



Today's Stories

Task 1.1: Open School Communities

Deliverable D1.1.3

School Environment Reference

September 2001

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Acknowledgements: Children, staff and parents of Nr. Broby School, children and parents of a small group of kids working with the NIS laboratory.

Project ref. no.	29312
Project title	STORIES
Deliverable status	Final
Contractual date of delivery	Originally 14. th August 2001 (T33)
Actual date of delivery	Rescheduled for September 2001
Deliverable number	D1.1.3
Deliverable title	School Environment Reference
Type	Internal Report
Status & version	Final
Number of pages	10
WP contributing to the deliverable	WP1: Open School Communities
WP / Task responsible	T1.1: Contact and Sensibilisation NISLab Partners Involved: UGO, CFE, NIS
Author(s)	Katja Hansen, Yael BarLev, Niels Ole Bernsen
EC Project Officer	Jakub Wejchert
Keywords	School environment, contact and sensibilisation, preparation of test group, primary users (children of 4-8 years), motivation of participants, contact to educators and parents.
Abstract	The project Today's Stories develops an approach to learning for young children (4 to 8) that is aimed at the development of social, communicative and emotional skills in the context of the everyday activities of children. This deliverable is about contact and sensibilisation of the School environments in Denmark and Israel. The collaboration between the consortium personnel and the school communities participating in Today's Stories involves establishing the connections between the consortium personnel and the school community and ensuring that educators, children and their parents are motivated to continue the collaboration and participation in Today's Stories.

CONSORTIUM PARTNERS	
MIP/NIS	Natural Interactive Systems Laboratory, University of Southern Denmark
CFE	Ben-Gurion University of Negev, Center for Futurism in Education, Beer-Sheva, Israel
UGO	University of Gothenburg, Sweden
CTI	Computer Technology Institute, Patras, Greece
LRF	Lambrakis Foundation, Athens, Greece
NCFL	Nordic Center for Research on Toys and Educational Media, Sweden

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WP1: Open School Communities	T1.1: Contact and Sensibilisation	
Partners involved: UGO, MIP, CFE	Total Resources: 9.8 p.m.	Starting date: T24
<u>Objectives:</u> The overall objective is to establish the connections between the consortium personnel and the open school communities in Denmark and Israel, involving children, educators and parents and the respective education authorities. The work involves sensitization, motivation and preparation of the test 'primary users' (children aged between 4-8 years) and other parties involved.		

Introduction

Deliverable D1.1.3 is about the contact and sensibilisation of the School Environments in Denmark and Israel. The purpose of this deliverable is to describe the developments in the relationship between the consortium personnel and the school communities participating in Today's Stories.

The deliverable is structured around five tasks:

A.1: Initialisation meetings, presentation of current Today's Stories concepts and objectives, role of participating school communities and their authorities. Confirm schools and authorities commitment. This activity is repeated at the beginning of each school year.

A.2: Identification of key on-site personnel from the school communities. Confirm staff commitment.

A.3: Identify potential participants from the schools communities. Confirm and document consent to participate.

A.4: Negotiate and agree a modus operandi document, check compatibility with school procedures and state of the art practices.

A.5: Larger scale dissemination activities.

In Denmark the school connected to Today's Stories is called Nr. Broby School. It is a village school situated between Fåborg and Odense on the island of Funen. The school has 17 teachers and 160 pupils divided in nine classes, with classes rating from pre-school class to 7th grade class, which means the children are between 5 and 14 years old. Nr. Broby has approximately 2000 inhabitants, and therefore the school is situated in a local environment with close connections between the teachers and the pupils, and this means very good opportunities to participate in a project like Today's Stories. **Five** teachers have been involved in Today's Stories during the past year. In this project period two classes, a 4th grade class and a pre-school class consisting of children aged 10-11 years and 5-6 years old, have participated in the trials.

In the Israeli site there are 12 experimental groups in all. The age range of the children is 4-7 years old. There are 11 teachers involved in the project and four people in the academic team. All experimental groups are situated in the Tel-Aviv area, and are of a high-mid socio-economic level. The experimental groups include 2 primary schools, and 5 pre-schools as follows:

"Ilanot school" – 5 teachers, 5 groups, children aged 5-. The teachers have participated in the project from the beginning whereas the students have changed.

"Ramat Hachayal" school – 2 teachers, 2 groups, children aged 6-7. The teachers have participated in the project from the beginning whereas the students have changed.

5 pre-school groups – 5 teachers, 5 groups, children aged 4-6. Three of the teachers have participated in the project from the beginning of year 2 and two other teachers joined the project in the beginning of year three.

Patterns of work with the teachers in Israel

Forum workshop – monthly meetings.

In subteams – weekly meetings.

Personally – according to growing needs.

A.1

Initialisation meetings, presentation of current 'Today's Stories concepts and objectives, role of participating school communities and their authorities. Confirm schools and authorities commitment. This activity is repeated at the beginning of each school year.

A.1 .1 Danish Site

During the meetings with the staff at the Danish School Site preliminary presentations and discussions have taken place to present the current Today's Stories concepts, objectives and role of the participating schools to the involved staff at Nr. Broby School. The five teachers directly involved in the project were introduced to the new fieldworker Katja Hansen and together with her the lines for the project at the Danish School Side were drawn. It was emphasised that it is the project's goal to support children's reflection of their early experiences and the collaborative development of future appropriate technologies in the context of the local schoolwork.

There has been a three months period without a local fieldworker. Since Marilyn Panayi left the project the first of September and until 4 December 2000 when Katja Hansen could replace her, there is a gap of three months. In order to find out about the situation in Nr. Broby and to bridge the gap between September and December 2000, the Danish and Swedish teams decided to have a common meeting in the end of October 2000 in Odense including visits to the school in Nr. Broby.

In October 2000 Göran Lassbo paid the NIS-Laboratory a visit. These two days Katja Hansen spent with Göran Lassbo and mainly with the propose of keeping in touch with the school and staff of Nr. Broby. Niels Ole Bernsen participated in the meeting on the first day. This meeting was also meant to work as an introduction of the new project member to the project as well as to the school site. During the first day's meeting we talked with the two teachers involved in the project from the very beginning, the technology co-ordinator for Nr. Broby School, our contact person and the teacher of the 4th grade class. To our delight the school and staff of Nr. Broby School were even more positive than we could have expected. The broken continuity during the fall had not affected their generally positive attitude in any noticeable way.

The idea of expanding the co-operation with the pre-school group came up already during the first year of the project, and was now brought forward by Katja Hansen. The technology co-ordinator very quickly took up the idea and contacted the pre-school teacher. The children of 4th grade class are important to the project as they are prepared for the **trial course**, but they are also a bit old in relation to the planned target group of the project. If the pre-school class of six-year-old children were brought into the project, it would give the project a new perspective.

During the two days we were introduced to and talked to the children of the two classes. First we met with the 4th grade consisting of 10-11 years old children engaged in the project from the very beginning. Thereafter we met with the pre-school class and their teacher who was not at that time formally in the project but took a keen interest to participate with 5-6 years old children. During the meetings with the two classes the fieldworker carried out some exercises aimed at getting to know the children and their names and obtaining a picture of the six years olds' notions of the concept of technology. At that occasion, pictures of the children were taken.

Another outcome of these meetings was that the 4th grade class teachers undertook a more active role in the project. Originally, he preferred a model like the previous one introduced by Marilyn Panayi by "lending" his class to the project's fieldworker. However, the 4th grade class teacher changed his mind and agreed to accept a more active role in the preparation and follow up of trial sessions, as long as the new role did not include any unacceptable new workload. From the project's point of view this was a very important offer, since the project now changed from a preparatory stage into a more applied one.

Members of the consortium from Denmark, Sweden and Belgium visited the school and meet with teachers and children during the plenary-meeting held end of March 2001. During this plenary we also had a demonstration of the technology for the project partners at NISLab with the parts ready for use. Other topics on the agenda were: updating of technology/interface, field tests and observation methodology, planning of activities, and the i3 ESE publication.

I seem to be missing the mention of a whole series of trials with both school classes?

In the middle of April Maria Ramalho visited NISLab to help solve some problems in integrating and installing the technology and make the system work. She worked intensively with Bent Nygaard (responsible for the system at NISLab). On the second day they made the system work and in the afternoon we had a test trial with the Lab2group, consisting of two children. They were very interested in the project and highly motivated for the small games prepared for the occasion.

On 19 April the group of four (Maria Ramalho, Bent Nygaard, Mia Casparij and Katja Hansen) went to the school in Nr. Broby and had the first trial with the 4th grade class. The trial session was a great success: the children were very motivated, and the technology worked fine. This trial was focused on the use of Today's Stories technology, and the trial consisted of a game to get to know the names of the children, and two other games. In one of the games the children were asked in turn to tell part of a story while three of the children were appointed photographers and made recordings with the KidsCams. The other game was a guessing game in which the children had to move around each other in the class. The purpose of the game was to let the children play with the KidsCams in a situation **where the children move around among each other.**

In the beginning of June 2001 an evaluation and planning meeting took place with visits from UGO (Göran Lassbo and Dennis Beach). We had a meeting at NISLab including an introduction to the technology. Bent Nygaard took part in the introduction of the technology and gave his point of view to the status of the project regarding the technology. Göran Lassbo and Katja Hansen had a meeting at the school in Nr. Broby with the teachers of the 4th grade class followed by a trial with their class. The subject of this trial was to let the children make their evaluation of the course of trials they had had during the project. After this visit Göran Lassbo had another meeting with Katja Hansen about the status of the project and planning matters.

At the end of June there was an evaluation meeting with the teacher of the pre-school class. It was concluded that the trial period with the pre-school class would not be continued. Several points lead to this conclusion. Firstly, there are 20 pupils in the pre-school class and this has a big influence on the possibilities to complete a trial. Secondly, and this is the crucial point, the teacher estimated that the children are not ready to take part in the process required by Today's Stories, which demand considerable technical skills. The teacher expressed the opinion that she was convinced the children cannot profit of the technology until they are about eight years old.

At the end of August 2001 there was a planning meeting at NISLab to plan the course of trials in the autumn with the 4th grade class at Nr. Broby School. There was participation from UGO, represented by Göran Lassbo, KidsLab, represented by Melina McKim, and from NISLab Niels Ole Bernsen and Katja Hansen participated. In the morning we had a very constructive brainstorming during which a lot of ideas and perspectives for the contents of the trials were discussed. It was decided to focus on more goal-directed pedagogical activities: developing skills in reflection and self-reflection.

There was a tele-conference in the afternoon with participation of the following partners: LieseLotte Van Leuven, Rossella Magli and Yael Bar Lev. At this tele-conference the partners were introduced to the ideas generated at the morning meeting. It was decided that the last phase of the project should focus mainly on the trials with KidsCam and Magic Mirror in the school context rather than (re-) introducing commercial technology developed outside to the project. Further, it was agreed that there

should be a Lab trial at NISLab before planning the second part of the trials in Nr. Broby for this autumn. A tele-conference would be set up to discuss the report written on the Lab trial.

Picture of a trial scenario with three children using KidsCam

Picture

Later in the afternoon, the teacher of the 4th grade class came to NISLab to attend the planning meeting and give his comments on the ideas and perspectives in the planned trials. The teacher gave us a short briefing on the atmosphere and feelings among the children of his class, and they were very positive. He told us what the children found interesting and the favourite activity among the children was the production of a small video they made with Marilyn. This information convinced us that the choice of the video production idea was the right one, and we decided to let this be the main theme for the autumn trials. The teacher of the 4th grade class agreed with the proposal to focus on usability in relation to specific goal-directed pedagogical activities.

A.1. 2 Israeli Site

All 11 experimental groups from the year before have continued their involvement in the project in its third and last year.

A.1.2.1 November

One-day seminar for invited participants only (people from academia, both disciplines of education and technology, and people from the ministry of education in Israel). On this day the project was introduced to the guests as constituting a representative project for the key issue of the day, which was the complex relations between human values and the development of technology in western society, and the conflicts in the field of education relevant to this focus.

A project partners' meeting was planned in Israel in this month together with a first school trial with the new technology prototypes. Preparations with the schools were made but, unfortunately, the plan was cancelled due to the political situation in Israel at that time.

Schools experimentation: all experimental groups from the year before chose to continue their involvement in the project in its 3rd year. The meetings with the school staff in this month had focused on the establishment of an organisational framework for the coming year, i.e. the pattern of meetings between teachers and the academic team, the pattern of inter-schools meetings, and the pattern of action with the children. A different and specific pattern was established for each experimental group with sensitivity to its specific educational context and everyday constraints.

During this period, also the pedagogic focus of the 3rd year was discussed and agreed, and was translated from abstract definitions into practical work definitions to be developed and implemented during the year. Focus for all experimental groups was agreed to be 'the development of meaningfulness', which was translated into two areas: the development of personal interests and the development of reflective skills.

A.1.2.2 December

Schools experimentation: after the phase described above was completed, weekly meetings were held with each team focusing on planning the specific focus of the team within the common focus, and an actual framework for each site was planned.

Forum meetings: first forum meeting of the 3rd year. All teachers and the academic team participated. In the forum meetings common issues were discussed and presented, like the desired features of the

project's technology, the progress in technological development, pedagogical principles of the AOE theory, and their implementation in schools.

A.1.2.3 January – May

Schools experimentation: actual work was produced in schools. Weekly meetings of the academic team and the teachers were carried out, in which analysing of activities with children and further planning was discussed, and theoretic material were studied together.

There was a question in this period whether to experiment with alternative technologies or wait for the project's prototype to be ready. We decided to wait for the prototype and meanwhile to use low tech as will be described in detail in the third year pedagogic deliverable, due month 36.

A.2

Identification of key on-site personnel from the school communities. Confirm staff commitment.

A.2.1 Danish Site

In December 2000, Bent Nygaard and Katja Hansen had a meeting with the technology co-ordinator who was the original contact person at the Nr. Broby School. On this occasion, she confirmed her continuation with the project in that role for the rest of the project. She has done a fine job by facilitating our contact and sensibilisation with the school environment.

The purpose of this meeting was to clear up installation-possibilities and determine what kind of computer to buy for the use of the technology of Today's Stories. When Göran Lassbo visited the Danish School Site in October 2000, he proposed to offer the school in Nr. Broby a modern laptop computer as an appreciation of their efforts as participants in Today's Stories. It was later decided at NISLab to offer Nr. Broby School the computer used for the project as an appreciation of their efforts as participants of Today's Stories.

In January 2001 NISLab was invited with CFE for a Technical seminar at Starlab in Bruxelles. The aim of this visit was an introduction to, and demonstration of, the technology of the project. Bent Nygaard and Katja Hansen represented the NISLab team. To keep up the interest on a management support level, it was suggested that the technology co-ordinator of Nr. Broby School should become more closely involved in the project planning structure. One way to achieve this would be to invite her to the technical seminar at Starlab in Bruxelles along with the NISLab team. Therefore, Tove Husted was invited as a representative of the school in Nr. Broby and she took part in the seminar as a special guest. On this occasion, scenarios and pedagogical issues were also discussed.

In January 2001 the teacher of the pre-school class in Nr. Broby was invited to a meeting at NISLab. Katja Hansen introduced her to Today's Stories, and she agreed to take part in the project with her pre-school class children. From the project's point of view we consider it very important at an early stage to turn the pre-school teacher into an active partner in the project.

There was a meeting in mid-February 2001 to inform the parents of the pre-school children about Today's Stories. The second purpose of the meeting was to get the parents' acceptance that their children could participate in the trial sessions due to begin in March. Together with the invitation to the meeting the parents of the pre-school class children received a paper with general information about the technology of Today's Stories.

In February 2001 there a meeting was held between Ilse Hakvoort (UGO) and Katja Hansen (NISLab). The meeting was held to determine the pedagogical lines for the trial scenarios of Today's Stories in Denmark due to take off in the beginning of April. Ilse Hakvoort and Katja Hansen discussed the fact that the technology was not fully functional for the school yet and what this would mean regarding the project plenary in March. Both agreed that a school visit during the plenary would only be advisable if the technology would be functional. We felt a responsibility not to organise a new trial session (after the session in the beginning of May 2000) as long as the

technology may risk not be used. Besides our concern for the teacher and the children, it was also mentioned that there has been a break for the children regarding the activities within Today's Stories from June 2000 onwards. The teacher of the 4th grade class at Nr. Broby School took part in the last part of the meeting in the afternoon.

A.2.2. Israeli Site

A sub-team from each school was chosen and also actively chose to become involved in the project, and to become involved in its organisational and pedagogic framework. The same teachers were involved in the 2nd and 3rd year of the project. In the first year only part of the current group was involved. Some of the teachers also initiated presentations of the project to their colleges in their school or in the whole region.

The manager of the project kept ongoing relations with the important figures in the ministry of education, responsible for the experimental schools of the project. Visits were organised for those people in the different schools.

A.3

Identify potential participants from the schools communities. Confirm and document consent to participate.

A.3.1 Danish Site

NR. Broby School has agreed to continue its participation in Today's Stories. The technology coordinator at Nr. Broby School, Tove Husted, is working with the NISLab team to identify local school personnel and national education authority personnel/departments to be informed about the Stories project and has suggested an appropriate strategy. **The strategi is to continue the close co-operation between the teachers of Nr. Broby School involved in Today's Stories and the project partners.**

Katja Hansen has contacted parents from Marilyn Panayi's "KidSeacher" group to ask if they were interested to continue the work in the group. The parents did not want their children to continue, and therefore the new fieldworker established a new group called the Lab2group consisting of two children aged 5 and 7 years old.

The purpose of the new group was to provide both ongoing and rapid feedback on interactive sessions that meet the aims and objectives of Stories workpackage activities. The children in the Lab2group have tested existing wearable toys/technologies and made reflections on the videos they captured, and provided comments on children's software. The test trials with the new Lab2group took place in the middle of March 2001.

In addition, NISLab is:

- identifying researchers and others, e.g. regional and national storytelling associations, with interest in children's reflective processes, narrative abilities, and technology in education, to which information can be disseminated. The potential for an informal network is being explored.
- identifying potentially complementary Danish School Sites that may be interested in future involvement with the project such as limited evaluation of the **future (slettes)** technology by being developed **???**, e.g. a private sector school with a more culturally mixed population.

Results of these search activities?

A.3.2 Israeli Site

Participation from the schools communities:

Parents: parents played an active role in some of the schools: presenting their own field of interest to the children through hands-on workshops, carrying out projects together with their own children, etc.

Ministry of education: right from the beginning of the project, the relevant people were involved and strongly supported the process of experimentation in schools. As a consequence of the good relations established with the ministry of education's institutions during the project period, they might be interested in funding a continuation of the project in some of the schools, after the end of EC funding.

Academic colleges: this kind of partnership contributed to the project a wider academic discussion on concepts such as the development of personal autonomy, self fulfillment in an educational environment, what does that mean: a meaningful life, and what is role of reflectivity in this context.

A.4

Negotiate and agree a modus operandi document, check compatibility with school procedures and state of the art practices.

A.4.1 Danish Site

The existing *modus operandi* agreed upon with Tove Husted at the very beginning of the project has given direction to the work in Today's Stories. We have also been provided with the existing school documentation which describes the ethos and working of the school. In addition, we have agreed to:

- i) the current *modus operandi* that the project staff work together with the teachers through initial observation sessions in order to become familiar with staff, pupils and school practices;
- ii) staff to work with the NISLab 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 NISLab team, and how these may complement the school's ongoing work.

Hvor bliver i'erne af?

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

Agreement has been reached for use of photographic and video material from the school to be used for local dissemination and initially for the web site. Subsequently, permission will be incorporated within the school's 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 will finally be adopted.

Documentation. Agreement has been reached for typical types of media and the process of documentation of the project. These include various '*media documents*'. Examples agreed to date are: '*photographic, video, audio snapshots*', '*video dialogues*' '*child work samples*'. These documents will serve as types of 'snapshot' documentation for the project and as a record for the teaching staff.

The first '*photographic, video, audio snapshots*' had been taken during January and February 1999, and Marilyn Panayi's visits to the school continued until she left in September 2000. Katja Hansen started new visits to the school and in the first meeting on 30-31 October new photographs of the children were made. The trials carried out in the spring of 2001 included video and photographic snapshots with activities of:

Small games to get to know the names of the children.

Memory exercise based on the game "Dinner with the Royal Family".

Finding the Thimble: The children had to find a little thimble hidden by the fieldworker.

Telling stories and winding yarn: the children had to contribute to a home-made story winding a ball of yarn simultaneously.

Giving a little speech about a word or thing in front of the other children.

vii) '*Experimental Probes*' (EP) the NISLab research team introduced the idea of leaving 'experimental probes' for use by pupils and staff. These would have various aims and functions. The first EP left in February 1999 was a disposable camera. This was left with the teacher and children of the 1st class to document the forthcoming preparations for the school 'event of the year, a production

of Aladdin turning the school hall into a 'Bazaar'. This was a great success and NISLab has made a second digital camera available at Nr. Broby School for Today's Stories and other activities.

viii) agree and gain consensus on content and extent of *participant consent forms* including the school's usual codes of practice, such as emphasis on health and safety, welfare of the child and use of technology.

Ethics issues have been discussed at meetings in Denmark (15 February, 6-7 June and 29 August 2001). Discussions will continue with staff, parents and students as appropriate.

A.4.2 Israeli Site

The third year continued according to the plans established during the second year.

A.5

Larger scale dissemination activities

A.5.1 Danish Site

Dissemination: the NISLab team is currently identifying potential academic and lay publications that may accept papers/articles based on the interactive methodology being developed to support the technological development, e.g. the ACM series, Technology-in-Education, and regional, national and international education practitioners' publications.

The following articles were published in the period November 2000–August 2001:

Fremtidens hverdag, Jyllandsposten, 26 November 2000.

Børn lægger brikker til historier, Jyllandsposten, 26 November 2000.

Skoledagen bliver til film, Jyllandsposten, 26 November 2000.

It was decided in a tele-conference on 29 August 2001 to produce two videos, one in Israel and one in Denmark presenting the work in the school environment and with focus on the trials. KidsLab will also produce a video with the material they have collected during the work on Today's Stories and activities related to the project.

Picture from trial scenario using Diary Composer

Picture

A.5.2 Israeli Site

The Israeli site is writing 6 articles to be published in the coming year, all of which are outcomes of the three years of experience in the project.