Future Classroom Lab School Leaders
A new initiative from European Schoolnet

European Schoolnet is a network of 30 European Ministries of Education which aims to bring innovation in teaching and learning to its key stakeholders: Ministries of Education, schools, teachers, researchers and industry partners. As a leading think tank for policy makers working at both national and regional level in education, European Schoolnet also aims to inform the future direction of European Commission research programmes by highlighting and addressing strategic challenges and roadblocks that remain related to the mainstreaming of innovative, ICT-enabled pedagogical approaches in school.

In December 2014, with support from two of its industry partners (Microsoft and Promethean), European Schoolnet took a first step towards establishing a pan-European school leaders network under its existing Future Classroom Lab initiative[1]. In a first phase which ended in June 2015, school leaders from five countries have been working together with a particular focus on identifying:

- Key challenges for head teachers and school leaders trying to implement whole-school use of ICT;
- Perceived gaps in the resources and training that is currently available for school leaders which support change management.

This short document has been produced following the initial pilot with these school leaders to:
- Explain the rationale for this new European Schoolnet initiative;
- Summarise the recommendations that have emerged from this first phase; and
- Inform a wider group of stakeholders (education ministries, industry partners, the European Commission) who may wish to be part of and help support the next phase of this initiative.

The importance of school leadership in mainstreaming innovation

The rationale for this new initiative is very simple; it is widely recognized that good leadership is an essential factor in bringing about innovation and change in organisations and this is increasingly critical in schools that are seeking to integrate ICT. Education has been described as a 'messy' system, with many conflicting pressures and demands on it and a very wide range of levers to pull if change is to endure – and technology is only one of these levers, an essential enabler but not a cause of change.

In such conditions, an informed, well-supported proactive leader is essential, as evidenced for example in Schools for 21st Century Learners (OECD, 2015[2]):
> *What do you need to create a responsive 21st century school? Three key ingredients are*

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[1] http://fcl.eun.org/school-leaders
[2] http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/schools-for-21st-century-learners_9789264231191-en#page11

teachers who are confident in their ability to teach, a willingness to innovate, and strong school leaders who establish the conditions in their schools that enable the first two ingredients to flourish.

Among those conditions is an adequate technological infrastructure to support the 21st century school. A 2015 report for the European Parliament, Learning and Technology Options, also reiterates the importance of the school leader:

School leaders are important catalysts for change; they play a crucial role in fostering an environment where technology is smoothly integrated into the educational process by providing strategic vision, defining consistent priorities, establishing clear goals, creating a supportive environment, and developing actions aimed at transforming closed institutions into connected open learning communities. [3]

This implies that school leaders understand the potential of technology to transform learning in their school. However, according to a May 2015 post by OECD's Andreas Schleicher, this may not be true:

Between 80% and 90% of school principals say that their schools are adequately equipped when it comes to computers and Internet connectivity – even principals in the many countries where the equipment is clearly substandard. So is technology not that important? Or are school leaders not aware of the potential of ICT to transform learning? [4]

European Schoolnet believes that there indeed remains much to do in terms of capacity building of school leaders. However, finding new mechanisms whereby busy head teachers and school leaders can be made more aware of the potential of technology to support teaching and learning remains extremely challenging.

This first pilot with school leaders has confirmed this view but it has also started to suggest a way forward and how some additional resources, approaches, training and support could be provided at European level to help them better understand the potential of ICT and the benefits from adopting a whole school approach to technology deployment.

FCL school leaders initiative: phase one

This first, exploratory phase (phase one) was supported by Microsoft and Promethean and coordinated by European Schoolnet as part of its Future Classroom Lab initiative. It brought together an expert group of 12 school leaders of showcase schools from Norway, Sweden, Austria, UK and Portugal, to share their experiences on leading change to 21st century teaching and learning in their schools.

The work (January – June 2015) included a series of four webinars and a face-to-face weekend workshop in the Future Classroom Lab in Brussels to review existing, change management resources from European Schoolnet, Microsoft, Promethean and European Schoolnet. An overview of all of these existing resources/support is published in the end of phase 1 report, for example:

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[3] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/547407/EPRS_STU(2015)547407_EN.pdf , page 6.
[4] http://oecdeducationtoday.blogspot.fr/2015/05/are-schools-ready-to-join-technological.html

The European Schoolnet Future Classroom Toolkit[5]

The Future Classroom Toolkit enables school leaders, education policy-makers, teachers and ICT suppliers to create and implement Future Classroom Scenarios which provide a clear vision of innovative teaching and learning practices. It can be used to introduce or scale up innovative use of ICT in a school or across a number of schools within an education system. The rationale for this process is to bring about incremental but sustainable change in the education system.The toolkit encourages whole school use of ICT by:

- Creating an educational vision that is ambitious but achievable
- Involving all key stakeholders involved in designing a schools' ICT strategy
- Focusing on advanced pedagogical practices and change management
- Designing engaging Learning Activities that bring innovation through the use of ICT to support learner acquisition of 21st Century skills
- Evaluating the use of Learning Activities

Microsoft Partners in Learning[6]

First launched in 2003, Partners in Learning is now a global network serving educators and school leaders in over 119 countries and available in 36 different languages. It delivers a portfolio of professional development, curricula, tools and resources designed to advance 21st century teaching, learning and digital inclusion that improve learning outcomes for every student. Partners in Learning is part of Microsoft Education's wider holistic approach to supporting schools with change. This approach includes a set of published papers (Education Transformation Framework) to help senior educationalists and policy-makers with the critical conversations that are needed for effective transformation of education systems. These research-based papers cover topics such as: Vision for Anytime Anywhere Learning for All; Public, Private and Community Partnerships for Employability; Designing Technology for Efficient and Effective School. The approach also includes a practical Design, Deploy and Transform phased programme to implement 1:1 computing within the school, starting with the case for change (phase one), moving through to strategies for change (phase 3), and then to the final review, monitor and evaluation (phase 5). The Innovative Schools Toolkit also provides a practical guide for schools.

Promethean Technology Integration Matrix[7]

Promethean offers schools a portfolio of professional development, curricula, tools and resources, supported by the active Promethean Planet teacher community. Resources include the Education Transformation Framework and support of in-school learning labs (FCL+) and the EUN Future Classroom Toolkit. One of the tools reviewed in the pilot was the Technology Integration Matrix (TIM) which illustrates how teachers can use technology to enhance learning for K-12 students. The TIM incorporates five interdependent characteristics of meaningful learning environments: active, construct, goal directed (i.e. reflective), authentic, and collaborative (Jonassen, Howland, Moore & Marra, 2003). The TIM associates five levels of technology integration (i.e. entry, adoption, adaptation, infusion, and transformation) with each of the five characteristics of

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[5] http://fcl.eun.org/toolkit
[6] http://www.microsoft.com/education/en-ie/partners-in-learning/Pages/network.aspx
[7] http://www.prometheanworld.com/gb/english/education/timtools/

meaningful learning environments. Together, the five levels of technology integration and the five characteristics of meaningful learning environments create a matrix of 25 cells.

During phase 1 the experiences of school leaders from Microsoft and Promethean showcase schools was shared to capture what worked for them in leading change and their recommendations for future activities.

Reflections from school leaders

What is interesting are the challenges that the leaders of these showcase schools continue to face, what their top issues are now and how they are seeking to address them:

- Initial teacher training: newly qualified teachers are continuing to come into schools with a traditional mindset in terms of teaching and learning practice and are poorly equipped to make innovative use of ICT from a pedagogical perspective.
- There is a need to refine strategies for the measurement of impact, leading to greater use of data and measurement to help support decision making:
  - Self-reflection evaluation surveys of teachers and students to measure, monitor and set a plan each year e.g. focus on improving feedback, involving students in shaping school learning plans.
  - Approaching universities to seek help with independent evaluation of impact; however, securing engagement from universities has proved difficult due to a lack of funding.
- Working within the varying constraints placed on school leaders and their freedom to lead and manage change in their schools. In some countries/regions, policy and budgets, as well as the overall allocation and management of teachers is handled centrally. The freedom to engage and allow experts from outside into schools is also limited.
- Common issues: the 'test, test, test' and exam culture continuing to dictate approach.

What was common to all the expert school leaders in the working group was:

- A shared passion/belief that the mainstreaming of innovative, ICT-enabled pedagogical approaches in school is the right way for the future of their students;
- The view that they are in it for the long term – there is no quick fix;
- Their determination to succeed - overcoming the barriers one by one (even if not able to do immediately, they have their plans 'in the bottom drawer' ready to pull out, e.g. redesign of school buildings);
- The value of networking with other school leaders (school leader is often a lonely job);
- Actively encouraging a culture of collaboration in their schools, working hard to bring all their teachers on board.

A short video from the May 2015 workshop was produced to convey this passion: *Building a network of school leaders in Europe*[8]

The following conclusions can be drawn from the activities of the school leaders in the pilot:

- The opportunity to network both face-to-face and online with other school leaders was highly valued and the European dimension was particularly important as it exposed

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[8] youtu.be/SZrnQWbXS6Y

school leaders to ideas and innovative practices that were not always visible in their national context.

- The most beneficial workshop sessions/inputs were those on leading change, and collaborative learning.
- The resources reviewed in the project were all found to be useful but were seen to overlap and, in order to exploit them fully, it was suggested that support/consultancy would be needed to 'bring them to life'. There was a consensus that more is needed than just free online resources.

Looking forward, the schools leaders suggested that:

A European network of school leaders needs to be high profile and seen as 'prestigious' to join, offering opportunities to exchange views and practice between both experienced and not so experienced school leaders. There needs to be 'something for everyone' to encourage membership and on-going participation. The size of such a network relates to the activities and budget. For example, supporting the cost of bringing all school leaders together to meet once a year, and the ability to network and work together through facilitated forums.

It is important **not to lose the momentum** that has been built up during this first, exploratory phase. European Schoolnet should explore possibilities for funding a phase 2, including via European Commission research programmes. A project for school leaders is needed that aims to:

- **Support a network for school leaders in Europe.**
    - o It needs to have a clear purpose and an added value. For example, focusing on a priority issue such as the impact of mainstreaming innovative, ICT-enabled pedagogical approaches in school, working together with research-based institutions.
- **Bring together existing materials** with a view to developing and testing a European toolkit for leading digital age change including:
    - o a 'roadmap' to the wide range of existing resources available to schools, including those reviewed in phase 1, ideally with links to local partners to help 'bring them to life'.
    - o an online course that would be of interest to a larger constituency of school leaders who may not be active members of the network. Integrate the toolkit with an online MOOC to create a hybrid programme, running over several weeks, offering a mix of pan-European and localized resources. The outline of such a course was developed during phase one and proposed 6 modules:
        - Module 1: Why should we develop new pedagogical approaches using technology in our schools?
        - Module 2: How to identify a specific development focus at classroom level and school level?
        - Module 3: How to assess my schools' level of innovation/technology maturity?
        - Module 4: How to develop more staff collaboration and sharing of best practices?
        - Module 5: How to organise effective professional development for mainstreaming pedagogical change?
        - Module 6: How to set up a school learning lab?

- o <u>Accredit</u> those using the toolkit and completing the online MOOC – involve universities, certification bodies.
- o <u>Build links to existing networks of schools and head teachers in Europe</u>, such as the European School Heads Association and also to the eTwinning network of schools and teachers which now covers more than 320,000 teachers spread across Europe.

Recommendations from phase one

The following recommendations were made following the phase one pilot.

1. There is a need to support a pan-European network of school leaders to facilitate the sharing of best practice related to change management involving whole school use of ICT and to provide new opportunities for school leaders to engage in high quality professional learning.
2. It is important to raise awareness and disseminate more widely training resources that are already available for school leaders – *however,* recognizing that there is a need for translation and localisation to make these more accessible to school leaders across Europe, together with a model for local consultancy and support.
3. New mechanisms are required to make it easier for school leaders to engage with universities, particularly to assist with the evaluation of impact data that will be necessary to convince policy-makers to invest in curriculum reform and new approaches to assessment that support of 21st century learning.
4. A new, pan-European network of school leaders should engage with initial teacher training institutes, to ensure that the training of new teachers incorporates modern pedagogical approaches and prepares student teachers for work in classrooms where learners have access to a wide range of ICT solutions.

The phase one report and recommendations is published as a slide deck at http://fcl.eun.org/school-leaders. A model to support the working group and extend its influence and impact is now being explored.