

# Educating in Freedom

## Free Access and Collaboration is the Key

By

Anne Østergaard

[anne@easterbridge.com](mailto:anne@easterbridge.com)

Presented October 30<sup>th</sup> 2009  
at Free Culture Forum 2009 in Barcelona.

# Educating in Freedom

## Free Access and Collaboration is the Key

### Content:

- \* What is the present status?
- \* A recent case story - Change is a long process.
- \* What are the barriers for change?
- \* Who do we need to convince?
- \* The teachers professional teaching methods will change.
- \* Collaboration between professions and stakeholders.
- \* Conclusion.

# Educating in Freedom

## Recent case stories

In recent case stories from Austria, schools are financially motivated by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture.

Get €10 Euro for each workstation that uses OpenOffice suite or pay €10 Euro for using Microsoft Office.

[http://www.osor.eu/case\\_studies/desktop4education-bringing-new-environments-to-austrian-schools](http://www.osor.eu/case_studies/desktop4education-bringing-new-environments-to-austrian-schools)

# **Educating in Freedom**

## **Barriers for change**

Your school, your home, and your friends use proprietary software.

Scepticism towards new things.

No government backing.

Lack of knowledge.

The traditional understanding of learning.

# **Educating in Freedom**

## **Barriers to change**

What students are learning in their spare time from social media such as Facebook, World of Warcraft etc. is considered by teachers as something in contrast to what the students should learn at school.

Students are bored at school, and considers their own goals as more important than those of their teachers.

# **Educating in Freedom**

## **Teachers teaching methods will change**

The use of FLOSS in education is planting the seeds of a new pedagogy where educators and learners create, shape and evolve knowledge together, improving their skills and understanding as they go.

# **Educating in Freedom**

## **Teachers teaching methods will change**

New learning methods will rock teachers vision of being in control, and not being the only authority in the group.

We are seeing the change from the industry era to our knowledge based society.

We are talking: Life long learning.

# **Educating in Freedom**

## **Collaboration between professions, and other stakeholders**

There are many stakeholders in the change process:

- The political level
- Individual schools
- Teachers
- Students
- Technicians, developers and maintainers
- Parents etc.



# **Educating in Freedom**

## **Collaboration between different professions.**

- It is important to listen to the teachers needs. They are the ones creating new learning material.
- Often teachers learning material get stuck on school servers.
- The technical infrastructure is there to back and support the creativity, and the collaboration as well as the communication efforts.

# Educating in Freedom

## Collaboration between men and women

Bear in mind that the technical infrastructure is mostly developed and maintained by men, whereas a very large percentage of the primary school teachers who are supposed to use the software solutions are women.

- Men and women communicate very differently.
- There are huge differences between competing and sharing alike.
- In the technical field women in general are not on a level playing field.
- Women are easily ridiculed.

# Educating in Freedom

## How do the stakeholders collaborate better and more?

How do we make progress?

- By setting up programs for training teachers in Free Knowledge and FLOSS during their education.
- By spreading awareness among politicians.
- By holding conferences for librarians, and others. Giving them information about Free Software, Copyleft, open standards, IPR, patents, software, and where to find free learning materials.
- By building repositories for education programs with various technical solutions.

# Educating in Freedom

## Spreading awareness about the collaboration model from Free Software Community

Pooling your own knowledge with that of other people will eventually result in a better end product.

This has been the case with scientific works, with software as well as with all sorts of creative works.

Copyright licenses for software, and

Creative Commons Licenses for art works.

# Educating in Freedom

## My conclusion

ICT can support and develop the learning and education process in various subjects.

We have two completely different understandings of knowledge production:

- We learn best from experience.
- We can not learn alone. We need resistance in an asymmetric relation to raise our individual level.

Important that students gets the experience that they can be creative as well as creators  
– being IT- creators instead of IT- consumers.

# Educating in Freedom

## Conclusion

- We need a top down as well as a bottom up approach
- Top down = Decision made on the relevant political level (government, local government)
- Bottom up = Individual schools or teachers take private initiatives

# Educating in Freedom

## Conclusion

- Free Software solutions for education should be simple.
- User friendliness is key for both students, and teachers.
- Only few students will later be able to write good source code. But the gifted ones should at least have the possibility to see how code is made, and what it looks like.
- To judge quality of functionality we need to be able to compare code.

# Educating in Freedom

## Conclusion

- Teachers training courses.
- Case stories
- Install Parties
- Repositories
- Wikipedia
- How to use mailing lists etc.
- Back up for librarians
- Info kiosks
- Collaboration between professions etc.



# Educating in Freedom

## Conclusion

- We need not only focus on the technical solutions.
  - In fact we might do better by focusing on the **global access** to Free Knowledge.
- **Approval by the government** is necessary for the acceptance by administrators and users.

# Educating in Freedom

## Conclusion

Access to Free Knowledge as well as to Free Software programs are important to defending freedom of expression, privacy, innovation, consumer rights, and creativity on the Internet.

# Educating in Freedom

## Conclusion

A change in the ways we learn will result in the possibilities of an enormous mind share worldwide.

But it requires a change in our mindset.

We have only seen the beginning of a very interesting, and ongoing process which involves the use of new information and communication technologies as well as a growing pool of freely accessible Free Knowledge.

# Thank you for your attention!

Collaboration is a social skill.

Knowledge is universal, Free Software too.

Anne Østergaard  
[anne@easterbridge.com](mailto:anne@easterbridge.com)

Slides available at:  
[www.easterbridge.com](http://www.easterbridge.com)