

University of Leicester
School of Education
MBA in Educational Management

Module 2: *Managing Effective Learning and Teaching*

Research Assignment
Submitted: February 2007

What Would Be the Operational Management Consequences of Moving from a Teacher-Centred to a Learner-Centred Approach in Years 6 & 7 of the European School?

Dr Winfried van Gool
Educational Adviser at the
European School Karlsruhe (Germany)
Student number: 059014307

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Context of this study	4
1.2 Purpose of this study	5
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 The Rationale	7
2.2 Management Implications	10
3. INVESTIGATION	
3.1 Introduction	12
3.2 Methodological Rationale	13
3.2.1 the questionnaire	13
3.2.2 the interviews	14
3.2.3 other means used to collect data	15
3.3 Return Rate	15
4. ANALYSIS	
4.1 Introduction	17
4.2 Results of the Questionnaire	17
4.3 Results of the Interviews	18
4.4 Other Results Obtained	18
4.5 Interpretation of the Results	22
4.5.1 classroom management	22
4.5.2 subject management	22
4.5.3 organisational management	23
4.5.4 stakeholder management	24
4.6 Conclusion	24

5. CONCLUSION	26
----------------------	----

ANNEX

1. The Questionnaire	28
2. Results of the Questionnaire	32
3. Transcript of Interviews	38

BIBLIOGRPHY	47
--------------------	----

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context of this study

The curriculum, and the pedagogy used to deliver it, “may be seen as a reflection of the society within which the institution is based.” (Briggs, Sommefeldt, 8) In the context of the European Schools, the problem here lies with the word ‘society’. At present there are European Schools in seven EU countries. The system was set up in the fifties when student-based learning was virtually unheard of and “the advent of the Internet and the rapid expansion of modern telecommunication capability” unthought-of. (Briggs, Sommefeldt, 32) The EC had six member states and four national languages. The society then differed greatly from the present one. “[E]ducation systems are seen as a legitimate way of ensuring the culture and beliefs of society are passed on to future generations” (Briggs, Sommefeldt, 17). It seems logical therefore that the political and technological changes that have occurred in European society since the European Schools were set up would necessitate a reflection on the pedagogy used and goals set.

In a number of countries, students are required to act more independently, take greater responsibility for their learning process and regulate their own school behaviour to a greater extent. Teachers are required to promote the development of student autonomy through pedagogical and didactic coaching. Simultaneously, teachers must continuously monitor and control the learning process and social behaviour of individual students. The external control (inspection) and the school management ask of teachers that they monitor the learning process of each student in great detail. In these countries, schools have become more autonomous. Teachers had to change their pedagogical approach and students have been given more responsibility.

1.2 Purpose of this study

This progression seems to be absent from the European Schools. In his role as an Educational Adviser at one of these Schools, the author of this study is confronted with a variety of teaching methods, with the poor communication and exchange between teachers on their approach, as well as with an obvious lack of alignment in these matters. The result is an often dispersed view of the individual student. The overall aim of this research is to enhance knowledge and understanding of the operational management implications a common student-centred approach would have and to submit the findings to the Board of Governors. In this way, the author hopes to contribute to the development of the European School curriculum.

This study entails three objectives:

1. To look at the rationale for a learner-centred approach.
2. To assess what the implications for operational management would be if such an approach were to be adopted in Years 6 and 7 and draw conclusions as to its feasibility.
3. To come to proposals to pave the way for the possible adoption of such an approach.

In order to achieve these objectives, the following three research questions are considered:

1. What are staff's feelings to this approach, and to what extent do they feel able / willing to transform from teachers into coaches?
2. What would be the physical implications of the introduction of a learner-centred approach in Years 6 and 7?

3. What would the school management have to undertake to make this transformation possible?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Rationale

Modern society and higher education require people able to organise their own learning processes and develop their own knowledge and skills. (Ranson, 1994) Higher education expects students to be problem-orientated and to possess reflective skills and attitudes. Employers demand that their employees are flexible, capable of developing their own qualifications and able to cope with the dynamics of modern society. Secondary education has to prepare students for this life-long learning. Therefore, the traditional structures and organisations from the 'first modernity', with its hierarchical models and well-structured and distinct components such as the traditional school subject division, are today confronted by the individualisation trends of the 'second modernity' (Beck *et al.*, 1994; Castells, 1996; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). The 'second modernity' stresses the growing autonomy of individuals (students) and organisations (schools). Schools are being forced to change their management structures, control and evaluation to the new paradigm.

Greater autonomy implies a 'bottom-up approach' in which "the curriculum manager determines or designs the curriculum on the basis of student needs" (Silcock, Brundett: 35). An educational system may choose to empower students by giving them room to develop their own education. However, most systems, among them the European School system, apply a top-down approach implying direct control and regulation as well as a prescribed and taught curriculum.

teacher-centred / top-down approach

Ross (2000) states that most curriculum models are characterised by the traditional subject division. They do not allow learner control over selection, organisation and pacing of transmission of knowledge. Traditional barriers between subjects taught by subject specialists can create a dispersed view of the student. There is little room for cross-subject teaching or evaluation. He calls this a 'Baroque' model.

student-centred / bottom-up approach

Learners can to a certain degree determine their educational needs and outcomes. Teachers become coaches that help students to "develop attitudes which they need as autonomous lifelong learners". (Silcock, Brundett: 39) The stress is on the manipulation of knowledge or the students' relationship with it. Higher education expects students to be problem-orientated and to possess reflective skills and attitudes. Employers demand that their employees are flexible, capable of developing their own qualifications, and able to cope with the dynamics of the 'second modernity' (Beck *et al.*, 1994; Castells, 1996; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). "The emerging paradigm suggests that learning is continuous and pervasive, that it results from an interaction between the learner and the environment [...]" (Lumby: 6).

Beside the 'economic' argument for learner-centred learning there is a humanistic-pedagogical one. Learners become "active constructors of their own minds, consciously 'actualising' their own identities." (Silcock, Brundett: 41) They become the leading actors in their auto-transformation process through the setting of their personal goals. A problem-orientated approach implies working from a given experiential base.¹

¹ Basing on Piaget's (1954) 'Constructivism' theory.

schooling for tomorrow: lifelong learning, deep or profound learning

The Chair of the OECD/CERI conference on 'Schooling for tomorrow' concluded that "the curriculum is at the heart of schooling. The focus needs to shift from teaching and towards learning. [...] schools [should] lay[...] the foundations for lifelong learning [...]" (Rotterdam, November 2000)². In this view, the school is seen as the starting point of a process that will continue well into the future. This implies a movement away from the traditional acquisition of knowledge (cognitive centred) sanctioned by formal testing, the results of which are no more than a random indication of students' knowledge. Instead, the ability to manipulate knowledge and to develop a flexible attitude towards it is wanted (skills centred). This makes sense in a modern context where available knowledge has become unlimited and traditional learning through the acquisition of selected facts is by definition limiting, not to mention that these facts may quickly become obsolete in a fast changing society. In this respect, the internet may have become a far more up-to-date and complete information source than the traditional textbook or taught lesson by the teacher.

Cheng (2000) highlights the paradigm shift in learning from the traditional site-bounded learning to the new "triplization" learning which is individualised, localised and globalised and which "aims to create unlimited opportunities for students' lifelong learning and for development of their Contextualised Multiple Intelligence (CMI)³.

Again using Ross' (2000) terminology, a thus organised curriculum is "Naturally Landscaped": subject boundaries are weak and the learning process is governed by the nature of the learner). However, as we will see in 2.2 and 4.5.4 with the example from the Netherlands, elements of a "Dig-for-Victory" approach, based on future rolls in work, schooling and society are not entirely absent here. Therefore, Ross' (2000) term "Cottage Garden", implying a mix of traditional and innovative elements would apply here.

² Quoted from Briggs and Sommefeldt (2002: 10).

³ Cheng (2005) mentions technological, economical, social, political, cultural and learning intelligences.

2.2 Management Implications

Elsewhere, Cheng (2002) points out the importance of ensuring clear linkages between school reforms and students' effective learning. In his view, the essential point to bear in mind when giving more autonomy to schools is how to make sure that decentralisation "can be managed with a clear structure and direction for facilitating student-centred approach of teaching and effective learning of students". The absence of such a linkage is at the origin of many failing experiences of school reforms all over the world.

The school should be managed as a facilitating place for individual student learning and developed as a CMI environment. (Cheng, 2002) Schooling should arouse curiosity and motivation. Management of learning should stress self-learning and self-actualisation: "Standard curricular topics can be so treated if teachers abandon any attempt at 'delivering' them." (Silcock, Brundett: 42) Methodology applied by teachers and the curriculum materials should enhance this self-regulated learning of students. Materials such as textbooks have to focus more on goals, on planning the learning experience, and on skills for students to learn the subject matter more independently. Levin (1997) says greater school focus is needed on independent endeavours for students in learning activities in comparison with the traditional emphasis on school and teacher-directed activity. Teachers have to concentrate more on the learning process of the individual student and to offer students the opportunity to practice self-regulated learning. This means a devaluation of power (student-directed instead of teacher-directed learning) that should not go accompanied by a loss of teacher authority. Consequently, teachers need to pay attention to learning paths, learning styles and learning opportunities. They are also required to coach all these individual learning processes. Monitoring procedures and alternative assessment criteria are part of this.

Moreover, Cheng (2002) argues that both local and global resources supports and networks should be brought in to maximise opportunities for the development of and contribution to individual student learning. He is referring to self-learning packages, web-based learning, as well as outside experts, parents and community members including

social services, business and industry. He is calling for active involvement of these stakeholders to allow for effective “networked” schooling and “multiple sources of learning”.

For self-regulated learning to become possible, Egan (1999) proposes a subject-free, thematic curriculum. Bell (2001) points out it is inexistent at the moment, although there are curricula based on or incorporating core skills or generic competences. An example of such a curriculum is the so called ‘Studiehuis⁴’ in the Netherlands referred to in 4.5.4. Beside this example, Marsh (1997) mentions others.⁵ Teachers here are required to work beyond the confines of their subject and develop a bird’s eye view of their students’ progress (Bell, 2001).

Silcock and Brundett (2001: 43) point out that resource implications for learner-centred work can be inhibiting for schools, since diversity of learning implies a diversity of resource. Burton (2001: 64) remarks that centralised planning and booking procedures for multimedia have to be instigated. Curriculum resources have to be managed centrally. The system implies a reinforcement of middle management (Lumby, 2001:9ff). Coordinators for multimedia centres, for every school year, as well as support functions in study rooms, libraries and multimedia centres, all functions that go beyond the scope of the actual subject teacher, are required. Curriculum managers need to check that “socially as well as personally valued goals are implicit” in student choices. (Silcock, Brundett: 42)

⁴ literally: ‘Home of Studies’

⁵ Australia, Britain, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland

3. INVESTIGATION

3.1 Introduction

The teacher questionnaire should provide qualitative data as to the first research question about the respondents' feelings, abilities and willingness. The interviews are meant to provide data relating to research questions two and three: the physical implications and the role of the school management.

Method of Sampling

Fogelman (in Coleman *et al.*: 98) argues that the process of sampling allows the researcher to study a particular set of the population "that can be shown to be representative of the relevant population and which therefore allows us to be reasonably confident about the validity of whatever generalisations we make." The findings obtained in this way have "wider implications beyond those subjects." (97). By selecting all seconded teaching staff (47 members) as a sample for the questionnaire and by interviewing a variety of stakeholders, reliability (the probability that similar results would be achieved by repeating the research procedure in other European Schools) of the results can be claimed (Bush in Coleman *et al.*: 60).

Triangulation

The interviews were carried out with a variety of stakeholders and similar open questions were asked to verify the validity of the answers. This is called respondent triangulation (Bush in Coleman *et al.*: 68). In this way sample bias was avoided.

3.2 Methodological Rationale

3.2.1 the questionnaire

In order to address the first research question, it was decided to conduct a questionnaire survey among teachers to find out about familiarity with and attitude towards the student-centred approach to teaching. As a sample, the totality of seconded teaching staff (47) was taken for the following reasons:

- Seconded teachers form the bulk of teaching staff in a European School. They originate from diverse cultural backgrounds as opposed to supply staff who are locally recruited and therefore do not represent the same diversity. Hence, external validation, relating “to the extent that findings may be generalised to the wider population which the sample represents” (Bush, 2002: 67) is assured. Similar answers would have been obtained if seconded teaching staff from another European School would have been used as a sample.
- Internal validation, relating “to the extent that research findings accurately represent the phenomenon under investigation” (Bush, 2002: 66) is achieved by having the questionnaire reach across sections, departments, nationalities, lengths of experience and age groups. A student-centred approach is a whole-school approach. This research endeavours to create a holistic picture of the situation before coming to conclusions as to the feasibility of the possible introduction of the new approach.
- Feelings as the basis of research, for example the feeling that staff from Northern European countries are more familiar with and more positive towards a student-centred approach than their Mediterranean counterparts, are ruled out. Only phenomena that are “amendable to the researcher’s senses” (Morrison, 2002: 15) are used for analysis.

- “Educational research needs to be grounded in people’s experience” (Morrison in Coleman, Briggs: 18). Therefore, the first research question seems to be the most persistent. A positive attitude from staff would have to precede any physical or managerial modifications required to make a student-centred approach in the final stage of the European School Bacculaureate possible.

Piloting

A small number of questionnaires was handed out to determine if they were clear and would obtain the desired data.

Piloting revealed the necessity of an introductory section in the questionnaire explaining about the student-centred approach because participants tended not to think beyond class management issues when defining the approach.

3.2.2 the interviews

Interviews were chosen as a research tool to address the second and third research questions because here the number of respondents is limited. The interviews were conducted to provide an informed way of obtaining knowledge as to organisational and stakeholder management and to gather qualitative data: in-depth knowledge, opinions and experience of various actors. In all cases, pre-interview explanations were conducted to try gain informed consent from potential participants (Busher in Coleman *et al.*: 84). Given the nature of the information required, the interviews were semi-structured. A precise question was asked and respondents could express themselves briefly or at length. This type of interview was preferred over another because answers would focus on the research topics and digression would be minimised.

Interviews were conducted with:

1. an expert teacher / timetabler
2. a Director
3. a former Deputy
4. a Librarian

3.2.3 other means used to collect data

Syllabi of various subjects were accessed and informal discussions with subject coordinators were conducted. His membership of the staff of a European School, allowed the author privileged access to such data that would have been more difficult to obtain for an external researcher. Accounts of conversations which occurred in casual situations and configurations in and outside the staffroom were also used. Naturally, all data obtained in this fashion was handled in such a way as to ensure confidentiality.

3.3 return rate

The initial return rate of the questionnaires was a meagre 40.4%. An additional investigation found:

1. The questionnaire was sent out shortly before the Christmas holidays which was not a particularly good time. Staff were too occupied and in need of a break.
2. Unbeknown to the investigator, almost the entire Italian section was called to Italy to sit for competitive examinations.
3. A number of teachers were uninterested or even hostile to the research believing that the student-centred approach was not worth serious consideration, and hence undeserving of their time.

The researcher approached staff a second time after the holidays and this time the return rate was a more satisfactory 80.1%.

Details on return rates are found in Annex 2.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This section presents the data obtained through the research tools mentioned in 3.2. It was decided not to refer to the numeric results of any individual question in the questionnaire but to the general tendencies revealed (4.2). Section 4.3 shows the most important data obtained through the interviews. Full numeric results of the questionnaires and full transcripts of the interviews can be found in Annex 2 & 3.

4.2 Results of the Questionnaire

The following quantitative data was obtained:

Table 1
Results of the Questionnaire

Question	Data obtained
1.	Results show that in general, a student-centred approach is not a phenomenon unknown to staff, although clearly, German, English and Dutch staff seem to be more familiar than French and Italian.
2.	Similar results as obtained in question 1 show. German, English and Dutch staff express themselves to be more in favour of this approach than French and Italian.
3.	German and Dutch teachers clearly have more experience with the student-centred approach than English, French and Italian.
4.	Results of this question are rather inconclusive, although no one indicated they would feel ill at ease in their role as a coach.
5.	Results here show that the various syllabi do not sufficiently stress the principle of problem-orientation.

6.	Most staff indicate that in the syllabus, reflective skills are stressed to a limited extent or are not really stressed. However, a clear tendency towards reflective skills cannot be distinguished.
7.	Staff from all sections and with various lengths of experience indicate that problem-orientation is stressed in their lessons. The results bear no relation to the subject being taught.
8.	Staff from all sections and with various lengths of experience indicate that reflective skills and attitudes are developed by their teaching methods. The results bear no relation to the subject being taught.
9.	No clear tendency towards stressing flexibility can be distinguished in any section of the school.
10.	On the whole, staff seem to feel that the contents of the syllabi only partly prepares student for modern society and professional life.
11.	Flexibility is felt to be taught to some extent. There is no proof of a clear link with particular subjects.
12.	Teachers clearly feel they prepare their students for modern society and professional life to some extent.
13.	See Annex 2

4.3. Results of the Interviews

In Table 2, the qualitative data obtained has been presented in order of frequency of occurrence.

4.4 Other Results Obtained

Scrutiny of various subject syllabi has not found any reference to problem orientation, or development of reflective skills and attitudes. Subject coordinators concur; however, a science and mathematics coordinator stated that in these subjects problem-orientation is a

natural approach. This does not mean that he feels students should be given more autonomy: “Teachers need to teach a logical scientific method that students cannot sort out themselves. Only by copying this method can problems be solved.”

Table 2
Would-Be Problems

PROBLEM	MENTIONED BY	FREQUENCY	MANAGEMENT LEVEL
Inadequate staff selection criteria	The Director the expert teacher / timetabler the former Deputy	3	Organisational (internal)
Only works for motivated students	the Director the former Deputy	2	Classroom
Time consuming	the Director the expert teacher / timetabler	2	Subject Organisational (internal)
Two timetables running simultaneously	the expert teacher / timetabler the Director	2	Organisational (internal)
Elaborate booking procedures / coordination	the Director the Librarian	2	Organisational (internal)
Inadequate management structures / motivation	the expert teacher / timetabler	2	Organisational (internal)
Lengthy implementation procedures	the Director the former Deputy	2	Stakeholder (external)

Baccalaureate ensuring university access in the entire EU	the Director the former Deputy	2	Stakeholder (external)
'Reduced' teacher role	the Director	1	Classroom
Micro political struggle	the expert teacher / timetabler	1	Organisational (internal)
Increased inspection	the expert teacher / timetabler	1	Organisational (internal) Stakeholder (external)
Lack of in-service training	The former Deputy	1	Organisational (internal) Stakeholder (external)

4.5 Interpretation of the Results

The combined results of the questionnaire and interviews, linked to the title of this research, allow an interpretation of results obtained applying to four different management levels:

4.5.1 classroom management

Frontal teaching methodology would have to be partly abandoned in favour of research or project based learning that allows the development of attitudes needed for autonomous and lifelong learning (see 2.1). In many classrooms, this would necessitate the rearrangement of classroom furniture to allow for group work and / or discussions. The presence of computers with internet connection would be a prerequisite for the success of investigative learning.

Materials such as textbooks would have to be selected on the basis of their relevance to autonomous learning. They would have to focus on goals, on planning the learning experience and on skills for students to learn the subject matter more independently.

Both teaching methodology and materials should enhance students' self-regulated learning to prepare them for what Beck (1994) and other researchers call the second modernity (see 2.1). As discussed in 2.2, Cheng (2002) suggests self-learning packages and web-based learning as possible tools for self-regulated learning.

Teachers would have to be adequately prepared for the devaluation of their power referred to in 2.2.

4.5.2 subject management

Present European School subject syllabi indicate general and subject specific aims with little or no interdisciplinary topics or activities. They would need to be rewritten to allow for "[b]road, integrated topic work and interdisciplinary forms of enquiry" (Silcock, Brundett: 42) They would also require a clear description of monitoring procedures as

well as an indication of skills needed to attain deep and independent learning: "For learners to be truly independent, curricula need designing so that taught skills, concepts and attendant procedures are included within foundation studies." (Silcock, Brundett: 42)

4.5.3 organisational management (school internal)

The European School timetable is divided into lessons of 45-50 minutes, sometimes allowing for two-period blocks. A lesson equals a subject, a teacher, and, in some cases, a specialised subject room such as a science laboratory. The timetable prescribes exactly where teachers and students are supposed to be at any particular time. Within the allotted time, teachers are responsible for teaching their subject to a group of students from one and the same year group. The leading paradigm is the uncomplicated nature of organisational management rather than the satisfaction of individual student needs. Self-regulation means students can work flexibly on the subject or topic they wish to work on. Levin (1997) therefore stresses the importance of focussing on independent endeavours for students in learning activities (2.2). Of course, this cannot mean regular compulsory lessons will be totally abandoned. The timetable would have to allow for regular lessons, option hours as well as self-study periods of different lengths.

Most importantly, an enhanced degree of flexibility of staff would be needed. Present job descriptions are totally inadequate for this system. Lifelong learning (2.1) should apply, not only to students but to teachers too. Beside a revision of the statute of teachers, a profound change in recruitment procedures would have to be undertaken. Recruitment procedures revealing applicants' skills and willingness to spend time and energy on working in the new system would have to be considered as well the possibility for schools to recruit their own staff.⁶

⁶ Pedagogical autonomy is on the agenda of the Working Group II. Whether this implies that schools will have a greater say in recruitment of seconded staff is unclear. *Draft Minutes of the Meeting of Working Group II, "European Baccalaureate and Cooperation with other Schools"*, Troika, Brussels, 22 September 2004. Ref.: 2004-D-7910-en-1 (original in French) Section VII (pages 9 & 10) is on the European Schools' pedagogical autonomy. However, it is the judgement of the President of the Board of Governors that a pedagogical structure with greater autonomy "is not feasible within the existing 1994 Convention." (*Report to the Board of Governors of TROIKA Working Group II, Wider Availability of the European Baccalaureate and Cooperation with other Schools, Board of Governors of the European Schools, Meeting on 28, 29 and 30 April 2004 – at Parma (Italy)*. Ref.: 2004-D-532-en-2) The reference to the present non feasibility is on page 5.

School study guides and websites should describe the planning of the subject matter for the students and the choices available to them.

4.5.4 stakeholder management (external to the school)

Since secondary schools prepare for entrance to higher education that require problem-solving skills as well as autonomy (2.1), coordination of methodology in secondary and higher education would be needed, as well as a more persistent policy in allowing subject combinations in Years 6 and 7 by students with respect to an advanced study. In the Netherlands, the clustering of subjects into profiles that relate to sectors in higher education and the job market⁷ is considered to be an important element in the liaison between secondary and higher education.

Staff teaching in the ultimate stage of the European School system will therefore have to 'renew' their relationship with higher education and the job market. An augmented degree of autonomy would allow European Schools to conclude mutually beneficial partnerships with local or regional institutes for higher education and companies. This would be very much along the lines of Cheng's (2002) "network" schooling referred to in 2.2.

4.6 Conclusion

The results of the questionnaire and the interviews seem to indicate that there is reasonable support for the theoretical concepts of learner-centred learning. However, the researcher envisages problems with the development of self-regulated learning. Italian and French teachers, in particular, have only limited experience with the development of self-regulated learning and coaching methods (4.2, question 1). Several participants (1 teacher and 2 interviewees) also indicated that heavy work-load would prevent a successful adoption of the new approach. They also feel that heightened class numbers would render individual coaching very difficult.

⁷ There are four profiles in the Dutch senior secondary educational system (the so called 'Studiehuis'): Science and Technology, Science and Health, Economics and Society, Culture and Society.

The introduction of a student-centred approach in the last two years of the European School curriculum may not be easy. The lack of school autonomy and the incoherent staff recruitment procedures are not among the least reasons for this.

5. CONCLUSION

A move towards a student-centred approach has to be characterised by professional development and efforts to decentralise decision making. Implementation of such far reaching reforms would require teacher support: "Successful change involves ownership of the process by those involved in them" (Briggs, Sommefeldt: 106). Ownership of school development also emphasises the needs of an individual school (MacBeath, 1999). It is therefore appropriate that the professional development of teaching staff is school based and designed to meet targeted priorities as defined in schools' development plans for teaching and learning. (West-Burnham, 1998)

A bottom-up and student-orientated approach implies that the traditional timetable consisting of teaching hours for each subject and teacher will have to be replaced by a 'study load' approach. Student will have to complete a certain number of learning tasks that total a given number of hours. Traditional contracts for seconded teaching staff stipulate 20-22 teaching hours/week. However, in the new system, teaching obligations per subject are no longer defined in terms of number of lessons but in number of hours the average student has to work on a subject. The way teachers are remunerated would require revision. As shown in 2.2, coordinating and support functions would take up a considerable part of their time.

More flexibility would need to be monitored in more detail. Therefore, a top-down process of control will have to exist in apparent contradiction to the new bottom-up approach.

In view of the micro political problems referred to by interviewee 1 (4.3), even more struggle and animosity may be the result. The relationship between students and teachers and between teachers and school management could become characterised by a 'calculating' attitude.

On a final note, it must be considered that the traditional cognitive approach may still be the most suitable method for younger students⁸. A downside to introducing self-regulated learning in Years 6 and 7 could, therefore, be that Years 1-5 would become very distinct from the courses in Years 6-7 that would be very much orientated to higher education and the job market.

The coexistence of a traditional and a more flexible timetable may be difficult to put into practice as revealed by the interviews (4.4.3).

An alignment as to what shape secondary education should take between the 27 EU states cannot be expected in spite of political and economic changes that have taken place. Still, this fact put aside, recommendations could be made bearing to the operational consequences:

- The lack of adequate teacher skills would seem a major objection to introducing a student-centred approach in this European School. It could be compensated for by training and alternative recruitment procedures.
- The absence of physical means could be solved by setting-up mutually beneficial partnerships with institutes for higher education, colleges and universities, as well as public and private employers. This recommendation draws on Cheng (2002), dealt with in 2.2.
- For both of the above, the school would require more pedagogical as well as budgetary autonomy.
- Procedures preceding changes in the programme should be simplified.

⁸ One participant (see Annex 2, question 13, remark 9) seems to disagree and would be in favour of a gradual implementation, starting at an earlier age.

ANNEX 1:
The Questionnaire

Questionnaire The Student-Centred Approach

11.12.2006

Dear colleagues,

As part of my MBA in Educational Management, I am trying to find out in how far you, as teachers from different countries and backgrounds, are familiar with the so called student-centred approach and how your feelings towards it are. Could you **please take a few minutes to fill in the questionnaire below by ticking a few boxes**? The results will serve my research purposes only and will remain anonymous and confidential.

Please stick the completed form in the blue ballot box (used for staff representative elections) before the Christmas holidays (**last day = Thursday 21 December**).

Thank you for your help.

Winfried van Gool

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE CONSISTS OF THREE PAGES!

I teach in the

German English French Italian Dutch section

Subject(s) taught in Years 6 and/or 7:

Number of years worked as a teacher:

Number of years worked as a teacher in the European School:

Please go to page 2

Student centred approach

Learners can to a certain degree determine their educational needs and outcomes. Teachers become coaches that help students to “develop attitudes which they need as autonomous lifelong learners”. The stress is on the manipulation of knowledge or the student’s relationship with it.

Higher education expects students to be problem-orientated and to possess reflective skills and attitudes. Employers demand that their employees are flexible, capable of developing their own qualifications, and able to cope with the dynamics of modern society. Secondary education has to prepare students for this.

Beside the ‘economic’ argument for learner-centred learning there is a humanistic-pedagogical one. Learners become “active constructors of their own minds, consciously ‘actualising’ their own identities.” They become the leading actors in their auto-transformation process through setting personal goals. A problem-orientated approach implies working from a given experiential base.

1. Are you familiar with the student-centred approach?

- very much so more or less vaguely never heard of it

2. Would you be in favour of introducing such an approach in Years 6 & 7?

- very much so I am sceptical but interested I am sceptical and not really interested No, absolutely not. It could not lead to the desired results

3. Do you have any experience with coaching instead of teaching?

- No Yes (please indicate how long and where)

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4. Would you feel at ease in a new role as a coach instead of a teacher?

- absolutely probably perhaps probably not not at all

Please go to page 3

Higher education expects students to be problem-orientated and to possess reflexive skills and attitudes.

5. Does the Years 6 & 7 syllabus of the subject(s) you teach stress problem-orientation?

- very much so to some extent not really not at all

6. Does the Years 6 & 7 syllabus of the subject(s) you teach stress the development of reflective skills and attitudes?

- very much so to some extent not really not at all

7. Is your teaching to Years 6 & 7 problem orientated?

- very much so to some extent not really not at all

8. Do your teaching methods in Years 6 & 7 develop students' reflective skills and attitudes?

- very much so to some extent not really not at all

Today employers demand that their employees are flexible, capable of developing their own qualifications and able to cope with the dynamics of modern society.

9. Does the Years 6 & 7 syllabus of the subject(s) you teach stress flexibility?

- very much so to some extent not really not at all

10. Does the content of the Years 6 & 7 syllabus of the subject(s) you teach prepare students for modern society and professional life?

- very much so to some extent not really not at all

11. In Years 6 & 7, do you teach your students to be(come) flexible?

- very much so to some extent not really not at all

12. In Years 6 & 7, do you feel you prepare your students well for modern society and professional life?

- very much so to some extent not really not at all

13. Please feel free to make any comments on the student-centred approach!

Thank you for your time.

End of the questionnaire

ANNEX 2:
Results of the Questionnaire

STAFF RESPONSES	D	E	F	I	NL
Question 1					
very much so	66.60%	40%	0%	16.60%	33.30%
more or less	16.60%	40%	50%	33.30%	66.60%
vaguely	16.60%	0%	25%	33.30%	0%
never heard of it	0%	20%	25%	16.60%	0%
Question 2					
very much so	66.60%	60%	25%	16.60%	33.30%
sceptical but interested	33.30%	20%	25%	83.30%	66.60%
sceptical and not interested	0%	20%	25%	0%	0%
no	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%
Question 3					
no	0%	80%	75%	83.30%	0%
yes	100%	20%	25%	16.60%	100%
Question 4					
absolutely	33.30%	20%	0%	0%	33.30%
probably	33.30%	80%	100%	20%	0%
perhaps	33.30%	0%	0%	80%	66.60%
probably not	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
not at all	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Question 5					
very much so	0%	0%	25%	33.30%	0%
to some extent	33.30%	60%	50%	50%	66.60%
not really	50%	40%	25%	16.60%	33.30%
not at all	16.60%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Question 6					
very much so	0%	40%	25%	50%	0%
to some extent	66.60%	40%	50%	33.30%	100%
not really	16.60%	20%	25%	16.60%	0%
not at all	16.60%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Question 7					
very much so	50%	20%	25%	33.30%	66.60%
to some extent	50%	60%	75%	16.60%	33.30%
not really	0%	20%	0%	33.30%	33.30%
not at all	0%	0%	0%	16.60%	0%
Question 8					
very much so	66.60%	20%	50%	16.60%	0%
to some extent	33.30%	80%	50%	88.30%	66.60%
not really	0%	0%	0%	0%	33.30%
not at all	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Question 9					
very much so	0%	0%	50%	20%	0%
to some extent	33.30%	80%	0%	60%	0%
not really	50%	20%	50%	20%	100%
not at all	16.60%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Question 10					
very much so	16.60%	40%	25%	0%	0%
to some extent	50%	40%	50%	100%	66.60%
not really	33.30%	20%	25%	0%	33.30%
not at all	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Question 11					
very much so	33.30%	40%	25%	0%	0%
to some extent	33.30%	60%	50%	80%	66.60%
not really	33.30%	0%	25%	20%	33.30%
not at all	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Question 12					
very much so	0%	20%	25%	0%	0%
to some extent	100%	80%	75%	80%	100%
not really	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%
not at all	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Answers Question 13:

1. A German economics teachers stated coaching is hardly possible in the present conditions.

2. A French biology teacher expressed rather strong animosity towards the student-centred approach in saying that it has nothing to do with education and that its objective is none other than producing "slaves for industry". He feels it to be the result of neo-liberal thinking and wants to have nothing to do with it. Education should stress philosophical, not economic values and he refers to literature by educationalists such as Ferry and Condorcet to prove his point.

Students in his view are incapable of working autonomously and should be given clear directions by the teacher at every moment.

4. A German science teacher who is very much in favour of the student-orientated approach, feels time pressure and inadequate syllabi make it impossible at present.

5. An English and Philosophy teacher who is not convinced of the benefits of the student-centred approach but who claims to be very much familiar with it says that authorities, in planning school buildings, should do so with the physical consequences of such an approach in the back of their minds. The present building is inadequate: too small, not enough rooms to set up media centres and self-study rooms.

6. An English ethics teacher feels her subject is right for a student-centred approach because it is a non-examination subject. "Ethics classes help students to become more reflective in their approach to various life issues." However, she is unsure whether it could work with examination orientated subjects.

7. An English teacher remarks: "I think student-centred goes down to a very basic principle which is that teachers are there to serve students and not the other way round."

8. An Italian Philosophy teacher feels a student-centred approach is more adequate for his subject than for chemistry for example.

9. An Italian teacher feels a student-centred approach should be seen as a gradual process that would have to be introduced at an earlier stage than in Year 6. In that way, students in the final stage of secondary education would feel at ease in the method and independent research will have become a habit.

10. A Dutch teacher who claims to be familiar with the student-centred approach says many teachers working in the Dutch 'Studiehuis' have lost motivation because they feel they are being reduced to acting as coaches. They feel they cannot sufficiently express themselves and that most students require an inspiring teacher that can interest them through their inspiring teaching methods.

11. A Dutch teacher who is familiar with the approach says this method only works for good and motivated students that can organise themselves. For others it is disastrous.

Return rates questionnaire

section	Teacher number	Number of Returns 1 st time	Percentage Returns 1 st time	Number of Returns 2 nd time	Percentage Returns 2 nd time
D	18	6	33.3%	15	83.3%
E	12	5	41.6%	10	83.3%
F	7	4	57.1%	4	57.1%
I	6	1	16.6%	6	100%
N	4	3	75%	3	75%
Σ	47	19	40.4%	38	80.1%

ANNEX 3:
Transcript of the Interviews

Interview 1:

Interviewee: a Dutch mathematics and science teacher / timetabler

Date: 18.12.2006

Place: the interviewer's office

Type: face-to-face

This interviewee pointed out a few problems of the new approach that have to do with micro politics of the school in The Netherlands he used to work in. If only few students choose to attend optional lessons this could mean two different things: the teacher concerned already provides sufficient coaching and instruction during regular lessons, or, that particular lesson is considered too easy by students or they may rate that teacher's instructional and coaching skills low. A struggle for students may be the result. To be on the safe side, teachers may influence students in favour of attending their optional lessons. Hence, the introduction of the new system intensifies already existing micro politics. This may cause increased feelings of animosity between members of staff that do not go unnoticed by students.

In his subject, mathematics, autonomous working and problem solving goes without saying. The role of the teacher is different from a teacher-centred approach in that the teacher needs to get 'insight into the heads of their students' to find out what motivates them. A student-centred approach is very versatile because everyone can find something interesting in it. It is also a very efficient approach because stronger students do not need to wait for weaker ones anymore. In a teacher-centred approach, the teacher adapts his teaching to the average student.

Another sound effect of the student-centred approach is the transfer of responsibility to the student; "Just like in real life."

For this approach to work you need a strong, motivated, dynamic management that is convinced of itself. Management should motivate their staff who, in their turn, motivate the students. This simply does not work in the European School because managers and teachers are not selected with such a vision in mind. There is no homogeneity in

recruitment procedures. With the application of staff from many European countries the school has no say at all. This he feels to be a bad situation; it is totally inappropriate to create a team spirit and a feeling of ownership. He cannot imagine a student-centred approach ever working in a European School because of this.

A downside felt by teachers and management in the Netherlands is the increased level of inspection. The State attributes a lump sum to the school. This financial independence allows the school to set its targets and priorities. However, government inspection has increased to see if attainment targets are reached and structures are appropriate to provide the didactical content required by the authorities. Results are published and naming and shaming, applying to schools and even individual teachers, is the result. Groups of teachers lose security in this way.

He also mentions timetable implications. Being one of the school timetablers, he does not see how two different timetable systems could possibly coexist. "With five language sections, things are complicated enough as they are now!"

Interview 2:

Interviewee: the Head of a European School

Date: 20.12.2006

Place: the interviewee's office

Type: face-to-face

This interview is with a Director of a European School who formerly occupied this post in two other European Schools. His experiences with a student-centred approach in Denmark are resumed by the words: "It was a fiasco." Having a keen interest in Educational Management in general he is wondering why in the past few years the method is being propagated again in educational management courses whereas experiments run in Scandinavia have shown that it only works for intelligent and motivated pupils while it creates a larger amount of dropouts than in teacher-centred approaches.

He then quickly moved from pedagogical to management considerations and expounds a list of arguments explaining why, in his view such an approach could never be adopted in the European School system.

Firstly, there is the matter of recognition of the European Baccalaureate by all 27 member states of the European Union. At present, there is a clear curriculum sanctioned by an official examination that is unique in the world in that it is valid, without any national assessment, in all EU countries as well as some other countries in the world. Profoundly changing the nature of 'delivering' the final stage of the curriculum would undermine that principle. In any case, any attempt at doing so would require the agreement of all 27. The procedures would be lengthy, if not endless. The chances that all would agree are infinitely small.

Secondly, the European Baccalaureate in its present form gives access to universities in all EU member states. This right would also be questioned if a student-centred approach were introduced and students' careers and futures may be compromised.

However, he is not totally hostile towards this method. A positive consequence of following such an approach is linked to the school's connection with the outside. In this school, the number of Category 2 students is increasing every year. Ever since his arrival at the head of this school, he has played an important role in this. "The survival of this school is directly linked to this, since the European Commission seems to want to close four of the smaller schools on the basis of there being insufficient Category 1 and 2 students." He believes that a more active role of companies in the PAMINA⁹ region could secure the school's existence in the future. "Part of our students will form these companies' future members of staff" he says.

Thirdly, relating to school internal management issues, he would envisage the following obstacles:

1. Teachers must work more in teams, which would be more time consuming because it would involve plenary, coordinating and evaluative meetings.
2. It would be difficult to motivate staff because there may not be enough support for this approach and because 'opening the classroom' may cause teachers to feel uncomfortable. Their present role gives teachers security which he feels they would not wish to trade in against an uncertain future in which their central role is taken away and in which they are put on the periphery of students' education; are mere tools to be accessed, like the internet or an encyclopaedia.
3. There is no real feeling of ownership among staff. Teachers do not identify themselves with the school as they may do in national systems. This is partly due to the nine-year rule which he believes to be a bad rule.
4. The library would have a different function. It would take the place of the classroom as the physical centre of learning. This would require considerable financial investment. "No money is to be expected from

⁹ PAMINA is the Euro-region in the Strasbourg / Karlsruhe area. It means 'Palatinat du Sud, Mittlerer Oberrhein, Nord de l'Alsace'.

Brussels. Only financing by companies that are more actively involved in our students' education would be a way forward here.

5. Practical issues, such as a module based timetable in Years 6 and 7 coexisting with a traditional subject based one in Years 1 – 5 may cause major implementation problems.
6. Booking procedures for hardware, rooms, etc will be complicated and a total restructuring would be required. This cannot take place without a high degree of coherence and motivation of staff.

Interview 3:

Interviewee: a former Deputy of two European Schools

Date: 21.12.2006

Place: the interviewer's office

Type: face-to-face

This is an interview with a former Deputy Head of two European Schools who has a great deal of experience with the student-centred approach from her time as a teacher in the Portuguese educational system. She says she cannot imagine that this approach could function in the European School system.

The first reason she gives for this is a purely pedagogical one: "it simply does not work". The system, she feels, is ok for interested students who are motivated by their parents and in whose families studying occupies an important place. However, her experience has taught her that it does not work for less fortunate and weaker students.

A second reason is linked to the way the European Schools are administered and decisions are made. It is impossible to change anything in this system without the accord of all (27) members of the European Union. Any change is preceded by the work of a working group that normally takes about two years to present its findings to the Board of Inspectors. All inspectors need to express their opinion and any single one can reject it. Once a proposal gets passed this stage, it is sent to all schools for teachers' comments and then back to the inspection. From there, it goes to the Pedagogical Committee that needs to officially confirm any change to the programme. Once authorised by the Pedagogical Committee, the proposal is sent back to the Board of Governors. Any proposal has to be submitted to this time consuming procedure. Often, when a programme has been changed in this way it is no longer actual. This is the situation concerning small changes in the programme. Introducing a student-centred approach would imply a major change. The changes of that taking place are equal to zero.

A third reason has to do with the irregularity of in-service training. It is not a rarity that members of staff in their nine-year secondment are not offered any training. A coherent

policy in in-service training would be required if such a fundamental change in the curriculum were to take place.

A fourth reason is the incoherence of staff recruitment procedures. Recruitment can take place through a competitive examination or through an interview. Although she prefers the latter method, even that one does not guarantee the quality of teachers recruited. However, many countries, especially southern European, do not accept recruitment procedures taking into account personal skills and motivation and in which the school is at least partly involved in the selection of its staff. The result is the absence of a team spirit, the absence of identification with the school, etc. A coherent staff is what a student-centred approach would require before any thing else. At present, cross-subject activities would be next to impossible when one realises that cooperation within one language section or one subject is already a big problem.

Interview 4:

Interviewee: a school librarian

Date: 21.12.2006

Place: the school library

Type: face-to-face

This is an interview with the Dutch school librarian. She is well aware of the student-centred approach through literature and direct experience in the Netherlands. She feels she possesses the skills to transform the library into a media centre and would very much welcome the opportunity to do so.

More space would be required to allow for more students to work here at the same time, as well as separate rooms for group and pair work. "We have the most extensive library of all European Schools here", she claims and proudly shows the collection categorised by language sections (five in all). The library also has subscriptions to a large variety of scientific, cultural, economic, political and literary magazines. Reference works such as dictionaries in many languages and encyclopaedias are also part of the collection as well as a small CD and DVD collection. "Most of what would be required for individual and autonomous learning is already here." However, adequate reservation procedures for hardware, software and other materials would be required. This cannot be realised without the help of teachers.

All students have access to computers in this school. Students have their passwords to access their profile and the internet. IT lessons are part of the curriculum in every year now and the necessary IT skills are already being taught in Years 1 – 5. However, at present, the library is working alongside teachers. Communication with teaching staff is an enormous problem. The library disposes of a sound budget to keep its collection up-to-date but we need the teachers to tell us what to buy and this is not always done.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beck, U., Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002) *Individualization*. London: Sage Publications.
- Beck, U., Giddens, A., Lash, S. (1994) *Reflexive Modernization*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bell, L. (2001) 'Cross-curriculum co-ordination' *Managing the Curriculum*. London: Sage Publications.
- Briggs, A.R.J., Sommefeldt, D. (2002) *Managing Effective Learning and Teaching*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Burton, N. (2001) Managing the planning of learning and teaching, in Middlewood, D., Burton, N. (eds) (2001) *Managing the Curriculum*, London: Sage. (pp. 55-69)
- Bush, T. (2002) Authenticity – reliability, validity and triangulation, in Coleman, M., Briggs, A. (eds.) (2002) *Research Methods in Educational Leadership*, London: Sage Publications.
- Castells, M. (1996) *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Cheng, Y. C. (2000) 'A CMI-triplization paradigm for reforming education in the new millennium', *International Journal of Educational Management*. 14(4), 156-174.
- Cheng, Y. C., (2002) 'Linkage between Innovative Management and Student-Centred Approach: Platform Theory for Effective Learning', Centre for Research and International Collaboration, Hong Kong Institute of Education (Plenary Speech at the Office of the National Education Commission, Bangkok, 2-5 September 2002).
- Cheng, Y. C. (2005), 'Shifting the paradigm – Learning and reform on sundry waves', Hong Kong: Asia-Pacific Educational Research Association, Centre for Science, Development and Media Studies.

Egan, K. (1999) 'Education's three old ideas and a better idea', *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, Vol. 31, no. 3, pp. 257-67.

Levin, H. M. (1997) *Accelerated Education for an Accelerating Economy*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Educational Research, the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Lumby, J. (2001) 'Framing teaching and learning in the twenty-first century', in Middlewood, D., Burton, N. (eds) (2001) *Managing the Curriculum*, London: Sage. (pp. 3-17)

MacBeath, J. (1999) *Schools Must Speak for Themselves*, London: Routledge.

Marsh C. J. (1997) *Perspectives: Key Concepts for Understanding the Curriculum*, London: Falmer Press.

Morrison, M. (2002) What do we mean by educational research? in Coleman, M., Briggs, A. (eds.) (2002) *Research Methods in Educational Leadership*, London: Sage Publications.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (1996) *Information Technology and the Future of Post-Secondary Education*, Paris: CERI.

Ranson, S. (1994) *Towards a Learning Society*. London: Cassell Education.

Ross, A. (2000) *Curriculum Construction and Critique*. London: Falmer Press.

Silcock, P., Brundrett, M. 'The management consequences of different models of teaching and learning' in Middlewood, D. and Burton, N. (eds.) (2001) *Managing the Curriculum*, London: Sage Publications. (pp. 35-51)

West-Burnham, J. (1998) 'Leading and managing school-based development' in West-Burnham, J., O'Sullivan, F., *Leadership and Professional Development in Schools*, London: Pitman.