

EAPRIL Cloud 4

Innovation in Education!

Improving Learning & Well-being

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Prelude

“Young people need a wider range of competences than ever before to flourish, in a globalised economy and in increasingly diverse societies. Many will work in jobs that do not yet exist. Many will need advanced linguistic, intercultural and entrepreneurial capacities. Technology will continue to change the world in ways we cannot imagine. Challenges such as climate change will require radical adaptation. In this increasingly complex world, creativity and the ability to continue to learn and to innovate will count as much as, if not more than, specific areas of knowledge liable to become obsolete. Lifelong learning should be the norm.”

EU Commission, Improving Competences for the 21th Century, 2008.

“Finance. Food. Fuel. Water shortage. Resource scarcity. Climate chaos. Mass poverty. Mass migration. Fundamentalism. Terrorism. Financial oligarchies. We have entered an Age of Disruption. Yet the possibility of profound personal, societal, and global renewal has never been more real. Now is our time.

Our moment of disruption deals with death and rebirth. What’s dying is an old civilization and a mindset of maximum “me” – maximum material consumption, bigger is better, and special-interest-group-driven decision-making that has led us into a state of organized irresponsibility, collectively creating results that nobody wants.

What is being born is less clear but in no way less significant. It’s something that we can feel in many places across Planet Earth. This future is not just about fire-fighting and tinkering with the surface of structural change. It’s not just about replacing one mindset that no longer serves us with another. It is a future that requires us to tap into a deeper level of our humanity, of who we really are and who we want to be as a society. It is a future that we can sense, feel, and actualize by shifting the inner place from which we operate. This inner shift, from fighting the old to sensing and presencing an emerging future possibility, is at the core of all deep leadership work today. It’s a shift that requires us to expand our thinking from the head to the heart. It is a shift from an ego-system awareness that cares about the well-being of oneself (or just a few) to an eco-system awareness that cares about the well-being of all, including oneself. When operating with ego-system awareness we are driven by the concerns and intentions of our small ego self. When operating with eco-system awareness, we are driven by the concerns and intentions of our emerging or essential self – that is, by a concern that is informed by the well-being of the whole.” (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013)

Mission statement

In the last decades, we have been experiencing over and over again that we are not very successful in resolving the global 21st century problems. Worse, we continue creating new ones and supporting old ones. Albert Einstein was right: 'we cannot resolve problems with the same thinking that created them'. Scharmer and Kaufer (MIT) paraphrase this quote as 'we cannot solve the current eco-system problems with the ego-system thinking that created them'. We need a wider range of human competences to flourish, and to co-create a world that we do want. Our time urges us to develop the competences to individually and collectively

- act from an eco-system awareness,
- achieve our highest potential as human beings,
- sense and shape our life and future from the emerging future possibilities,
- have access to our best sources of creativity and entrepreneurship, and
- realise our deepest purpose of life.

As our children and youths spend a large part of their childhood in schools, we as teachers, educators, and action researchers are in an excellent position to help them equip themselves with these human core competences

The now-emerging world requires more than improving test scores or adding some new classes to the curriculum. It requires a common will to renew the very foundation of our entire educational system. It requires transformational change so that all individuals get the learning opportunities they need to develop the mentioned human core competencies. This transformation revolves around transforming the relationship between learner and teacher.

Education 4.0 (Scharmer & Kaufer, 2013) gives us a new framework for 21st century education. It results from an eco-system awareness - well-being for all and the whole – and is co-sensing- and co-creating-driven. Learners are co-creators of entrepreneurial centred learning environments in which teachers take the role of conductors and orchestrators of the highest creativity in their students and as midwives allowing and facilitating their students' best future potential to develop.

High impact learning (Dochy, Berghmans, Koenen, & Segers, 2015), Honour education (Wolfensberger, 2012), Understanding the difference (De Jong, 2015), Finish education (Sahlberg, 2011), Waldorf education, and Learning for well-being (Kickbusch, Gordon, & O'Toole, 2012) contain promising elements in this direction.

In this cloud we **aim** at

- sensing and prototyping learning environments facilitating the development of the human core competences along with other important competences in an integrated way,
- studying their impact (on well-being, learning outcomes, learning approaches, social aspects of learning, etc.), qualities, conditions and features through action research, and
- understanding the impact of the relationship between learner and teacher in these learning environments.

Developing the human core competences is a process throughout the whole of childhood and beyond, as it opens the way to lifelong learning. Fostering this development requires an appropriate educational approach in tune with the natural human development in each stage of childhood. Therefore, this cloud needs to address all **education settings** for children, young people, and adult learners, and intends to build an enthusiastic cloud team with sub-teams in early childhood, primary, secondary, and higher education.

Cloud initiator

Prof. Dr. Els Laenens, senior lecturer at the University of Antwerp (department of Mathematics and Computer Science) and vice-chairperson of CNO, Center for continuing professional teacher development, Antwerp School of Education, University of Antwerp.

Current interests: profound innovation in education and its impacts (Laenens E. , Stes, Hofkens, Vandervieren, & Van Petegem, 2016), human core competences, subjective well-being (Laenens E. , Stes, Hofkens, Vandervieren, & Van Petegem, 2016), theory U, action research.

Our action research studies at the University of Antwerp illustrate the positive effects that may result from competence based and student centred learning environments in which students get the opportunity to co-create part of their learning environment. Our results show that these environments yield statistically and practically significant improvements for all scales of our study but one (perceived fit). We find significant increases for the scales Self-regulation, Autonomous motivation, Self-efficacy, Student cohesiveness, Teacher support, Student involvement, Student cooperation, Enjoyment of studying and Academic efficacy. In addition, we note significant decreases for the scales Controlled motivation, Amotivation and Lack of regulation (Laenens E. , Stes, Hofkens, Vandervieren, & Van Petegem, 2016).

Feasibility

“ If you wanted to prevent mankind from accessing these deeper levels of knowing, what would you do? How would you engineer your assault?

Here are five ideas: (1) put your children in front of TVs as often as possible (take out interpersonal contact); (2) encourage them to spend hours quickly reacting to video games (killer games help best to re-enact the violence that they watched earlier on TV); (3) put them in schools where they are victimized by downloading-based teaching methods that prevent them from developing the capacities of the open mind, heart, and will; (4) as soon as the attention deficit syndrome kicks in (which predictably happens as the result of factors 1-3) use drugs and medication to doze them down; this will make sure that the feedback their body gives them against their unhealthy and inhuman environment, will be responded to on a symptoms level so that the root causes can continue to be unaddressed; (5) make sure that educational policies like quantitative testing (no child left behind) and other methods guarantee, for the years to come, that teachers cannot create an environment that allows our children to experience and explore their deeper levels of awareness, creativity and knowing.

*Sadly, these are not just imaginary conditions. They actually describe how we currently prevent our children from connecting to their deeper sources of knowing. **But if this is the way we organise the world for most of our children, we also have the power to change it.**” (Scharmer, Theory U, 2009)*

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