Lifelong Learning Programme

LABLEARNING

MEDIA BASED EMPOWERMENT FOR DISENGAGED YOUTH

THE LABLEARNING GUIDE COLLECTION

NR 4
Empowerment media didactics for disengaged youth

The LABlearning Guide Collection offers inspiration, tools and principles to establish empowermental media based learning facilities for disengaged youth.
The Guide Collection offers around 20 different guides, including the full collection of guide material.
The media based learning initiatives are contributing to re-thinking learning and to the creation of 21st century learning opportunities for young people.
The LABlearning Guide Collection is synthesizing theory and practice from such approaches as media learning, game based learning, project based learning, entrepreneurial and community based learning. The Guide material emerges from extensive literature studies, the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network's 20 years of experience, as well as from LAB practice in Catalonia Spain, Holland, Italy and Denmark.

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www.LABlearning.eu

The LABlearning Guide Collection is produced by the Comenius LABlearning project 2011-13, funded by the European Commission.
The material is openly available to all non-profit users.
More information about the project and the partners on www.LABlearning.eu

Empowerment media didactics for disengaged youth

This comprehensive guide offers building blocks to create media based laboratories across all sorts of learning activities in formal as well as in non-formal education and linking strongly to what we call 21st century learning. The guide elucidates what media labs are about from different angels and perspectives, never by enforcing manuals but by offering open inspiration

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CONTENT

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. . . Why media based learning works for disengaged youth

THE WHY

Traditional education didactics is outdated for all learners, not just for youth at risk.

All learners could significantly improve their learning outcomes, their competences and their creativity if offered explorative and productive media LABs instead of teaching and lecturing.

Nevertheless we argue that media LABs are of special importance to youth at risk. Why is that?

Strong, self-confident and academic learners can manage their learning pathways even if offered outdated education settings and methods. They might not be able to unfold their talents to the full, which they should in the knowledge economy, but they can manage their learning in a somehow acceptable way.

This is not true for youth at risk.

What does *youth at risk* mean in this context?

- Young learners from non-academic communities and families
- Young learners with low qualifications in the traditional subjects, such as reading and writing and math
- Young learners not able to learn in the classroom
- Young learners with low self-esteem when it comes about schooling
- Young people who cannot, from their life perspective, value the theoretical learning offered
- Activist and media entertainment addicted young learners
- Young learners with very little support from family and friends as to learning
- Young learners not aware of what they would like to do with their future life
- Young people easy victims of drug and alcohol abuse
- Young learners typically dropping out of secondary school or vocational training, often more than once
- Young people being trapped between unsuccessful basic school and the lack of ability to attend secondary high or vocational training

As can be seen we are a long way from the above mentioned strong learners not able to fully unfold their talents.

These large groups of young people are in need of very powerful initiatives to overcome their so-called educational deficit. If not, they are lost for life, and lifelong learning will turn out to be life non-learning.

Why do media LABs make a difference, then?

Let's point to some of the most important factors.

- The work processes are practical, action oriented and product oriented
- Reflections are in a natural way inserted when needed as time-outs in the practical work flow
- The young learners are not passively listening and responding to teacher initiatives, but design their own mission and work flow

- The learning is not based on academic skills and qualifications, but on own talents and action learning
- The young people are engaged in defining the projects, their missions and their work methods prior to engaging in the activities; missions are not felt as externally enforced and irrelevant
- Even though most young people do not know how to learn with media and technology, they are familiar with technology and feel they are on safe ground
- To a great extend the learning activities are based on the known talents of the young people, or based on the development of new talents
- The learning process is not divided into isolated academic topics, but represents a long coherent work flow
- The learning potential of the work processes is not depending on your academic and theoretical capacity, but on a diversity of very different capacities
- The use of high-end media is well-known to be highly respected among these young people, and they are well-motivated to work hard to get more media skills
- The work flow is to a large extend based on interacting with external professionals, the community and social networks
- The work process has a clear final goal: to produce a product or service of high quality to be used by other people in the community; often the young people take pride in their products and the fact that other people need them
- No formal teaching takes place in the LABs; the learning is indirect and emerges through the practical project work
- The media LABs do not smell like education, but more like an open, action-based and productive workplace
- The young people are at the centre of all the phases in the projects: from mission design to delivery of the products; they acquire a deep understanding of their different roles in these phases and of production processes
- Basically the young people are recognized for *what they can do* and for *what they would like to do*, not for *what they should be able you do according to the formal education system*

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. MEDIA LAB PROJECTS

It is interesting to describe the typical work flow in such media LAB projects for youth at risk. Such a description tells us about what kind of learning, skills and competences the young people will need to develop along the media projects.
Media LAB projects are, of course, very different, but it is possible to outline the most typical phases, as there is a certain "logic" involved in projects and in media projects as well.
Of course, the description below depends on the size and scope of the project and on to what extend it is possible to carry out these phases in the practical learning situation.
Media LAB projects should not be "dogmatic", but pragmatic: you do your best in the actual situation and with the resources available.
The young people might, most likely, not be able to carry out the different tasks in the work flow, but they will learn a lot from trying and from being challenged by all these activities.
One of the great advantages of this didactic is that everybody around the young people are taking them seriously, which will encourage the young people to start taking themselves seriously.

MISSION

Depending on the formal or non-formal context, the young people will be invited

to discuss a given or new mission they will be engaged in as a team or as several teams.
The mission must be real and important and challenging. It must make sense and motivate the learners.

Main skills to train

Develop ideas, construct, plan, reflection on other people's needs and what you can offer, establishing relevant teams, defining a project, designing work flow and tasks

RESOURCES

The young teams will find out what resources are needed to carry out the mission. This includes own skills and training needs, support from external professionals, counselling from different people in the community, media needs and resources, available mentors and process supporters, time and costs to take into consideration.

Main skills to train

Reflecting on what we can do and not do, what we need to learn and why it is necessary, identifying support resources and even partners, planning of work flow and work tasks, discussing the team's capacity and deficits and what to do about it

FIRST DIALOGUES

The young learners will contact people they need to collaborate with along the project. They must expose the project and the reason why they need support or collaboration. They also need to explain the benefits for the approached resources and for the community. Moreover, they need to explain what kind of contributions they need from the collaborators and how the team will receive the support. The people to approach might be working in a private enterprise, a health institution, a cultural institution, or they might be media professionals or technology supporters.
The initial dialogues might include discussions with the end users of the final products of the project.

Main skills to train

Communication with different people in the community, explaining your cause and your mission to other people, describing what you need from other people and why they should help you, planning how to use these resources during the project, identifying the needs and interests of possible end users

FIRST DESIGN

Then the young teams will, supported by mentors and professionals, engage in the first work tasks and some training activities are inserted when needed – knowledge and skills are created when you need it.
The first steps often include finding knowledge, using existing material and resources and trying to outline and visualize what the product or service should look like.
The first steps will normally reveal additional training needs and additional support needs.

Main skills to train

Internet search, selection of useful resources, elaborating on material, estimating what we have and what we need to create, visualizing plans, flows and outcomes, creating the first concrete visions of the products, including already at this stage: what kind of things would the end users like to have and how the users will use the products in practice

SECOND DIALOGUES

Now the youth teams will establish dialogues with their mentors and collaborators about the first design steps. They will also communicate with possible end users about their ideas, now starting to take on more concrete forms.
The feed-back from these dialogues will go into the further design steps.

Main skills to train

Presenting ideas to partners and users, receiving feed-back, managing the frustration when feed-back is unexpected, learning how to use the feedback from different sources to take further design steps, most importantly learning to

adjust own ideas and expectations to partners' and users' needs: differentiate between what I would like to do and what they need…

SECOND DESIGN

The time has come to start producing some of the elements for the production. It might be a video, an interview, a piece of music, a web framework, and some photos, whatever. The young people will engage deeply in this work if properly guided.

The big challenge is for the team to coordinate all this and to remember to work together even if the team members are working on different elements.

This phase might require a lot of media work and training, and strong mentoring and guidance will be needed.

At the end of this work process, the team will bring together the different elements and construct the first version of the product or products.

The material must be presented in a way that makes it possible for other people to discuss it and perhaps test it.

Main skills to train

Designing and producing with all sorts of media, taking ideas into concrete media elements, coordinating different project and media tasks in teams, seeking advice and guidance when needed, putting together different pieces of content into a meaningful flow, getting new media skills on the flight, ensuring the testability of the produced material, product or service

TESTING

The first, and of course un-finished, material should be "tested" by or presented to the people or the institution who will use it. The team of young people should try to make the first version testable or at least discussable to allow a fruitful dialogue with end users.

It will be important in this activity to listen well and capture the feedback from the users, and, afterwards, to reflect on what kind of adjustments or further developments might be needed.

Main skills to train

Presenting material in a way to allow testing or discussions, strong listening and capturing skills, constructive dialogues with users, understanding the needs and ideas of the users, making user feedback operative to the final productions

FINAL PRODUCTION

Based on the testing or dialogues with the users, the youth teams will start producing the final outcomes of the material, products or services.

This process is demanding and will require considerable mentoring and professional guidance. The young learners' critical competences will be challenged in this phase.

The youth team should feel proud in the process of finalizing the work.

Main skills to train

Media skills, coordinating skills, critical and self-critical approaches, agreeing with the team, open to ask for help and guidance, take pride in your work

DELIVERY

The final material, products or services should be delivered to the users. It can happen in the form of an event, a celebration or in a very informal way. The youth team will need to present their work to the users and perhaps offer guidance on how to use the material.

The learners should make sure to organize feedback from the upcoming user experience.

Main skills to train

Presentation to users and perhaps other audiences in the community, guiding users towards a proper use of the outcomes, making users interested in evaluating their user experience, and perhaps making them interested in further collaboration

EVALUATION

If possible in the specific learning context, the delivery should be followed up by a double evaluation activity. Normally young people are not interested in

evaluations, but when the evaluation is about their own work, the interest will change.
On one hand, the youth teams should evaluate their own work process: what did we learn, how we learned, what worked and what did not, and what would I like to learn more about (the topics, media tools) and how can I do that.
On the other hand, the learners should plan and carry out an informal evaluation of user experience.

Main skills to train

Reflecting on your own learning process, reflecting on your new talents and needs, reflecting on teamwork and reflecting on user satisfaction, planning further steps in your learning journey based on what happened in this project
And always: meeting a need by producing products or services always produces new needs… How can we create and approach new needs?

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. A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Most of the above described activities might not be possible in a specific context. The young learners might not be able to carry out all these different tasks.
This is not so important.
The overall aim is to offer the young learners a new learning experience, very different from their almost always rather negative classroom experience: to show them that learning can be different, joyful and exiting, and that they are not stupid.
What is important is the young learners' feelings about the project: do I feel proud, did I take new steps, did I occasionally forget myself during the work flow?, have I developed new talents or ideas, do I feel encouraged to take new or further steps, did I have fun during the project, did I like this kind of work, etc.
Clearly, media LABs are not so much about subject learning, but much more about the famous key words: empowerment, self-confidence, learning re-motivated, discovering skills and talents, renewed energy to take further steps.
If *some* of the young people feel *some* of these things, your media LAB was successful.

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THE RHETORIC OF TECHNOLOGY

It was hoped, from the early days of information technology, that it would revolutionize education.
It did.
It offered knowledge to millions of people, it offered online communication and e-learning and it offered measures to make education more efficient.
But it was a "traditional" revolution. Lots of technology optimists still believe that technology has basically changed education.
But it has not.
In most cases technology has been integrated into traditional didactics. Some teachers and learners benefit from this, some not.
All evaluations agree: the more privileged a learner, the more benefit from technology.
Technology itself is not revolutionizing the way most people learn, especially not the way youth learn. And it will not. The learning potentials of technology will only be unfolded when integrated in new didactics, in new ways of learning, shifting the focus from the classroom to actively producing learners: 21st century learning.
Technology itself will not produce one milligram of learning. On the other hand, some technologies offer incredible rich tools for learning if integrated in creative learning processes. These learning processes are, though, not derived from technology, but derived from knowledge and experience about what learning is.
Socrates pointed in the right direction 2000 years ago with very limited technology.
In fact both the misuse of technology and the unmanageability of available "knowledge" might very well disturb learning rather than facilitate it.

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. THE EDUCATION CRISIS

Europe has experienced deep crisis in its education systems for more than a decade. High drop-out rates, early school leaving, disengaged youth, etc.
The new generations of learners have exposed the conservatism of the education systems – neither able to meet the young people, nor able to link to the new realities of learning and work.
Many attempts to change the old classrooms have been made over the last 10-15 years, some of them quite successfully, but basically the education system remains unchanged.
Policy-makers, educational professionals and stakeholders seem unwilling to give up the formal control of the system, its work methods and its outcomes.
The education crisis is about new generations of young people not willing to passively receive "knowledge" from the teachers, sitting in the classroom for hours, days and years. They do not have the *industrial discipline*, they do not want to have it and they are not able to; neither the so-called smart students, nor the so-called weak students.
The new generations are active, networking, self-centered, technologists, "un-disciplined", rapidly bored and lacking the old conservative education virtues.
The education system at large is not able to respond to this profound cultural change.
In fact, most students have been bored in the classrooms for ages, but perhaps it was less visible in the old days. Technology and technological youth seem to super-expose the failures of the traditional education system.
Technology did not revolutionize learning; it simply made visible its failures.

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. DIDACTIC DAWN

Technology and technological youth seem to super-expose the failures of the traditional education system, so we said.
But, in fact, we have known for decades, if not for centuries, what good creative learning is about.
Socrates did not offer answers, but only new questions. Freud did the same in his field of work, and the constructivists followed these pathways in more systematic ways.
But the industrial era called for mass educational solutions, not new questions, later on accompanied by the democratic movement's pseudo-dialogues with the learners: enlightenment, but not empowerment, and mostly for the middle class.
The creative learning environments were always and are still found in the fields of non-formal learning, such as the Nordic folk high schools and the global Computer Clubhouse Network.
No doubt, the didactic dawn is highly influenced by both the communication technology itself, as well as the new generations' technology cultures.
It has become clear throughout the last decades how outdated the traditional educations are when confronted with the potentials of creative technology and huge challenges of globalization.
Today, everybody seems to concur: innovation is urgent in the European education sector. The new technologies are seen as key drivers in this innovation.

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. TECHNOLOGY AND DIDACTICS

But, technology cannot define innovation in learning. Innovation in learning must be based on knowledge about how we facilitate good and creative learning. Good and creative learning was possible long before the emergence of Facebook and computer games.
This means that innovative didactics are to be based on non-technological principles. On the other hand, technology offers rich access to all sorts of creative tools, and properly used technology can make creative learning processes unfold to the max.
Examples of core and non-technological principles on which creative learning should be based might be:

- The learning environment must be open, explorative and open-ended
- The learning must be linked to the interests and aspirations of the young people
- The young people must be involved in defining problems and missions
- The learners must critically explore the knowledge available
- The learners must interact with external experts and community resources in the learning process
- The learners must learn to organize, elaborate on and present the knowledge
- The learning outcomes could benefit other learners or citizens in the community; often the young people take pride in their products and the fact that other people need them
- The learning process should be product-oriented, as it offers the young people concrete, focused and practical perspectives in the learning

- The learners should use a variety of expression forms along the process and when delivering the final outputs, as using different forms of expressions help the learners develop different forms of intelligences
- The overall learning process is open-ended
- The learning should be linked to real tasks, not to artificial or simulated tasks.

All this can take place without the use of any of the new technologies, but it is very clear to what extend new technologies can dramatically increase productivity, creatively and motivation in such processes.

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. WHAT DOES MEDIA MEAN

When we talk about media – as in media based learning -, we mean all sorts of new technologies fit for learning: text editing, digital photography, video, animation, social gaming, serious games, social networking, all sorts of useful software and hardware.

But in our context we talk about media for learning. Media for entertainment might be different. PlayStation might not be relevant to learning, whereas Facebook and Photoshop might be extremely relevant.

Defining media for learning includes challenging one of the great myths of our time: the idea of "digital natives".

Most young people might be "fluent" as to PlayStation and Facebook, but they are not at all "fluent" when it comes about learning with media. Not that they are not technically capable, they are, but they do not know how to learn with the technologies at hand.

Therefore, in learning with media nobody is "fluent": neither the teachers, nor the learners.

We are all in the same boat: we must learn to learn with any media available, and we must learn to base the learning principles on knowledge about learning, not on technology. Any available creative technology should support creative learning, not the other way round.

Thus, the term "media based learning" is actually "wrong": the learning is based on creative learning principles, but the practical learning is based on extensive use of creative media to enhance productivity, creatively and motivation.

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. MEDIA BASED LEARNING IN FORMAL SETTINGS

It can be expected that innovation in learning will emerge from bottom-up initiatives: good practices demonstrating the benefits for the young learners as well as for the institutions.

Therefore it is urgent to organize a variety of laboratory and media based learning processes in formal education. As long as the creative learning initiatives remain isolated in non-formal settings, assessment requirements are quite low or even non-existing in these settings, the strong potential of creative media based learning in formal education will not be demonstrated.

Creative laboratories of learning can be established at all levels and in different scales in formal education. It can even be done without disturbing the formal assessment rules and routines. It's not about WHAT to learn, but about HOW to learn.

There is a wide range of opportunities to establish media based settings: from a group work to a class project to a large cross-subject and cross-class thematic community learning initiative.
The wide range of opportunities is described later on in this paper.
The aim of such limited media learning laboratories is to enable young people, teachers and institutions to learn to innovate the traditional classroom didactics. This is done by learning from practical experience and by telling the success stories to a wider audience.

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. MEDIA BASED LEARNING IN NON-FORMAL SETTINGS

Many young drop-outs, young unemployed, street youth, etc. are in great need of after-school and 24/7 learning provisions, and different laboratory settings can be established in youth clubs, in community centers or in public or private institutions.
As no or very few formal requirements are forced upon such settings they can develop into high-powered and very creative media learning incubators for young people, and have a huge impact on youth performance in school.
One of the advantages in such non-formal settings is that the laboratory must finance itself, in full or partly. This is a great challenge to the young people working in the facility, as they will learn to contribute to their own laboratory by producing useful projects or products or services to organizations in the community.
The sense of ownership resulting from such activities is quite amazing, and this kind of ownership is only possible to a lesser degree in formal education.
In such non-formal settings it is easier to link the media projects to the community, to interested institutions and to real needs in the city, including the labor market.
The aim of such non-formal settings is to re-motivate and re-engage youth at risk by offering creative and relevant media learning projects, but also to use such facilities as an inspiration to the formal education sector.
The formal education system can learn a lot from these settings, and the idea of linking formal and non-formal youth settings closer to each other is extremely interesting.

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. THE PRINCIPLES OF MEDIA BASED LEARNING

Turning to the practical use of media in laboratory settings, we should define the most important media learning principles, not to be confused with the basic didactic principles described above. It is important to notice that neither the young learners not their teachers can be expected to know how to work in media laboratories!
The sense of experimentation is therefore fundamental to the labs.

- The use of media should be guided by the learning needs and the missions of the project undertaken
- The media is not for entertainment, but for learning; hard fun
- The learners must have access to all state of the art media tools for creative learning; they should not be limited by lack of access to quality tools
- The mentors are learning mentors, not technology experts

- The learning settings must have easy and flexible access to media professionals for inspiration and help, as well as to technical support
- The most important media resources are tools with which you can express yourself creatively
- It is important to the young learners that they learn to reflect critically on why they are using the different media tools and for what purpose
- The media labs are based on production, not on consumption: you cannot play computer games, but you can create a game
- The choice of media should reflect the target and purpose of the produced outcomes
- The media work should link as much as possible to the local community, including private enterprises, cultural institutions and educations
- The media work should be based on the personal interests and talents of the young people, and should link to non-technological creativity, such as drawing, painting, playing music, crafts, etc.
- The mentors should ensure the quality of the learning and offer guidance on the quality, relevance and usability of the outcomes produced
- Networking with peers in social networks should be encouraged

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. LESSONS LEARNED FROM MEDIA BASED PRACTICE

Let us try to sum up some of the negative lessons from youth media projects over the last two decades.
When we analyze the evaluations of the practical experiments, we will notice a clear pattern: most evaluations focus on a limited set of obstacles or roadblocks, seriously damaging the expected outcomes of media labs for youth at risk.
Here are some of the typical obstacles to successful media LABs:

- Professional staff not ready to let go of the traditional control
- Professional staff not really interested in learning with media, more like simulating an interest
- Young learners not understanding what the media LAB is about and how they can benefit from it
- Lack of patience on the teachers and mentors side, but also on the side of the institution
- Lack of support and inspiration for using hardware and software
- Lack of technical support when needed
- Learning projects not sufficiently based on the interest of the young learners
- Not interesting missions, or not sufficiently promoted
- Isolated learning space, not linked to the community or to creative environments
- Too much time pressure, not allowing time to learn to work in the media LAB both for learners and mentors
- Tight work schedules, not allowing the learners to unfold or follow ideas and interests and getting in flow
- Not enough time to train complicated hardware or software
- External partners not seriously interested in the young people's work
- Professional staff not really dedicated to exploring themselves, just pretending to do so
- More time needed to make the young learners feel ownership to the media projects
- Overestimating the young learners' technology fluency
- Learning processes too abstract and academic, dropping of the non-academic learners
- Learning projects too ambitious, too far away from the learners' potential

In conclusion, such lists should call for strong and serious reconstruction of the media labs. With youth at risk you can only fail once or twice. Too many failures, game over!

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. HARD FUN

Are we promoting "more fun in education"? Are we giving in to the entertainment culture of the young people?
Not at all.
The learning innovators at the MIT Media LAB use the expression "hard fun". What do they mean by that?
They clearly promoted fun in learning, or "fun learning", for example in collaboration with the LEGO company. Having fun, feeling good, feeling pleasure seems to be contradicting serious learning, at least when serious learning is based on discipline, self-control and abstinence?
The joy of learning seems more "acceptable", but it really means the same. In fact, one might argue that "learning without joy" is simply not possible.
The deep feeling of satisfaction when engaged or immersed in challenging learning activities is the real driver of lifelong learning interest.

Therefore, we do not agree that "fun" should be opposed to serious learning, in fact we argue that fun, and pleasure and joy are preconditions for sustainable learning processes: real learning includes the whole person.
When MIT use the expression "*hard* fun", they did it to show that in successful media based learning the young people are challenged much more in all dimensions than in the classroom. Media based projects, when based on the total engagement of the young learners, are *hard work*: you need to learn so much and so many different things, most of them being quite different from remembering what the teacher said in the class.
This is why young people at risk can grow in media LABs: if they are successfully engaged in the learning projects, they will grow precisely because they are challenged, and precisely because they are following their own interests and using their own talents.

Thus, media LABs are not more entertaining or easy going than the classroom. On the contrary, the LABs are far more demanding than the classrooms. And, it is precisely because of the "fun", the "pleasure" and the "joy" of working that makes the young learners work so hard!
Therefore, once again: you cannot play entertainment games in the media LABs, but perhaps you can create your own computer game?

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. THE INTEGRATION OF LEARNING AND WORK

It is important to realize that not only is the traditional education system not tuned in with the new generations; it is also not tuned in with the labor markets of globalization.
What is learned and assessed in traditional education?
Traditional "knowledge" and traditional "skills", very different from the competences needed in the labor markets of the knowledge society, and assessed by traditional methods, such as multiple choice tests.
Today it is possible to be successful in the education and totally fail in the labor market. And the other way round.

So, the traditional education system is challenged from both sides: from the new generation of young learners and from the 21st century labor markets!
Lately it has become a transversal key priority in the EU Commission's educational programs to develop projects and practices integrating learning and work.
Media LABs offer this integration in several ways:

- The missions of the media projects are linked closely to the community resources in the learning process, and could benefit people from the community, i.e. children, elderly, other young people, or the community at large
- Many media projects link directly to mentors or collaborators in the private sector, such as sponsors, media professionals and project partners
- The LABs invite several resources other than educational professionals to participate in the media projects
- Many of the skills needed in the media learning processes include skills highly needed and acknowledged in the labor markets, i.e. planning, problem solving, production, delivering, entrepreneurship, taking risks, etc.
- The media LABs smell much more of entrepreneurship, risk taking and production than the classrooms that in general isolate themselves from the community and the labor markets

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. INNOVATIVE EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT FLUENCY

We all know that one of the great obstacles to innovation in learning is the demand for *control* from the formal education system and powerful communities in the society at large.
This control is practiced in the form of formal assessment and validation systems. The learning and the curricula are directed towards those formal assessment and validation systems.

Most assessment systems are controlled by national governments, and the local education can do very little about it.
So, on one side the institutions need to establish innovative learning settings within the traditional education system, on the other side the education system needs to develop innovative and relevant assessment methods that meet the challenges of the new learning processes and of the modern labor markets.
The new assessment methods are likely to be process based, self-evaluative and team based, and to be able to assess the quality of an entire learning process, not just the results of the learning process.
The EU Commission has paved the way for such innovations by launching the learning outcomes based assessment: what should be assessed is not how many books the learner has been reading, or how many hours the learner has spent in the classroom, but *what the learner is able to do as a result of the learning process*.

To assess what the learner can do, we need to monitor and assess the entire learning process within for instance a media based project. This is quite different from a post festum multiple choice test exam.
To make the assessment measures fluent with the new learning processes, we need a top-down approach (national governments changing the assessment methods) as well as a bottom-up approach (LABlearning settings demonstrating the strengths and relevance of alternative work and assessments methods).

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...Teacher or mentor – Freud, Socrates...

There are many obstacles to innovative didactics: national policy-making, conservative educations, reluctant or insecure teachers, the learners' traditional expectations, just to mention a few.
One of the most severe obstacles is, of course, the teachers.
Most of them are not used to work in media LABs, give up control and emerge into exploration side by side with the learners.
For many years public policy has responded to this by offering more teacher training: you must learn this and that to update your teaching skills.
This is mission impossible, as new technologies and new social practices are emerging all the time, and change has become the rule, not the exception. The teachers will, unless they are natural users themselves, never "catch up".
The good news is that they don't need to.

It goes without saying that teachers of today should take an interest in the world of creative technology, but they do not need to be technology experts at all. It is not their most important role.
Most teachers ask: what must we do to be able to manage these new media, these new learning settings…
But perhaps it is not about *what you should do*, but about *what you should not do*.
Shifting from teaching to mentoring, and that is what is needed in the media LABs, means NOT doing a lot of things you used to do in the classroom. Thou should not teach, Thou should not organize, Thou should not take the scene, Thou should not control the learning process, Thou should not direct all activities towards the final tests; Thou should not be… a teacher.

It's more like the famous Freudian rule of abstinence. The rule of abstinence is not about drinking or smoking, *but about not giving in to your desire to tell the "patient" how things are*.
The patient can only heal himself by constructing his own story about his mental life.
The same is true for the learner, and even more so for the young learner: she can only learn from constructing her knowledge and experience, and especially from doing this in real-life situations.
The teacher cannot replace this process. The teacher cannot transfer the needed knowledge and experience to the learner, as Freud could not transfer his knowledge about the patient to the patient. In fact, he could, but he found out that it did not help the patient. Neither will it help the learner.
So, the basic rule of mentoring in media LABs is the rule of abstinence.
Mentoring means waiting, hesitating, watching, reflecting, - and then stepping in when the learners need guidance or mentoring.

The mentor learns with the learners. Therefore the mentor should never engage in the same projects several times. If so, he will lose his learning drive and motivation to explore.
The mentor is a senior learner.
The mentor is experienced in learning, not in media. He can help you when you get stuck, when you need a push to go on… Or give advice in complicated matters or situations. But he will never take over your learning process. Like Socrates: he will answer your question with another question, allowing YOU to learn.

Let us point to some of the important qualities in a media LAB mentor:

- Focusing on facilitating the learning of the learners
- Avoiding taking over the learning of the learners
- Willing and able to explore with the learners
- Deeply interested in creative media, but not needing to be an expert
- Sharing the mentoring with non-educationalists from the community
- Intervening when relevant and constructive: just in time
- Offering his experience when useful
- Demonstrating patience and acceptance towards the individual learner
- Watching the learning process, stepping in to let it progress
- Offering time-outs and dialogues when things get stuck

- Making needed resources available during the work process
- Offering critical and useful input
- Not giving in to “populist” behavior to please the learners
- Making sure that the learners’ ambitions are challenging and realistic at the same time
- Encouraging the learners to make mistakes and to take risks
- A protagonist of and role-model for “hard fun”

Basically, mentoring cannot be learnt in theory, but only by practicing it, and sharing your experience with peer mentors.
To quote the European Commission: only entrepreneurial teachers can foster entrepreneurial mentality.

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. . . Key approaches to LABlearning for disengaged youth

MISSION

The media laboratories will re-engage young people not learning well in the classrooms by letting them work with all sorts of media tools and social media in teams and projects, linked to real life and community.

The laboratories will allow the young people to discover that they can learn, that leaning can be fun and exciting – but also *hard* fun.

The laboratories will help build their self-confidence by offering immersive learning, sometimes taking on epic dimensions, in an open and creative learning environment, build on respect and trust.

The laboraties will enhance the young people's learning capacity and motivation, as well as make the young learners more attractive to future employers.

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. LABORATORY

The media laboratories can be established in all sorts of formal and non-formal education and training contexts.

The laboratories offer the young people creative work facilities with state of the art media equipment and access to mentors, media professionals and community networks.

Laboratory signals research, exploration, experimenting and working together in project teams with clear missions and goals.

The key driver in the laboratories is the young people's own interest, curiosity and personal aspirations.

The laboratories are not classrooms with teachers, but open work places where projects can start, be carried out and made useful to the community.

The laboratories are populated by mentors, junior mentors, media people and community collaborators, not by traditional educational staff roles.

The atmosphere of the laboratoroes will be welcoming, creative and encourage team based work and projects – more like a fim studio or an atelier than a classroom.

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. TECHNOLOGY

The key principles in the laboratories are about how to learn, how to be creative, how to follow ones ideas, not about technology.

Technology is used to allow a high degree of creativity, self-expression and communication, and because technology is the natural language of the young people and holds the future keys to education and labour market.

The laboratories will offer the young people high quality and open-ended (unlimited) media tools, allowing the young people to follow their talents and interests wherever it lead them.

Technology is not tought, but explored, not instructed, but mentored, not isolated, but collaborative.

The laboratories will offer readily technological support and creative media inspiration, but will also invite the young people to find their own solutions, individually and in teams.

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. LOCATION

A media laboratory might be placed anywhere in the community: in a school, in an after-school facility, in a community centre, in an old factory or closed super market – or linked to a sport club or to a cultural or educational centre.

Media based learning can flexibly take on the form of a place, a situation, a process, a project, a room, a mission, a building…

The young people should be involved in designing and re-designing the lab space themselves, asking the question: what should a creative media work place or process look like and why?

Any facility, educational activitity or building can be re-organized to host a media lab.

The lab space should meet the needs of the young people's project and team work and should smell of creativity and community.

Many people from the community will be invited to visit the media lab and propose useful activities.

If possible, a full media lab should be place at the centre of the city or the community to allow everyday and fluent personal contact to other people, families and friends and institutions.

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. THE YOUNG PEOPLE

The labs might first of all address disengaged young people between 12 and 20 from disadvantaged communities and families, and in danger of dropping out of the educational system or simply not being able to link to education or labour market.

These young people are invited to join the media laboratories in the school, in the after-school facility or in the community centre.

There are no requirements, no tests, no conditions for joining, except: interest and curiosity.

Nevertheless there are conditions for *participating* in the laboratory activities. Agreements are made between the youth teams themselves and between the youth teams and the mentors on how to work responsibly in the laboratories.

These values cannot be taken for granted, but must be developed among the young people – along with an increasing motivation to work in the projects.

Most of the time the young people don't know what to do in the laboratories, except play with the technology. They need to be guided and to learn to find, follow and trust their own intersts and talents.

And if they have no talents, they will develop some.

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. STAFF

The laboratories will be populated by other adults than in the classroom, as no teaching takes place in the labs.

Teachers will shift their roles to mentors, working side by side with the young teams, some of the most dedicated young people will work as junior mentors,

media professionals will inspire and collaborate, and people from the community will join in when they are needed to carry out the media projects.
The laboratories will ensure that qualified mentors are the key references for the young people, and the mentors are expected to be able to work fluently and patiently with young people that might have personal, social or learning problems.
Mentors are not required to be media experts, but to take a personal interest in exploring all kinds of media – and be able to work in open laboratories and be focused on guiding and facilitating the different ways the young people work and learn.
Mentors and youth teams will establish useful contacts to professionals and interested institutions in the community.

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. COMMUNITY PROJECTS
The projects in the laboratories will as often as possible be linked to real needs or to innovation in the community.
It will be smaller or larger projects, depending on the circumstances. And it will be projects with all sorts of institutions and people, depending on the interest of the young teams.
Projects might be with energy companies, kindergartens, art institutions, banks, sport clubs, elderly, etc.
It is important to the laboratories that the learning and the media exploration are linked closely to real-life challenges, not to examples in a text book.
A part of the growing self-confidence in the young people comes from making useful things for the community, things people in the community need and appreciate.
Community projects are not based on a fixed curricula, but on a combination of different topics and fields of knowledge, defined by the project and the mission.
When the laboratories demonstrate their value to the community, the community can be expected to support the laboratories – whether in formal or non-formal settings.

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. THE SOCIAL DIMENSION
The media laboratories are also social networks.
They offer young people, often with social or personal problems, a strong social network of friends, team members and adults – all of them working for the same thing: using creative media to produce interesting things for themselves and the community.
The social bonds emerging in the laboratories are based on collective work: you are respected for the way you contribute to the team mission, and for the way you explore new ways of doing things – not for your parents' job, not for your academic virtues or the color of your skin.
You might even be respected for being a little bit "crazy" and have "crazy" ideas… And for being different.
The social and psychological factors in the laboratories are important, as they contribute to building up trust and respect, and also contribute to the re-motivation of many young people.
The media laboratories will ensure that the adults in the facilities are aware of and able to manage these social and psychological challenges.

Such life and youth skills are more important than the academic knowledge of the mentors.

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. HOW TO LEARN

The key mission of the media laboratories is to offer disengaged young people with poor future perspectives *deep learning experiences*, in which they forget that they are learning.

Therefore the projects in the labs are based on strong and well-researched learning approaches, and are totally different from the traditional classroom, including what is called "group work".

The young teams will explore their own interests and talents, define and design their own projects, search and give form to useful materials and knowledge, engage in a strong and demanding production process and present the results in creative ways, exploiting state of the art media.

They will link to supporting mentors and the dedicated collaboration of professionals, and link directly to the realities of their own community.

They will, in short, explore, design, produce and present.

They will do that while exploring and exploiting creative media in small teams collaborating with relevant professionals and institutions.

The laboratories' learning and work methods are inspired by the Computer Clubhouse Network's long-standing experience with disadvantaged young people from across many continents and cultures.

The learning by designing and producing principles are valid for all disengaged young people whether they are learning in formal or non-formal settings.

The ultimate succes criterium of the media labs is that they are able to engage the young people in creative and immersive learning processes, in which they re-build or build their learning capacity and motivation, and in which they overcome their resistance to learning and towards education and start building sustainable self-confidence.

Deep learning must take on epic dimensions…!

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. GOING EPIC

To be able to offer the young people immersive learning experiences, the learning space must take on epic dimensions, we say.

What does that mean?

When something takes on epic dimensions it means that the activity or event is played out on a dramatic scene, including different phases, conflicts, missions, interaction with different players and persons, and that it has epic structure: setting out from a shortage, a shortcoming or an important problem, travelling through different stages of elaboration and ending in some kind of conclusion, synthesis or new equilibrium, this ending being perfect or imperfect, perhaps leading to a new drama with epic dimensions…

The epic dimension means that you are deeply personally immersed in the mission.

If we assume a pragmatic standpoint for a moment, what does this mean in everyday media labs?

We need to ensure lab processes of a certain *length*. Epic learning needs a certain amount of time to be played out. So does true learning. Small projects for a few hours or days will not be sufficient.

We also need to ensure strong *missions*. If the missions are not strong, relevant and do not trigger the participants, the missions are not powerful enough and epics will not emerge.
We need to give *space*: to allow different things and actions in physical and mental space to let the drama play out. This includes available media tools.
We need to *interact* with other people than in the traditional classroom. We need to put new people, resources and players on the scene. A new stage, a new theater.
We need good *mentors*. Not media experts, but mentors capable of setting the scene, supporting the different stages and interaction, and silently, discretely, like an invisible hand, pushing the young teams towards solutions or elements of solutions.
The strong mentor knows how to balance frustration and success among the youth teams. Too little frustration makes them lazy, too much frustration make them give up. Too much success, and too early, makes them lazy again, too little success discourage them.
Perhaps this is the true art of being a media lab mentor – and it is not about knowledge, but experience and… art! The art of mentoring…

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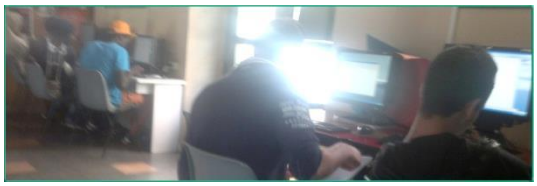
. HARD FUN
The media laboratories are not about pleasing disengaged youth with media entertainment.
Fun and excitement is different from entertainment.
Entertainment means passively consuming things others have made. Like films or computer games. Or easy knowledge… All this being, by the way, ok – like after a long work day. The young people can watch all the films they like, but not in the laboratories.
In the labs you don't play computer games, you make your own. You don't watch YouTube, you make your own videos.
This principle – not playing computer games – is not a moralist one. It's about how you learn and work. And if you, after all, will engage in computer games in the lab – it is precisely because this game offers you productive, immersed learning and social networking. You are, in this case, on a mission that goes beyond the game itself.

The laboratories will challenge the young people, not please them.
But the challenges will be meaningful and relevant, exciting and engaging, based as they are on the young people's own interests, talents and aspirations – and linked a they are to state of the art media tools.
The projects in the laboratories are not entertaining, they are *hard fun*, and the young people will be much more challenged and hard-working than in the classroom.



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. WHAT TO LEARN
The media labs are primarily about HOW to learn, HOW to work in teams and projects, and HOW to produce useful media products.
The driver of the labs' re-motivation capacity is in the HOW.
But the WHAT is equally important, as the HOW cannot unfold unless the young teams are working with challenges that interest and excite them, and challenges

that they see as meaningful and useful – and will produce respect and appreciation among their friends and in the community.
The WHAT is therefore about having a clear mission.
Creative learning processes are useless without a clear mission, without clear aims and without challenges to explore and problems to solve.
The media labs will offer the young teams real-life challenges, meaningful challenges, challenges important to the community and challenges that demands strong team work and creative use of media. Challenges can might *change* something…

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. TALENT
Academic, theoretical and traditional literacy based competences have nothing to do with talent.
You can be talented in many different ways, also intellectually and artistically. And you can unfold and develop such talents in all sorts of ways.
Not all types of talents are acknowleged in the formal educational system.
Many disengaged young people might be talented. Or they might be able to grow talents. But they find it difficult within the traditional educational system, or the system is not offering them the opportunities to find, unfold or develop such talents.
The media labs offer disengaged young people the time, space and opportunities to find, define, explore, unfold and take further all sorts of talents – and link these talents to the exploration of creative media and social sharing.
Or, the labs might simply offer the young people to *grow* talents – out of personal interests or aspirations. Or dreams…
Unfolding talents and interests might lead to learning, to positive work experience, to entrepreneurial ideas – or simply to more self-confidence.
Unfolding talents will, always, lead to an increasing learning capacity and motivation.
The adults in the media labs will have a special focus on the individual talents of the young people, and facilitate and encourage taking such talents further. And they will enjoy seeing the young people grow…

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. MANY WORDS, MANY WAYS
There are many strong and creative approaches to learning, such as Problem Based Learning, Collaborative Learning, Constructivism, Game Base Learning, etc. In total: 21st century learning.
The laboratories build on many inspirational sources, but are basically promoting a pragmatic approach: what is possible, what migth be combined and how can we offer young people with poor learning and life perspectives experiences of deep, creative and immersive learning?
Academic dogmatism has never offered young people anything…
The laboratories are deeply inspired by the Computer Clubhouse learning approaches, developed at the MIT Media Lab many years ago.
This approach is called *constructionism*, not to be confused with Piaget's constructivism being in itself a great step forward for the understanding of learning.

The difference between the two approaches is rather important for our non-academic learners: Piaget is talking about mental constructions only, whereas

the MIT approach is arguing that the strongest learning takes place when the learners are actually constructing things in the real world, such as artefacts, programs, services or media presentations.
The involvement in producing real products of different kinds invites the young people to be part of, not only a mental process, but a project with different and often quite demanding phases and tasks.

The most important learning principles in the media laboratories can be short-listed like this:

- Learning is not delivered by teachers or books or ready-made materials, but is a result of the young people's active exploration, construction and collaboration
- Learning is not seen as an individual accomplishment, but as the results of a dynamic team work
- Learning is not necessarily based on academic skills and competences, but on a variety of work methods and expression forms and collaborations
- The learning is not anchored in a curricula, but at the intersection between the young people's interests and aspiration on one side and community needs on the other
- Learning does not take place as articifial and abstract processes, but is embedded in and emerge from real-life projects
- The teacher roles are replaced by mentors, media professionals and community collaborators – and volunteers dedicated to the mission…
- Learning is deeply linked to personal self-expression, motivation and empowerment
- The learning should be creative and fun, but always in the meaning of "hard fun"
- The young people work in community projects, and are themselves responsible for the design of the projects, the collaboration and the outcomes

Design and creative shaping, forming and articulating in different media and languages and art forms are celebrated as great learning resources in the laboratories.

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. COMMITMENT
A key and transversal word in the laboratories is *commitment*.
The young people will be motivated to commit themselves to the projects, the teams and the lab community.
The mentors must be extremely commited, curious, open and very flexible. They must be able to encourage experiments and to accept mistakes, failures and dead-ends…
But the managers and owners of the school, youth facility or centre must be equally commited: if quality facilities, media equipment and mentors are not available, the laboratories will not be able to work, and the impact will be lost.
Commitment at all these levels means: putting in resources, offering open spaces and opportunities, developing a strong mentaliy and ensuring sustainability.
Commitment is vital at personal, mental, social and community level.

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. DESIGN, CONSTRUCT, PRODUCE
But what are the young people actually doing in the labs?

They are discussing what they like and desire. And their ideas. And the needs of the community. And what the state of the art media tools can be used for.
Then they design projects, find collaborators in the community and support from professionals. Then they construct knowledge, forms and figures, films and music, and they produce something useful to themselves and their community.
That's all.
The different projects might last 3 weeks or 3 months, or more...
So, this is what they do.
They design, construct and produce.
And therefore they learn.
And the mentors work side by side with them to make all this possible.

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. SOCIAL SHARING
The laboratories promote a sharing spirit.
Sharing your skills – help the others. Sharing your knowledge – open up and get more back! Sharing your mistakes – the others can learn from them. Sharing your successes – celebrate each other.
The young people will be encouraged to share: their problems, their challenges, their solutions, their results. With the other teams, but also with the community.
They will be encouraged to share their efforts and accomplishments with peers through their usual online communities and networks.

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. THE ROLE OF AESTHETICS
Few people in the educational sector are concerned with the field of aesthetics in learning processes. And if they are interested, it is mostly because the topics they work with are about art, and in that case art is "content" not the act of designing.
Aesthetics is exterior to learning, we think. Maybe even in opposition to learning, if learning is mostly linked to the idea of *science*.

Of course, we might understand that when we work with media, we need to pay attention to the way things look – a video, a photo series, an animation, a Power point, a website, etc.
In fact, what is typical to our mindset, and corresponding to the reality to a certain degree, is that the more a product is text based the less we are concerned with aesthetics, and the more the product is based on other media forms the more we are concerned with the "feel and look" of the things.
Many educationalists do not care for aesthetics at all: the only thing that matters is the knowledge, the "content" and stuff like that.
This mindset denies any internal or immanent relationship between learning, knowledge and the "form" in which the so-called "content" is delivered.
So, form and content are not really related. This statement is what we do not agree with.
In fact we consider form, design, structure and organization as elements at the heart of the learning process.
From a media lab point of view it is evident that **active designing and aesthetic reflections** are basic elements in the production of interesting digital material for the schools and the colleges.
But it might as well be a project for a bank, a kindergarten or for the local theater or energy company.

A useful example is a group of young people, from a very deprived community, collaborating with the famous Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam: the young people were invited to study and explore the paintings at the Museum and to express their personal experience of Van Gogh through all sorts of modern media.
So, aesthetics is not about making something look nice.
On the contrary it represents very basic learning processes connected to design and production.
Imagine the same questions in a project with elderly from the community, but now linked to the production of a website…
Aesthetics is not extrinsic to learning, but at the very heart of the learning process:
- How can certain "things" be designed and expressed and given form?
- In what ways is the "form" interacting with the "content" of the messages?
- How can different expression forms and media be combined to produce powerful communication?
- How will backgrounds, colors, shapes, space and time influence and contribute to the total expression design and strengthen or weaken the messages?
- How can we use basic story-telling principles to support the interaction of form and content?

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. . . A platform for media LABlearning for disengaged youth – for policy-makers, educational managements and teachers

This section offers a possible platform for the establishment of media laboratories for disengaged youth. It can be used by for instance policy-makers and institutional managers to make informed and qualified decisions.

PARENTS

At school level it is essential to develop a model for working with parents of children in risk of school dropout.

The platform should include principles on linking media laboratories both in formal and non-formal settings to the young people's families and friends. Projects might be developed about the family background of the young people, migrants or natives, and family members might be involved in some of the projects.

Attention should be paid to the fact that some family members might have resources, skills or talents that might be useful to the projects in question.

Projects might also be about certain needs in the family that could be addressed through the laboratory activities.

The same could happen in connection with friends of the involved young people.

The rationale of this principle is to

- establish dialogues with the young people's families
- allow the young people to feel pride and respect towards their own and others' families
- exploit useful and creative resources in the media projects
- establish a very concrete and important relation to the community
- demonstrate the open learning environment in the laboratories

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. TEACHER RESOURCES

It is very important that teachers are given the possibility and are stimulated to work additionally with children at risk of dropout, adapting the study program to and content to their particular needs.

The platform should include principles on initial and ongoing stimulation of teachers and mentors working with disengaged youth in media laboratories.

The teachers and mentors should be allowed to reflect on their experiences and learning with peers both at institutional and community level.

The stimulation and reflection activities should be integrated in the everyday laboratory practices, not organised in traditional course settings.

Social networks on the internet might be taken into account as reflection forums, but face to face activities should be given high priority as well.

A major challenge is to what extend media and technology training or stimulation should be a part of such activities – or teachers and mentors should learn together with the young people in the projects.

The platform should make clear and explain that the teachers and mentors working with the young people are the key to successful laboratories. The staff members are challenged with tasks that go far beyond traditional teaching. It should be recommended that the laboratories include adults with long-standing experience with marginalized youth, as social, family and many other issues will be raised in the laboratories.

Once we open up the learning settings, we leave the relatively safe classrooms, thereby invited many personal and social structures to be visible and have an impact on the activities.

. TECHNOLOGICAL EXPECTATIONS

Even those young people who are typically most at risk of disengagement from learning expect technology to play an integral role within their daily lives.
They also expect it to play an integral role in their learning. Young learners want and expect flexible and engaging learning environments that effectively use ICT.
An environment of this kind is communicative and inclusive. It features a high degree of collaborative learning, interactive content, as well as interactivity among learners and between learners and practitioners. It also connects learners to the world beyond the classroom or conventional learning settings. It pays attention to individual learner needs, values and interests and ensures that the content and mode of learning is relevant to learners' lives. It enables learners to build on their existing skills, reflect on their own learning and become self-regulated and self-directed. This kind of learning environment has been shown to have a direct and positive effect on the engagement and retention of young learners.
In too many instances, however, young learners experience an environment in which technology is used in limited ways. They are unable to rely upon the provision of appropriate technology by their educational organisations. They also describe a significant gap between their own digital literacy and technological proficiency and that of their teachers and trainers.
The platform should include principles on linking media laboratories not only to high-end media technology, but also to the state of the art technology of the young people.
Even though most young people are fluent as to everyday social technology, they cannot be expected to have any experience in more advanced technology such as video and animation technologies. They might be able to record and circulate videos, but not to edit them and present useful content.
In general young people are open to and interested in all kinds of media technologies; however they are not familiar with using the technologies for *learning* and more systematic activities. A major challenge for teachers and mentors is therefore to motivate the young people to take deeper steps into the world of learning with technology.
Young people should be stimulated to take their technology interest beyond what they use in their everyday social life.

. TECHNOLOGY IS NOT ENOUGH

Bridging the "digital divide" is more complex than providing hardware and software to community-based organizations that serve youth. Just providing computers, internet connections and technology training will do little to give young people the skills they need to succeed in the new economy. Rather, it is about offering opportunities to use the technology in innovative learning programs and to establish meaningful relationships with other children and adults in the community.
The platform should include principles on the necessary balances between access to technology and learning with technology.
On one hand technology must be available to learn with technology and to be free and creative, but on the other hand the availability of technology will not in itself motivate the young people to learn with technology.

The focus should therefore always be on the collaborative, communicative, community-based and relevance of the laboratory activities, not on the technology itself.

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. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Reliable and quality technical support is critical for all programs. Too often, centres must rely on volunteers or overworked staff to provide technical support to maintain the network, hardware, and software. When the equipment is not functioning effectively, young people quickly lose interest and staff loses confidence and become disenchanted with the technology.

The platform should include principles on the availability of technical support. Technical support, both covering the hardware and software fields, should be readily available, however it is an important principle that the young people and the mentors should take an interest in solving technical problems themselves – and learn from the technical support.

This "training" will support the laboratories' independency and the young people's independency, as well as encourage the young people to be curious and explore the world of technology beyond using it.

This discussion also raises the question: what kind of adults, professionals or resources should be working in the media laboratories? Should a mixed team of mentors, technicians and media professionals inhabit the laboratories? Should we re-think the meaning of "educational staff"?

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. POSITIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

One step towards social inclusion is to undergo positive learning experiences and thus (re)engage school dropouts in learning processes. For marginalised young people those experiences have to be outside of the formal education system and have to happen in alternative forms to traditional ways of teaching at school. Thus, one of the demands for a new pedagogical approach is to make use of the fun aspect of young people's devices, using attractive means of technology, and extend their interests from pure consumption of content to the creation of content.

The platform should include principles on both using media laboratories in formal education for preventing drop-out and using media laboratories in non-formal settings for re-motivation, re-engagement and second-chance activities.

The principle of shifting from consumption of content to creation of content is key to all laboratory settings. It represents the very core of the media laboratories: do not play computer games, make them.

The most important thing is not to develop advanced technological skills in themselves, but to develop self-confidence and to receive respect from your peers, your mentors and your community. New learning motivation can occur and can be sustainable when self-confidence and respect are linked to the learning activity.

The mental and social aspects of laboratory learning should be taken very seriously.

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. VARIOUS COMMUNICATION AND EXPRESSION STYLES

The platform should include principles on re-thinking what communication is about.
In traditional education most learning and activities are based on written texts.
In the laboratories all sorts of communication should be encourage and equally respected and celebrated. Sound and pictures, animation and video should be equally important as texts and words.
To many young people these communication forms are more meaningful than long texts, and the laboratories should encourage a variety of non-traditional communication, also between the mentors and the young people.
A very important form of communication should be the combination of different communication forms: combining animation and words, texts and videos, etc. These combinations strongly support traditional as well as media literacy and fluency, and they definitely enhance the young people's creative and critical thinking.
Such principle might very well be linked to encouraging expressing yourself with a variety of art forms, such as drama, drawing, painting, music, etc.
Projects linking to art forms might be established in the laboratories, involving local resources, and the mentors might witness the emergence of hitherto hidden talents or aspirations among the young people.

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. IMMERSED LEARNING

The shooting of videos requires tactile-kinaesthetic perception and handling of objects and thus it supports different learner types. To have a virtual stage fostering personal creativity and self-expression might have a stimulating effect and provoke positive learning experiences with flow character. According to this notion, in a stage of flow, people are fully immersed in their activities and experience deep enjoyment, creativity and complete involvement with life. When people experience flow their attention is completely focused and the working or learning procedures themselves are sufficient as sources for motivation, no external motivators are required.
The platform should include principles on learning activities leading to immersion and flow. Experiencing immersion and flow is one of the most important elements in learning to enjoy learning. Many young people experience this when playing complicated and demanding computer games, but it is indeed possible to experience such states of mind when creating content and not consuming content.
If the laboratories succeed in establishing activities in which creation and production is linked to immersion and flow, the laboratories are performing at their maximum, and the activities will have a tremendous impact on the young people involved, as well as on the mentors.

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. BRIDGE TO THE JOB MARKET

Furthermore, video-based documentation of their everyday life's cultural practices, interests and expertise are seen as a possible bridge to the job market especially for at-risk learners. Learners may select and comment their videos to create portfolios and submit them to potential employers.

The platform should include principles on how to link the laboratory activities indirectly or directly to further formal education and labour market, especially paying attention to possible entrepreneurship opportunities.

Some activities in the laboratories might even develop into small incubators, in which a group of young people develop important skills that could be useful to entrepreneurship or labour market contacts.

One of the advantages of entrepreneurship is that it sometimes can be linked directly to the young people's personal interests and talents.

Although the laboratories should never push the young people towards further education or labour market, it is of great value to use any opportunity to link the laboratory projects to real life, to opportunities in the community and especially to entrepreneurship initiatives (taking into consideration the lack of emerging job opportunities in today's Europe).

Although the laboratories should primarily be considered learning motivation incubators, they in fact support the learning of many basic skills called upon in the ever changing knowledge economy, such as learning to learn, working in shifting teams and projects, exploring the benefits of new technologies – and at the personal level self-reflection and self-regulation.

Developing personal or team based portfolios, perhaps through the social networks, is a very strong way of making the young people visible, to themselves and to the community.

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. COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The phenomenon of learning within social communities on the internet can generally be conceptualised with *communities of practice*. Communities of practice are informal groups of individuals or networks with common goals and interests who communicate with each other over a longer period of time, who exchange experiences, who commonly solve problems, who collaboratively collect and build knowledge and learn from each other:

- Common goals, interests, needs or activities of the members;
- Repeated and active participation of the members;
- Intensive interactions, strong emotional relationships and shared activities among the contributors;
- Access to the shared resources with clearly defined rules of access;
- Reciprocal activities like exchange of information, support and services among members;
- Common rules of activity and common language;
- Voluntary membership.

The platform should include principles on open communication and collaboration. This means that the communication in the laboratories should never be closed and isolated in online forums not visible to the social networks used in everyday life by many young people.

In fact, networking and open communication in the social online networks should be encouraged at all stages in the laboratory projects. This practice will also equip the young people with very useful social networking skills, crucial to all modern learning and labour market environments.

To many institutions this open networking is new and challenging. Both formal and non-formal educational settings must learn to support, explore and benefit from such communities of practice.

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. THE BASICS

Create: a basic element in a constructionist learning environment is to allow learners to create their own contents. By creating an external representation they make parts of their internal world model explicit.

Construct: instead of accumulating unrelated bits of knowledge, students need to construct a deeper structure connecting their own and other students' re-presentations. They should identify parallels, connections, dependencies, and conclusions as well as omissions, contradictions, or errors.

The platform should include principles explaining the most basic principles of media based laboratory learning: the activity of exploring, constructing and creating is at the heart of the laboratories, not the transfer of "dead knowledge".

Creating and constructing covers all fields of learning: constructing knowledge, creating physical and digital artefacts, constructing things or services, creating new partnerships and links to the community.

The key is reversing traditional education: production instead of consumption, constructing instead of receiving.

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. UBIQUITY – RE-LINKING TO SPACES

Mobile and location-aware internet technology provide a basis for *ubiquitous learning infrastructures*. Such infrastructures support on-site learning-by-problem-solving approaches by providing pervasive access to learning communities and re-attaching persons and knowledge to *real places*.

The platform should include principles on taking the media into life instead of taking life into the media.

This means that the laboratories should not close themselves around digital computer production, but link to the surrounding realities. The realities include the community, the family, nature, the different physical spaces in the city, etc.

This principle is extremely interesting and calls for a lot of reflection: the laboratories replace the classrooms by expanding the actions in both directions – deeply immersed learning with media tools and opening up to and connecting to the realities around the learning setting.

Accordingly, the laboratories should take an interest in using and exploring media tools that can facilitate both immersive learning and can connect to physical spaces and activities in the community realities.

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. COMPUTER CLUBHOUSE LEARNING PRINCIPLES

Activities at the Computer Clubhouse are guided by the current educational research that shows that adolescents learn most effectively when they are engaged in designing and creating projects, rather than memorizing facts or learning isolated skills out of context. The Clubhouse fosters a learner-centred, informal educational approach that encourages participants to discover their interests and apply their own ideas. Given the support and freedom to pursue

their own ideas, young people get beyond their disinterest and apathy about learning, and develop the internal motivation to learn and grow.

The Computer Clubhouse gives participants the opportunity to become *designers* and *creator*s of technology. The Clubhouse provides high-end resources, materials, and tools for young people to develop projects based on their own interests. Rather than playing games with computers, young people learn how to use professional software for design, exploration, and experimentation. In the Clubhouse, young people can learn what it is like to be an architect, engineer, composer, artist, journalist, scientific researcher, computer programmer, and a wide array of other professions in the modern workplace.
The Clubhouse educational approach is based on research that shows the importance of interpersonal relationships and community in the learning process, particularly for youth. Young people are influenced a great deal outside of school by the people around them, peers as well as adults. In the Clubhouse, young people interact with other youth and adults who are enthusiastic about learning and are interested and invested in their work. Clubhouse members become part of a community that values and respects hard work and the pursuit and sharing of ideas and knowledge.

This structure is led by the youth themselves, but guided by staff, adult mentors, and youth peer leaders who serve as coaches and catalysts, providing members with inspiration, mentoring, and organizational support.
Learn by Design
Put technology directly into the hands of the youth, to lead as designers, inventors, and creators.
Follow Your Interests
Provide opportunities for choice, where youth care about what they are working on, are willing to work longer and harder, and learn more in the process.
Build Community
Create a community with a culture of peer learning and equal opportunity, where young people work together with one another with support and inspiration from adult mentors.
Respect & Trust
Create a stable environment in which participants feel safe to experiment, explore, and innovate and are given time and space to play out their own ideas.

The expected youth impact from our learning model includes the ability to:
〉 express oneself with technology
〉 collaborate, communicate, work in teams
〉 solve complex problems
〉 develop, plan, and execute complex projects
〉 express self-esteem and self-confidence
The platform links directly to, explains and explores the Computer Clubhouse learning and social principles, as they represent 20 years of designing creative learning laboratories for disadvantaged or disengaged youth.
The platform explains how these principles are relevant and useful also to formal youth education.

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. . . Many different approaches to media based learning for disengaged youth – some scenarios

Media based learning and *LABlearning* are our pragmatic names for learning processes using media work as a motivator, driver and organizer of learning outside the traditional classroom.
Our young "digital natives" are experts in social media and media entertainment, but certainly not in *learning with media*. Most probably, neither are our teachers; nor are we, the frameworkers.
Media based learning and *LABlearning* aim to motivate, engage and activate young and adult learners at risk of drop-out or with poor education experience, but can enrich any learning process for any group of learners…
Media based learning and *LABlearning* are also very powerful activities in lifelong learning centers and community centers fostering lifelong learning and inclusion through learning.
The examples in this section are taken from social care educations, but might have referred to almost any educational context.

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. MEDIA SUPPORTED LEARNING

Description
In different kinds of settings the learners will use digital media on every occasion possible – to search knowledge, to organize knowledge, to discuss knowledge and to present knowledge. Media elements such as internet, social media, Word, Power Point, design tools, video tools, etc., can be used by the learners to produce knowledge.

Use of digital media
The learners use all kinds of available media tools at different levels, depending on their media skills and interests, and on what tools are available.
It is important that the use of media includes being creative with media and the use of a variety of expression forms.

Didactic capacity
Media supported learning does not offer a didactic framework for learning, but it can support and make more interesting different learning approaches, such as problem based learning.

Example
Based on the challenges *Why do some young people suffer from lifestyle diseases*, the teams of learners search basic knowledge on the internet, organize the knowledge in Word, Power Point or design tools, discuss the problems in social platforms, produce a few videos with young people and present the full material on the institution's website.

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. MEDIA PRODUCTION LEARNING

Description
The learners work in teams to produce learning material on the relevant topic. They plan the production, they search raw material, they organize the content, they design the presentation forms, and they establish dialogues with the people

who are expected to use the material.
The learners learn, not from using media material, but from producing useful material for other people, for example younger learners or families.

Use of digital media
The learners use media tools to produce material and therefore they will also have to use advanced media tools, such as graphic editing and web editing. Relevant media tools should be available to the learners and technical training at hand.

Didactic capacity
Media production learning can offer a strong didactic framework, able to organize the entire learning process in different phases.
The didactic drive is the logic of media production, but the subject-related learning outcomes can be very strong.
Often it is necessary to include professional media designers in the process.
Sufficient time must be allocated to the learners' media training, if needed.

Example
A team of learners is given a mission: in one month you should produce a high quality multimedia material on dementia and how to communicate with people suffering from dementia.
The material will be used by younger learners and by learners in secondary school.
The learner team designs the material, supported by the teachers, and carry out the needed research and dialogues. They use the most relevant expression forms to present the content.
Finally, and supported by a professional media designer, the learner team produces a high quality material on dementia communication, combining different elements and forms of expression.

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. COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING

Description
The learners address the health needs of groups of people in the community and establish a number of dialogues with groups of citizens and with different stakeholders and players in the field.
The learning mission is to provide the community with alternative or innovative information, material or other forms of input that can help groups of people change or better manage their situation.
The learner team collaborates with the community all along the process.

Use of digital media
The use of media is not the key focus in this process. But on many occasions the creative use of media tools will improve the quality of the collaboration and the final outcomes. Media tools should be used to communicate with the community, search knowledge, organize knowledge and present knowledge to the community.
A special attention should be given to the creative use of media to offer the end users alternative ways of understanding the problems in question.

Didactic capacity
Community based learning is indeed capable of offering a strong didactic platform for the learning process. Community collaboration can cover all the phases of the learning process and offers a clear mission and structure to the learners.
The community didactic is characterized by setting up a mission beyond the world of the learners themselves: they are working and learning to benefit the community.
At the same time this framework offers many opportunities to use media in very

creative ways.

Example
The learners are given a mission: school children are spending a lot of time using computers, mobile phones and other electronic devices. Some of them get very little physical exercise. Give the community some new input on, how this situation might be changed.

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. PROBLEM BASED LEARNING

Description
The learners are given a team challenge. A health problem in the community or among themselves is described.
The challenge to the learner teams is to find out how they will learn about the problem, and what they are going to do about it…
Therefore the learners need to discuss and to find out, how they are going to organize their learning of this topic. What will you do, who will you talk to, where will you find, how will you discuss, and how will you present the results of the learning.
The teacher acts as mentor and counselor, but does not interfere with the learning.

Use of digital media
In fact, the learners do not have to use media at all in this process. Nevertheless, the process will be far more creative, efficient and interesting if a wide range of media tools are involved. Relevant media tools can support the research, the planning, the communication, and the presentation of the outcomes.

Didactic capacity
Problem based learning is a strong didactic platform for the organisation of the learning process. The focus is on the *learning to learn* challenges, not primarily on the topics. Yet, strong subject-related outcomes can be expected from such a process.
The teachers and mentors involved need to be confident as to the practical use of this method, as the learning process can sometimes appear quite chaotic and full of roadblocks.

Example
It is a problem to the primary schools that many migrant families do not participate in the school's family events. It makes it difficult to support the migrant children's learning and integration.
The mission is to plan a learning process through which we will come to an understanding of the problem, from different points of views, and that will eventually propose some possible solutions to the problem.

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. GAME BASED LEARNING

Description
The learners use video games to study a topic, or a mosaic of related topics. The learners can work individually or in teams. The learning process should establish a strong interaction between the video game world and the learning environment surrounding the game world.
The gaming might include the critical analyses of the game and the ways in which

the player interacts with the game.

Use of digital media
Interacting with video games, or learning games, offers a highly concentrated and challenging use of digital media. Many skills and competences can emerge from the gaming activities. However, working with video games is not necessarily that productive, meaning that video gaming should be accompanied by active, productive and designing use of media tools along the learning process.

Didactic capacity
Only in the case where the games employed are of a very high quality and covers many aspects of the learning process can game based learning offer a strong didactic platform. In most cases video gaming will be an element in the practicing of other didactic principles not specifically related to video gaming.
Good learning games do, though, often offer excellent learning experiences, not obtainable elsewhere in the learning process.

Example
The learners use a video game offering missions from within the human body: the body is influenced by different environmental sources and the learner must find out about the impacts on the different elements of the body and try to combat the damages inflicted.
The game is structured in different levels, taking the learner to more and more complex tasks and demanding solutions.
The body game offers experiences that cannot be obtained in the real world.

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. GAME DESIGN LEARNING

Description
Learners can learn, not only from playing video games, but also, and perhaps even more so, from designing video games on different topics.
The process of designing a learning game is very demanding and complex, and it requires a variety of activities, most of them involving the use of digital media.
The design process is balancing between the learning of game design and the learning of specific topics or knowledge fields.

Use of digital media
Even though the design of learning games will often set out using paper and pen and a lot of discussion, the creative use of digital media might be very creative and demanding.
To illustrate the gameplay the learners will need to use graphics, progression tools, animation tools, perhaps web based tools and most certainly elementary game programming.
The learning process might end at the point of the production of a demo, or it might go all the way and include the production of the full game or parts of the game.
In all cases, professional game designers should be involved and collaborate closely with the learners and the teachers.

Didactic capacity
Game design learning offers a very strong didactic platform, as the learning process can be organized according to the phases of game design.
The teachers involved should collaborate closely with a professional game designer to help the learners organize the process.
Although the learning process seems to be focused on game design, a lot of subject-related challenges will occur along this process, and eventually lots of good learning can result from such processes.
This leads to a piece of serious knowledge: the didactics of the learning process does not in any way need to be linked to the topics at all to offer strong subject-related learning outcomes.

Designing learning games is an excellent example of this.

Example
The learners are challenged with designing a video game on burnout.
Many teachers in primary school suffer from burnout symptoms and in some cases they lose their working capacity for a long time.
The video game should offer a game environment challenging the gamer to find creative ways of avoiding being a burnout victim.
The game should be developed in collaboration with, tested and used by primary school teachers.

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. SOCIAL GAMING LEARNING

Description
The learners are engaged in online gaming activities, in which they play a significant role in the progression of the game.
The social gaming might take the form of a serial, progressively feeding the learners with new content elements and challenges.
An important part of the gaming is the discussions between learners and players: how to collaborate, how to solve, how to progress…
Such social gaming processes can be established at high level, including long-term planning and plenty of resources, but it can also be designed as small in-school or between-schools scenarios, using quite simple media tools.
A groups of teachers should work together to design such social gaming processes.

Use of digital media
The social gaming activities are mostly focused on the use of social media and communicative tolls, but might include missions of producing media elements to progress in the game world.
The social gaming environments offer strong media based virtual collaboration competences, being key competences in the knowledge society.
Different forms of text based or video based synchronous communication might also be included.

Didactic capacity
The social gaming learning might simply be an element in learning processes organized by other principles, or it might constitute a regular element in any learning process.
But, in fact social gaming might also, at different levels of ambitions, be used as an organizer of the entire learning.
The teachers and mentors need to be familiar with such learning tools and be highly motivated to participate themselves.

Example
A game series in 12 episodes is produced by a group of schools in collaboration with a social game designer. The process will take 12 weeks and is about why many young people drop out of school and what happens to them afterwards.
The learners take active part in the discussions of the scenarios presented, and work together in teams competing on finding the best solutions and how to make the social game progress.
The winning teams might be offered an opportunity to produce a new social game in collaboration with the professional social game designer.
Alternatively a group of teachers and learners can work together and produce such a series of scenarios at lower level and using the school's own web environment or online forums.
Social gaming learning might be carried out within popular virtual worlds, such as Sims or Second Life.

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. SOCIAL NETWORKING LEARNING

Description

The learners are engaged in online platforms, game-like or not, with learners from other schools or even countries. The learners are constantly challenged with problems, situations or scenarios they have to find out about and communicate about.

The discussions and activities in the platform might include media productions to be discussed with other learners.

Social networking learning is different from social game learning as it does not include gaming, but is focused on exploration and collaboration in virtual platforms.

Use of digital media

The learning process will be focused on the use of virtual communication and collaborative tools, but the learner missions should also include the production of small media products, such as Power Points or videos as integrated elements in the virtual collaboration.

Different forms of text based or video based synchronous communication might also be included.

Didactic capacity

Social networking learning might be used as an organizer of the learning process, but in most cases social networking would be an element in a learning process organized by other principles. In such cases social networking might offer a strong collaborative dimension.

Social networking learning also offers strong and interesting opportunities for the learners to collaborate with learners from other schools, from the community and from other countries (for example in the case of language learning).

Example

The learning teams in a Danish college are challenged with collaborating with a Spanish college exploring and discussing the alcohol habits among young people in the two countries.

The learners are expected to collect evidence and produce multimedia material explaining the different alcohol habits, and to discuss the problem and the material in English and in Spanish.

In advanced cases such learning processes might result in the production of a joint website with relevant material.

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. SCENARIO BASED LEARNING

Description

Scenarios are very different from games. Games are quite demanding as to rules, gameplay and programming, whereas scenarios are short narratives demonstrating a life situation or a fictive situation.

Scenarios can be produced with simple tools like Power Point or any digital storytelling tool available, it can be set up as a website – or it can be a series of small videos.

The learner teams' mission is to work with the scenarios, respond to the scenarios – and to produce new scenarios taking them further.

If resources are available, scenarios might also be produced at high level with

professional media tools. Normally this would include collaboration with media designers.

Use of digital media
The learners engage in learning with simple media tools and communication tools, but they should also respond to the scenarios presented by developing new scenarios with a variety of simple or advanced media tools.
The focus might be put on expressing oneself with the most relevant media available, and to explore how different media could be used to develop scenarios.

Didactic capacity
Depending on the ambition level of the scenarios such activities might form the backbone of a good learning process. It might as well, though, simply be a learning activity among others in settings based on other principles.
In advanced cases the scenarios might work as an organizer of a full learning process.
Scenario based learning offers the teachers and learners a variety of simple and more complex opportunities to simulate real life challenges.

Example
An elderly citizen suffers from severe diabetes.
A series of dramatic scenarios are developed, using drawing, text or small videos, in which the elderly citizen is not caring well for his diabetes, but bringing him in difficult situations.
The learners will work with the scenarios, and produce new scenarios to present their solutions to the difficulties.
Advancing this example might mean the production of a series of video based scenarios.

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. VIRTUAL SIMULATION BASED LEARNING

Description
Simulations are not games. They present a part of life in digital format to explore.
Many such virtual worlds are simulations. The freedom of action for the learner can be very different, but the basic idea is to allow the learner and the team to explore often complex situations that cannot be explored directly in real life, for different reasons.
The simulated world might include challenges and tasks, and even larger missions.
The virtual world might represent a very small part of real life, or it might be historical simulations over time.
A simulated world might be about how to communicate with a citizen suffering from dementia – or it might be about the functioning of an entire hospital or work place.
Quality simulations are quite demanding to design and produce and therefore quite expensive.
It is, in some cases, possible to construct such simulated worlds in existing platforms such as Sims or Second Life.

Use of digital media
The learners will be working a lot with media in virtual worlds. They will learn to construct, problem solve, navigate and collaborate in virtual environments.
Usually they will not produce with digital tools themselves, but it is possible to include digital production in the missions of the virtual worlds, or in connection with the activities in the surrounding real-life learning environment.

Didactic capacity
Simulation learning might be used as an element in different kinds of learning processes organized by other principles, but in the case of a high-level epic virtual world, the entire learning process might be linked to and embedded in such a structure. In this case virtual simulation based learning might constitute a strong didactic platform.

Example
The human body has been animated into a simulation world and the learners can travel along the natural transportation infrastructure of the body to explore different elements in the body, such as the heart, the liver, the blood, etc.
The simulation world can offer open exploration, or it can include different emerging challenges and missions, for instance emerging from outer world incidents impacting the functioning of the body.
In fact, there are no limits to the scope of such simulations and missions, but such simulations should be targeting large-scale audiences, as they are very expensive to produce.

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. TRAINEESHIP BASED LEARNING

Description
Many educations include periodically traineeships in which the learner practices skills and competences in real-life work situations.
During the traineeship the learners might be challenged with producing evidence of their experiences. They might use different media tools to explain what they are learning and what problems they encountered. The media products might be discussed with other trainees from time to time and be presented to new learners to prepare them for the traineeships.
In fact, the media products might also be presented to the work places to invite them to learn to better mentor and support the trainees.
The same is possible in for example transnational learner mobility activities.

Use of digital media
Besides online communication with people from the education and the work place, the learner will be challenged with finding out how to best organize and present the work place experience: how can I make others understand my learning and my problems by using the most expressive and relevant media?
Should I use texts, pictures, drawings, videos – or should I combine different expression forms? And how to illustrate and express different forms of experience?

Didactic capacity
Structuring and presenting one's experience might very well be a strong organizer of the traineeship. The entire traineeship could be organized into challenges linked to structuring and presenting what you learn and what kind of problems you have during the traineeship.
Presented in this way, the experience would be more interesting to people involved in the traineeship, and to new learners.
Of course, media work in traineeships might also simply be carried out at lower level at milestone points, or as post festum reflections on the traineeship outcomes.

Example
A young migrant is engaged in a traineeship in a centre for elderly.
Some of the elderly have great difficulties with the young migrant's language and accent, as they suffer from reduced hearing and concentration.
The young migrant agrees with the school mentor to illustrate and present these experiences by video interviews with some of the elderly and by producing a media log during the traineeship.

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. RESEARCH BASED LEARNING

Description

This learning pathway focuses on using digital media to search useful knowledge, to review useful knowledge critically, to organize useful knowledge and to present useful knowledge in user-friendly ways.

The internet is the basic tool, and the mission is to find the most relevant knowledge on the topic in question, but also to identify different expression forms in which this knowledge has been successfully delivered. This, then, includes critically media reflection: how is this knowledge presented in the best way to people expected to use the knowledge?

This critical reflection leads to the second part of the mission: how can we organize the knowledge in a new way, using different media, to allow a better understanding of the topic among the users?

Actually, the title of this pathway might be: how to work with and form different forms of knowledge?

Use of digital media

The learner will use the internet in many different ways, and become an "expert" in the quest for relevant knowledge. Such a mission might benefit from gamification.

But the learner will also engage in critical reflections on different forms of media expressions: how might the users of the knowledge benefit from certain forms of presentations and not from others?

Finally the critical reflection should lead to a process in which the knowledge elements are combined and presented in a new way, taking into account the profile and needs of the users. In this part of the process, the learner will choose the most relevant media and produce a media product presenting the knowledge in a new way.

Didactic capacity

It is obvious that such activities can be integrated in many different learning processes, governed by different principles.

But in fact, research based learning might offer a strong didactic framework, as the knowledge work might structure the entire learning process.

In this case research based learning provides a very strong didactic platform.

Example

Cancer patients in hospitals are often presented with piles of information. A lot of this information is bureaucratic, unorganized and very difficult to digest for a patient in the middle of a serious crisis.

The team of learners is challenged with this mission: find the relevant knowledge that need to be transmitted to the cancer patients (or a sub-group of cancer patients), analyze critically the quality of the information taking into account the situation of the users, and produce an alternative way of making the patient aware of this content.

Discuss the outcomes with the hospital staff responsible for the production of cancer patient information.

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. “COMPUTER CLUBHOUSE BASED LEARNING”

Description
A Computer Clubhouse setting is not a “didactics” -or, is it?
In a Computer Clubhouse the media interest is not linked to a specific topic forming part of curricula as in formal education. Instead the media interest is linked to… media. And, especially to the personal interests and talents of the people working in the clubhouse.
The clubhouse offers the learner time and space to explore how media can be used to take your talents or interests further – and to engage in in-depth media learning.
The clubhouse is often used to motivate or re-motivate young people, and to allow them to build reinforced self-confidence and a number of important basic learning to learn skills.

Use of digital media
The learner engages in all kinds of media learning, such as graphics, animation, video, music, etc., including social networking, and explores what media can do for the learner and her personal talents, aspirations or secret hopes.
The focus is on media work and how to express oneself and ones “cause” in the most creative way. The clubhouse activities are linked to community networking.

Didactic capacity
The Computer Clubhouse “didactics” is based on a series of principles allowing the learner to explore media tools and media expressions.
The clubhouse environments are non-formal learning settings and the learners attend out of their free will.
The clubhouse world can be established as an after-school provision, or it could be integrated in formal educations in the form of “free space for media exploration”.
Very often such provisions are addressing young people not working well in formal education, early school leavers, or learners at risk of dropping out.

Example
In a vocational center the drop-out rate is very high. Many young people enroll in the education without really knowing why and what it’s about.
Instead of accepting drop-out, the VET college might establish a “Computer Clubhouse” at the heart of the college or in a neighboring building. The clubhouse should be open every afternoon and can be used by learners at the College at risk of dropping-out, and by learners having recently left the education.
The clubhouse environment is an alternative to dropping-out and to continue to mal-function in the classes.

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. WEB BASED LEARNING

Description
This media learning pathway is about changing traditional education material and classroom teaching into media based materials and collaborative team work.
The education produces a world of web based multimedia material, in some cases including learning games and social networking platforms, often in collaboration with media designers.
The learners will explore this material, typically organized in sections with facts, narratives, scenarios and links, combine the material in a useful way, and add new elements from online search.
The learners will produce media products as outcomes of the learning and thus contribute to the variety of material in the web world.

Use of digital media
Learners will use all kinds of digital materials in the learning process, including collaborative communication tools.
Learners will train their ability to combine digital material and also combine knowledge embedded in different "languages", such as texts, videos, scenarios, graphics, links, etc.
Last, but not least, they will be encouraged to use media tools to present the outcomes of the learning.
In certain cases, the learners are encouraged to take their media skills further and explore more advanced media tools.

Didactic capacity
The established "world" of web based multimedia material might very well constitute a well-functioning didactic platform, encompassing the entire learning process.
The media didactics of "find-organize-present" can be a strong organizer of the team learning.
The advantage of this pathway is that it can be used at different levels, without compromising the very idea of the principles. And, it can form a part of any learning process governed by other didactic principles.

Example
Working with and supporting people in deep crisis, due to severe illness, can be very demanding and complicated.
To support the learning of the students the media team produces a large and very qualified material for the learners to explore. The material is designed in close collaboration with teachers, and it also includes video interviews with people in severe crisis situations.
As the institution owns the productions, it can decide to further develop the material, to include productions from the learners or to share the material with other educations.

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Much more on www.LABlearning.eu
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The LABlearning consortium offers

Counselling on media laboratories for disengaged youth for national and European educational policy-makers

Collaboration on the establishment of media laboratories in formal and non-formal contexts for institutions and communities

Training in managing media laboratories for disengaged youth for teachers, mentors and youth workers
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The LABlearning consortium offers its services on non-profit basis and always links the media laboratories to 21st century learning.

21st century learning in action

Experience the direct voices of the young people on YouTube

With English subtitles

The 37 minutes video **Joves i Futur** is created, designed and produced by young people in Salt-Girona Catalonia participating in the EU LABlearning project.
Their work is much appreciated, as are their open statements in the video.
The project wishes to thank both the youth teams and the mentors working with them!
The video, other videos and 20 different LABlearning Guides are openly available on

www.LABlearning.eu