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Multimedia use and new ways of learning in the Netherlands

With a view to contributions by public libraries

Abstract

Dieser Artikel bietet eine kurze Sondierung einiger Aspekte hinsichtlich der Verbreitung und Nutzung von Multimedia in der Erwachsenenbildung. In den Niederlanden ist Erwachsenenbildung eng verbunden mit dem „Neuen Lernen“, das auch als „Lebenslanges Lernen“ bezeichnet wird. In Bezug auf neue Formen des Lernens spielen öffentliche Bibliotheken eine große Rolle.

Einige allgemeine soziokulturelle Studien zeigen, was sich während eines Vierteljahrhunderts in der Medienlandschaft verändert hat und welche Auswirkungen das auf die Mediennutzung hat. Dabei zeigt sich, dass die Niederlande im europäischen Vergleich ein schneller und begieriger Nutzer der neuen Medien sind.

Ein Teil der Niederländer nutzt auch die Möglichkeiten, um – häufig während der Arbeitszeit und zum Teil bezahlt – ein Studium zu absolvieren oder an einem Kurs teilzunehmen, vor allem um die Jobchancen zu verbessern. Für das informelle Lernen fehlt eine starke nationale Politik, da dieses Gebiet dezentral den Gemeinden überlassen wird. Der Einsatz von Multimedia in der Erwachsenenbildung hängt deshalb von den Gemeinden und den betreffenden Einrichtungen ab. Öffentliche Bibliotheken, die ebenfalls dezentralisiert organisiert sind, haben von Anfang an Neue Medien in ihren Bestand aufgenommen. Sie verfügen über Internetzugang und digitale Informationsquellen. In einer breit angelegten Kampagne wurden Bibliothekarinnen als Trainerinnen für Medienerziehung ausgebildet und lernten den Umgang mit Multimediaprodukten. Öffentliche Bibliotheken arbeiten gemeinsam in einem nationalen Programm für Lebenslanges Lernen. Dabei werden, initiiert durch die Vereinigung Öffentlicher Bibliotheken, digitale Bildungsdienste über die digitale Bibliothek und eine virtuelle Schulmediathek angeboten. Außerdem werden spezielle Lernwege und digitale Dienste für Anderssprachige sowie für Einbürgerungsprogramme geschaffen.

Die Zusammenarbeit der niederländischen Bibliotheken mit Einrichtungen der Erwachsenenbildung führt dazu, dass Multimedia reichlich vorhanden ist und dank Einweisungen und zusätzlicher Kurse über Informationsfertigkeiten, die unter anderem in den Bibliotheken stattfinden, intensiv genutzt werden kann. In zunehmendem Maße richten

öffentliche Bibliotheken ein frei zugängliches Lernzentrum ein. Sie tragen mit ihrer Sammlung an Medien, Fachwissen und Netzwerk zu neuen Formen menschlichen Lernens bei.

2005 wurden die Ergebnisse einer Untersuchung über die Internetnutzung niederländischer Frauen mit dem Titel „Die digitalen Damen“ veröffentlicht. Die Untersuchung unter sechshundert Frauen und hundert Männern in der Altersgruppe zwischen zwanzig und fünfzig Jahren wurde von TNS Nipo im Auftrag des Sanoma Verlags, einer Untergruppe des Zeitschriftensektors des finnischen Medienkonzerns Sanoma WSOY, durchgeführt. Die niederländische Niederlassung ist der größte Multimediaherausgeber von Publikumszeitschriften und Infotainment in den Niederlanden. Frauen in den Niederlanden scheinen in den letzten Jahren im Internetbereich eine große Aufholjagd gemacht zu haben und nun genauso viel Zeit im Netz zu verbringen wie Männer. Diese Aufholjagd ist vor allem am „windowshoppen“ festzumachen, dem Betrachten und Vergleichen von Waren als Vorbereitung auf einen Kauf.

Ein anderer wichtiger Grund für Frauen, im Internet zu surfen, ist die Suche nach objektiver Information, wobei die Verlässlichkeit einer Seite eine wichtige Rolle spielt. Vor allem Websites von bekannten Absendern werden besucht. Auch der Wunsch nach Unterhaltung ist im Aufwind. Verglichen mit dem Jahr 2000 finden es mehr Frauen schön, einfach so zu surfen, was sie als unterhaltsam bezeichnen. Musik herunterladen und Internetradio zu hören, ist auch ziemlich beliebt. Die Anzahl an Frauen, die aus Langeweile online sind, ist dreimal so groß wie 2000, als eine ähnliche Untersuchung durchgeführt wurde. Frauen scheinen noch viel häufiger als Männer Probleme im Internet zu haben, so dass sie viel Wert legen auf eine deutliche Wegführung. Ausführlichere Ergebnisse dieser Untersuchung gibt es bei dem Internetportal www.allesovervrouwen.nl.

New ways of learning

The human capacity to learn has been the object of reflection, policy making and various practices. For what purpose is a human being learning, and for what purpose will his/her acquired learning be used? As soon as one person tells to another person what he or she should learn, something of the beautiful capacity will be lost. Learning is a case of freedom: it can only take place in a free atmosphere and environment; Learning pre-supposes an open mind, a preparedness to make efforts and to discover. Learning, discovering is a mission which is submitted to a human being at birth, a task which is sufficient to last for his whole life. In the end, it may result in that a human being has acquired a better understanding of himself and his environment, the world. Better understanding may contribute to a greater chance for peaceful existence. These lines may summarise the ideas of international organisations which focus on the human capacity to learning and reflection as a major factor to improve human society. Human values, such as that every human

being should be able to develop him/herself to the fullest potential and to use the individual talents, are central to these concepts. They are guaranteed in human rights.

A number of factors contributes to the greater importance of lifelong learning. Developments in science and technology, changes in industrial structures, changes in the organisation of labour and work; growing world population, the influence of television and other media, the focus on the individual, environmental issues, and globalisation are some of these factors. In other words: 'Today, biographies of individuals are less predetermined and are thus more open to change than ever before. Modern 'patchwork biographies' are the result of such openness. At the same time, the indeterminate character of life assigns burden on the individual to make decisions about what to do and how to live.' (UNESCO, 2001)

'Lifelong learning is most important, because we must give people conditions to exercise a right that is the right to know, to education, to culture throughout their life span. (Councillor, quoted in Calixto, 2001) The recognition of the individual right to education and learning, as formulated in the 20th century, makes clear that States must do their utmost to realise these rights for every individual. Most States also do understand the necessity of education for employment and economic growth.

Developments and trends of multimedia

Before looking further into lifelong education, and the role of multimedia in adult learning, and the role libraries play in this educational , a short overview of development and trends in the availability and use of multimedia, and the enrolment in adult education and self study in the Netherlands is useful.

Multimedia-products are an easy noun to indicate different types of media and sources of information, from internet sites to dvd's, cd roms and video's. As soon as new types of media became available for the general public, public libraries have been among the first to include them in their collections, based on their conviction that they form sources of information, useful for the general library users for development of education, cultural and social participation. People differ in their ways of learning and acquiring and processing information. Therefore, a multimedia approach to the public library services is a general international professional standard. For a long time, library collections consisted for about 5% of audio-visual materials. Media related to music became popular in the library service and are a self-evident part of their collections.

In the SCP report, Behind screens, the central focus is on the impact of the diversity of media that took place since 1975 on the media use of the Dutch. Media use classifies printed media, audiovisual media and digital media. A distinction was made in each of these media types into the media provision, ownership of media equipment, media reach and the time devoted to media.

Although this study gives a wealth of combined data and conclusions, the study ends (2000) when the booming of internet had hardly begun. Furthermore, the research focuses on the use of media in leisure time. It means that the use of media such as book reading for study or work or the use of pc and internet on the job are excluded. In other words, education in leisure time, not considered as study, would be included, whereas formal education/study is excluded. The study does not take into account learning processes, but gives indications for the supply, possession and use of media. As developments in the knowledge society go very rapidly, some conclusions seem already to be of temporary character.

In this studied quarter of a century, the Dutch population has grown, aged and become more ethnically diverse. This gives an indication for a higher demand for media products; higher sales of printed media and (public) television; and a more international oriented media landscape.

The increase in the general education level increases the average media competence of the population. This enables more people to consume more complex media content. In general, people experience pressure on their time, but they have more money to spend in that reduced free time.

The broad socio-cultural developments can be summarized as the following recent social changes: individualisation, informalisation, informatisation, internationalisation and intensification. (Schnabel, 2000)

With regards to the printed media, reading of books, magazines and newspapers is in decline, as increasingly fewer people read regularly.

'Clear differences can be observed in the reduction in reading according to age, education level and labour market position: older people continued to read more than younger people, the better educated more than those with a low education level, non-workers more than workers, and workers more than students. Men and women spend the same amount of time reading, but differ in their preferred media: men read the newspaper more than women, who in turn read longer in books and magazines.' (Huysmans, 2004, p. 269)

Regarding television and radio, a dual system, was created with broadcasters relying entirely on advertising income operating alongside broadcasters with a cultural and public service remit and thus financed with public funds. The growth in the reach of audiovisual media lagged a long way behind the expansion in the supply and ownership of audiovisual equipment. Measured in time watching commercial channels (especially by people with low income) has mainly been at the expense of the public broadcasters. Young people also show a clear preference for the commercial channels.

Personal computers and internet

Young people are also the group, together with higher income groups and the highly educated who typically took the lead in the spread of PCs and the Internet (in contrast to the spread of colour television and video, where lower status groups led the field). 'The lower status groups are however now beginning to catch up in the digital stakes. Although income

still plays a role, it may be assumed that non-possession of digital media in the future will be more of a conscious choice than a sign of disadvantage.' Differences in usage still remain as they are related to perceived functionality and necessary skills.

In 2003 82% of the households had a pc at home, and 72% had internet connection. Younger people, people with higher income, working people and higher educated people have more often a pc and access to internet. In international comparison, The Netherlands should be considered among the top group.

Differences in computer literacy skills do exist at the time of the study: the elderly, and, to a lesser degree, lower educated people, and people with low income seem to be less skilful, as they use the new media less and have less easier access to them. This points to possible problems for individual citizens in a society increasingly dominated by information, as they might be hindered in their social and cultural participation by lack of computer skills and non-use of media.

There seems to be a change in the reading of books. Internet users seem to spend more time on reading than non-users. This goes especially for those who have bought a pc early; they watch less television.

The recent report on Digital Economy (2004) shows, that in the Netherlands the time of large investments in the information- and communication technology (ICT) and the strong economic grow of domestic ICT-sector seems temporary over. There is hardly any growth in the distribution of ICT, such as computers, internet and mobile telephones. But the use of these existing ICT and multimedia is used more varied and intensely in society. The majority of enterprises and households has broadband internet connection, and 70% of the enterprises is in one way or another present on the internet. They have increasingly to protect their businesses against viruses, from which 45% suffered. Nevertheless, a third of the Dutch population had never used internet in 2004. Two-thirds of this group consist of persons aged 55 years and older. In 2003 there were 4.2 million adults who had no Internet experience at all. Over one and a half million people aged 65 and older had never used the Internet in 2004. On the other hand, the proportion of over-65s with Internet experience has grown by 36 percent from 14 percent in 2002 to 19 percent in 2004, well above the average increase by 9 percent in the population aged 12 years and older. Practically all 12 to 18 year-olds have Internet experience; only 3 percent had never used the Internet. Apart from age, education level is an important factor regarding use of the Internet. In 2003 95 percent of over-65s who had only primary education, had never used the Internet, as against only 53 percent of vocational college or university graduates over the age of 65. In all age categories there is a strong link between education level and Internet use.

In 2004 the Internet user rate in the population of 12 years and older was 66 percent. Nearly 60 percent of the Dutch population had access to the

Internet at home; 53 percent of the employed population had used the Internet at work. Although most people have access to the Internet at various locations, approximately 8 percent had not surfed the Internet at home in 2003. They accessed the Internet at other locations, for example at work, in an educational setting, a library, community centre or with family, neighbours, friends or acquaintances. The possibility of using the Internet at other access locations contributes significantly to the proliferation of Internet use among the Dutch population.

The introduction of a type of medium in the Netherlands seems to take place rather quickly. Once a medium has proven its practical use, the Dutch market is quickly absorbed and arranged to distribute the new media. With a population of 16 million people, and well-developed distribution networks, the Netherlands are fit to be a country of many early-adaptors.

As the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau summarizes: 'Together with Scandinavia, the US and Canada, the Netherlands leads the way in access to and use of the Internet, and also as regards broadband infrastructure. Thanks to the dense cable network, many households have access to broadband: at the end of 2003 24 percent of households with an Internet connection had a cable connection and 17% an ADSL connection.

Overall, there is a North-South opposition in Europe: people in the North read more, access the Internet more and watch and listen more 'seriously', whereas in the South the television dominates. In line with its geographical position on the North-South dividing line, the provision and use of media and ownership of media equipment is average in the Netherlands, although the Dutch have a slight lead when it comes to new media (DVD, Internet).' (Huysmans, 2000, p. 273.)

Cultural participation via media and ICT can be considered as media provide a gateway to art and culture by making them accessible to people in their living rooms. Media also offer information on art and culture through cultural pages, programmes and listings.' Far more Dutch people come into contact with art and culture via audiovisual media than through visits to cultural institutions. In 2003 half the Dutch population reported that they sometimes watched or listened to radio and television programmes about art. The other half ignored these programmes. Women watch art programmes more regularly than men, though the difference is not large. There are however wide differences in terms of age and education level. People over 50 and highly educated people follow art programmes more regularly than the other groups. These are the same groups who are the most frequent visitors to cultural institutions.' (Huysmans, 2004, p. 272)

Participation in adult education and self study

According to the general statistics in the Netherlands (CBS) nearly 14 percent of the population of people is participating in adult education. This means that 1.3 million people aged between 15 and 64 years who are not full-time pupils or students, are enrolled in some type of education.

Of these people, 711 thousand were enrolled in an extended course (for at least six months) and 589 thousand did a short course. In the period 1995-2002 there was a slight increase in participation in short courses and a slight fall in enrolment for extended courses. With regards to age, interest in education decreases, when people are over fifty they are fewer than one in ten; Two out of ten people aged under twenty who are not in formal education take part in a course. For extended courses, in particular, there is a strong correlation with age.

Work is the main motive to enrol in courses. 85 percent reported that the course was important for getting or doing a job. Sixteen percent of the employed labour force was enrolled in education, twice the rate for people not in the labour force. For the unemployed labour force, the proportion enrolled in extended courses is highest: 9 percent.

The most popular subjects for courses have been the same for a number of years now: languages, computer skills and management. Nearly one in three people can claim study leave from their employers, on average 4.5 hours a week, and half of participants do not have to pay for the course themselves.

In an overview on self study, CBS reported that in 2003 almost 30 percent of the population study at home: 32 percent of men and 27 percent of women strengthen their knowledge through self study.

The most frequent form of self study is reading professional literature. About 20 percent of the population (aged 15-75) study professional literature. Some 15 percent learn or practice through the Internet. About 12 percent of the population visit libraries and education centres. Some 8 percent tune in to educational broadcasts or study through audio, video or computer.

Close to 13 percent of the population increase their knowledge through four of these self study methods, 16 percent use two or more of these methods.

The greatest number of people involved in self study are between 25 and 30 years of age: 37 percent, closely followed by the group of 30-50 years: 35 percent. People over 50 are less involved in self study, but still 15 percent in the age group 70-74 years learn through self study.

The most recent immigrants (living less than five years in the Netherlands) are the ones who study most through self study: almost 36 percent. About 26 percent of the people who have lived in the country for more than five years study at home. Regarding the types of self-learners: about 36 percent of employed and unemployed people study versus 14 percent of people who are unable to work, 17 percent of retired people and 15 percent of househusbands and housewives.

National policies

In a follow up of the European Commission's incentive for lifelong learning, most States have been eager to show their official interest in lifelong learning. Commissions have formulated definitions and presented plans for implementation. In the Netherlands, about 10% of the population has not a sound educational basis for work; 25% of young

people (25-29 years old) have no diploma to start working. The Social-Economic Council therefore discerned two aspects in its report on lifelong learning: employability of people and personal development. It made a plea to open new learning opportunities for vulnerable groups, including immigrant women, refugees and functional illiterates (10%). People should receive introductions to make use of new media and to improve information literacy.

In a critical comment on national policies regarding various forms of learning, three researchers explain the state of the art on non-formal education: 'The Netherlands is lacking when it comes to policy making for non-formal education. Until the 1980's there was substantial activity in this area, at that time mostly entitled 'vormingswerk' or training. But with the introduction and implementation of the Act on Basic Adult Education, the socio-cultural dimension of adult education diminished (of course there were differences in various local councils). ..

At present, non-formal education is once again in the spotlight; in 2001 the Dutch parliament passed a motion, which calls for a policy regarding non-formal education. In addition, the European Commission, in its Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, emphasised the importance of co-operation between the formal and non-formal education sectors. The National UNESCO Commission also subscribes to this opinion.

Despite all this, the position of non-formal education in the Netherlands is unclear; since the introduction of basic adult education no single ministry has been responsible for the non-formal education sector. This is because this form of education falls principally under the jurisdiction of decentralised policy and local councils are free to decide their own policies on non-formal education. This current practice makes it clear that local councils tend to include only formal education in their educational programmes and that the national government does not have a clear overall picture of how non-formal education is developing, let alone develop a consistent policy on the matter. (...)

Non-formal education, however, is the domain of local and regional councils who decide on policy themselves but do not have the disposal of earmarked money to fund it. This means that when it comes to non-formal education, local councils have responsibility. We are of the opinion that the time has come for the government to give a clear signal that non-formal education is of great importance both alongside and in co-operation with formal education. Both the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport increasingly recognise the importance of a structural positioning of non-formal education. It is now up to the local councils to create a concrete policy on this.'

The view of libraries towards lifelong learning and multimedia use, inspired by international policies and projects

As the Netherlands professional organisations are very active in international professional development, international guidelines and projects give inspiration for their national policies and projects. Regarding lifelong learning, in general two types of learning are identified and

discussed: intentional learning and unintentional learning. Intentional learning stresses deliberate or purposeful learning; it implies those learning activities that follow a more or less structured plan of studies, with the purpose of obtaining a certification. These learners usually aim at developing skills and competencies that will be useful in their social and work lives.

Unintentional learning is considered as a non-structured way of learning, which takes place in everyday life, by which individuals improve themselves, simply by reading the newspaper, listening to the radio, reading a book, or attending a conference. This type of learning is a way of living, a life style.

One may even discern a third way of learning. Beyond this unintentional learning related to media, there is something else: life itself as the main teacher of life: a human being learns or has a chance to learn from his experiences, meeting and living with other people, facing difficulties, going through crises and finding new orientations and fundamental understanding. Such universal experiences of human life and possibilities are described in many library sources, witnessing of authentic life.

In any of these cases of lifelong learning, libraries have a lot to offer and have done so from the very beginning: The educational field appreciates the contribution of libraries to learning, but very often they only think of existing learning models of tutoring and tests. But there is more, libraries are familiar with a diversity of learning. Especially the contribution to unintentional learning is important: 'Public libraries are unique in the way that they can allow those tiny portions of learning to invisibly change people's lives.' (Batt,1998)

International professional organisations such as IFLA and EBLIDA in which the Netherlands Public Library Association and Dutch libraries heavily participate have included the concept of lifelong learning in formal statements, strategies and standards. For example:

The IFLA UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994) also highlights the importance of public libraries for lifelong learning: 'The public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individual and social groups.' The IFLA Guidelines for Public Libraries (IFLA (2000) consider the roles of public libraries in supporting lifelong learning at both intentional and unintentional levels:

'The public library supports lifelong learning, working with schools and other educational institutions to help students of all ages with their formal education. The challenge of providing educational support provides an opportunity for public libraries to interact and network with teachers and others involved in education.' Among the tasks mentioned are: 'To support and inspire open adult learning;' and 'To offer learning opportunities in workshops and in a good learning environment.'

Furthermore, the IFLA Public Libraries section initiated a project to elaborate policies and gather best practices in the field of services related to lifelong learning.

'In a society of lifelong learning - whether of a formal or informal nature - public libraries will be nodes connecting the local learning setting with the global resources of information and knowledge. Public libraries must therefore be allowed to play a role of fundamental importance in the development of future systems of lifelong learning. The development of the information and communication technology has already laid the basis for the creation of information networks, giving users even of small local public libraries access to the world wide sources of information. The public libraries also offer guidance and training in information search and quality rating of information sources. Thus, public libraries are necessary if not sufficient prerequisites for a democratic knowledge society.

At the European level, initially, the potential of libraries to contribute to lifelong learning was hardly recognised in European documents and only mentioned among many other possible agencies for local learning centres. The Dutch library organisations participated in the European Lobby Bureau of Libraries and Archives (EBLIDA)'s statement and response, to the consultation which was organised by the European Commission, to hear the views of various social and cultural agencies on lifelong learning. EBLIDA stressed the key role of libraries, which are 'not just service places, but active partners offering access, professional guidance and training to global resources in a local setting.'

The Commission published a Communication, which acknowledged other than purely economic perspectives in the definition of lifelong learning. At least it included two references to libraries: providing access to information on studies and careers; and, serving as multifunctional centres for lifelong learning.

The Netherlands Public Library Association also participated in the European library project PULMAN to collect best practices with a view of integrating new technology in library educational services. In this context a guideline for services in the field of lifelong learning was developed: 'Public libraries are major learning resource centres. They should be the local learning place and champion of the independent learner. The development of their services requires the establishment and maintenance of strong partnerships with other organisations. There is also a requirement to provide access to and to package effectively a greater variety of good quality, relevant and attractive learning content of local relevance to use within new IST-based learning environments. Possible services are:

- providing public access to the Internet;
- provision of IST-based study facilities and learning environments;
- open and/or structured access to courses leading to accredited qualifications such as the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL);
- e-Learning environments e.g. a combination of Internet, telephone, videoconferencing and broadcast television, signposted and packaged content and Web-based services;

- networked reference desks.'

These suggestions and the best practices referred to demonstrate the possibilities of libraries in new terms for lifelong learning. The terminology is very much focussed on instrumental service delivery for intentional learning: IT-spaces, information literacy, course ware.

Library multimedia services to adult education

Generally speaking, Dutch libraries have responded positively to the concept of lifelong learning and new ways of learning with multimedia. They have recognised the role they already played from the very beginning of their services, to support the individual in exploring life, enjoying culture, pursuing his personal interests in multiple things and aspects of living, posing queries, forming his opinion etc.; in short developing himself as a unique human being. This role of libraries has been elaborated at the time of policies on permanent education. Public libraries operating in the new environment of life long learning 'have been rediscovering the established role of supporting learners. By doing this, they are also reshaping themselves in order to respond to increasingly diversified demands in terms of their resources, services and activities.' (Calixto, 2001) In this new era of lifelong learning, libraries have pointed out what services they can and do offer, and what potential role they could play.

Aspects such as easiness and equality of access, informal setting, unstructured opportunities for learning, professional services etc. have been highlighted.

The services libraries can provide may be summarized as follows:

1. Provision of resources for lifelong learning:
 - books, materials
 - information and communication technology
 - spaces and facilities, e.g. language lab
 - professional staff
2. Information about education and learning
 - e.g. self-instructional or open learning materials; audio-visual materials; broadcasting and broadcast-related materials;
 - education and training opportunities; programmes of local organisations
3. Counselling and support
 - provision of space for study group meetings, classes etc.
 - educational guidance, to find tuition and external assessment, included in open and distance learning
4. Animation and activities
 - e.g. lectures, short courses, presentation of learning results
 - highlighting oral knowledge; social and cultural heritage

Dutch Public libraries support the objective to have all people learning throughout their lives. They also recognize that there is a need to develop the balance between formal education and learning for life . Various policies for networked learning should combine efforts, into a more integrated national network.

Advices

In the exploration of including multimedia in learning processes, the Council for Education has also explored the educational role of the (public) broadcast. It advised, in the same way as there is an Educational expert centre for the Web (Kennisnet.nl) to create a Centre Education and Media. In general, the educational function of broadcasting organisations should be a clearly visible function and more integrated in the broadcasting structure. The Centre should focus on the added value by the media for learning. Broadcasting programmes should be more related to various learning paths within and outside the school programme. This offers opportunities to work with external partners and share knowledge and responsibilities. Libraries are, according to other research (Cultuurnet.nl) the most used partners for schools.

Among the successful programmes, the Council mentions the Z@ppelin programmes for youth, which are placed in an educational context. Youth libraries cooperate with the programmes in which children's literature takes a prominent place.

The reuse of broadcast material is a heavily studied subject, as this would give a boost to the multi-faceted character of learning. This has also been mentioned by the Council for Culture in its advice on Media wisdom, advanced forms of media literacy. In this advice the Council recommends a stronger role of public libraries in various forms of learning and literacy. Some of the research on reading has also addressed the relation with multimedia. The results are useful for further improvement of learning and library services. Verhallen (2002) found that Turkish and Moroccan children of five years of age with retarded language development, learned much better from picture books fit for their age, when they were read to, supported by multimedia. Reading aloud has stronger learning effects when accompanied by sounds and animation for these children.

This finding may m.m. also be interesting for learning processes for adults, especially in the early stages of language learning. It is general policy that language development is included in the reading promotion policy.

Netherlands Library plan for new ways of learning

The Netherlands Public Library Association (NPLA) has taken up 'lifelong learning' in its annual plan, published a basic document and developed initiatives in cooperation with other organisations to support new forms of learning. Connections with institutions for adult education have been re-established. Media-education, aimed at supporting information literacy, had already been addressed in earlier initiatives.

Lifelong learning has priority for public libraries and is part of the long term planning at the national level. It entails a number of actions, including

1. building up a network at the national level with organisations which focus on non formal learning. These include the associations for folk universities, regional education centres; partners in the Grundtvig III

- project "learning partnerships"; Working groups on illiteracy campaign; Week of Learning and active libraries (Haarlem, Apeldoorn, Hoogeveen).
2. Supporting the development of learning centres in public libraries, through an introductory congress, leaflet and dissemination through the association website.
 3. Concrete partnerships at the national and local level.
 4. An e-learning platform at the library portal: Bibliotheek.nl , where Information in 7 steps, and Netnieuws are available.
 5. Developing a 'curriculum' for lifelong learning.
 6. Education and training; research.

Digital learning services

With the coming of new media, public libraries in the Netherlands have been eager to get connected to the Internet which was realised by 2000. Through special funding under the framework of the National Action Plan of the Electronic Highway, libraries were able to enlarge their services, offering digital access to electronic information provided by the government and other public institutions. Included in this plan was the training of librarians, not only how to use digital tools and search for digital sources, but also on how to train and educate the general public in using various forms of sources, especially digital sources. These courses in media-education do not only focus on technical skills, but do also help people to have a critical look at the sources found, to check their reliability, authenticity etc. Various training programmes are developed, addressing different target groups with different needs, e.g. job-seeking persons, pupils, women and the elderly. In this way learning new media skills means at the same time learning to find sources focussed on one's special needs and interests. Through the programme, 6000 library staff was trained, and 5900 courses were given to target groups (in 1999). New media training programmes, as a form of adult education, are still offered by the public libraries. For seniors, this is often done in cooperation with Seniorweb, a national association for services to seniors, with which the NPLA has established a contact of cooperation.

A form of blended learning offers the course developed by the NPLA called: Information literate in 7 steps, which is available on the web. (www.bibliotheek.nl and www.debibliotheeken.nl)

As it is important that more mediators are skilled for this type of learning course, a train the trainer course is now also nationally available.

Virtual learning library (www.virtuelemediatheek.nl)

Parallel to the development of the virtual library in the library portal: www.bibliotheek.nl, libraries made connection to the educational field with the development of the virtual school library. A number of services supplied to primary and secondary education, were presented in digital form for pupils/students, teachers and school librarians. Appropriate media and content is presented according to the type and level of education. These sources for educational processes contain not only

references to books or articles but also to video's and contain full text e-books and encyclopedia articles. Teams of teachers and librarians are in charge of monitoring content and quality of sources. This virtual learning library is now extended to include materials and multimedia for adult education and literacy. In this way, learning processes are supported, regardless of whether they concern formal or non-formal education. Specific content for adult education is provided by the public library of Amsterdam.

Citizenship

Public libraries have always played a role in the introduction of newcomers, immigrants and temporary visitors to the local society. Reference collections consisting of encyclopedia's, address books and maps, guides for education, language courses, practical community information have always served as a helping hand for new citizens. In most programmes for adult education, a visit to the local library is included, so people are introduced to its facilities and services, including learning collections.

In the new era, new tools and services have been developed, to improve these introductions into citizenship.

Professional literature and international guidelines and examples have been helpful to arrange these services in the Netherlands.(www.ifla.org; www.finfo.dk)

Through a pilot project of the NPLA in the City Library of Groningen, a virtual information point for non-dutch speaking people was developed, and presented as a national service as part of the library portal (www.bibliotheek.nl) in December 2004 with a promotional campaign. This dedicated website (www.ainp.nl) contains information in six different languages on practical issues for new citizens who want to orientate themselves. They find introductions on legal matters including asylum, visa, integration, naturalisation and refugees organisations. Social security is another important heading and includes information on insurance, legal assistance, police, transport, mail and telephones services, housing and financial matters. The education system is explained in clear bits of information, including requirements. For job seekers, a file on jobs and careers, payments and even voluntary work is provided. A large part of the site is dedicated to explanations of the medical and health system, with references to medical doctors, hospitals etc. New citizens also need to know about local and national government issues, such as tax paying, elections and licences. In the cultural and recreational field, information about libraries, art and literature, theatre, magazines, television, sports and music and events is presented. They make it easier for new citizens to find their way and learn about their new societal environment.

Virtual New Citizen Desk:

A working group of librarians and partner organisations evaluates regularly a variety of digital products. This resulted in a national offer of

the Virtual New Citizenship desk, in a special library edition. More than 200 libraries have included this offer in their services.

Every month about 10.000 inhabitants of Amsterdam, The Hague, Eindhoven and Deventer make use of the Virtual New Citizen Desk, a digital edition, which is distributed in a easy access way. The use of new media, such as internet, makes immigrants more independent in society and more attractive for the job market. At the same time, new media offer municipalities a range of opportunities for monitoring and supporting the integration process.

The Virtual New Citizen desk contains basic information about the Netherlands and Dutch municipalities in different languages. The basic information contains subjects of practical interest to immigrants, especially obtaining a job. The presentation of the basic information in a mix of short films, animations, pictures, databases, maps and short text blocks, make this very attractive.

The aim of the Virtual New Citizen Desk aims to make information which an immigrant in the Netherlands needs readily available. An additional aim is to familiarise immigrants with ICT in general and especially with internet. The Desk consists of applications with information and links to websites. The information includes administrative procedures, rights and obligations, housing, finances etc. Important is that the information is given both orally and in writing.

The Virtual New Citizens desk can be adapted to the local situation, by adding local data about 30%. Then the application of the desk can be used by the immigrant on various spots: in the library, the open learning centre, a neighbourhood centre or even at home.

A second service in this range for new citizenship, is NetNieuws, a digital language learning product including summarised news texts and speech, offered for free to all public libraries. They can include it in the services of their learning centres and facilities. The attractive presentation makes it useful for various types of learning, individually, in groups, supplied with newspapers and books or brochures. Netnieuws will probably be included in the basic package of digital library services through bibliotheek.nl. These multimedia service products are developed by the Netherlands Library Association and offered in a national package to all libraries. The products are used everywhere in libraries to welcome groups of participants of regional vocational education centres and language schools.

National partnerships around adult education have been established. There are agreements between the Netherlands Public Library Association and the educational organisations for non formal learning (Bond van Volksuniversiteiten and Regionale OpleidingsCentra (ROC). Libraries and adult education universities joint forces in responding to the ministerial National Action Plan of Lifelong Learning which was presented to the parliament at the end of 2004.

Efforts have been made to connect the two professional fields by holding regional conferences. They were well attended by professionals from adult education centres and libraries, and created the building bricks for local and regional cooperation, which were confirmed through covenants. How to make better use of available collections (including multimedia), how to reach learning adults, how to create learning centres and make better use of new technology are the leading questions in the cooperation talks, which have started between the NPLA and the Learning Experience Centre of the Open University Netherlands.

Another fact worth mentioning is the increasing presence and participation of libraries working with local partners in the national Week of Learning, which takes place annual in September. This promotional programme draws attention to various subjects of learning and the variety of media which are available and can be used. Through representation and input in various preparatory groups for lifelong learning, the NPLA has also made relationships with the educational broadcasters, Teleac and RVU. They organisations have started discussion on structural cooperation and exchange.

Best practices can be found in Dordrecht, where the public library cooperates with the Language school and fulfils a major role in the social inclusion policy of the municipality. A variety of methods is used to attract people of various backgrounds to courses and learning, with the help of attractive media.

Another example is the Public library in Lelystad, which has created a learning centre on its premises. Other libraries in the region of Flevoland cooperate in a regional project called 'never learned enough', which is funded by the province and the NPLA.

Other libraries which are involved in learning projects, using a variety of media, especially audiovisual media and internet are taking place in the cities of Eindhoven, Tilburg and Haarlem.

In Eindhoven, a project, called: 'Educators in the spotlight' has started between the library, the adult education institute (ROC) and the job market organisation. The aim is to encourage participation of immigrant women, a.o. through offering a programme in all ten library branches. Another project supported by the NPLA is to enhance a variety of learning methods, including multimedia, which is the subject of cooperation between the public library of Tilburg and the ROC Midden-Brabant. People with reading difficulties are one of the target groups for adapted learning services in the city library of Haarlem. Well-known for its Easy to Read square in the redesigned library, it also includes special languages programmes, immigrant language services and learning opportunities.

Overall, one can say that the larger cities have created language learning corners, and installed language computers. In a multicultural neighbourhood as Hooggraven, Utrecht, the redesign of the library has created opportunities to include a new learning centre. It has easy access,

about 20 new computers with flat screens. The space is fit for individual use and learning in groups. The programmes installed on the computers contain not only language courses but also introductions into the Dutch society, such as 'New neighbours' (Nieuwe Buren).

In the Netherlands, public libraries work with a strong and advanced central library supplier, called Netherlands Library Service. All kinds of new materials and media, of interest for public library services are offered, with complete bibliographic data and library-ready. For the new learning services through public libraries, a range of interesting audiovisual media is offered annotated for ordering by libraries.

The strength of the combined efforts of libraries and adult education institutions is the ready availability of multimedia sources, training programmes and facilities. The public libraries form a network, which acts effectively through concerted action, and agreed policy within the NPLA. International cooperation is necessary for further development of quality and up-to-date services for adult learning. Therefore, the NPLA participates actively in international professional exchange and development, for example through IFLA. The libraries in Netherlands are also involved in the European Grundtvig project for cooperation between libraries and institutions for adult education. This has inspired professional discussions, research and necessary training for advanced services.

Recommendations

Multimedia use is supported and promoted by (public) libraries from the very start. They play an important role in policies on 'new learning'. But they are often hardly recognised for their contribution. It is recommended that libraries are included in the further development of policies and programmes for various forms of learning, and for targeted adult education programmes.

Based on the outcomes of a European conference organised in the Netherlands, 'Creating Public Paradise', March 2004, Recommendations were presented to the Council of Europe and adopted. They include acknowledging a.o. the role of libraries as 'centres for lifelong learning. They provide people of all ages with information, ideas and materials for learning, widening their horizons, enhancing their abilities and skills as citizens, extending their knowledge and cultural taste.' Expert-participants recommended to including public libraries as important public spaces in new city planning and development. In recognition of the increasing demands from library users, authorities, city councils should support the reshaping of public libraries. As a follow up of these outcomes, it is recommended that further development of multimedia use and application in learning, is closer connected to the design and restyling of public spaces such as libraries, in order to create attractive learning spaces, in a context of a variety of media and an inviting learning environment.

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Samenvatting (Te vertalen in het Duits)

Dit artikel biedt een korte verkenning van een aantal aspecten dat zicht geeft op spreiding en gebruik van multimedia in volwassenenonderwijs. In Nederland is volwassenenonderwijs nauw verbonden met het nieuwe leren, ook aangeduid als een leven lang leren. In het brede veld van betrokkenen bij nieuwe vormen van leren spelen openbare bibliotheken een belangrijke rol.

Enkele algemene socio-culturele studies geven aan wat er sinds een kwart eeuw veranderd is in het medialandschap en welke gevolgen dit heeft voor het gebruik van media in al hun verscheidenheid. Daarbij is duidelijk dat Nederland in de Europese context, een snelle en gretige gebruiker van nieuwe media is.

Een deel van de Nederlanders maakt ook gebruik van de mogelijkheden om vaak in werktijd en ten dele vergoed, een studie of cursus te volgen, met name met het oog op verbetering in het werk. Voor het niet-formele leren ontbreekt een sterk nationaal beleid, aangezien dit terrein naar de gemeenten gedecentraliseerd is. Toepassing van multimedia in volwasseneneducatie hangt daardoor van gemeenten en de desbetreffende instellingen af.

Openbare bibliotheken, eveneens een gedecentraliseerd werkveld, hebben van het begin af aan nieuwe media in de collecties opgenomen; zij beschikken over toegang tot internet en digitale bronnen. In een grootschalige campagne zijn bibliothecarissen getraind als trainers voor media-educatie, leren omgaan met multimedia. Openbare bibliothekenwerken samen in een nationaal plan voor een leven lang leren. Daarbij worden, geïnitieerd door de Vereniging van Openbare Bibliotheken, digitale educatieve diensten geboden via de digitale bibliotheek en virtuele schoolmediatheek. Daarnaast worden speciale leerwegen en digitale diensten geopend voor anderstaligen en voor inburgeringsprogramma's ten behoeve van modern burgerschap.

De samenwerking van de Nederlandse bibliotheken met instellingen voor volwasseneneducatie leidt ertoe dat multimedia ruim voorhanden zijn en intensief gebruikt kunnen worden, door introductie en aanvullende cursussen voor informatievaardigheden, die mede in de bibliotheken plaatsvinden. In toenemende mate richten openbare bibliotheken een vrij toegankelijk leercentrum in. Ze dragen met hun hele collectie media, expertise en netwerk bij tot nieuwe vormen van leren voor mensen.