



Lifelong Learning Programme

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Background

The „Media Playing Communities“ project aims to examine how children, families, and early years practitioners can extend levels of media literacy within their communities, by exploring how media can form an active part of a play environment.

Funded through the European Union's Lifelong Learning Programme, the project involves families, pre-school children, early years practitioners and community organisations from Austria, Germany, Denmark, Romania, Italy, Spain, Hungary and the UK. These groups will develop media playing activities locally and exchange their ideas during and (hopefully) long after the project.

There are two participants from Denmark. This is the Multimedia-team of the Social and Health College in Aarhus and of the Knowledge Centre for ICT and Learning (KCIL) from University College UCC, Copenhagen.

For further information visit the project website:

www.mediaplaying.net

and have a look at the Danish website:

www.mediaplaying.eu

The kindergarten is online!

A Danish story about community networking



To use the Internet to communicate with the surroundings – or to communicate with them back in the kindergarten!

One among many questions we were asked when we presented the mPc project around in Europe was, why children should be saddled with computers and other new technology in the kindergarten when the kindergarten could be the place where the children should be able to have an old fashioned childhood.

In the project we are playing with photographing, sounds, video and computers etc. together with the children and we are trying out new ways to do media play. And one of these new ways is to use the Internet.

Kindergarten children around Europe are already on the Internet even though most kindergarten teachers think they shouldn't. They use the computer together with their elder brothers and sisters, playing different games on the Internet or look at small movies places like YouTube.

The next question we will be asked will then be, why the children shall be taught to use the Internet in the kindergarten, when there are that many dangers the children can't see through. And the answer must be:

Therefore!

In this guide we will do a beginning presentation of how to use the Internet as a pedagogical tool in the kindergarten. Either to communicate with other kindergartens, parents, the children back home in the kindergarten when some of the children are on an excursion – or to use the Internet to be able to look at something going on somewhere and looking at it somewhere else at the same time.

On the Danish part of the mPc website there are both inspirations and instructions (in Danish and in English) you can use, if you want to start doing media play on the Internet in your kindergarten. You will find more information on this page: www.mediaplaying.eu

Present the kindergarten to the surroundings

If your kindergarten does not have an official website or if you do not have the access to put up material on this website in an easy way, you can use blogs together with the children, to show parents, grandparents etc. what you are doing in your kindergarten.

Using the Internet to present what the children do in everyday life in the kindergarten, the distance between what's going on in the kindergarten and what's going on at home will be minor. Because the child can show pictures from the activities in the kindergarten to the parents, when they talk about what happened in the kindergarten on a certain day.

By using blogs the teacher has an easy and fast access to put material on the web

together with the children. She goes to the website with the blog, logs in and then she will be able to put in material on the blog in the editor with few tools as to bold the text, make hyperlinks, put in pictures or video clips or attaching other files.

Do stories together by using the Internet

To communicate on the Internet is more than to spread text. By using picture-sharing services like Flickr¹ etc. the children in different kindergartens can exchange pictures. In this project we have experimented with letting a group of children in a Danish kindergarten take some pictures, manipulate them and put the pictures in a row to compose new stories from the pictures². The kindergarten teachers then wrote down the stories in a text editor.

The children also drew pictures about something that happened in the kindergarten e.g. about the Christmas and Easter traditions, put them on the Internet, and then the children learned about the traditions in the other countries. Here is a picture from an Austrian girl, Vici, telling about the Easter traditions in her kindergarten.

¹ <http://www.flickr.com>

² To be inspired on how to help children to compose good stories, I will recommend Rodari, Gianni; The Grammar of Fantasy: An Introduction to the Art of Inventing Stories

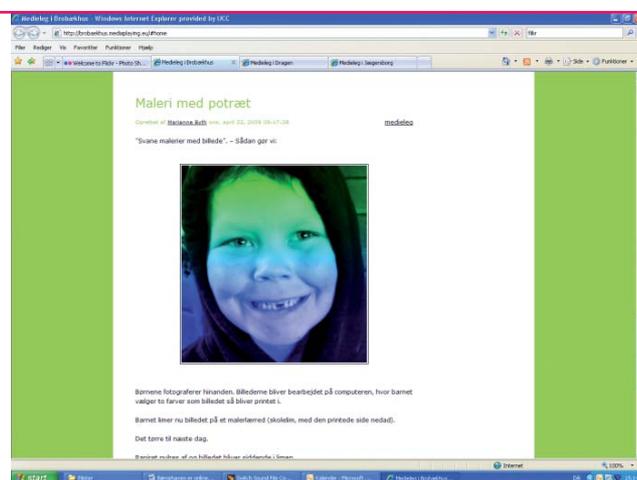


“Easterbunny has brought 12 eggs for you... Can you find them? Easter rabbit is also hidden on the picture, but you can only see 1 ear. Happy easter holidays and have fun – all the best from Vici (I'm 6 years old and attend 1st class primary school...)”

The bird in the nesting box

In the kindergarten Brobækhus in Gentofte they have bought a wireless webcam to set in a nesting box, so on the computer screen the children in the kindergarten can follow a pair of birds brooding egg, and later see the birds feeding the nestlings. When first time looking at the screen seeing the birds, it can be difficult for the youngest children to understand that what they see on the screen, is what's going on outside the house in the nesting box.

By following the progress from egg to birds in the nesting box, the children learn about nature, but the children also learn



To the left you can see the editor box in a blog, where a boy from Gentofte has put his manipulated picture to show how they are doing what we call the “sampling picture-painting” technique, where the children glue the picture together with a canvas (put the glue on the motive), and after a day or two gently remove the paper with water. Then the motive is on the canvas ready to be edited with brush and paint. To the right you can see the final webpage.



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about how video is a picture of reality. Another way of playing with the webcam is to stream video live³ to your own computer. When you stream video live, there will be a delay of the picture on the screen. A play can be to see, when you are moving e.g. the arm, there will pass a couple of seconds before you see it on the screen. It is fun to look at.

Online Video Streaming between two kindergartens

Bambuser is a free Internet service where you can stream video live on a homepage directly from a webcam or from a mobile phone. If you use Bambuser you can choose to look at it on the Bambuser website⁴ or you can show it on your own

³ To stream video live means that you broadcast video to the Internet, and people can see it on a webpage at the same time.

⁴ <http://www.bambuser.com>

website using the embed command, the same way as you can show videos from e.g. YouTube at your web page.

The quality of the video you can send to Bambuser depends, of course, on the quality of the camera you use, on the upload speed on your Internet connection and finally on how many users are uploading to Bambuser at the same time.

To use Bambuser to stream live video is still pioneering, and at this time you can't be sure to send live TV in high quality on the Internet using a free service. In our experimenting with live video broadcasting using Bambuser, we have sometimes broadcasted in high quality and other times we could be glad just to be able to see each other.

Instead of using Bambuser to broadcast between two kindergartens, you could also use Microsoft Messenger or Skype, which

both offer live video communication, but there are more than one advantages by using Bambuser or similar services. As described above, by using Bambuser you can put the video broadcast on a web site, which means that you can transmit to many computers at the same time, whereas Messenger and Skype are built to communicate between two computers. In Bambuser it is very easy to let the picture fill the whole screen, so several children can look at the screen at the same time. And finally Bambuser saves the transmissions automatically, so you can watch them again later.

In the mPc project two mobility meetings were held simultaneously in respectively Cawsand, Plymouth, and in Gentofte, Copenhagen. Children, parents and kindergarten teachers from England, Germany and Austria participated in a



Children, parents and kindergarten teachers from England, Germany and Austria participate in a meeting in Cawsand while children, parents and kindergarten teachers from Denmark, Spain, Italy, Hungary and Romania participate in a meeting in Gentoftø.

meeting in Cawsand while children, parents and kindergarten teachers from Denmark, Spain, Italy, Hungary and Romania participated in a meeting in Gentoftø. That means that the participants in the mPc project were gathered in two different places with a large physical distance, but at the same time.

During this meeting we were able to transmit the entertainments at the official welcome in Gentoftø, where we sang the same song in different languages, to the participants in Cawsand by using Bambuser. Later the children could show some of the products from their two days'

media playing activities.

You can read more about our experimentation with video broadcasts in kindergartens on the Danish part of our website (both in Danish and in English): <http://mediaplaying.eu/mpc-tv/>

Finally the second half of the headline was "or to communicate with them back in the kindergarten!". It is going to be more common to have mobile Internet connections, and with this on a laptop it is no longer possible only to broadcast from the kindergarten to the surroundings. It will also be possible to broadcast home to the kindergarten from an excursion.

Masthead

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