



THE EU COMMENIUS LABlearning project



Media Based Laboratory Learning

PLATFORM

Part 1 - Guidelines

Part 1 should be used for structuring dialogues in workshops, meetings and training sessions

DRAFT
April 2012 - JG/MM

THE ROLE OF THE PLATFORM

The LABlearning Platform consists in two parts: **Part 1 is the Guidelines** (offering short statements); Part 2 is the *Inspiration* (offering more elaborated texts).

The Platform offers guidelines and inspiration, not instructions and formula. It consists in a number of texts and statements about the quality of the media laboratories. The Platform offers a mutual language, a framework to be implemented or put into practice in different ways - according to local, educational and cultural circumstances.

The Platform is not a theoretical or scientific paper, but offers basic guidance on the most important elements in media laboratories for young people - whether in formal or non-formal settings.

The Platform is based on lessons learned, failures and successes, knowledge and inspiration from similar initiatives. It is also based on interviews with the young people themselves and on the interests and values of the LABlearning project itself.

The Platform and the LABlearning project are primarily concerned with disengaged or disadvantaged young people between the age of 12 and 20.

Platform Part 1 is also a tool for reflection. You can add your own experience to the different topics in the Platform, and the LABlearning project welcomes your contribution - whether you are a partner or not.

The draft version will be discussed by the project partners in spring 2012, and a final version will be available in summer 2012 to guide the project's laboratories.

The Platform will be used to organize the midterm time-out reflections and to support the project's quality assurance activities.

Finally, the Platform's Part 1 will be used to organize and structure the project's final outcomes.

Deep learning must take on epic dimensions...!

The reality...

Sometimes the reality makes it difficult or even impossible to do what we really would like to do...

Rules and regulations, financial matters and things like that can be obstacles to the media labs we would like to offer...

All media labs will have to face compromises...

Not really...

No matter what compromises we have to accept, there are certain things without which the media lab would not be a media lab.

Adding some media use or technology to the classroom does not make it a laboratory...

Doing a little teamwork and searching the internet is not about media labs...

The labs must basically be offering a different way of learning...

Priorities...

All the different labs, whether in formal or non-formal settings, must accept compromises, and therefore also accept to make priorities...

Especially in formal education many things can work against establishing the media labs we really would like to...

Priorities are needed...

Learning, not technology...

The most important thing when we must make priorities is the learning principles, not the amount of technology.

And these learning principles need space (rooms, mental space, social space) and time (too short projects do not allow immersed learning and different ways of using media creatively)...

Deep learning must take on epic dimensions...!





MISSION



The media laboratories will re-engage young people not learning well in the classrooms by letting them work with all sorts of media tools and social media in teams and projects, linked to real life and community.

The laboratories will allow the young people to discover that they can learn, that leaning can be fun and exciting – but also hard work.

The laboratories will help build up their self-confidence by offering immersive learning in an open and creative learning environment, build on respect and trust.

The laboraties will enhance the young people’s learning capacity and motivation, as well as make them more attractive to future employers.

Platform part 2 p 3-14

LABlearning website and material

www.computerclubhouse.org

www.sosuaarhus-international.com/LABlearning.htm

Key challenge

Establishing media laboratores in formal educational settings

Youth Voice



Your experience



LABORATORY



The media laboratories can be established in all sorts of formal and non-formal education and training contexts.

The laboratories offer the young people creative work facilities with state of the art media equipment and access to mentors, media professionals and community networks.

Laboratory signals research, exploration, experimenting and working together in project teams with clear missions and goals.

The key driver in the laboratories is the young people’s own interest, curiosity and personal aspirations.

The laboratories are not classrooms with teachers, but open work places where projects can start, be carried out and made useful to the community.

The laboratories are populated by mentors, junior mentors, media people and community collaborators, not by traditional educational staff roles.

The atmosphere of the laboratoroes will be welcoming, creative and encourage team based work and projects - more like a fim studio or an atelier than a classroom.

Platform part 2 p 19-32

LABlearning website and material
www.computerclubhouse.org

Key challenge
Long-term patience and sustainability

Youth Voice



Your experience



TECHNOLOGY



The key principles in the laboratories are about how to learn, how to be creative, how to follow ones ideas, not about technology. Technology is used to allow a high degree of creativity, self-expression and communication, and because technology is the natural language of the young people and holds the future keys to education and labour market. The laboratories will offer the young people high quality and open-ended (unlimited) media tools, allowing the young people to follow their talents and interests wherever it lead them. Technology is not taught, but explored, not instructed, but mentored, not isolated, but collaborative. The laboratories will offer the settings readily technological support and creative media inspiration, but will also invite the young people to find their own solutions, individually and in teams.

LABlearning website and material
www.computerclubhouse.org
www.sosuaarhus-international.com/LABlearning.htm

Key challenge
Providing quality media tools and quality media mentoring

Youth Voice



Your experience



PLACE



A media laboratory might be placed anywhere in the community: in a school, in an after-school facility, in a community centre, in an old factory or closed super

market - or linked to a sport club or a cultural or educational centre.
The young people should be involved in designing and re-designing the rooms themselves, asking the question: what should a creative media work place look like and why?

Any facility or building can be re-organized to host a media lab.

The rooms will meet the needs of the young people's project and team work and will smell of creativity and community.

Many people from the community will be invited to visit the media lab and propose useful activities.

If possible, the media lab will be placed at the centre of the city or the community to allow everyday and fluent personal contact to other people, families and friends and institutions.

Platform part 2 p 30-32
LABlearning website and material
www.computerclubhouse.org

Key challenge

To involve the young people in designing and re-designing the work rooms

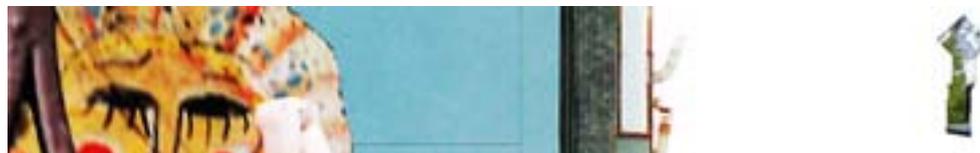
Youth Voice



Your experience



YOUNG PEOPLE



The labs will first of all address disengaged young people between 12 and 20 from disadvantaged communities and families, and in danger of dropping out of the educational system or simply not being able to link to education or labour market.

These young people are invited to join the media laboratories in the school, in the after-school facility or in the community centre.

There are no requirements, no tests, no conditions for joining.

Nevertheless there are conditions for *participating* in the laboratory activities.

Agreements are made between the youth teams themselves and between the youth teams and the mentors on how to work responsibly in the laboratories.

These values cannot be taken for granted, but must be developed in the young people - along with an increasing motivation to work in the projects.

Most of the time the young people don't know what to do in the laboratories, except play with the technology. They need to be guided and to learn to find, follow and trust their own interests and talents.

And if they have no talents, they will develop some.

Platform part 2 p 3-14
LABlearning website and material
www.computerclubhouse.org

Key challenge

To allow time for the young people to develop a sense of responsibility and commitment

Youth Voice



Your experience



STAFF



The laboratories will be populated by other adults than in the classroom, as no teaching takes place in the labs. Teachers will shift their roles to mentors, working side by side with the young teams, some of the most dedicated young people will work as junior mentors, media professionals will inspire and collaborate, and people from the community will join in when they are needed to carry out the media projects. The laboratories will ensure that qualified mentors are the key references for the young people, and the mentors are expected to be able to work fluently and patiently with young people that might have personal, social and learning problems.

Mentors are not required to be media experts, but to take a personal interest in exploring all kinds of media - and be able to work in open laboratories and be focused on guiding and facilitating the different ways the young people work and learn.

Mentors will establish useful contacts to professionals and interested institutions in the community.

Platform part 2 p 15-16
LABlearning website and material
www.computerclubhouse.org

Key challenge

Finding the right mentors with the right combination of skills, competences and life experience

Youth Voice



Your experience



PARTNERS



The young teams' projects will be based on three resources: the young people's own interest and curiosity, the exploration of the media world and what it can be used for - and the will to make useful contributions to the community. The media projects will have different partners from the community, taking an interest in collaborating with young people with "un-disciplined" new ideas.

The partners will be working directly with the young people themselves and offer the youth teams relevant and authentic challenges. Sometimes media professionals will be needed, sometimes art professionals will be needed - and sometimes mentors from the collaborating institutions.

Platform part 2 p 19-29
LABlearning website and material
www.computerclubhouse.org

Key challenge
To avoid developing "closed" labs and instead establish more and more links to the community

Youth Voice



Your experience



COMMUNITY PROJECTS



The projects in the laboratories will as often as possible be linked to real needs in the community.

It will be smaller or larger projects, depending on the circumstances. And it will be projects with all sorts of institutions and people, depending on the interest of the young teams.

Projects might be with energy companies, kindergartens, art institutions, banks, sport clubs, elderly, etc.

It is important to the laboratories that the learning and the media exploration are linked closely to real life challenges, not to examples in a text book.

A part of the growing self-confidence in the young people comes from making useful things for the community, things people in the community need and appreciate.

Community projects are not based on a fixed curricula, but on a combination of different topics and fields of knowledge, defined by the project and the mission. When the laboratories demonstrate their value to the community, the community can be expected to support the laboratories - whether in formal or non-formal settings.

LABlearning website and material
www.computerclubhouse.org

Key challenge
To make stakeholders and institutions in the community interested in working with the young people

Youth Voice



Your experience



SOCIAL DIMENSION



The media laboratories are also social networks.

They offer young people, often with social or personal problems, a strong social network of friends, team members and adults - all of them working for the same thing: using creative media to produce interesting things for themselves and the community.

The social bonds emerging in the laboratories are based on collective work: you are respected for the way you contribute to the team goals, and for the way you explore new ways of doing things - not for your parents' job, not for your academic virtues or the color of your skin.

You might even be respected for being a little bit "crazy" and have "crazy" ideas...

The social and psychological factors in the laboratories are important, as they contribute to building up trust and respect, and also contribute to the re-motivation of many young people.

The media laboratories will ensure that the adults in the facilities are aware of and able to manage these social and psychological challenges.

Such life and youth skills are more important than the academic knowledge of the mentors.

www.computerclubhouse.org

Key challenge

Establishing an atmosphere of trust, openness and social flexibility

Youth Voice



Your experience



HOW TO LEARN



The key mission of the media laboratories is to offer dis-engaged young people with poor future perspectives *deep learning experiences*, in which they forget that they are learning.

Therefore the projects in the labs are based on strong and well-researched learning approaches, totally different from the traditional classroom.

The young teams will explore their own interests and talents, define and design their own projects, search and give form to useful materials and knowledge, engage in a strong and demanding production process and present the results in creative ways, exploiting state of the art media.

They will link to supporting mentors and the dedicated collaboration of professionals, and link directly to the realities of their own community. They will, in short, explore, design, produce and present.

They will do that while exploring and exploiting creative media in small teams collaborating with relevant professionals and institutions.

The laboratories' learning and work methods are inspired by the Computer Clubhouse Network's long-standing experience with disadvantaged young people from across many continents and cultures.

The learning by designing and producing principles are valid for all disengaged young people whether they are learning in formal or non-formal settings.

The ultimate success criterion of the media labs is that they are able to engage the young people in creative and immersive learning processes, in which they re-build or build their learning capacity and motivation, and in which they overcome their resistance to learn and towards education and start building sustainable self-confidence.

Deep learning must take on epic dimensions...!

Platform part 2 p 3-14

LABlearning website and material

www.computerclubhouse.org

www.sosuaarhus-international.com/LABlearning.htm

Key challenge

Supporting the different ways of learning and working of different young persons, without taking refuge in dogmatic, formalistic or other rigid approaches

What does "Deep learning must take on epic dimensions...!" mean?

Youth Voice



Your experience



THE EPICS OF IMMERSIVE MEDIA BASED LEARNING



To be able to offer the young people immersive learning experiences, the learning space must take on epic dimensions, we say.

What does that mean?

When something takes on epic dimensions it means that the activity or event is played out on a dramatic scene, including different phases, conflicts, missions, interaction with different players and persons, and that it has epic structure: setting out from a shortage, a shortcoming or an important problem, travelling through different stages of elaboration and ending in some kind conclusion, synthesis or new equilibrium, this ending being perfect or imperfect, perhaps leading to a new drama with epic dimensions...

If we assume a pragmatic standpoint for a moment, what does this mean in everyday media labs?

We need to ensure lab processes of a certain *length*. Epic learning needs a certain amount of time to be played out. So does true learning. Small projects for a few hours or days will not be sufficient.

We also need to ensure strong *missions*. If the missions are not strong, relevant and do not trigger the participants, the missions are not powerful enough.

We need to give *space*: to allow different things and actions in physical and mental space to let the drama play out. This includes available media tools.

We need to *interact* with other people than in the traditional classroom. We

need to put new people, resources and players on the scene.
We need good *mentors*. Not media experts, but mentors capable of setting the scene, supporting the different stages and interaction, and silently, discretely, like an invisible hand, pushing the young teams towards solutions or elements of solutions.

The strong mentor knows how to balance frustration and success among the youth teams. Too little frustration makes them lazy, too much frustration make them give up. Too much success, and too early, makes them lazy again, too little success discourage them.

Perhaps this is the true art of being a media lab mentor - and it is not about knowledge, but experience and... art!

Platform part 2 p 16-18
www.computerclubhouse.org

Key challenge
What does "Deep learning must take on epic dimensions...!" mean in practice?

Youth Voice



Your experience



HARD FUN



The media laboratories are not about pleasing disengaged youth with media entertainment.

Fun and excitement is different from entertainment.

Entertainment means passively consuming things others have made. Like films or computer games. Or easy knowledge...

The young people can watch all the films they like, but not in the laboratories. In the labs you don't play computer games, you make your own. You don't watch YouTube, you make your own videos.

This principle - not playing computer games - is not a moralist one. It's about how you learn and work. And if you, after all, will engage in computer games in the lab - it is precisely because this game offers you productive, immersed learning and social networking. You are, in this case, on a mission that goes beyond the game itself.

The laboratories will challenge the young people, not please them.

But the challenges will be meaningful and relevant, exciting and engaging, based as they are on the young people's own interests, talents and aspirations - and linked a they are to state of the art media tools.

The projects in the laboratories are not entertaining, they are *hard fun*, and the young people will be much more challenged and hard-working than in the classroom.

Platform part 2 p 3-14 + 32-34
LABlearning website and material
www.computerclubhouse.org

Key challenge
Developing a culture of fun and hard work among the young people

Youth Voice



Your experience



WHAT TO LEARN



The media labs are primarily about HOW to learn, HOW to work in teams and projects, and HOW to produce useful media products. The driver of the labs' re-motivation capacity is in the HOW. But the WHAT is equally important, as the HOW cannot unfold unless the young teams are working with challenges that interest and excite them, and challenges that they see as meaningful and useful - and will produce respect and appreciation among their friends and in the community. The WHAT is therefore about having a clear mission. Creative learning processes are useless without a clear mission, without clear aims and without challenges to explore and problems to solve. The media labs will offer the young teams real life challenges, meaningful challenges, challenges important to the community and challenges that demands strong team work and creative use of media.

Platform part 2 p 3-14
LABlearning website and material
www.computerclubhouse.org

Key challenge
Developing strong media projects at the intersection point between the young people's own interest and the interests of the community

Youth Voice



Your experience



TALENT



Academic, theoretical and traditional literacy based competences have nothing to do with talent. You can be talented in many different ways, also intellectually and artistically. And you can unfold and develop such talents in all sorts of ways. Not all types of talents are acknowledged in the formal educational system. Many disengaged young people might be talented. Or they might be able to grow

talents. But they find it difficult within the traditional educational system, or the system is not offering them the opportunities to find, unfold or develop such talents.

The media labs offer disengaged young people the space and opportunities to find, define, explore, unfold and take further all sorts of talents - and link these talents to the exploration of creative media and social sharing.

Or, the labs might simply offer the young people to grow talents - out of personal interests or aspirations. Or dreams...

Unfolding talents and interests might lead to learning, to positive work experience, to entrepreneurial ideas - or simply to more self-confidence. Unfolding talents will, always, lead to an increasing learning capacity and motivation.

The adults in the media labs will have a special focus on the individual talents of the young people, and facilitate and encourage taking such talents further.

www.computerclubhouse.org

Key challenge

Identifying, nurturing and supporting open and hidden talents in the individual young person

Youth Voice



Your experience



MANY WORDS, MANY WAYS



There are many strong and creative approaches to learning, such as Problem Based Learning, Collaborative Learning, Constructivism, Game Base Learning, etc.

The laboratories build on many inspirational sources, but are basically promoting a pragmatic approach: what is possible, what might be combined and how can we offer young people with poor learning and life perspectives experiences of deep, creative and immersive learning?

Academic dogmatism has never offered young people anything...

The laboratories are deeply inspired by the Computer Clubhouse learning approaches, developed at the MIT Media Lab many years ago.

This approach is called *constructionism*, not to be confused with Piaget's constructivism being in itself a great step forward for the understanding of learning.

The difference between the two approaches is rather important for our non-academic learners: Piaget is talking about mental constructions only, whereas the MIT approach is arguing that the strongest learning takes place when the learners are actually constructing things in the real world, such as artefacts, programs, services or media presentations.

The involvement in producing real products of different kinds invites the young people to be part of, not only a mental process, but a project with different and often quite demanding phases and tasks.

The most important learning principles in the media laboratories can be short-listed like this:

✦ Learning is not delivered by teachers or books or ready-made materials, but

is a result of the young people's active exploration, construction and collaboration

- Learning is not seen as an individual accomplishment, but as the results of a dynamic team work
- Learning is not necessarily based on academic skills and competences, but on a variety of work methods and expression forms and collaborations
- The learning is not anchored in a curricula, but at the intersection between the young people's interests and aspiration on one side and community needs on the other
- Learning does not take place as artificial and abstract processes, but is embedded in and emerge from real life projects
- The teacher roles are replaced by mentors, media professionals and community collaborators - and volunteers dedicated to the mission...
- Learning is deeply linked to personal self-expression, motivation and empowerment
- The learning should be creative and fun, but always in the meaning of "hard fun"
- The young people work in community projects, and are themselves responsible for the design of the projects, the collaboration and the outcomes
- Design and creative shaping, forming and articulating in different media and languages and art forms are celebrated as great learning resources in the laboratories

Platform part 2 p 3-14

LABlearning website and material

www.computerclubhouse.org

www.sosuaarhus-international.com/LABlearning.htm

Key challenge

To avoid dogmatism and rigid learning approaches, still, though, holding on to a few important and very basic learning principles

Youth Voice



Your experience



COMMITMENT



A key and transversal word in the laboratories is *commitment*.

The young people will be motivated to commit themselves to the projects, the teams and the lab community.

The mentors must be extremely committed, curious, open and very flexible.

They must be able to encourage experiments and to accept mistakes, failures and dead-ends...

But the managers and owners of the school, youth facility or centre must be equally committed: if quality facilities, media equipment and mentors are not available, the laboratories will not be able to work, and the impact will be lost. Commitment at all these levels means: putting in resources, offering open spaces and opportunities, developing a strong mentality and ensuring sustainability.

Commitment is vital at personal, mental, social and community level.

Key challenge

To establish long-term commitment among managers and policy-makers

Youth Voice



Your experience



DESIGN, CONSTRUCT, PRODUCE



But what are the young people actually doing in the labs?

They are discussing what they like and desire. And their ideas. And the needs of the community. And what the state of the art media tools can be used for.

Then they design projects, find collaborators in the community and support from professionals. Then they construct knowledge, forms and figures, films and music, and they produce something useful to themselves and their community.

That's all.

The different projects might last 3 weeks or 3 months, or more...

So, this is what they do.

They design, construct and produce.

And therefore they learn.

And the mentors work side by side with them to make all this possible.

Platform part 2 p 3-14

LABlearning website and material

www.computerclubhouse.org

www.sosuaarhus-international.com/LABlearning.htm

Key challenge

The focus on the simple and efficient structures of the media labs and keep the focus on the basic learning and social principles

Youth Voice



Your experience



SOCIAL SHARING



The laboratories promote a sharing spirit.

Sharing your skills - help the others. Sharing your knowledge - open up and get

more back! Sharing your mistakes - the others can learn from them. Sharing your successes - celebrate each other.

The young people will be encouraged to share: their problems, their challenges, their solutions, their results. With the other teams, but also with the community.

They will be encouraged to share their efforts and accomplishments with peers through their usual online communities and networks.

LABlearning website and material
www.computerclubhouse.org

Key challenge

Not to interfere with the young people's own social online networks and communication, but to encourage them to share their experiences in the labs through these networks

Youth Voice



Your experience