
Spotlight Session—Going Dutch, by Satellite **Windows on The Netherlands: Collaboration and Commitment with Information Technology in Education**

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Introduction

The purpose of this international videoconference is to highlight some of the large variety of activities involving information technology in Dutch schools. Examples will be given of projects and activities in elementary and secondary schools; of Dutch innovations with respect to educational software, multi-media, and telecommunications use in education; and of projects involving The Netherlands and other countries throughout Europe. A main aspect in these activities is collaboration, working together toward restructuring in education.

Interconnectedness, in Society and Education

The Netherlands is a small, densely populated country in the center of the European Community. Rapid technological developments in society and rapidly escalating interconnectiveness within Europe and with the rest of the world are reflected in the sorts of educational developments that are occurring in our land. We are committed to the idea that our students must develop the skills and understandings necessary to function in this emerging interconnected information society. As one aspect of this, we see an increasing demand for more flexible education and new forms of collaboration to bring about change and even restructuring in the educational system. One way in which this is occurring is a change away from a centrally led and managed education system where the school and citizen are more and more responsible for themselves and their own initiatives,

In education, this restructuring is being translated as "the autonomous school." In this vision, schools will become self-standing units that can determine their own policy, with the central Ministry only establishing some overall learning objectives. Through a form of "partnerships" with other schools and industry, schools will be able to get money from the Ministry for special projects and activities, but these projects and activities are planned and managed by the partnerships. In the future, the schools therefore will more and more make their own policy and choose their own services and resources, on the basis of a total school commitment. Schools who share a certain vision will work together in different kinds of collaborative networks. Schools may also transform their sense of their target groups and even their physical boundaries, as demand for life-long learning and (re)training increases in society. The schools may become centers for adult education as well as for the traditional age groups of students. And even in a small land such as The Netherlands, the need for and use of telecommunications for "telecooperation" and "telelearning" will steadily grow. And, as the borders—political and geographical—are changing so rapidly in Europe, the need to find flexible ways of being in contact with the world outside the schoolroom or the office or the home will continue to increase. Information technology and telecommunications are of major importance to give us and our children the skills to find our way in the information society and to be part of the interconnected world.

This transition in our schools is happening on the basis of considerable experience and experimentation with different forms

of collaboration in education. In particular, we can see many different examples of collaboration and commitment with respect to the introduction and support of information technology in schools. In this teleconference, we will "open the windows" on The Netherlands to get a glimpse of some of the many examples of collaboration that are occurring in The Netherlands with respect to "working together to total commitment" with regard to new technologies in education.

Collaboration and Information Technology in Education in The Netherlands

The Dutch word for collaboration is "samenwerking", working together, and samenwerking is a key theme in our activities with respect to stimulating the use of information technology in education. In this teleconference, we will try to "open our windows" to give NECC participants a look at a number of different projects that show how "working together" works in The Netherlands. We will interactively visit projects or people connected to projects that show many different aspects of working together:

1. Working together within the school--The "Proefschoon" project--where partnerships between schools, the universities, and the Ministry have stimulated total-school commitment to exploring the uses of computer-related technology in education.
2. Working together for software development and dissemination - the "POCO" project, where the educational community, educational publishers, and software development companies are working together in a nationwide long-term project to bring quality software into Dutch schools.
3. Working together for support of computers in elementary education--the PRINT/COMENIUS project--where national support guides the integrated infusion of hardware and software into elementary schools throughout the country and where teacher training (and also "training" of the school principals) takes place in partnership with the teacher training institutions, the institutions for support in the schools, and even a national institution for educational television.
4. Working together to create innovative multi-media learning materials--the "COMPUTERJOURNAAL" -- where the National Curriculum Institute, the National Center for Educational Television, and the Dutch PTT Telecom (telephone and telecommunications service) collaborate in the development and dissemination of multi-media, curriculum-related learning materials throughout The Netherlands.
5. Working together on telecommunications initiatives, both national and international, where one of the many telecommunications activities taking place in Dutch schools and for Dutch teachers will be highlighted as an example of working together in a European perspective.
6. Working together to stimulate and coordinate innovation and implementation of information technology in education--the PRINT project--as national leadership for innovation and collaboration in education involving information technology. One of the many partnerships between the universities, teacher training institutes and the PRINT project has resulted in the innovation of the national physics curriculum by integrating information technology.

Conclusion

Our conclusion, with respect to this Special Session and teleconference, will only be a beginning, a beginning of making new connections, friendships, and partnerships through our participation in NECC. In a later (project) session of NECC '92, "Information Technology in The Netherlands: From Project to Total School Commitment," we will describe in more detail the projects we have taken a "bird's-eye-view" of during our teleconference. In this Spotlight Session we have opened the windows on our Dutch activities, showing how we work together for change and improvement in education with the help of new technologies. We invite you to visit us again--but next time, not only a "televisit!"