



Year 9 students from Kunskapsskolan Västerås on their way to van Kinsbergen College in Elburg.

KED

Newsletter Issue 4_22



September 19, 2022



It is Dynamic

Can you feel it? As when the train wheels take their first spin, and you start rolling out of the station. Slowly first, then steady, forward, and closer towards your goal.

We managed to keep the Network activities going throughout the pandemic, thanks to digital solutions. Now we can travel again. I just returned from the Netherlands after spending time with the students from Kunskapsskolan Västerås and van Kinsbergen College who completed a vibrant exchange project. Staying in host families is back. Excursions are back. And laughing face to face. We have moved from a static

phase to a dynamic process of connecting, exploring, and learning.

The dynamic forces in the KED Network are not only evident by the fact that we travel again. This morning, I received an email from Sac, teacher at Kunskapsskolan Tumba in Sweden, who told me that Malin, teacher at Kunskapsskolan Norrköping, had picked up his base group exercise called “variation and motivation go hand in hand” that he shared in the previous KED Newsletter. It goes like this: “Write down three things that make you feel bad, and you need to stop doing, then write down three things that you need to start doing to feel good about yourself.”

Malin’s students liked it as much as Sac’s. A forceful example of the dynamic exchange of good ideas in our Network.

My list goes like this:

Stop: Watching a screen, wearing a mask, delaying things.

Start: Breathing fresh air, meeting new people, doing it now.

What about yours?

Cecilia Aronsson

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The Exchange Effect

The Swedish flag is flying high at the entrance of van Kinsbergen College in Elburg, the Netherlands. 30 Year 9 students from Kunskapsskolan Västerås, Sweden, are in town. They arrived by bus Monday morning. After breakfast and a city tour, the Dutch summer weather called for an afternoon by the beach, before the host families arrived to bring the Swedish students to their home for the week. Some families host two Swedes. One Dutch family offered to host five. Alette's little brother sleep at their grandmother's place to make space for all the guests.

"But he is coming back tonight to join us when we go to play pool," says Alette.

Her friend Sabine hosts two Swedish students this week:

"It's fun getting to know each other when they stay at your house, and you can go out after school. They are polite and it's surprisingly easy to speak English together," says Sabine.

Today is Tuesday and we are getting ready for some local outdoor experi-

"It's fun getting to know each other when they stay at your house, and you can go out after school. They are polite and it's surprisingly easy to speak English together," says Sabine.

ences – sailing on the nearby lake and hiking the sand dunes in a local national park. This turns out to be a geography lesson that ties in with the local learning goals in both schools. Two thirds of the land area in the Netherlands is vulnerable to flooding, due to its low elevation. Sand dunes, like the ones we are hiking in today, are important in the Dutch battle against the water. They provide defense against flooding and protect nearby communities from destruction by heavy storms and high waves.

Many dams and other floodgates are built to protect the country. One of the most ambitious constructions to defend the land is called Deltawerken (the Delta Works) at the Southern coast some three hours' drive from Elburg. A visit here is also part of the exchange week, and so

is a tour of the renowned Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. Thanks to the project with Sweden, the Dutch students can go there too, helping them dig deeper into their own core coursework.

Climate change and inclusion are the main themes of the exchange project. It is financed by grants from Erasmus+, which is the European Union's program



to support education and collaboration for young people. Every student in the relevant year group can participate, regardless of their grades. Participation is based on interest rather than past merits. Van Kinsbergen College's Head of School Heidy van den Berg says this is unusual in the traditional Dutch school system, but inclusion is a feature that Erasmus+ embraces.

"If you want to do an Erasmus+ project yourself, I recommend that you have inclusion as a theme in your application," says Heidy van den Berg.

In May, van Kinsbergen College brought all their students in the second highest grade (14-15 years old) to Västerås (read about this in [KED Newsletter 3_2022](#)). Kunskapsskolan Västerås extended the opportunity to all their students in the corresponding grade. Students then had

to apply and describe why they wanted to join, and selection was based on motivation rather than merits. The two student groups have been connecting regularly online since the beginning of 2022, planning the project, and discussing issues related to growing up in an increasingly digital world. Learning to live digitally is one of the KED future skills explored at both schools.

Van Kinsbergen College has been granted funding from Erasmus+ until 2027 and is going to continue the exchange projects with its 14–15-year-olds for many more years. No wonder, both Heidy van den Berg and some of the teachers in her team are starting to

speak Swedish to the people who come here from Västerås and elsewhere.

This collaboration shows the potential of KED exchange to help realizing our mission of excellent delivery of a local curriculum, making students stretch their boundaries and learn more than they thought possible. These days, personalized learning, clear goals, and collaboration across KED schools make that happen.

Keep the flag flying. ■

Cecilia Aronsson
KED Network Director

Motivation to Last All Year

In August, all teachers and other team members at the 36 Swedish KED schools gathered in Norrköping for a two-day kickoff.

Among the speakers was Nils van der Poel, 26-year-old speed skater from the Swedish southwest, who won both the 5,000 and the 10,000-meter event at the Beijing Olympics earlier this year. In a clear voice, regularly pausing to get his punchlines across, Nils described the essence of goal setting:

“To set goals also means deciding where you are not headed,” he said.

Remember to communicate your goals to people around you, to get

their support and acceptance of the priorities you are going to make to get where you want, while caring less about things that are not your goals. To have a vision of the opposite of your goal – your anti goal – is equally important as visualizing your goal, says the reigning Olympic champion:

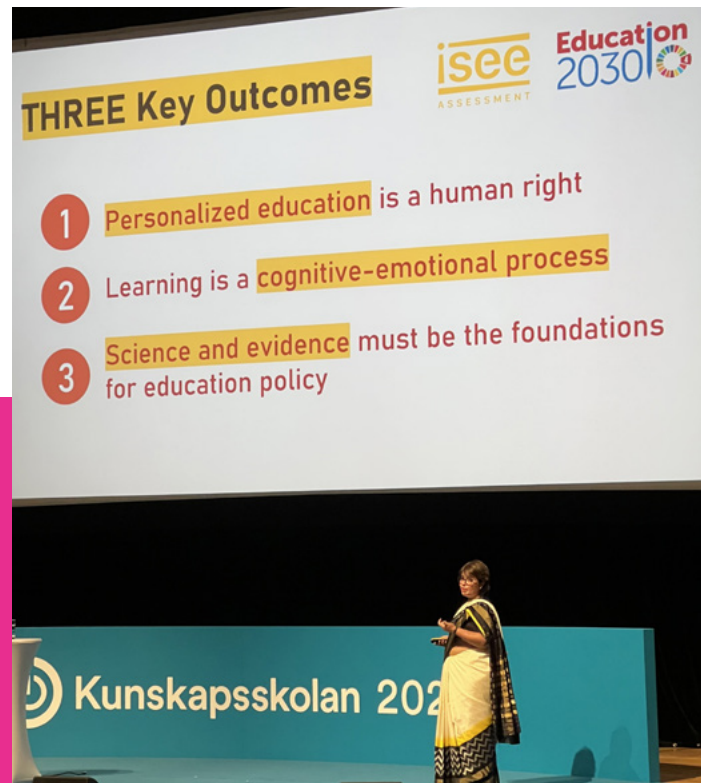
“You’re not giving your best when you’re hunting. You’re giving your best when you’re hunted. And when you’re both hunting and hunted, you can become invincible.”

But when you set a new goal to improve from where you are today, you run the risk of failing. Thus, goal setting takes courage. And when you are aiming higher, your performance usually goes down initially. So, you need lots of courage. Obviously, many people do not have enough courage to set new goals.

To be brave enough, you need support. And in this area, our next speaker provided good advice.

Kickoff 2022

Kickoffskolan 2022



Nandini Chatterjee Singh from UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) talked about the kind of education needed to address the world's current challenges. In its famous report launched in spring, UNESCO says personalized education is the best way forward, since all humans are different. And our guest speaker from India emphasized that all learning builds on relationships among learners and teachers. Learning is not only about transferring information. Whether the right neural connections of knowledge will form in the brain depends on the emotions triggered and nurtured in the learning process. The teacher, coach and support structure for the learner are critical to bring out the courage, skills, and mindset necessary to reach each goal.

One of those learning skills was highlighted as Kunskapsskolan recorded a

new podcast episode live on stage. The podcast focused on resilience, which is the skill to recover quickly after setbacks – to dust yourself off and try again since reaching a goal might take several attempts. Again, the speakers recorded in the podcast, including pediatrician Kristina Bähr who has written several books about student health, concluded that resilience is generated in the relationship between student and teacher. And to start growing the desired skills, you need to work on gaining the student's trust. Trust is the foundation for all successful schoolwork and in this regard, personalized education that respects every student's individual needs has a natural advantage. The world's experts seem to be on the same page. ■

Cecilia Aronsson
KED Network Director

What the UNESCO Report Means in Reality

“It is obvious that the reading and arithmetic levels in the Netherlands must be raised. The question is how. Science has provided evidence for the statement that education with a balance between cognitive and social-emotional skills will stimulate the levels even more. And, at the same time, prepare students better for their future life in society. That is why it is important that not only the Dutch Minister of Education, but also the rest of the Dutch educational world takes this worldwide research to heart,” says Nienke van Atteveldt.

“Although the report is about education globally, the conclusions and recommendations highlight several sore spots in the local context.”



She is a Professor at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in the Netherlands and Co-Chair of the UNESCO study that has received a lot of attention after calling personalized education a human right.



This report is full of building blocks to upgrade education around the world. More than 300 scientists from 45 countries worked on it for three years, resulting in recommendations to emphasize the learning potential of students instead of their performance, and to stimulate both cognitive and social-emotional development (the whole brain, not just cognitive functions). The experts recommend active instead of passive learning and the use of formative assessment rather than standardized tests in evaluating children's development. Leading to the preference for personalized education since it takes all these elements into account.

The UNESCO report got a mixed reception in the Netherlands, says Nienke:

“First, I think only a few have read the full report. That is understandable since it is so long, so we have put a lot of effort into creating a ‘summary for policymakers’ that is as comprehensive as it is accessible. Having said that, I see two responses. The first comes from people who recognize our findings and get inspired. On the other hand, I hear people say: ‘Here we go again: another report.’ And some respond that a balance between cognitive and social-emotional skills will come at the expense of the necessary reading and math teaching. I say look at the research, and although the report is about education globally, the conclusions and recommendations highlight several sore spots in the local Dutch context.”

Inequality of opportunity is one. The UNESCO report states that education policy worldwide has brought wonderful improvements in literacy, technology, and science, and improved many lives. But at the same time, it has generated more inequality:

“In the Netherlands, the emphasis is on economic growth, performance and making development measurable. That principle is so intertwined with Dutch education – in the way we measure the effects of education and in school inspections. We should create tests that help students learn, rather than making them learn for the test. And the same applies to teachers; we need to look beyond test results. The system surrounding education has left us with tunnel vision,” says Nienke.

UNESCO points out a way to break this vicious circle, by having an eye for every child's learning potential without the prejudices of origin or name:

“We need less selection and more flexibility for students to learn subjects at

different levels. These themes play a role worldwide, but particularly within Dutch education, being an important cause of the inequality that we are so eager to combat. The fact that personalized education is also about ‘constantly challenging’, ‘getting the best out of students’, and ‘seeing whether students can learn at a higher level in one or more subjects does not contradict this, as long as you have the individual student as the starting point.’”

Completing the UNESCO study was not painless. Working with more than 300 scientists from different disciplines was new to many. Some educational scientists wondered rhetorically ‘Why should brain scientists participate in this research?’ As the research coordinator, Nienke replied that the brain is an important factor in the complexity of learning. In addition, there was some miscommunication, not only because of different cultural backgrounds of the scientists, but because certain terminology in one scientific domain means something else in another.

“So, keeping the group together has been quite a challenging part of my work as coordinator. But together we managed to create a report that deserves to be seriously studied, and that calls on education professionals to look at the basic objective of education from a ‘beginner's point of view’ – in addition to preparing for a professional life, education has the purpose of developing flourishing social children and young people. That is sorely needed with the current social challenges,” says Nienke.

If you want to learn more about the UNESCO report, you find it here along with the summary for decision makers: <https://mgiep.unesco.org/iseeareport>

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