

CIDREE Conference "Create learning for all - what matters?" in Stockholm on 15th November 2012 – Report

The CIDREE conference 2012, a collaboration between CIDREE and the Swedish National Agency for Education/Skolverket, was held in Stockholm on November 15th. The CIDREE Yearbook 2012 was launched on the same occasion. The overall theme and common link between the conference and the yearbook was "Create learning for all - what matters?". This is an eternal issue, however, the answers are new and need to be constantly discussed and reviewed. Schools and their ability to support all students in their efforts to learn and achieve the learning goals and expected outcomes was the starting point. The conference deepened and complemented the book.

The conference programme was divided into three parts. Three invited keynote speakers highlighted different aspects of the topic, three authors gave a short presentation of their contributions in the yearbook, and in three parallel workshops the theme was further discussed.

The conference attracted participants from fourteen European countries, altogether nearly a hundred participants from the CIDREE member institutions together with participants from Swedish authorities and organizations, including Skolverket, the Ministry of Education, schools and other stakeholders. Anna Ekström, Director General of Skolverket, and Stefan Wolter, President of CIDREE and Director General of SKBF/CSRE in Switzerland, opened the conference. Moderator and responsible for organising the conference and main editor of the yearbook was Ulla Lindqvist, Director of Education at Skolverket and National Coordinator in CIDREE.

Keynote speakers and their topics

✚ *Claes Nilholm, professor of Education at Malmö University:*

Inclusive Education - what does it mean and (how) can it be accomplished?

The starting point was that "inclusion" is one word but is given many meanings. Claes Nilholm presented three different understandings of inclusion and discussed outcomes from a recent review of research about inclusive education.

✚ *Gordon Stobart, Emeritus Professor of Education at Institute of Education, University of London & Senior Research Fellow at Oxford University:*

Creating effective learners – what matters in the classroom? / Expertise and the importance of formative assessment.

Gordon Stobart pointed at a global policy rhetoric about the need for flexible and self-regulating 21st century learners but yet there is little evidence that our educational systems are producing them. His lecture looked at what we know about how experts learn and applied this to classroom teaching and learning. The model for this is Assessment for Learning – a formative approach to assessment which emphasises rich dialogue, clear learning intentions and effective feedback – combined with the need for purposeful practice.

✚ *Kay Livingston, Professor in Educational Research, Policy and Practice in the University of Glasgow, Scotland:*

Teachers as learners – career-long professional learning / Peer-mentoring as professional learning to improve pupil learning outcomes

Her focus was on teachers as active agents in their own development which is in line with research suggesting the importance of enabling teachers to become more reflective and enquiring practitioners. The impact peer-mentoring has on teachers' professional learning, their teaching and their development as leaders was shared with the audience.

Three authors present their yearbook contributions

❖ ***Educating spaces: quality learning environments for future schools***

Mónika Réti, researcher at Hungarian Institute for Educational Research and Development, Hungary

❖ ***Creating learning for all within outcomes based education in the Netherlands***

Wilma Kuiper, Professor at The Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO)

❖ ***School leadership as a predicting factor for the use of interactive teaching methods and ICT in classrooms***

Tidita Abdurrahmani, Albania, Director at IZHA (Instituti i Zhvillimit te Arsimit)

Parallel workshops – further discussions

▪ **External influences on learning.**

- **To what extent can learning in the school be influenced from outside?**

Chair: Jan van den Akker, Professor and Director General at SLO in The Netherlands

▪ **Effective learners – what matters in the classroom?**

- **Expertise and the importance of formative assessment.**

Chair: Gordon Stobart

▪ **Teachers as learners – career-long professional learning.**

- **Peer-mentoring as professional learning to improve pupil learning outcomes.**

And: What's the role of the school leadership?

Chair: Kay Livingston

Evaluation of the conference

After the conference an evaluation form was emailed to the participants. It included questions about their overall impression of the conference and on the practical arrangements. They answered with a score on a scale from 1 to 5 and commented on the issues. Furthermore, there were open questions.

Response rate and review

The assessment was consistently very positive. The response rate was 68 % of the CIDREE participants and 61% of the Swedish group. Regarding the overall impression of the conference the average rating for CIDREE was 4.5 and for the Swedish group 4.2 on a scale of 1-5 according to the following breakdown:

CIDREE group: 5 = 57%; 4 = 38%; 3 = 4.8%

Swedish participants: 5 = 36.4%; 4 = 48.5%; 3 = 15.2%

The organization and the practical arrangements during the event received an average rating of 4.9 from CIDREE and 4.2 of the Swedish participants according to 1-5 scale. The ratings were distributed as follows:

CIDREE participants: 5 = 85.7%; 4 = 14.3%

Swedish group: 5 = 39.4%; 4 = 45.5 %; 3 = 15%

Comments

The positive rating was supported by the participants' comments. Constructive proposals on improvements were also made as well as reflections from the actual contents of the lectures. Regarding the overall impression and issues that were particularly appreciated during the conference, and other comments, the following examples might give an idea. Subsequently, examples of statements about practical arrangements, organization and structure:

CIDREE participants:

- ✚ I've found the conference highly interesting as well as in topics as in people that I was able to meet through the conference.
- ✚ Very interesting and broad approach of create learning for all
- ✚ Very well organized. In conference all the presentations were very interesting, very well prepared and presented. A good way for exchanging experience.
- ✚ Nice place, interesting programme, fine catering.
- ✚ ... relevant speakers for present time.
- ✚ Gordon Stobart and Kay Livingstone both presented their topic in a very professional and interesting way. They really knew what they were talking about.
- ✚ It was very well organized and I can say I've learnt a lot during these 2 days.
- ✚ Very nice location, with excellent logistics and catering.

I especially appreciated ...

- ❖ ... the approach to inclusive education, formative assessment and the position of teachers as learners.
- ❖ The overall structure and the way it guided attention.
- ❖ I liked the workshops, however, they were a bit short.

Swedish participants:

- ✚ A day that still has a positive impact on me on a daily basis - and lectures which I quote as often as I can.
- ✚ The content was well suited to what we do/want to start in our municipality.
- ✚ The three lecturers / professors were inspiring and gave interesting and worthwhile input.
- ✚ Very exciting and relevant content.
- ✚ Excellent discussions of Education, but it would have been possible with a larger concentration of the substance of the conference.
- ✚ A very enjoyable conference showing the variation in school development and research in Europe.
- ✚ How can the school system contribute to exclusion and ethnic uniqueness turned into a valuable asset for all students?
- ✚ Thanks for a super conference!

I especially appreciated ...

- ❖ The breadth and variety of the program. The possibility of in-depth workshops. The lecture Creating Effective learners - what matters in the classroom? by Professor Gordon Stobart was very good.
- ❖ Lectures by Claes Nilholm and Gordon Stobart
- ❖ The element of coaching of teachers in the context of implementation of new governance documents.
- ❖ Workshop with Kay Livingston - interesting to both content and form. Kay has a rare ability to lead a group!
- ❖ ... appreciated the diversity of the topics that are relevant to the world of education today. The speakers were good and detailed, especially Gordon Stobart. I 'm very interested in how to create an education system that can adapt to each student (not vice versa), and found that Claes Nilholm had a good point: we need more research on didactics, didactics which varies depending on each individual student according to their interest, prior knowledge, skills etc., and hope that I can help to achieve this goal in the future
- ❖ As a lecturer, I think Claes Nilholm and Gordon Stobart were relevant. However, it could have been possible with a few more interactive elements such as Stobarts initiative on "how to be good at something." Both lecturers could have had more time.
- ❖ The possibility to listen to international researchers. Very inspiring. Current issues.

The practical conference arrangements, organization and structure

The following provides a representative picture:

CIDREE and Swedish participants

- ✚ Excellent organization, I cannot imagine any improvement...
- ✚ Great venue in historical setting...
- ✚ Absolutely brilliant!
- ✚ Everything was perfectly organized. I highly appreciated the proximity of accommodation and location of the conference. Then, I liked the way Ulla was keeping track of the speakers' time. I have been to a lot of conferences where that hadn't been the case and schedules were not kept because of that.
- ✚ Well done - a very smooth conference with thought-provoking issues raised through presentation and debate.
- ✚ It was well-organized and interesting content wise. I enjoyed the whole day. Congratulations to Ulla and her colleagues.

- ✚ Thank you ever so much and congratulations for the wonderful conference which I thoroughly enjoyed.
- ✚ Thank you for a very interesting event, superbly organized and operated.
- ✚ Thanks to all the people that made the conference a success!

Other reflections and observations

A point made by some participants concerned the relationship between the number of presentations and space for interactivity. While they appreciated the lectures there were also requests for more time for dialogue and discussion. After Claes Nilholm's lecture was relatively ample time for questions and discussion, but less time after other sessions. The final workshop was appreciated. Some also point to the opportunities for conversation and discussions during the breaks, lunch and dinner. Some voices from CIDREE highlights requests for any seminar, based on the expertise available in CIDREE.

- ✚ Perhaps a bit too many presentations; some more interactive sessions, building upon expertise in CIDREE institutions, might have been stimulating.
- ✚ I missed an organized moment of discussion between CIDREE participants. I had a bit the impression that contacts between CIDREE participants were informal (which is not necessarily negative) and depending on spontaneous initiatives.
- ✚ More time and space to discuss what we have heard.

Some comments were concerning the authors' presentations of their contributions in the yearbook:

- ✚ ... It was highly relevant for the whole day
- ✚ ... too condensed (and late in the day) to give them serious levels of focus and concentration.

The breadth of topic is also discussed. Many appreciated the diversity and breadth, while others felt that the theme was too broad and could have focused more clearly.

- ✚ Interesting theme, although perhaps a bit too broad.

Finally,...

On the basis of the very positive reviews, the good response rate and, not least, the great interest and large attendance at the conference, the participants apparently thought that it was very inspiring and rewarding, and were very happy with the event.

Further information and documents on the CIDREE website

Please find the following information and documents on the CIDREE website:

- the CIDREE Yearbook 2012
- the conference programme
- CVs of the keynote speakers at the end of the conference programme and
- bios of all the authors in the yearbook
- power point presentations
- the evaluation of the conference