

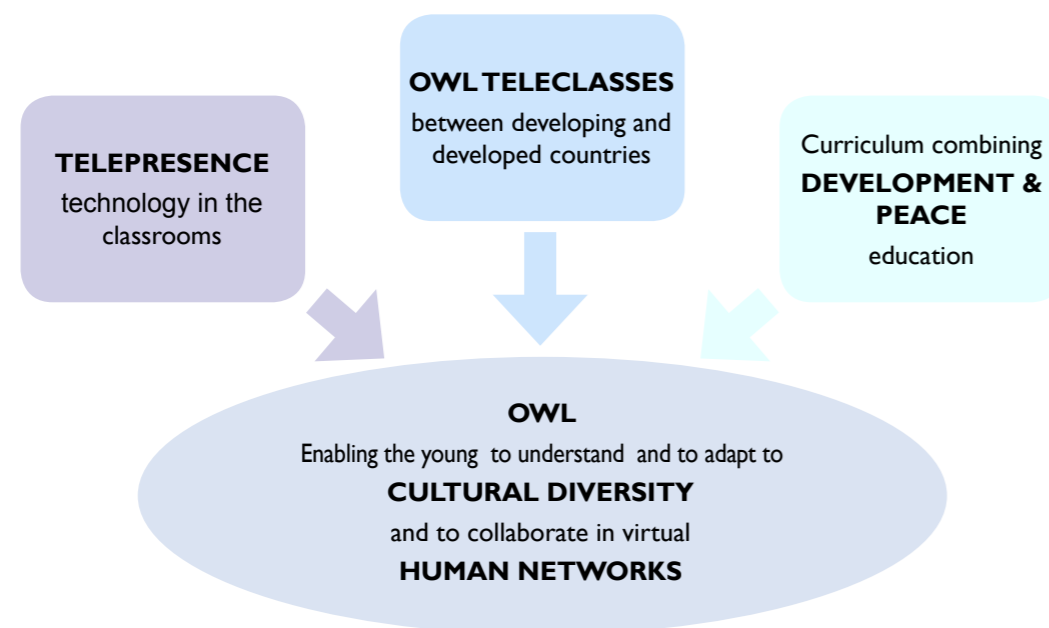
ONE WORLD LEARNING

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION



REINVENTING DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

ICDT has created the **One World Learning (OWL)** project to provide non-formal education for secondary school students in developed and developing countries to learn about the world as they have never done before. It aims to deepen their knowledge of foreign cultures and universal development issues and to establish lasting international relationships. The project is composed of regular real-time interaction of two culturally different groups (**OWL teleclasses**), an interest-driven and flexible curriculum, and the use of the telepresence technology in secondary education environment.



OWL TELECLASSES

The project approaches timely issues within the international development agenda with a non-traditional perspective. It follows the main points of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and focuses on those development issues which have to be addressed through conventional education. The OWL teleclasses emphasize the needs and interests of the actual participants, rather than relying on a general curriculum.

After completing a comprehensive preparatory course, the supervising teachers are able to support the participants in conceptualizing abstract development issues using entertaining and engaging activities. The students are encouraged to discuss some of the “big questions of life”. Meanwhile, they receive continuous assistance to help them dealing with matters, which are beyond the sphere of their comfort zone.

The primary aim is to promote understanding cultural difference amongst persons and groups. The specific objectives are to broaden the knowledge of students on issues that have high priority in the global development agenda (e.g. human rights,

gender equality, multicultural knowledge, health and environmental awareness, economic way of thinking etc.) and to lay down a foundation for a sustainable, non-formal development education method.

THE STUDENTS

The project is designed for secondary school students as they are the most inclusive members of the society and they are about to make important decisions regarding the continuation of their studies or beginning their career. Experiences people undergo between the ages of 14 and 18 will fundamentally determine their personal and work attitude that will further influence their environment and the community.

Today’s youth grow up in a rapidly changing environment where the traditional methods of education are becoming less effective. Due to the development of communication technologies and the practically unlimited availability of information, they instinctively go beyond the limits of school education. They frequently build up their world concept by relying on false information that comes from rich but often unreliable sources such as mass media and the internet. In those cases when they discover the world by themselves – since they have the illusion of the possession of the ultimate knowledge – they often adopt many misconceptions. This discrepancy may lead to conflicts in many dimensions of life and have direct effect on the evolution of global issues such as poverty, inequality, and development.

TELEPRESENCE

OWL is based on telepresence technology that enables the participants to have a realistic face-to-face communication experience and to use most elements of verbal and non-verbal communication. They take their seats around a virtual table and engage in discussion, as they would do in real life. The biggest advantage of the technology is that it remains practically invisible and that it does not require any technological experience from the users. Moreover, the realistic communication experience is also ensured by the fact that there is no delay between picture and sound.

Furthermore, the technology also contributes to the financial sustainability of the initiative. First, the cost per capita of the project is much lower than in case of conventional projects with similar expected outcomes. Second, the mobile telepresence device that was designed specifically for the OWL project can be also used for third party initiatives when it is not used for teleclasses (e.g. school holidays, weekends).

PILOT PROJECT

In March 2012, a One World Learning (OWL) pilot project was implemented between the Magnet High School (Ongata Rongai, Kenya) and the Berzsényi Dániel Secondary School (Budapest, Hungary). Eighteen students and two teachers participated in an introductory session and three 2-hour teleclasses. The objective of the pilot project was to determine the feasibility of the project concepts. Cisco Hungary and Cisco Kenya provided access to the telepresence facility used in this project.

The teachers of the participating schools and ICDT developed the content of the sessions based upon the interests and development needs of the students. This process was the simulation of the content development method that will apply in case of the actual project.

The analysis of the foregoing teleclasses showed that the dialogues between the participants contradict in many ways with the existing concepts of multicultural encounters and development cooperation. The meetings had brought attention to many – often surprising – issues that have been previously ignored, while other “important” problems seem to have less relevance in practice. Interestingly, none of the students had problems to get accustomed to the special environment. There was no sign of discomfort and they dealt with the situation naturally. Furthermore, it can be concluded that during the pilot project the students were extremely open and non-judgmental. Even topics like religion and sexuality did not create conflict. After the sessions the students referred to these issues as natural differences of opinions and they were interested in understanding the background instead of judging the other side. All in all, it was found that today’s youth need an entirely different education approach to address their needs and interests than the one which is used in traditional education.

Note: The telepresence facility used for the pilot project uses the same technology as the mobile device that was designed specifically for the OWL project.



project
OWL

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ABOUT ICDT

International Centre for Democratic Transition (ICDT) is an international non-profit organization based in Budapest, Hungary. It collects the experiences of recent democratic transitions of other countries and shares them with those who are determined to follow that same path. ICDT believes that this research is essential for societies preparing to set off on the difficult journey towards a well-functioning democracy. ICDT's mission is to facilitate the smooth and peaceful process of democratic transition on the basis of participatory principles; the political, economic, legal, cultural, and civil societal aspects of transformation; and the socio-cultural context of regions and countries where the process takes place.

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