KP-Lab
KNOWLEDGE PRACTICES LABORATORY
Teacher community
Newsletter
Your guide to KP-Lab!
Issue 1 2008

The trials in Israel

Yoram Haim is a teacher in the Ziv School in Jerusalem. He is one of the teachers involved in KP-Lab.

In Israel, trials with the Map-IT tool has begun. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI), are responsible for the trials. But some of them are carried out at the Ziv high school in Jerusalem. Map-IT is a discussion map tool, that can be used to create a map of what has happened during a meeting or discussion. Yoram Haim is the teacher who has tried the tool in his school.

- The tool raised opposition, most of the teachers didn't understand what they needed this tool for when the discussion is face to face.

But even though some teachers did not immediately praise Map-IT Yoram sees benefits:

- I think that the tool has abilities in developing rational thinking.

Read more about this on page 6!

The UniC Case

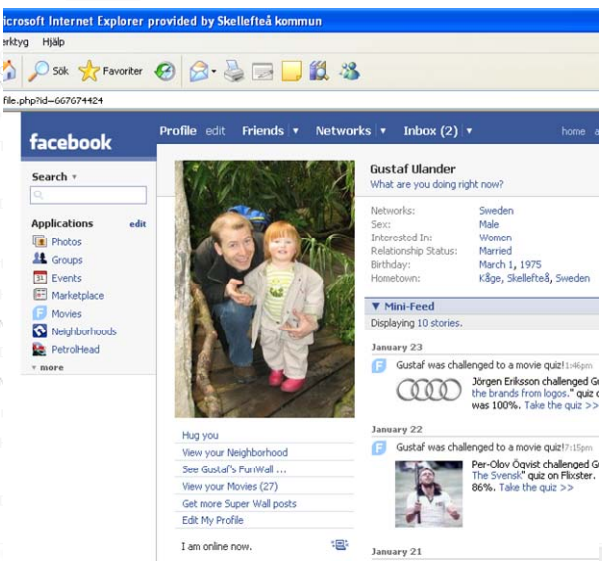
The emphasis in the knowledge creation metaphor is on the ways people participate in knowledge communities who aim at the development and advancement of knowledge objects.
One distinctive application of this metaphor can be collaborative design of curricular artefacts. An example can be how pedagogical communities create and advance shared knowledge artefacts (instructional modules, assessment rubrics, educational ICT applications, and written educational reports) relevant for developing their competencies and professionalism. But how do communities attain these effects?
The goal of the UniC study is to report on examples from a case study which investigates changes in collaborative design practices. **Patrick Sins gives us an exclusive view of the study on page 3.**

Contents

The KP-Lab teacher community newsletter is published and edited by Gustaf Ulander, Skeria. Contact the editor at gustaf.ulander@skelleftea.se Contributions come from the KP-Lab consortium unless otherwise indicated

Facebook – the community that changed the world?

When Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg started a community in February 2004, had he any idea that 3-4 years later, it would be the most talked-about



My own Facebook profile, although not very updated…

community in the world?
I doubt that. In my experience the most successful communities stem from a basic need that the creator feels – not a "business idea" or a market plan.

No, I think that young Mark just wanted a fun way of keeping in touch with his friends. Well, not only a fun way but a way to do it online – as a student he probably spent most of his time in front of a computer anyway – and in a way that put the power into the users hands.
How is that? Compare facebook to a telephone or address register. These are fine and a very good way to keep track of your friends so you know where to send postcards and christmas greetings.

But if US students are anything like the students in Sweden, they move around. A lot. That makes it hard to keep track of where to send stuff.

In Facebook everybody takes their own responsibility for keeping their facts up to date. If you move to a new house your Facebook space stays. To me, I see a close connection to how my younger friends only have cell phones – no "landline" phone to their house. To them it's natural to keep the same contact ways (phone, e-mail) if they move.

What is really interesting is that almost all really successful communities seem to be based around more or less spare time activities. If Facebook would have started as a community for students where only study-related issues were welcome, I don't think it would have had 30 million users by mid-2007. It should probably have been happy to have 3000…

But how can we take advantage of this in the educational settings? Maybe by using Facebook (or any other successful community nearby) as some others already have done – start a sub-community for the matters you need a community for. In Facebook you can find groups for almost any interest you might have.

So, do your school have a Facebook community? Do we need a KP-Lab Facebook section?

Or is this Facebook thing just a short-lived Internet thing, soon replaced by something else? Discuss it with your colleagues!

Text: Gustaf Ulander

The UniC Case

- WORKING WITHIN INNOVATIVE KNOWLEDGE COMMUNITIES AS A CONTEXT FOR DEVELOPING PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

- Rapid **changes** in present **knowledge society** present new **challenges** to human competence
- Work is nowadays increasingly more focused on the **deliberate advancement of knowledge** and developing **professionalism**
- How to theorize and to address these challenges in education?
- The **Knowledge creation metaphor of learning** theorizes these challenges and provides principles for designing innovative educational practices

The emphasis in the knowledge creation metaphor is on the ways people participate in knowledge communities who aim at the development and advancement of knowledge objects, thereby creating innovations and new knowledge in the process (transformations of practices)

One distinctive application of this metaphor can be collaborative design of curricular artefacts. An example can be how pedagogical communities create and advance shared knowledge artefacts (instructional modules, assessment rubrics, educational ICT applications, and written educational reports) relevant for developing their competencies and professionalism. But how do communities attain these effects?

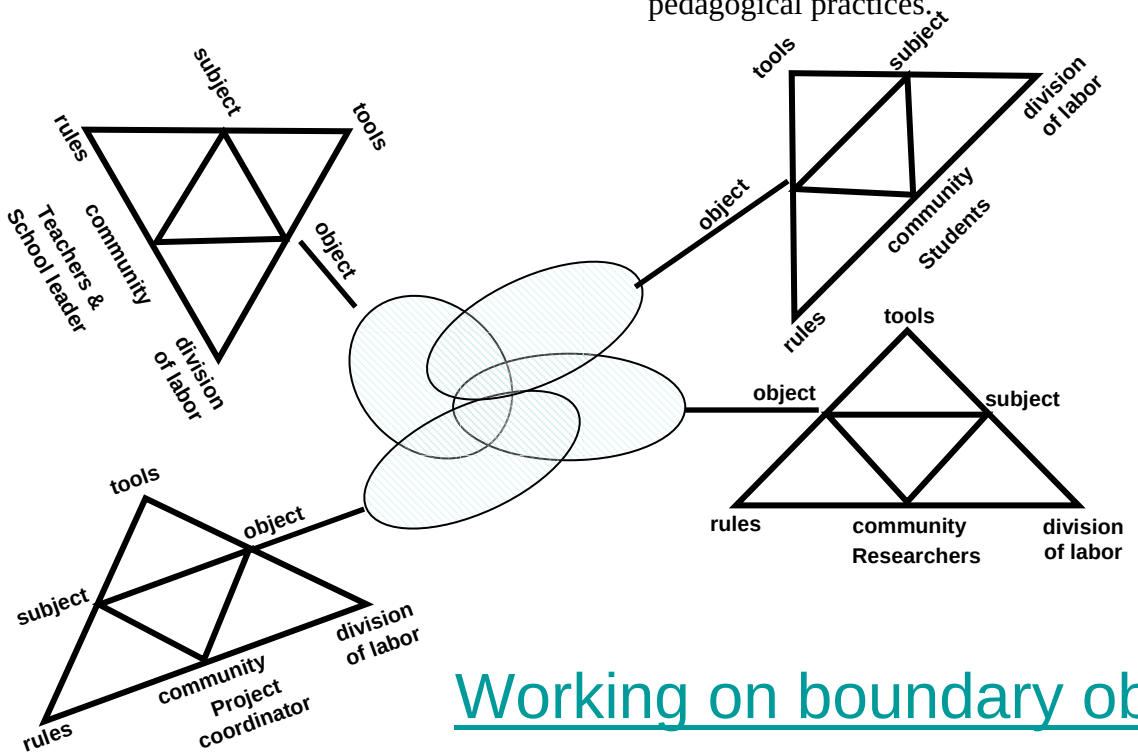
The goal of the UniC study is to report on examples from a case study which investigates changes in collaborative design practices.

The case concerns a collaborative development, advancement and implementation of a new course module at a secondary school in the Netherlands (UniC).

The work was conducted by a multidisciplinary design team: researchers, teachers, school leader, project coordinator, students and pedagogical expert. They participated in an innovative knowledge community whose activities are mediated through the creation and use of boundary objects

To accomplish this main goal, the design team has to engage in crossing boundaries between the traditional (sometimes conflicting) aims and roles represented by these different groups. The group has to be engaged and persevere in creating their own context and rules of working together.

The prime focus is on fostering students´ learning through development of teachers´ pedagogical practices.



Working on boundary objects

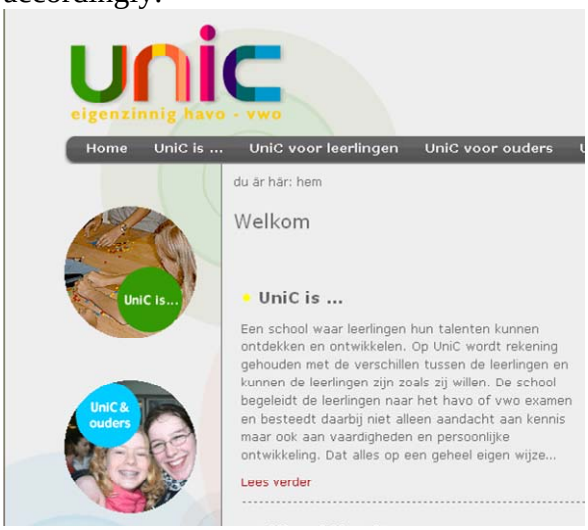
This case investigates the ways in which pedagogical ideas are transferred from the context of their design to their actualization in teachers' practices in the classroom. Developments in teachers' pedagogical practices are examined while they collaboratively design learning activities and subsequently bring these ideas into practice when providing guidance to their students.

Results and discussion

The project partners shared the intention to create and to advance the design and implementation of a new course module in the context of teachers' professional development, based on theoretical insights gained from the trialogical perspective on learning.
The meetings of the project partners served to improve the design of the module based on experiences of teachers and researchers encountered during implementation of the module and based on socio-cultural theoretical insights. All partners were highly involved in the collaborative design work provided that the goal of all participating parties was shared and the object (i.e., course module) afforded discussions and further elaboration and reflections to advance its implementation.

The activities of the partners participating in the design team at UniC cut across the practices occurring within the following two intersecting levels: a) that of the students engaged in learning activities, and b) that of the community consisting of project partners who collaborate on the (advancement of the) design of the module based on principles of trialogical learning.

The design work requires participants to be highly engaged and motivated to persevere in their shared efforts to reach their own set goals. The project partners shared their intentions to create, advance and implement a new course module based on negotiations around a pedagogical model and acted accordingly.



Participants were willing to engage in long-term co-development of the course module to be implemented at UniC and to learn from each other. Also, partners expressed the need for transforming practices to guarantee an effective way of working. This was also accomplished since, for instance, researchers changed their role from more observatory participants to actively engaged participants in the reflection on and co-design of teachers' pedagogical practices, which was due to teachers expressing the need to receive more feedback on their activities.

Patrick Sins

Currently, Patrick works as a postdoctoral fellow at the Faculty of Social and Behavioural at Utrecht University. Patrick's main research activities focus on the investigation of teacher training contexts that are designed according to principles of the KP-Lab theory in an iterative fashion. More specifically, he examines how pre-and in-service teachers' pedagogical practices develop as a result of working within innovative knowledge communities. In addition, Patrick's research aims at investigating the impact of explicitating tacit knowledge on teachers' pedagogical practices within these communities.

The process of the collaborative design of the learning module at UniC will take place longitudinally, spanning several iterative modules. New teachers and educators will be involved in the subsequent phases of the advancement and design of this module and workshops will be organized around the object of creating and developing an understanding and insight into the pedagogical practices that effectively foster practices in student groups. Moreover, in next implementation rounds of the module, the design team will be engaged in practices revolving around the development and testing of an educational scenario.

In the UniC case, interaction between different types of knowledge (i.e., tacit, propositional, declarative, procedural, and explicit) occur on both the individual and collective platform of the design team and is reflected in the behaviour of the participants.

The design team at UniC consisted of partners coming from diverse fields of knowledge, such as: educational sciences, practical pedagogy, psychology, and teacher education. The negotiating between the diverse voices originating from these fields served the development and advancement of the shared object; that is the new course module. Both researchers and teachers indicated that they experienced the collaborative design work as highly rewarding and noted that both groups contributed equally to the iterative conceptualization and operationalization of the way in which pedagogical practices during the learning trajectory at UniC should be organized.

This is one example of the research in KP-Lab. What would it be like to have similar things in your school? Contact the KP-Lab project for more information.

Text and illustrations: Patrick Sins

The UniC school

UniC is a secondary school, in Utrecht, where students can discover and develop their talents. UniC values differences between individuals and stimulates students to be what they want. The school coaches students towards the (national) exam, thereby not only focusing on knowledge but also stressing skills and personal development.

The school supports the students and offers possibilities to carry out their plans. Every period (8 weeks) students negotiate these plans with the teachers. All results and scores can be retrieved in personal portfolios.

Movies of the study

The following links contain two presentations and some videos providing an insight of the work at UniC:

http://edugate.fss.uu.nl/~unic/downloads/Presentatie_Patrick_Sins_theorie.zip

http://edugate.fss.uu.nl/~unic/downloads/Presentatie_Crina_Mirjam_Patrick_onderzoek.zip

Contact gustaf.ulander@skelleftea.se for a file with subtitles in English for the videos.

Map-IT trials in Israel

In Israel, trials with the Map-IT tool has begun. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI), are responsible for the trials. But they are carried out at the Ziv primary school in Jerusalem. Yoram Haim is the teacher who has tried the tool in his class. Here is what he has to say.

My interview with Yoram is made through E-mail, but I had the pleasure also to meet him both in Jerusalem in February 2007 and in Budapest during the WP9 Workshop later on.

Where do you work, what kind of school is it? What is your teaching subject?

- I am a history and geography teacher in a highschool in Jerusalem. It's a public 6 year program school – (7th-12th grade). Students arrive mostly from west Jerusalem.

As well as being a teacher, I work in training teachers to teach in a computerized learning environment.

How would you describe being a teacher?

- This is a question which is difficult to answer in a few sentences. I will just say that being a teacher in my point of view is a kind of a social mission. In our profession one can change and influence and definitely that is why I am in this field.

The technological development and the social changes that occur in our era, requires from us, the teachers, to adapt ourselves to this new situation. A teacher of today needs to learn and to be updated all the time, to focus in teaching learning skills rather then passing on information, and to develop critical thinking among the students. I am in the opinion that we haven't yet absorbed the need in change and many of the teachers un the schools still teach in the same method as their colleagues in the 19th century.

When a new methodology or tool is proposed to you, how do you tackle that as a teacher?

- After I learn the tool or the method I ask myself how can they assist and serve my educational goals. If I come to the conclusion that the tool is good for me, I then ask myself – how do I bring together the tool or method with the students. I think of ways that the students will be confronted with the tool or method in such a way that there will be minimum opposition (our students are very critical about tools and computerised teaching methods that the teachers bring) In order to prepare the confrontation of the students with the method I usually turn to my daughter who is in 9th grade and ask her what she thinks about it. From her reaction I learn how should I integrate the tool in the classroom.

"If I come to the conclusion that the tool is good for me, I then ask myself – how do I bring together the tool or method with the students?"

In your opinion, what are the most important things to consider when you test a tool in your teaching?

- I mostly like to work with open and free tools, and that is why I encourage the use of learning in a Wiki environment, Blogs and other Internet tools. It is important that the teacher will define to himself what are the goals in using that specific tool and that he will check how does he use that tool in order to achieve those goals. The use of computerized tools in teaching is a means and not the goal itself.

Yoram Haim is an Israeli teacher that is involved in the pilots with KP-Lab tools.

- Phrasing in writing the things that were said orally helps the student to organise the things that were said, in a logic way and helps in developing thinking, he says with regards to a short trial with the Map-IT tool.

You have tested Map-IT in your teaching, is that right? For how long?

- I used Map-IT a few times, but only with teachers,. We used it in face to face discussions, and the tool was a mediate in the learning group.

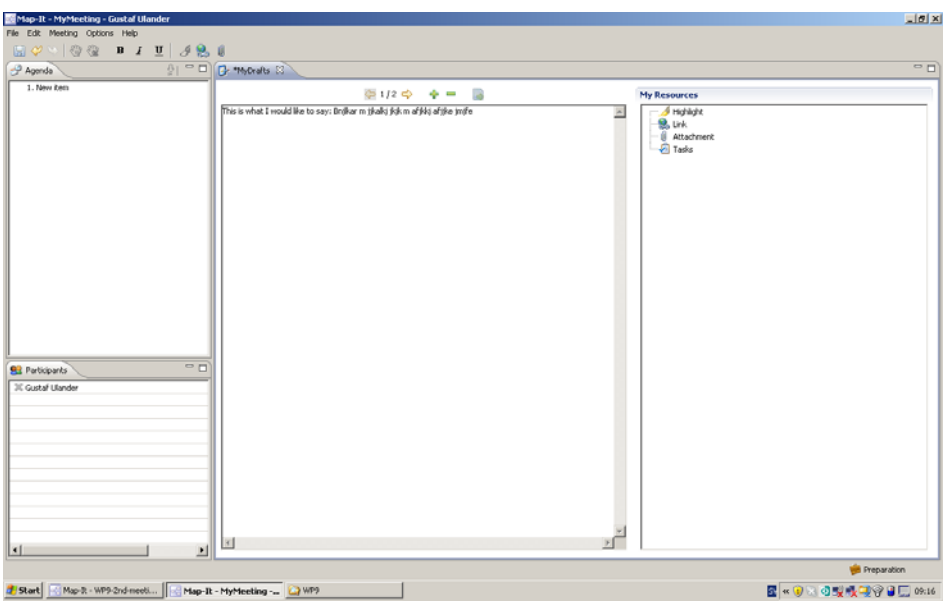
The participants were asked to discuss a certain issue, and at the end of the discussion they were asked to phrase what they had said in the discussion , on the map-it map. The tool raised opposition, most of the teachers didn't understand what they needed this tool for when the discussion is face to face. I understand their criticism , but I think that the tool has abilities in developing rational thinking.

The tool asks the student that parallel to the oral discussion, he should summarize and phrase his ideas again in short.

Phrasing in writing the things that were said orally helps the student to organise the things that were said, in a logic way and helps in developing thinking.

Our students find it easy to throw all kind of arguments and claims to the classroom space, but when they are asked to phrase it again in writing –in a logic manner- they find it much more difficult.

We hope to be able to get back to the Ziv school trials later in the project. For now, we thank Yoram and the others for their cooperation!

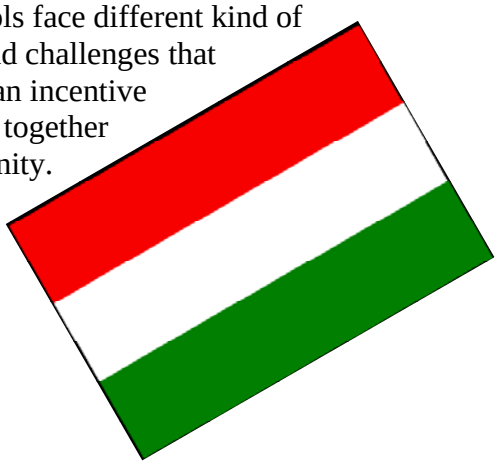


Map-IT is still being developed as one of the KP-Lab tools. It can be an aid both in face-to-face and online meetings, to take notes and to support the discussion. A discussion map is created during the meeting that describes what happened during the meeting.

The Multigrade school community

In Hungary Elte has been involved in a community for multigrade schools. Many countryside small schools in Hungary are driven as multigrade schools where pupils of different ages work together in the same class.

These schools face different kind of problems and challenges that gives them an incentive for working together in a community.



Multigrade schools exist in different European countries, so a European dimension on a community would be interesting

In the next issue of this newsletter we hope to bring you a detailed article about the multigrade community in Hungary.

Do you have any experience or opinions about multigrade schools? Contact the newsletter editors at gustaf.ulander@skelleftea.se

How to find out more about KP-Lab

KP-Lab wiki

A wiki is a system that allow users to collaboratively explain and define things. It is like an encyclopedia that is always changing. A dedicated WIKI site has been setup for the KP-Lab project and it has many answers.

http://kplab.evtek.fi:8080/wiki/

Publications

Quite some publications are being written in the project. They spread the word about KP-Lab and explain what is being developed and the basis for that development. The publications are a good source of information!

Publication list

WORDS

Scaffolding

A process by which a more experienced person supplies supporting structures or simplifies a situation or a task in a way that allows one less experienced to solve complex problems that would otherwise be beyond the latter's capability. Scaffolding may also be created by computer tools that structure inquirers' activities in a way that facilitates complex problem solving. The concept was first introduced by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) for investigating the help that an adult gives to an individual learner to perform a task that is too difficult for a child to accomplish alone. According to them, scaffolding included such elements as arousing the learner's interest in the task; reducing the degrees of freedom - and hence the complexity of problem space - in the task to suit the learner's level of expertise; directing the learner's activity towards the task goals; highlighting the critical features of the task; helping to control frustration; and modelling the solution to a task.

References

Wood, D., Bruner, J. S., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *17*, 89-100

[Definition from the trialogical glossary in the KP-Lab wiki]