

# The end of the fishbowl

Paper 2, CCK09 course  
Changing roles of educators  
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In this second paper, I will try to find an answer to the question if the roles as educators (ICT and media teacher at the faculty of Teacher Training Hogeschool Gent) within my field are changing by reflecting on my own position. I want to state clearly that the views and opinions expressed here represent my own and not those of the organizations I am related with.

## Introduction

I want to start this paper with a reflection on my first year as a teacher trainer. Being a newbie, I was really happy I could teach in parallel with a colleague. He provided me with support, content and the learning materials. At that time, ICT and media was almost completely understood as teaching Microsoft Office Programs. All courses were given ex-cathedra, and in a one-way-communication style with the teacher in front and students who were trying to follow the instructions demonstrated on their desktop computers. One day in that first year, I was explaining them how to work with styles in Microsoft Word. I remember looking at their faces at one point. Right there, I had the feeling to be in front of a fishbowl with goldfishes. They were gasping at me, just opening their mouth to breathe air. I will never forget that moment, because it was the first step in my belief I had to change my role as an educator.

## ICT is more than just a course

In the past, ICT could be considered a separate course in a curriculum, just like math and history were. Today, this vision on ICT is no longer valid. There are numerous reasons why ICT should be part of every aspect in the education of future teachers, but I will concentrate on 3.

The first reason for teachers teaching in Flanders, should be “the final objectives” who were introduced by the Flemish government in September 2007. “Minimum objectives the educational authorities consider necessary and feasible for a particular part of the pupil population. Final objectives apply to a minimum set of knowledge, skills and attitudes for this part of the pupil population.” (website Department for Educational Development, core curriculum). ICT is one of the cross-curricular final objectives where the government states they are “a basic package of themes on which the school can be called to account by society (website Department for Educational Development, Cross-curricular final objectives). Ten objectives were determined like the pupils “have a positive attitude towards ICT and are willing to use ICT in support of their learning” (number 1), “can retrieve, process and save digital information by means of ICT” (number 6) or (number 10) “are willing to adjust their actions based on reflection upon the use of ICT by themselves or others (website Department for Educational Development, Ten ICT Cross-curricular final objectives).

Not only recognises our government that society considers ICT as mandatory, our student teachers must be able to meet the cross-curricular final objectives with their own students. In order to do so, it is clear they will have to master enough ICT-skills themselves before they can meet the final objectives with their students.

A second reason could be found in several research studies concerning the importance of good “ICT examples” by teacher trainers themselves towards their own students (Jo Tondeur et al., 2009; Kangro & Kangro, 2005; Shapka & Ferrari, 2003).

A third reason can be found in the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) approach that “attempts to capture some of the essential qualities of knowledge required by teachers for technology integration in their teaching”. “Effective technology integration for pedagogy around specific subject matter requires developing sensitivity to the dynamic, transactional relationship between all three components. A teacher capable of negotiating these relationships represents a form of expertise different from, and greater than, the knowledge of a disciplinary expert (say a mathematician or a historian), a technology expert (a computer scientist) and a pedagogical expert (an experienced educator)” (Mishra, 2008).

More reasons could be found and cited in support for integrating ICT in every aspect of teacher education, but the three cited above should do for the purpose of this paper.

## **The end of the fishbowl**

So what could be done for student teachers in order to help them develop new (or support their current) ICT skills?

To go on with the fishbowl metaphor, I would suggest we all go swim somewhere else. We don't have to go to the sea or a river with strong current from the first time. A nice little pool will do in the beginning. As an educator I will still take the lead sometimes, but most of the time I will be swimming between them or even after them. They will learn from me, but also, and even more, from the other fishes. And once they feel strong enough, they can even go out and explore wilder waters with other great fish out there.

Learning Networks and connectivism are coming very close at this point of my story: the fishbowl (classroom) will be replaced by a learning network (pool). A few rules must be followed. It is clear we shouldn't just suddenly take the fishbowl away and throw all the fish in the pool. And second, as an educator we need to be in the water ourselves, but it isn't recommended as well for us to jump in the water without thinking about the consequences. In the most ideal situation, all educators and fish are swimming in the same pool. Unfortunately today, too much educators are still talking to their fishbowl.

## **Conclusion**

Our roles as educators are changing. In my field, it is clear that our society, with the support of the educational department, wants us to change and research happens to support this change. If we don't evolve, we will either lose our students, by force or just by evolution.

Some of us (educators) already joined the pool, others will accompany us very soon, a few will be forced to leave the fishbowl and jump in the pool. The ones refusing to leave their fishbowl, should start thinking about another job.

It is never too late to take swimming lessons, but the clock is ticking loud and clear.

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## **About**

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