

Iclass project. 2008.

Visiting open schools in Israel.

First of all, I would like to thank all the people who organized this wonderful experience. It was really very instructive. You will find below some pedagogical thoughts aroused by the observation of the open schools.

1. Open school or **open learning**?

Open schools are places where the learning time is under the control of the learner. Open schools attempt to deliver learning opportunities where, when, and how the learner needs them. In some ways open schools deliver **open learning** that is definitely a distance learning concept. **Consequently an integration of the open schools concepts to computing teaching should be possible.**

2. **Increasing distance and increasing density.**

***Preliminary note:** The following comments are not scientific but just based in my experience in primary teaching.*

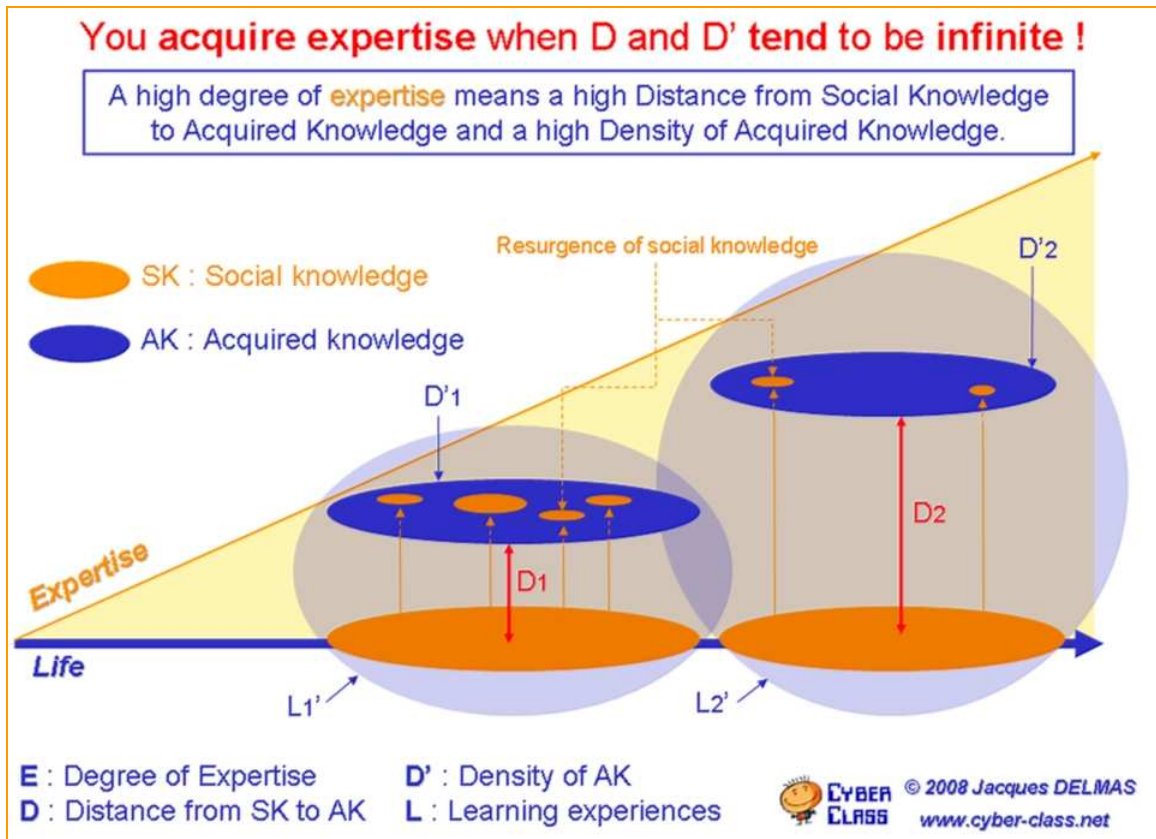
You acquired a lot of skills and knowledge even if you never went to school. Interactions with your environment gave you numerous informal didactical situations. These continuous stimulations are changing your perception of the world (at the beginning of your life this process is often unconscious).

Consequently you are gradually increasing the distance from your initial perceptions to an abstract construction (you improve your metacognitive skills. You are aware of your own knowledge and your ability to understand your own cognitive process).

But two processes are running parallel. The **increasing distance from social knowledge to acquired knowledge** is joined by the **increasing density of your knowledge**. Indeed your social knowledge (defined as your first perceptions of the environment, e.g. the sun moves around the earth) is modified by your learning experiences.

But, even with a high degree of expertise, the resurgences of social knowledge do not disappear completely. We are social creatures and we need them to interact with our fellow creatures!

I tried to resume this dual process with the following diagram:



The schools are promoting a flexible learning structure. They mix life and learning. For me this means: **“one cannot not learn”**. Life is a perpetual open learning environment. Why the schools should be different? I totally agree with this concept. **But are open schools the solution?**

3. Intrinsic motivation: **competition, emulation or just collaboration for a better world?**

By multiplying learning opportunities, the open schools try to improve the **intrinsic motivation** of the learner. We all know that is an important factor for a successful learning.

In traditional schools the motivation is often based on competition (e.g. summative evaluation in primary school) or on emulation (e.g. kindergarten activities). Sometimes, students are losing their motivation and we have to organize some learning support including psychological help.

But the main question is: **why are the students learning?**

They can learn...

... to pass an institutional examination?

... to have a good job in a future?

... to acquire power?

... to please their parents...

....or just to collaborate to the construction of a better world?

This simple question induces some operational concerns during the transfer of such a model to a computing tool.

The institutional goals can corrupt the all opening process so the definition of such an implementation must cover all the educational aspects. This is the crucial point.

Can we just import parts of the open schools model without losing the main philosophy?

4. Lifelong learning.

Open schools model help us to understand why lifelong learning is not an empty concept. For obvious reasons, we decided to build our traditional schools following a curious rhythm: step by step, year by year.

But education is a **continuum**.

I don't know if open schools are the solution (or part of the solution) but I met during this wonderful trip professional teachers who know that learning never stops. **Time is not the valid parameter**.

They defined a kind of **relativistic** pedagogy! They cannot be totally wrong.

Thanks a lot again.

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