

Minireport

The youth Voice

The aim of the Youth Voice is to get the voice of the student regarding the LabLearning project. Instead of thinking what a youngster might tell us, we ask the youngsters ourselves. In this mini-report, you will find the results of Drenthe College

Drenthe College

Drenthe College is a large vocational college (approx. 10.000 students). With main locations in Emmen, Assen and Meppel, Drenthe College has direct access to a lot of students in the target group of the LabLearning project.

The college offers level 1-4 education for students age 16 years and older. The college is organised in educational clusters, Health and Welfare, Technology, and Business, Horeca and Sports.

Apart from these levels, Drenthe College also offers the AKA; a level one form of education for students, having difficulties finding their way on the labour market or to college. This form of education is situated in the Health and Welfare department.



Target Group

As the target group of the project consists of level 1 and 2 students, within the college we have looked for the best opportunity to work with the LabLearning project.

In Assen there is the largest group of AKA students (AKA: Arbeidsmarkt gekwalificeerd Assistant). This is a level one type of formal education, teaching dropouts the skills they need in order to find a job or to stay in school. There are about 50 students, age 16-21 years, in this project right now (2011-2012). The responsible manager also works with care assistant (level 1) and care helper (level 2), so a wide range of students is available.

Being able to interpret the results, within the college we also decided to have a reference group. As AKA is the primary level in Vocational Education, we looked for the highest level to be able to compare the results. We found a reference group, the educational assistants, which is a level 4 type of education.

Research basics

Within our college's project team, we discussed the way of researching. As the AKA students are more difficult to approach, we have decided not to use a regular interview for these students. By asking them questions directly, we did not think we would get any useful answers.

Also we wanted students not to be influenced by our



way of asking questions. By asking a question, one tends to answer it himself or direct the student towards a certain way of answering.

After some talks within the project team, the coordinator at our college contacted Jaap Peeters, a management consultant. Jaap specialises in different ways of viewing challenges in organisations. He led us towards Michel Cloosterman. Michel uses Lego Serious Play© as a way to get communication started. After some talks with Michel, we decided to use the Lego Serious Play© method for The Youth Voice.

Research method

Having received the questionnaire regarding the Youth voice, we decided not to hand over the questions directly to our students, neither ask them these questions directly. The project coordinator at Drenthe College used the list as a guideline, to develop a list with behaviour characteristics. This list could then be used by the assessors, while the Lego Serious Play© method was used.

By using this list, we would also have comparable results, as all different results would end up being written in the same list. We then would be able to compare the results at the AKA level at the different groups, but would also be able to compare them with the reference group.

The list would also provide Michel with enough background information about the aim of the discussions.

As Michel would be the leading man during the discussions, the teachers would still be available and present during the day, to observe the group.

Furthermore the break moments (coffee, thee, lunch) were used as being informal moments, where the discussion could continue. These moments were used in the school restaurant, and more teachers would be present to talk to the students.

As at AKA we have 4 different groups, we decided to use this group process during the Youth Voice. The AKA groups mix constantly, but on one day the group is constantly together during labour skills. We used this day (Thursday) as the Lego Serious Play© day.

As the AKA group is divided into Care, Horeca, Technology and Trade, we made a special routing for the groups. We decided to start with Trade, this being the most quiet group, and from there on start up the other groups. Teachers were invited to write a report on the day afterwards, apart from the checklist.



Results AKA:

The AKA group liked the way of working very much. After a quiet start, they got more and more into the creative process and were able to think up new ideas. From a very directional approach (e.g. build a bridge) they were invited to work with lesser visible themes (develop an app for the college).

Having both a teacher and a “Lego man” present, proved to be very successful. One could look at the process, the other could score results.

After a few hours, the AKA group felt completely free to come up with ideas and working methods. They delivered some very interesting insights for us; especially in the mentor contact and in providing results towards their diploma.

They did not change very much in the school system indoors. This did not come as a surprise, as they hardly sit in the classroom during the week. The project consists of one day skills, in a practise environment, one day sports, and only four hours in a classroom for language, mathematics and social skills.

The results were also talked about during the AKA team meeting, to see if teachers could recognise these insights. Although sometimes the students surprised us, we could actually very much place the results in our way of thinking.

Actual results:

- **working more with mobile internet**
- **having a digital examination program**
- **finding a digital way of coaching**

Results Educational Assistents:

The Educational assistents are of a higher level than the AKA group. This became clearly visible during the day. As the AKA students had difficulties to 'think outside the box', this was not an issue with the educational assistents. As they have a rather different program, their results became also very clear in this area.

Whereas AKA students thought more about them being outside the school and not having very much classroom based lessons, the other group asked for more clarity during their educational process. This was not a big surprise, as this group has a longer course (4 years) in which it is more difficult to see the end and work towards that end. Furthermore they had more interest in using the computer during their classroom. Also not a big surprise, as a laptop is compulsory for this group. In their opinion it could be used more during their stay at our college. Reflecting on this, we could say that our teachers have to be more educated to work with digital materials.



Actual results:

- **a digital way of following their course**
- **more use of ICT at the college**
- **better educated teachers**

Conclusions:

The way of working has proven to be very successful. A different approach meant that we could get clear results 'out of the box'. A questionnaire could be very useful for level 4, but not for the entry levels we work with.

Our aim within the project will be the digital environment for the students. Also it is very important to educate our teachers more to make the most of ICT use.

The next step:

We already talked to a company, specialised in developing digital learning environments, with the inclusion of smart-phone use. Our focus will be:

- finding a way to get digital proof of the exams for our students
- using a digital coach to stay in close contact with our students
- working with a practise-blog, therefore having more contact with the students
- a clear timeline in which students can actually see their progress during their form of education

We will also take a closer look at our teachers, to educate them and provide them with modern ict technology.

Sources:

www.jaappeters.nl

www.seriousplay.com

www.mcatwork.nl

