Tradition versus Innovation in Education?
The Estonian Case
Hello!

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Estonia in numbers

- Population is 1.3 million
- 30 people per km²
- 100 years of the Republic of Estonia
- 2 out of 3 people live in towns
- Literacy rate is 98.5%
- Every Estonian speaks 2-3 foreign languages
- Basic education the best in Europe and in the top 3 globally
Tradition or Innovation? Which way to go?
The tree of education

innovation

tradition
More **start-up companies** per capita than any other country in Europe.
Skype.
Transferwise.
Toggl.
Taxify.
Internet access is a human right.
Highly developed digital society. e-Estonia.
Electronic ID-card

- Access to all government services
- Digitally signed documents
- Travel document
- Health insurance card
E-residency

- No citizenship
- Set up a company online
- Access to Estonian bank services
- 17 000 new e-residents and 1 500 new companies in 5 years
E-taxation

- 95% of all local taxes
- User information securely stored online
- Pre-filled forms
- Review and click “send”
- 3 minutes on average
E-health

- For each individual
- Medical case notes, test results and x-rays
- Accessible for doctors from anywhere
- Informed decisions
- Digital prescriptions
Online voting

- Since 2005 (first in the world)
- Secure and anonymous
- Various elections
- 3 minutes
- Votes from all around the world
Is technology the innovation in education?
Technology can amplify great teaching, but great technology will never replace poor teaching.
What is innovation in education?

Define or share your experiences with the person next to you. 2 minutes. Share with the rest of us.
The teachers from around the world say...
Innovation in education involves constant collaboration with colleagues: a total last-minute re-do of a teacher’s lesson plan, because there was something else out there that he or she just had to try, a change in the direction of a class because the students are driving the instruction.
Innovation in education happens when educators ask, “How can I make this real, relevant, interesting, student-centred and personalized?”
Innovation in education is about more than just technology. It’s about how you can use technology to empower students to become lifelong learners who are agents of change.
Innovation aims to create additional value for learning and development.
Students are unique individuals. Individualized innovation?
Given the uncertainties that accompany all change, **teachers** will always favour the status quo.
We need to

- Invest in capacity development
- Invest in change-management skills
- Develop sound evidence
- Back it all up with sustainable financing
A SMALL DETOUR

Conference “Tradition and Innovation in Education” (Estonia, 2015)

1. New ways still need testing and getting used to.
2. The outcomes will be visible after several years, but we expect to see working solutions and results right away.
3. Educational changes are like human experiments.
The big challenge of education is to be cautious while being directed towards an uncertain future.
The actual educational innovation today is not finding out what needs to change. It is putting what we know into action.
Estonian Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020
Putting words into action.
The strong Estonian premise

- Education is highly valued in Estonia and considered a cornerstone for individual and national success.
- Teachers and schools have great autonomy in implementing curricula and teaching.
- The socio-economic background has a low impact on students' results.
- Comparative international studies show that learners acquire good basic skills.
Vision 2020

Learning is a lifestyle. Let’s notice development opportunities and let’s look for clever solutions.

Responsibility
People understand that learning and self-development are their own choice and responsibility.

Needs
Studies are based on the learner’s interests and capabilities, support his development and meet actual labour market needs.

Opportunities
The lifelong learning system offers good-quality, modern & flexible study opportunities that account for a learner’s special needs.
The **5 Main Goals** of Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020

1. A change in the approach to learning.
2. Competent and motivated teachers and school leadership.
3. The compatibility of lifelong learning with the real needs of the job market.
5. Equal opportunities for lifelong learning and increased participation.
Main Challenges for Schools and Teachers

Everybody should find (be offered) the most appropriate learning opportunities.

Radical change in learning and teaching approaches and assessment methodologies.
But all that is nothing new.
Universities and schools as partners in collaborative learning.

Establishing educational innovation centres.
2 universities
Teacher education and educational research

2 competence centres
Networks of teachers, researchers and professors

New approach to learning
Developing, collecting, testing and sharing
Innovation can’t be imported or exported. It is context-dependent.
Best practices from Estonia
Developing innovative learning scenarios

1. Developing
   University lecturers, researchers and students develop innovative learning scenarios

2. Testing
   Data is collected and analyzed as school teachers and students test the scenarios

3. Co-creating
   Teachers and lecturers come together to develop, implement and test long-term scenarios

4. Sharing
   Teachers share practices within their schools and networks and new practices are implemented into teacher training
Identifying development needs

1. Measuring
   University researchers and researching students conduct and analyze the results of school culture surveys

2. Interpreting
   School leaders and researchers come together as a group and individually to put results into context

3. Identifying
   With the help of trainers and researchers, schools identify their own pressing development needs

4. Resolving
   School leaders, researchers and trainers define the best solution - experience exchange, in-service training, project etc
Partnering for school development

1. Mapping
   University experts focus on mapping a school’s learning, teaching and organizational culture

2. Coaching
   University experts and other partnering professionals coach the school as they implement and organizational change

3. Action research
   The process of change management is monitored and analyzed

4. Sharing
   A model for school development (Future School) is piloted, tested, updated and shared
Building partnerships

A. Interdisciplinary LIFE projects for all university students

B. Experience sharing seminars for teachers, school leaders and lecturers

C. Hackathons and living labs for generating ideas and developing solutions
Results so far

- Overview of the reality of schools and their needs
- A trusting working relationship between schools and universities
- A growing common understanding about the future of education
Changing the approach to learning is a holistic approach towards innovation in education.

The three directions of educational change
Constructivist approach

Learning is individual, active and takes place in a context.
Collaborative learning

Learning to work together towards a shared goal.
Autonomy

Moving towards the increased freedom of action of the school, teachers and learners.
Innovation in education happens when the student is empowered to be the innovator of his own learning.
Gracias!

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