Chapter 8
Views of Students on Learning with Technologies in Dutch Education and Training

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ABSTRACT

The integrated use of technologies in learning in formal education and training in The Netherlands is far from realized, and there is still a long way to go to reach that goal. But what are the views of students and early career teachers about learning with technologies? This chapter focuses on Dutch research into the expectations and experiences of students and early career teachers as to their views of learning with technologies in education and training. A survey was conducted online, followed by focus group interviews among all groups studied. The most important findings of the research are being presented here. Special attention is given to the use of mobile technologies and the Internet, social networking sites and gaming, bullying, spam and plagiarism, homework and learning, technologies in schools and in learning, motivation of students and the role of teachers.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes findings collected from listening to and analyzing the views and hopes of students within education and training institutions in The Netherlands about learning with information and communication technologies (ICT). The

main question for this research was: "What are the views of students and early career teachers about learning with technologies in Dutch education and training?" In 2008 and 2009, students in primary and secondary schools, vocational education and training institutions, teacher training students and early career teachers participated in research into their current experiences and ideas of learning

with technologies, with the support of Kennisnet, the Dutch national agency for stimulating the use of ICT in education. Early career teachers were included in this research as they were conceptualized as being able to provide perspectives from their recent experiences as both university students and subsequently teachers. Simultaneously similar research was carried out in Australia (Moyle & Owen, 2009). A literature review of students' expectations about learning with technologies informing both sets of research, was conducted in Australia (Moyle & Owen, 2008).

The purposes of the research in The Netherlands were threefold:

- To gain a clear understanding of how students and early career teachers experience and view the use of ICT when doing homework,
- What their expectations are regarding the use of technologies in schools or training institutions; and
- To develop a good understanding of students' and young teachers' requirements regarding their use of ICT in education and training.

This chapter describes the general trends and developments that emerged from this research, focusing on several experiences emerging from the research and presents ideas worthy of further research. It also describes some causes and consequences of research findings and suggests possible solutions.

BACKGROUND

In recent years several publications have been dedicated to the views of the present generation of young people (Haan, de & Hof, van 't, 2006; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Wijngaards, Fransen & Swager, 2006; Fransen, Swager & Wijngaards, 2008). These studies attribute all kinds of skills

and qualities to young people, such as social skills, strategic insight and their interest in visual and kinaesthetic things. These studies also show that technologies are an integral part of students' lives: they are online much of the time; like new challenges and experiences; expect immediate answers to their questions; they dislike texts but do like visualisations, and they prefer to keep in touch with their peers online. Furthermore students are fascinated with socially important subjects (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). As far as learning and teaching are concerned these characteristics could mean, that amongst other things, there could be more focus on cooperative learning (peer-to-peer learning, interaction and engagement), on learning that is visual and dynamic (images, movement, and spatial relationships), and on meaningful matters (socially relevant, problem-solving contexts for learning). It therefore seemed important to compare these ideas with the ideas of young people themselves.

The tempestuous, ceaseless developments in ICT make it possible to personalise learning. Young people however, cannot all be "lumped together", and like the individuals of all previous generations, they differ one from another (which is a good thing). New technologies now allow for custom-made education and learning processes, adapted to the individual. This possibility to tailor learning to a student's individual needs and aspirations provides young people with a perfect opportunity to see that their role in education is taken seriously and that they are no longer treated as "subjects" but rather as "citizens", as described in the UK's National College for School Leadership "Leadership for personalising learning", which states:

It is not unreasonable to argue that personalising learning moves students from being subjects to citizens. As citizens they have an entitlement to be direct participants rather than have token consultation. If personalising learning is to go beyond paying lip-service to a greater focus on

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