Journeys in Search of the Baltic Sea
Teacher – Cross-Border Collaboration
and Dialogues within the Cohab Project

Daniel Alvunger and Björn Nelson (ed.)

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1. Introduction

by Daniel Alvunger

He felt the passion before a flower stalk’s curve, the solemnity in front of a cloud landscape and that was the major point. It was not enough to appreciate the other’s canvasses. Comprehending art did not make you an artist. Nature itself must create this craving desire in you and make the hand twitch impatiently so that an invisible brush would begin to move between the fingers. It was the landscape that controlled the brushstrokes. The world whispered its secrets in a language that the others couldn’t understand. (Jensen 2007, p. 93, translation DA)

Before the first meeting with all the partners in the COHAB (Co-ordination and integration of higher education and the labour market around the South Baltic sea: for a more detailed description see chapter 2) project in August 2011, I was asked by the project management to present and talk about my work with the dialogue seminar method in teacher education (I will give a more detailed presentation of this method below). Once I had approved and said “yes”, I began to think about how my work best should be presented for my colleagues in the project.

It is fairly easy to give a theoretical and methodological account of dialogue seminars, but it is a very delicate matter to try to explain and explicitly describe how it turns out in practice, and what I regard to be the essence of it. The latter: the difficulties to make practical knowledge and familiarity of knowledge accessible, is in fact what underpins the rationale and idea with the dialogue seminar method. But there I was, and I found no other solution than to involve the auditorium in how one of the most fundamental aspects of the dialogue seminar method works: to awaken spontaneous associations, thoughts and reflections, that bring forth examples and analogies sprung out from the conceptual world of the professional.

In my presentation I started with the quote that is in the beginning of this text. It is a very short passage from the Danish novelist Carsten Jensen’s book The Final Journey and it describes the moment when the lead character in the novel for the first time realises that he is an artist. It is not merely a cognitive state of mind but a very physical sensation for him: he feels. Now, the point of using this passage was not to provide all those who read it with the description and analysis of how the artist becomes aware of his transformation. I didn't comment on the text before almost everyone had had their say. The thing is that according to the dialogue seminar method there is no correct reading or interpretation of this passage. The whole idea is to see what comes out from the readers, and then gradually and systematically, through dialogues and a series of seminars observe how concepts, examples and analogies form.

In the current situation we did not have time for a more thorough discussion, but it was interesting to see how some said that the phrase "Comprehending art did not make you an artist” made them think about teaching. It is one thing to be able to give a account of how it generally works in theory, but this does not make you a teacher, and it is a totally different game to do it in practice. Other reactions to this text were about “flow”, when you are just doing something, or the question of retrieving a language of your own.

This book is not about the dialogue seminar method, but it is founded on the same underlying
idea of this method, which is that we learn through reflecting upon and sharing our experiences, and that critical dialogues, research and collaboration lead to the empowerment of us as individuals, and provide us with a preparedness for change so we can make a difference for a better world. In this respect this book is in fact not at all to be regarded as a traditional report of an international mobility project. For those who are interested in more hard facts and the course of the project there are other kinds of documentation which will give you a splendid overview, for example Cohab: Barriers and Opportunities for Mobility in the South Baltic Region from 2012. We in ““Team Teacher”, as we who were working with teacher education called ourselves, felt that only quantitative data and general results could not lead us into the heart of understanding mobility. In short, this anthology reflects another way of dealing with and presenting staff and student mobility.

The Idea of this Book

When students leave their home country and encounter another culture, what do they really experience and feel? How should they find words for their emotions? Early in the project our team was convinced that something indeed would be missed out if we did not study and try to grasp the more “soft” values and aspects of mobility. We thought that we should put the students in the driver’s seat and tell about how it is like to take part and collaborate in an international setting. Moreover, this was the first mobility project in the South Baltic Sea region with the design of a combination of study visits and virtual teaching/blended learning for teacher students (and nurse students). This not only gave us unique opportunities for doing something for the first time, but to think and elaborate in new and challenging ways.

Because of our ambition to look at what happens, and how teachers and students experience mobility, we needed methods to help us to “get into the heads of the students and ourselves”, and give us a better understanding of processes in cultural encounters, from both student and teacher perspectives. In this respect we were helped by the dialogue seminar method, round table discussions, blogs and so on. But we also had to work out something for how the students could tell about what it is like to take part and collaborate in an international setting. We thought that the best thing would be for all the participants to share their experiences, thoughts, impressions and reflections on the project, and that a good way of sharing was a personal narrative. It is this very idea that underpins this anthology. Apart from seminars and blogs, the students conducted interviews with students and teachers, and could use this material in their narratives as well.

Our idea to use personal narratives is also the result of the process of planning and working with the activities for student mobility in the project. One of the main tasks for the teachers was to plan and create a summer school and a parallel teaching course based on virtual teaching and a number of study visits in the participating countries. During our work with the content in the course we realised that the different modules regarding professional skill and mobility, inter-regional virtual communication and culture and society had to be patched together. We needed a common figure of thought, image or metaphor to make the modules appear as parts of a whole, and to create a pedagogical platform for both us as teachers and the students.

During our planning we came up with two different elements that not only separately would serve as inspiration for the students, but together could form a powerful platform. By using “the Baltic Sea Teacher” as a figure of thought when it concerned the learning objectives and the different assignments, and “The Journey” as a metaphor for the progression and explorative dimensions in terms of intercultural encounters in the project, it was our ambition to create a solid structure. Furthermore this helped us to outline the learning and experiential trajectory of
each student. To go on a journey is in many ways putting yourself at risk. As Gert Biesta has put it, risk-taking provides a condition for learning. You do not know in advance what you might learn about the surrounding world, or about yourself. Furthermore, what you exactly learn can also be unclear: you might find out new things you did not ask for or even expect (Biesta 2004).

This anthology consists of personal narratives from both the participating teachers and students. We hope that it may serve as inspiration for future teacher students who are thinking about international exchanges. Moreover this book can be used for teacher educators, because it consists of a varied collection of experiences and thoughts regarding students perceptions of international collaboration and cultural encounters. It also gives an account of how teacher educators experience what it is to work within cross-border co-operation, and thus are relevant for teacher educators in regions all across Europe.

You will see that the idea of a Baltic Sea Teacher and the metaphor of the journey have inspired the authors in different ways. In the editing of the narratives we have been very careful not to change too much and correct in the contributions. Our ambition has been to preserve the personal character of the texts as far as possible.

Before the personal narratives are presented, a background of the COHAB project and the different modules and content of the course for the students will be given in chapter 2. After that Richard Ennals, professor at Kingston University, London, who has been working in international projects all over the world for decades, will give his views and his comments to Cohab as an interregional project, as well as observations he has made in the different narratives of the student teachers and the teacher educators. This introductory chapter ends with a more thorough description of the dialogue seminar method, and how it was applied in this particular project.

Exploring Professional Skill and Practical Knowledge: The Dialogue Seminar Method

An important aspect of the COHAB project is that dialogue seminars have never previously have been used to such a great extent in international projects. Furthermore, they have never been, as far as I know, used in international projects concerning teacher education. In this respect we are pioneers. In order to give a deeper understanding of the purpose with using dialogue seminars in our project, it is important to have a more complete image of the method and its theoretical and methodological foundations.

During the 1980s a new field of science emerged that focused on changes in skill and practice of various professional groups, due to computerisation and automation in information society (see for instance Mouwitz 2006; Göranzon 2009). Ever since the early studies, focus has been directed towards the relationship between tacit dimensions of knowledge and formalised/codified knowledge in workplaces and educations. Explorative and heuristic case studies: where many are based on a hermeneutical approach in the theoretical and methodological tradition of Gadamer, dominates the research conducted within what today is the subject skill and technology. Practical/tacit knowledge: judgment, reasoning, responsible actions, interpretation, deliberation, is considered to be the kernel of professional skill, and formalised knowledge: regulations, instructions, routines, serves as a supportive structure for the professional (Backlund 2006). An important aspect thus is to interpret and to look for representations of tacit knowledge and skill for the promotion of professional development and knowledge formation.
Another way of describing this and the interactions between different perceptions of knowledge is through the words of Bo Göranzon, professor in skill and technology at Linnaeus University:

[W]e interpret theories, methods and regulations through the familiarity and practical knowledge we gain from being active in a practice. In the dialogue among people involved in a practice, there is some friction between the different perceptions people have based on their different experiences (different examples of familiarity and practical skills). Being a member of a practice while at the same time acquiring greater competence requires a continuous dialogue. Being professional means extending one’s perspective to encompass a broader overview of one’s own skills. According to this argument if we remove all the practical knowledge and knowledge of familiarity from an activity, we will also empty it of propositional knowledge. (Göranzon 2009, p. 128)

Following the argument above, it is obvious how practical knowledge is put at the centre of professional skill and a practice. It is important not to mystify the concept of tacit knowledge. Knowledge can be “tacit” simply because professionals sometimes want to keep their skills and special techniques secret to avoid competition (e.g. like the Master in Medieval society). Another fact is that “knowing” is intimately connected with “doing” which makes it very hard to explicitly describe actions or processes that demand fast decisions (Janik 1991). At the same time it undoubtedly poses a number of methodological problems. How is it possible to make practical knowledge and familiarity of knowledge accessible for exploration and work with it empirically? This is where the dialogue seminar method comes in.

The dialogue seminar method today serves as an underlying structure for professional development and knowledge formation within a wide range of professions. When professionals describe and talk about their skills, they very often use a personal, reflective and narrative language where meaning is transferred through examples, metaphors and/or analogies. The dialogue seminar method helps professionals to articulate and formulate certain aspects of their practice and experience. The most common way to work is to form a group of 6–8 participants. By using specific “impulse texts” (it may be a drama, a poem, a novel, excerpts from a classical philosophical work, a picture, a movie) the purpose is to bring forth associations, images, memories, reflections and experiences from their work life. The participants prepare before the seminars by actively reading an impulse text where spontaneous associations, thoughts and reflections are noted in the margin. It could be a particular situation, a memory, a personal experience or an example from worklife. The notes are summarised in a personal text that is read aloud during the seminar. All participants are invited to comment, but there is no criticism. Central themes, patterns and concepts that emerge during the seminar are noted in so-called minutes of ideas, a kind of summary and interpretation of the dialogue seminar by one of the participants. Before the next seminar, the minutes of ideas are used, together with new impulse texts. Hence a reflective and hermeneutic spiral is created through a series of seminars that also can be complemented with lectures, drama and music (Hammarén 2002; Ennals 2006).

Experiences, reflections and examples are personal and subjective, but instead of disqualifying them, the dialogue seminar offers an arena for the encounter between different notions and concepts. It is an inter-subjective context, driven by a search for universal characteristics, as well as the particularities of a profession. Most important of all, focus is on the conceptual world of the practitioner which Sven Åberg, researcher and teacher at the Royal Academy of Music, justifies in the following way:

To study a practice is basically a quest for broadening your repertoire of ways to deal with the outside world. If the outside world is ambiguous the language to describe the practitioner’s
relationship to it must be able to express the inherent contradictions we are interested in. In this work, we have no use for a concept of rules that we have given a metaphysical status as the basic pattern of reality. It is rather the ambiguity we want to gain experience of, by examples, whether they are expressed in linguistic form or in actions we can see and reflect upon. (Åberg 2008, p. 186; translation DA)

To conclude: the dialogue seminar method is a fruitful method for making visible and exploring professional skill, and conduct qualified discussions about the specific character of practical knowledge in different professional activities. It can consequently be seen as a condition for initiating and underpinning a process of reflection, within and between individuals, where the language of the practitioner/practice dominates. The dialogue that evolves may be described as "dialogues between practitioners".

Considering the ways in which the dialogue seminar method can be applied, you must be well aware of in which context or setting you apply it. Our student group indeed was very heterogeneous, and here I am not only referring to different cultural and national backgrounds. A quite large group were studying to become vocational teachers (and even were working as such teachers parallel to their studies). These students had previous experiences from other professions and were older. Many of the students studied to become teachers in compulsory school and they were younger in age. They had other kinds of experiences, since they had fresh memories from their own time in school as pupils.

Altogether, the conditions we were facing made the work with dialogue seminars even more exciting, since we had the opportunity to create an arena with the intersection of those who had considerable experience from work life being on their way into a new profession, and those who rather recently had finished school and were about to conquer their first professional role ever. The issue of language was not only challenging in terms of the fact that all had to express themselves in a second language: English. They were also forced to use the professional language in the field of teachers. Regarding the diversity of students representing different branches of the teaching profession: primary school teachers, secondary school teachers and vocational teachers, we faced yet another challenge.

By using the dialogue seminar method, we sought ways to find a common ground. In this respect the dialogue seminar method offers a solution to explore and elaborate with professional language, because what we are dealing with is a kind of thinking that is analogical to its character, not hypothetical and theoretically abstract (Johannessen 2002). In short our ambition was, to use the words of Richard Ennals, “to step sideways, to engage in analogical thinking” (Ennals 2006, p. 313). We who participated in the project came in from different parts of the South Baltic Sea with different cultures and languages. By experimenting with professional language: analogies, concepts and metaphors, we all searched for what was at the heart of the professional culture of teaching.

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2. COHAB – Background and Reflections on the Summer School and Parallel Teaching Course

In this section the overall aims of the COHAB project is presented. In order to understand the personal narratives the course and other central activities in the project also will be presented. The chapter ends with reflections from “Team Teacher” on the three central modules of the summer school and the parallel teaching course that were carried out between August 2013 and April 2014.

Co-ordination and Integration of Higher Education and the Labour Market Around the South Baltic Sea

nThe COHAB project started in July 2011 and ended in June 2014. An important aspect to understand the purpose behind the project is that the project partners – Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden – recognised that the interregional labour market mobility was not very well-functioning in the South Baltic Sea region. Bottleneck situations in the area requiring qualified labour from other countries had not really improved the labour market mobility and the project partners believed that a project was needed in order to establish the barriers of this lacking mobility and to do something about this situation. The project partners established that the main barriers that needed to be addressed included ignorance of each other’s local culture in education and labour market, educational recognition and lack of strong educational links.

The project focused on two professions in the public sector and which were founded in a higher education institution participating in the project. The aims of the project were to accumulate data on the labour market in order to identify common barriers, to make the selected educations/professions well known and transparent, to increase staff mobility, to increase student mobility and to increase staff and student competences in order to equip them for cross-border mobility. In order for the labour market to become mobile, it was the belief of the project partners that this process had to start with educational cooperation. Through study visits, cooperative work with courses or attendance in courses and summer school, staff and students would be introduced to and become familiar with the cultures of the South Baltic region; the labour market, the job opportunities, the educations and educational structures, the people and the local traditions and values. Furthermore the ambition was that the staff and students would become ambassadors for the interregional mobility and the result will be that it will widen like rings in water ensuring that the project was firmly rooted in the partnership organisations and with other organisations. The project took a clear cross-border impact and a long term perspective as its starting point. Through parallel teaching, an essential teaching approach in the project, it would be possible to solve logistic barriers and for the project partners to continue to cooperate after the end of the project period. Virtual education was and still is considered as sustainable in thinly populated areas like in the South Baltic Region. In the short term staff and students in the educations involved would become mobile, and in the long term mobility would become a more natural option for other students as well as the graduates and would spread to the labour market. All in all, the project would be a good practice example that could spread to other professions.
To achieve an increased and sustainable mobility, the project created and developed a virtual infrastructure and courses for nurse students and teacher students respectively. The courses comprised a summer school course and a parallel teaching course as well as student study visits in the partner countries. The courses were carried out within the framework of three thematic modules A, B and C for the teacher students with study guides to each of the modules: A. Professional skill and mobility; B. Interregional virtual communication; C. Culture and society (see chart below).

From the very beginning it was clear for the members in “Team Teacher” that a certain common figure of thought, metaphor or image was necessary in order to create a pedagogical platform for both us as teachers and the students. By using “the Baltic Sea Teacher” as a figure of thought and “The Journey” as a metaphor for the progression and explorative dimensions in terms of intercultural encounters in the project it was our ambition that the three components should be seen as one entity.

The summer school provided the students with a foundation for future progression and development during the parallel teaching course. In other words the summer school should was used both for the students to get to know each other and to introduce the basic tools and perspectives in the course. During summer school the students did their first assignments. Other important milestones were the study visits where interviews with both local teachers and students were conducted. The aim of the interviews was to gain knowledge about different approaches to education. In between we of course met in the virtual world for preparation and collaboration.

Another aspect that was essential for us is that from an overarching perspective the courses could be seen as consisting of two dimensions. One dimension is the overall progression and content throughout the courses with different assignments, visible outcomes and products of the students’ efforts, work and collaboration. The students conducted interviews, and as their final exam the students wrote an essay which was published in an anthology. The other dimension is the learning and experiential trajectory of each student. From a teacher’s perspective this is generally "the dark side of the moon": what we cannot see because it is not highlighted. In order to make such notions visible, the students were instructed to write a log on specific occasions where they reflected upon what they have experienced, learnt and felt etc. Gradually their logs resulted in the growth of self-reflective and evaluative documentation. The teachers did not only "get into the heads" of the students but foremost it became possible to evaluate the courses through a more qualitative empirical material rather than merely a traditional student survey.

From the intended learning outcomes and the content worked out by “Team Teacher” during the study visit in Denmark and in Sweden in 2012 three major aspects were identified to serve as content blocks/modules in the courses. The assignments and exams could of course differ between these modules but to avoid too much pressure on the students, the ambition was to find synergy effects between the modules and their tasks.

An obvious strength in our project was the combination between our different experiences and characteristics as teacher educators provided us with a solid and extensive foundation of competences/knowledge and it gave us the opportunity to exchange ideas and apply a plethora of methods. Along with conventional arenas like interviews and workshops and seminars we also explored new methods like dialogue seminars, roundtable discussions, education rally and so on. The chart below illustrates the relationships between the overarching idea/figure of thought, content, activities and structure of the courses:
**Module A:**
Professional skill and mobility

- to conduct interviews based on a scientific approach and methodological awareness and to apply basic skills in project management within an international context
- to train and develop reflection as a tool for experimental learning and to exemplify personal experiences of learning and problems and possibilities in cross-border collaboration
- to train and develop skills to participate and contribute in intersubjective encounters and dialogues with the purpose to identify and configure images of professional skill, bridges and barriers

**Module B:**
Interregional virtual communication

- to develop an understanding of the concept of synchronous/asynchronous virtual teaching and learning
- to train and develop skills in managing a virtual classroom successfully and proficiency in using the technological equipment
- to develop skills in learning, teaching and collaborating in new learning situations including blended learning

**Module C:**
Culture and Society

- get familiar with the theoretical approach on culture and culture standards
- being aware of cultural differences and similarities of the partner countries
- develop a South Baltic culture concept
- get familiar with the interregional idea and reflect on it and discuss pros, cons, strengths and weaknesses of interregional work
- develop ideas/concept/image of an interregional working Baltic Sea Teacher. Therefore the national teacher image will discuss differences and similarities of their professions.

### Summer school 19 - 30 August 2013 Klaipeda (LT)

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<th>Cultural visits</th>
<th>Interview with fellow student</th>
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### Study visits

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- Interview with teacher
- Interview with a pupil
- Workshops on the anthology

**Parallel Teaching Course**

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<th>Working “in” ICT tools</th>
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**Anthology - Your Journey**

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15
Reflections on module A Professional skill and mobility

One of the things that constitute the very charm of teaching is when a course you have planned for and carried out exceeds your expectations. When we work out a new course with its ends, aims, content, literature, structure, assignments and activities we have a general image of how the course will be like in the encounter with the students. The expected learning outcomes are presented before the students and in the end of the course you go through them once again to hear whether the students feel that they have achieved them.

During the work with COHAB and the module Professional skill and mobility we have experienced that the students in their reflections upon the content express both pros and cons. One of the parts of this module seems to have been very challenging for some of the students: the dialogue seminar (we will get back to that later). But foremost we feel that they have learnt more and even other aspects than those we have listed in our aims. That is what we call “added value” and a true value of an education.

By no means this achievement is solely due to the module A. On the contrary, it hadn't been possible to reach such results without the figure of thought of “the Baltic Sea Teacher” and the metaphor of “The Journey”. But most of all we give our thanks to the students who have learnt us so much of hopes and fears in the process of becoming a teacher and through their open-mindedness have shared thoughts and ideas which has helped us to envisage new possibilities and openings.

In the following we will describe the content of module A and its progress during the course. Together with the description we will present our reflections. Our structuring principle is chronological, from the beginning with the summer school in Klaipeda in the end of August 2013 to the end of the virtual teaching course in April 2014.

Preparations – Virtual Seminars

Before we embarked on the summer school we had the opportunity to test our ICT- equipment and meet the students of the different countries through virtual meetings. Even if most of the content in the module was presented during summer school, one essential part was actually introduced for the students in a lecture in June 2013: The writing of the personal narrative in the anthology. Here we also presented the metaphor of the journey as overarching principle together with the figure of thought “the Baltic Sea Teacher”.

The idea in the module A was that the student would contribute to the project’s aims to ”map” and identify barriers and bridges for increased mobility. The mapping should be done through interviews with different categories of informants (fellow student, teachers, pupils), partly due to the stakeholders of each education and the character of the labour market. The interview-material and material from blogs and dialogue seminars should be compiled in a personal narrative. The story should be a part in an anthology consisting of the other students’ stories and teachers’ narratives. By creating such an anthology it could provide as teaching material but also form a document in time where various cultures expressed how barriers could be dealt with in order to pursue a higher level of integration in the European community. The contribution in the anthology would also be discussed between the teachers and forms an essential part of the evaluation and dissemination of the COHAB project.
Summer School in Klaipeda, August 19-30 2013

During the summer school the module was presented for the students. We instructed the students that the content of the module went along three intertwined tracks where the intended learning outcomes were achieved through a gradual progression, from the summer school (Summer 2013) until the end of the parallel teaching course (Spring 2014). These were the specific aims of the module:

- to conduct interviews based on a scientific approach and methodological awareness and to apply basic skills in project management within an international context
- to train and develop reflection as a tool for experiential learning and to exemplify personal experiences of learning and problems and possibilities in cross-border collaboration
- to train and develop skills to participate and contribute in intersubjective encounters and dialogues with the purpose to identify and configure images of professional skill, bridges and barriers in the countries of the project

An essential theme within the content of the module was “Science and Liberal Education (Bildung)”. The students were introduced to different research paradigms and their epistemological foundations. At the heart of this track was how complex problems can be dealt with from a more holistic perspective and through the relationship between theoretical and practical knowledge. Along with a lecture introducing this theme there was also instructions about interviews as a scientific method.

One of the methods used for an explorative and heuristic approach (which was new to the students) was the dialogue seminar method (see Introduction). The students were told how to be prepared before the seminar. The tale of The Ugly Duckling was chosen as an impulse text. After the seminar a document with minutes of ideas (central themes and concepts that had come up during the seminar) was published on the learning management system for the course: Moodle. Our impression of the dialogue seminar was very positive. It was obvious that the students had
longed for a forum where they got the opportunity to exchange and process ideas, thoughts and experiences that had come up during their stay. In short they found it as a new way of working that could be useful for them as teachers.

Study Visit in Denmark, October 7-11 2013

During the time in Denmark the COHAB students were scheduled to do interviews with Danish teachers. The Danish students had arranged teachers in the Vordingborg area to interview. The Swedish “Team Teacher”s lectured on the theme interviews and a lot of discussions took part in class on how deal with it. Afterwards students, in groups depending on what type of teachers they were going to talk to, had time to finalize and consider their relevant questions.

The aim was to conduct interviews based on a scientific approach and methodological awareness and to apply basic skills in project management within an international context

All students carried out interviews with teachers and made written documents that was published on the COHAB Moodle platform.

A dialogue seminar was also held during this Study visit, dealing with the text “Teacher Man” by Frank McCourt. The story is told by the author when being a young, new teacher having his first class experiences in a New York school in the middle of last century. The author reflects on his relationship with pupils and school authority and a couple of situations brings him into hilarious, serious, sad and relation-bonding conditions important for future teachers to reflect and debate around. The participating students came prepared and with written reflective stories mirroring for them close by related moments from their own classrooms, as pupils or teacher students.

Aiming to train and develop skills to participate and contribute in intersubjective encounters and dialogues with the purpose to identify and configure images of professional skill, bridges and barriers in the countries of the project
To be able to give everyone time and space to read and talk around their text, as well as let their peers comment and reflect about what had been brought up the whole COHAB group was divided into two parts. In the two different dialogue session, each lasting two and a half hours one contained ten students and the other one nine. The actual dialogue was led by one “Team Teacher” and another “Team Teacher” was taking notes. The written matters and themes from the first chapter of Teacher Man were important and serious but the brought up reflections and contents were private and still mostly concerned the students own experiences and situations not involving any situations where other COHAB student played a great role. According to the students the dialogue seminar went well and everyone could freely express opinions and thoughts. Everyone gave positive comments on the evaluation form.

Study Visit in Germany, December 2-6 2013

In Germany the students got an opportunity to further more explore the dialogue seminar method. In the same way as in Denmark the students had to prepare a text in advance and this time their text should be inspired by a short film about the Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The focus for the seminar was “the Danger of a single story”. During the seminar many interesting subjects surfaced and there was a feeling that the participants really dared to share personal thoughts and reflections about meeting other cultures with all its challenges of i.e. preconceptions.

After the study visit in Germany we could see that some of the students were a bit critical towards the dialogue seminars. Some expressed that it became boring in a way that the discussion circled around the same topic. At the same time there was also a considerable number of students who were positive and found the seminar rewarding. It might have been the vulnerable and sincere mood at the seminar that caused this uneasiness among the students.

During one of the school visits in Rostock the students got the possibility to conduct interviews based on a scientific approach in line with the content of module A “Professional skill and mobility”. The interviews were made in groups with pupils at the age of 16-18 years and the questions mainly focused on thoughts about mobility and intercultural encounters. The material from the interviews were meant to be used as background material for the personal narrative the students were writing as a final assignment in the project.
Study Visit in Sweden, February 24-28 2014

To a great extent we had felt all along that the study visit in Sweden would be the final test for how well we had achieved in our planning and work with the students. In this respect we were a bit anxious and quite nervous. There were so many pieces that needed to be brought together in order to complete the course and now we stood before the challenge to see how our idea with the “journey”-metaphor and the idea of the Baltic Sea Teacher had worked out.

During the progress of the course we could see how the students’ personal narratives slowly materialized and grew. A reflection on the work with the personal narratives is that there probably were great differences in how much feedback the students had got on their first texts. Some students had also had troubles to finish due to other exams that lay parallel to the course. In many ways, the workshop for the anthology that we had planned for the last study visit in Sweden would be a sort of a “mini-evaluation” of how we as teachers had managed to support the students in their writing process and how good and clear our instructions for this assignment had been. Before the seminar the students had been instructed to read and give feedback on a text from a fellow student to find improvements and issues for discussion.

We must say that the texts from the students and the workshop exceeded our expectations. During the workshop sessions there were many examples of interesting and fascinating stories about how the students had experienced encountering other cultures, the study visits, the seminars, the late night talks and so on. Our general impression is that the workshop sessions helped the students to improve their texts. They were very supportive in their feedback and it was obvious that the texts brought up several aspects and dimensions of how they had experienced the course.

An interesting remark is that a number of students had troubles to write in a personal and reflective way. They seemed a bit inexperienced to write in that specific genre and that struck as
an interesting reflection to bring up. The students will be working as teachers and an important part of developing yourself professionally is the ability to reflect. We know from research that professionals usually talk about their practice by using images or metaphors, in general a personal language closely connected to “doing” and actions. It is of utmost importance that students learn how to write in an academic and scientific fashion. At the same time a teacher education should challenge the students to also write about their practice. Maybe this is something to bear into mind, especially when it regards the work-based learning parts of teacher education (e.g. during internship).

As during the former study visits, the week contained a dialogue seminar but this time we had chosen another approach. For this particular seminar the students were asked to reflect and write a text around one of the following issues:

1. Look at your three former texts that have been written for your former seminars! Are there parts of these texts where you “meet” yourself or “others” that you find especially crucial, energy containing, that makes you want to go deeper in and reflect and write some more about. Do so!

2. Make a summary of your dialogue texts compromising them in to a shorter more solid version where you combine parts of your various texts constructing a type of your own “patch work”.

3. Write a text where you give personal experiences from the time you have taken part in this Baltic COHAB project. Try to reflect in a critical way on some dimension on being part of the project, living in the Baltic area with various cultural differences and similarities.

The two different dialogue seminars in Växjö both had similar contents. At this time of the project many students felt the need to discuss and evaluate various issues and most students chose to write their text about issue 3. The structure of the former seminars were followed meaning that one “Team Teacher” led the seminar and one “Team Teacher” took notes and each student had to read their text loud and others had to give comments or initiate a discussion around it. The content and the debates in the dialogue seminar were evaluating, critical and engaging. It seemed that everyone had the need to ventilate and mention concerns which had in a way been obstacles or problems in the project. Issues brought up were digital connection problems, culture differences between the countries, practical problems when cooperating cross country wise, how much do we identify with being a Baltic teacher, do we identify as European to mention a few. Some voices were critical, a few arguments were carried out, problems were lifted but the seminar ended in negotiation. The two participating “Team Teachers” felt that there was a great need to bring up these various matters to discuss and feel that the whole group benefitted from the open somewhat critical seminar and that this type of openness is crucial for a constructive continuing of the project.

to train and develop skills to participate and contribute in intersubjective encounters and dialogues with the purpose to identify and configure images of professional skill, bridges and barriers in the countries of the project
Virtual Teaching

The course in the project also consisted of the objectives that the students should be able to understand the concept of virtual teaching and to manage a virtual classroom. During the two semesters of the course we participated in four virtual meetings where the different countries facilitated one meeting each. The virtual meeting hosted by Sweden had a focus on professional skill and our students gave four lectures using different teaching methods to serve as a good example of professional skill. The use of ICT tools in virtual teaching was a challenge for both students and teachers and we all felt it required a different approach and different mindset than your everyday teaching situation.

The methods used by the Swedish students were for example the “flipped classroom” which is a method that adapts well in a virtual setting. The content in one of the other lectures dealt with motivation factors and how you can use i.e. the internet in your teaching.

Conclusion

We started off this chapter talking about the unplanned events and outcomes and added value as the charm of teaching. Looking back at our efforts we can say that we are very pleased with our achievements. Even if it hardly can be seen as an explicit result of Cohab we can see that the students are creating new platforms for themselves. It is one thing in particular that we would like to underline as an unexpected outcome of the project and that is that a group of our students have started a community on Google+ called COHAB SWEGER. This initiative comes entirely from the students and is a great way of continuing the cooperation.

Reflections on module B Interregional virtual communication

1. What is interregional virtual communication?

An essential aim of the COHAB project is to further collaboration and mobility between the four partner regions – both during the project and beyond. One way of doing this is to arrange regular face to face meetings in order to build network and create joint projects, but this would seem to be a very time-consuming and expensive option. An interesting and potentially very fruitful alternative is to use virtual communication for interregional collaboration. For this reason, the course offered to 20 students from the four COHAB countries focused on interregional virtual communication, both as a means and as an end.

But what exactly is interregional virtual communication? In the COHAB project, the concept is defined as communication that takes place in a virtual setting and involves two or more colleagues and/or students from different regions. Using experiences gained from the COHAB project as a starting point, the present article will discuss relevant virtual communication tools, management of the virtual classroom, potentials and challenges and the need for a didactic design for virtual teaching in education.

Virtual communication tools

An abundance of tools are available for virtual teaching, but the COHAB project relied on two different three types of tools in particular, namely videoconferencing, an e-learning platform and various web 2.0 programmes, which serve different but mutually dependent functions. Videoconferencing allows two or more locations to communicate by simultaneous two-way video, whiteboard and audio transmissions. Like all long distance communications technologies
videoconferencing is distinguished by reducing the need to travel to bring people together. Moreover, the visual and auditory quality is good, and the equipment is relatively easy to use.

While videoconferencing offers many benefits, there are also drawbacks. When used in education, the result may well be a teacher-centered classroom, where students become passive onlookers. Although traditional face to face group work can be arranged separately in the classrooms, this kind of setting hardly fosters true interregional collaboration.

Taking this into consideration, various web 2.0 programmes were also used in the COHAB course to allow for students and teachers alike to collaborate in small groups across borders in real time. Programmes that were used for interregional, virtual group work in class included Skype, Google Hangout, Google docs, Facebook and Prezi. Finally, the online learning platform Moodle was used as a communication and storage platform throughout the course.

The decision to make use of the equipment and programmes mentioned above was based on a number of practical and didactical concerns in relation to management of virtual classrooms, which are in some aspects different from traditional face to face classrooms.

2. Managing the virtual classroom
   a. Didactical considerations (split & flipped classroom)
   b. Student collaboration in a virtual context (national & transnational group work)

How to manage a virtual classroom? What does it look like? The last question first: The physical classroom at all locations consist of smart board, a video conferencing screen pixled in four steaming life from all locations. You can move your own camera i in all directions and zoom in and out. Sound can be turned off. Both picture and sound are in high quality. Five students and one-two teachers are placed in each location virtually together in “A Global Classroom”. When three or four partners are together the picture from each country becomes quite small. It allows you to recognise persons you already know from face to face, but even the quality of the picture is very high as mentioned before is small sizes makes it hard to hold contact with the students participating from abroad.

Persons, students, teachers, whoever can stay focused for a shorter time when using videoconferencing than at a traditional face to face lecture. The schedules listed below shows how sessions were divided into small bits and various activities. It is very important to involve students and makes them active both in the classroom and cross border.. Both research and our experiences tells that about 15 minutes of video conferencing is the time limit. It requires a highly concentration to listen to a speaker long distance and using a second language is a filter for both speakers and recipients. Summing up: Oral communication passes through four filters altogether from sender to recipients. Two screens, two language barriers of varied textures depending on English skills. Sound delay must also be mentioned. Even it is very little is has an impact on the conversation flow. It becomes a bit artificial by waiting. It is really useful that you can turn out the sound in your room, because the clean sound can be quite noisy with four classrooms together.

During one lesson many communication modalities took place facilitating different types of work. Lessons consisted on following activities as shown in the sessions plans below:
Teachers lecture

Two kinds of group work:
1. National groups and
2. Interregional groups

Individual work

Interactive exercises on smart board. For all locations

A part of the interregional group work was to test various communication platforms. It turned out that the most appealing platforms were google+, google hangouts, and facebook's messenger functions. Some did text also.

Working synchrone on the smart board was great fun and a concrete and visual way of working together due to the variety tools on the smart board.

Altogether It appears that the video conferencing system in connection with smart board work well. Video conferencing is a as the word says videoconferencing and it is requires another way of thinking didactics than for instance parallel teaching where classroom are featured with one camera in front and one in the back.

3. Potential and challenges.

The potential is obvious: You can meet and work with persons long distance. It is a way to interact with other cultures. It easy to share classrooms. The teachers can metaphorically speaking open a window to the world. Let other classes watch the teachings but also interact with them in whatever ways you find fruitful.

It can save a lot of time and money when you want to work cross border. It means that it is possible to do more work with more countries and more people. You must reorganise that teaching you must be reorganised and you must develop new ways of teaching and thinking didactical.

It is a minus that the dialogue becomes a bit artificial due to sound delay. You must wait longer than normal taking turns.

4. Developing a design for virtual teaching

Experiences & advice

Based on the experiences gained from the COHAB project, we put forward the argument that teaching designs used in traditional face to face classrooms cannot easily be applied in virtual classrooms. Teachers practicing virtual teaching are aware of this, but they are left to cope on their own as few studies address the issue. Advice is limited, guidelines are few and a “Virtual Teaching for Dummies” is yet to see the light of the day.

However, what we need may not be guidelines based on large-scale research findings. As Diana Laurillard puts it:

“Ideally, teachers should be able to enact design science as part of their normal professional practice, and have the means to act like design researchers themselves, i.e. documenting and sharing their designs. Without this they remain the recipients of research findings, rather than being the drivers of knowledge about teaching and learning, able to critique and challenge the technology that is changing their profession”.

In other words, an integral component of any virtual course should be for teachers to “enact
design science”, that is, to experiment, to document and to share their positive as well as negative experiences. This has been the aim of the COHAB project and this article – and it may well be one of the ways in which teachers can successfully stay ahead of the game in an increasingly technological world.

Sharing and adapting experiences

We will let the participants get the last word with some reactions from the virtual meeting October 23rd 2013:

“Thank you and your colleagues for the virtual lesson yesterday, it was great opportunity for us to learn some new things, you have a good experience working in Moodle system, and of course, it get more possibilities in learning and teaching.

For us Lithuanians it’s just a very new form of modern teaching technology, we need more practical skills and maybe individual studies in this field of technology, It’s was very useful lesson for students and teachers. Thanks a lot!”

On the length of the sessions:

“Thank you for doing this! I think that it must be a big help for the Lithuanian team!

I have just one thing to comment on according to the schedule:

“A 45 minute virtual lecture is not recommendable. –It is far too long – all literature on the subject virtual lessons/teachings agree on that and –I think our own experiences are evidence. If you look at the timetable from the Danish team you see no more than 25 minutes for lecture – and you may remember that it felt like a bit more than 25 minutes…. One of our aims is to gain experiences ‘with split “class rooms”, “virtual teaching” and we might end up in a state where we can recommend a the length of a virtual lecture. How long time can one do without a break or exercise??.”

Reflections on module C Culture and society

Working in international settings

In today’s work design the megatrends like the technical and demographical change, the globalization and the change to a knowledge-based society have a heavy influence. If one regards in particular the technical change in combination with the globalization, one can recognise the development of working environments towards multimedia settings within the last few years.

The WorldWideWeb offers in connection with multifunctional devices many services to simplify our daily life and businesses. There are a lot of new possibilities especially for teachers and their work. Thus, it is possible to create multimedia based learning and teaching arrangements. To handle the implied challenges and to meet the aims of the new possibilities teachers are encouraged to train themselves dealing with those devices and in the usage with new methods.

By means of the technical development it was and is much easier for schools to generate international collaboration and networking. Therefore one can recognise many schools running collaborations or participating in international networks with other schools or educational institutions within Europe or all over the world.
The transnational or rather international work requires not only technical knowledge but also intercultural skills and competences. With regard to the developments described above the COHAB project accordingly focused on professional mobility, ICT-based teaching and learning and the development of an institutional network in the field of teacher education.

**Learning outcomes**

Due to the project targets “Team Teacher” defined learning outcomes which should be results in the end of the student’s project participation. When drafting the learning outcomes it was important that the current challenges for teachers were taken into consideration.

The first of the three issues, we expected to be essential, is the ability to work in an international/transnational context. This includes the ability to be a professional teacher in a today’s globalized world and to reflect critically on the own and the social development.

The second issue covers the intercultural aspect – the knowledge, understanding and respect of different cultures and their specific customs and habits. That means in particular, that (1) the students should have developed the capability to interact with colleagues from other countries, especially in the Baltic Sea region; (2) the student can reflect on other and their own culture in a critical manner, (3) furthermore they should gain an insight of the teachers’ role and a general perception of the teaching profession, particularly in the Baltic Sea region.

The last aspect we considered was interpersonal and collaborative skills within an interdisciplinary setting. The teacher students should develop their ability to work in an interdisciplinary team, which requires e.g. a problem-solving capability and creativity. They should be able to generate new ideas of or rather learn, teach and collaborate in new learning environment, such as the method of Blended Learning, which was an essential part of the project.

**Teaching and Learning in Module C:**

The Module C “Culture and Society” was one of the cornerstones to reach the determined learning outcomes. Due to the project idea of promoting mobility to the students and provide them an insight of the partner countries the aspects of culture and society came into focus. Therefore this module can be seen as an overarching module for the students’ development and the project process. Module C addressed the following targets:

- Students know and are familiar with the theoretical approach to culture and cultural standards. They can use the approaches of HOFSTEDE’s culture dimensions and THOMAS’s cultural standards. They can reflect on their own cultures and are aware of intercultural differences.

- Students know cultural differences and similarities of the partner countries. They develop a South Baltic culture concept and get familiar with the interregional idea and can reflect on it critically. They can discuss pros and cons, strengths and weaknesses of interregional work.

- Students develop an idea/a concept/an image of an interregional working “Baltic Sea Teacher”. Therefore they discuss their own professions and the differences and similarities of their professions in the respective partner countries. They combine the gained knowledge to transfer it to a new professional concept of an interregional working “Baltic Sea Teacher”.

The project was structured into three essential parts: a summer school, study visits and virtual
meetings. During the summer school and the study visits the students had not only the chance to see each other face to face but also to visit the partner universities and other educational institutions and organisations e.g. schools. Whereas the summer school took two weeks, the study visits took one week in each country.

To get a first impression of each other the students met up in a short virtual meeting at first. But the summer school has been the official start for the students’ project participation of almost eight month.

The students met for the first time face to face in Lithuania. These two weeks were used to set the frame for the tasks within the next months. The taught topics during the summer school caused a lot of discussions regarding: cultural differences and similarities, teacher education and education in general. The students reflected on their own cultural background and gained information about the education systems and teacher education process of the partner countries.

The students themselves were very heterogeneous. The group comprised students from primary, secondary and upper secondary school and adult education. The methods and teaching designs within those education parts can be very different. Therefore the mixed group offered variety and many possibilities to get new ideas of the own mindset of what teaching can be and how other countries develop the teacher profession.

Beside they studied different fields of teaching they been on different stages in their life. The Swedish students for instance are professionals in a certain field of branches for at least 10 years. Some of them were 15 years older than others. They shared their teaching and professional working experiences with the other students. Learning from one another became reality and took great effort for the students.

The students varied not only in their fields of study but also because of their age and implicated by that because of their different stages in life. The Swedish students, for instance, are professionals in a certain branch for at least ten years. Thus some of them are 15 years older than the others. But this was more an advantage than an obstacle because they could share their teaching and professional working experiences as well as their experiences of life with the others. As a result learning from one another became substantive and a great effort for the students’ development.

The study visits were hosted by the partner universities. School visits, workshops and cultural parts were organised and done in each country. The school visits offered an insight to the school life in each partner country, e.g. in the teaching and learning conditions and environments. Due to the different teaching profiles, primary, secondary and vocational education we decided to split up the group and organised specific school visits. The students saw how the systems, they heard of in the workshops, function and are realized in daily situations, how the schools are equipped and how they are financed. The variety of the visited schools was large – the students visited public schools as well as private ones. During the visits the students had the chance to attend classes, talk to students and teachers. Afterwards reflection classes took place, where the students could reflect the things they had experienced. The students gained a wide view to the different education systems and how learning and teaching is organised. They experienced different methods, didactics, teaching styles or usage of ICT devices. Hence they acquired new impressions for their own teaching career.

Another part was the project workshops, which took place in the facilities of the partner university. The students got the chance to experience studying at the partner universities for a
short period of time. This provided an insight of how the daily life at the universities looks like, e.g. the campus, food in the cafeteria etc. Furthermore how differently or not the teacher education is realized.

As another focus this culture and society module contained as well historical, art and social parts during the study visits. Thus the students visited museums, got guided city tours or enjoyed national food dinners, which supports the understanding of cultural diversity or similarity. Particularly interesting was the discovering of the common history because of the connection by the Baltic Sea – the Hanseatic Time left so many traces. Equally important are critical historical times like World War 1 and 2, which caused huge changes to the countries and their inhabitants. The students should develop an understanding of how history influenced the Baltic Sea area. The city walks in Rostock, Klaipeda, Copenhagen and Malmö showed that especially red brick architecture is one of the main commonalities. The national food dinners presented a typical dinner with special food and all countries ensured a surprise.

**Baltic Sea Teacher approach**

With regard to the different teacher education profiles among the students it wasn’t easy to find an overarching topic that ensured that all students feel addressed. Something, all teachers have in common is a specific identity or ethos. Mostly it’s about values and norms, pedagogical acting and the love for teaching. Primarily it’s about the work with people: children in case of primary or secondary schooling or adult learners in case of vocational training. Thus, we developed a visionary concept of a regional teacher identity: The Baltic Sea Teacher approach, which presented a joint concept to work on. The Baltic Sea Teacher concept promotes an interregional teacher profile: acting cross border with interregional matters, considering cultural differences, networking, ICT skills and mobility in intellectual and physical aspects. It underlines the approach of the European citizenship. The development of an interregional teacher identity seemed to be an innovative way to connect the students.

The start of the summer school focussed on this approach. The students presented their own ideas how the Baltic Sea Teacher is characterised and what skills and competences the Baltic Sea Teacher would need to work successful in interregional working settings.

Afterwards the students experienced themselves how to work in cross boarder projects. They got confronted with challenges cross border work implies and that it can be quite difficult. For instance the hand in common assignments or they had to find agreements on chat dates and they were involved in the planning and organisation of the study visits in their countries. The students wanted to assume responsibility and they got the chance by organizing one particular day during the study visits. They planned, organised and carried out all activities on their own. That means that the lecturers were just mentors for this day and they had to handle the challenges, barriers and problems independently.

**Intercultural aspects**

As mentioned earlier Denmark, Sweden, Lithuania and Germany are located around the Baltic Sea, which allows the cultural view of them as western oriented countries. Therefore the cultural differences need not to be evident however every society has hidden cultural elements. Even if the differences are small it is necessary to figure them out and keep them in mind. Successful professional acting requires an understanding of those differences to avoid cultural pitfalls.
During the COHAB project the students got those necessary and sometimes detailed insights of the different partner countries cultures. For instance table manners and gastronomic culture can be quite different. The Germans tend to wait until all have their dish the Danes just start eating. This might be impolite for Germans but for the Danes it isn't.

Conclusion:

The COHAB-project offered huge efforts for the students in cultural and society perspectives and has been a great chance to develop one’s professional opinion and built an own network of teachers within the South Baltic Sea region. The students learnt facts about the education systems and got insights of the educational structure, visited schools, met and talked to teachers and students, got used to the possibilities of ICT and practiced different tools to work and teach cross boarder and last but not least gained first cross border working experiences within the South Baltic Region. These experiences will help them to work more inter- or rather transnational within their future career. The defined learning outcomes got mostly fulfilled and the project can be seen as successful.
3. Journeys

Summer School in Klaipeda, August 19-30 2013
Study Visit in Denmark, October 7-11 2013
Study Visit in Germany, December 2–6 2013
Study Visit in Sweden
February 24-28 2014
"Taking the First Steps towards New Challenges"

by Alvadorija Keblytė

COHAB – a word which didn't say anything in the beginning, but now it means a lot to me. It took a long way to know what it really is. There were 5 big steps for me which let me understand that I'm on the right way.

First step – EXPLORATION. The game “packing my bag” was interesting because people, sitting in front of me, were full of experience and all new to me. The only thing that I could say was how they were dressed. What is in their heads? What are they thinking about be? I don't know. But I have a lot of time to know that.

Second step – MIXING. From the first day we had to work in international groups and then our real work started. Our first stop - Summer school - was full of impressions which were put in the blogs. Blogs – the way to start our real communication and co-operation. Maybe it was the hardest part of our trip. I wanted to share my thoughts everyday, but my head was too completed of new things that everything what you wanted to do at the end of the day – to sleep.

Third step – BRAINSTORMING. Dialogue seminar – one problem and a lot of opinions about that. This activity was the most interesting for me, because you didn't know what to expect from your colleagues. They can ask you one question. They can agree with you. Or disagree. Then a balloon of ideas explodes and discussion starts. The ugly duckling, painting, the danger of single story, teacher who is eating sandwich from the ground – all those stories let us empathize with students, teachers, let us create a better way of teaching.

Fourth step – BACK TO SCHOOL. The main aim of this project – to improve our mobility. If we want to reach this goal, we need to get acquainted with education systems in other countries (Denmark, Germany, Sweden), to know pros and cons about this. For this reason, we had some interviews. Talking with teacher from Denmark and students from Germany, visiting a lot of schools in Sweden gave me a lot of experience about teaching and learning in foreign country. Now I can compare how it works in different countries and what challenges will wait me in the future if I decide to work abroad.

Fifth step – SELF-IMPROVEMENT. If we want to build a house, we need foundation. My house has a strong foundation. During this project I had a lot of lectures. Interesting lectures. It gave new knowledge and it will help in the future as a primary school teacher. Everything opens a new way of thinking, teaching and understanding.

IT'S DONE. What's now?

We were strangers in first days, later partners and now we are real friends. In my opinion, the project worked well, because I had no idea how to remember all names at the beginning. And now, when the project is over, we have an invaluable friendship.

I created a bigger opportunity to work in these countries. I see the vision of a Baltic Sea teacher.
And now I can be an example of this teacher. Only because of this COHAB project I'm prepared to take a challenge and work in other country. To be honest, I don't see me teaching in Denmark, Germany or Sweden. I took this project as a first step to my career. COHAB showed that I can reach something more.

I can quote few sentences of one dialogue seminar: “Before my studies I had to pass motivational test and there was a conversation with psychologists. One of the questions was „Why did I choose to be a teacher?“ and I answered that I have a dream to be a volunteer – teacher in Africa”. I am in the 3rd year of studying and I still have those minds in my head. Thank you for the COHAB project which let me start to make my wish come true. Only step by step I can reach this goal. The most important thing to me was intercultural competence, ability to understand other people in this project. I got it, but it's not enough. I made the first step – the project ended, but I need to keep going. Where? Maybe I will get another chance to participate in a project like this. We will see!

Whan can I say, now I'm really happy to be a part of COHAB family. Thank you!

“A Citizen of Our Baltic Sea Nation”
by Sara Hammarström

Our journey in the Cohab project started the 18th of August 2013, we left Sweden and travelled to Klaipeda, Lithuania to meet all of our participating members in The Cohab project! We were excited, nervous and looked forward to begin the first 2 week of summer school and our Cohab journey! It started very intense and with a fully booked scheduler. We started to get to know all the members, interview each other to get a deeper understanding for the participants and for every country. We had a task to present our own countries different school system from preschool up to gymnasium and college. From Sweden all member was educated teachers working at different gymnasium with different subject areas. From Lithuania and Denmark all members was students, study to be teachers in comprehensive school and from Germany the members was student’s study to be teachers for gymnasium. There was a big spread between all members and we learned a lot about the different school systems and the other countries values, culture and heritage. We visit schools, working with ICT tools and intercultural communications, have sightseeing, and eating Lithuanian food, visit Vilnius and had an inspiring, interesting time in Lithuania. When it was time to go home to Sweden again it felt really strange, to leave all of our new friends that we spent 2 intensive weeks with but the good thing was that we soon was about to see each other again in Denmark! During our time home in Sweden we reflect our experience, transcribe our interviews with another student and was preparing for the next visit.

Our next visit in October was Vordingborg, Denmark to see the Danish members country, University and hometown. We experienced their nature, their culture and a lot of exciting visits. We got a good insight of their school system, how they work with internship in their vocational education. We are so impressed to see their vocational school; their equipment and the opportunity the Danish student are offered. We got a lot of ideas and thoughts how we could use their way of working in Sweden and the possibility to cooperate with our Baltic Sea neighbours. To
try to encourage our students to travel and be a part of the Baltic Sea cooperation. Time flies and after this week we once again had to say goodbye and look forward to our next meeting.

This time we went to Rostock, Germany in December. Once again excited and looking forward to see the German traditions, eat German food, see their culture and learn all about their education system. We expired their wonderful Christmas market, have a cultural education rally to learn more about the town and history. Tried student restaurants, school visits and a lot more. Worked with teambuilding, the opportunity to work with ICT tools and how to use this in our own education systems.

We have during this journey experience so much, learned a lot about our Baltic Sea neighbours, their culture, traditions, nature, history and a lot more. We have made a lot of new friends, colleagues, and teachers and have a brand new network to use in the future. I wish everyone could have this opportunity to cooperate with all of our Baltic Sea neighbours to have an understanding for other countries and their dedicational methods, to exchange our knowledge and expand our own teaching. That we should be united and work together without boarders. I developed myself and my way of thinking and can see thing in different ways and think I can be a good ambassador for our Baltic Sea region and not just for my “old” country. I think after this journey I will not see myself as a Swedish citizen instead I will see myself as a citizen of our Baltic Sea nation!

“Learning about our Different Histories for a Common Future” by Martin Andersen

In the old days, Europe was an area with many wars, and many countries that wanted to make themselves bigger. Great Kingdoms of Russia, Germany, small Denmark and Sweden are fighting for a better and bigger country. World War 1 and 2 and then the cold war. Europe has been in troubles many times, but what about today. In the time of EU we are coming closer, not only the politicians, but also the populations are moving between the countries and trying to make the future better. Then you can ask yourself, are we looking similar, all the European countries? No, we are not. Actually, we are very different, in the way of seeing the world, and in the way, we want the children to see the world.

On the journey in the southern Baltic Sea area, we have seeing such beautiful different kind of culture. The cultural part of this journey has been the most important part. If a country do not have their own culture, the country will not be the country. However, could we learn something from other countries and maybe change the view of us selves? Yes in some way, we can. In the way of teaching, we have seeing very different kind of teaching. In Lithuania, we saw many help for the kids, in the orphanage we saw how important the family are. The kids were living in families and they were growing as person. If you learn how to take care of other persons, you will be a better person, and I think that the school have this task to make the children to better persons, in a better world. For me the class is like a family, where you should take care for the other pupils in the class.

The meaning with teaching is to create modern children, who live in a world where they think and help other people. However, can we help the students to come to that point? I think that
we have to make them comfortable with themselves and they have to learn other cultures, not only their own. What kind of food do they eat in Lithuania, what do they dance in Sweden, and how the East Germans think of the West Germans today? If we want to be a part of a modern Europe, we have to teach the children to understand the history of Europe, and how different culture are today. In the school we should have, some weeks were we learn about other countries, making food, traditions, language and history. If we learn the children about other countries, I think that the children will be able to understand other cultures and hopefully they get a bigger tolerance for other people. If you want to know yourself better, you have to know about other persons and their culture. To be Danish is to be not Swedish, not German; you are your nationality because you are not the other nationalities.

This project have given me new way of thinking: I can see how different schoolsystems effect the countries. I have also learnt new teaching methods; the dialogue seminar have given a view of how you can read and understand texts and peoples mind. In that method, you begin to know your friends and collegues better. If we used this method, our students will get the opportunity to know their friends better, and if we make it in an international dimension, the kids will learn about mentality in other countries.

When I look into the future, I see a South Baltic Sea School, where culture, language and knowledge are the main stuff. The students will be able to study in another countries and learn new stuff, they can use in their future. When I look into this project, I see a lot of potential. If the children will learn how to react and live in Europe, they have to be a part of Europe, the school will visit many countries in Europe, and it will be prestige to be on that school. We as teachers have to be in front. We have to know the other cultures, and know how to show it, to the students. The Baltic Sea teacher is a teacher who will help the children to be a better person, in a modern and better Europe.

"From an Idea to Reality?!"

*by Britta Will*

Nowadays connecting people and creating networks is an important issue for modern and globalized work environments. The COHAB project created a network of teachers and schools within the South Baltic Sea region that follows the Idea of an Baltic Sea Teacher. In my essay I will reflect on this concept.

Initially “Team Teacher” was faced by the challenge to identify commonalities due to the different teacher education profiles and levels. The participating institutions educate students in primary, secondary and vocational teacher profiles. Didactical concepts, methodical approaches and content issues within those profiles are heterogeneous. Teaching 1st graders is very different from teaching adults. Therefore we had long and chewy discussions, again and again. Sometimes it felt very frustrating for me, but we had to find a common basis to work on. Something, we as teachers, have in common is a specific identity or ethos. Mostly it’s about why we’re teachers, about values and norms, pedagogical acting and why we do love teaching. Primarily it’s the work with people: children in case of primary or secondary schooling or adult learners in case of vocational training. Finally we developed a visionary concept of a regional teacher identity: The Baltic Sea Teacher. The Baltic Sea Teacher concept promotes an interregional teacher profile: acting cross
border with interregional matters, considering cultural differences, networking, ICT skills and mobility in intellectual and physical aspects. It underlines the approach of the European citizenship.

With the Baltic Sea Teacher concept we created an overarching concept for the project in which all participating teaching profiles has been addressed. It includes modern teaching methods, ICT-based learning and teaching and mobility. It has a strong regional connection. For the project and especially the challenge of finding commonalities the Baltic Sea Teacher concept covers all the advantages we, as teachers, expected by the project. I was really happy that we went for this concept and of cause for the development of the teacher part within COHAB.

I grew up in the region of Rostock. Working in the region means a lot for me. Many Youngsters left the region due to less career possibilities. On that score the Baltic Sea teacher approach fits very well into my understanding of what working in the Baltic Sea Region means to me:

First – networking: Networking means to me to build and use a network of people. The collaboration with the students and partners of the COHAB project has been a great experience for me. Beside my professional development, like my skill improvement in project management, I personally learned a lot. Especially dealing and working with the partner institutions and the fellows in “Team Teacher”. I really think that we – teachers and students – reached the goal putting a cornerstone for a future cooperation. For now it is necessary to build on this cornerstone and find common working contexts in the future to consolidate, fasten the collaboration and stabilize the network.

Second – professional development: I think professional Development is an essential cornerstone of being a teacher. Before this project I have never worked with or taught students from five different countries in one class. It was quite challenging and offered a new working environment for me. For me as a teacher it was always a need to provide interesting and student centered workshops in an open-minded working environment, which should be a usual part of teaching. My intension has always been to present small methods and games to enrich and improve didactical knowledge of the students. I as a teacher gained a lot from the ITC-based teaching. I got used to small effective ICT-tools which are useful to add in classic teaching to make it more efficient or modern. Especially the benefit from the Swedish and Danish experiences with regard to those tools was very useful.

Third – exchanging experiences: The exchange of experience is always a good chance to open your mind, share knowledge and take a look over the rim of your own world. During the COHAB project we had many discussions, formal and informal ones. We talked about the different opinions and mindsets regarding the teacher profession in the partner countries and what “being a teacher” means. It was very interesting and I got new insights.

It will take time until the concept of the Baltic Sea Teacher Identity will spread over to more teachers in the region. Nevertheless the COHAB project initiated a network of teachers that started to think and work as Baltic Sea Teachers.
A good step towards our future as teachers in the South Baltic Region and hopefully our Idea becomes reality.
“Competence Development through Learning by Confrontation” by Martin French

I would like to start my essay about my experiences as a teacher and staff member of the COHAB project with a quotation of Jimmy Carter:

“One of the most basic principles for making and keeping peace within and between nations (...) is that in political, military, moral and spiritual confrontations, there should be an honest attempt at the reconciliation of differences before resorting to combat.”

These words seem to be very political and quite far from an educational project like COHAB but they aren’t. The future in a peaceful and modern world, made by intelligent and open-minded people, will also be promoted by projects like COHAB or rather educational processes and effects out of approaches like this. I’m very proud that I could be a part of such processes and hopefully will be in new projects and developments in the future as well. The following lines will shortly describe some impressions I had and experiences I made and in the end learning outcomes I recognised for myself in the COHAB project.

Competences in a modern world

From my point of view one of the most important objectives of the COHAB project was to develop the competences or professional skills of all participants, which means not only the students but also the teachers or the project staff. With regard to the question which competences are needed in a modern world and in this context which competences a project like COHAB can develop, all participants had different opinions and concepts in their minds. In my opinion people in our complex world need to have employability skills or competences to be successful. For me that means competences like verbal and written communication in different languages, teamwork, social and (inter)cultural awareness, analysing and investigating, initiative and self-motivation, drive and spirit, authenticity, planning and organising, flexibility, time management and last but not least mobility, not only in a physical but also in a mental meaning. All these competences have been, more or less, a part of the teaching objectives and didactical methods in the COHAB project. In the end of the “COHAB journey” it is obvious that different competences developed in different ways concerning each participant.

Success by heterogeneity

If we ask the question what is a successful development of competences we also have to focus the fact that different people would assess this question in different ways. These assessments are of course caused by the individual “habitus” of the people, which refers to the lifestyle, values, dispositions and expectations of particular social or cultural groups that are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life, including job activities and experiences in the professional work. Also in the COHAB project, we had a lot of discussions about what are the competency goals or standards. In that point I realised, that some of the students and the staff members have had a different mental concept of success by heterogeneity or the positive development effect of different individual socio-cultural backgrounds and the linkages of these ones. I think all of us who worked and lived in a quite heterogeneous group for some time in the
COHAB project, have made totally different unique experiences of learning about different cultures, behaviours, individual objectives and developments. Some of the really open-minded discussions about these different experiences and the following changes in behaviour, thinking and acting were maybe one of the most important effects of the COHAB project. I can sum up, that the “clash of the cultures” in the COHAB project ignited or created for most of the participants potentials for innovations and changes – for their one and maybe also for their families, peer groups or colleagues in daily work.

Learning by confrontation

If we link the objective of permanent competence development in societies of lifelong learning and the proven potentials of collaboration of individuals with different socio-cultural backgrounds I would like to create the educational development concept of “learning by confrontation” and point out that this concept was the most interesting and impressive learning outcome for myself concerning the COHAB project. The COHAB project was a “trial of constructive confrontations”. If we define constructive confrontation as a structured, systematic approach or process that decreases conflicts and increases accountability by connecting the issues between what different people think, need or want, it should be the task of the educator to create a learning and teaching environment that promotes these processes. In regard to the COHAB project that means that we as the teachers should always act in a very professional and commendable way concerning a high intercultural awareness, a tolerant and open-minded behaviour and analysing skills like using methods of pedagogical diagnostic. For me, especially the last point was quite interesting in the COHAB project. It was really important to analyse and to discuss some teaching and learning situations, especially in the summer school and in the study visits, concerning the occurred confrontations between students and students, students and teachers or teachers and teachers. Only a good analysis or constructive discussion of confrontations in educational situations (like in the COHAB project) can lead to productive learning outcomes. And the basic of all of this is of course, one the one hand, to understand that confrontations are totally normal, when people with different “habitus” come together, and, on the other hand, that confrontation is not a bad thing but is necessary to create new ideas, solutions and development processes.

Rise of a creative and intercultural class

If we ask how we as the teachers supported the process of the “COHAB trial of constructive confrontations”, I think we can say in many situations we did a good job. But of course in the end it’s also a task and life challenge for the students or all of the COHAB participants to continue this journey of confrontations and work sustainable on their own creative and intercultural mindset. And here is the linkage to my first quotation of Jimmy Carter in the beginning of my essay, because only this “creative class” of young, well-educated, open-minded people empowers communities, organisations and people to harness their innate creativity to achieve greater prosperity, more effective collaboration and well-being in the world. But these young people also need “educational idols” and these of course should be teachers in all educational levels, from the early childhood education to the universities. Only teachers who have a very high professional educational standard especially in social and (inter)cultural awareness, professional knowledge and experiences, self-reflected authenticity and humility concerning human differences can lead young people really efficiently to achieve the creative and intercultural class.

I would like to finish my essay with some very meaningful words, created by the famous American educator and lawyer Derek Bok:
"If you think education is expensive, try ignorance!"

Our generation and the coming generations of the future only have one chance to succeed as individuals and as societies, if they understand, that it is necessary to spend more money and time in education. Projects like COHAB are an evidence that the investment in human capacity building is the best way to gain new knowledge and professional skills, improve the understanding of the own and of others cultures and strengthen (self-)analytical and reflective behaviour. This reflective behaviour is necessary for identifying and describing learning processes that focus on improvement and innovation. And in the end that leads to tolerant and cosmopolitan people, modern and innovative societies and last but not least to interregional and intercultural collaboration all over the world.

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1 See Pierre Bordieu
2 See John Hoover et alia
3 See Joseph Schumpeter
4 See Richard Florida

"Exploring a Parallel Universe – Reflections on Teaching in a Digital World” by Anne Kristine Petersen

When I first started teaching some 4 years ago, my lessons were completely analogous. That is to say, I did not use IT in my lessons, nor did I encourage my students to do so. Having gained some experience as a teacher trainer, I realised that this approach was hopelessly insufficient; my students will become primary school teachers when they graduate, and they will face the challenge of preparing pupils for jobs and technologies that don't exist. How can you help future teachers to face this challenge if you are not yourself ahead of the curve...Well, it turns out you can't.

So I began using PowerPoint for my presentations in class, which was by no means revolutionary at the time, but it nevertheless became an important turning point for me, because it opened my eyes to what I have come to believe are probably the most important skills for teachers today: the desire to experiment and the ability to adapt to what has been learned from the experiments.

My next step was to start using various web 2.0 programmes in my lessons and to encourage my students to do the same. Although my attempts were not equally successful, important lessons were learned: if the goal is for today's youth to acquire the intercultural and technical competences needed in a globalised world, exploring the opportunities offered by the web 2.0 becomes an obligation, not an option, for teachers and teacher trainers alike.

What I think the web 2.0 offers to education is the opportunity to practise skills that are essential in today's society, such as the ability to create new ideas, information and products by drawing on the vast amount of data available on the internet as well as the ability to collaborate virtually in both synchronous and asynchronous contexts.

As an English teacher, I have also come to realise that the web 2.0 may play another vital role in education as the medium through which the intercultural encounter can take place in the classroom. Pupils sharing the same mother tongue find it awkward to communicate with one another in English, and they usually have little opportunity to practise their intercultural competences in class because their cultural backgrounds are similar. The web 2.0 allows for authentic, virtual
interaction between pupils and teachers from different countries, and is less time-consuming and less costly compared to e.g. study trips.

I joined the COHAB project a few years ago, and here I was presented to another means of authentic, virtual interaction, namely parallel teaching, where classrooms are connected and teaching takes place synchronously. You may argue that this way of teaching is simply another variant of traditional teaching, the only difference being the fact that a group of students is watching you from afar. However, this is far from the truth; in order to manage the parallel classroom, both teachers and students must adapt and put an effort into creating and maintaining the social interaction that takes place between individuals in face to face lessons and is much valued by the social-constructivist tradition that I represent.

And this I find the most challenging: to make sure that the far-away group of students become active participants rather than just onlookers. A way of involving all students is to keep presentations short, to initiate discussions and to allow for both face to face and virtual group work among students. This is, however, easier said than done, and may explain why parallel teaching still awaits its breakthrough in the mainstream classroom.

What would probably help teachers taking on the daunting challenge of teaching in a parallel context, are some basic guidelines of how to do this successfully, that is, a kind of ‘Parallel Teaching for Dummies’ guide with tips and tricks and, in addition to this, a chapter on how to manage the multicultural, virtual classroom, where different cultures are represented and educational traditions may clash.

Until someone decides to publish such a guide, my advice is simply to take the plunge and explore the parallel universe, because what makes effective teaching is not the perfect lesson, but the preceding lessons where everything went wrong…

“Once upon a time…”
by Janine Feindt

…but not that long ago, there was this little ordinary teacher student. She was a 25 year old, insecure about her teaching skills and her future at all. She asked her mother: “What will I be? – Will I be pretty? Will I be rich?” “Que sera, sera. Whatever will be, will be.” She has never stood in front of a class before. And then there were these other teacher students of the other South Baltic countries, who have had a lot more real and practical experiences than the little ordinary teacher student has had. One day, all of the 20 students packed their bags: Peter with the tobacco, Greta with the bottle, Janine with her pillow, Britt with the pen, Jockum with his camera, … and they started their journey of becoming a South Baltic teacher within the COHAB-project term – more or less using these items.

The first time they met each other was at the summer school in Lithuania. The little ordinary teacher student was very excited and open for all the new things she was about to discover, especially the things she didn’t even expect to be part of the journey of becoming a South Baltic teacher. She thought all that time: “I’m a big big girl, in a big big world.”
At the beginning the COHAB-participants dealt with the cultural differences and similarities. Some of them appeared as barriers (like the English language, if someone liked to explain anything very precisely). They also appeared as helpful bridges (like the coast with the beaches of the South Baltic Sea). But the more they got to know each other, the more they were convinced that culture doesn't count so much. They came up with an intercultural or even non-cultural point of view. With this point of view, everyone has the possibility to get deeper into one's personality than any prejudices only permits.

Every participating student had to offer so various inputs for COHAB. The little ordinary teacher student also made her experience with these various inputs by herself. Especially when she was talking to her fellow students besides the schedule in the breaks or in the evenings over a glass of wine. Reflecting what happened every day was so satisfying for her. Sometimes they talked about the teacher as a role model and they learned a lot about this by discussing their lectures and lecturers critically. Another time they talked about the tight schedule or the blogging. And sometimes they wondered why the students couldn't influence the organisation of their journey as well. They told their lecturers a few times, also in official feedback situations, but it seemed to be static. So the students told themselves: “I don't care… I love it!” and just let the things slide.

The other teacher students, who are also very inspired and focused on getting better and better, gave a feedback on the little ordinary teacher student’s appearance. That gave her the possibility to look into a mirror. And this mirror was armed with more experience than a normal mirror was. It was not like the queen in the fairy tale of snow-white asking for: “Who in the land is the prettiest at all?” It’s more like: “What do you think, is pretty about me?” By giving differentiated reasons, comparing to own experiences this is a very good example of reflected learning from each other. And this is what happened. They learned a lot from each other. All together they supported the little ordinary teacher student. And it was so gorgeous for her to exchange any thoughts with them. And sometimes, when she was surprising her fellow students and waking their interests instead of the other way round, it was even more gorgeous.

At one summer day in Lithuania, they all went to the beautiful beach. The sun was going down. Everything looked so relaxing. There was no noise at all. Only the waves of the Baltic Sea were making the familiar sound, when they broke. The little ordinary teacher student pulled off her clothes and ran into the sea. She was happy as could be jumping into one big wave and swimming with the next one. A few of the other students shared her joy of life about the sea. At that point the little ordinary teacher student was totally caught by the wave.

This wave brought the students to different places in Lithuania, Denmark, Sweden and Germany. The knowledge about these countries and their education was consolidated and extended. They learned about modern teaching arrangements like the virtual classroom. The smartboard technique together with the internet made it possible to teach from one country classrooms in the other countries as well. This was totally new to the little ordinary teacher student. And so were all the Web 2.0 teaching tools prezi, google-drive, mindmeister and storybird to name but a few. She got convinced that ICT has to be a part of her teacher education.

Every time the teacher students met each other, there was a “dialogue seminar” on the schedule. This teaching method appealed a lot to them. The little ordinary teacher student was affected by the group dynamic of this method in particular. The story of the “teacher man” was one beginning of a dialogue seminar and it starts with: “Here they come. And I’m not ready. How could I be?” The students talked a lot about, what they can do about becoming a good teacher and how to prepare for various teaching situation without losing face. It wasn’t possible to get the one and
only solution. They figured out that it has to do a lot with one’s personality. How does a teacher look at the students and how does he or she act intuitively in the classroom. And they considered that a teacher is also lifelong learning. But whether he or she turns out to be a good or a bad teacher depends on how the teacher deals with mistakes and whether this person likes to get better only for oneself or also for the learners. An inexperienced teacher has to grit the teeth and murmur the song: “So wake me up, when it’s all over!” Afterwards the teacher should learn from his experiences and exchange the experiences with others.

Especially impressed was the little ordinary teacher student by their study visit in Denmark. She fell in love with the Danish mentality that seemed to be spread everywhere. The teacher personality was also affected by this persuasion that everybody can reach everything. This could be a reason for every Dane to be happy most of the time. The little ordinary teacher student observed Danish teachers being secure in focusing their lesson on the students’ interests and using a lot of ICT. The schools had a lot of ICT equipments. She doesn’t know this from Germany.

In the end the little ordinary teacher student drew lessons from all the dialogues in the COHAB project. It influenced her teaching personality and will also influence it in the future. The openness and the honesty helped her to collaborate with each other so well and would also be a great skill to live and work successfully abroad. But above all stands the experience everyone has or gets from others through exchange. It is not possible to measure these experiences, because the result of exploring more and more experiences is a feeling of secureness. And this feeling tells the teacher that he or she is skilled like a teacher in the 21st century should be.

This little ordinary teacher student was me. But I grew up and developed during the COHAB-time into a “teacher woman” – like Hans Christian Andersen told me at our first dialogue seminar. I just had to be patient and self confident. From now on I’ll never be that insecure about my teacher personality any more, thanks to my COHAB-family members and all the responsible persons who made it possible for me participating in COHAB. Ugly ducklings are in our past, present and future time. It is also a teacher’s aim supporting them to reach their learning targets, to find their own way and build their competence. I am now sure about that I will cut my own path through the jungle of a teacher’s life. Flying, by the way, because I’ll never let anyone clipping my swan’s wings of idealistic attitude any more.

And the little ordinary teacher student lived happily ever after as a grown teacher woman…

“Social Friendship and Cultural Differences”

by Kajsa Higgins

Meeting people from various, even close by countries triggers my cultural mindset. During COHAB project there has been numerous of tight relations created where opinions and values have been shared, discussed and hierarchies have been established and questioned while everyone’s special position in this group have been constructed and reconstructed. Some lessons have required great openness where some students have been brave in exposing their own weaknesses and feelings of side-lining. By giving subjective stories, possibilities of creating opportunities to enter each other’s “rooms” and allowing situations where power structures have been challenged are a few of the many learning moments I will remember for a long time.
"In the heart of the forest there is an unexpected glade that only can be found by those who dares to get lost" (Tomas Tranströmer, Swedish poet)

Culture is one of the most difficult concepts to be defined and Herlitz (1989) expresses that there are around 200 ways of describing it. Triandis means that “culture is to society what memory is to individuals”. Each society has each different culture just like memory varies among individuals and cultures must be respected and understood since nobody can deny other's memory. Defining culture as the human-made part of the environment leads us to understanding culture as a particular adaptive tool and characteristic of the humans. Elements of culture like dress codes, ways of getting food and cuisine, technological innovations, economic activities, patterns of social interactions and behaviour, customs, beliefs, systems of values and meanings are shared within a specific region between people who live at a certain region. Also as cultural elements are considered as useful to the inhabitants they tend to be transmitted from generation to generation (2004).

All along human history process of migrations and cultural mixing and cultural change has constantly happened. Meeting other cultures always meant borrowings, adaptation, integration, sometimes assimilation but also conflicts and clashes. The scale and significance of these problems has probably never been so dramatically broadened as now, at the beginning of 21st century. Nowadays, the world is becoming more accessible, and this put more importance on intercultural communication. In such a world, it is essential for educational systems to offer young people a global perspective. It is when we reflect experience turns into knowledge.

One of my thoughts is; how do I perceive other persons? Do I do it with the eyes of my society and culture, or do I make my own judgment about them? As a conclusion I would like to think that the connection between culture, individual and behavior exist and is rather strong. Nevertheless through contact with individuals who are representatives of other cultures, who probably exercise another type of behavior people can make their own assessment and maybe decide to adapt to the other's culture, find themselves able to appreciate it and even internalize it. It is up to every individual to shape their understanding of what culture is, how it operates within the structures and the psyche and what the outcome of the ‘clash’ between cultures might come to be.

When it comes to cultural meetings there is in my opinion at least two talents that individuals have to acquire: the ability of communication including linguistic competence, and the ability to see deeper into each other’s respective culture. First, when we have these abilities intercultural communication and understanding will be possible. Mastering the English language is essential and the importance of English as a world language is rising along with political, economic, and business globalization and active international travel. Language is a very important communication tool and therefore having a good general foundation in English is seem to be essential for successful global interaction. Second, all people should be encouraged to be proud of their individuality and their specific culture but also learn to respect each other’s differences. Nowadays there are increasing opportunities to have intercultural communication, and it means that we have to understand others who have different backgrounds. To me after getting over the first culture clashes it seems that all humans are more similar to one another than they are different.

I joined the COHAB project because I am curious to get to know people from other countries with different cultural backgrounds. This has been one my interest since primary school when a teacher in grade five, being a cosmopolitan, along with everyday teaching constantly gave the
class international inputs and images. Later on throughout my time as a teacher I have been attracted by intercultural challenges and this has led me to work with immigrants in Swedish schools, working with curriculum implementation some years in Africa and later on taking part in construction of internationalization on university level in Sweden. What attracts me in intercultural/international teaching is the exiting and creative cultural meetings which often results in a non-foreseen dual learning process. Without trying to understand ourselves we will never understand others.

Two truths approach each other, one comes from within and one from without and when they meet we have an opportunity to see ourselves (Tomas Tranströmer, Swedish poet).

Herlitz, Gillis (1989) Kulturgrammatik Kulturförlaget Glunten, Uppsala

“Inter-regional Group Work”  
by Trine Baagø Jørgensen

I’m ready for a new journey, this time to explore the mobility around the Baltic Sea as a teacher with the cohab project. My suitcase is packed, my passport is ready and so am I. I’m a teacher student from Denmark, but I’m also Scandinavian, European and a Baltic Sea citizen. Although I see myself as a person who has explored many cultures and enjoy meeting new people, I don’t really feel connected with the other Baltic Sea countries, maybe because I don’t know that much about them, so I am more than ready to expand my horizon.

My first encounter with my inter-regional group was good, they all seemed very nice. At first we were all very modest, checked each other out and acted as polite as we could. When were given our first inter-regional group assignment, we came with our different approaches and views on how to work with it, but at the same time we gave each other space and accepted the differences - An example here is that I am very outspoken and always speak my mind, where the German boy is very modest, observant and really reflects a lot before he gives his opinion. So I push him to speak up a bit more and he makes me think once more before I speak up. This dynamic I think is really great and it gave the result that right from the beginning we worked very well together.

A thing which I really enjoyed with my group was that we always worked together. We didn’t divide the work and separated, but sat down together, even if this would take more time. When we were to write on our blogs as a group, we sat down with one computer and agreed on everything. To me it was quite impressive to work so well with people whom I had just met and thought I would have very little in common with, because we came from different countries. But I found out that personality is more important than nationality when working together. This has truly left a mark on me, and I would now be more open to working cross nations in the future.

The group work continued virtually. It was kind a strange that the group, which had work so well together, drifted apart when we weren’t physically together - almost as if the culture of obligation was different from each person/nationality when you weren’t meeting in person. The virtual meeting that we did have went great and I felt like it was a learning full process.
- After the virtual meeting in September we didn’t do anything in our inter-regional group till January.

This made me think about what function my inter-regional group really had. I don’t have a need for a close personal relation with the people in my group. I like them and I get very well along with them. But if we don’t have an assignment from the project, we are not in contact with each other; only follow each other on social media like Facebook and Google+. So I think about if it was even necessary to meet in person, if the group work would have functioned just as well if it was only virtually? I will never know this, because we did meet in person first and at the same time we only had few virtual meetings as a group. I do also believe it would have been very difficult to learn each other’s way of working and behaving, if it was only virtually. Like I said earlier personality is important for the group work.

But I must admit I think it could be possible to work cross boarders without physically moving, because you can meet and work virtually, you just have to be aware that it is strictly professional and you are not to create a personal relation with the people at the other end, for that you have to meet in person. You must be aware of your person and how you like to work - you must also be able to put this a bit to the side and be open to new ways of working to make a virtual collaboration function.

To conclude my journey I have experienced that mobility is not just physically but it can also be mentally, and I think that this is the kind of mobility I have gained the most of with this project. Not the visits to the other countries, but the opportunities I have for the future being mobile without having to travel. I’m not feeling more connected with the other countries, but I feel more understandable towards their cultural behavior, which I think is a great achievement that will benefit me in my future studies and work.

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“Mental Harbours”

by Björn Nelson

Öland is an island southeast of the Swedish mainland. Here I have my special spot on earth. Two weeks ago, I was sitting there looking over the Baltic Sea, thinking back. What did I know about the countries and people in Lithuania and Germany and Denmark before this Cohab project started? My knowledge was certainly limited and fragmented, and still is. I wonder if I, and you out there over the sea, have the same opinions and imaginations as before this COHAB journey?

The water is blue today, yesterday it was green, or was it perhaps grey? Nature play tricks with our senses. I have been sitting here for an hour, and my thoughts have floated away, looking for different meanings of the word memories. Under me is limestone and marble. It was built up by sediments where we can track fossils from octopus, fishes, etc rests. They remind us of organisms living here more than 300 million years ago. I can imagine what it looked like. The Baltic Sea as a kettle, boiling from life, then, resting on the bottom as sediments slowly pressed together to rock formations.

The second memory is also a “sediment”, but in my memory. I think of it as a “mental harbour”.

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From here I can travel to the past or the future in a moment. Suddenly this short story crosses my mind:

*A Sioux chief is sitting by the railway far away from civilisation. A guy approaches him and says “There will be no train until tomorrow”. The Sioux chief says “I am not waiting for the train. I just came. I am waiting for my soul”.*

They are so rare nowadays, those moments when I do not run too fast: moments when I get that feeling close to something like “deep ecology”. The expression was made by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. He meant that in those depths nature and humans are connected. Naess named the individual expressions of deep ecology as ecosophy. His own ecosophy was “Tvergastein”: his mountain hut. In my mind ecosophy is a metaphor for domains you can’t describe with words. If we get the glimpse of other persons ecosophy words are not needed.

I remember my first real big project in the academy. It was twenty years ago I met Per, who later became a professor in informatics. We really got along well and everything seemed to work in the project. After a while I felt there were frictions and tensions between us that grew. I tried to understand what was happening, and we discussed the problem. One day he asked me: “*have you heard about the cow*”. “No” I said.

*“It’s what’s on the meadow”, he said. In Swedish it is a play on words (sv. Poäng) where the cow “on the meadow” also could mean that the cow is the point or the meaning.*

I laughed at first, but later the word “poäng” became, at the same time a metaphor, as a “pebble in my shoe”. I started to think of myself as a project leader. I came from the building industry, and was used to leading projects.

In the back of my head something was processed and some weeks later an idea came over me when I saw Per.

*“Give me five minutes”, I said to him, and we went in to an empty class room. I drew two vertical parallel lines on the whiteboard, pointed to them and said, “*This is a road*”. Per nodded.*

*“On the left and to the right we have meadows”. Per nodded I continued “I want you to walk on the meadows, and when we decide we will meet up on the road and you will tell me what you found, to take the project further”.*

Per nodded and smiled.

During the project there were 25 students writing their master thesis in the project and Per got his promotion as a professor. Per became one of my best friends.

About ten years after this I read a book written by Stephen Holl, an American architect.

*"A metaphoric or symbolic parallel proves meaningful in a given situation. The act of juxtaposing two incongruous things together: a literary metaphor and an architectural programme and structure, yields a dynamic tension. A unique meaning and intensity can evolve in the effort to hold these together and work within these tensions."*

When I had read this I saw Per smiling. I had been lost in my plans and had given too little creative space.
Sitting there on the marble sedimentary rock on Öland, facing the Baltic Sea, I was trying to rewind. The year before the COHAB project was agreed, Marit Persson, Daniel and I went to Denmark to discuss a new possible project. This period our souls were left behind in Växjö: we were all fed up with work and the energy left for new engagements was low. We discussed the question in the car: what could motivate us to go into this?

For my part, my view was expressed by using the words “barriers and movement”. I reckon my interest in the project was addressed to solving mental barriers by travelling between in our “inner worlds”.

Social systems are, according to the sociologist Niklas Luhmann, held together by communication. Now after the project I think that the Baltic Sea could be that pond where we meet, talk, listen and reflect: where we communicate.

Platforms for dialogue are needed: foundations for as a new sort of “mental harbour”. A smaller Baltic Sea: a Pond without geography. There is the same sea level at each harbour concerning richness and prestige. I feel really pleased when I have read all the narratives: those subjective truths are to be considered when a new cultural landscape grows in Europe.

"So Many Impressions From My Journey Around the South Baltic Sea" by Greta Treinauskaite

First of all, I want to say that I had very good experience in Cohab project. I am glad for my decision to join it. It will be in my memory for a long time.

So, I can say that I had very good time in all countries (Lithuania, Denmark, and Germany) and I cannot exclude any country talking about lectures, dialogue seminars, interviews or leisure time.

In Lithuania (Klaipėda) we were hosts and we tried to do our best. Of course, where some difficulties were in first days, but after few days everything went smoothly. Talking about myself, first days were quite hard for me, maybe I was little afraid, because I saw so prepared students with fluent English. After meetings, conversations I realized how simply and friendly they are. The same was with lectures. However, I tried to concentrate in it and I was glad for my results. The summer school lasted two weeks, so we had more time to get familiar with each other. In lectures, when we were divided in international groups, we had opportunity to compare and share ideas about culture, society, education system, ICT in different countries. It was very interesting and useful time.

Talking about visits to Vilnius, Nida, Palanga and other places in Lithuania was nice to show what our capital and other beautiful towns are like. I had good experience in that, because I had to remember some facts and information about these places. Also, school visits, now I can compare with other countries education system. I think it is good for my future, when I will think where I want to be a teacher, in Lithuania? Or maybe in Sweden? I will think about it later on.

Our next meeting was in Denmark (Vordingborg). Here I had new experience with education, society and culture. I was impressed of dialogue seminar, it was exciting and the topic was
really interesting for me (task: read an extract from the book “Teacher man” by Frank McCourt and write personal reflection). As well as, I liked interview with teacher in St. Joseph school. Of course, I loved all evenings spend together with Cohab members and it was the best summary of every day.

Meeting in Germany (Rostock) I liked most, it was excellent. Here we had a lot of different activities and every day was full of excitement (for example, Education Rally, round table discussions and ICT lectures). Even, the Education Rally day was cold and we get tired, but it was exciting and I would repeat it again and again. Round table discussions with education experts from Rostock were very interesting and they told about system in different schools. We also gave examples and shared ideas about our institutions. In my opinion it was really useful for all of us. Also ICT lecture which was quite different from other ICT lectures (We were building constructions from marshmallows and spaghetti). We had group work and fun.

And our last meeting in Sweden (Vaxjö)! I had amazing time in amazing country with amazing people! What can I want more? Everything I had that week in last study visits. Every day was full of excitement. First day we visited primary school and had city tour with guide, who told a lot of interesting things about city, as all houses are made from wooden and etc.. Second day we had dialogue seminar as evaluation, because we were talking about all project, so we had opportunity to share our ideas. Third day - Apladalsskolan in Värnamo.. I will never forget that beautiful primary school with warm atmosphere and Jockum lunch. Also “Lost identity” and Salsa evening... Just wonderful time all together. And of course last two days in Malmö.. Beautiful city and a lot of memories, as last night in city, study visit at Malmö Högskola and lunch at Moderna Muséet.

How sad would be, but the project is going to the end and I hope we all will continue our friendship. I had good experience which I won't forget.

Thank you all, Greta :)

“Teaching Technologies (methods) in Cohab Project for Modern Society Teachers in South Baltic States”

by Renata Jarovaitenè

UNESCO notes, that modern society, today more than ever before, is based on information and knowledge. For this reason, it is was necessary to create conditions by which more and more society members are provided with ICT skills that will allow them not only to process information, but also to implement their individual creative potential to the solution of any problem, teachers and educators should also have the corresponding opportunities for acquisition and development of such skills.


The mission of Cohab Project was to make more closely such processes as mobility, education and labor market.
Due to the fact that for a long time I have been working in the field of teacher education and interested in some aspects of teaching training, didactic and methodology, I accept to take this project as a challenge and try myself. I'm interested in teacher education, and all the time try to understand teachers as multi-faceted personalities needs, aspirations, expectations in modern society. Project helped me find some answers, what we need to do for future in teacher education.

Just a couple names and facts from world and Lithuanians Modern society started developing in Lithuania during interwar period (1918-1940). Efficient training methods and forms are very important for achievement of qualitative results. Starting with J. A. Comenius, an originator of didactics, a science of teaching, topical remains to be the question about what the subject and aim of teaching is and what means are to be employed for its achievement. The great Czech pedagogue treated method as the major key to learner's intelligence and heart: “Teaching method has to know and understand the difficulty of the method, to assist in quick and thorough learning, protecting learner from intimidation and deterrence from further learning, stimulating and encouraging his willingness to learn” (Comenius, 1927). Outstanding Lithuanian's educators Stasys Šalkauskis (1927), Juozas Geniušas (1927), Antanas Maceina (1936) and others were encouraging to replace passive teaching methods with active ones by employing modern technologies, integrating teaching subjects, etc. When discussing the concept of method as a rational way, focused on aim of studies, Šalkauskis (1991) emphasizes compatibility of method with student's make-up and peculiarities of studied subject. He points to two types of method: tethic (“proposing”) and heuristic (“discovering”). He emphasizes heuristic method, showing active role of student in the process of studies, highlighting development of his self-dependence, encouraging him to strive for perfection and innovations.

While analysing organisation of the training process, J. Geniušas pays particular attention to implementation of such principles, as naturalness, imagination and activeness. The essence of principles and their employment is defined on the basis of child’s psychology and theoretical conceptions of new pedagogical trends, on the basis of own experience and data of foreign experimental researches. According to him, a child „should not only hear and see what a teacher is telling and showing him, but also to independently remake it: orally, in written, in drawings, modelling and, finally, express it in play. Therefore, empiric experience with its visual aids and their important role are particularly significant in conscious and firm pickup.

After restoration of independence (11 03 1990) national educators started gaining experience from western researchers D.C. Berliner, N.L. Gage M.N. Grendstand, R. Arends G. Petty. They differently define teaching methods, but the essence remains the same, for example, “it is a model of teacher’s recursive actions, it can be employed in teaching different subjects, it is typical to more than one teacher and important for learning“ (Gage, Berliner, 1994, p., 307. G. Petty (2006). They propose to employ methods not only on the basis of chosen aims, but also to pay attention to demands, expectations and ergonomic environment of learners. Variety of methods stimulates pedagogical activity, pleases pedagogues, and encourages them to experiment with groups of students and to reject inefficient methods.

Soviet pedagogy (Lithuania was ruled by Soviets in 1940-1941 and 1945-1990) aimed at conveyance of information, which had to provide learners with maximal amount of knowledge. This tendency is still rather strong even after 24 years of independence in such teaching institutions.

Eternal didactic problem („how to teach?”) nowadays takes a new shade. Rapid changes and modern technologies of upbringing result in changes within academic didactic provisions and approach, namely, in academic teaching and learning methods. Analysis of human memory and
mental abilities shows that passive learning is not most productive and does not satisfy human demands for information and acquisition of skills. Modernization of technologies replaces passive methods with active ones, which results in more rapid and efficient achievement of desired results. Teaching itself becomes more interesting and attractive. Modern teaching paradigm is typical to all EU countries. It aims at independent acquisition of knowledge, development of practical abilities, when method in the process of upbringing is a way of interaction between educators and learners. It is continuously improved during their pedagogical meetings, their communication and cooperation. As participant of Project Cohab, I have had a lot of possibilities to observe a different styles of teaching in different schools and universities of Europe, Germany (Rostock university), Denmark (University College Zealand) and Sweden (Linnaeus University).

I notice, that aim of higher schools and universities nowadays is to provide students with specific knowledge and to teach them how to learn systematically, prepare them for lifelong learning, to shape their desire to search, discover, evaluate critically and employ information for solution of problems, decision making, for continuous update of their knowledge, for vocational and personal development. Higher schools have to develop the culture of learning, which would stimulate students and graduates to strive for learning and to be able to do that in continuously changing informational environment.

Upbringing of enterprising and creative individuals would be and are now the biggest challenge for higher school. However, the question emerges – whether or not lecturers are able to do that? Role of educator in modern society is that of a assistant, taking care of learner and the process of his knowledge improvement. While communicating with learners and observing them, the educator concludes about abilities and needs of each learner and on the basis of these observations develops a democratic learning environment, which would enable learners to construct meanings, understanding and knowledge.

The term “teaching/training technologies“ is nowadays very frequently employed in the science of upbringing. Scientific literature provides with different versions of its explanation, for example, the art of teaching, development of skills and abilities, employing innovative training methods, meaningful implementation of teaching aims and results in the process of upbringing. The term involves forms, methods, lecturing methods in education institutions, organisational and methodological means in the process of upbringing.

Activities in Project I classified the methods of upbringing in accordance with technologies: productive technology - (explanation, instruction, work with literature, virtual-practical classes, testing, lecture, demonstration, illustration, virtual learning, etc.); cooperation technology (major methods - interview, discussion, cognitive play, control, programming, practical training, problem-orientated training; auxiliary methods - illustration, work with books; saving technology (major methods – narration, discussions, disputes, subject based plays, video/audio methods, observation; auxiliary methods – situational method, unconventional methods, demonstration).

Evidently, the term is realized differently – some researchers perceive it in narrow sense, whereas others comprehend it in wider sense and even offer their own classification. We should accept researchers’ observations as a versatile explanation of above term, when all of them reason in a similar way.

Planning virtual meetings during Project most important was creative methods of training and their employment in virtual lectures. On the basis of these methods critical thinking and ability
of students to solve problems in nonstandard situations was developed. In that sense significant were exploratory methods, involving into research activity and exploration of reality.

Modern society needs creating personalities, employing their intelligence as an instrument. It is not easy to define and specify creativity. According to B. Edwards, it could be a personal property, assisting in discovery of something new. Creativity as a complex of personal properties, which enables to achieve original, socially significant and qualitatively new results of activity, whereas a creative type of lesson is designed for productive and creative activity of schoolchildren. Similar though more mature should be classes with students in higher school. Creativity as a human ability to offer new ideas, to think self-dependently, in non-stereotyped way, to orient quickly in problematic situations, to easily find a typical solutions. During Project methods of active training helped to implement these objectives, as they are methods of pedagogical activity, providing with opportunity for better realization of teaching content and improving ability of critical thinking, employment of knowledge both in ordinary and new conditions. Methods of upbringing are as important factors of pedagogical activity as aims and content of upbringing.

When choosing and offering students different teaching methods, lecturers have to consider criteria of active methods (methods have to create conditions for relax and motion, they also have to involve many participants and offer them conditions for communication, they have to activate available knowledge and positive qualities of participants, making them useful for entire group. In my opinion, it was perfect on project was managed perfect implementation.

Practical peculiarities in study related activities and good ergonomic conditions are important for employment of active methods. After evaluation of their availability on the basis of these criteria lecturers are likely to choose and offer most efficient study methods, encouraging, stimulating and activating all learners.

Activating teaching/learning methods encourage Project’s students to take interest into discovery, analysis and synthesis of knowledge, to search for new facts and find creative methods for solution of problems, to identify their interrelation. Employment of these methods leads to tolerance and nurturance of social openness and reciprocal understanding, respect, development of cooperation, development of ability to listen to each other, implantation of general human values (humanism, tolerance, responsibility, conscience, self-confidence, creation, free and good will). Methods of active learning enable to realize the essence of undefined situations and undertake new activities. Active learning secures its integrity and self-expression.

Working on Project I saw how creatively and effectively project is managed to perfect implementation could be students using inventive and complementary training methods, interview, stimulating cooperation, inter-assistance, outspokensness, critical thinking, activity of schoolchildren, etc. A wide range of modern training methods is oriented towards learners and stimulation of their teaching/learning activity. I think these are most efficient learning methods, stimulating activeness, i.e. discussions of training material, its own practical testing and teaching of others. Methods must create environment, which would stimulate learning and enable to rest on largest possible sensations in one’s own activity. Learner achieves best results when he is an active member in the process of learning.

Students- teachers of South Baltics states tried different active training methods, employed in the process of higher education studies demonstration, work in group, virtual-platform teaching, search of literature, discussion, project teaching method, verbal introduction, scientific paper, reviews, interview, essay, learning blogs, drafting of bibliographic list, didactic testing, graphic and
visual methods, maps of ideas and notions, map of ideas, introduction of banners/posters, group rally method, case analysis, etc.

I believe during the Project by working together both parts students and teachers used and applied in practical discussion sessions, dialog seminars the most innovative teaching methods, that’s proves as their competences as Baltic states teachers status in now days changing, modern society.

“Intercultural Competence, That’s the Keyword”

_by Helle Madsén_

When I had the chance to participate in a project were I could improve my intercultural competences, I had to apply right away. And by all means I got in. I was now a part of, according to my expectations, a great project that hopefully would give a lot of good experience to my future job as a teacher.

During the COHAB-year we had to start with a summer school in Lithuania, then 3 study visits in respectively Denmark, Germany and Sweden, three virtual meetings and at the end this anthology. The year was long and we all had to work a lot, but it was worth it.

We are now finished with the project and I’m standing with a feeling of greatness. In spite of the small failures we experienced, which by the way only made it more experience-full, it was well planned and well performed. I am now rich in speaking English, seeing different culture from the miscellaneous countries who participated, learning the educational system from the participating countries and I have learned a lot of new exiting words. Words like; mixed ability – intercultural competence – dialogue seminar – bilingual teacher – study visit – collaboration seminar – vocational teacher – primary and secondary school teacher – virtual classroom teaching – innovational skills – lifelong learning.

What do I do with all these new inputs in my head? Well.. I mix it all in a big pot and then I take it out once in a while bit by bit, whenever it’s needed in my job as a teacher. The things I have seen, heard and learned in this project will and can be very useful in my teaching job, now and in the future.

What made most impression and what do I remember the best during the year with COHAB? I must say that, what amazed me the most was the fact that 20 different students were put together in a group and now had to live and work together. We all had different nationalities, different cultures and different social layers. But it worked like a dream. There were no impediments in the fact of us working within the borders or cross the countries.

There was a funny thing I experienced in Lithuania and I am still a bit amazed about it. When you have to eat a meal together in e.g. Denmark, you serve everybody at the same time and then you don’t start eating until everybody has their food. In Lithuania its different, you start when you get your food. Even in restaurants they just serve when the food is ready, without any consideration about the fact that all the persons at the same table should be served at the same time. I experienced that we were four persons sitting together, ordering at the same time but
different meals. One person got her food before the rest of us, and she was a Lithuanian so she just started. When the rest of us finally got our food, she was finished with hers: I don’t really see that as a way of dining together!

But when things like that happen, you really see the difference in the culture. Every country has its own culture. And what I might think is strange in one country, that concerned country might think something strange about a cultural thing in my country. When you get aware of these differences and you adapt them that is what I would call intercultural competence.

Dialogue seminar, was one of the new words I learned. The first time we tried it, we had to prepare an essay from home. Either thoughts we got from looking at a certain picture or something related to the story about the ugly duckling. One of our teachers was there and we were only ten students in this group. We had to read our essay one by one, and after reading it, we would get some feedback and maybe even some discussions/debates about our story. It was a very different, but good way of having debate about a subject. I really liked it. Immediately I was thinking of how I could use it in my job as a teacher. How could I lower this to a level for younger kids?

There was a protocol made so we could read what was said in this seminar. I think/understood that the plan was, that the next time we had dialogue seminar, we had to follow up on the old protocol with the new essays and the new debates. But we didn’t. And the third time we did the seminar, it became a bit boring, because we all basically just said the same and there wasn’t really any debate going on. I don’t know if it was the subject or the fact that we didn’t follow up on the old protocols.

A funny thing about a project like this is, “what is it really that you remember?” For me I have so many new and interesting experiences, but I must say that it is the fellow students and situations with them I remember the most. A walk down Cohab-memory lane and pictures in my head is students laughing together, the happiness of meeting each other again at the next study visit, talking deeply about the different ways of teaching and just simply being social together.

I would certainly highly recommend this Cohab project to others, it has given me a lot on the personal side, on the social side and on the professional side that I will be able to use in my job as a teacher, now and in the future.
So… Thank you Cohab!

“I Pack My Bag”
by Ann-Christin Minarski

COHAB for me contains Change in the sense that we enlarged our set of skills and thereby strengthened our properties. We became more Open-minded in regard to other ways of teaching, methods and habits, and also changed our Habits because new skills and knowledge tells us there is a better way to do it or to think about things. We learned to pay Attention to new ways and methods of teaching, but we should always carry a master plan in case of a lost internet connection or other disorders. Of course the Baltic-Sea region with its beautiful sights and opportunities should be mentioned in this context.

A new project with unknown people and countries…so I packed my bag with excited and unknown expectations, when we went to our first study visit to the summer-school in Klaipeda,
Lithuania. I still exactly remember the first breakfast, because unfortunately we could not be there for the launch event. All groups were separated from each other and discussions took place within the national groups. I couldn’t imagine how close the relationships to the other groups would grow. On the first day we got to know all the other members of the project. The game “I packed my bag with …” helped us to learn all the names and link it to an object. It still helps me to remember all the names: “Peter and his tobacco”, “Jockum and his camera” and “Helle and her book”. That was a very nice introduction to a wonderful project, with wonderful people.

We were divided into our international groups on the first day. My group consisted of Alvadoria from Lithuania, Helle from Denmark and Jockum from Sweden. A wonderful combination, because Helle and Jockum gained experience in the pedagogical and practical range already, which Alvadoria and I could benefit from. In addition Jockum is a professional in the field of ICT-Tools, he helped us acquiring some new skills during our visits. In this international group we had the task to create a blog to exchange experiences and tasks on different subjects. That was a little difficult for me, because before, I had never been interested in blogs. I changed my mind about that later on.

The experience with the ICT tools - I like the Google offers like Google Docs or Google Hangouts most – helps me in group work even today, when group members can’t meet directly and personally. Google Hangout also simplifies video chats with more than two people and allows you to share the desktop with the others. This also helped us in the exchange of experience between our group work. I think I will use the tools we learned to use for my teaching job. I am also grateful for the tools Jockum shared with us, either on our blog or on facebook.

Another very great method for me was the dialogue seminar, especially the one in Lithuania. It was really a nice experience to hear such beautiful, emotional and profound lyrics.

In October we went to Denmark, in December the other groups came to Rostock and in our last study-visit we visited Sweden. In Denmark we visited some schools, the most interesting of which was the boarding school. I also liked Copenhagen a lot, it is a really nice city with lots of different sights. In Germany my favorite activity was the round-table-discussion where we had the chance to talk to professionals from the educational system. In our last study-visit we had the chance to see different vocational schools, which of course for me is really useful, because I am going to be a vocational teacher soon. We also learned how to dance salsa and discussed new ideas and plans for the networking and other projects in the future. One of the funniest moments for me took place in a Lithuanian school when the teacher moved from Lithuanian to English and Karolis still translated it for us in English. All in all I was able to develop my language skills through the exchange with the other students. In addition, I was able to learn new methods, such as the dialogue seminar or the ICT-Tools, or the project-seminar from John.

So today I pack my bag with a lot of new experiences, language skills, method skills and media skills and my new friends from the Cohab-Project. I am sure that we can learn and benefit a lot more in the future by the cross-border exchange and I am really glad that I had the opportunity to take part in this project.
"The Idea of a Baltic Sea Teacher"

by Hanka Lent

When I got the awesome news that I will be a participant in the COHAB project, I was very happy because I noticed this would be a great chance. The chance to get to know other people from other countries, others cultures, other ways of being a teacher, and of course to improve my language skills. Getting to know the other participants in the first short virtual meeting was very exciting: new persons and especially new technology.

My anticipation for the Summer School in Lithuania was increasing and the time was running until then and before we knew it, team Germany was sitting in the airplane to Palanga. There were so many things during the summer school: new people, a new country and new and different cultures. But it was not just fun, we had to work on interesting topics. We created the fascinating idea of the Baltic Sea Teacher. The most lasting issue of the summer school is the great discussions we had.

Most of them in the breaks and in our free time, because unfortunately there were not that much time in the lectures or we had to stop at the most thrilling point, for example in the dialogue seminar – a totally new method for me with so much potential to get to know the others much better. The input we got was not that boring as expected because of the fact that we students mostly were the presenters. Thus I got many insights about the other school systems or the ways of becoming a teacher. The only issue that was not mine is the blogging task. I think blogging is something very interesting, but you need to have passion for it and for the thing to share information with the whole internet community – and that’s not mine.

After the fabulous two weeks in Lithuania we had our first long-term virtual meeting. For me it was nice to see how to communicate or how to teach in four different countries although it was very hard to motivate yourself over the four hours and to find your concentration especially when the input was a bit more theoretical. And there were a comment like “it’s similar like if the television is on”. Another thing I noticed during the first long meeting is that you as a teacher need to feel comfortable in front of a camera and that you have to have a very good media competence otherwise you will be a slave of the media in particular when technical problems occur.

The following study visit in Denmark was for me a bit stressing because of the tight schedule. However, I have to say “Thank You” to the Danish students because they did a great job and I got a close insight of another understanding of teaching and learning.

The next virtual meeting was our turn – team Germany. This time I got to know how annoying it could be if there are any technical difficulties. You have planned something and gave much effort in it and then nothing goes right. Thus it should be clear that all technical components work in all participating countries. Nonetheless I had the chance, together with the other German students, to practice in front of the camera and how it feels to be the man/woman in charge – I have to admit it’s a nice feeling. And then we met each other again in Germany during the Christmas time, thus we were in charge again.
Repeating myself I have to say that the study visit was much more stressing than gainful. For me it would have been better if the study visits would be a bit longer, not just 5 days, including the weekend before or after would be helpful to get together the cultural, interactive things and the theoretical and working thing, because for me the intercultural contact is as important as the working issue.

The last study visit in Sweden I could enjoy more than the others because of the relaxed schedule. Although it made me a bit sad that we saw each other for the last time face-to-face during this project. My hope that we take up the idea of the Baltic Sea Teacher during this week was not fulfilled in the way I expected it would have been. But we spent a lot of time on questions of sustainability of the project outcomes which is important for maybe getting the chance to see each other again as a becoming, growing Baltic Sea Teacher.

All in all I can say that the project development exceeded my expectations by far. My language skills increased, I got to know very interesting people and learned much about other countries their culture and their understanding of education. We created a small network between us students, the lecturers and other persons in charge we got to know during e.g. our school visits. I'm very looking forward the development of this network, I hopefully can use during my time as a teacher. For myself I can say taking the chance to be a participant in this project was the best thing I could have done for my own development. I think I'm on my way to become a Baltic Sea Teacher.

“On a Baltic Journey with the COHAB-project during the years 2011 to 2014” by Anne Britta Rasmussen

It is tempting to call this text i “A sentimental Journey” as a reference to the first example of the genre travel literature written by Laurence Sterne in 1768, but that would be too academic and The Cohab project journey was not a sentimental one and unlike the novel it has a proper ending.

Using the metaphor, “Journey” as a framework in a project like this makes perfectly sense to me.

The Cohab journey is meant to be an educational journey in all possible ways, personal and professional for all participants. It makes perfectly sense to use metaphors, like “A journey” when you want to create a picture everybody can relate to.

I remember a certain book that inspired me and many others during my time at university called: “Metaphors we live by” written by two American professors, cognitive linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson.

The book claims that metaphors primarily are conceptual constructions and indeed central to the development of thoughts. Non-metaphorical thoughts are only possible when we talk about purely physical reality. The greater the level of abstraction, the more layers of metaphor are required to express it.
The Cohab project indeed is an abstraction consisting of many layers: Different people, different nationalities, different educations and various virtual communication systems. Framing it all together by a metaphor like "A journey" for teachers from around the Baltic Sea, who are exploring education culture and education systems, provides everybody with a picture they can relate to.

Lakoff and Johnson’s assumption, which I find so interesting and very likely if not true, is that humans ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally of *metaphorical* nature. Our experiences and knowledge are organized in *image schemas*. In other words: Image schemas are preconceptual structurings emerging from pervasive everyday experiences.

“The journey” is a prototypical example of a *source to goal* image schema. Every time we move anywhere, there is a place we start from, a place we end up at, places in between and a direction. The basic image-schema serves as the mapping system of conceptual metaphors themselves. The targets domains are conceptualized in terms of the source domain. The pervasiveness of the journey metaphor is reflected in its mapping onto the process of life itself. We go through life from birth to death. After periods of difficulties we carry on with our lives. It is a common platitude to state: Life must go on.

In their 1989 book, *More than Cool Reason*, Lakoff & Johnson refer to the pervasiveness of the journey metaphor as follows (pp.60-61): “Our understanding of life as a journey uses our knowledge about journeys. All journeys involve travellers, paths travelled, places where we start, and places where we have been. Some journeys are purposeful and have destinations that we set out for, while others may involve wandering without any destination in mind, consciously or more likely unconsciously, a correspondence between a traveler and person living life, the road traveled and the ‘course’ of a lifetime, a starting point and a time of birth, and so on.”

The most remarkable at this moment of writing is the study visit to nuclear attack-proof fortress, The Stevnsfort now Cold War Museum. Down in a bunker learning that USSR airplanes could attack Denmark in only 20 minutes was quite scary. I remembered how my childhood years were filled with fear of atomic bombs, World War 3, discussions in school, writings on peace, pictures of white doves and so on...

Outside in front of tanks, cannon towers new Cohab-friends from The former East metamorphosed into old enemies. The significant sounds of Lithuanian and German language toned so harsh on the large field outside the museum. It was a windy day in early spring. The portrait photos taken in front of cannons seemed out of place, too. Past and present wowed together for a moment and made me realize how great it is that we in Europe work together now instead of fighting each other. How great isn’t it that the Cohab journey is made possible by the European Union?? That day convinced me that we are heading in a good direction – a peaceful one. The world is evolving in good way.

Both the fellow travelers and the path of The Baltic Journey were great. We traveled by boat, train and airplane, car, bus, minibus, by foot, not to mention the unpredictable ways our thoughts took.
I think everyone, who took part in Cohab for short or for long and lived by the metaphor of The Baltic Journey, will keep it in their memories for long. According to the cognitive image schemata theory good things is oriented “up”. So look up for The Baltic Teacher… Right now Cohab is an acronym (Co-ordination and Integration of Higher Education and the Labour Market around the South Baltic Sea), but it might turn into a word or even a metaphor standing for “sharing educational experiences around the Baltic Sea”.

“Now I have My Own Model”

*by Ieva Marozaitė*

In my personal narrative I would like to talk about my experience in summer school, Denmark and Germany.

First of all about the summer school. The funniest thing in the first days was the biggest problem for me to remember all students’ names. This is how I was trying to remember them: Helle the girl with long and beautiful hair, Trine sportive blonde, Julien black hair guy with beautiful big smile, Christian crazy guy and others. After few days of absorbing environment I started to feel like in a big family. And there was no matter from what country we are, how old we are or how we look like. These relationships get stronger during the dialogue seminar, taking interviews of each other, during the ICT seminar and of course during all the trips to Vilnius, Nida and other evenings which we spent together. I really liked the dialogue seminar with Daniel where we were sharing our thoughts about the picture of a class or story about ugly duckling. The first time I realised how inventive and creative all students are. It was very interesting to hear all stories especially from personal experience. It was quite interesting to prepare and take the interview of the student. This was my first experience of it. I was really happy that we had a ICT seminar about the smartboard, which gave me a lot of knowledge how to use it and work with it in the classroom because I had never work with it as a teacher (preparing tasks or information) only like a student. In my opinion, the summer school gave for all of us a lot of good memories in all of the trips and a lot of knowledge about the interviews and smartboard and other ICT tools.

Now about visit in Denmark. The best thing what I liked there is a university of Vordingborg, all the environment and surrounding of it. I was really surprised how cosy you can feel in the place where are you studying. This is completely different what we have in our university. In Vordingborg university you can feel like at home- kitchen, living rooms and separated bar with all music equipment and even drinks (which would be inconceivable in Lithuania). The second thing which surprised me how schools are provided by new technologies such as iPads or smartboards. This has a pros and cons. Pros are that pupils can easily use those new technologies without any problems, they are get used to this and for them it will be easier in the future jobs. But the bad side of using new technologies was that pupil which were in the 5th grade they could not even read fluently. In my opinion, the priority in school, specially in primary school, should be not using of iPads or other stuff but fluent reading or writing. This is a basic of all other studies.

Talking about the schools visits in Denmark one of the most amazing thing was the visit of boarding school. This school was more than amazing. Students, equipment, classes, living places, sport halls- everything were remarkable. I wish we could stay there longer. The last thing I want to mention about visit in Denmark is how easily and fluently almost every Danish can speak.
There is no problem of asking way or how to find one of other thing. In my opinion, that was achieved by strong and hard teachers and pupils work. And the other thing about Danish is that they are really happy people who can enjoy life this is what lack my country’s people. Denmark and Danish could be a good example for all Europe countries how to be happy and enjoy everyday without complaining about everything.

Now about visit in Germany. The best thing in Germany was ICT seminar by Jon and education rally. Jon was very creative and made us use our logical thinking to create from the first looking easy things but actually it was really difficult. Education Rally was a new experience which was very useful to get to know more about city and its history. The other thing which I really liked was the secondary school visit in Rostock’s suburb. There we had an opportunity to talk with 11th class students. It was very nice to share our experience with youngsters, tell them a little bit more about our countries education systems and listen to their opinions about their study system—how are they feeling as students in Germany.

In conclusion, all visits were great. I get a lot of knowledge about the differences in each country, how they are organizing education, what differences Denmark or Germany have comparing to Lithuania, what should our country develop in the education system. Now I have my own model about each country and these visits helped to make my mind about where I would like to have my practice or future job.

”Breaking Barriers and Building Bridges Through Professional Language in the South Baltic Sea Region”
by Daniel Alvunger

I feel like I have set off on a great adventure but besides a vague sense of insecurity and uncertainty I feel quite unease with the fact that I am trying to communicate my inner experiences in another language than my own. What is the price to pay when you try to express your emotions and feelings in a second language?

The passage above comes from one of my notebooks. For many, many years I have been making short notes trying to reflect upon what I do, think and feel or just to scribble down impressions and ”good-things-to-know”. These notes sometimes brings me in a state of total confusion but most of the times they help me to sort things out. Foremost they can make patterns or the general dimensions in my line of thought visible. It serves as a way for taking a step back and look at a situation from a fresh angle.

The particular part above illustrates how I felt during a staff study visit in Klaipeda, Lithuania February 2013. Everyone in “Team Teacher” had been working very hard. This week was our last opportunity for planning the summer school and setting the modules of the virtual course through a physical meeting. Our outset was to create an education with intercultural competence and professional skill at its centre, using the latest technology and possibilities of ICT. To be honest, things hadn't worked out as well as one might had expect during the week. At least, this is how I recall it. As you can see, my worries concerned the issue of language and communication. When feeling under pressure in the discussions regarding the summer school and the
virtual course that we were working on, I remember that my expressions in the English language sounded so poor and vague. I was frustrated since the words couldn’t give my colleagues the slightest hint of what was going on in my heart and mind. Sometimes I felt there was like thick walls of armoured glass surrounding me on all four sides and I was desperately pounding to break and tear them down.

When I look back now, I understand that we all in “Team Teacher” had reached a point where we had to live up to very same ideals and aims we had set for the virtual course for the students! For hours and hours we had been twisting and turning on expressions about intercultural competence and professional skill. Now we had to live these concepts and carry them out in practice!

From my previous experience I know that groups – regardless of what they are doing – are tested when deadlines or dates for delivery approaches. For sure, I have seen this happen to my students during project work. The members of a group become pressed and the relations are put under strain. It is in such times you have to keep your head cold, your feet on the ground and not let your emotions lead you astray. During our staff visit we as a group were trialed and tested. We had to deliver and we had to find a common solution, and – which is most important of it all – we prevailed.

Still today I am not sure what made us reach a common solution, but in the middle of chaos we managed to find a mutual understanding and a joint idea for our course. We could rally up behind the figure of thought of “the Baltic Sea teacher” and by using “the journey” as a metaphor for the summer school and virtual teaching course we had constructed a mental platform. Once we had settled these images we could pave the way for moving forward. We created a space of confidence for experimentation and exploration that allowed us to be practical and make use of the grand potential in our collective experiences as teachers.

I believe in the power of example and that is why I chose to focus on this particular week that in my world was like a turning point or when we passed the eye of the needle in the project. I think that my many years of work with professional development and vocational learning at least has contributed to some aspects of the project. When I look back at this week I feel a strong sense of pride. I am impressed of our efforts and that we actually managed to see things through. BUT most of all I feel pride for the students and their achievements. It is wonderful to see that added value, that all our hard work has born fruit and hopefully facilitated the students for future collaboration where they move on according to their own agenda.

"Insecurity", "uncertainty" and "unease". Going out on a journey is putting yourself at risk. Sometimes I wonder if a journey is something we make or something we take? I will leave that question unanswered and instead go back to the words and the question in my notebook in the beginning of this text. I know one thing for sure: There is no cost of sharing your experiences and expressing your emotions in a second language – even though you might feel uncomfortable with it. What we must do is that we have to learn and then boldly continue to explore and elaborate with our professional language as teachers in the South Baltic Sea region. Our professional identity and our values, beliefs, ideas and thoughts as teachers can provide a common platform for creating meaning and building new networks. In this process We can look for what we have in common and learn from our differences and use diversity as a collaborative advantage. The price we would have to pay for our silence would be disastrous. Therefore my outmost hope is that the voices of the Baltic Sea classroom never will turn silent.
“Making it happen!”
by Jockum Boklund

Cohab should not be a project, Cohab should be part of every student’s opportunity to come to another country to improve their knowledge of other countries’ cultures, not only in the education system but also to gain deeper intercultural competence in a broader sense. My experience within the project has been positive. Large areas have been about a deepening of my teacher training, what it means to be a teacher in an international context. During our summer school 19–30 August 2013, I met my Lithuanian, German and Danish friends, all teachers or student teachers. We have different experiences and are obviously influenced by our own educational culture and our countries’ cultures and customs. Despite these differences was summer school in Lithuania team building at high level. All participants contributed positively during these two weeks and it is a memory for life.

Initially, we helped each other to gain a deeper understanding of our respective education systems and their background. The Danish, German, Lithuanian and Swedish teams presented what was typical for each country’s educational system. Among other things we made a personal interview with a fellow student and I could notice that the Dialoge seminar made a great impact on most of the students that didn´t have that experience.

For my own part, I have had a good knowledge and understanding of the other participating countries, different educations, how they function, ranging from elementary school to university. During the summer school, we have been able to use virtual tools to conduct training at a distance. With the help of technology could Anne-Christine perform a lecture from Zealand to Klaipeda without problems. Internet and collaborative tools like Google docs for sharing, Google Hangouts and Skype have proven to work largely without problems. Barriers to learning without borders is no longer in technical barriers, rather it is so that I could deepen my knowledge in English to facilitate.

Dialogue seminars have served as a fine filter where different experiences and skills come to speak. I also believe that the younger teachers could have some benefit of the elderly and vice versa. The mix of students has been good. Our virtual platform Moodle has no technical maturity and has been ineffective. There are no collaborative advantages of Moodle. Google docs and Google Drive, by contrast, worked well. In my international study group we used Google Hangouts and Skype for managing communication among each others as we would transcribe our interviews. Working with other students in an international context has been challenging but also extremely educational. Sure, there are cultural differences, but I would suggest that it is more cultural similarities between the countries. We have conducted interviews with both teachers and students in both Germany and Denmark, the similarities are greater than the differences between both teachers’ experiences as well as students. I absolutely believe that it would be possible to work as Baltic teacher if the common language for teaching is English. This assumes of course that you can create an organisation for this.
In the meeting with teachers and students, I find that it is approximately the same training to technical problems between the countries. At seminars and interviews, it appears that there is also a great curiosity in traveling and might have exchanges with other countries in the Baltic region. I have personal contact with two schools, one in Denmark and one in Germany. My hope is that my school will take the chance and develop this. On a personal level this feels like a natural progression.

When I summarize my impressions, I see more opportunities than obstacles in trying to increase exchanges between the countries in the Baltic Sea region. Virtual meetings are a great start if you want to start the initial meetings with, for example, a school in Germany. Having four people sit on ferries and trains are not a sustainable way to meet. I am also convinced that everyone who participated in Cohab project wishes that cooperation will continue. I have received quite invaluable contacts in Germany, Lithuania and Denmark. I sincerely hope that it can become a constructive continuation of cooperation even after we finished.

“Meeting New People: a Chance to Develop and Broaden Your Horizons” by Therese Nilsson

There is a well-known Swedish poet called Hjalmar Gullberg who wrote this about meeting other people:

Byta ett ord eller två
gjorde det lätt att gå.
Alla människors möte
borde vara så.
(Strophe from the poem Människors möte)

As you are aware of it is difficult to translate poetry but the core meaning of this strophe is that you, by talking and interacting with other people, can facilitate your way down the path of life. It also says that all meetings should make life easier to us. I am certain that all our encounters, whether they are in a work context, on a personal level or maybe in a combination, can make a great impact on the way your life is heading. We just have to leave the door ajar to let someone in…

When you look up the verb meet in a dictionary you will get a wide variety of meanings and explanations. These different meanings will create the structure for this narrative consisting of experiences and reflections in the Cohab project. It is captivating to realize that so many of these explanations fit in the Cohab context, but from my point of view they would also make sense in a broader perspective in your everyday encounters.

The first meaning I come across in my dictionary is “to see somebody for the first time” and this is of course in the very heart of the word meet. During my metaphorical and literal journey in this project there have been many encounters with strangers and I sometimes amuse myself by thinking back on those first meetings. While doing this I try to get a glimpse of my first impression and compare it with the impression of that same person who I now know as a friend. It is a somersault in your mind that can be difficult to perform.
The number two meaning I take note of is “to see somebody at an arranged place” and I come to think about a virtual meeting that was arranged in October 2013. At that time I had not yet met my fellow colleagues or the students and it was a non-familiar teaching situation for me. The fact that I had to interact with someone without knowing him or her, and further more in a virtual classroom, make me think about how quick we draw assumptions about someone else and how difficult it can be to re adjust those thoughts later on. I feel that it is of great value to be aware of these human shortcomings when working intercultural and cross border.

As number three of meanings in my dictionary I find “to come together to discuss something” and my thoughts wonder to a seminar in Rostock where a group of students had a discussion that dealt with the theme “The danger of a single story”. It was a mind opener for me to get an insight into how the different nationalities saw both themselves and others in a cultural and historical perspective. It was very obvious that things aren’t as light hearted as they may seem at a first glance and some of the students carry a large backpack of preconceptions which might be an obstacle in their development in intercultural settings.

Yet another meaning of the verb meet is “to experience a problem or situation”. This explanation of the word makes me draw a parallel to the examination assignment to write a personal narrative and how that task made quite a few of the students experience a problem. It was obvious how the different educational systems had made considerable impact on the students and how that in turn led to frustration about this somewhat unknown genre. But even so the results were both rewarding and multifaceted and in a way a reflection of our differences.

The very last meaning - and probably the meaning that is the most valuable to me - is “to join or touch” because this is what meetings and encounters are all about. Through different cultural and experiential backgrounds we get a chance to experience personal and group development, see challenges and overcome them, increase our knowledge and be joined with people from various environments.

When I take in consideration all these different layers of the word meet I can see that they make a web of important things that initiates a change every time we have a new encounter; with a person, another culture or maybe an unfamiliar situation. And the struggles and hardships are all worth it the very moment you realize that a stranger has become a friend.

“Virtual, Collaborative and Intercultural – Time Together as the Most Important Parameter” by John Andersson

My journey began when was selected to participate in a project to design and build a Baltic class. I had work with colleagues from Educational institutions in Sweden, Germany and Lithuania. Imagine to be allowed to try something new, a class which consists of students from 4 countries meeting synchronously and asynchronously online and FTF first on a 2 week summer school and then 3 times one week’s visit to the three remaining countries. A super exciting set up - how can I help in this or this journey!
I have previous experience in large projects involving countries around the Baltic Sea. Here was one of my experiences that all participants must have the time and space for finding themselves in the project. The time we’re together is crucial to our goal of the trip. I compare it often to a good friend who is usually one you been together with for a longer while. In this long period of time you then found out about the friendship holds and perhaps also whether you have found a friend. Someone who knows you and you know well.

The new and interesting for me was, would our work facilitate the virtual meetings, in the sense that it was not only when we met FTF that, so to speak, was made something! I had made myself some thoughts on how good the picture and especially sound would improve the work and get the group to work collaboratively. The equipment turned out to be more than useful, the sound was amazing and the picture was high class. I had it several times like it was a real FTF meeting. However, just with the gain that I had saved many hours of travel, every time we met virtual!

I have always hoped that we could work more collaboratively and cross-border, but unfortunately I do not believe I got far enough for the teachers concerned. However, I have with pleasure seen that students are working very transnational and collaborative. Maybe because we did not give them no other choice! However just to meet up for dialogue, discussion and reflections on various countries’ work was worth it. The fact that I have experienced synchronous FTF meetings the four countries in between have clearly shown the way for me. Virtual meetings as the planning and implementation of training for small groups, such as we had arranged it (5 students from 4 countries = 20 students) I find that both motivational and educational.

On the journey, the project would also wanted to work with our intercultural understanding. Therefore, we have also emphasized to visit the four countries that participated and through these visits, experience the culture and intercultural understanding. I am pleased to participate in the many visits, first with teachers and later with teachers and students. I was surprised at how similar we are as teachers and how different our education can be. I have been strengthened in that teaching students something in school has a lot to do with the teachers and their working conditions to do.

But back to my thoughts about be able to work without always going to meet real FTF! Can our project show some directions, some important structures so cross-border cooperation can be used in the educational contexts? Here I would point out that the time perspective, that is the time the students work together and the time students and teachers working together is the most important parameter. When this is achieved, in the sense that it takes time to get started then there is a solid base for further and deeper learning. I saw it particularly in the teacher team where, through various presentations from each country quietly became wiser on the their understanding and approach to the project and learning herein. I became wiser on the various national education systems and their understanding of learning. And through the explanation of one’s own education I became also very aware of the important role the systems have on teachers and students opportunity to gain a good education and perhaps also to get some of the education virtually. Virtual learning and virtual collaborative cooperation I believe have an exciting future ahead. The world has become more open to those who have the Internet and it becomes also more open to those who have virtual education and will work collaboratively.
“Discovering and Revealing Meanings That Lies Within An Acronym” by Julien Schab

COHAB – What was only a strange acronym during my first confrontation with the project became something totally different over the course of my participation in it. Because meanwhile, I got an in-depth look and a vivid idea of what COHAB in fact is about. Therefore, I would like to give you, the gentle reader, an understanding of this European (ad)venture and also share some of my experiences with you. I considered that it could be helpful to use my own, personally modified “understanding” of every single capital letter out of the project’s name as a structure for my text.

Cultural competence – Of course, one essential element of an international project is to get in contact with people from abroad. We received first impressions of our constellation due to a stimulating kick-off seminar in April 2013, where we met each other virtually and introduced ourselves. I was pleasantly surprised by the mix of very interesting personalities, ages and levels of education. Some of us were teachers-to-be, others were already professional teachers or lateral entrants. So everyone had gained aplenty of individual experiences to share with the others and to contribute to the project.

I can still remember that in advance of our journey I was really excited about how things will work out. What is it like to work international? Am I proficient enough in the English language? And so on… Retrospective I learned a lot about our by tendency small but mighty cultural and more distinct educational differences. Not forgetting the amount of similarities I pointed out. Furthermore it was very helpful to detect as well as to develop my own cultural identity. The same applies to our educational systems. Every single one of them has its strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages. To know, compare and develop them – and that’s an extraordinary chance I see within the project – will enable us to generate and benefit from synergy effects (“1+1=3”) in the future.

Open minds – We got a dearly welcome at Klaipeda University where our first physical meeting took place. Even though we had just arrived we were expected to “pack our bags” once more but only to become acquainted with one another face-to-face. Especially during the summer school games like that were regular features in order to create a relaxed atmosphere or to stimulate while working or just in between. Because an open mind provided the basis, which was needed to gain or at least to broaden your knowledge, skills and competences. In this context interviewing and transcription as well as the dialogue seminars became – among others – valuable methods of intellectual exchange of ideas.

Hospitality – What I enjoyed most was that wherever we went, “team COHAB” always got a warm welcome in each of the hosting countries. Many people, especially from the local/regional schools and institutions we visited, tried their best to make us feel comfortable. Without them COHAB would not have been that successful. I would like to say thank you to everyone. In cause of our consistent proximity to the Baltic Sea I always got a feeling of coming home. Of course the Baltic Sea is something that did and always will connect us all even over long distances. While we got more and more familiar with each other our national boundaries seemed to disappear from time to time. To get to know all participants as professionals and in private was a privilege I really enjoyed.
Adventure – Fantasy trip, travelling through the South Baltic area, cultural walkabouts,… - from my perspective the whole COHAB project was a great adventure. To describe it with a maritime picture: Along our whole journey I felt on the way from a sailor to a navigator. In the beginning of our “sailing trip” I was quite wet behind my ears and faced with so many new challenges. But fortunately I was able to grow with them. Not least because of our impressive COHAB crew that taught me a lot. I have seen lots of harbours and lighthouses and got familiar with the different countries and their ways of education. Now I really know, what it means to sniff sea air. The imagination of the Baltic teacher inspired me and made me feel more qualified to discover other parts of Europe or even of the world.

Baltic Teacher – Working with so many different learning situations, the dialogue with students from different South Baltic countries and the ability to get interesting insights into the different educational systems was a great step on the way to become a Baltic Sea Teacher. But most important of all is to develop yourself, find out who you are, find out about your cultural identity to be authentic, to know about your strengths and weaknesses. So you do not have to be affright of teaching situations you are not used to, because you can work it out.

“My Journey With Cohab”
by Peter Nilsson

What a great trip with Cohab, a big thanks to everyone involved. Thanks:

Lithuania! For your hospitality in Vilnius and Klaipeda and for inviting me to take part of your ambition to be an part of Europe. But also for showing me your struggle against poverty and social exclusion.

Denmark! For showing me your conviviality in Vordingborg, the happiest people in the world. But also for sharing your unjustified inferiority complex to Sweden.

Germany! For giving me a wonderful guided tour in Rostock by your polite and structured Germans. But also because I had access to your dry humor and your ability to always be first on the bus line.

Expectations
When I first searched for the Cohab project, my expectations were high; I saw the project as a real opportunity to make contacts with other teachers, businesses and schools around the Baltic Sea area. In addition to the professional benefits of the project I also had expectations to develop on a private level, to engage in something new, to meet new people and especially learning about new cultures.

Summer School
The project began with a two-week summer school in Klaipeda, Lithuania, and when I think back, I feel that those two weeks were the most rewarding. This is not dependent on any “aha” experience regarding their ICT use or any revolutionary educational ide... But precisely because it was here we tentatively began establishing the first personal contact with the other participants and their different cultures.
The first thing that struck me when we went from the airport to Klaipeda was how similar the landscape is to my home districts, Scania in Sweden. When I began to think more about this I came up with that it’s only a few mil of sea that separates the countries apart. This is something that I later have reflected on in wide variety of situations, not only in Lithuania but also in Germany and in Denmark, how many similarities we have between our countries. And I who to begin with was so focused on finding differences between our countries, really realized how much we have in common. And this in itself may very well be a good foundation for further collaboration.

But of course I also have seen big differences in our cultures and especially in our education system and how we use ICT tools in teaching.

**Observations on ICT**

ICT is an area where we in Sweden are relatively well advanced; with it not said that it is good. During the summer school in Lithuania it felt almost like traveling back in time 10-15 years in regarding to ICT. At the University of Klaipeda the network was very unstable and did not work at all if to many tried to connect. That’s absolutely an interesting experience (although it felt frustrating for the moment) how different conditions is between our countries.

When I am on ICT, I have to say that I was a little bit surprised when we were on a study visit at a secondary school in Rostock. The use of IT and ICT was at the school almost non-existent. This was something that I definitely not was expecting. I have had the image in front of me that Germany is a country that is at the forefront in technology, but that was not the case in this specific school.

**Observations on education**

A very rewarding moment that has permeated the entire Cohab project has been the study visits we have done in different schools. Denmark was fantastic to visit; we went around to a variety of field trips both in Falster and Vordingborg. Except that the Danish schools are good at IT and ICT, they also have a very close collaboration with the industry.

Regarding the Danish Vocational training program, they have a well-functioning apprenticeship system in where all parties take responsibility for the students. This is something I wish we in Sweden could take after, that all parties take responsibility for the future workforce. As Vocational teachers in Sweden I can feel hopelessness and frustration at this, when our students are to be deployed in internships and company after company declines to accept our students. Somewhere, Sweden has lost this collective responsibility for young people’s education, this collective responsibility that apparently lives in Denmark. But however, local differences may also exist in the same country. When we visited Finnvedens Gymnasium in Värnamo, I got the impression that they have a much better collaboration with the industry than what I’m used to in my region.

Vocational training in Germany was constructed in the same manner as in Denmark with an apprenticeship system. But here we also got to take part of the apprenticeship disadvantages. The fact that companies sometimes see young people as cheap labor, and not always want to drop them off for school-based education. This is probably not a problem isolated to just Germany, but it’s only to conclude that all systems have their pros and cons.

**Conclusion**

One insight I have gained from really get to see how other countries’ educational systems are
built and works, is that our own system also has its advantages. Imagine if it were so simple that one could take the parts that work well in other countries and implement those in Sweden or vice versa? But unfortunately it is not as simple, as the various systems are based in different cultural differences and values, and how to implement them?

The greatest benefit of the projects I definitely think has been in contact with other cultures and people. One interesting thing about this is that this exchange or learning did not occur within any university walls but in the real world. And that’s precisely what makes the Cohab project so interesting, that we participants have had the opportunity to take part of the countries cultures in real life.

“Beam Me Up, Scotty”
by Niklas Agerbech

There I was, 102 kilometres away from home, excited, but highly doubtful that a virtual meeting would even strike a slight impact on my so far gained technical-experience. While waiting for the ICT-tools to connect to one another, I felt a slight heart rate increase, as my palms turned cold and clammy. “What was going on? Was I starting to get nervous?”

I had a short chat with myself, “You have met all your fellow COHAB-students before, and even gained close friendships” “What is the difference from this meeting, and the physical meeting just two weeks before in Denmark? Or even the two week study trip in Lithuania?” ...

Maybe I was not nervous at all? Maybe the symptoms of my body and mind was just anxiousness?

I was eager of getting started, after all, the virtual meetings was one of the milestones in the foundation of the mobility-thought behind the Baltic classroom.

I tried to get my thoughts straight, so I gave my fellow Danish students at my own campus a thought. “I wondered, how they were spending their time at this very moment?”

Just before my 1 1/2 hour train ride, I had to skip two lectures at my University, to make it in time. “So much for mobility” a paradoxically thought stroked my mind, as my body became heavy and sank into the train seat, so I could feel the plastic behind its textures.

But my body was not heavy anymore, it was taut as bow and eager to get started, as my fellow Danish COHAB-students and I, was finally called in to the classroom, where the virtual meeting, ten minutes after would take place.

As I unveiled my MacBook from its imitated black leather sleeve, I overheard there was a connection error with the Lithuanian students, of whom the teachers of the project could not get a hold of.

Quite intuitive I signed into my Facebook, Skype, LinkedIn and my Google+ account, just to kill time, until I realized that all these platforms, immediately broad down the communication issue, with the other students and countries. The ten minutes passed, and the meeting began. There they where, the students from Sweden, Germany and Lithuania. Transformed from flesh
and blood, into three small thumbnails inside the 42 " Samsung TV, mounted on the wall just beside the shared Smartboard.

The Smartboards in every country was synced, at all of a sudden handwriting, from one of the respective countries appeared. Even though, I do see myself as a digital native, I was stunned, and I quickly grabbed my iPhone and started video documenting what was happening. It felt like being a part of a science fiction movie from the sixties. But this clearly was not fiction, it was fact and reality.

As the meeting went on, I was no longer in doubt. The feeling that earlier played tricks with me, was nervousness, but not only was I nervous, I was exited as well. This emotional cocktail made me wonder …

A couple of weeks earlier, I interviewed a Danish teacher, about her thoughts of moving her career to another country. She told me “In some way I would have to start all over again, I would have to think in another language and of cause learn another culture, partly”. It all made sense to me now, at this very classroom we where all moving our country to a new zone. A zone placed in between virtuality and reality. A zone, not containing any predefined culture, or language.

Just like the Danish teacher was precocious of moving to another country, due to the fact she had to learn another culture and language, we where not learning, we were creating them. This made me realize, that the word mobility, not only contains an aspect as the physical journey. Mobility also contain the journey from the physical world into the wild digital land, where culture, rules and language are being build at this particular moment.

"Conversations and Discussions Played the Biggest Part”
by Eglė Liebutė

Everyone has an amazing story to tell and almost every person have been in an unforgettable journey. Our journey started in Lithuania, Klaipėda, where we had a summer school. Even from the first day I realized that this project will bring me a lot of new experiences, because I saw many interesting people who really want to share their ideas, thoughts with the others. It is wonderful that all the people, who participate in this project, are from different Baltic countries, from different cultures, even our age is different, but we all can work together and sometimes it looks like we created our own community. Moreover, I think it is a really great thing that we have international groups and there are some works that we have to do together.

During those two weeks in Klaipėda, I learned some things, which I did or heard about for the first time. I had never written a blog, so it was a good experience and I am sure that I will use it in my future job. Second thing was a smart board. I know that it is very necessary to use it and other new technologies when you are working at school, especially with children at primary school. Because of this reason, lecture about the smart board and how to use it was really helpful to me and the opportunity to touch it and to work with it a little bit was great.

After summer school, we had study visit in Denmark. What surprised me the most? First of all, I did not expect so much ICT tools, like smart phones, tablets, smart boards and so on, in
schools. I am from Lithuania, where we still use a lot of books in learning process and using for example tablets in class would be almost impossible, because just a small percentage of pupils have it and our schools usually cannot afford to buy it for every child. Moreover, I talked with some girls in one school and they said that sometimes they would like to use books instead of computers or other new technologies, because for instance, to read a good story from paper book is more enjoyable for them, so maybe not all the time new technologies can overcome what was important for a number of years.

We made the interviews with teachers from Danish schools. I must admit that sometimes it was quite difficult to come up with right questions. Another thing that complicated the interview was the fact that the teacher, who had to answer our questions, almost did not speak English, so one of the Danish students had to translate her words for us, but nevertheless interview was good.

In Denmark we had a dialogue seminar as well as in Lithuania. This time I really enjoyed the text we had to read before this study visit and then write our texts. It was fragment from Franks Mc-Court book 'Teacher man'. During dialogue seminar, everyone expressed so many feelings and interesting ideas, also it was really great that some of students shared their experiences from their personal life and from work as teachers.

Our journey continued in Germany. There are few things I remember the most. One of them is school visits, especially that modern school in Rostock. It left me a big impression but I can hardly imagine my work in classes where are no walls. At this school we made our interviews with pupils. I think it was very good idea that questions were already prepared for us. This, in my opinion, did not prevent us to develop discussions or add your own questions. In other secondary school, we had the possibility to talk with students in groups, they told us more about exams, lessons in Germany and so on.

The other thing that I really liked was John’s tasks for us. To build a tower or catapult were amazing tasks, during which we had the possibility to see how our cooperation works and are we can work in groups effectively.

During the project we were in four different countries: Lithuania, Denmark, Germany and Sweden but in addition to this, we had virtual meetings. This is very special thing because these meetings gave us the possibility to talk with each other and see each other no matter that we are in different places. This is some kind of mobility which is one of the most important things in this project. American artist and educator Roger Tory Peterson said that "birds have wings; they're free; they can fly where they want when they want. They have the kind of mobility many people envy." In my opinion, no matter what a big freedom you have, the most important thing is which destination you will choose to go. Not necessarily your body should move from one place to another, it could be your thoughts or ideas expressed on a virtual way.

To sum up, I can say, that every experience in this project, no matter it is tasks we have to do or tours around Vilnius, Copenhagen or Rostock, everything gave us new knowledge about our countries, teacher’s job and about each other. In my opinion, conversations and discussions played the biggest part in our personal development which is definitely the most important and priceless thing.
This journey has affected me in a multitude of ways. The most difficult part when gathering thoughts for my personal narrative was selecting the most prominent experiences. However, there I was, a sunny day in August embarking the plane to take me to Klaipeda in Lithuania. As I sat down in my seat my mind wandered, as it usually does when I find myself alone or with a new group of people, and I wondered if this experience would be similar to other projects I have been a part of and that involved new people from other countries. My previous experiences have been amazing to say the least and people, whichever country they were from, collaborated seamlessly and shared reflections and thoughts that pushed everyone’s level of personal development much higher than it had been before.

As we landed and consequently went through two great weeks getting to know each other and the project, there was one thing I was absolutely certain of, and that was that the collaborations and personal growth I had previously experienced in similar projects was back. The task of trying to increase mobility across borders was an exciting one indeed and the fortnight we spent together in Klaipeda was merely enhancing that feeling.

A big part of keeping the communication throughout the project were the virtual meetings and virtual collaborations, which brings me to one of the main thoughts that has grown in my mind, physical presence and virtual presence. Since our goal is to reach across borders and find common ground one of the easiest and most accessible ways of achieving that is the use of virtual space. There have been a lot of discussions, suggestions and talks about how to incorporate ICT tools in our classrooms the right way and not as a substitute to the good old blackboard. These talks have been extremely interesting and together I reckon we have come up with quite a few ways of integrating these tools in a new pedagogical way. However, within these discussions I believe we have not sufficiently covered the basis on which we use these virtual tools.

Virtual classrooms, digital collaborations etc. are all great tools to reach across borders. However the real core and fundament to all human interaction, be it virtual or face-to-face, is connection, communication and understanding. Without it the great digital tools at our disposal are nothing more or extraordinary than a pen and a piece of paper. Without the energy that comes with people physically gathering to reach a common exciting goal, it all becomes a bit flat. The reason I came to think about these things is the comparison I mentally made between our virtual meetings where we saw each other on screens and the study trips where we could all sense and above all feel each other’s presence. The difference in the level of energy and attention to me was highly noticeable. Obviously the joy of seeing all those familiar and friendly faces was there at the virtual meetings but something was missing. That thing that would make you work for another hour if necessary. Or walk another mile. Or gather strength for another smile. It is important to understand that I am not in any way saying that these types of meetings are a waste of time. They impressed me greatly in the way that technology could enable people from four different countries to exchange ideas, reflections and knowledge. I am merely curious about the way they

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are so different.

Before I wander too far away from my original thought I would like to get back to the importance of building a solid foundation on which virtual tools can exist and enhance our pedagogical development. What has struck me as very clever is the way the project has been planned with us meeting physically for a longer period of time sprinkled with virtual meetings. It all makes sense from my standpoint. Without first establishing a relationship between people, my guess is that the connection in cyber space would be far flatter and distanced and as a result not equally efficient and rewarding. When it comes to the study trips the dialogue seminars were to me the strongest and most memorable experiences. What made them so great was first and foremost the way they made us all come together as people. Not Germans, Swedes, Danes and Lithuanians. The labels were gone and we were left with human beings sharing, discovering how similar we all are deep down, listening, learning, challenging each other and discussing. To me, it was truly a beautiful experience.

To conclude, what I am trying to say is that sometimes we rely too much on technology in our teaching before having developed our skills in communication, leadership, understanding and empathy, in which case it only functions as an empty shell of potential enhancement of knowledge that could crumble at the slightest tremble of resistance. If we stabilize the ground on which we use these tools, our students and we will experience a richer, more substantial and versatile form of teaching, which in turn will help us in our pursuit of motivation and inspiration.

“A Personal Look at the Education Systems of the South Baltic Sea region” by Christian Splitter

The fascination for different countries, cultures and people is one of the driving forces in my life. I am grateful that I had the chance to be a part of this project. One year ago it was not sure if I was able to be a part neither to participate. I personally think that the possibility to take part in this international program was the biggest motivation to solve my health problems. Even setbacks will appear in a different light when you reach a goal like this.

The motivation was present, I was only afraid of using my rusty language skills. In the beginning I was not even aware of how quickly international relations can grow. Meeting many different people with different cultural and personal backgrounds was a new experience. Our diversity, but also our similarities have been a reason to grow together as a family in a very short time. This was one of the most astonishing developments. As Alvadorija wrote, we started as strangers, worked as partners and we will quit this project as friends.

Although English was one of my biggest obstacles in the first days of the project, I made the experience that talking – sometimes without that much thoughts – is a good way to overcome this difficulties. This project sensitized me how important the personal development for the teaching profession is. The exchange of experiences in this profession, for example with Swedish teachers and during the dialogue seminars, this consciousness manifested more strongly. I learned to be an all-rounder simplifies the daily life of a (vocational) teacher. The strengthening of my character is a central point to be forearmed for my future work as a teacher. Combining different methods to form the character is the challenge. On the other hand I think my identity with the Baltic Sea
area was formed during this project. I never had this kind of view on cultural similarities and differences in this region before. It was very nice to get to know the cities within the project -which are so far away from each other- and to see that they are not that different as you expected. I hope that we will take our experiences from this project to change the identity of our countries. We are not only sovereign states. We are countries with a crossing borders identity. So for me the project achieves/realize one of the main targets of the European Union. Forming an (European) identity. In the following I want to have a closer look at some similarities and differences between the education systems of the South Baltic Sea countries.

During our interviews in Denmark we spoke a lot about the technical equipment, the way of teaching, going abroad and our different educational systems. One of the main experiences was that despite of the technical differences between the four participating countries, we are facing the same problems in the end. I recognised from the beginning of this project that Germany, which is convinced that it has one of the best developed school systems in the world, is actually far away of its own beliefs. In reality OECD reports the last years have shown that Germany is a country with an educational system scoring average in European comparisons. Some countries in northern Europe show higher results and do a lot more to be prepared for the future. To prepare the people and thus the economies to be more innovative. These countries spend a huge amount of money for their education systems. If you have a look at the different statistics in the OECD report, it is hard to imagine what kind of impact the different percentages compared to the GDP have on the educational system. COHAB gave me an valuable insight.

In summer 2013, when we visited Lithuania, it was a surprise for me to see how similar the German and Lithuanian equipment for the daily use in the universities and also in the schools are. In both countries ICT tools are not that common, so we need a lot of training for this.
If you compare both countries, you can understand this surprise. Lithuania which is on rank 41 - Germany rank 5 - of the Human Development Index and on rank 83 – Germany on rank 4 – in the GDP-Ranking spends nearly the same percentage for the education as we do.

The frontal teaching (method) is in both countries the most practiced way of teaching. So blackboards, whiteboards, flip charts or different sorts of papers are playing a big role in the daily school life. Only some rooms in the schools have computers and often not enough for the whole class. During our visit in Denmark in October 2013 I saw how advanced the technical equipment in the Danish system is. To use the smart board is quite normal for teachers and even for the youngsters in the primary school. The government spends more than 8% of their GDP for educational purposes. I saw a class in the primary school, where it was normal for the pupils in the 4th grade to work with an iPad and creating presentations or movies with the help of it. Also, in nearly every classroom you can find a smart board and all the technical equipment you need to use it effectively. To see a 3D-printer in a technical grammar school was one of my highlights during this trip.

In December when the students visited Germany, the Swedish and Danish students recognised the technical gap in our schools. I remember that Peter Nilsson from the Swedish team told me that he got three computers and one iPad from his IT-school to work with it. So it was a surprise for him that our vocational education school in Rostock has only 90 computers in 6 different rooms for more than 2000 students. And the teachers do not even have access to WIFI for their preparation. But despite of our technical differences, I basically think we have the same or similar problems that are not exclusively related to a certain country. We talked about this in our interviews. Although the equipment in Denmark is much better, we heard that the teachers are not trained enough to work with these new tools.
There is a big lack of courses or seminars for technical equipment and that is why a lot of teachers only have superficial knowledge about the function range of different ICT-tools and the continuing development of them. This is often the reason why they cannot see the fanciness of this equipment. The result is that they try to avoid using smart boards etc. so their skill stays on the same level as before. ‘We don’t know how to use a smart board in a smart way.’ One of the statements summarizes the frustration about the situation the best: ‘If I had more instructions, maybe I would love the smart boards. It is a lot of money we invested. I think it is like 60.000 Danish kroner for each smart board and I think very few teachers here are able to use it the way they should. So there is a lot of money, which is just invested in…’ It is wasted.

In Germany it is the same waste of money. Although there are these technical possibilities the ‘excuse-problem’ still exists. In former times the students forgot their homework or the material (books, papers, fountain pens, pencils etc.), but today they say ‘I am out of power’, because they left the charger at home and teachers have to solve this. Niclas Andersson figured out a very good point when he said: ‘I wonder sometimes, why they never have this problem with mobile phones…’ The idea was that maybe the combining of the smart boards or other ICT-tools and the mobile phones would be a good solution for this problem. The phones are much more interesting for working and the students can carry them everywhere they want to.

To take a step away from the technical side, I want to talk about another similarity for example the school organisation. Every teacher has some subjects he has studied. But in Denmark, Sweden and I think also in Lithuania it is as normal as in Germany that teachers have to be generalists. If there is a lack of math teachers, you will be asked if you can fill the gap. So you have to study to be prepared for these lessons. This is lifelong learning. On the other hand, if you need some knowledge for special needs like for technical equipment or for dealing with problematic pupils there is a lack of courses or a lack of will to organize the staff for these courses.

The last similarity I noticed was that in Denmark, Sweden, Lithuania and in Germany the willingness of going abroad is very high. We think that using the relationships to other close countries will have positive effects for everyone. For example if you have a look at the Danish vocational education system, you recognise that the relation between people who get training in the schools and the number of graduates is widely. After one year of theoretical learning it is difficult for the students to find practice in a company. The Danish economy does not have space for that many trainees. So why doesn’t Germany, with its lack of well qualified people, use this possibility? Germany has already signed some contracts with Spain that the unemployed youth gets a vocational education in our country. But the language barrier for Danish students is much lower in relation to people from Spain. Danish people often speak English more fluently compared to the youngsters in Spain. Also, the costs for the theoretical training could be divided. A teacher for the IT branch told me that for example the Danish electrician branch would have a benefit of this. A lot of electric tools, engines, devices etc. are constructed in Germany.

Although there are some exchange-projects, the teachers often do not know something about it or they get to know it too late. Often there are only possibilities. Because of the bureaucracy and the lack of help from the schools or the government, it is a lot and hard work to get students abroad. I hope for the future that we can use the connections to our neighbors in a better way to build up a strong Baltic Sea community. I will start to visit Jockum’s school in 2014.
How to get Knowledge to Become a Baltic Teacher
by Britt Møller Hansen

Here we go! We are sitting in the airplane, waiting to take off. The sky is blue and the weather is just starting out perfect to an amazing trip. Finally the journey which all of us has been waiting for is beginning - the journey of becoming a Baltic teacher - a teacher who can teach across the countries in the Baltic Sea.

The plane was landing in this little airport a Lithuania town called Palanga, where we by taxi were driving to Klaipeda, and that was the place we were going to stay for summer school for the next two weeks. The days were passing by so quickly over here, and we were getting so much knowledge about the different school-systems from the countries which were participating in the project; Germany, Sweden and Lithuania, about their culture and much more. One day we had to work on how to get acquainted with the different systems from fellow student, a teacher and a student - the way we could get the knowledge was by doing interviews.

We had to write questions to each other about the modules, which were Professional skills & mobility, Interregional virtual communication and Culture & society, and then we were ready for the interviews. So which skills should a Baltic teacher have according to a fellow student? The student I was interviewing answered that you have, as a teacher, to be able to talk with your pupils and play some games to get closer to each other. However she did also mention that the language can be a complication if she should ever work in another country. This student was from Lithuania, and beside the things she was mentioning there was also another differences from what I knew about the education system in Denmark. The teachers did e.g. educate in all the subjects and they are specializing in different grade levels, where we in Denmark only specialize in some subjects.

After such an intense two weeks it was hard to say goodbye, but we were meeting again in our study groups, to virtual meeting and of course in Denmark, where the next study visit was. In Denmark we had to interview a teacher from a primary school. We had not met any of them before and therefore we were just choosing a random one. I was starting with a quick presentation of the project, which the interviewee though was very interesting, and afterwards she was gladly telling us what a teacher should and have to do. Her idea was that before you can become a good teacher, you have to have a good relation to the pupils and therefore you have to see and meet them on their level. She did also point out that this was the most important skill, because you can as a teacher have high professional skills, but if you do not know how to work with children and cannot see them as they are, then you cannot learn them anything. This teacher was very open to travel and educate in another country, but the social thing was in her opinion very important, so if she ever got the opportunity to work in another country but there were no social activity with her colleges then she would travel home immediately.
Next phase was a study visit in Germany which presumably showed us another schooling system and view on teaching and learning ideas. One day we had to interview a pupil in a beautiful private school. We did not know any of the pupils just like with the teachers in Denmark, and we were therefore divided - some of us were in small groups and some of us were only one interviewer and one interviewee. I was lucky and got one pupil, who was really good at English and told me a lot. This boy, that I was interviewing, had never had a teacher from another country, but he found it interesting to be taught by one, just like the teacher from Denmark found it interesting teaching in another country. As we were sitting and doing the interview in the modern, simple classroom we began to talk about growing up and traveling around the world. He had not thought so much about his own future, but his English teacher had been traveling around the world and that was also something he maybe would like to do.

Today I am sitting in my soft couch and feeling happy that I have had this opportunity to participate in this project and have got so much information about the different school-systems to further inspiration in my own education as a teacher. I learnt that the systems are not so that different from the Danish system - it is possible to create work across the Baltic Sea, and I hope that it is happening and my future pupils can have a better contact to other pupils across the border.
4. COHABiting across Borders

by Richard Ennals

Introduction

In many parts of the world, routine collaborations have been established across national borders. That has been one of the objectives of international regional groupings such as the European Union. National control in policy areas such as education has been diluted, in light of the benefits which can be available from using internationally available infrastructure, and meeting agreed standards. The costs of information technology have fallen. The advantages of using an international language such as English have been recognised. There are particular attractions for vocational education which seeks to address the international dimension.

One such collaboration is the European COHAB project, in the South Baltic Sea region, which brings together Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Poland and Lithuania. The project is supported by the European Commission INTERREG programme, with a focus on collaboration between teaching and nursing professionals. Such professions are active and important in any modern country.

The COHAB work with teachers is reported in this anthology of contributions from the different partner countries, based on shared experience. This externally contributed chapter for the COHAB anthology locates the work in a wider international context, including European projects and policy development.

Personal background

I met the participants in the COHAB project when I was an invited speaker at the COHAB “Visionary Seminar” at Linnaeus University in September 2013. The project made use of the “Dialogue Seminar Method”, with which I am familiar from my work with Prof Bo Göranson at the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology and at Linnaeus University (Göranson and Josefson 1988; Göranson and Florin 1990, 1991, 1992; Göranson 1992, 1995; Göranson, Hammarén and Ennals 2006). Work on vocational education has been led at Linnaeus University by Bjorn Nelson and Daniel Alvunger.

I have worked in each of the partner countries in COHAB over a number of years. In Denmark my links with the Royal Pedagogical Institute date back to 1975, with work on the UNESCO Experience-Centred Curriculum (Wolsk 1975). In Germany the emphasis has been on work and technology, and on vocational education and training, for example with the University of Bremen. In Poland we explored new collaborations in business education. In Lithuania I continue to work with Mykolas Romeris University and Kazimiero Simonaviciaus University, as a Visiting Professor.

In my reflections on regional development and “creating collaborative advantage”, I also draw on experience of working in Norway, with the Work Research Institute, the Norwegian University
of Science and Technology, and the University of Agder (Ennals and Gustavsen 1999; Gustavsen, Nyhan and Ennals 2007; Johnsen and Ennals 2012).

I also work beyond Europe. In Southern Africa I have worked with the Southern African Development Community, addressing the needs of member countries in policy areas such as education. I have a particular concern for Mozambique. In South Asia, innovative developments with Quality education in India, inspired by work in India, have been taken up in Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Turkey. Teachers and students will come together for an international convention on Students’ Quality Circles at Kingston University, UK, in June. This is not an example of the UK leading the world, but of sharing experience with international partners, from whom we in the UK have much to learn.

European Policy Context

The COHAB project ends with a concluding seminar in Denmark on 3rd - 4th June, which will include a presentation of the completed anthology. The anthology also addresses a wider international audience.

In the last week of May 2014, when this chapter is being completed, the people of the EU will be voting in the elections for the European Parliament. A new European Commission will then be appointed. A new phase will begin. The European people may express enthusiastic support for the EU, or there may be evidence of a return to support for nation states, rather than for the European Project. There is a need for clear accounts of what can be achieved by Europeans from different countries coming together to create collaborative advantage.

The COHAB anthology is based on work with vocational education teaching students from Sweden, Denmark and Germany, and primary school teaching students in Lithuania. It describes a joint project, including a series of visits and “journeys” in search of “the Baltic Sea Teacher”. The project made use of Dialogue Seminars, which enabled participants to explore their reactions to shared experiences. Metaphors and analogies were used, sometimes using popular myths and fairy tales, such as “the Ugly Duckling”. The anthology documents the process and the outcomes.

By the end of the project, the students had taken the lead, using social media to continue their international collaborative activity, setting a new agenda. This has particularly involved the Swedish and German students.

Future activities can build on this momentum, including a proposed catalogue of courses on international vocational education, where similar pedagogical approaches can be used. There are other cross-border regions in the EU where the experience could provide useful insights. More generally, the European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN) is now active in 30 countries. The COHAB anthology and associated student activities could help to take Workplace Innovation to a new generation.

The language of collaboration and regional development

The language which we use when we discuss the COHAB project helps us to locate it in the context of wider European debates.

The South Baltic Sea region case obliges us to reconsider how we discuss issues of collaboration and regional development, which are of vital importance for the EU in political, economic, social and
cultural terms. We use the vocabulary of regional development.

INTERREG projects around the EU are normally based on shared borders, offering opportunities for comparisons (France – Spain; Sweden – Norway), and learning from differences. The Baltic Sea does not provide such a border. It is more comparable to the English Channel (La Manche), a sleeve through which others pass. There are relationships between participants on the opposite sides of the water. There are other countries with Baltic Sea coasts, further north, which are not included in COHAB (Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Russia).

For regions to develop sustainably, they need to establish shared meanings. In some cases this can take place through transnational business activities. Religion can sometimes provide a common focus, but this does not work for the South Baltic Sea region and COHAB. In the case of COHAB, the focus has been on professions, and in particular teaching. Members of the COHAB group have journeyed in search of the “Baltic Sea Teacher”, sharing their reflections in the anthology.

The anthology suggests that, through COHAB, a web of connections has been developed which may have the capacity to support future activities. We may identify a cluster of engaged partners around the Baltic, able to build on the connections in order to create the basis for a learning region.

We might regard the South Baltic Sea region as a potential example of a new generation of region reflecting the knowledge economy and knowledge society. The web of connections between teachers may result in a new form of social capital, which is virtual rather than physically based and located. Having identified members of a professional community of practice, they can be engaged in common activities. INTERREG, and in particular COHAB, are seeding such a process.

What happens next? We have been exploring the possibility of regional development. This will benefit from a common agenda of shared activities. There may be an intermediate stage, at a meso level between individuals and national governments, where dialogue conferences are held in order to engage participants at all levels, developing agendas through bottom up processes. We may see the emergence of trans-national development coalitions. Through mutual exchange of experience, and a process of social benchmarking, we may see some convergence on approaches to innovation systems. The social partners may develop distinctive approaches to social dialogue.

The Nordic Region of the Regional Studies Association are holding a conference at the University of Agder, Norway, 15th – 16th January 2015. This offers new opportunities to take forward regional collaboration, submitting a paper. Often the debate on regions is based within countries: COHAB demonstrated the potential of larger regional groupings.

With strengthened educational foundations, we may see a new culture of educational workplace innovation. This suggests a case for links with the European Workplace Innovation Network (EU-WIN) which has recently held conferences in Denmark and Portugal. There is a case for submitting a paper on COHAB to the new European Journal of Workplace Innovation (EJWI). The project addresses issues which bring together several EU policy agendas.

Vocational Education

As I swim in my local community pool each morning, with a handsome duck watching from the side, I think about how different discourses can be linked. I can imagine a vigorous and impor-
tant discussion among COHAB partners concerning vocational education. As in my pool, we do not all move at the same speed, and there are many styles of swimming.

In the UK, vocational education has been regarded as an “ugly duckling”, when the focus has traditionally been on academic education, which has more prestige and funding. For about 140 years, in a series of official national reports, there have been calls for cultural change, if the UK is to be a successful modern industrial economy. Today the UK employs numerous migrant workers from Poland and Lithuania, who bring valuable skills.

In Germany, there has long been a dual system of vocational education and training, involving educational institutions and employers. It is often regarded as an example for the UK to follow. One recurrent German nightmare has been that the EU, under pressure from the UK, might force Germany to abandon their distinctive focus on skill, in favour of an emphasis on “competences”. This would be seen as economic suicide.

In both Denmark and Sweden there has been a long tradition of respect for work, combined with tripartite discussion of the economy and labour market. There are debates on how vocational education could be improved, with strengthened links between educational institutions and the workplace.

The Polish economy has developed well since EU Enlargement. It would seem that vocational education has been successful. Those Poles who work in the UK have brought valuable skills, and sent much of their income home.

Lithuania has had a strong tradition of academic education, but has been weaker in developing education and training to meet the needs of industry. However, economic pressures have meant that many teachers and students also work in full time employment, so a form of integration of work and learning does take place at an individual level, even if it is not acknowledged.

Perhaps the COHAB discourse could set the different models of “ugly ducklings” against the alternative perspective of “swans”. In the knowledge economy and knowledge society, what is the place of the vocational education “swan”? Is there an agreed view from the COHAB partners? Could we imagine a virtual offshore campus, located in the South Baltic Sea, which could link the COHAB partners? The students seem to have no difficulty with such an idea, and have already implemented what might be seen as a prototype platform. We do not have to assume a single South Baltic Sea model, but it may be that the virtual offshore campus can facilitate dialogue between partners, using a common language and vocabulary.

Teacher Mobility in a European and South Baltic Context

The INTERREG programme is intended to encourage cross-border collaborative relationships in different parts of the European Union. Within a common framework of European law, regulations and culture, national borders can lose much of their significance. This has happened for travel within the Schengen region, where passports need not be shown. In the South Baltic Sea, the fish are free to travel across borders, and we do not know that they encounter language barriers. On land, there is considerable potential to learn from differences, using the European approach of social benchmarking.

In the South Baltic Sea region, several adjoining countries border the Baltic Sea. These countries have distinctive histories, cultures and languages. They are now established fellow members of
the European Union. Despite the long existence of theoretical opportunities for teacher mobility and collaboration, and new opportunities provided by information and communications technology, activity had been limited. A fresh initiative was required. This is reported in the COHAB anthology.

Regional Development

The South Baltic Sea region cuts across established collaborative spaces. Denmark and Sweden are active partners in the Nordic and Scandinavian regions. Lithuania shares some common history with Latvia and Estonia, formerly internationally known collectively as “the Baltic States”, and for most of the 20th century all three were part of the Soviet Union. Germany and Poland have long experience as neighbours, with periodic traumatic changes of borders. In each case there could be benefits from engagement in a new and broader region.

The Baltic Sea is no longer a trading route to the same extent as in the past. However, there is increased awareness of mutual interdependence in terms of environmental sustainability. The coastal states eat the same fish, such as herring, prepared in diverse ways.

Collaborative Advantage

The COHAB project, with the use of Dialogue Seminars, opens up new and exciting prospects for creating “collaborative advantage”. Collaborative advantage can be seen as a counter-balance to “competitive advantage”, which is often presented as a driving force in capitalist economies. However, economists increasingly recognise that effective competition is often underpinned by foundations of collaboration. In INTERREG projects, we are interested in cross-border collaborations.

Around the South Baltic Sea, the focus of attention by coastal states is not generally on the Baltic Sea. Competition and collaboration have had other orientations, with other partners. There is a vacuum waiting to be filled. The Baltic Sea is a space in which we can learn from differences, as we engage in action.

The European Project

Under European treaties, the governments of EU nation states retain responsibility for national systems of education and health. The European Commission supports programmes at a regional level, such as INTERREG, and individual projects such as COHAB, which can add value without compromising subsidiarity. By maintaining processes of dialogue and collaboration, the European Commission hopes to reduce the likelihood of tensions and conflicts between member states. On this basis, value can be added to national activities. The European Commission supports international collaborative initiatives on Lifelong Learning and Regional Development. In 2004, the TRIPOD proposal for a European Lifelong Learning University, with 75 partners in 25 countries, was well received, passing all quality thresholds, but was not funded. The consortium was led from Lithuania, with support from Kingston in the UK, and involved experienced network partners. The partners have continued contacts.

Knowledge Society

In considering collaborative approaches to teacher mobility, there is the additional context of the knowledge economy and knowledge society. The use of new technologies is not constrained by
national borders. The European Union may not have originated most of the new technologies, but it represents an enormous single market in which they can be applied. This is the focus of many European Commission projects in DG Information Society Technologies.

In the 1980s, the EU COST 13 programme supported work on new technologies and the professions, led from the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology, the Royal Dramatic Theatre, and the Swedish National Institute for Working Life. There have been 30 years of research in the philosophy of knowledge, supported by the Dialogue Seminar and the Skill and Technology research field. This has contributed to COHAB work in Sweden, and beyond.

Searching for the Baltic Sea Teacher

The COHAB project work on teacher mobility can be seen against this distinctive background, which brings together research and practice in philosophy, technology and culture.

In summary, the COHAB team formed an international group of teachers from partner countries, and they engaged in a common journey: a series of organised visits. Teachers drew on a shared resource of European myths, legends and fairy tales. They communicated in English (a foreign language for all of them). They participated in a series of facilitated Dialogue Seminars, and submitted their written reflections. They seem to have emerged as “Baltic Sea Teachers”, having been motivated by the experience. Their writings give substance to what was previously a simple vision.

Implications

We can imagine professional groupings such as teachers and nurses as located somewhere offshore, providing a flow of cultural resources. We will discover more about distinctive tacit knowledge and language games in these groupings, which may be seen as European, rather than simply nationally defined.

We can elevate the creation of collaborative advantage beyond the relatively narrow world of business. Professional knowledge, underpinned by shared ethical concerns, crosses borders. We might want to characterise this as “innovation in the professional knowledge workplace”. Professionals find they have much in common, even when their economic circumstances are different. It is not possible for the full range of professional knowledge to be made explicit.

These are not trivial issues. Indeed, they could help to redefine the wider European Project. As we encounter disputes over the potential fragmentation of nation states, it may be helpful to consider elements that we share across Europe. We are unlikely to arrive at clearly defined conclusions. Rather we should expect to encounter European “family resemblances” in a rich and diverse tapestry of concepts and practices. In turn, such encounters may have an impact on European law. Progress in this direction can be helped by the use of shared myths and analogies, with roots in European culture.

The Europe of the Regions

We need to take account of details of the approach taken to Dialogue by the COHAB team, and the experience of the participating teachers. Informed by those details, we address regional development and “the Europe of the Regions”, which provides a means for European collaboration without jeopardising national sovereignty.
As a result, we hope to arrive at a richer account of “creating collaborative advantage” in Europe. In particular, we will explore prospects for enhancing the European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN), for mutual benefit, taking Workplace Innovation to a new generation.

It will be interesting to discuss the relationship between the Dialogue Seminar and Forum Theatre, which is attracting considerable interest in EUWIN. In both cases, analogical thinking is enriching debate around work.

Via EUWIN, we may identify other regional groupings and INTERREG projects for exploration. COHAB may provide a model of collaboration which reaches places which other models have failed to reach.

Professions

If we reflect on the work of Bo Göranzon’s EU COST 13 project in the 1980s, which culminated in the 1988 conference, “Culture, Language and Artificial Intelligence”, we may see a context in which Dialogue can have a significant role. The project was documented in a series of 6 books on “Skill and Technology” 1988-95. Since 1988, scepticism has increased concerning the claims made for Artificial Intelligence. Göranzon introduced a special conference track on “Artificial Stupidity”. My own presentation at the conference considered President Ronald Reagan and his Strategic Defense Initiative, popularly known as “Star Wars”.

Since 1988 the English language has had an increasing role in the EU, while the UK has become less engaged. This means that discussions are not dominated by English native speakers. One strength of COHAB is that English can now be used in the project, but without native English speakers: participants are on a level linguistic playing field. English is the new Latin.

Göranzon concentrated on the professions, and explored dialogue between the arts and the sciences. Others have looked at the workplace, and the role of social dialogue, involving trade unions and employers’ organisations.

The professions tend to refer to values and principles which go beyond individual nations, but are recognised and shared by fellow professionals. Professional skill and tacit knowledge are seen in practice, and not just in writing. Reflection is required if we are to access tacit knowledge. This provides the starting point for the Dialogue Seminar Method. This is most fully described in “Dialogue, Skill and Tacit Knowledge” (Göranzon, Hammaren and Ennals 2006).

If the EU is to develop further, there is an important role for professional knowledge. The professions are not subject to EU control, but the EU needs to provide an environment in which judgments can be exercised. It is a context in which European professionals can learn from differences. Such environments may have regional dimensions. We can imagine a significant role for the countries of the South Baltic Sea region. Science, technology and the professions are well established in Lithuania, despite the lower income level of many of the population. There is a distinct national cultural identity.

Dissemination

We can develop effective dialogue in particular groups. It does not follow that success can produce models of good practice which can be rolled out and transferred to new contexts. I explored
this issue in my article “Can skill be transferable?”, published in “Knowledge, Skill and Artificial Intelligence” (Göranzon and Josefson 1988). In the UK, the focus has often been on competence (based on observed performance of particular tasks), rather than skill, in new vocational qualifications.

Arising from the 1988 Stockholm conference, the six volume collection of papers on “Skill and Technology” 1988–95 was intended to underpin a PhD programme. It was successful at the level of intellectual debate, within a particular tradition of practical philosophy and working life, but it did not link with the professions in a way which generated sustainable further dynamic activity.

In a changed context, it may be that Linnaeus University now offers an alternative mechanism, in association with COHAB partners and professional groups. The new team have added further insights and pedagogical methods. They also have potentially important links with Asia, through Mitsuru Suzuki, who leads the Asian Exchange Programme. Importantly, this offers connections with Japan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, where Japanese approaches to Quality Circles have been applied in education.

Regions of Meaning

We may want to agree with Bjorn Gustavsen (2004) that regions are not always geographically defined. We may want to consider “regions of meaning”, which link people who see the world in the same way, even if they are geographically separated. On that basis, INTERREG may represent the tip of the iceberg. Across Europe, meanings can be shared, in different patterns. In South Asia, we can link groups developing Students’ Quality Circles, using ideas and approaches first developed for Japanese industry. The South Baltic Sea region may have new partners in South Asia.

We might want to consider the professions as “communities of practice”, and take advantage of new technologies which are designed to support them.

Response from Daniel Alvunger

Daniel Alvunger, of Linnaeus University, has identified particular contributions made by the COHAB team at Linnaeus:

“From my point of view we owe many thanks to Bo Göranzon and his work with the Dialogue Seminar Method. The fact that he became affiliated with us at Linnaeus has resulted in many new and challenging ways of working. To a great extent, our work in the COHAB project represents a new context and direction for working with this particular method. Together with our own experiences we have refined and in some ways transformed the method because we have applied it along with other methods that promotes reflective and analogical thinking and provides a platform for experiential learning: log writing; a systematic method for planning, performing and evaluating internship for students, their supervisors and mentors (this is a unique model designed by Björn Nelson, Malin Strand and Viktoria Johansson and it was highly regarded during the assessment of the Board for Higher Education in 2010); a critical dialogical model combining dialogue seminars together with critical seminars/studies in line with theoretical and methodological foundations of critical hermeneutics (a model developed by me building on the work of Gadamer and Kögler).”

Daniel Alvunger has talked about both regions and professional learning communities:
“As with talking about "regions of meaning", one could also talk about "professional learning communities" and in our world of today we are fortunate to possess both language skills in English as the lingua franca and the infrastructure in terms of ICT. What we lack, and I do not think this applies only to the teaching profession, is a sense of a common professional language. For instance, do teachers across the Baltic Sea region use the same kinds of metaphors and images to try to make skills and capacities in their profession visible?”

“I believe COHAB has taken some very important steps and shown a way to deal with such issues. This is also where I think you have a very strong and good point when you write: “If the EU is to develop, there is an important role for professional knowledge. The professions are not subject to EU control, but the EU needs to provide an environment in which judgments can be exercised. It is a context in which European professionals can learn from differences.” An exciting thought is what happens when professional learning communities engage in cross-border co-operations, they cut across what Benedict Andersen refers to as "imagined communities" and turn out to represent another type of such a community. Therefore we need to stratify and be aware of how Europe can be compared with a patch-work quilt, dynamic and ever changing.”

He tackled issues of professional dialogue:

“Which issues should be put at the heart of professional dialogue? I do not think we should rule too many options out, but we need to pick up the thread at one end. My suggestion is questions that touch upon values, beliefs, purpose and meaning in professions. Once again our dialogue may be a quest for metaphors, heuristic and experimental (in the sense of Dewey, not referring to any clinical studies) to its character. The tension between auditing / accountability / the cry for higher standards and the expectations / skills / capacities / hopes we attach to teachers for me is somewhat like a paradox. These oppose each other, but in political rhetoric they also tend to reinforce the notion that education is a wanted product that must be designed to fit the consumer, and that our educational system is like an industry which we can demand good and able products from. If there is an ill product, there must be something wrong with the skill of the workers (teachers: let’s change or correct teacher education) or the system as such is flawed so that we through reform must adjust the machinery (improve quality work, educate teachers and principals to become controllers). Rather than merely talk about academic taylorism we might want to reflect upon Bobbitt and Dewey as the two counterparts from the 1920s and onwards: What is education? Is it the delivery of a proper product to enter the work life on day one after school, or is it a free–minded, spirited and creative individual with more than just the capacity to perform in a work place?”

Bjorn Nelson contributed a philosophical reflection:

"You have a crucial point I think that reminds me of the philosopher Arne Naess. He talks about the river: always changing in the eyes of Herakleitos but still the same if we listen to Paramenides. Then he says: I am the river! He talks about “ecosophy”, as the personal profile of a deep ecology. We have personal, mental rivers reaching the same Baltic Sea.”

The COHAB partners are indeed the rivers which converge in the Baltic Sea.

Geographical and Political Context

The countries in the South Baltic Sea region act as the “sleeve” for an “arm” of sea which runs from the North Sea to Russia and Finland. The region is not self-contained. Countries have
other links which are stronger. They lack direct links to all others in the region. The Baltic Sea has not necessarily provided regular transport links. Gas pipelines now pass underneath. Political unrest in one part of the Baltic Sea region can have a widespread impact.

The South Baltic Sea region countries are also EU members, and should be able to learn from other INTERREG projects around Europe. There are opportunities to “Learn from Differences”. However, to date, the region seems to be an EU construct, rather than a previous priority for the individual countries.

COHAB has made some significant progress in a region which may have seemed artificial.

- The focus on the professions may be vital.
- Timing has been important, following EU enlargement in 2004.
- Today you can find competent English speakers, making communication easier.
- There are unifying approaches to philosophy, myth and legend.

Reflections

Our focus here is on the South Baltic Sea region, and issues around creating collaborative advantage. After many decades of contacts with the individual countries, motivated by COHAB, it is time to reflect, pulling ideas together.

Historically, co-existence in the region has been more of an issue of avoiding unnecessary tensions which might lead to war. Within the EU, war is now much less likely. Indeed, this was one of the key objectives of the EU. The South Baltic Sea region has probably not scored highly on collaboration in the past. It links countries whose individual collaborative focus has been away from the Baltic Sea. It is a region in geographical terms, rather than in terms of language, culture or politics.

At this stage, and with the focus on particular professions, we can see the scope for innovative developments. As national borders are less important, using a common language and referring to international professional standards become attractive. Approaches which work in the South Baltic Sea region could in principle be applicable elsewhere. There are many other cross-border regions in Europe.

I suspect that there has not been a strong history of either competition or collaboration between the set of countries which border the South Baltic Sea. There will be ongoing rivalries, and partnerships between pairs. New partners can start fresh collaboration by feeling slightly uneasy.

In the past, Norway and Sweden had been ruled by Denmark, and thus indirectly involved in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, in which Lithuania and Germany were also involved. To a certain extent the Baltic Sea served as an extension of the Atlantic. It is not an inland sea.

The countries in the region joined the EU at different times. Germany were founding members. Denmark joined in 1973, together with the UK, followed by Sweden in 1996. Poland and Lithuania only joined the EU in 2004, and were previously linked to the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact.
Lithuania had been known as one of the Baltic States, with Latvia and Estonia. However, Lithuania saw itself as being at the centre of Europe, and had memories of earlier grandeur, as indeed did each of the other countries in the region.

If the EU is to be cohesive and sustainable, these different histories and traditions need to be linked. The EU patchwork quilt needs to accommodate differences, while building on similarities. This is part of the wider context for COHAB.

Universities and Regions

Universities are now constantly embattled, in each of our countries. They are now seen as actors in regional and national development.

Once we move the analysis beyond the level of single enterprises, we encounter issues of partnerships, supply chains and networks, all based on the need to create collaborative advantage. If one is to compete, this cannot be done alone.

Småland has a reputation in the regional development literature. There are several Swedish cases reported in “Work Organisation and Europe as a Development Coalition” (Ennals and Gustavsen 1999). The “Third Task” makes universities partners in this process.

It will be interesting to see the extent to which the COHAB collaboration provides a basis for regional activity which goes beyond education. INTERREG may offer further opportunities.

Technology and Regions

One reason why Göranzon’s work on “Skill and Technology” encountered some difficulty at KTH was that it involved taking a very different approach to technology. A central role was given to human reflection, which provided a qualitative perspective. This contrasted with a more technocentric and quantitative orthodoxy. There are different approaches to science, to generalisation, and to repeatability. Behind cross-disciplinary facades, there are long-established assumptions, and professional cultures. This context has been apparent in working with the COHAB students.

Göranzon had a tacitly “regional” approach: his “region” was the Stockholm intelligentsia, the professions and creative industries, including theatre and music. The researcher was also a renowned impresario.

When, led by Göranzon, we took the boat across the Baltic to St Petersburg in 1993, documented by the novelist Malcolm Bradbury in “To the Hermitage” (2000), we were exploring links on the other shore, including developing dialogue with Russian philosophers. We found the tanks attacking the Russian parliament. Much was unfamiliar, and unsafe.

For COHAB (or “son of COHAB”), we might now like to think in terms of a virtual offshore campus in the South Baltic Sea. This could be presented as an outcome of the journey in search of the Baltic Sea Teacher. For Linnaeus, such a virtual campus could become an important asset. This would be the Baltic Sea version of Atlantis.
Flat pack

Are companies such as IKEA interested in the kind of project which we have discussed? With some creative thinking, a project started at Linnaeus University could involve European networks and business partners. EUWIN and the European Commission could be interested in “flat packed self assembly projects”, reflecting original design and local applications. It could provide a way of linking previously separate projects.

Towards a curriculum for workplace education and innovation

Daniel Alvunger has responded:

“Thank you for your inspiring reflections and comments on the South Baltic Sea region. Your sketch and background really helped me articulate something that has been going on for quite some time in the back of my head. What I propose is that it is time for writing a curriculum for workplace education and innovation. Such a curriculum should be based on principal ideas and values in support for the creation of meaning-making, collaborative professional learning communities. We find the roots of this curriculum in the soil of pragmatics like Dewey and the philosophical traditions of Bakhtin, Mead and Gadamer and our common experiences of intercultural work and the fact that we are living in a globalising (to stress that the process continues and not is finished) world must also have forward position. For instance we have the concept of cosmopolitanism (and I am not referring to economic or political cosmopolitanism) being a foundation for education. Professor David Hansen (Teachers College, Columba University) has articulated one of the most promising writings on this subject (2008). We are in a very good process of working virtually through e-mail, and the idea and practical work with a curriculum is not an easy task. In recent years we have become accustomed to our computer files being stored “in the cloud”, with no precise location, but without taking up space on our personal hard drives. I could imagine COHAB partners saying that their files were “in the sea”. They could be seen as stored offshore, in a shared virtual platform.

Going around in Circles

Looking beyond the end of COHAB funding at the end of May 2014, we should consider new ways of going forward. It is clear, from reading the various contributions in the draft anthology, that the process is not complete. It has just begun. The anthology, which we will complete in May, shows that rich foundations have been built, using some shared metaphors and analogies. The students are already building on those foundations, and taking the lead.

One approach would be to form a set of Quality Circles (QCs) from among the COHAB participants who worked together on the journey to find the Baltic Sea Teacher, somewhere over the rainbow, “following the Yellow Brick Road”. QCs are voluntary, set their own agendas, and are self-managing. The COHAB students have taken this approach. A set of COHAB QCs in each partner country could give new reality to the region. Adopting this approach also creates opportunities to work with further international partners. There have been similar proposals made to the EU Grundtvig Programme, using “Quality Circles to Empower Intercultural Competences”.

There is a history of concerns with Quality among COHAB partners in Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Poland and Lithuania. That can help in forming new QCs. I know from my experience at Kazimiero Simonaviciaus University (KSU) in Lithuania, working with students of crea-
tive economy and society, that there can be an enthusiastic and constructive response. Ramojus Reimeris of KSU also works with EUWIN.

The QCs now need to take control of their own future, empowering their members. QC members may have come from different partner institutions, but they could now all relate to the same virtual offshore centre “in the sea”. They should be able to work together, across national borders, setting their own agendas, tackling practical problems. We are concerned with innovation in the learning workplace. This involves a self-managing practical curriculum.

From a Linnaeus perspective, I am exploring links with Henric Stenmark, who now leads Nordic training for Vattenfall (he started his new senior job in April). He is looking at learning and development needs in the power generation industry, which faces numerous challenges. At a seminar at Linnaeus he expressed interest in introducing Students’ Quality Circles in control rooms of nuclear power plants, for control centre and maintenance staff. That was 9 days before the Fukushima disaster in Japan, which has had a severe impact on power generation around the world. Energy policy is in turmoil. We need collaborative dialogue arrangements in place well in advanced of crises. The same needs arise in all countries.

Peter Totterdill, my colleague at Workplace Innovation Ltd, has been co-leading conferences in Denmark and Portugal for the European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN), which works in 30 European countries. His focus is on engaging and empowering workers. I could imagine a powerful role for Forum Theatre in the South Baltic Sea region, using the base of analogical thinking which is now in place, and tackling issues in vocational education. There could be a role for Dialogue Seminars across the EU, developing bottom up.

Finally I suggest a link with another INTERREG region, the border between France and Spain. My colleagues Miren Larrea and James Karlsen, at the University of Deusto, are engaged in action research to support policy makers in the Basque Country. QCs should be voluntary, bringing together people who work together, can agree on what needs to be done, and have some initial facilitation support. A group of QCs could provide mutual support. They have the means of bringing bottom up continuous improvement. They had a radical impact in Japan in the 1970s, and again in South Asian schools since the 1990s. They could contribute to integrative development in the South Baltic Sea region, enabling “learning from differences”.

We have an international convention on Students’ Quality Circles at Kingston Business School in June. This highlights what has been done elsewhere, for example in South Asia, and suggests new potential. Day rates are available for registration 24th - 26th June (£50 per day or £125 for three days). The convener is Chris Ford. COHAB representatives will be welcome.

Mermaids

Let us imagine that the COHAB journeying group was comprised of mermaids, each with a home base on land as well as a shared offshore virtual base in the South Baltic Sea. Perhaps they report back to the little mermaid in Copenhagen.

It would be interesting to determine the extent to which the pilot group wishes to continue joint activities. I have seen some creative work. How can this be encouraged?
Are they now members of one organisation, or representatives of their separate countries and institutions? Should we form a COHAB chapter of the World Council for Total Quality and Excellence in Education?

If there are ongoing joint activities, are the functions divided between national groups, or conducted across borders with the support of technology? This affects the way in which approaches such as Quality Circles might be applied.

What happens next?

Challenges

There are practical challenges.

There is a tension between what can be imagined and what is currently possible. The citizens of the countries bordering the South Baltic Sea enjoy very different economic conditions, despite freedom of labour in the EU. Perhaps those differences are more strongly felt when all participants are speaking a common language, engaged in the same professions, and sharing a common journey.

If all that can be offered by INTERREG through COHAB is the awareness of a conceivable common future, this could be counter-productive. What is needed is a practical route to sustainable collaboration. This means offering a way forward, with follow-on projects.

In one sense, fellow European countries can look back to greater power and prestige in the historic past. It can be harder to envisage a return to former parities.

EU enlargement, with mobility of labour, opened the way to unprecedented migrations, from Poland and Lithuania. This has been destabilising, and this is likely to be reflected in the results of the elections for the European Parliament.

COHAB raises major political questions, echoed by Thomas Piketty in his book “Capital in the 21st Century” (Piketty and Goldhammer 2014). Given current inequalities, is there to be economic redistribution? If so, how is this to be achieved? Is the European Project now popular in richer countries? COHAB shows what is possible in a particular region. In principle there are implications for other cross-border regions.

References


