WORKPACKAGE WP1:

OPEN SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

School Environment Reference

Deliverable 1.1.1 and 1.1.2

TODAY'S STORIES

OPEN SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

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Deliverable 1.1.1 and 1.1.2

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Abstract T1.1 Contact & sensitisation	Establish the connections between the consortium personnel and the open school communities at both sites in Denmark and Israel, involving children, educators and parents and the respective education authorities. The work will involve sensitisation, motivation and preparation of the test 'primary users' (children aged between 4-8 years) and other parties involved.
Executive Summary	Marilyn Panayi

Activities

REFERENCE GROUPS

Pedagogic Framework and Technology Environment - Denmark

The Danish site is located on Odense. Odense lies on the island of Funen and is Denmark's third largest city with a population in excess of 180,000 inhabitants. Nr. Broby Skole is located southwest of Odense. Historically a rural community, Nr. Broby is now considered to be within the suburbs of Odense. Nr. Broby Skole is one of the four Grund Skoler in the Broby school district offering education to children aged 6-14 years. It has 140 pupils and a staff pupil ratio of 1:10. Children are grouped in classes by age for most of their school day, subjects are taught on a mixed thematic and non-thematic based curriculum. Thematic curricula are considered important and often involve whole school participation. A recent "art and environment" project resulted in the children's artwork being displayed throughout the district. The key points of the school's pedagogic philosophy have been summarised as follows:

- To promote the activity, curiosity and creativity of the pupils.
- To promote close school-parent collaboration.
- To enable the holistic development of pupils within an assured, safe and welcoming environment and interdisciplinary curriculum.
- To promote a sense of responsibility for pupils through a process of empowerment.
- To encourage the pupils to develop their self-confidence and foster a communitarian attitude.
- To promote excellence within school work

The school has a network of 15 multi-media Macintosh machines (including four power PC's, Macintosh ICII, colour scanner). There are additional stand-alone machine shared between the classrooms. The school has an above national average machine to pupil ratio of 1:10. Administrative and staff machines are connected to the Internet and plans are in place to connect the pupil network. The school has identified staff responsible for IT development and implementation. Tove Husted has been teaching at the school for

12 years and has been active in promoting IT development over the last six years. Ms Husted has been instrumental in contributing to the district IT development plan for beyond 2000 and is an active member of the local IT network started two years ago. There is a core of computer literate staff (1/3). The eldest children are computer literate and have developed a range of multi-media computer skills, typical programmes that are integrated into the curriculum including, KidPix, Claris Works and, more recently, Hyperstudio.

The technology culture promotes easy access to technology. This is reflected in the physical arrangement of the networked machines. The network is centrally located in the main school hall. The space can be booked by members of staff for groups of pupils or accessed by pupils from different classrooms. In addition, pupils can have individual access after-school. There is strong commitment from the school community to participate in the Today's Stories research.

Presentations and discussions have taken place to re-present the current 'Today's Stories' concept, objectives and role of the participating schools, to the whole staff team and the early years classroom teaching team (EYT) that comprises 9 staff. Biographies have being requested from the technical co-ordinator and the EYT. Staff were introduced to the 'Today's Stories' project where the emphasis was our interest in supporting children's reflection of their early experiences and the collaborative development of future appropriate technologies in the context of the local school work. We briefly touched on the potential of the project to also facilitate the reflection of the staff on their work with children. Two points of particular interest from a staff perspective were:

- The potential to use 'media documents' for the staff to reflect on their work practises in a new 'cross-age' working scheme currently being implemented.
- An interesting question raised by one of the staff was the potential for such technology to facilitate reflection/learning of children with learning difficulties.

The research team have introduced themselves to the early year classes and carried out initial observation/*'visitor'* participation sessions.

The introduction shared with children was focused on the fact that we were part of a 'international' team of people interested in how children tell stories, how they think about their lives and how we would work together to find how 'smart machines' and

computer could support this activity. Research team introductory activities included the 'visitors' coming with a 'ladybird' puppet who did not speak any particular language but was vocally very expressive and collect 'very' short stories from the children, to a 'imagineering introduction exercise session' with older children where 'we imagine our homes and all the smart machines in them now, compared with twenty five years ago and what about the next twenty-five years?'

Parent contact has been mediated through the school staff informing parents of the schools participation in the Stories research project. This initial information was disseminated to parents in the March – Mid April1999 parents meetings. The research team has written updates about the work and used the vehicle of the school newsletter.

Members of the consortium from Denmark, Sweden and Belgium were able to visit the school and meet with staff and children during the internal workshop held in Denmark February 18th-19th 1999.

Interactive Session with Children- Denmark

Preliminary Observations

Preliminary observation were made using written notes and ***'photographic, video, audio snapshots'*** .The first of these were taken during the January 1999 - February 1999 observation and introduction sessions. Video and photographic snapshots sessions included e.g.:

- mask-making by the first class,
- spontaneous initial play with video camera by the first class,
- drama exercise base on the reflective theatre work, classes 1-4,
- The 'Whole school event of the year' a production of Aladdin by class 7, and the 'Bazaar', a transformation of the school hall into an interactive theme space. All classes contribute to making physical spaces, props, backdrops and creating the atmosphere.

The first of the periodic ***'video dialogues'*** have been discussed and initial samples have been taken with key staff members as information 'snapshots' and responses.

The first four in the series of these 'video dialogues' were taken in Feb 1999, from staff and children. They are listed below:

- Henning, (one of the early years teachers). He comments on the current work of the students and plans for the Spring/Summer term 1999 (English),
- Headteacher, Ole gives information on the background to the school, it's ethos and pedagogy (Danish),
- Tove Husted, the technology co-ordinator. Dialogues on the history of technology at the school.
- Classroom sample video dialogues have been taken illustrating the 'Community of Enquiry' (COE) activities. These were introduced in the second part of the first year (1999). 'COE' is a pedagogic framework developed for teaching children philosophy that has been adapted for the Stories interactive sessions. Children discuss with staff their reflections of the activities and issues that arise from these sessions.

'Children's Work Samples'

A portfolio of work is being created and collected by staff and the research team of children's work samples e.g. stories in both traditional and digital media, clips of 'video experiences', paper prototyping artefacts, construction prototyping artefacts. Samples of these activities are illustrated on the video.

'*Experimental Probes' (EP)*

The NIS research team introduced the idea of leaving **'experimental probes'** for use by the students and staff. These would have varied aims and functions. The first EP was left in February 1999 was a disposable camera. This was left with the teacher and children of the first class to document the forthcoming preparations for the school 'event of the year' the production of Aladdin and the turning the school hall into a 'Bazaar'. A series of photographs of this event and a school outing were collected. Samples of photographs are kept at school and at the NIS lab.

A second series of 'experimental probes' was launched. This involved providing three web cams, digital video camera and a digital stills camera, Autumn Term, 1999. This probe was introduced in the context of setting up **'Studio'** interactive sessions where children could use video, drama, video theatre to work on their storyboards and narratives and experience becoming filmmakers.

At the NIS lab, a second 'Studio' space has been established where children carry out design and interaction activities, learn to use video, road test educational software and technologies related to the Stories project and have opportunity to dialogue about issues and respond to requests from the consortium research teams. During year 2, 2000, the children will have opportunity to contribute to the creation of an 'Interactive Learning Space' for the future.

Later during the autumn term, the three web cams have been exchanged for an additional digital still camera. The staff is in the process of producing their evaluation and reflective comments. These are expected early in the New Year 2000.

'Digital Community Memory'

The concept of ***'Digital Community Memory'*** was proposed by researchers, during the second half of the first year, 1999. These 'DigiCoMs' will be located on the school web site with restricted access. Permission will be sought for a selection to go on the Stories web site. The first embodiment of these artefacts are the scanned images and selected video clips, some of these have been incorporated into the first 'media document' – ***How do they do that? – Wearable Technology 1.*** The first in a series of video's/CD's has been produced by the Danish site that illustrating interactive session that have been linked to the Stories project. The video shows short clips storytelling, play, drama, 'video theatre', 'children as film-makers' and design activities. A guesstimate of about 90% of the footage and still photographs have been shot by the children, the editing has been done professionally a collaboration between NIS research team and MediaStudioWorkshop at Southern Danish University.

The idea of a physical artefact to compliment any ***'digital spaces'*** i.e. web pages that will be created. Suggestions discussed so far have been e.g. a mural, a sculpture, ceramics, to 'follow and grow' with the development of the Stories project at the school and provide a single, obvious and whole school point/place for 'reflection'. The School co-ordinator will talk with the art teacher at the school. It is envisaged that this artefact

may later be 'digitally enhanced' and perhaps a similar physical artefact created in Israel. This work may become integrated with the trial activities planned for the second year of the project, 2000. Outcomes of these interactions are being documented for a forthcoming journal paper.

Pedagogic Framework and Technology Environment – Israel

Reference group

The two reference school groups have been established in Israel and are located in two suburbs in Tel Aviv. Each school has between 4-500 pupils. The age range is pre-school up to sixth grade. Participation in the Stories project is through two integrated pre-school/first grade groups of about 30 children each at the Ilanot Community School and three first grade classes of about twenty five pupils each in the Ramat-Hahayal Elementary School. In the first school the two experiment groups share a common building separated from the rest of the school, whilst in the second they share a corridor in the main building. Both schools have access to computers and children have lessons in computing. The AOE programme is currently being applied in an experimental framework in these two schools in the Tel Aviv district of Israel, and in the four kindergartens.

An Experimental pluralistic framework

An experimental pluralistic framework for the development of the Today's Stories educational process has been established. The team works in various settings.

- *Creation of a framework for developing the theory and ways of implementing it:*

The way in which the program heads chose to act is the participation of the teachers involved in the program, from the initial thinking and development stages. Over the past year we established two working teams – **"Ilanot" and "Ramat Hehayal"** (total of 7 teachers)– whose objective is to ***maintain joint experiential and thinking processes, and to enable the mutual enrichment and combined development of the program's theoretical and applicatory aspects that derive from one another in a mutual relationship***.

- *Guidance and thinking meetings:*

These were held separately at each school, on a *weekly basis* and for *two hours per meeting, over the past year*. The meetings were attended by members of the program's team from The Center for Futurism in Education (three members) and the teachers' teams. Different guidance processes were "tailored" for each school in accordance with the teachers' needs, existing work methods, and the character of the team. Apart from the meetings, guidance included personal meetings with the teachers for guiding them through the process constructed differently for each of them and their classes. There was also direct work by the instructor with the children in co-operation with the teachers.

- *Principals' meetings:*

These meetings were held at a frequency of between once weekly or once monthly between the program administration from The Center for Futurism in Education and the principals of each of the schools. The subjects discussed were connected with the work at present, future plans, and pedagogic counselling that bind the processes taking place in the framework of the program to more inclusive processes taking place in each school.

- *Extension courses:*

Extension courses in AOE have been offered. These courses have taken place in two forms:

- Concentrated 56-hour summer courses.
- A total of 56-hour course time held on a monthly bases

The courses are supported by and in conjunction with the university team and the Tel Aviv district Center for Initiative and Futurism in Education. They were attended by all the teachers from the various schools involved in the AOE program. Apart from the courses being held in a framework structured for a variety of experiences, development and the acquisition of knowledge and skills, they also constitute a forum for encounter, discussion, participation in experiences, and deep deliberation on pedagogical-theoretical and applicatory issues that arose from the practical experiences of the teachers, the children, and the academic team in its work at the schools.

Experimental activities with Children

Following a period of work with only the teachers, experimental activities with the children were commenced. These were implemented by the teachers and team members from The Center for Futurism in Education. Because of the research-experimental nature of the program, these experiences were used as a basis for the continued development of thinking and practical and theoretical dealing with the questions arising from them. These experiences contained mainly processes of documentation of meaningful events in the child's life followed by reflective dialogs.

Our objectives were to develop

- The wish and the ability to observe and reflect as part of the children's and the educators' way of life.

The work is conducted in groups (usually of five children) or individually (teacher/child). Occasionally, the research team works with the entire class. The material used in the classroom interaction in the first instance has focused on using familiar low-tech techniques of drawing. Throughout the year, the schools have acquired a new supply of video cameras, cameras, and tape recorders. These new tools are beginning to be introduced to support curriculum activities. Further details of the classroom activities and documents that have been used to support the interaction at the school site e.g. AOE, course materials, evaluations can be found in the Pedagogic Road map (D 2.1.1). We have employed low-tech documentation technologies, since the process of the technological equipping of schools has taken longer than expected. This delay led to the fact that this year the project used the technology of paper, drawing, tape-recording and in a limited way, video-recording. Our objective is to examine the influence of hi-tech in the future and mainly the effect of use of the KidsCam on the processes of reflectivity.

Identification of key on-site personnel and participants

Tove Husted is the technology co-ordinator for the Danish School site, Nr. Broby Skole. Ms Husted was the original contact person and has confirmed her continuation with the project in that role. She has facilitated our contact and sensibilisation. Further details about the schools technology IT policy (Danish), ethos and pedagogy (Danish), latest Newsletter, a document for students, parents, friends of the schools (Danish) are contained in, will be uploaded to the BSCW site. In Israel both schools have agreed to continue participation. The teaching team involves seven teachers, one per 30 students and four nursery teachers, a ratio of one per 30 children. Nr. Broby School has agreed to continue participation. The school based project co-ordinator is currently working with the NIS team to identify local school authority personnel and national education authority personnel/departments to be informed about the Stories project and is suggesting an appropriate strategy.

NIS has established a campus and school based 'KidSearcher™' Groups for the Stories project through the NIS laboratory. The purpose of the groups will be to provide both ongoing and rapid feedback on interactive sessions that meet the aims and objective of Stories workpackage activities.

In addition the NIS has began a data base of researchers and others e.g. regional, national and international storytelling associations, bodies with interest in children's reflective process, narrative abilities, technology-in-education, to which information can be disseminated. The potential for an informal network is explored. Complimentary Danish school sites have been identified that may come on board during the later stages of Year Two and Three trials. These included a private sector kindergarten school and private sector school with a more culturally mixed population.

In Israeli Principals at the participating schools, local education authorities and the ministry of education have confirmed their commitment. A fundamental decision regarding the formulation of the project activities in the schools had been to integrate it with the schools' regular activities in order for the children (and schools) to benefit most from the project trials. Therefore, the parents have learned about the project throughout a series of PTA meetings conducted in the beginning of the year in which they learned about the AOE paradigm and the project method. We plan to conduct activities with the parents in the future. Throughout the year, the program's activities were accompanied by intensive formulative evaluation that included participation in the

guidance meetings, constant provision of feedback to the Center for Futurism in Education program team, interviews with teachers and children, an observations.

'Modus Operandi'

During the first year both sites have negotiated and agreed a working relationship with the respective reference groups, a 'Modus Operandi'.

From initial discussions with Tove Husted at Nr, Broby Skole, we have been provided with the existing school documentation that describes the ethos and workings of the school.

Feedback comments from the observational interaction by the UGO team visit included: confirmation by teachers of their interest in taking part in the general development in the school world, most manifest the development within IT. This is regarded as an important part of contemporary development. The contacts with TS, introduced by a computer company, fits well with this planned entry into the electronic world. Compared to the Israeli plans, the expectations at the Danish school are on quite another level. The participation is regarded as a restricted one, reasons for participation definitely not guided by plans to change the existing system of education.

'Modus operandi'

The local research team in Denmark has negotiated and agreed a nine point ***'modus operandi'*** for the Today's Stories project with staff.

i) Members of the research team will conduct initial observation sessions to become familiar with staff, students and school practices.

ii) Staff will work with the NIS team to identify areas of the curriculum that may fit in with the initial project objectives.

iii) Staff will consider the curriculum suggestions made by the NIS team and how these may compliment the schools existing work.

iv) Staff will recommend and discuss specific children or groups that can be involved in the future programme of project specific interactive sessions.

v) Documentation.

Agreement has been reached for typical types of media and process of documentation for the project. These include various *'media documents'.*

Examples agreed to date are**:**

a)*'photographic',*

b)' video, audio snapshots',

c) ***'video dialogues'***

d) 'child work samples'.

The purpose of these documents will be to serve as sample 'snapshot' documentation of progress for the project, evidence of children's progressive activities during the Stories project and as records for the teaching staff.

Agreement has been reached for use of photographic and video material for preliminary observations. These may be used from for research dissemination within the consortium. Use for wider purposes will be negotiated on as needed and request basis. Subsequently permission will be incorporated within schools forthcoming permission for use of material on the school's web site. This may also be used in relation to the project and linked to the consent forms that may finally be adopted. The research team will keep the reference groups informed of dissemination activities. Any compiled information will be shown and discussed with members of the reference groups.

vi) **'Experimental Probes' (EP*)***

The NIS research team introduced the idea of leaving 'experimental probes' for use by the students and staff. These would have varied aims and functions. Typical it would be a type of base-line technology. The technology would be introduced in a limited way and staff, children and researchers will track its use. Samples data from the experimental probes will also be used for documentation. Resources allowing summary data will be collated and a mixture of qualitative and qualitative analysis methods applied e.g. activity, interaction analysis.

vii) Agree and gain consensus on content and extent of ***participant consent forms*** to include schools' usual codes of practice, including an emphasis on health and safety, welfare of the child and use of technology.

Original consent documents are being modified to suit the needs of the local school; the staff suggested a lay description for parents. These have been translated into Danish and are currently being reviewed by staff. Copies of the version and types of consent can be found in the Ethics and co-design deliverable, D4.21. The status of consent is that of a ***'Living document'*** that is periodically reviewed.

Ethics issues have been discussed at the consortium workshop (Feb18-19th, Odense, Denmark,), ongoing discussion will continue with staff, parents and students as appropriate. Research team discussions continue on the BSCW site.

vii) The NIS team has reached a mutual agreement to work within the school's existing practices.

The Israeli team has made the fundamental decision regarding the formulation of the project activities in the schools. The approach is to be one where they begin to integrate it with the schools' regular activities in order for the children (and schools) to benefit most from the project trials. Members of the consortium team visited the Israeli site and continued dialogues regarding pedagogic practise and ethics issues. The structure for the comparison between the Danish and Israeli sites is currently review (December 1999). During the first year of the project two members of the UGO group visited the experiment sites in Denmark (in February'99 and in May '99) and in Israel (in June '99). The visits aimed at comparing the sites; terms of comparison included identifying potential problems areas, new opportunities and to return the information to the research teams. The analysis is based on observation of restricted parts of the direct experiment interventions and on discussions with participants, field-workers, co-ordinators, teachers, principals and, to some extent also children. The aim has been to emphasise differences and similarities in regard to structures and processes between sites, which might influence the project. Reasons for participation by the Israeli school have been indicated as an interest in changing the school situation on an local-national level. The overall aim is to empower individual development in order to promote good, moral and autonomous citizens. The Today's Stories project (TS) is one engagement in line with these general outlines of development. The choice of experiment sites was made in several steps. The choice was guided by the extent to which the schools shared basic

views of education with the Autonomy Oriented Education model (AOE) developed by Dr. Roni Aviram, IL project leader. A review can be found in D4.2.1 Ethics, Privacy.

Finally, the preparation of a first year 'excitation seminar' re-scheduled. A consensus was reached by the consortium that priority should be given to create opportunities for contact between teachers and children in both Denmark and Israel. It was agreed that we should continue dialogue and look for resources to bring perhaps one teacher from Denmark and Israel to a future i3net/Stories event. This activity has now been scheduled for discussion in early January 2000.