



EU Project: visuaLearning

Reference-No: 225773-CP-1-2005-1-DE-GRUNDTVIG-G1

Monitoring Report 5

Reporting partner: Stichting Reflexion, The Netherlands
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Reporting period: 1. May 2007 – 30. September 2007

Introduction:

As described in the project proposal it is planned to write regularly monitoring reports.

The reports should include information on:

- *information about the progress*
- *establishment of local network*
- *development of group discussions with learners*
- *preparation of qualification workshops*
- *development of qualification concept*
- *difficulties and weak points*
- *strategies of problem solving.*

Remark: The frames are adaptable to the length of your answers.

Aspects for Monitoring Report

Progress of project

• activities undertaken during the reporting period

We continued our research on the state of the art concerning visual learning in Education in the Netherlands. A survey report was completed in which the main aspects of the subject area are covered. In general it seems that the visual aspects of learning receive (or attract) little attention in the Dutch educational system.

In the region of South Limburg there was literally no more than one general experts in this field that we could identify, working for both the Arcus College (providing vocational training to 10000 students) and Hogeschool Zuyd (the an academy for higher professional education in South Limburg).

In a small workshop attended by Pascale Veenings and Charlotte Bracké on behalf of Reflexion, this expert and one of his colleagues from the IT department of Arcus College showed the methods and instruments for visual learning as used by the college and Hogeschool Zuyd: the innovative aspects seemed to be limited to the use of certain visualisation software (mind mapping for instance). In other words: the total harvest in terms of educational methodology from this cooperation was a bit poor and certainly disappointing. But a major disappointment was yet to come.

For organising the group discussions and the workshops our cooperation with Arcus College (acting on behalf of Hogeschool Zuyd as well) was crucial: they were able to select a group of teachers in adult education, for whom a workshop on visual learning would be most useful.

For the purpose of being time efficient, we suggested to integrate the group discussion in the workshop, as a kind of preparatory session. And although all this was agreed quite early, it seemed that the coordinator at Arcus-College was having problems in selecting a group of teachers, or to plan the event next to the ongoing teaching activities. Or both. Finally we were told that for teachers at Arcus College and Hogeschool Zuyd such a workshop would lack sufficient relevance and the cooperation for this project was ended from their side ...

A subsequent attempt to invoke the expert's cooperation on a personal basis was rejected by Mr. Vaessen (even when paid), due to a reported lack of time.

Just when we were contacting a Danish expert called David Bloch who works frequently in The Netherlands, an alternative solution was offered by DIE, providing their visual learning expert (Mr. Dirk Stuber) to carry out workshops in The Netherlands. As most people in The Netherlands at least understand the German language pretty well, the fact that Mr. Stuber was not at ease with English would not present a major problem. The date for the first workshop was fixed on the 12th of October 2007, which would enable us to experience this first session just before the final partner meeting.

A rather massive mailing action followed, addressing personally over 200 teachers and coordinators in educational institutes and expert organisations in the region of South Limburg (both Netherlands and Belgium), as well as two vocational education institutes in the middle of the country (Province of Utrecht). The mailing action was supported by an editorial announcement in the regional door to door magazine, reaching an audience of 120.000 people or more. All this resulted within little more than two weeks in a group of 8 participants for the first workshop. The group included 2 experts from the educational support department of the University of Maastricht. They are responsible for providing all university teaching staff with the latest in educational developments.

However, it seems that for a 2nd workshop we could better count on the interest for this work and our project that has been roused at the vocational education institutions from Utrecht (ROC Midden Nederland and ROC Zeist).

- **successful experiences and / or events**

The workshop on visual learning was a fine event; a most suitable and well equipped location was found near the Central Railway Station of Maastricht.

The course content was presented in the German language and most communication took place in German as well, all in all without severe problems.

The mailing action resulted also in a couple of requests of people who could not attend the 1st workshop, but who may want to attend the 2nd workshop.

Thanks to the cooperative attitude of the regional door to door newspaper, the information concerning the project has reached a wide audience in South Limburg.

- **Difficulties and weak points**

The difficulty of joining a running project at a later stage, was perhaps underestimated at the previous reporting occasion, which took place at a time when the cooperation with Arcus College concerning this project was developing in a favourable way. Their withdrawal came as a surprise and indeed a most unpleasant one, all the more as we do not really know their "deepest thoughts", i.e. their motives for backing out.

The fact that the operational period for the project has been prolonged was really helpful.

Another difficulty was caused by the fact that the researcher and Reflexion's internal project coordinator, Mrs Pascale Veenings left the organisation for a full time job at the University of Maastricht. A closely related problem is the absence of advance payments for this project (we use such instalments in all other EU-projects that we participate in or that we coordinate). Instead, costs are reimbursed well after they have been made and after reporting and invoicing. However, under Dutch law personnel cannot be paid later than at the end of each working month and if employers cannot guarantee these salary payments, they are simply not allowed to employ (new) personnel. Reflexion's pre-financing capacity was not sufficient to employ new personnel at that time, which caused delays in the processing of tasks. We would therefore strongly advocate the pre-financing procedure, such as applied (and intended) by the EU-programmes themselves.

- **feedback from others regarding the project**

From the project partners and even more from the project coordination we received support and encouragements during the start of our work (from 31st of January 2007 on). External contacts however showed a very mixed response. The interest in the work field that we encountered at Arcus College was at first promising, but in the end very disappointing. In general we feel that the subject area has a lot to offer to the educational field, precisely because it is fairly new and unknown. On the other hand this may point at a weakness for carrying out such a project in The Netherlands: if a subject is not at the core of general educational interest and developments, it may fail to attract the attention it deserves. A Dutch educational expert wrote about five years ago that the digital portfolio or E-Portfolio was one of the most “sexy” subjects in educational science at that time. Perhaps visual learning is yet not that trendy.

Group discussions with learners

- **Description of target group(s)**

We were preparing the group discussions with Arcus College; they were foreseen for a period right after the summer holiday. After the withdrawal of Arcus College, Reflexion has to set up and organise another setting to make this a successful activity.

- **Results and findings**

For those who attended the workshop in Maastricht, the content of the programme and the way of working clearly was an eye opener. Especially the participants from the Province of Utrecht (both working in the field of literacy education) made clear that providing a workshop in their region would most probably be welcomed by their institutions.

- **Consequences for the workshops and the qualification concept**

The theoretical part of the workshop was valued least, the practical parts were appreciated most and more time could have been devoted to these elements. Implementation of methods in literacy education was triggered and could be stimulated even more by a stronger focus on practical applications, hands on experience, et cetera.

Involvement of experts and establishment of local network

- **With whom did you work together?**

After contacting the University of Amsterdam we placed the emphasis of cooperation efforts to contacts in our neighbouring area: Hogeschool Zuyd in Heerlen/Maastricht (the High School of Professional Education of South Limburg) and Arcus College in Heerlen. See above for further details.

We will shift our attention slightly to the middle part of the country (Provinces of Utrecht and Gelderland), where educational institutions seem to be more eager on extending their knowledge and experience. Relevant contacts have been found in the HCE network of reintegration and training organisations and experts in which Reflexion/Atrium participate.

- **What have you done so far? What are your experiences?**

Our experience is that Visual Learning needs much more focus and attention in The Netherlands as only few people are really familiar with the subject; with some exaggeration we could say that it feels sometimes like we are addressing an underdeveloped country when we promote the project activities.

(This text is identical to the previous report: we are still struggling to get the message across!!)

Dissemination

- **What are your dissemination tools? (e.g. networks, magazines, newsletters...)**

Please refer also to the dissemination activity overview. In general we emphasize dissemination in the European context. At this level we benefit from the large number of European projects in which Atrium and Reflexion participate.

A new element here is the HCE Network of reintegration and training organisations and experts, in which some cooperative contacts for this projects have been established.

Furthermore we were more than happy with the press announcement of the workshop: it is quite extraordinary that a message on a rather sophisticated educational topic is published in a door to door newspaper.

- **What have you done? - Overview of activities in general (in addition: please fill in the specific "dissemination form")**

- a) Desk and field research on visual learning in The Netherlands
- b) Writing and compiling a survey report on visual learning in The Netherlands (completed)
- c) Contacting educational institutions (University of Amsterdam, CESO Maastricht, Hogeschool Zuyd and Arcus College, ROC Midden Nederland, ROC Zeist, HCE Network) to establish a network for project activities
- d) Preparation of workshop programme
- e) Preparation of group discussions, (not carried out yet).

Development of qualification concept

- **First steps**

The development of the qualification concept was carried out with support and input from DIE

- **Country specific aspects or interests**

In The Netherlands visual learning covers a subject area that does not yet attract massive attention, the project should be used to change this situation, but there is no guarantee of success.

- **Open questions**

Preparation and testing of qualification workshop

- **First steps**

The qualification workshop was carried out with support and input from DIE

- **Country specific aspects or interests**

See above

- **Open questions**

- **Further steps**

Second workshop could be planned soon, i.e. half November, preferably in combination with group discussions.

Remarks, questions and / or recommendations

- **Regarding the reporting period**

We would recommend an “enabling” instalment procedure (actually the standard procedure in EU-projects under the EAC programmes), rather than the “rewarding” procedure of payments that are made following actual expenditure.

- **Regarding the further steps**

- **Regarding the cooperation between the partnership**

If more partnership meetings had been scheduled during the second year, this could have been helpful (for Reflexion as the newcomer) to benefit better from experiences and ideas of the other partners.

City / Date: Geleen, The Netherlands / 17th of October 2007

Report compiled by: Joost Thissen, Chairman of Stichting Reflexion