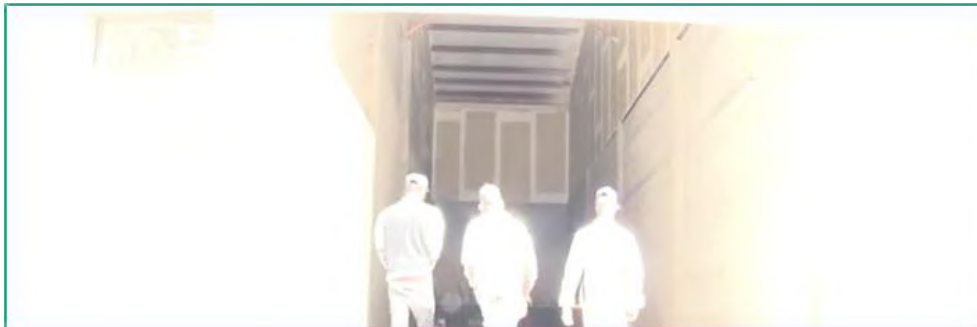




LABlearning

Final Report

Public Part



INTRO

This report has been designed to represent and illustrate the LABlearning project as authentically as possible with regard to the project processes and outcomes.

This allows you to get a solid impression of the project and its results, and to be inspired to study the rich material on the project website - www.LABlearning.eu - including the LABlearning Guide Collection, offering 20 different inspirational guides on the most important challenges to the provision of media based learning for disengaged youth.

Project information

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Executive Summary



...Re-think learning

To take full advantage of new technologies, we need to fundamentally rethink our approaches to learning and education— and our ideas of how new technologies can support them.

Mitchel Resnick, MIT Media Lab - *Rethinking Learning in the Digital Age*

What motivates LABlearning is the fact that in many member states, many young migrants and youth who need special attention are not doing well in the education system.

This poses a great and serious challenge to EU education systems, especially for primary and secondary schools as well as initial vocational training.

Most research as well as everyday evidence confirms the general impression of the existence of an increasing mismatch between the media culture of young people in the new generations and the classroom didactics, the traditional way of organizing education in EU throughout centuries.

Moreover, much evidence indicates that these groups of young people are, in fact, able to learn, and often quite talented.

But they learn differently from the standard-students of the traditional education system.

LABlearning will take the learning into the media world of youth at risk, instead of asking them to leave their media world and enter the old classrooms.

...Hard fun

ENTERTAINMENT?

When we change the traditional classroom teaching into active and project based media labs, are we doing this to make the learning more *entertaining*?

Do we need to change the classrooms because the young people are *bored*? Because they are used to music, films and YouTube all day long? *Is that it?*

Perhaps many young people really *are* bored in the classrooms, but that's not the point. The media labs are not created to entertain the young people.

Some people think of the media labs as a place where the young people can do whatever they like, play computer games, search the YouTube and play with music and update their Facebook.

Some people think we make media labs to *please* the young people... To be more “like them” and their life...

However, this is not the case. On the contrary.

MORE CHALLENGING, MORE WORK...

In fact, the young people will be working much harder than in the classrooms. Some of them might not like that at the beginning, but the media projects must be so exciting, so *seducing*, that the young people will slowly start to engage themselves more and more in the project missions. The idea is that they will experience *immersive learning*. Learning that makes you forget that you are learning, forget yourself...

The extensive use of all sorts of state of the art media is not to entertain the youth teams, but to allow them to unfold and express themselves - and to start learning with the media tools they use in their social lives.

Most young people, and disengaged young people in particular, are not used to do this. They might be media fluent as to specific social ways of using media, but they are certainly *not* media fluent for learning...

For many young people learning with media and in media projects will be very hard work. They will be challenged in the media projects in ways they have never experienced before. They will be taken seriously, and they will be seriously challenged...

Why do we believe that they will engage in such challenges - instead of quitting and dropping out...?

THE PROJECTS

Because they will experience a new way of feeling personally involved in all parts of serious projects.

They are not used to this.

The projects are real-life projects, often defined and carried out in collaboration with people or organisations from the community - a bank, a kindergarten, a school, a theatre, the local NGO for sustainable energy, an elderly centre, etc.

The youth teams will be engaged in defining the mission, in the project planning, in the research, in the dialogues with the clients, in advanced media work and in producing and presenting the outcomes of the projects.

They will not be able to do this. Neither will the mentors. But they will learn to do it on the flight - they will learn by doing...

The important thing is that the projects must be *real-life* projects, have a *clear mission* and must deliver useful *outcomes* for the students, the school, the client or the community.

HARD FUN

Media is used extensively in all phases of the projects, because it allows a great variety of expression forms and the youth teams to form and unfold content in all sorts of ways.

And the extensive use of media encourages critical dialogues on design, usability, aesthetics, etc. - This is hard fun.

It is not entertainment, but hard work that is also fun. It can be hard work to learn to edit a video at high level, but it is also fun. Not entertainment, but fun, pride, overcoming obstacles, taking new steps, showing your work to other people... using your own special talents, or finding new...

And first of all: *feeling involved, accepted, respected, dedicated, almost forgetting yourself...*

The Intel Computer Clubhouse Network offers 20 years of experience in this field. And bottom line is: yes, it can be done, yes it is happening...

So, hard fun. Does this mean that the young people cannot play computer games in the media labs?

No. They can use computer games for learning. Or, they might design a game themselves. Or design some of the projects using strong game principles from good digital games. *Production, not consumption...*



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1. Project Objectives



The mission of the LABlearning project has been to synthesize what we know about 21st century learning, what we know about the needs of disengaged youth and solid experimental media laboratory practice in four partner countries.

An important part of the mission has been to deliver inspirational guidance to institutions, teachers, mentors and different forms of after-school youth provisions, as well as recommendations to policy-makers at national and European levels.

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 center 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*



2. Project Approaches



. . . Key approaches to LABlearning for disengaged youth

MISSION

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

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



. 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 laboratories will be welcoming, creative and encourage team based work and projects - more like a film studio or an atelier than a classroom.



. TECHNOLOGY

The key principles in the laboratories are about how to learn, how to be creative, how to follow one's 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 leads them.

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

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



. 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 supermarket - 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 activity 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 placed at the centre of the city or the community to allow everyday and fluent personal contact to other people, families and friends and institutions.



. 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 interests and talents.

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



. STAFF

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

Teachers 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 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 establish useful contacts to professionals and interested institutions in the community.



. COMMUNITY PROJECTS

The projects in the laboratories are as often as possible be linked to real needs or to innovation in the community.

It is smaller or larger projects, depending on the circumstances. And it is 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.



. 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 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.



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

In short, they explore, design, produce and present.

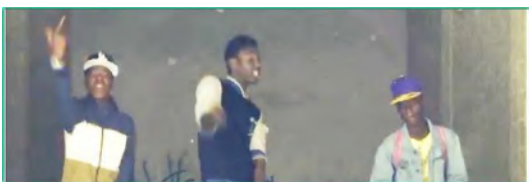
They do that while exploring and exploiting creative media in small teams collaborating with relevant professionals and institutions.

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 success 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...!



. 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...



. 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.

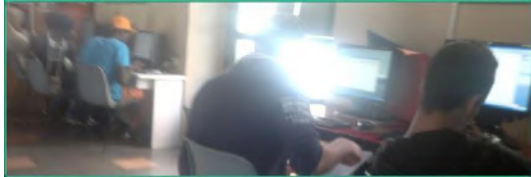
In the labs you don't play computer games, you make your own. You don't watch YouTube, you make your own videos.

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 challenge the young people, not please them.

But the challenges are meaningful and relevant, exciting and engaging, based as they are on the young people's own interests, talents and aspirations - and linked as 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.



. 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 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...



. 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 acknowledged 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 have a special focus on the individual talents of the young people, and facilitate and encourage taking such talents further. And they enjoy seeing the young people grow...



. 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 might 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 artificial 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.



. COMMITMENT

A key and transversal word in the laboratories is *commitment*.

The young people are motivated to commit themselves to the projects, the teams and the lab community.

The mentors must be extremely committed, 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 committed: 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 mentality and ensuring sustainability.

Commitment is vital at personal, mental, social and community level.



. 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.



. 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 are encouraged to share: their problems, their challenges, their solutions, their results. With the other teams, but also with the community.

They are encouraged to share their efforts and accomplishments with peers through their usual online communities and networks.



. 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?

Therefore aesthetic reflection is important in media based learning.

3. Project Outcomes & Results



The LABlearning project delivers a LABlearning Guide Collection with 20 different guides offering inspirational guidance on the most important challenges to media laboratories aiming to empower disengaged youth. One of the Guides is the Complete LABlearning Guide comprising the entire guide material.

The Guide Collection is openly available for non-commercial use from the opening page of the LABlearning web: www.LABlearning.eu.

Furthermore the project and the website offer documentation from the project's youth labs and from the various project processes.

The LABlearning Guide Collection offers inspiration, tools and principles to establish empowermental media based learning facilities for disengaged youth.

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.

Here you find a list of the [inspirational guides](#); a selection of guides has been translated into Italian and Spanish:

LABlearning In short

The basic LABlearning principles

Empowerment media didactics for disengaged youth

Including:

Why media based learning works for disengaged youth

Horizons of media based learning for disengaged youth

Teacher or mentor - Freud, Socrates...

Key approaches to LABlearning for disengaged youth

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

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

Teaching and mentoring in media labs - interactive tool

The epics of immersive media based learning

The role aesthetics in media based learning

How to capture the youth voices

Ways to media labs for disengaged youth - interactive tool

Digital gaming in media labs for disengaged youth

Inspiration from the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network

Basic evaluation platform for media based laboratories for disengaged youth

Making LABlearning processes visible

10 Quality Assurance questions for media LABs

Lessons Learned from LABlearning Practice

Policy Paper - What disengaged youth need

Youth Voices from the media LABs

The social ethics of media based laboratories for disengaged youth

Outside looking in - Interview with Intel Computer Clubhouse Network

The most important findings, running across the entire guide material, can be expressed in the form of 10 principles of empowermental media laboratories for disengaged youth:

1. The young people should work with creative media, linked to own interests and without limits
2. They should work in team-based projects with epic dimensions to allow immersion
3. The media projects should link to real-life and to the surrounding community
4. Creative media LAB projects can easily be linked to curricula and societal challenges
5. The media LABs should foster entrepreneurial mentality, initiative and risk taking
6. Gamification and creation of digital games can be an important driver in the media LABs
7. The LAB environment must be based on flexibility, tolerance, patience, trust and mutual respect
8. The media LABs should be strongly supported by the community and the community should join forces and ensure sustainability
9. Empowermental media LABs should be available in formal as well as in non-formal settings 24/7
10. Whenever possible, the media projects should link to international collaboration and networks

4. Partnerships



The Comenius LABlearning consortium included the following partners:



Baobab



Ajuntament de Salt



Aarhus Social and Healthcare College



Municipality of Reggio Emilia



Training 2000



Drenthe College



SUPSI-DFA



ABPKM



Europartners 2007



Intel Computer Clubhouse Network

You can read more about the third country partner from the US later in this Report, and on www.computerclubhouse.org.

Media labs were established in four partner countries: Catalonia Spain, Italy, Holland and Denmark, covering both formal as well as non-formal settings and very different youth groups.

Evidence from the media labs are provided on the project website: www.LABlearning.eu. - including a long and very powerful video produced by the young people and mentors in the Catalan media labs (subtitled in English and different partner languages).

The media labs established local partnerships with local media resources, local digital game designers, and local authorities as well as with local youth education provisions. This means that the media labs are closely linked to the communities, which is one of the core principles in media based learning.

The consortium's Swiss and Italian evaluators and QA experts have been describing, evaluating and analysing the media labs all across the media projects in all four countries, and the project's third country partner has delivered solid inspiration and critical input all along the project lifetime.



5. Plans for the Future



The LABlearning project has produced a very solid basis for media based re-engagement of youth groups at risk of exclusion, drop-out or disengagement.

However, the project has given rise to as many questions and needs as answers.

The LABlearning consortium therefore carried through a collective reflection on what we call Future LAB. These reflections revealed a strong need to further qualify the media lab provisions and at the same time meet the key challenges of Europe 2020's re-thinking learning.

This means that groups of partners will take new media based learning initiatives from 2014 focusing strongly on:

Entrepreneurial learning

Media based learning linking to real-life challenges and producing useful outcomes in collaboration with out-of-school players - creating entrepreneurial mentality.

Gamification of learning

Exploring how media based learning can be linked to and benefit from serious gamification, in particular finding out how gamification can be a driver of re-motivation and re-engagement among disengaged youth.

Community based learning

Media based learning in interaction with people and institutions in the community, linking media projects to interests and needs in the community, for example children or elderly.

Learning linked to labor market

Media based learning interacting directly with relevant labor market players and stakeholders and creating media projects supporting labor market mentality and labor market readiness.

Special attention should be given to one of the well-known obstacles to 21st century learning innovation:

How can 21st century learning link to school curricula?

A major problem in media based learning in formal education is to integrate these creative processes into fixed curricula. How can this be done without inflating the empowerment values of media based learning, and without awaiting 20 years of slow educational change?



We cannot wait for national education systems to change...

6. Contribution to EU policies



The LABlearning contributions to EU policies fall into two sections:

1. What EU policies have LABlearning contributed to?
2. What EU and national policy recommendations have the project produced?

. . . What EU policies have LABlearning contributed to?

LABlearning has been joining forces with similar European initiatives to address the challenges linked to an increasing number of disengaged young people across Europe. These young people are disengaged for many reasons, which is further elaborated in the Guide Collection, but what they have in common is a lack of ability and interest in learning in the traditional school system and by ways of the traditional classroom.

They drop-out, disengage or are simply not learning anything.

The LABlearning project and its outcomes are contributing to the European policy on re-engaging these youth group by way of creative media, innovative didactics and empowermental learning processes.

The long-term objective is to enhance their learning capacity, re-build their interest in learning and education and enable them to manage the increasingly complicated labour markets.

In short: to offer them 21st century competences.

Allow us to short-list the most important LABlearning contributions, not only to the 2007-13 policy goals, but also to Europe 2020:

- › Offering disengaged youth innovative learning opportunities
- › Offering disengaged youth opportunities to re-engage in learning and education, based on positive learning experiences in which they are at the center of the learning activities
- › Offering disengaged youth the opportunity to turn their everyday media entertainment into strong and powerful learning tools

- › Offering disengaged youth the opportunity to work closely with the community and re-install confidence in collaborative activities
- › Offering disengaged youth the opportunity to get a taste of what entrepreneurial mentality can offer, and what taking initiative means
- › Offering disengaged youth the opportunity to be engaged in and sometimes even immersed into what 21st century learning is about, and that they are able to join such learning activities despite negative school experience

Bottom line, LABlearning initiatives are contributing to the long-term inclusion of the increasing number of youth groups pending between negative school achievement, drop-out, unemployment and low paid part-time jobbing.

The fact is, however, that solving the increasing youth “problems” in Europe will take new and reinforced effort at all levels.

This is precisely why the LABlearning project offers strong, precise and direct policy recommendations to national and European policy-makers:



... What EU and national policy recommendations have the project produced?

WHAT WE KNOW

The new generations and their learning and work styles do not fit well with the traditional education system. An increasing mismatch is observed all over Europe. What we sometimes forget is that the traditional education system does not fit well with the new labor markets either.

We know that an increasing number of young people belong to exclusion threatened groups, nowadays called disengaged youth, disadvantaged youth, NEET youth, including drop-outs, early school leavers and young people with poor educational outcomes.

We also know that adjustments to the education system is not enough, it will not work. It has been tried for decades, and there are few results from this adjustment strategy.

This is why we agree with the EU Commission’s “We need to re-think education and learning”.

Furthermore we know that throwing technology at these youth groups will not solve the problem either. The problem is lifestyles, learning styles and mentality, not technology in itself.

And therefore we agree with MIT Media LAB Mitch Resnick's "Access [to technology] is not enough".

Bottom line, we are talking about millions of young people in Europe not being able to contribute to their own lives or to European innovation and growth.

Everybody agrees that Europe cannot accept and afford this.



WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW, - OR DO WE?

... Is what to do about the increasing number of disengaged youth..

At least we are not doing it.

Because, perhaps we do know. Experiments, research and projects along the last two decades point jointly towards: these young people need very different learning opportunities from traditional education. They need what we call 21st century learning and 21st century employment.

Open and explorative media laboratories are examples of 21st century learning with the capacity to re-engage and re-motivate even street youth, normally out of reach to formal education.

So, perhaps we sort of do know. We are just not doing it.

It can be estimated that 95% of educations in Europe are based on traditional industrial parameters and changing in turtle-like ways.

And the increasing budget cuts in education along with the increasing academification of education are not making the change processes easier.

The EU LABlearning project funded by the European Commission and similar initiatives have clearly demonstrated what works for these youth groups, documented in an extensive Guide Collection available from the project website.

The changes in education are urgent. Social reality is pushing forward at exponential speed, while education still discusses what to do at well-organized conferences.



*You see the picture.
The cheetah at high speed, exponentially driving forward...
The turtle, surprised, "what happened?"...
Imagine what will happen in the next scenarios...
Pictures tell more than a thousand words sometimes.*

What is needed is scaling up tremendously changes towards 21st century learning in the formal system and offering rich provisions of 21st century learning, such as open media laboratories, in non-formal after-school settings.

The global Intel Computer Clubhouse Network has for 20 years demonstrated successfully how this can be done - in all sorts of communities and social contexts. In Europe we need to learn from these 20 years of experience, and we need to go beyond after-school provisions and into the formal school system.

While oceans of academics in Europe are discussing learning theory, Intel Computer Clubhouse Network along with initiatives such as the EU LABlearning project have demonstrated in practice that these approaches work for disengaged youth.

We need fewer books and more practice.

The LABlearning project supports the European Commission's *re-thinking learning* mission.

We do that by sending a number of clear messages to policy-makers in the member states and in the Commission.



. . . Policy messages

For national educational policy-makers

We encourage you to speed up 21st century learning in the formal education system, with a special focus on reaching disengaged youth

We encourage you to help schools and colleges in their efforts to make the educational processes more flexible to allow initiatives of 21st century learning and in support of attracting and retaining disengaged youth

We encourage you to launch and fund systematic exploration of what 21st century learning means at different education levels and to sustain the results

We encourage you to help schools and colleges to mainstream the results of learning experiments for disengaged youth funded by the European Commission

We encourage you to fund 21st century learning ambassadors to speed up and support educational change in the different educational sectors, including in support of outreach to disengaged youth

We encourage you to celebrate strong and useful initiatives and to use them as demonstrations to other schools and colleges

We encourage you to support the establishment of non-formal open media laboratories in after-school settings (including evenings and weekends) for disengaged youth to help them build 21st century learning capacity outside the formal education system

Finally we encourage you to work closer with the European Commission in support of the implementation of the re-thinking learning mission



For European educational policy-makers

We encourage you to pursue the re-thinking learning mission and to enforce the practical implementation through the European social and educational programs

We encourage you to make the European funding schemes more flexible towards experimentation and exploration to avoid the loss of freedom degrees as policies and priorities are transformed into Calls and funding procedures

We encourage you to ensure proper funding measures for special programs addressing the urgent needs of disengaged youth to build 21st century learning capacity and motivation- across the traditional sector programs and including formal as well as non-formal approaches

We encourage you to put pressure on the member states to remove obstacles to 21st century learning experimentation in the formal education system and to celebrate such initiatives among schools and colleges

We encourage you to put more focus on practical experimentation accompanied by field research and less focus on traditional academic research

Finally we encourage you to avoid the pressures of the “we must find new things to fund all the time to look modern and up to date” pitfalls: 21st century learning for disengaged youth should include funded experimentation and implementation for several decades; 95% of all European educations are not influenced by 21st century learning

7. Inspiration from the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network



LEARNING BY DESIGNING

Research has shown that people learn best when they are actively engaged in exploring, experimenting, and expressing themselves, not just passively receiving information.

More and more schools are focusing on learning-by-doing, involving students in hands-on activities. Computer Clubhouses follow a similar strategy, but go a step further: members don't simply get their hands on computers, they use computers to design, create, and invent things. It's not just learning-by-doing; it's learning-by-designing.

As Clubhouse members design their own illustrations, animations, robotic constructions, and music compositions, they learn valuable technical skills while also learning about the process of design and invention: how to conceptualize a project, how to make use of the materials available, how to persist and find alternatives when things go wrong, and how to view a project through the eyes of others.



FOLLOWING YOUR INTERESTS

When people care about what they are working on, they are willing to work longer and harder, and they learn more in the process.

Clubhouses provide members with a great deal of choice, so that members can find projects and activities that they really care about. Members choose when to come, when to leave, what to work on, who to work with.

But running a Clubhouse is not simply a matter of letting youth do what they want. Clubhouses need to provide a great deal of support and structure to help youth identify their interests, turn them into meaningful projects, and learn from the experience. Clubhouse structure comes in many forms: the selection of software, the arrangement of furniture, the collections of sample projects, the support materials, the guidance from staff and mentors. The key is to provide choice plus structure, so that members have the freedom to follow their fantasies, but enough support to turn those fantasies into realities.



BUILDING A COMMUNITY

When people think about thinking, they often imagine Rodin's famous sculpture *The Thinker*: a solitary figure, sitting by himself, with his head resting on his hand. But in the past decade, educational researchers have increasingly focused on the importance of social interactions in the ways people think and learn.

Clubhouses are designed to foster the growth of a learning community, in which youth of different ages share ideas and work together on projects, with support from staff and adult mentors. No one is assigned to work on any particular team. Rather, communities emerge over time.

Design teams form informally, coalescing around common interests. Communities are dynamic and flexible, evolving to meet the needs of the project and the interests of the participants.

Through their interactions and collaborations with a diverse community of members, staff, and mentors, Clubhouse members gain new perspectives for thinking about the world around them - and also new ways of understanding themselves.



RESPECT AND TRUST

Communities flourish only if they are built on a foundation of respect and trust, in which people respect one another's ideas, opinions, and values.

At Clubhouses, young people are treated with trust and respect - and are expected to treat others the same way. In many settings, youth are reluctant to try out new ideas, for fear of being judged or even ridiculed. At the Clubhouse, the goal is to create an environment in which participants feel safe to experiment, explore, and innovate. Youth are given the time they need to play out their ideas; it is understood that ideas (and people) need time to develop.

Clubhouse staff and mentors do not simply dole out praise to improve the "self-esteem" of the youth. They treat youth more like colleagues, giving them genuine feedback, and pushing them to consider new possibilities. They are always asking: What could you do next? What other ideas do you have?



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..... [MUCH MORE](http://www.computerclubhouse.org) about the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network on www.computerclubhouse.org



8. Digital gaming in media labs for disengaged youth



. . . Digital gaming in media labs for disengaged youth

ENTERTAINMENT OR HARD FUN?

Traditionally games and learning belong to two different worlds: the classic world of academic education and the wild world of entertainment markets.

This has dramatically changed. Many serious and social games are developed and education is taking an increasing interest in using games to change traditional classroom teaching and to offer youth more engaging learning experiences.

The best serious and social games fit perfectly into the learning principles of media labs: they offer clear missions, step by step training, immediate response, trial and error, social dialogues, teamwork, strategic thinking and often very qualified simulations of real-life - or, link directly to real-life.

And first of all, they offer exciting visual and interactive narratives, totally different from the old text books.

Good serious and social games are not entertainment. They are *hard fun*. They encourage immersive learning, long-term investment of energy, sustained interest and social dialogues.

Good serious and social gaming is therefore a great resource to the media labs, especially media labs for disadvantaged or disengaged youth.

USING DIGITAL GAMES

Of course, serious games might be strictly subject-related: you can learn math or language through digital games, individually or in teams.

But the best digital games for the media labs are games offering youth teams to explore different forms of worlds, such as energy, politics, healthcare, etc. - or games offering research and detective challenges linked to complicated topics, often connected to conflicts, change or dilemmas.

The best serious and social games do not invite the young learner to hide behind the computer or the television or the handheld game device, but offer the youth teams social dialogue with community stakeholders or with other young people through the games' online platforms.

Such digital games can be great resources to the media labs and to project and problem based learning, especially for disengaged young people.

And today, more and more serious games invite the youth teams to contribute to the game, to interact with the gameplay and to take the game world further.

DESIGNING DIGITAL GAMES

The most interesting way to use digital games in the media labs might, though, be to involve the learners in *designing, constructing and producing* serious games - closely linked to the topics in question and to the learning needs of the youth teams.

Of course, this is impossible. Mission impossible!

Not necessarily!

First of all, the media labs are not only inhabited by mentors (the former teachers!), but also by media designers and media professionals.

This means that it is possible to establish projects in which youth teams collaborate, dialogue with and learn from professional game designers, or, perhaps even better, from young game developers in need of training and practice.

Designing digital games takes the young people through all the challenging phases of learning, and it offers young people the opportunity to get deep into the processes, forgetting that learning actually takes place and in more powerful ways than in the old classrooms.

Many disadvantaged, disengaged or drop-out young people have *talents*. These talents might not be recognized in the classroom, but might very well be recognized and unfolded in game design projects.

BEING A DIGITAL GAME

The most dramatic use of digital games is to design the project, the education or the school as a digital game!

You may think: hey, this is too much! Using games is ok, but designing a school as a game...?

In fact they do this in New York City: The *Quest2Learn School* is one of the first schools to explore how digital games can be used to design curricula, learning projects, missions, entire school environments, etc.

Take a look yourself on <http://q2l.org/>

For most people turning your school into a digital game might be too much! Perhaps a strategic perspective...

But what about exploiting the great learning principles in digital games to design a project?

How would you design a four week project for a youth team based on the principles of digital gaming?

If you do that, please let us know! Games go didactic!

9. What we offer



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

The LABlearning consortium offers its services on non-profit basis and always links the media laboratories to 21st century learning.

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LABlearning - appreciated by European youth