

Education by Collaboration

How to Get More Free Software into Primary Schools

by

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Content:

1. Where do primary schools use Free Software today?
2. Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is part of everyday life.
3. How can we convince more primary schools to use Free Knowledge based on Free Software?
4. Whom do we need to convince?
5. Collaboration between different professions.
6. Spreading awareness about the collaboration model from Free Software development. But we need not only focus on the technical solutions.
7. Conclusion.

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State of the Art

In 2004 during GUADEC in Kristiansand, Norway, a joint declaration was made about these topics:

- International collaboration
- Sharing of architecture and applications.
- Elimination of duplication of work.
- Communicating and sharing of ideas.

The complete cooperation statement is available here:

http://developer.skolelinux.no/brev/cooperation_statement_debian-edu.txt

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State of the Art

At the moment we have several successful school projects:

- LinEx in Spain: www.linex.org
- Skolelinux in Norway: www.skolelinux.org
- Debian Edu: wiki.debian.org/DebianEdu
- Projeto Software Livre, PSL-Brasil in Brazil:
www.cic.unb.br/docentes/pedro/trabs/freesoft5.htm
- AbulÉdu in France: www.abuledu.org
- One Laptop Per Child (OLPC): www.laptop.org

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Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Everyday Life

Everybody needs to be able to operate computers to get a job and earn their living!

- Without access to computers and the internet society will not develop.
- Children do not learn about technical Operating Systems (OS) and how to use them. They are missing the chance - or the key to their lives: Education, knowledge and democracy.

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Who do we need to convince?

There are many stakeholders:

- Politicians
- Schools
- Teachers
- Students
- Parents
- Technicians, developers and maintainers

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How to Get Free Software into Primary Schools

- We need both a top down and 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

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How can we make progress?

How do the stakeholders collaborate better and more?

- 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, 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.

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- Free Software solutions for education should be simple.
- User friendliness is a key for 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 looks like, how it works, and how it can be adapted.
- To judge quality of functionality we must be able to compare code.

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Collaboration between different professions.

- It is important to listen to the teachers' needs as teachers are creating new learning material.
- The technical infrastructure is there to back and support the creativity and the collaboration as well as the communication efforts.

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Spreading awareness about the collaboration model from Free Software Community

We need not only focus on the technical solutions.

In fact we might do better by focusing on the global access to Free Knowledge.

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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.

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The Master suppression techniques were a framework articulated by the Norwegian feminist Berit Ås to describe five means by which women are or were subjugated in western patriarchal societies:

These techniques are:

- Make Invisible
- Ridicule
- Withhold Information
- Damn If You Do and Damn If You Don't (double bind)
- Heap Blame and Put to Shame

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Conclusion

- Teachers training courses
- Case stories
- Installation Parties
- Repositories
- Wikipedia
- Netiquette (mailing lists + newsgroups)
- Backup for librarians
- Info kiosks
- Collaboration between professions

Thank you for your attention!

“Knowledge is universal, Free Software too.”

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Slides available at
www.easterbridge.com