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Open Schooling in the Netherlands

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Abstract

Here in the Netherlands the main idea about education has been to lock students up in schools and feed them with a lot of information. This has proven to be good method for achieving good exam results, however, students are lacking experience with society. That is why more and more schools are trying to become an open school – a school which seeks connection with the society. There are a lot of ways for schools to interact with society, in this case we will be looking at how two schools, one primary (De Verwondering in Monnickendam) and one secondary (Pieter Groen College in Katwijk), do just that.

Keywords: Ownership , Societal learning

Introduction

Primary education: vocation week

During this week parents are invited into the school to show the children what they do at work. Each year a wide variety of jobs is represented at the vocation week, think about: electronics, woodworking or even drone flying. The goal of this project is to take society into the school; however, this is not always possible. That's why some activities during the vocation week are outside the school. Parents will then take groups with them to real life settings.

By this vocation week children are shown what all the formal learning adds up to. The results are astonishing because the children become aware what is possible and show their skills in different ways. Parents have the opportunity to act as professionals and not as parent.

Secondary education: BOSS!

During this project the first-year students will raise money for a charity. In this project this main goal is divided into five 'steps'. In the first step students will have to choose the charity they want to commit to. In order to help them choose there's a charity market in the auditorium. The students can go past all the charity and gain information. Step two is to get creative, in this step students are offered creative workshops. Step three is to write a business plan. In this step the students combine the information of step one and two and turn it into a plan. The fourth step is to raise the money, students will have approximately two months to do this. Step 5: At an exchange in the auditorium students present what they've done to fellow students, teachers, parents, the charities and other interested. At the end of the exchange the money will be handed over to the charities.

Through this project students learn about the importance of the work of various charities. They are also introduced to the very basic steps of starting a company. And above all they have learned how to commit to a good cause. The main idea behind this project to determine which students have skills, often built on a passion, that they have, but that are not required in our school system. Pieter Groen has developed an entrepreneurial environment in which students from all ages have the opportunity to create things, start enterprises, create ownership that replaces lessons. The students have the possibility to skip classes and plan their study themselves and develop in a way they would like to. The only rule is that they keep up with their classmates and write tests as planned.

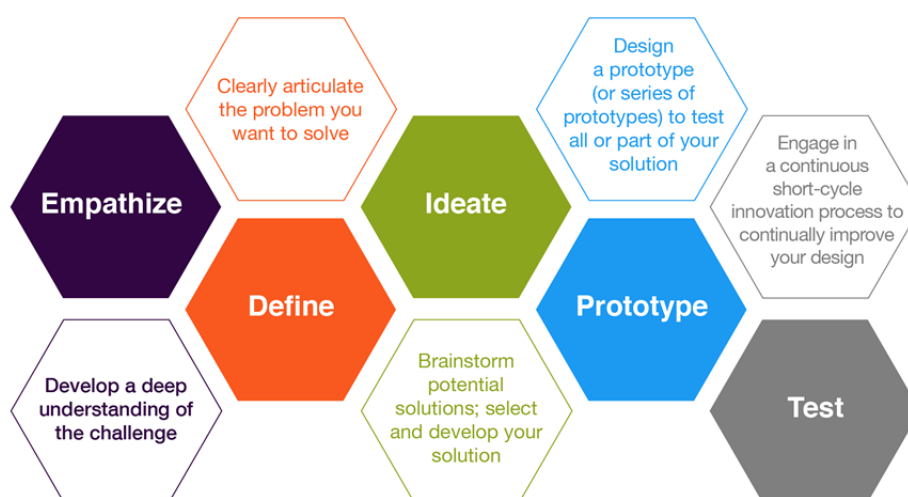
Katwijk meets the world

During this project students will have to dive into a foreign culture and get to know everything about it. At the end of the project the students present their findings by decorating a classroom. When all rooms have been decorated parents, family and others interested can come in to see the differently themed rooms.

The main purpose is to create global awareness and ownership. It brings students together based on the interests for a foreign country

Design thinking and masterpiece

Design thinking is taking a problem and turning it into a solution. Students spend one day going through the design cycle shown below. They are encouraged to take local problems and come up with a creative solution for it. In the process they are guided by one of the most important banking institutes in the Netherlands (the Rabobank). One of the social goals this bank has is to help educational institutes create social awareness among youngsters. The social partners in this project are interested in the outcome and help to carry out the ideas.



<https://citl.illinois.edu/paradigms/design-thinking>

In the final year at secondary school students must make a masterpiece, in this masterpiece students have to solve a problem based on research. This masterpiece combines the knowledge the students have learned with the skills they have developed. Doing the masterpiece requires each student to spend 80 hours or more. The main goal is based on two ideas: first of all the school wants the students to show their knowledge and skills after being at school for at least 5 years. And secondly is this the opportunity to cooperate with the community based on real life issues and help finding solutions to the issues.

Conclusions

Both projects show the eagerness of schools to find a balance between teaching knowledge and skills and give purpose to the education. One of the best things to create is ownership and give perspective to the goals of education. The best way to do that is to connect with the world "outside the school". By doing these projects students get a better picture of how society works, what the challenges of society are and how they can cope with these challenges. By providing these projects students are better prepared for life after school.

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