

The European School Leadership Network

It began in Stavanger, integrated in the 9th Biannual Conference in the year 2004. The **European School Leadership Network started.**

The European School Leadership Network project is supported by the European Commission under the Socrates Minerva Program for the promotion of Open and Distance Learning - Information and Communication Technologies in the Field of Education.

The course is being developed and supported by the project consortium, led by the European Schoolnet together with six other partners including several universities at the forefront of School Leadership development and training, the European School Heads Association (ESHA) and one national association (the Netherlands) for School leaders in Europe and a government agency for school development (the Centre for Educational Leadership - University of Manchester, University of Cyprus, Dutch Secondary Heads Association (Schoolmanagers_VO), the Swedish Agency for School Improvement and the Hungarian-Netherlands School of Educational Management).

The course is now in the responsibility the European School Heads Association (ESHA). The countries represented in the consortium are Belgium, Cyprus, Hungary, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK, France and Germany.

Among this team of experts involved in the course are the internationally renowned Professors John West Burnham - University of Manchester, the author of the modules and Professor Petros Pashiardis - University of Cyprus as the evaluator.

ESLN is

- an English medium continuing education.
- It is an on-line course in combination with three conferences, where all course participants and the course leaders come together.

The results intended have been

- a basic understanding of the topic matter of the course.
- an understanding of common interests and differences between the challenges and goals of different school systems in Europe, and
- contacts and relationship among participants.

All three points made the conference an absolutely essential element of the otherwise on-line working course.

The course consists of three modules

Module 1.

The Moral Dimensions of Educational Leadership in Europe

Module 2.

Professional Development from a European perspective

Module 3.

The Leadership of Change in an Emerging Europe

Module 1. - The Moral Dimensions of Educational Leadership

- It will work from the premise that leadership is, fundamentally, a moral activity and that school leadership in Europe may have specific moral dimensions. In most education systems the ethical dimension is 'taken-for granted', it reflects a national hegemony. The course will seek to promote a debate to test what moral systems are appropriate to education in Europe in the 21st Century.

Education is about values - to educate a person is to seek to develop their full human potential. As well as academic success, all schools seek to develop social (and so moral) understanding and behaviour. For many years, this aspect of the work of educators could be "taken for granted" - ethical principles can be assumed. Today, morality in society is often a contested topic, there is no clear consensus.

Therefore, there are issues for educational leaders in understanding that their leadership will have a significant impact on the moral dimension of schooling; not just in what they 'preach' but also in what they practice.

This module is written on the assumption that education is primarily a moral activity and therefore, educational leadership has a moral dimension.

Module 2 - Professional Development from a European Perspective

If we agree that education is primarily based on moral criteria and that educational leadership has a moral dimension then the second module provides the participants of the course with basic information about professional learning and development. Having experienced this, we can state with assurance and fact: in Europe the professional development of teachers and school leaders varies enormously across the educational systems of Europe. It is one of the areas where there is the greatest level of distinctiveness and variation.

This module provides the participants with a model of effective continuing professional development.

Module 3 - The Leadership of Change in an Emerging Europe

When we accept the moral dimension of Educational leadership and understand professional learning and development, it is incidental that we need change in many fields to develop leadership in education for a new European society.

We have to accept the necessity of change and to understand change as a process which assumes school heads as leaders of change.

Change is fundamental to all life (Everything flows, nothing stays *Heraklitus*).

Why is change necessary? The answer is clear and we all know it is impossible not to change. Even the hardest rock is subject to erosion. The history of our planet is a history of change and we all have changed during our lifetime.

Organizational change will normally be in response to a wide range of forces and challenges. The pressure for change in education is to recognize the changes in the society such as social and economic changes and the change in the world order.

Therefore, school leaders have to create a culture of change and to understand that opposed to the management of change we need leadership of change. and we must recognise that organisations don't change – the people in them do.

Outlook

The results of this European Program, ESLN will be presented and discussed in Rome on the occasion of the Biannual ESHA Conference. The personal contacts and the on-line relationships between the participants built up during the conferences in Stavanger, Budapest and Fiuggi will hopefully persist. But this is not enough for such an innovative and significant program which is too precious to be laid ad acta after Rome. We can ascertain that ESLN is a highly successful pilot project, which reached the expectations of the participants. We now have to plan the future of this project:

- In addition to the on-line version it is necessary to make changes that allow for the use the materials as an on-line course, for self studies and/or institutes.
- We must reach all school heads in Europe.
- We should translate the course into other languages.

- We must interest European and national institutions to offer this course as a “training on the job program”.
- We should offer an official accreditation for the program.
- We should identify the program closely with ESHA and its members so that it will be part of the portfolio of services for our members.
- We should support further development and dissemination of the program.
- We should develop an entrepreneurial approach to marketing and disseminating the ESLN program.
- We should develop strategies to extend the scope and content of the program including the development of further modules.
- We must find partners for funding to finance the translations and production of CD's as well as promote the courses and the new modules as often as possible.

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