The school as a beacon of hope
ESHA magazine is the official magazine of the European School Heads Association, the Association for school leaders in Europe. ESHA magazine will be published nine times per school year. You are welcome to use articles from the magazine but we would appreciate it if you contacted the editor first.

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THE ESHA BOARD  Clive Byrne (President), Greg Dempster (Board member), Jens Porsgaard Nielsen (Board member), Omar Mekki (Board member), Barbara Novinec (Board member)

ABOUT ESHA  ESHA is an Association that consists of 42 Associations of School Heads and Educational employers in 26 countries in primary, secondary and vocational education.

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The ESHA magazine is a platform for sharing vision, knowledge and experiences of school leaders to their European members. ESHA’s goal is to inform, share and promote best practice but cannot be associated with a specific political viewpoint. The author of an article is responsible for the content unless otherwise stated.
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Some articles in this issue contain direct links to websites. Simply click on the coloured text and you’ll be automatically linked to a specific website or videopresentation. Try it yourself and enjoy.

ESSAY
Flipping Classrooms
BY FRED VERBOON

There is a number of interesting ICT enabled projects that offer teachers chance to rethink education. Most of them enable teachers to offer a more individual and self-paced way of learning. One of the most promising movements is called “Flipping Classrooms”.

The Friday Institute for educational innovation study ways of effective education and differentiates the following levels of rigor: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, create and publish. According to Dr Lodge McCammon, teachers traditionally spend the vast majority of the available classroom time on delivery and review of content. Only a small percentage is spent on application. This application of content is usually done at home…

ESHA MAGAZINE APRIL 2012
ESHA MAGAZINE DECEMBER 2015
Our schools must be beacons of hope

The recent terror attacks in Lebanon, Egypt, France and Mali are a stark reminder of the randomness of life and death, the savagery of extremism and the constant need to work towards resolution of religious conflict throughout the world. In the increased security and heightened awareness of potential threats, the Belgian authorities closed schools in Brussels in the interests of safety. Schools should be beacons of hope, places of safety and trust where our children can grow and learn in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance.

It is clear over the last decades and in many countries that governments have neglected migrants from former colonies. As a result generations have grown up in an atmosphere of alienation without any feeling of belonging to their adopted country. In an ideal world we could try to deal with the problem through education, through investment in appropriate housing, work, leisure and recreational facilities. In many suburbs, in the larger centres of population throughout Europe, such interventions, if implemented now, will be seen as too little too late.
We need to learn stark lessons from the migrant crisis currently exercising governments throughout Europe. Chancellor Merkel’s announcement, that all immigrants from Syria would be welcome in Germany, precipitated a humanitarian crisis of vast proportions leading to the largest human displacement in decades. The sight of refugees and asylum seekers making their way through miserable and treacherous conditions highlights the fact that conditions in Syria and Afghanistan must be worse to force them to undertake the trek towards what they hope will be a better life in Europe.

The plight of so many lost at sea led to the calling of an emergency meeting to discuss possible solutions. This “emergency meeting” took three weeks to arrange as opposed to the meetings which can be arranged at a few hours’ notice to discuss financial matters or difficulties with the Euro. We cannot afford to pay lip-service to the current crisis. At the recent General Assembly meeting in Bergen, we heard of the large numbers of refugees to be assimilated into German schools at short notice and with minimal or no additional resources. Members also heard of the thousands of unaccompanied minors being accommodated in Sweden. We were briefed on the possible traumas witnessed or experienced by many of these children. The crisis for the refugees, asylum seekers and also for local populations cannot be resolved on a wing and a prayer.

Additional supports must be put in place to make migrants feel welcome and to give them a sense of belonging. Extra resources, in terms of speech and language teachers, must be allocated to schools to assimilate new students as quickly as possible. Adult education classes for language and culture must be made available to create a sense of belonging for the entire family. Work and training opportunities must be created to develop independence and self-worth and the feel-good factor of contributing to the local community.
From watching media reports, many of the migrants have valuable skills which will be of great benefit to European society. So please no repeat of the policies that created many of the ghettos which has led to the radicalisation of young people and an alienation from western norms and values! Targeted investment in education opportunities and in our schools will pay rich dividends which will enable our schools to be those beacons of hope, trust, tolerance and respect to which we aspire. Investment in the young people now will be money well spent and will avoid the need to spend many multiples of that amount in the years ahead.

We are lucky to live in a western society where notions of tolerance and respect are valued. Although increasingly multi-cultural and multi-denominational, we must strive to promote the vision and values we have for our society. The role of the school and of the school leader is vital to bringing that about. As we approach the season of peace and goodwill to all, can I wish all school leaders and those involved in education in Europe and beyond the compliments of the season.

Clive Byrne
ESHA President
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Agenda 2016

MARCH
18th     AVS Annual Conference, Nieuwegein, The Netherlands

APRIL
8th – 9th  ESHA GA meeting, Ljubljana, Slovenia
20th – 22nd International School leadership training in Oslo, Norway
        Module 1 and 2 (Module 3 is available online)

JUNE
13th     Entrepreneurial Leadership in education
        International Conference, Koper, Slovenia

OCTOBER
4th – 5th  International School leadership training in Oslo, Norway
         Module 4 and 5
18th     ESHA GA meeting, Maastricht, The Netherlands
19th – 21st ESHA biennial Conference Maastricht, The Netherlands

OCTOBER 2017
23rd – 25th  4th Regional Conference in South Eastern Europe,
             Ljubljana, Slovenia
Education, Cultural Diversity and Immigration
When the conversation about cultural diversity arises, educators often ponder the question: Where do we go from here? With the steady stream of immigrants—both illegal and those legally seeking citizenship in countries around the globe, especially in the U.S and EU countries, there are more questions than answers these days as the number of immigrants increase and the responsibility for sustaining human life ultimately falls to the countries in which these individuals seek a new home. Recent media attention has focused on the alarming number of illegal immigrants entering into these countries.

In January 2014, the European Union Commission released the following statement: “more than 276,000 migrants illegally entered the EU, which represents an increase of 155 percent compared to 2013.” According to the PEW Research Centre, there were 11.3 million illegal immigrants in the U.S in 2014, accounting for nearly 3.5 % of the nation’s population.

DR. FELICIA NACE
While countries around the world are aware of the need for a reform of cultural diversity training in educational systems, much of it today still does not meet the needs of educational leaders and school staff. The training that most educational leaders provided to staff over the past 20 years is no longer valid as it does not keep pace with the changing face of immigration and the growing and real concerns of many educators and community members. Much of professional learning around cultural diversity does not address the divides of some of the populations within a community, or the mental adjustments that families make in blended neighbourhoods of today.

Many are concerned for their country’s economy and the health and welfare of future generations in their respective country.

Cultural and diversity training in countries experiencing fast-track transitions have to delve deeply into quickly changing realities. In some instances, fundamental religious and cultural beliefs in communities are diametrically opposed, and still there is a need for people to respect one another in order to maintain peaceful coexistence. This is often easier said than done. There are many layers that communities and educators need to process collectively as they adapt to quickly changing environments.

Cultural and Diversity training has to take into account specific issues that illegal immigration brings with it. It is easy to echo the words diversity training, cultural acceptance, and sensitivity training, but for people who view some immigrants, whether legal or illegal, as
invaders, past training sessions which primarily centre around “tolerance,” is not enough. Some of the concerns of residents have validity. Any society that is not concerned about possible criminal elements gaining access into their country, the possible influx of undetected diseases, and those who evade paying taxes – contributing their fair share to the country’s financial resources, is not being truthful. There are valid concerns that legal long-time residents in many countries entertain about illegal immigrants – if not stated aloud, are often contemplated in private thought. It does not mean that these individuals are bigots or racists. If for no other reason, many are concerned for their country’s economy and the health and welfare of future generations in their respective country.

Many school leaders avoid engaging in open conversations about immigration and its impact in the classroom because they fear
backlash. However, the school community and those in school neighbourhoods are talking about immigration issues as it relates to the quality of education, health, and welfare of a country. Aside from their roles in schools, educational leaders and teachers are also very much a part of their own communities and many are strong patriots of their country and thus engage in real conversations about immigration and share their feelings with friends and family about the changing dynamics of their own communities.

We only need to look at social media comments that are shared by educators online, and which have, in some cases, resulted in the dismissal of school leaders and teachers from their jobs. Current diversity training as it stands is flawed because in many instances it only addresses topical issues. How many of those reading this article, desire that their child or grandchild be taught by teachers who simply “tolerate” a child’s cultural background? Yet, tolerance seems to be the operative word in many professional learning discussions around diversity in education. It is time to layer past professional development with professional learning that will lead school staff to a deeper understanding of those with varied cultural differences, such as diverse groups of immigrants who seek a better life.

The educators, who log onto social media accounts and utilize those platforms to engage in a discourse about students of certain ethnic backgrounds, are not the most frightening. The most dangerous
educators are those who teach young minds each day and never openly share their disdain for children of religious and ethnic backgrounds that differ from their own. These educators are the real threat to the institution of education because those underlying thoughts ultimately surface in the classroom.

The thought that an educator would voice opinions about their prejudices online for the world to view, is shocking to families and communities because those who entrust their children to school personnel, hold them in high esteem. However, there are so many more educators who will never voice the prejudices harbour because they understand to do so would render unwanted consequences. This is why schools have to provide diversity training that reaches the core of educators. That can only happen when collective conversations about diversity take place and school staff better understand the concerns and needs of the community they serve.

Much of past diversity training in education has taken place in schools and included school staff alone. Schools can choose to continue providing insulated diversity training to staff or schools can take a smarter approach –to be inclusive of parents and community members in the professional learning process. The active participation of those in the community provides a full picture of diversity issues which seep into the fabric of schools. If diversity training is rolled out void of a systemic approach, then the training will be partial and fragmented as the school’s view will be the only perspective used as a springboard for training. For real change to occur, families and communities need to have a voice in the diversity conversations that takes place in schools.

How well a child succeeds in learning largely depends on their mental state. The community can often be a breeding ground for how well
children of various backgrounds are perceived by their peers, acclimate to a new school environment, adjust emotionally, and achieve academically. Subsequently, families and community members are pivotal in helping to create a desirable school culture.

Whatever the reasons, whether old or new, if prejudice exists, often, it is born in the homes of children. This holds true for school leaders and teachers as well. Each individual is a product of his/her upbringing. So, it stands to reason that prejudice and conversations around diversity issues require a systemic approach, including schools, families, and communities. Schools cannot undergo diversity training in isolation and believe there will be significant positive outcomes. Many schools, world-wide, have been vigilant about raising awareness around cultural diversity. School leaders have consistently provided training to staff on the topic of cultural sensitivity and
diversity, but to what end? Each educator brings to the table some prejudice – that is, if an individual is willing to be honest. Some of those prejudices are fleeting and virtually harmless, while others have deep rooted issues as regards various cultural groups. So, the reflective questions for leaders are: Does the professional learning around cultural diversity truly meet the needs of staff and community? Does the training have a real impact? What support do I need as a leader to ensure my own cultural diversity growth? Assessments, conversations, and observations involving all stakeholders are necessary before an educational leader can determine the type of training that is needed and the extensiveness of the training.

SMART GOALS FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

▷ A smart goal to consider: Identify those in the community who are willing to build relationships between longstanding community members and new comers who possess different backgrounds. These individuals can help organize cultural diversity meetings at the school.

▷ It is a good idea to bring teachers face to face with the community to specifically talk about community diversity. These meetings will be a learning experience for all involved, and will give teachers a broader scope of their student’s cultural backgrounds.

▷ School leaders will want to keep the conversations involving staff and the community, positive. For example, schools can concentrate on ways the community and school are already fostering cross-cultural positive relationships. In addition, community members and the school can compare effective approaches and then identify areas where their work intersects, and then combine efforts to reap greater benefits.
Although many newcomers embrace the opportunities in a new country and make a real effort to blend their own cultural values with those in their new surroundings, there are some who do not make the effort. However horrible the conditions of the country from which they migrated, still there are some immigrants who arrive to a new country unwilling to make a real effort to adapt. Some immigrants fear that making concessions to their new environment may force them to relinquish their own culture and belief systems. To avoid these traps, a smart goal for a school leader is to make it clear to parents that acclimation is a shared responsibility. The school has an obligation to make every child feel welcomed. However, the child must be encouraged by staff and family to always make an effort to embrace and integrate to some extent to his/her new surroundings.

When bringing staff, families, and community members together to discuss cultural diversity, remember, for parents and community members whose first language is not that of the country in which they currently reside, educational leaders need to ensure that these individuals have access to any information being shared at a meeting- both verbally and in writing. Therefore, a professional translator may be necessary, but if this is too costly, then try to assemble a list of those in the community who can translate and are willing to volunteer.

The school leader will determine which meetings to include all stakeholders, and which meetings will include staff alone as staff will need some time to reflect on information garnered from community meetings and this will also be a good time for staff to process takeaways in private and have planning sessions with fellow colleagues about how to incorporate takeaways into the school environment.
Schools alone cannot make the diversity leaps that need to occur for true educational equity to emerge. Most countries have their own long time prejudices embedded into their cultural fibre, such as southern and northern cultural differences, regional differences, skin hue variances, or subtle religious choices. Now, in recent years, there are new elements that mass immigration brings with it, and schools that were already dealing with their own age old home grown differences and inequalities in education, have to face new diversity challenges. This will require thinking about diversity training in a different way and setting smart goals to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

You can read more about cultural diversity on the ESHA portal http://eshacommunity.wikispaces.com/Cultural+diversity
In the last part of October the ESHA General Assembly was held in Bergen. 35 school leaders from 21 countries participated. The importance of meeting colleagues from all over Europe and the informal conversations are of course important parts of the assembly. This is an ample opportunity to keep up to date on what is happening in the education sector in large parts of Europe.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY TORMOD SMEDSTAD
The meeting was held in Bergen, a city on the west coast of Norway. The Vice-president of the Norwegian Association for School leaders, Omar Mekki, who is also a member of the Executive Board in ESHA, welcomed the delegates to Bergen.

ESHA’s General Assembly is held twice a year; every second year in connection with the ESHA-biennial conference. There is also a meeting of the Executive Board in connection with the conference.

**ERASMUS+, CRISIS AND SCHOOL OF THE FUTURE**

The first part of the assembly consisted of presentations and discussions on different topics.

A representative of The Centre for International Education in Norway talked about the Erasmus + program and focused on the possibilities of exchange for both pupils and school leaders, for instance through job-shadowing colleagues in Europe. How can ESHA contribute so
that the members are familiar with these opportunities was one of the topics discussed after the presentation.

Unni Hjeltne is the director of the Center for Crisis Psychology. The center has focused on dealing with critical situations and their impact on child and adult victims, as well as on personnel that have to deal with such situations.

The Centre has conducted research and implemented a variety of assistance programs to help children in different war areas. Based on these experiences, they have produced a series of books, book chapters, and many scientific papers. This has provided other professionals working in the field, with valuable knowledge on which to base their interventions. The Centre has also published a series of articles on the helper’s situation when dealing with stress, trauma and grief. (See also page 70)
You can read more about crisis psychology on the ESHA portal: [http://eshacommunity.wikispaces.com/Crisis+psychology](http://eshacommunity.wikispaces.com/Crisis+psychology)

There is a great need for this knowledge and competence in the situation in Europe today when we think of the situation of all the refugees.

Further on the Norwegian professor, Sten Ludvigsen, talked about the report *Pupil’s learning in the School for the Future*. He was the leader of the committee appointed by the Government “to look in the future of education in Norway”. He talked about a renewal of subjects and competencies and the need for deeper learning. In the discussion that followed it was clear that despite the fact that school systems are quite different across Europe, there are many similarities in terms of challenges that schools, work and society face both today and for years to come.

Solveig Hvidsten Dahl, the president of Norway’s school leader organization, Clive Byrne, the president of ESHA and Vigdis Berg from SIU/Erasmus+.
In the evening of the first day there was a reception offered by the Bergen Municipality and a representative of the Mayor held a speech

ESHA MATTERS
The specific ESHA-topics were dealt with on the second day of the conference. The president Clive Byrne had a briefing on the work of ESHA’s Executive Board, and there was a financial update. Key point was Byrne’s presence at the ICP meeting in Helsinki (Convention of the International Confederation of principals). The question of how ESHA and ICP could cooperate was discussed. The ESHA Executive Board has also had two Skype-meetings. The OPC international school leadership program, and Norway’s pilot as a co-sponsor, was presented.
ESHA is eager to cooperate and influence the agenda of schools and

Omar Mekki and Monique Westland
school leadership in Europe. Members of the ESHA board have been engaging with ministry, parliament, European commission and the European federation of employers; likewise with the OECD and the parents association in Europe. The members also suggested items for discussion for the second day of the assembly, for instance: What can we do to make ESHA more visible and alive? How can we improve ESHA’s communication individual members? Another suggestion was to collect ESHA’s best educational practices. There also was an update on the plans for the biennial conference in Maastricht 2016. Executive board member Chris Harrison had served his years on the board and Jens Porsgaard Nielsen from Denmark was elected in his place. Barbara Novinec from Slovenia was re-elected to the board. The board now consists of the two mentioned and Omar Mekki from Norway, Greg Dempster from Scotland and Clive Byrne, the president, from Ireland.
Interview with the President of ESHA

Clive Byrne

BY TORMOD SMEDSTAD

Could you say a few words about the importance of the General Assemblies?

The ESHA General Assembly is the most important decision making body in the Association. Decisions taken at the General Assembly are then implemented by the President and the Executive Board. So the General Assembly is where policy is decided, budgets are ratified but for me the most important aspect is the personal interaction between representatives of the member associations. This allows for a sharing of best practice and also the sharing of burdens or issues of concern. We must remember that education and education policy is a national mandate so it is not unusual for General Assembly members to explore possible solutions or different perspectives to resolve thorny issues in their respective countries. At this GA meeting in Bergen we had a presentation and a suggested template to disseminate best practice from the Finnish Association representing small schools as well as one from Italy on a reform being introduced which will have a major impact on schools in the country.
As the president of ESHA, what do you hope to get out of it?
As President my main role is to preside over an orderly meeting of the assembly, to work through the agenda, to encourage participation from delegates by creating a climate at the meeting whereby participation is not only welcomed but expected. Delegates need to feel that they will benefit from attending and have confidence in the President that issues they feel strongly about will be included on the agenda and discussed by delegates.

I like to conduct meetings where there is a high degree of consensus where contentious votes can be avoided.

What parts of the program in Bergen did you appreciate most?
I am so grateful to Skolelederforbundet for hosting the GA meeting. The attention to detail of the organisers was most impressive. This was the first GA meeting that we were able to include items on the agenda which were raised by delegates at previous meetings. Colleagues who attended the last GA in Podgorica were keen to find more information about the possibilities offered by participation in the Erasmus programme and it was great to have experts speak of the opportunities available. It was also very informative to have the application process de-mystified. I was really impressed by the presentation by the Centre for Crisis Psychology on dealing with critical incidents and how to be pro-active in planning for critical incidents so that should the worst
happen there is a contact list and template on what steps to take to minimise damage to children and the school community.

You lead the Executive Board; what is your and ESHA’s focus in the nearest future?

I suspect that the migrant and refugee crisis will be to the fore over the next while. We heard of our colleagues in Germany who are coping with additional students at short notice and with no additional resources. We heard of the 40,000 unaccompanied minors in Sweden and the potential social problems if they’re not integrated properly and in time. The crisis caused by the movement of refugees through Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia was also raised as was the perception that many governments have been caught unawares and are reacting in ways that will not be good enough in the long term. ESHA will always have as a priority the need to invest in leadership. Without appropriate leadership most educational initiatives will not succeed. Being responsible for the education outcomes of students by having sufficient resources to enable to school principal to be the leader of learning in their school is always a challenge. Issues of accountability, assessment, good citizenship and life-long learning etc. are rarely far away from our thoughts and will continue to be prioritised during my time as ESHA President.

■
International school leadership training

17 school leaders attended the first two modules of the International School Leadership training program at Gardermoen in Oslo in September 2015

BY TORMOD SMEDSTAD

ONSITE WITH LOCAL CO-SPONSORS

15 Norwegian school leaders and one from Iceland and one from Scotland participated when International School Leadership Ltd (ISL) in cooperation with the Norwegian Association of School Leaders arranged an onsite course in the two first modules of the certificate program International School Leadership. – I experienced the ILS seminar as very useful in that it was so practical and full of method-ical tips. It was very well structured with good variety and a lot of self-activity, said one of the participants.

Joni Heard came from Canada to lead the two modules – in a very professional way. She took care both to challenge the participants and make sure they felt safe and comfortable. She walked the talk in that she used a variety of strategies that the school leaders could use themselves in their own work.
The heading of module 1 is *Principal Leadership for School Improvement* where the focus is on the key challenge of school improvement today; that instead of being managers who implement policy, school administrators will increasingly need to become leaders of their schools who can also exercise leadership in the environment beyond their schools, and articulate the connection between the two. A school leader has to develop and raise high level achievement by working with, learning from and influencing the behaviours of others within and beyond their schools. Module 2 is called *Characteristics of Effective Schools and Systems* where the focus is on, amongst other things, more capacity building and greater precision as to the core goals.

**THE PROGRAM**

The certificate program is designed to provide a comprehensive set of modules leading to the acquisition of the International School Leadership Certificate. In addition, certification is awarded at three
levels of achievement, depending upon the number of completed modules.

There are 6 modules in all. The ISL online academy offers all modules at various times a year. Each module extends over a five-week period and involves 15 to 18 hours. You are closely followed up by an instructor who gives you online feedback and advice. You also cooperate online with colleagues from all over the world.

International School Leadership Ltd. (ISL) is a subsidiary of the Ontario Principals’ Council. The programs are grounded in current research and the advisory panel consists of well-known researchers like Michael Fullan, Ken Leithwood, Avis Glaze and Andy Hargreaves.

Joni Heard from ISL was a very professional instructor and used a variety of strategies during the seminar.
WELCOME TO NORWAY

We are very pleased with the excellent response that we had from the school leaders that took part in the onsite course that we co-sponsored with the ISL. We have decided to continue with this co-operation and arrange new seminars next year. The first will be based on the two first modules of the program, the second will be module 4 and 5, says vice-president of the Norwegian Association of School Leaders, Omar Mekki. You can take module 3 online in the meantime if you wish.

Mekki also says that it will be possible for colleagues from Europe to join the two seminars. Module 1 and 2 will be held in/near Oslo in April (20th to 22nd) and module 4 and 5 in October (19th to 21st).

If you are interested in more information you may contact Trygve Beyer-Olsen at the Norwegian Association for School Leaders, email: tbo@skolelederforbundet.no. You can also read more about the full program on the International School Leadership web-site http://internationalschoolleadership.com.
Report from the 3. Regional Conference in Belgrade

From October 25th through 27th the 3. Regional Conference of the Southeastern European School Heads Association was being held in Belgrade, Serbia.

BY IVAN RUZICIC, PROFESSOR (CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF “SERBIAN SCHOOL HEADS ASSOCIATION”)
Друштво директора школа Србије

treća
regionalna
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udruženja direkторa
i ravnatelja škola
jugoistočne
Evrope

beograd
25-27. oktobar 2015. godine

Konferenciju podržalo:

Ministarstvo просвете, науке и технолошког развоја
The theme of the Conference was “Motivation in Education System,” and the Conference had 6 plenary lectures, 8 workshops and included a visit to kindergartens and primary and secondary schools in Belgrade, as well as a visit to the educational institutions of the Republic of Serbia. The Conference was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia.

The conference was attended by 260 directors of kindergartens, primary and secondary schools as follows: 49 from the Republic of Slovenia, 26 from the Republic of Croatia, 73 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 18 from Montenegro, 19 from the Republic of Macedonia and 75 from Serbia.

On the first day of the Conference, at the opening ceremony, in the presence of nearly 300 participants and guests, the heads of delegation of the participating countries as well as Mrs. Barbara Novinec as Vice President of the ESHA board addressed the attendants of the conference. The conference was opened by the Minister of Education in the Government of the Republic of Serbia Dr. Srdjan Verbić.

During the first and the second day 6 plenary lectures on the conference topic were held and on the second day 7 workshops were held. Themes of the workshops were f.e. ”The complete curriculum reform and motivation in the education system”, “Motivation in teaching”, “Play and the classroom”, “Learning management and motivating different generations”, “Positive motivation in schools”, “The teacher – educator, instructor and motivator”.

On the third and final day detailed reports from the workshops that had been held the previous day were presented, as well as the conclusions of the Conference.
Among other things, it has been emphasized in the conclusions that the lecturers and workshop presenters were at a very high level and that this was a good chance to consider the topic of motivation in the education system not only from the point of view of directors of kindergartens and schools, but also from the point of view of all participants in the educational process: children, students, parents, teachers and principals. It has been estimated that this kind of conference is very useful for all and that it makes sense that they are organized and that in this way directors of kindergartens and schools get advanced training and exchange their experiences. This will certainly improve their work, and raise the quality of work in kindergartens and schools, as well as the quality of educational systems of the countries in the region. In the conclusions of this Conference it has been announced that the Fourth Regional Conference of the South-eastern European School and Kindergarten Heads Association will be held in Ljubljana from 23rd to 25th October 2017, organized by the School Heads Association of the Republic of Slovenia.

All lectures are recorded and will be available on the website of the “Serbian School Heads Association” and all the participants have received certificates of participation at this conference. www.drustvodsst.edu.rs

In the name of all directors of kindergartens and schools from all 6 countries of South East Europe who participated in this conference, we would like to thank you for your help and support, assuring you that we properly represented ESHA in this conference. ■
AXIA XII organized its XII conference on School Leadership on November 26th of 2015. Theme of the conference was; “Now it’s time for professional school management”. The conference was attended by more than 120 people, most of them school leaders at state schools in Catalonia.

BY IGNASI LLOMPIART AND JAUME PRAT

The conference was opened by Irene Rigau, Catalan Minister of Education, and Aleix Gabarró, president of AXIA, who told the Catalan Minister of Education to increase support and development for a professional school leadership in Catalonia, as well as acknowledgement at the Catalan Ministry of Education premises. Irene Rigau recognized that AXIA annual conference is a landmark in the calendar and defined professional as the quality of an individual being competent performing an activity. She continued saying that school
leadership is a key driver at transforming the education system, but the whole system needs to become professional. She stated that the changes and evolution in the system has not been as slow as it is said, and to support it she mentioned what can be read in the minutes from school managers boards. She also reminded that dissatisfaction is a feature at schools, and it is worth to pay attention to what is working and what not. She admitted that the economic crisis brought budget cuts and school managers’ salaries and fees have not gone up. She promised that AXIA would have a seat in the Education Board of Catalonia among all other stakeholders, and talked about how positive the new decree is on school workforce. She also said that the new curriculum fosters school autonomy and pedagogical leadership. Finally, she stated that Catalonia is performing well at basic skills, students obtaining the basic degree at compulsory secondary education and improving the number of students enrolled in upper secondary, especially vocational training, which is due to good school leadership.
THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

First keynote speaker in the morning was Clive Byrne, president of ESHA, whose presentation was about “Developing School Leaders”. Clive Byrne started talking on the aims of ESHA:

- Developing views on innovative education & school leadership.
- Promoting these views at European level.
- Influencing policy in the European Institutions.
- Promoting international exchange and cooperation.
- Supporting organisations at national level.
- Promoting conditions to improve school leadership.

He also gave a brief information on ESHA projects: Erasmus+, Combating early school leaving, European Policy Network on School Leadership, Lifelong Learning, Retired members coaching & mentoring, and Iguana to encourage Innovation.

After talking on ESHA, Clive Byrne focused on school leadership: management competences and invigorating the role of school leaders, starting with pre-service training, and a key support on early days and months. He remembered that there is a shortage of applicants for the position of principal, due to the grey image of headship, middle leaders are not encouraged to lead, and are not networking enough. Clive Byrne quoted Steve Mumby, (CEO of the NCSL), who maintains that leaders are in danger of making two big mistakes: not believing enough in themselves as leaders – particularly deputy principals, and believing too much in themselves as leaders.

For school leaders, emotional intelligence is essential as a determinant of the leadership style and, consequently, organisational performance. In the modern organisation, leadership relies more on the ability to connect than upon the exercise of command and control. Clive Byrne moved to dealing with the challenges for school
leadership, which are working within the system to minimise the number of losers by leading strategically, leading teaching and learning, leading the organisation, leading people, and leading in the community. Then he focused his attention on the principal’s / manager’s role which is being a competent manager, modelling appropriate interpersonal behaviour, and using effective communication skills to challenge inappropriate behaviour.

Clive Byrne stated that the OECD research activity on improving school leadership comes to the following conclusions:

- The challenges and pressures facing school leaders in all OECD countries is enormous.
- The fact that school leaders are expected to be organisational managers and leaders of learning is a major dilemma.
- The range of knowledge and skills needed by a school leader today is daunting.
- The cumulative demands on school leaders will undermine the capacity of schools to meet society’s expectations of them.

Afterwards, the president of ESHA, set the priority issues for school leaders: principals as leaders of learning, trust and autonomy, appointment procedures to recruit the best principals, distributing leadership by sharing the load, continuous professional development, and continuous professional dialogue.

Next issues on which Clive Byrne talked were promoting instructional and curricular leadership, key elements of school planning, innovative learning environments, learning leadership, visions and strategies, evidence of learning, managing and leading schools as learning organizations, and climate and culture at schools.

Clive Byrne finished his presentation quoting David Hopkins on system leaders who share five striking characteristics:
They measure their success in terms of improving student learning and strive to both raise the bar and narrow the gaps.

They are fundamentally committed to the improvement of teaching and learning.

They develop their schools as personal and professional learning communities.

They strive for equity and inclusion through acting on context and culture.

They understand that in order to change the larger system you have to engage with it in a meaningful way.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE US EDUCATION SYSTEM

After Clive Byrne, Antoni Bassas, an outstanding Catalan journalist, who spent four years in Washington DC, as correspondent for the Catalan Public Channel Television (TV3), talked about his thoughts on education based on his experience with his children in Catalonia and in the USA. Antoni Bassas talked about the American schools always in contact with families, even to tell them the weather forecast when bad weather conditions are looming. He also pointed out that there are few breaks in American schools all day long. The US is an extremely competitive society, where individuals are encouraged to show the best of each one, to take their personal responsibility to grow up and to learn to communicate very well (including writing). So, American schools teach students what their society promotes and values. At primary school students have to speak in public once a week, which makes them very good at telling to the audience their views and thoughts. Critical thinking is another key point at American schools. Pupils learn to ask questions, to be curious about life. He also stated that American teachers laugh, communicate and students show respect to them. Anyway, the American education system is obsessed by evaluation. Finally, on school leaders, he said that they have to ease professional development, try new things and find talent in their staff.
THE DIFFERENCE A PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL LEADER CAN MAKE

Tina Mäkelä, from the Finland, University of Jyväskylä, was the last speaker in the morning. She talked about the contribution of principals on the quality of the Finnish education system. She divided her presentation in two blocks. The first one was a description of the Finnish education system. She said that the main features are:

- **Teachers**: Only 10% of the students submitting an applications were able to become teachers, they were very well trained, with a lot of practice and their professional autonomy was a high value.
- **Students**: The system works to deliver every student what he or she needs, with not only teachers at schools but other staff (health, etc.) to help students to be successful and avoid staying extra years at school.
- **Mother tongue**: It is extremely important that students learn their mother tongue very well, even if they are from foreign countries, speaking languages different from Finnish and Swedish.
- **Schools**: Finnish schools are very collaborative among other stakeholders, they network and are a vital element for their towns.
- **Politics**: Education is not a political issue. There are national evaluations but they do not rank schools. There is no education inspection and parents are committed to raise their children.
- **State schools**: 98% of schools are state schools, but management is not centralized.

The second block was on school leadership. Finnish principals are selected by the local authorities, who interview candidates, and parents have their say but nothing else. Selected candidates go on trial, which lasts for six months. There is continuous training for them. The average time principals are in office in the same school ranges from five to seven years. Principals are experienced teachers who have been previously trained on school leadership, economy, pedagogy
and management of human resources. The Institute for Leadership is in charge of training would be principals. Charm and ability to create school culture are qualities which are also highly valued to add to the previous ones. Principals are expected to select personnel, plan using their own budget, be school leaders, counsel students and promote professional wellbeing. To sum up, Finland believes in autonomy and professional management.

After lunch, there was a round table on “School leadership experiences on headship: organizational, pedagogical and management”, participating Rosa de la Fuente, principal at Escola Esplai 3 in Sant Joan Despí (Primary School); Josep Lluís, principal at Institut Baix Camps in Reus (Secondary School, including Upper Secondary with Vocational Training); Rosa Busquets, principal at ZER Alt Lluçanés (a cluster of rural schools); and Pere Romero, principal at CFA El Clot in Barcelona (Adults Schools). The debate was very intense, very interesting opinions were uttered, and their experiences were highly valued by the audience.

The closing ceremony was on Aleix Gabarró, president of AXIA, and Txema Castiella, general manager at Barcelona Education Municipal Institute.
Together we own distributed leadership

Konot Foundation is a school board that provides education to approximately 5500 students in Northeast Twente, a region in the east of the Netherlands. The directors and the executive council are working closely together to do the very best for teachers and students. In 2013 and 2014 this executive council collectively followed a study in the field of educational leadership. The importance of two critical issues became more clear for everyone during this study. We can only improve our organization meaningful and sustainable if there is:

- shared ownership between all employees
- when we distribute the leadership

BY JASPER DIELE
TRANSLATED BY MONIQUE WESTLAND
In 2014 the above resulted in making a strategic plan for the entire foundation, an approach which we had not used before. At various times all 500 employees of the foundation were interviewed and invited to provide the management team with their input. Core groups were formed for four main subjects. Each core group consisted of employees from each section. In this way teachers, internal counsellors, directors, officers and directors from all different schools actively work together with the new strategic plan. This whole process has led to a worn and ambitious strategic plan for the foundation entitled “Learning for your future!”

The main goal we want to achieve is that kids will take charge of their own development. The manner in which we have made strategic policy made very clear how to achieve this; by ensuring ownership at all levels and by exploiting distributed leadership. In this way we can optimally use the talents of all employees.

As a result of research studies in response to leadership in children we found a small number of schools that particularly excel in this. Worldwide, there are currently 122 schools where all students excel especially in pro-activity, set goals, prioritize, think in terms of opportunities, in understanding and in synergy. Children in these schools truly are a leader of their own development process. These schools have developed themselves based on The Seven Habits of Stephen Covey. They are the so-called ‘Leader in Me’- schools. We realized that especially from these schools we can learn a lot. Most (and the best) of these schools are located in Canada. This is also the place where bringing the ideas into the schools have excelled the most.

In May 2015 we came to the conclusion that we would have to travel to Canada. And according to our thoughts on distributed leadership and shared ownership, we decided to not only travel with the
management team but also include teachers, internal counsellors, managers, staff and administrators. Only in this way we can realize our ideas in shaping our schools.

**THE TRIP**

On September 19th of 2015 the first group existing of 26 travellers, the management and directors of the schools travelled to Edmonton, Canada. We meet our tour guide, Alma Country of CPS, we discuss again the Leader of the essence in me – framework. It is not a school system program. It is a way of thinking and living. In preparation of the school visits, we discuss a set of guidelines so the next day we all are focused on our personal development question when we leave for our first school visit.

The first school we visit is École Rio Terrace School. The school is in an area which is inhabited by families with medium and highly
educated parents. The school is surrounded by spacious sports fields and playgrounds.

At the door we are greeted by students who have put together the entire program for the day. Students then accompany us to the main hall decorated with goody-bags created by the children with symbols of ‘The leader in me’.

In the afternoon together we have time to discuss and to share the experiences of the morning. The most important thing that emerges corresponds to what the children have given to our tour guide as key points for us:

• Tell them to be kind
• Tell them to find their voice
• Tell them to think win-win
• Tell them to demonstrate the 7 habits in your daily life
• Tell them that everyone can be a leader if only they want to be
• Tell them to have faith in their pupils
• Tell them to understand how important you are, you as a school leader and as a teacher are

The program is completely set up and filled in by the students themselves. There are keynote speakers in the ages of 6 to 10 years, a self-written musical about the seven habits is being performed and we get the chance to ask our questions to a panel of seven students. It touches us all deeply realizing how successful the children have managed to take charge themselves. These children are very confident and positively critical. They all show a very open attitude.

The program continues with group visits. In small groups we get the chance to speak with children and teachers in the classrooms. Also
in the group it is very well felt here that children take charge of themselves. After the group visits our students give us the opportunity to question a parent and the school board on their findings. Once we sit down and marvel at what we’ve experienced we found it hard to describe in words. Students who so naturally use their capabilities, teachers who act as leaders, as mentors, as leaders without a student being left out on his or her own. The natural tranquillity that emanates from the pupils and teachers is impressive. After having spent the day in the school we have a day of study which is completely in the light of the seven habits. The seven properties are fully covered in seven hours. It is very valuable that we can immediately link the habits to what we have experienced at Rio Terrace on Monday. The strong link with our school attendance as a group makes us absorb the theoretical content of the seminar of the seven habits even better.
On Wednesday we travel to Scott Robertson School for a visit. While traveling in the bus there is a wavering sense. Is it realistic to expect that this school will be as special as the first school we attended? The answer to the wavering given by 267 children from the Scott Robertson School is convincing. At 9.00 AM we are awaited by the students of the Scott Robertson School. The school building is older, the space around it is wonderful and our arrival makes us speechless. An immense sign at the corner of that field welcomes the Dutch guests to this special place. All students are awaiting us in the hall way and welcome us personally. This is a very impressive experience when you realize that 67% of pupils’ are special needs’- students.

The children are proud of the fact that we come to visit them and they get to show us their school as well as their classroom. The first keynote speaker was Trinity, a 9 year-old girl that came in the school four years ago without being able to communicate. In her speech
DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

she tells all her schoolmates, teachers and twenty-six foreign guests how the 7 Habits have helped her to get where she is today. At this school we learn that the bottom-up principle is essential for the success of the Leader in me. This strengthens the group of travelers in the decision to organize two trips involving all sections in this beautiful experience. We conclude the second school attendance with the same sense of wonder that we have experienced after the first visit.

On Thursday, September 24th, 2015 another theoretical study day is in the program. Implementing the seven habits into your school is central topic for that day. Essential is to live your life according to the habits in your daily actions. The group was so captivated by the subject that a free afternoon is exchanged for an additional session. On Friday, we are ready in the morning for the third school visit. We visit St. Francis of Assisi School. A multicultural school in a working class district of Edmonton. This is a school that has to deal with all sorts of challenges in the field of social problems. We wonder whether it is also possible, in these difficult circumstances, to let the children take leadership of themselves as well. It seems for this group to be a difficult task since they do not experience many examples of self-leadership in daily life.

After a warm welcome the carry Cree-native children perform a wonderful self-rehearsed dance for us. From conversations with children, teachers and the director it also appears possible that the children grow by using the 7 habits. The school uses the habits to give the children the opportunity to develop themselves so that they can make a difference. We heard about a six year old girl literally say, “Ms. Johnson taught me about the seven habits. Now I’m able to take care of myself. So that I can make a good future.
DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP
This school, like the first two, inspires us with a special feeling. Also in these circumstances leadership is beautifully shaped. It seems more focused on engaged learning and strengthening identity. We are again mostly affected by the discussions with the leadership teams of students.

Back in the conference room at the hotel, together we look back to our three school visits. We note many similarities and differences. The self-leadership of the children is the strongest we’ve seen in all schools. And the direct link it has with the confidence and trust of teachers in all the children so they now dare to let go.

After many impressive and inspiring moments we travel to the Rocky Mountains and sunny Jasper Town. We visit the beautiful lakes and waterfalls but these experiences are nearly as impressive as the experiences we had while visiting the three schools.

Inspired we travelled back to the east of the Netherlands. The second group of Konot foundation, consisting of about fifty teachers, staff and internal coaches just came back from Canada. They are as enthusiastic as the first group. In January 2016 all participants will determine how to move on together in a strategically day along the course. Part of the course will be a big workshop in March 2016 where we will share the experience with all 500 employees.
Collecting ESHA educational best practices

In European schools there is a multitude of excellent and exceptional educational practices worth sharing. How to find them, how to spread information about them, and how to adopt them?  

BY JUKKA O. MATTILA
According to Wikipedia, a best practice is a “method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark. In addition, a ‘best’ practice can evolve to become better as improvements are discovered.”

As it is impossible to be aware of what is really the top of everything in this wide world, we can often translate the superlative ‘best’ into ‘excellent’ or ‘exceptional’. However, as “best practice” is an established term, I shall also use it throughout this article.

School leaders and teachers every now and then come across with examples of interesting educational practices. Unfortunately we too seldom seize the moment and thus do not adopt the new practice to our school from outside.

The usual reason for neglecting someone else’s ideas is NIH or “Not Invented Here”. We are stuck to our own circles and our own constructions. Although there is nothing to blame in own initiative activity, adopting a fresh new idea from outside would in many cases guarantee a quick and proven solution.

The Finnish Association of Small Secondary Schools, FASSS, has already for 15 years annually listed the best practices of all its member schools. Every member school (currently 162 in number) each year updates its part at the FASSS best practice list. Student centred activities are the main focus, but there are also examples of good solutions in information flow, entrepreneurship, marketing of the school, pedagogical and organizational innovations etc.

European-wide examples of best educational practices of ESHA’s European member organizations would be a valuable source of new insights. While ESHA website would be their main forum, some brilliant ideas would for sure give rise for short articles at ESHA Magazine, too, thus adding new value to the Magazine.
ESHA educational best practices would be a vast pool of incentives for other schools in Europe, beyond national limits. Please find two examples enclosed.

The standard of presenting ESHA educational best practices is max 350 characters including blanks. In addition, an informative photo plus caption should be included. The contributions should be sent to: Jukka O. Mattila, jukka.o.mattila@pp.inet.fi, President of the Finnish Association of Small Secondary Schools (FASSS).

STUDENTS PRODUCE LOCAL NEWSPAPER
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INFO: tauno.rajaniemi@edu.pyhajoki.fi
http://kuulumiset.pyhajoki.fi

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Juankoski upper secondary arts students annually construct several meters high wooden figures, finally stuffed by inflammable dry straw. Burning of the figures at night is a public local performance accompanied by music, dance, etc.

INFO: riikka.kuoppasalmi@juankoski.fi
http://tulitaidejuankoski.blogspot.fi
‘Now you as a school can be a role model of being there for each other’

Toolboxes, scripts and films of introduction together with discussion papers. Schools are being creative in peddling their experiences with the education for refugee children. Assurance of expertise and the dissemination of successful approaches prevents reinventing the wheel. “We already have a reputation for being a refugee school, but it is a shared social responsibility.”

BY IRENE HEMELS
TRANSLATED BY MONIQUE WESTLAND
Through trial and error we have become more wiser, says Jacqueline van Leeuwen, director of The Elementary School ‘The Streams’ in Alphen aan den Rijn. Six years ago the school received nine Somali children within one week from two notified families. “We hadn’t previously received such a large group and we had no idea how it would develop. Immediately it was clear to us that we wanted to use the one-time additional budget in a sustainable way. We have trained a teacher to be the coordinator and purchased teaching materials.”

At the first evacuation drill after the influx a Somali boy was lost. “We found him in the storage, where he had sought safety. At that moment something was set in motion. I’m not saying that such a thing won’t happen again, but we have become increasingly better at it. In fact, the assurance is the responsibility of the coordinator. She has developed a script, has thought over all things how a refugee child would act in specific situations. Here role is to keep the colleagues increasingly sharp on this.”

Starting mid-2014 the first refugee children from Syria came to the school. After a quiet period of several years, the task of coordinator was again refreshed, says Van Leeuwen. “The group teacher who then took over the role of coordinator, again got this assignment. She elaborates on the script of time and adjusts it to the new situation.”
NETWORK
At many schools, former teachers are deployed to provide extra language lessons on a voluntary basis for refugee children. Also on ‘De Dobbelsteen’ in Ulft, where last year, eleven children arrived from Syria and Somalia. Director Hans Epping: “In this way we can have an extra teacher for three days a week who is working with the children in small groups. A day a week a children’s coach is in the school to help the children with their social-emotional development and identify possible traumas. In addition classmates as buddies are associated with a new student to familiarize them with the school and carry out assignments together. “

The advantage of going to a regular school is the immersion in the Dutch language, according to both school principals. Like at the ‘De
Stromen’ a team of ‘De Dobbelsteen’ is also focusing on building a relationship with the refugee child and his or her family. Van Leeuwen calls it “building a small network around the people. We establish connections. A mother of a student at our school with an Arab background helps with interpreters.” Epping: “We are not social workers, but we want to give the parents and the children a sense of security. We bring them in contact with sports clubs and associations. Joining in activities contributes to their integration.”

COMMUNITY FEELING
The arrival of refugee children is a societal challenge that cannot be ignored by education, according to the schools. In Kortenhoef three schools worked together in the initial reception of refugee children who stayed in the local sports hall for ten days in October of this year. Marga Duijn, head teacher of the Curtevenneschool: “We have taken our collective responsibility. Together the three school leaders sent a letter to all parents of their students with the message that we wanted to receive these children as well as we possibly can and make them feel at home a bit. Through this joint message you give negative tendencies no chance. “

The Kortenhoef school designed a program with a lot of languages, sports and culture. Students made drawings and decorated the hall, which served as a temporary reception center. A Syrian parent who has been in the Netherlands for a longer period of time, translated the word ‘welcome’ in Arabic. Duijn: “We are bombarded with things that we have to tackle as a school, so we are quite careful with new business. Though this played no role here. We could actually make the notion of citizenship more concrete and show the children that we are there for each other. If people are going through a hard time you don’t leave them out in the cold. As a school you emit this value. We have experienced a strong sense of community.”
THE NEIGHBOURHOOD IN SCHOOL

With the arrival of refugee children society comes directly into your school. Is that also true for the attitude of some local people? Van Leeuwen from ‘De Stromen’ in Alphen aan den Rijn: “By being a good listener and explaining your motivation, you come a long way. We have not yet had parents who are very worried, but I am aware that not every parent is equally enthusiastic. As long as it does not affect the school climate, we do nothing. But we try as a school not to be too much in the forefront with this issue.”

“Every child has the right to education”, has proven to be a powerful motivator. Van Leeuwen: “This goes beyond just saying that citizenship is important. It is also a matter of doing. As a school we receive refugees and asylum seekers children and this means that you stimulate children to become more active. Children can be involved by signing up as a buddy.”

‘De Dobbelsteen’ works with Positive Behaviour Support (PBS). That helps in the process of the ‘us-them thinking’ and in the contact with refugee children, says school head Epping. “PBS is a groups matter. Parents, students and schools must all stand behind this way of thinking. Social security is leading in our approach which also means that you feel comfortable. This applies to everyone, whether you as a child are coming from the Netherlands or from abroad. Children who show good behaviour are rewarded and this continuously encourages the other children. Copycatting helps refugee children rapidly make the typical habits their own. “
Directing Team asylum children

On behalf of the AVS Paul van den Heuvel, former teacher and former director of a center for asylum seekers, is taking part in the Directing Team seekers children. He experiences a feeling of déjà vu. “It strikes me that still there is many unclear and unknown. Many old prejudices with previous large asylum flows, I see now over again.

The current regulations are a jumble. It is difficult for schools to find out where you can get money and expertise from. Therefore, we will create a handy fact sheet containing all existing rules. My advice would be to take a look at the regular additional funding, but I also recommend to discuss this in talks with the authorities on the possibilities for customization. To avoid any school from reinventing the wheel, we will start the project Adopt a school, where a school with a lot of experience in this area supports a starting school. And mobile teams with experts will help schools in the start-up phase.”

HEAVY JOB

‘De Stromen’ en ‘De Dobbelsteen’ take in refugee children, something that very few schools also do in their regions. A situation where the two school principals would like to get rid of. Epping invites other schools to use his toolbox for newcomers. Which should include a starter for the first day, a detailed roadmap a week, language methods and materials used, together with a description of what students should master in any field at any time.

Van Leeuwen of ‘De Stromen’: “We cannot absorb all the refugees in Alphen aan den Rijn with a few schools only. Schools find it challenging and are therefore avoiding them. If you’re not careful you are only known as a refugee school. That may be a task too big to
manage. Our school is a success because of the diversity of all the different students, so newcomers get acquainted with Dutch society. We intend to keep it that way. “

For other schools to stimulate receiving refugees children, ‘De Stromen’ has teamed up with a colleague from the same school board and produced an introductory film about their education for refugee children. All schools of the board have received the film with a discussion paper to start a conversation within their own school team. “We want schools to get a clear picture of what is needed to give good education to refugee children.”
DIDACTIC NEGLECT

Marieke Postma of Lowan, the national organization supporting education for newcomers, calls for separate language classes for refugee children that have been in the Netherlands for less than a year. “Everyone is doing his or her best in a nearby school, sometimes you see variations of two days a week, in a central reception and three days at the school in the area, but it can be better and more effectively in the language classroom where a child gets education in the Dutch language by methods that have proven to work.”

The Torch in Heemskerk is such a central reception class for side-entrants from across the region. The reception class attached to primary school ‘Het Rinket’ consists of three language classes where newcomers go to school for up to one year before they go to a school in their own neighborhood. Experienced teachers also are specialized in NT2*. (*NT2 means Dutch as a second language)

Director Margriet de Boer warns of educational neglect: “It listens very closely on how you present the language and how you deal with the children. Teachers in mainstream schools are still very quick to lay their own standards onto refugee children. We sometimes get kids that started in a neighbourhood school, but who didn’t make it for example because they lack clear instructions and they were not understood very well. “She advises regular schools”. Take a comprehensive look at how you are going to offer vocabulary teaching. That’s so important. “ Postma, also director of the International Language Class Haarlem, has clear advice for schools that receive refugee children in regular classes. “Make sure the entire team is involved in the education of newcomers and that you have one, preferably regional, vision. This is a buffer against ad hoc efforts that do not always turn out well.” ■
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Grief in children

This booklet will help you understand bereaved children and what can be done to help them. Beliefs about death and the rituals and customs surrounding it vary across cultures. As will be seen below, these customs play a very important part in children’s grieving, so the ways in which children are helped to grieve will differ depending on their cultural background. We have tried to set out basic principles for helping children below, but they have to be adapted to your culture and community.

BY ATLE DYREGROV, PHD, CENTER FOR CRISIS PSYCHOLOGY, BERGEN NORWAY
DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING OF DEATH

Already when children are very young, 2-3 years old, they can start to understand parts of what a death means if they experience it happening to one in their close family. They will ask where a person is, and may go searching for that person. By the time they are 5 and 6 years old, they are starting to understand that death is irreversible, that it can happen following illness and suddenly following an accident. In the preschool age they may ask questions showing that they cannot understand the permanency of death; “Next week he will be back”, “Who will give him food in the grave?” or “Who will cut his hair?” These questions also reflect that they are very concrete at this age level.

By the age of 8 or 9 years children will generally understand that death is the irreversible end of all physical functioning. Children of
this age may still be rather concrete in their thinking and tend to focus on the bodily aspect of dying. They know for example that dead people cannot speak or move, that they do not breathe or eat, and that their heart has stopped beating. They can understand death as both the result of external causes (i.e., violence) and inner processes (i.e., illnesses), and their interest may centre on the physical causes of death and the physical process of decomposition. Although these early school age children begin to understand death as universal and unavoidable, they may find it hard to conceive of death as a possibility for them. Some children of this age begin to develop more abstract concepts of death. These may have a “magical” component, for example in assuming that the dead person can still see or hear the living, and working hard to please them as a result. Children of this age are able to comprehend the perspective of others, and can show compassionate and empathic feelings towards friends who have been bereaved. Older children and adolescents develop an additional understanding that death is inevitable for everyone, and will happen to them personally. Their concept of death becomes more abstract, and they may begin to question whether a soul or spirit exists, and if so what may happen to it at death, as well as physical changes that occur. Adolescents may reflect on justice, meaning, and fate; and perhaps on occult phenomena (omens and superstition) as well.

GRIEF REACTIONS IN CHILDREN
There is no right or wrong way for children to react to death. Children
may react in a variety of ways. Common immediate reactions include: shock and disbelief, dismay and protest, apathy and being stunned, and sometimes continuing with usual activities. As grieving proceeds, children often show some of the following: anxiety, vivid memories, sleep difficulties, sadness and longing, anger, guilt, school problems, and physical complaints. Other reactions may occur. Children might show regressive behaviour, social isolation, personality changes, pessimism about the future, or a preoccupation with cause and meaning. This variety of reactions makes children’s grief seem confusing for adults, and it can be difficult to know how to help. Some of these reactions are described in more detail below.

**IMMEDIATE REACTIONS**

Shock and disbelief (“It can’t be true”, “I don’t believe you”) are especially common in older children. Parents are often surprised that children do not react more strongly. However, it does not mean that something is wrong if a child reacts in this way: this sort of denial is a necessary and helpful protection mechanism which prevents children from becoming emotionally overwhelmed. Other children may react more strongly and can become quite inconsolable, crying for several days after the death. Yet other children might just carry on as if nothing had happened (“Can I go out to play now?”), seeming as if they are on auto-pilot. Again, this sort of reaction may serve a protective function, allowing children to continue with ordinary and well known activities at a time when the world seems chaotic and unsafe.

**LATER REACTIONS**

Fear and anxiety is common in children after they have been bereaved. Children who have lost a close family member often fear that the remaining parent will also die (“If it happened to father, it could happen to mother, too”) and older children often think through the consequences of this (“who will take care of me if you die?”). The
fear that someone else may die tends to be more common than the fear that they themselves will die, although some children do develop a fear of dying themselves. This can result in separation difficulties or clinginess, even in older children, for example, in a fear of sleeping alone, or a refusal to stay alone at home.

Sleep difficulties are common, and the problem can be one of getting off to sleep, or waking during the night. This is more likely if the word “sleep” has been used as a way to describe death. Sometimes, children are afraid to go to sleep for fear that they will not wake up. Sadness and longing appear in different ways. Children may cry frequently, or become withdrawn and apathetic. Some children try to hide their sadness so as not to further upset their parents. Longing for the dead person can show itself when children are preoccupied with memories of them, when they feel the dead person’s presence, or when they identify with the dead person. Children might seek out
CHILDREN’S RESPONSES TO DEATH

places they used to visit with the dead person, or engage in the same activities they used to do together to make them feel closer to the dead person. Children may sometimes want to look at pictures of the dead person, ask to hear letters read out, or ask to hear stories about the dead person. This can be distressing for adults, but is a normal way for children to come to terms with the loss of a loved one. On occasion, children may feel that they have seen the dead person, or heard their voice, for example at night time. This is quite normal in adults and children, but can be very frightening if children are not prepared for it.

Anger is also common in grieving children. It tends to show itself more often in boys, and might take the form of aggression or acting out or temper tantrums. Children may feel angry at death itself for taking the person away from them, or at God for letting it happen, or at adults for not preventing it (or because adults have excluded the child from their grief), or at themselves for not having done more, or at the dead person for deserting the child. Angry feelings may be connected to guilty feelings. Guilt can arise when children feel that they did not do enough to prevent the death, or even that they may have caused or contributed to the death. Guilt may derive from the kind of relationship that the child had with the dead person, for example when the child regrets things that were said or done when the person was still alive. Grief can lead to school problems, particularly in attention and concentration. Thoughts and memories of what has happened can interfere with school work, and children who are grieving tend to be slower in their thinking and may

Some children try to hide their sadness so as not to further upset their parents
lack energy or initiative. Physical complaints may be present, and can include headaches, stomach aches, soreness or aching, and fatigue.

The range of “normal” grief reactions is very broad, but in some children grieving can become complicated. That is, there may be no grief reaction; or it may be delayed, prolonged, or distorted. All children need support in grieving, but those children who show complicated grief reactions are especially in need of help. There is evidence than when children are unable to grieve at the time of death, they are more likely to be affected throughout their lives in all sorts of subtle ways. It is not possible to predict which children will show complicated grief reactions, but there are some types of death which are likely to make grieving more difficult. Unfortunately, the sorts of death which are likely to result in a complicated grief reaction are all too common during disasters.

**CHILDREN’S EXPERIENCE OF DEATH DURING DISASTERS**

Any kind of death is distressing for children. However, children’s experience of death in disaster generally differs from more “normal deaths” in ways which are likely to make it even harder for them to grieve well. Children’s experience of death during disasters can take many forms, but in general, several main factors make it harder for children. First, in contrast to “usual deaths”, death is more likely to be violent and suddenly, and graphic pictures may be seen in the media. Second, many people are killed during disasters. Third, some disasters involve waiting and the possibility that the body may not be found or interferes with the normal farewell ceremony.

Where death is sudden and violent, it is called a traumatic death. Traumatic death is especially hard for children. Then, many of the sorts of normal grief reactions described above can be very intense,
and they can be combined with the post traumatic reactions. So, for example, children may have vivid intrusive images or fantasies of the death, or they may suffer from nightmares. If this is the case, they are even more likely to be anxious and jumpy.

HELPING CHILDREN TO GRIEVE

Death is one of the hardest experiences for children to deal with, and one of the hardest for adults to help with. In the sections below, some ideas are given for ways in which adults can help. Religious rituals and practises are helpful after death: we talk about these below in general terms, but use the guidelines in whichever way is most suitable for your situation.

There is a great deal that can be done to help children who have been bereaved in disasters. Children need time to work through both the emotional and cognitive aspects of bereavement, and activities should be geared so that both of these dimensions are stimulated. In Dyregrov (1990) I summarise some guidelines for adults who are helping children:

Open and honest communication
- give age-appropriate explanations
- reduce confusion
- don’t give abstract explanations
- don’t explain death as “a voyage” or “sleep”

Give time for cognitive mastery
- allow questions and conversations
- accept short conversations
- look at albums and photographs
- let children visit the grave
- accept children’s play
Make the loss real
• let the child participate in rituals
• do not hide your own feelings
• keep reminders of the dead person present

Stimulate emotional coping
• work for continuity in home, school, or play group
• avoid unnecessary separations
• talk with children about their anxiety about something happening to their parents or themselves
• talk with children about eventual guilt feelings

Some of these guidelines are explained in more detail below.

PARTICIPATION IN THE FUNERAL
If possible, children should be allowed to participate in funerals or memorial services. Sometimes, we think that it will be too upsetting for children to attend funerals, and we try to protect children by excluding them from the ceremony. But children, just as much as adults, need to gain a concrete basis for their grief. The funeral service, as well as being a celebration of someone’s life, is a public way of making the death real. When children participate in the ceremony, they can have a concrete basis for their grief. That is, they will see the dead body, and see that it is burned or buried.

But children should be prepared properly for the funeral. This means explaining what will happen during the ceremony, and if the body is to be viewed, describing beforehand what it is likely to look like. Children should also be prepared for adults’ strong reactions; and can be told, without frightening them, that they will probably feel sad or anxious too. Depending on the sorts of services held in your community, children can participate in the funeral itself. This might mean reading or saying prayers, or helping physically with the burial.
It might be more personal, for example placing something personal on the coffin. It is important that afterwards children are given the opportunity to talk through what has happened and to ask questions. Often during disasters, the normal rituals and ceremonies surrounding death are not possible. Sometimes, because of the fear for disasters, bodies may be disposed of hurriedly with little ceremony, or they may be buried in the wrong place; and sometimes the body may not be recovered. This will almost certainly make grieving harder for children. It will therefore be useful if you discuss with other group leaders or in your parents group, alternatives that could be used. This might mean for example having some smaller kind of ceremony at home, perhaps with a religious or community leader visiting the home.
COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN

When we communicate with children openly and truthfully, giving them concrete and direct information, then confusion and fantasy on the part of the child can be minimised. It is best to avoid metaphor or abstract concepts (saying for example, that the dead person is asleep): this can make things more confusing for the child.

Parents may be reluctant to talk for fear of upsetting children further, or because they think that they may break down in front of the child. In a similar vein, parents sometimes hide their feelings of sadness from their children, not wanting their children to see them crying and grieving. If parents are continually overwhelmed and cannot talk to their children about the dead person without very strong emotions breaking through, then it may be best for the child to have a trusted adult outside the family with whom they can talk. However, when possible, parents should be available for their children. If they do not talk, and hide their grief, then the child gets the message that it is wrong to talk about the dead person, wrong to cry, and that strong emotions are intolerable. They may also feel that the parents do not care about or remember the dead person if they are never able to speak about them.

Children need to be given time and permission to talk to parents and others about the dead person. Time needs to be given for cognitive mastery, that is, for children to develop an understanding of what has happened. Children will do this by asking questions, depending on their age. Such questions are often penetrating and can be painful...
for adults to hear and difficult to answer. Questions may be to do with the physical or spiritual aspects of death, or personal questions about the dead person. Carers need to be prepared for such questions. Answers should be truthful and to the point. If you don’t know the answer, it is best to say so. If a question is very painful, you might say that you need to think about it, and you will talk to them later, but if you say this, make sure you follow up.

Adults should also be prepared for conversations of this sort to be rather short. This can be shocking for adults: children may ask very penetrating questions, and then go out to play. They may come back with a similar question later. Remember that children need more time than adults to grasp what has happened: their understanding develops in a gradual, step by step fashion, and they may “tumble around” with words and ideas. Children have a shorter “sadness span” than adults and are less tolerant of strong emotions.

Some children may refuse to talk about the death or the dead person. This may be the child’s way of protecting himself, and care should be taken not to force children, or push them too quickly. Adults should provide the sort of emotional environment where children are able to explore their feelings, rather than pushing them into talking of things that they are not ready for. Here, using means other than talking are useful: all children need to have some concrete means of working through their grief, and some of these are described below.

**CONCRETE EXPRESSIONS OF GRIEF**

Concrete means of expressing grief are a way of making the unreal real. This can be stimulated by keeping memories of the dead person present and visible, as part of the child’s daily surroundings. Gradually, the parents and child can remove those things that it will be unnatural to keep. It helps children to remember the dead person
if they have objects or memento’s which remind them of times they spent together. You may have photographs or pictures of the dead person, and children should be able and encouraged to look at these, perhaps with a parent so that they can talk and ask questions if they want to. Some children like to have special objects - clothing, jewellery, tools - which they can keep in their own special place and look at privately when they want to remember the dead person. Visiting the grave side is often a way for children to come to terms with death. Depending on their age, they may want to do this with family or friends, or alone. Other children may want to make drawings of the dead person, or of gravestones or religious sites. These are not morbid preoccupations, but show the ways in which the child is thinking about and coming to terms with their loss. Parents can encourage this, and sometimes it can be a means to begin talking with children about what has happened.

**EMOTIONAL COPING**

As well as developing an age appropriate understanding of what has happened, through talking, drawing, playing, or visiting the gravesite as above, children also need to find ways to cope emotionally. Children need to feel that they can talk to their parents when necessary, and that they can continue to play and enjoy themselves at times. It is important that a normal routine as possible is re-established: this gives children a sense of security and safety in these very difficult times.

**PARENTS’ OWN NEEDS**

Perhaps the most important thing that parents can do for their children after a death in the family is to look after their own needs. Parents should be aware of the sorts of responses that they and their children may show after someone had died. Parents need to give themselves time to grieve if they are to help their children. This can
be helped by observing normal mourning periods and anniversaries as far as is possible in the aftermath of disaster. Parents may also find it helpful to seek out peer support: that is, to recognise that at times of crisis, they cannot take on too much, and it is OK to ask for help from others.

**ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN**
Grief can be a slow process, and much of the “grief work” that children do will be within an emotionally supportive environment at home. The following are suggestions of activities for children to do which can help the grief process:

**LETTER WRITING**
Children may sometimes find it odd at first to write a letter to a dead person, but it can often be a great help. Children might be asked what they wish they would have said to the person the last time they saw them, if they knew that that was going to be the last time. What would they say to the person now, if they could speak to them? Does the child feel that he or she has said goodbye to the person who died? Have they told them all they wanted to tell them? Children can be asked to write all this down, in a letter to the dead person. Sometimes, children will then use the letter later to show to a trusted adult as a basis for talking about their grief. More often, children will want to keep the letter themselves as something private that they can refer to and re-read whenever they want to think about or feel close to the person who has died.

**TALKING TO THE DEAD PERSON**
Children are sometimes reluctant to say that they hold internal dialogues with the person who has died, but this is very common, and a useful way of working through grief. Children might just want to tell the dead person what is happening now in their life, or to ask
them for advice. Children may be embarrassed that they do this, but it should be encouraged for it is a way of remembering the dead person while at the same time letting go. It will gradually diminish naturally over time.

**JOURNALS AND DIARIES**

As with letter writing, keeping a diary or journal can also be an effective way of working through all the grief reactions. Children might keep a personal diary or log of events and feelings. Sometimes, this is a way of keeping an internal dialogue going; sometimes it is a way of structuring and making sense of the bewildering array of feelings that accompany bereavement. Again, diaries might be used as a basis for talking if the child wants to; or it may be kept as a private and special way for the child to remember.

**PRAYER**

Prayer and other religious practices can be very useful for children. When the child is not from a religious background, then a time of bereavement is not the best time to introduce such concepts. Still, most people, religious or not, take comfort from some kind of prayer or meditation at a time of death. Children are the same, and depending on their age and developmental level, they may talk to God, asking them to take care of the dead person, and of those still living.

**RITUALS AND MEMERENTS**

Children need to have some concrete means of expressing their grief. It can be very helpful for them to participate in the funeral or burial. Later, it can be helpful for children to visit the grave. This might be done with other family members, but older children often like to go alone so that they can remember and think about the dead person. Often, this is kept quiet: children feel that parents will worry if they know they are going alone to the graveyard or burial site; or children
may like to keep it as a special private way to “be with” the dead person when they want to. For some children, it is harder to go because they may fear becoming too upset, or because the graveyard is frightening. It should be encouraged, and children can be helped to find ways to visit the grave regularly, perhaps with family or friends. Photos or pictures of the dead person are helpful ways for children to remember. Sometimes, children might be encouraged to look at them with parents, or be given permission to look at them when they want to. Otherwise, children might like to keep special objects which belonged to the dead person, or which remind them of the dead person.

Center for Crisis Psychology is situated in Bergen, Norway. The centre was founded in 1988 and has from the start focused on dealing with critical situations and their impact on child and adult victims, as well as on personnel that have to deal with such situations.

The centre has four main areas of activities:
• Clinical work with crisis and disaster situations both locally and internationally.
• Educational activities, i.e. lecturing to health professionals, aid workers and to non-professionals, both nationally and internationally.
• Conducting research on various aspects of stress, trauma, and bereavement.
• Emergency Preparedness Agreements to companies and organizations.

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