

Young Communication - increasing digital competence in Teacher Education and schools

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Abstract

Young Communication is a five-year project aiming at boosting the digital competence among Teacher training teachers and teacher students at universities, and among teachers in schools. The main focus of the project is the breakpoint between new technologies, youth cultures and learning. An important part in the project is the co-operation with organizations outside the educational institutions, which deals with young people in their free time, as well as in after-school activities.

Key words: digital competence, teacher training, youth culture

We are in the midst of a digital revolution. A multitude of new media is heaped upon us every day, and today's generation of young people plays a central part in this development. Young peoples' frequent use of digital tools such as computers, cellular phones, digital cameras, mp3-players and Internet communication, provide a new, and changed social landscape. Never before have youth cultures influenced society's means of communication the way they do today.

78% of Sweden's population - ages 16 to 24 - use the Internet on a daily basis. There is no difference between genders (SCB Statistics Sweden 2006). Recently, Mediarådet published a survey on the use and experience of media among children (ages 9 - 12) and young people, (ages 12 - 16) (Government committee Ministry of Culture 2006). The study showed that 54% of young people use the Internet every day. If you look at children the figure is 28%. 49% of the children between 10-12 have their own cellular phone. The older the user, the more common mobile phones get: 85% among 13-15 year olds, and 95% of young people between 15-18, have their own cellular phone (SCB Statistics Sweden 2005). Lunarstorm, one of the largest Internet communities among young people in Sweden, have about 1.2 million active members, 70% in age between 16 and 24; 400 000 unique visitors every day (Lunarstorm 2006).

The generation born and grown up in a context where digital technologies play a decisive part of their daily life is described in different ways, such as "Digital Natives" (Presky 2001), "Millennial Generation" (Howe & Strauss 2000), Net Generation (Oblinger & Oblinger 2005),

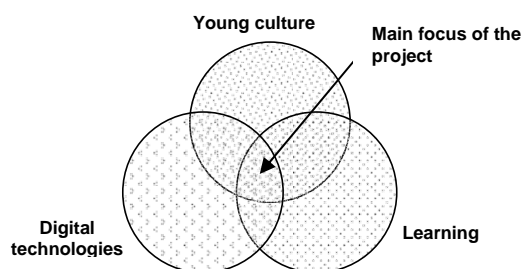
Homo Zappiens (Veen 2003), all with the same message: With their curiosity and open-minded attitude towards all things new, young people herald an upcoming paradigm shift on education, both in schools and at universities. Teaching and learning will never be the same ever again.

Young Communication is a five-year project aiming at boosting the digital competence among Teacher training teachers and teacher students at universities, and among teachers in schools. Also, the project aims at supporting and facilitating an increased co-operation between pupils, students and teachers. An important part in the project is the co-operation with organizations outside the educational institutions, which deals with young people in their free time, as well as in after-school activities. Regarding this, we are co-operating with Nätverket SIP and Reaktor Sydost.

Other interesting partners are the broadcasting media companies – e.g. SVT in Växjö. They are dealing with the question of how to attract young people to the broadcasting medium by using participation over the web.

A joint development may create experiences valuable for both the Teacher education and schools, and provide several synergic effects in bridging the gap between formal and informal learning. Most of the project's core work is carried out in thematic groups, initialized either by teachers, students or external partners.

The main focus of the project is the breakpoint between new technologies, youth cultures and learning.



The project is trying to cover three main areas:

- Increase the content of digital youth cultures in Teacher Education by using and developing pedagogical and didactical models including e.g. SMS, blogging, communities, file-sharing
- Research and development - in perspective of the questions raised within the project
- Learning Management Systems - in what way can LMS systems support young communication?

Young Communication is supported and partially funded by the Knowledge Foundation and is a collaborative project including Blekinge Institute of Technology, University of Kalmar and Växjö university, with Växjö as the co-ordinating partner.

Further information on <http://www.ungkommunikation.se>.

Notes

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