

IKT and Networks

In a newsletter of the project: *Handicapped and social Networks*,
Soeren Kayser write about social networks this way:

What is social network?

Social networks are very important to people.

We need community and recognition. To be a part of a social network is of great importance to ones well-being.

The concept: Social Networks

came into being in the middle 50's when the anthropologist John Barnes watched some fishing nets dry in the sun.

He wondered how he could describe the relationship in the local population, he was studying.

The common third

We share something with the persons, who are a part of our social networks, something they and we appreciate.

The friends in the footballclub, share the interest of soccer.

The function of the network.

We use networks for different things, e.g. Sharing knowledge about what dentist you want to choose or help to hang up a picture.

Reciprocity.

In social networks you need to be able to give and to receive. The relations to the other have to be mutual.

It can be knowledge and services you give or receive, but it can also be care or charity.

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Different Relations

Social relations can exist of many different people, with whom you have very different relations. E.g. brothers and sisters, pedagogue, colleges, friends etc. Some you know privately some are professionally and others you know through your work.

All our relations cannot be described as social networks. The relations have to last a longer period. If you pass someone in the street or if someone keeps the door when we leave a shop, is not a part of our social networks, whereas our friends and family are part of our networks.

Close or distance

Some of the people, who is a part of your social networks, is experienced as very close to you, others is experienced not that close. A good friend, a boyfriend or girlfriend can be very close, while a neighbour could be in the distance.

According to handicapped people, you often think of two types of network: A network with persons without handicap and a network among persons who have handicap. The first type could be family and friends. The second type is maybe Some of the persons, with whom you live.

Conditions of importance

Practical things are also of importance to how our social networks are like. E.g. it is of importance where we live, what kind of work we have, what kind of hobbies we have, if we have children etc.

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For the physical handicapped children and young people, the geographic distance and the physically handicap is the reason why they do not have the same opportunities as other people at the same age.



A cross on the map means, that one of the pupils in the class Cc lives here. Cc is the class for physically handicapped, normal minded pupils in Tovshoejskolen, Brabrand, Aarhus, Denmark. The pupils in the special classes for physical handicapped in Tovshoejskolen, comes from all Aarhus County. It is necessary to do an extra effort, when physical handicapped youths wants to be together with other youths.

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This effort is the childhood carried out primarily by the parents, they support the appointments, drive the kids and help with the necessarily practical work such as going to the toilet.

Beyond the physical problems, later on crises of identification and missing membership of groups can be realities. Day nursery, kindergarten, nursery school and until the age of 9 or 10 years, the social networks is able to develop positively for the physical handicapped integrated in the normal classes (the ordinary classes), after this age we often witness situations, where the not handicapped pupils literally runs from the handicapped pupils. No one is phoning you anymore, you are not invited to the cinema and you are more and more isolated socially.

You are often ill, the stomach hurts and you don't want to go to school. You are talk less about your school and you are thriving badly.

Even if you are able to follow the subjects in school, you are in bad thrive and your self-confidence and self-esteem is cracks.

Examples from the real world:

C was in an ordinary class until the 6th school year (12 years old).

Though his handicap is Cerebral Pareses, C is able to walk, and he loves to play soccer (Football).

C tells, that between the lessons, in the free time, he wanted to join the football players. He asked if he could join - the other answered, that he could not join, because they would be to many players. C is watching the play instead. Short time after, another not handicapped pupil asks if he can join the game. Guess what - yes, the not handicapped boy got the answer: Yes, you can join the football game..... C saw and listened to all of this.....

After the 5th year in school, C join the special classes for physical handicapped but normal pupils.

C is now playing soccer (Football) in a club for physical handicapped youths who is able to walk.

As a matter of fact, C was one of the promoters making this soccer team.

Ns family is friends with another family, who have a boy with the same age of N. His handicap is Cerebral Pareses and he is able to walk.

For many years the relationship between the 2 boys was very fine, but as they grow up and became teenagers, N is wondering about the major difference there exists in the worlds of the 2 boys.

His friend, who is not handicapped, is always out visiting friends, and goes to parties at least every weekend. N is very seldom to parties. The 2 boys is now 16 years old.

In the end, N was the only one who phoned, to stay in contact.

N tells us that he gets frustrated with this situation.

It seems that N is in the middle of an identity crisis: Who am I, do I have normal functions on all levels that makes me able to join anything like a not handicapped person or do I have limits?

Do I like my self or do I deny my handicap and my week aspects?

Friends and friendships between handicapped and not handicapped do exists.

- Some times, especially when the teenage years begin, as pseudo-friendships. Here it is the parents, who motivate the social being together: " You have not visited Peter for long....? Etc.
- In special cases as real friendships.

The main part of the social networks, friends and when time comes philandering is mostly seen in the group of handicapped people.

The years between childhood and being a grownup is in general a problematic period, but for the physical handicapped, the practical problems and the fact that they are few and that the few persons is spread over a

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big geographic area means, that there is a great danger of an adult existence in loneliness with catastrophic social consequences.

The way of presenting the problems above is supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs in Denmark, the administration of social services, who have put focus on social isolation and networks among handicapped people through the project:

Handicapped and Social Networks

The project is launched by the fact that in some years, there have been more focus on the risk that handicapped people are ending in socially isolation. The aim of the project is to strengthen the social network of handicapped people and to develop methods for the work with social networks. The project is running from 2003 to 2006 and is applied offers of accommodation for physical handicapped young people.

You are welcome to study more on the web page:

www.ufch.dk

At this page, you are able to change into an English version.

Pupils with special educational needs - Ways to a better life

Since August 2001 Escola Rel Barcelona Spain, Schule am Stadtrand Berlin Germany, Pestalozzischule Vöcklabruck Austria and Tovshoejskolen Aarhus Denmark have all joined a 3 years school development project with the title:

Pupils with special educational needs - ways to a better life

One of the aims with this project is, with help from the modern technology, that one achieve utilities establishing and maintaining social networks while:

Everyone needs networks, social networks (Friends, family etc.), professional networks (colleges) etc. to have a good life.

A great problem for physical handicapped pupils is, when they leave school and have to establish and maintain their own social networks.

While they are pupils in the school, they have a social network: The pupils in the class, the other classes and if they are interested in sport or have other interests.

But when they finish school and they become grownups and maybe leave their childhood home - they will become social isolated, if they do not have networks.

The history tell us, how dangerous a situation it is, not to have networks. The risk of social catastrophe is very high.

It is very important to emphasize, that IKT is only thought to be a catalyst for establishing and maintaining networks. IKT never must replace the physical contact.



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Qualifications

Since the middle of the eighties the special classes at Tovshoejskolen have integrated the modern technology in the daily teaching, using a wide fan of available software. Of course text-processing programs but also advanced audio programs.

In the beginning, writing like all other people, was a revolutionising progress.

Persons without ability in handwriting was earlier working with ordinary- or electric typewriters. When the computers were introduced, the result was, that it was impossible to see, if the writing was made by a handicapped- or a not handicapped person.

Another essential software facility, still in development, is the digital speech or digital voice. A fantastic possibility for people without verbal speech and very important pedagogical tools to learn to read and write. In the beginning we were computing every single word, now the synthetic speech is of so good quality, that you are able to use it for communication and as a pedagogical tool.

A study tour through an IBM-project to West Glamorgan Wales in 1989, where the teachers from the special classes at Tovshoejskolen participated, launched dreams and visions of IKT tools and education for physical handicapped pupils in our school. In West Glamorgan they used millions on IKT in the education to all, also the handicapped pupils. The most important industry in the area, the steel companies, were closing and the politicians needed to think in alternative strategies: Develop education with high technology.

The structure was a central led, with a big centre. The teachers were able to visit the centre and try all the software and hardware. If a teacher found a program, perfect to one or more of his pupils, the centre bought the program license for the pupil. If many pupils and schools were able to use the program, the centre bought a county license.

Computer-network and IKT in Aarhus Kommune

In the nineties Aarhus kommune developed computer based network at all schools. That meant, that nearly all the PC's in a school were connected to each other through wires. The schools are connected to the master server in the school administration and the schools also are connected to the Internet. In every school and in every class there is Internet access.

The special classes at Tovshoejskolen, as earlier mentioned, have been in front of the technology development and the special classes have today 5 to 7 PC's. With synthetic speech there is from 1 to 5 PC's and 3 to 5 PC's with Internet access.

The Ministry of Education has in the same period offered the conference system FirstClass for all schools, in Denmark.

The FirstClass conference system in the schools in Denmark is called Skolekom.

All the pupils and teachers are users and have their own logon name and password to Skolekom, which is not only is a conference system but also an e-mail program. So every user have their own e-mail address too.

The mailbox is available on the conference system as well as on the Internet. It is possible to see online users and use that information to chat online or mail "online".

The oldest of the special classes is using Hotmail. In that way, the pupils is able to stay in contact, when they leave school.

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IKT in the class Cc

All the pupils in the special class Cc, is able to log on the computer-network with username and password. In that way, they are able to use many of the Internet facilities, where you often have to report an activity, and where you get a user name and a password, you need to use, when you are joining the activity.

All the pupils have their own e-mail address, and parents, family and friends are requested to e-mail the pupil.

In the school, the pupil checks his/hers mailbox at least once a week. As a matter of fact, the pupils are free to check his/her mailbox, go on the Internet and do other activities on the computers in their free time at school.

IKT at home

At home the pupil and his family have access to the mail and conference system: **Skolekom**. Guides telling how to download, install and use the programs is available for the families. Look at.

Pupils with special educational needs - Ways to a better life

Comeniusprojekt

In connection with the Comeniusproject "Pupils with special educational needs - Ways to a better life" the pupils have been created as users in the closed group: **Comeniusprojekt** in the **MSN**. The pupils have created their own profiles and a class profile too.

In that way other members of the group are able to be informed about age, sex, handicap and the other members e-mail address.

In the 2 year of the project class Cc has communicated with a class from Escola Rel Barcelona and as a climax, Cc was visiting Escola Rel.

All groups in MSN does have a chat function. I think a better word for chat in this form is: **Direct contact** or even better: **Conference**.

Chat in the classroom

The pupils in Cc have used and are using this chat function in different kind of learning in the classroom. Learning where the pupils is training to present themselves, training Internet-etiquettes and enlarge the communication with the so called **smileys**.

E.g. After a holiday, they tell what they have experienced or they get the task, how to arrange a party. Subsequently the pupils are chatting about how to arrange this party.

In the class Cc there is 5 PC's connected to the Internet. That means, the same number of pupils is able to join the chat at the same time. There are 8 pupils in the class, necessarily 2 pupils have to use the same PC. This situation is pedagogical fine. The pupil develop new experiences and knowledge when they work together.

Chat between the classes in the school.

The pupils in the oldest special classes Cc and Cd, do train this chat function the same way. At a present moment the pupils are logging on the chat on the 9 Internet computers in both classes, and here they are solving different kind of tasks.

In the beginning of the chat session, the etiquette is, to say hallo to each other. At the end of the chat session it is very important to say goodbye, hi , bye, see you or another thing which indicate that everything is OK.

Chat in the free time.

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We have developed and distributed Guidance for pupils and parents, how to download, install and use the programs at home. Most of the families have Internet access and many of the pupils have their own computer with Internet access. The pupils hereby have the same opportunity to use the technology at home. Every Thursday night at 7.30 am (19.30) the pupils from the class is logging on the chat. In the beginning it was only the pupils from the class Cc and the chat program was in the group Comeniusprojekt in MSN. Now the oldest class Cd is joining the chat too and it is an aim that other physical handicapped young people from the age of 13 to the age of 26 will participate the chatroom. In that way, in the future they are able to create an environment of possibilities for communication and contact - a social network for physical handicapped young people.

Club GAL.

In the Aarhus county there have for a very long time been a great need for a place, where physical handicapped, normal minded young people could meet and be active in an equivalent environment. Many clubs and activities exists for young physical and psychological handicapped, but for a normal minded it is also very important to have the possibility to be reflected and to develop in an equivalent social group. At an arrangement at Tovshoejskolen - where personal from the House of Venture, pupils, parents and teachers were informing and discussing the possibilities and offer of activities for young physical handicapped - a club dedicated to this group of handicapped was created. The club, later named GAL (Get a Life) was created especially for the physical handicapped young people between 13 and 27 year.

A network of the young physical handicapped, parents and other resource-persons was established and a group was made in www.MSN.dk named Adventure Aarhus, modelled on the Comeniusprojekt group. A homepage for the club has been created www.gal.dk and the club activities and actualities is available here.

Adventure Aarhus chat

The pupils Thursday eveningschat has been moved from Comeniusprojekt to Adventure Aarhus. The chat in the group Adventure Aarhus is thought as a training place, where the pupils are able to experience and develop competences both of technically and of social art, in a complete confidence and secure environment. Being able to make conversation, to give and receive and hereby participate in a social network, is a competence that needs training and learning..

Examples from the chat: A boy invites a girl to the cinema. The boy is from another class, the class for the oldest pupils, and they find out to meet in the following weekend.

Messenger chat.

All the pupils from the class Cc, are all created as users in the MSN Messenger and more of the pupils from the oldest Class Cd are too. In the Class Cc we have trained this communication platform too. With all the pupils logged on the MSN Messenger we have created each other as **contact - persons** or **Friends**. In that way we are able to check if one of our **Friends** are online, at any time. Here we have also practised the hard thing: To communicate by literary language.

Guidings in how to download, install and use MSN Messenger at home have been produced and distributed to all the pupils and parents in the class Cc.

In that way it is possible for all pupils, to log on MSN Messenger from their homes. At the same time they are able to see, who of their friends, that are on-line. At home the young people is hereby able to train to maintain social relations.

Arto and examples of doing chat in free time.

One example of many, of what all the Comeniusproject "Pupils with special needs - Ways to a better life" with all its activities has carried out, is the following true story:

M is a pupil in the class Cc, one day in the classroom she tells that she has created her self as user in a homepage for children and young people. The name of the homepage is **ARTO**, the address is: www.arto.dk and the page is created by a high school pupil.

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This page has also a chat function. **M** finds the homepage and do the log-on procedure, with username and password and she shows the rest of the class the different activities and possibilities available on the page. **M** also shows her profile, and it is with great pleasure, the teacher recognises that her profile does not contain private data as phone number or address.

Another example is, when I from my home, logs on the MSN Messenger, (I have also created all the pupils in the class Cc as contact persons or friends), and I see, that other pupils are online too, e.g. **K**, a pupil in the class Cc as soon as he saw me online, he was sending me a greeting.

I have met several pupils from the special classes in the MSN messenger. They tell me that they use this platform very often in their free time and in their weekends when they need to contact their friends.

One day the pupil **N** is not in school. The day after **N** is still not in school, but the pupil **K** has met **N** on the MSN-Messenger, and **K** is telling the class that **N** have had a cold, but **N** will be in school the next day.

SMS

Approximately all the pupils in the 2 oldest classes Cc and Cd have their own mobil phone. The SMS function are often used as a communication tool.

Phone list

In the beginning of a school year all the pupils in Cc gets a phone and address list of all in the class. On the list there are:

The pupils name, the pupils mobil phone number, the pupils addresses, the names and addresses of the parents and phone numbers.

The list is updated periodically.

In spirit of the project *Pupils with special educational needs - Ways to a better life* the phone list is extended with usernames (Nicknames) for the conferences **Comeniusprojekt** and **Adventure Aarhus** and for the **MSN-Messenger**.

Conclusion

The development of tools used by physical handicapped people are continuing. The future technologically development of software and hardware, that we to day think is impossible, will in the future offer not known possibilities for handicapped people. "On the net we are all equal" These words is said by a grown up Danish handicapped woman, who uses the many ways of communication on the Internet.

The school developments project *Pupils with special educational needs - Ways to a better life* has caused , that the oldest of the special classes in Tovshoejskolen learns in technologically tools so their grown up lives can be filled with a positively content.

A Network of: Parents, family, teachers and other persons of resource around the young people, are involved in developing these competences.

For distributing the project we have had meetings, especially parents meetings, developed guiding papers and literal material and established a homepage www.espedup.com, in where you find the project description and links to the homepages of the participating schools.

Greetings

Mogens

Aarhus

Denmark