural education, human rights education, and peace education are invited to join this common forum to share and discuss ideas, problems and expertise concerning the issues of equity, social justice, conflict resolution and democracy. The conference welcomes university, college and polytechnic teachers, researchers, teacher educators, student counselors and advisers, programme coordinators, faculty and staff developers, and graduate students. Information about the conference is online at http://www.jyu.fi/ktl/unesco2003/conference.htm

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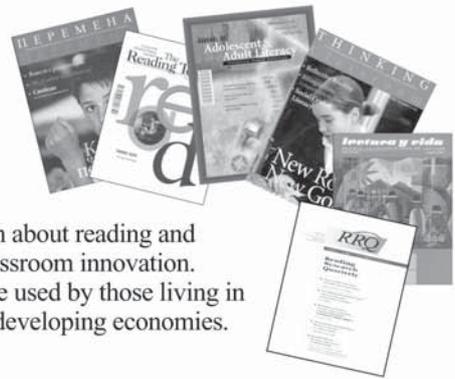
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