THE EU COMMENIUS

LAB*learning*
Project

# Youth Voice Report Turkey

Turkish Team met 10 young people from 4 different types of high schools:  a trade vocational high school, an industrial vocational high school, a girls' vocational high school and an ordinary high school. The meeting was held at a Children and Youth Centre located in Kocaeli/ Turkey.

## PART 1: INFORMATION ABOUT THE MEETING

1. The meeting was held at "Kocaeli 80<sup>th</sup> year Child and Youth Centre", on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2012. It lasted for about 70 minutes.

2. 10 young people 2 of which were females attended the meeting. Most of them are in the last year of secondary education and preparing for the university exam. So they are mostly 16-17 years old. As our city, Kocaeli, is very rich in terms of immigration, most of our interviewees are children of immigrant families who came here as labour mostly from the eastern and south-eastern part of Turkey.

3. They are students of 4 different high schools: a trade vocational high school, an industrial vocational high school, a girls' vocational high school and an ordinary high school. They are all members of "80<sup>th</sup> year Child and Youth Centre" which provides these youngsters pedagogical, cultural, educational and social opportunities.

4. Most of the interviewees are in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade of high school and in turners, preparing for the university examination. We could conclude that 4 of them are really low performers in school especially in math courses. Our general impression is that (as it will be elaborated on later in the report) all of 10 young people love their schools and most of them get on well with their teachers and classmates. But the main reason why they are low performers seems to derive from their insufficient educational background especially in the primary education.

5. 3 adults attended the meeting. One is a project expert who is responsible for the implementation of the LABlearning project in Kocaeli. He also conducted the meeting. Second adult is a teacher of English with a teaching experience for more than 10 years with young people. We thought that his opinions, suggestions and conclusions will be helpful for us. The last one is the deputy manager of the child and Youth Centre where we met with the interviewees. She was absent in the first half of the meeting but joined in the second part.

6. The general atmosphere in the room was warm from the very beginning of the meeting. However, because of some bad experiences of the youngsters about being presented as "street children" to the public, some of them were timid in the first phase. They confessed later that they thought we were journalists and would take their pictures and put on the paper as "street children". After we explained who we are and why we were there, they felt relieved. Only 3 of them answered to the first question but starting from the second one the participation level increased stepwise.


## PART 2: ADULTS' ACCOUNTS OF KEY DIALOGUE'S OUTCOMES

A) **Q. 1-3 Students' Opinions About Their Schools:**

*Participants mostly have a mixed/balanced opinion; they see both negative and positive aspects.

It seemed that nearly all participants see both the positive and negative aspects of their school life. They seemed to be pleased with their teachers and friends but they desire better physical conditions at school.

It was obvious in the most answers of the participants that, they are happy to be "students". Adults who participated in the meeting agreed that as nearly all of them were former street children, they are very aware of the real life outside. They had to work for money; they didn't have the opportunity to attend the school properly from the early grades. So it is assumed that they are aware of the "value of their schools and teachers" for themselves.

**B) Q. 4-7: What/how do you like to learn things + perceived personal strengths/abilities**

* Most participants enjoy the activities they do at school.
* Most participants feel that they can do at school the things they like best or are good at.

Most of the participants seemed very happy to be students at their schools. Two of them expressed the close relations between the teachers and students. Even one thinks to become a teacher in the future just because he loves the paternal attitudes of his teachers.

Although some complained about the lack of sufficient Math (Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geometry etc.) classes per week, some claimed that they are better at verbal classes. It is taken very normal as the ability and interests of individuals may vary.

One of them said he selected to study on international trade at a trade vocational high school because he thought this study area would be under the Mathematical disciplines. However he was disappointed when he found out that it wasn't. This expression let the conversation have the impression that the counselling service of the school is not effective and informative enough to inform the students who are about to choose their future occupations.

When talking about day by day activities of the participants in their schools, it became clear that they are not sure what occupation to have in the future. The adults based this situation on:
- The lack of efficient consultancy in schools
- Their confused minds and not being so worried about their future
- The economical conditions (they think to have a job not because they really want it but because they see some jobs as guaranteed against unemployment)

In conclusion, they are satisfied with their schools and teachers, so with the daily learning and social school activities. The main reason for this is that they see their school life as a socialization opportunity. But when the conversation comes to "education and learning" some prefer to keep silent.

**C) Q. 8-12: Current use and desired/potential use/knowledge of digital tools/media**

* Most participants use computers, mobiles, internet etc. regularly
* Most participants usually use computers etc. only for recreational reasons with no specific purpose
* Most participants are aware about the potential of computers, media and internet
* Participants are divided about more ICT use/learning (some very keen, others not interested)

In this technological era it is not surprising that all of the participants are regular users of ICT tools especially computer, mobile and internet. The main aim in using ICT tools, however, is not based on educational requirements. They prefer to use mobiles, computers and the internet for social networks like "facebook" and "twitter".

When asked if they use the internet for any learning activity, the only answer shall be that they search their research/project/preparation homework subjects on the internet. Yet, we cannot say that they are not aware of the potential of ICT tools in education and learning. Especially the ones from the technical high school believe that it can be helpful for learners to improve the usage of such tools in education but still they prefer technology only as a complimentary material to classical "teacher" perspective.

We can conclude that our participants are very pragmatic users of technology. They really like spending time with it but most of them do not like the idea to "work" on/with ICT in their future. Only few of them are keen on computer based occupations or learning more and more about computer programming. The rest seemed not be interested in improving their skills or knowledge on ICT tools. When the conductor asked if they ever think that they would like to create better computer graphics when they watch a science fiction movie or play a PC game like "Counter Strike", their facial expression proved that most (may be all) of them have never thought about it. But the second expression on their face was "curiosity". Therefore we believe that we seeded some interest in their minds about using, learning about the ICT use other than recreational aims.

**D) Q. 13-15: Learning elsewhere and learning differently: does it happen, could it happen?**

* Most participants think that they learn something outside the school
* Participants have <u>few ideas</u> about other ways of learning things

Most of our participants think that they learn many things outside of the school. But we assume that they misinterpreted the questions and thought general aspect (general knowledge) of learning rather than educational learning. In terms of education, the first think that occurred in their minds was using the internet for the research & project homework assigned by their teachers. This proved that they percept the idea of "learning" only at school, only in the class and only with their teachers. Therefore they were not very creative in producing ideas about "learning outside the school".

**E) Q. 16-22: Could this different perspective be brought into the school and how? Ideas, suggestions, desires...**

* Participants are divided about working more with computers, media, etc.
* Participants are divided about working more with computers etc. after school time
* Most participants would not like to experiment learning without a teacher in school

As it is indicated before, nearly all of our participants use ICT tools only for recreational purposes. Only two of them mentioned about working on/with computers in their professional life. Some comments were very interesting as they mentioned about finding it boring to work in an office for long hours. Rather they prefer more active occupations like being police officers, tourism and teaching.

When asked if they would like to try an educational system different from the current classical one, nearly all answered, as if they had had an agreement before the meeting, that without teachers and classroom environment, students would not be motivated and disciplined to study hard and so they would not learn enough. But when the conductor asked "Wouldn't you like to try it at least?" they answered: "may be but for only a short period".

About using the ICT media tools, they seemed determined to use them to a certain extent in their future life. The main rationale for their choice is that they think technology is destroying social life and people are becoming more and more day by day the technology develops.

**F) Q. 23-24: Leading to post-meeting documentation**

* Most participants want also to use media to express their point of views

The overall impression after this meeting is very affirmative by both the participants and the adults. All of the students agreed to share more ideas on these subjects later on. By making a brainstorming activity, they produced the idea that the results of the project should be disseminated to other schools and students through the means of mass media tools. According to them, the most effective ways in achieving this aim are creating a video and broadcasting it on both TV (where available) and video sharing websites. They seemed very enthusiastic to be "actors" of that video and share their ideas.

**PART 3: KEY MASSAGES BY THE PARTICIPANTS**

➢ "It is disturbing that sometimes our teachers compare students with other students or compare a class with another class" (Q 1-3)

➢ "The counselling service in the school is not sufficient enough. Each teacher tells different things about choosing an occupation and this creates a bemusement among students." (Q 1-3)

➢ "Being a student is great for me as I was on the streets when my peers started primary school". (Q 1-3)

- "The lessons that includes more practicing than other are more enjoyable" (Q 4-7)

- "I like my teachers but not when they are waiting by the school entrance scoping us as if we (students) were criminals" (Q 4-7)

- "I think one of the best ways of learning is the one based on the "mentor/apprentice system" (Q 4-7)

- "Technology is making people lonelier and more anti-socialized". (Q 8-12)

- "Who doesn't" (Q 8)

- "ICT tools cannot be main education tools but they can be very useful as complimentary learning tools for teachers and students" (Q 8-12)

- "Students must strive for learning but too much technology use in education may cause the students become lazier" (Q 8-12)

- "That is why we come here everyday" (As an answer to Q13 indicating the importance of the Child and Youth Centre where the meeting was held)

- "No teachers, no learning for me" (Q 16-22)

- "I would like to try learning without teachers but for a certain period like one month". (Q 16-22)