



E-STEP PROJECT TAKES OFF

E-STEP Training Framework takes shape

E-STEP aims to develop, implement and evaluate a training programme for school education staff in order to prepare them to effectively engage parents in schooling, through social networking technologies.

Framework Principles

The framework is derived from the following principles that have emerged from this work:

- Parental engagement that engages parents in their children's learning has been shown to contribute to beneficial outcomes for young people
- Schools and colleges work with diverse communities of young people and parents and a parental engagement strategy must be responsive to the complexity and plurality of the particular local context
- Highly valued parental is char-

acterised by a range of interactions for a variety of purposes and is likely to make use of a range of communication modes including social media

- Participation in social media is a social practice and requires digital literacy knowledge, expertise and confidence from all participants
- Teachers' and parents' (and young people's) knowledge, awareness, understanding and experiences of social media (and other forms of ICT) vary substantially and impact on their attitudes to social media use in school
- Teachers and parents attitudes towards social media are informed by wider discourses and these might be especially influential where individuals lack direct experience
- Initial teacher education does not necessarily teach either parental engagement or digital literacy, teachers knowledge and expertise is likely to be tacit and gained through experience and participation
- Communication between par-

ents and schools that is mediated by technology will be framed by the existing attitudes, values and cultures of the school or institution

- Attitudes and values of leaders, teachers, parents and children are crucial in determining the success or otherwise of both a parental engagement strategy and implementation of a work in digital modes

Opportunity for teachers

The training framework will enable teachers to:

- **explore** key issues and debates in parental engagement
- **engage** with the wider school community to better understand parental engagement and the existing and potential roles of social media in their own context
- **create** new meanings, identities and roles in relation to parental engagement
- **experiment** with social media
- **collaborate** to drive innovation and implement change

Workshops in the participating countries

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First round of E-STEP Workshops in the participating countries

Teachers, school managers and project partners met in a series of workshops during the first half year of 2014 to discuss needs and the opportunities the E-STEP project could offer. Selected cases from these workshops organized from all partners are presented below.

Workshops in Greece

► The 1st workshop in Greece took place in Patras on 30th of May 2014. Mrs. Evangelia Boufardea from CTI made an introduction to the project and overview of the workshop process in the participants (parents and teachers). The teachers were from different educational levels (primary/second-dary/high school) and of different school profiles. A presentation of two cases of effective partnership between schools and parents was made too. The two parallel focus-groups participated in the workshop were six parents and five teachers. Thereafter the two groups (teachers & parents) presented the results of each group's discussion and time for reflection and discussion was given to participants.



At the end of the workshop the ODS portal was presented and how it will be assist the realization of the project. The minutes of the workshop are used for the survey in the frame of WP1.

► The 2nd workshop in Greece took place at Markopoulo, Attica, on June 16th, 2014 and was attended by 12 Primary school teachers and 10 parents. After an introduction to the E-STEP project, that was presented by Mrs. Eleni Chelioti and Mr. Stephanos Cherouvis from Ellinogermaniki Agogi Research & Development Department, the participants were split into two focus groups, where they discussed their current experiences from parental engagement activities and their views on the conditions that would favour more effective and substantial collaboration between school and parents. The groups were then joined into a common discussion, where the key-points of each focus group were presented, leading to a constructive dialogue between teachers and parents, that elaborated both common attitudes as well as differing views regarding teachers' and parents' needs and perceptions about parental engagement, the forms it should take and the means through which it can be applied.

Workshops in Bulgaria

► The 1st Workshop of E-STEP in Bulgaria took place on June 10th in 51st Secondary School „Elisaveta Bagryana“ in Sofia. It was

held by Mr. Orlin Kouzov and Mr. Philip Ivanov, representing the E-STEP project and the attendees were 25 teachers from two schools (51th and 34th Secondary schools in Sofia) and 8 parents. The lecturers presented the E-STEP project and its objectives in line of the National Strategy for effective implementation of ICT in Education and Science in Republic of Bulgaria for the next program period (2014-2020). There was substantial interest and many questions on behalf of the audience and some successful practices for interaction of parents and teachers were presented (e-diaries, mail lists).



After that the audience was split in two target groups (parents and teachers) and some additional issues were discussed in order to find out how to further stimulate the cooperation of parents and teachers and what are the main obstacles that need to be considered. At the end of the meeting the main conclusions were presented to the joint audience and parents and teachers were asked to fill two survey forms (one explicitly prepared by E-STEP project team for the parents and one, prepared by the National coordinator for the teachers). The



participants made their comments that they approve the form of the seminars and would like such practices to be held on a regular basis.



► The 2nd E-STEP workshop took place in Sofia Vocational Schools for Electronics „John Atanasoff“ on the 11th of June. It was again held by the Bulgarian E-STEP team members including the national coordinator Mr. Orlin Kouzov. The participants were 11 teachers from the school, 4 of which were parents as well. There was lecture regarding E-STEP project and presentation about the most general topic of teachers and parents collaboration, good practices and ways to stimulate further implementation of ICT in order to speed up successful joint projects and practices in this area. The participants agreed that such collaboration could be beneficial for both sides and should improve the students' learning results. The teachers from the school declared that they are strong supporters of ICT implementation in the curricula and in teachers and parents collaboration and reminded that the school has strong ICT profile and highest result in e-maturity questionnaire. Due to the number of

attendees and the fact that some of them represented both target groups (i.e. teachers and parents) they were not split in groups but general discussion was held how to improve further the collaboration using ICT. At the end the attendees were asked to fill short survey forms which results to be used in further project implementation.

Workshop in Ireland

► ULS coordinated the first E-STEP workshop in Dublin on June 30th. The workshop was coordinated by Mr. Neil O'Sullivan representing ULS for E-STEP and 8 teachers representing primary and post primary school leaders and trainers attended. The E-STEP project was presented and brochures were distributed. ULS the Irish National Coordinator prepared a questionnaire prior to the meeting to allow the participants to consider issues in advance of the workshop meeting. The meeting lasted about two hours. E-STEP project and its objectives were presented highlighting linkages and connections from an Irish perspective. The participants showed great enthusiasm and the conversation centred on parental engagement from a schools staff perspective. Good practices were discussed and the problems and issues faced by teachers were discussed. Best practices and the role of ICT and social media were discussed. Then strengths and weaknesses and opportunities were discussed. The current practices of

email, website, Twitter, Facebook and text-a-parent were discussed. The participants agreed that they would introduce the parents to the E-STEP project once schools re-opened in September with renewed vigour. At the end of the meeting the findings and conclusions were added to the E-STEP on-line workshop reporting form. The participants commented that they approved of the workshop format. They felt it was a valuable experience and would be prepared to participate in future seminars as it was beneficial to their work.



Workshops in Austria

► The online education campaign days took place in the Kurhaus in Hall, Tyrol this year. The students of the College of Education Tyrol, their teachers and interested parents had been invited to attend the interesting and challenging program on "Innovative teaching methods" and "The Use of New Media in the classroom" on Tuesday, May 27th, 2014. The BMBF (Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs) informed on the online learning platform about important developments and projects. Current developments in the form of



lectures, workshops and demonstrations in the learning environment has been shown, discussed and debated. Mr. Christian Reimers led the workshop on behalf of BMBF. Five parents and four school staff (regularly and form teachers) participated to the workshop. Some of the outcomes of the workshop were: less than 40% of parents are open and willing to collaborate in schooling and about 50% of the teachers are open for a successful partnership with the parents. The school staff welcomes the engagement of parents in schooling. All teachers would like to have more parental engagement in schooling and get more feedback about teaching issues from the parents. Some teachers are very advanced and using ICT in teaching. They have appropriate skills how to implement new media in their teaching. There are still some teachers which rather are against using ICT in the school. Teachers prefer the use of existing platforms and tools instead of developing new ones. The materials should be as clear as possible for an easier implementation. Most of the teachers show sceptical attitude to using the social network-

ing tools during the school. The statement of one teacher was, that using social networking tools is a barrier for a real communication e.g. between young people.



► The 2nd workshop occurred in Vienna on 17th of June, 2014. It was directed by Mr. Christian Reimers and Mrs. Laura Rauscher. Nine interested parents and 13 school staff (regularly, form teachers and school IT staff) attended the workshop. Many teachers suggest that when parents and school personnel collaborate effectively, students are likely to behave and perform better in the school. They also pointed out that when parents communicate constructively with teachers and participate in school activities, they gain a clearer understanding of what is expected of their children at the school and they may learn from teachers

how to work at home to enhance their children education. Teachers reported that parent involvement was moderately high, having at least two contacts with each parent in average, corresponding to the two parent-teacher conference dates parents are required to attend annually. Many teachers suggested that there is an essential relationship between parent involvement and school performance. Also a number of contacts showed that even though greater contact doesn't necessarily relate to better performance, but it does relate to teacher perceptions of constructive parent-teacher interactions. Some teachers adopted autonomous and active learning using new technologies, new ICT-based curricular solutions have been generated. Some of the present teachers are acting rather as a guide, assisting students in finding their own learning method and evaluating their learning processes and outcomes. There are still a number of teachers which rather are against using ICT in the school.

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Second event Meeting with the National Parents Council Primary NPC

A fruitful meeting was held between ULS Ireland (Mr. Neil O'Sullivan) E-STEP partner and NPC Mrs. Áine Lynch, Chief Executive of NPC. At the meeting Mrs. Áine outlined the NPC vision and mission. She also highlighted the training courses which NPC run to support teachers to effectively work with parents. These training programs are founded on solid research and closely follow the work of Joyce Epstein's Framework for parental involvement (Joyce L. Epstein, Ph.D., et. al., Partnership Center for the Social Organization of Schools) has also informed NPC's parental involvement policy in "Education for Tomorrow - The Parents Vision".

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First international workshop at the Summer School 2014

The first international workshop about "how parental engagement can contribute to school development and innovation" and to engage parents effectively through technology in school-based activities took place on 17th July 2014 in Marathon/Greece.

25 teachers and heads of schools from primary and secondary education, coming from Serbia,



France, UK, Finland, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Cyprus and Turkey, participated in the workshop, which was organized from the E-STEP project, within the framework of the ODS Summer School (<http://ods.ea.gr/>). You can find photos and information from the activities on twitter at <https://twitter.com/hashtag/ESTEPAthens> or on the facebook site of E-STEP.

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E-STEP @ 9th Pan-Hellenic Conference

3rd to 5th October 2014 at the University of Crete/Rethymno in Greece

The 9th Pan-Hellenic Conference with International Participation "ICT in Education" (HCICTE 2014) is the official scientific conference of the Hellenic Association of ICT in Education (HAICTE), which aims to address the main issues of concern within ICT in Education and e-Learning. The main ambition of the 9th Conference is to conduct academic debate and to present research, analysis and theoretical studies on the multiple aspects of the field of ICT in Education. <http://www.edc.uoc.gr/~hcicte2014>

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E-STEP @ e-Learning Conference Eisenstadt

7th to 9th October at the Fachhochschule Burgenland/University of Applied Science, Eisenstadt/Austria

The aim of the eLearning Conference 2014 is to present and foster active engagement with projects, which were initiated by the previous e-Learning Conferences or have received decisive impulses. In addition workshops and working groups give the opportunity to learn and discuss about education and ICT based on various topics and how to play an active part.

http://homepage.bildungsserver.com/scms/content/index.php?kat_id=310&schul_id=1033&k_name=Conference+2014

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Greece/Cyprus

Six cases in Greece and three in Cyprus has been collected, which included:

- A relatively large-scale project in which parents participated in action community environmental education activities
- A project in which 4 schools organized collaborative Greek language lessons to migrant parents
- A comparative study of two Cypriot school communities, in which collaborative action groups of parents, teachers and pupils were established
- A cultural education programme for parents and pupils that took place in informal learning settings.
- A report from a Greek school that participated in ARION project on preventing violence by improving schools' and parents' relationships.
- Three reports from schools that are taking own initiatives to collaborate with parents.
- An intervention that invited parents and teachers to a common interactive workshop, in order to build bridges of communication.

Survey of current activities and initiatives targeting on parental engagement

Ireland

National Parents Council Primary (NPC) has charitable status and is a company limited by guarantee. It has a board of directors and employs a Chief Executive and staff. National Parents Council Primary (NPC) is the representative organization for parents of children in primary or early education. The National Parents Council Post Primary (NPC-PP) aims to provide a forum that actively supports parents and guardians in their parenting role and to interact effectively with schools and other education partners on issues that impact on the education, development and general well-being of young people within the post-primary education system.

Bulgaria

In practice, the identified good practices in Bulgaria follow the scenario of active parents engaging schools or local authorities and organizing on-site events for teacher training or discussion/ presentation of issues that concern both schools and parents. In general terms, parents had the role of the initiator in these practice, while teachers were engaged by them to co-organise these events, in which pupils also participated. Examples of activities:

- Forum "School- students- parents: Mission possible"
- Workshop "Parents – equal partners in our school"



Austria

Other involvement and engagement possibilities for parents are very specialized and implemented only at local level. Some of them include ICT solutions but mostly for information purposes:

- NMS parents information network (NMS Elterninformationsnetzwerk)
- School based initiatives: School-parents' communication solutions are offered by private companies at local level, e.g. in the region of Tyrol. These include "class books" and personal pupils' booklets with guidelines for parents
- IBOBB - Information, Guidance and Orientation for Education and Profession (Information, Beratung und Orientierung für Bildung und Beruf) in the 7th and 8th Grade, where parents were actively involved as career orientation advisors, based on their profession and expertise.

Survey of current activities and initiatives targeting on parental engagement

UK

BCU identified three larger-scale initiatives that were relevant to the themes of E-STEP

- Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement (EPRA) - University of Warwick (30 schools involved)
- Home and community links strand of the BECTA ICT in Schools Test Bed Project (31 schools, 90 teachers, 540 parents and pupils involved) - Home-school communication through e-mail and text messaging.
- The Homework Project aimed at providing parents with greater insight into their child's current learning and in strengthening home school links by focusing on parents and children working together. - University of Sussex; Open Mind Productions and Channel 4 Learning (18 schools, 40 teachers, 35 parents and 4 pupils involved)

All three projects explore some aspect of ICT and parental engagement or parental engagement more generally as a primary focus.



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