

# THE MULTIPLE CHOICE IDENTITY IN THE NETWORK-SOCIETY

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*'It's the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine'*

Michael Stipe, REM

It's seventeen years ago since the Berlin Wall did fall. Welcome to the new 'World Disorder'. The world is changing and so education has to change too. Young people are not like they were before. They are developing an own learning and living style in the Network Society. The key force of the Network Society is information and the computer networks the means. Young people are called the net-generation, moving fast on the digital highway. As educators we should learn how they are learning to learn. Otherwise they will be out of sight and we'll get lost on a small country lane.

This short essay is about the affinity between the Network Society, young people, learning styles and the future, concretised in the European project 'Multiple Choice Identity'. Why does it look like that? How can young people learn for the future, solve problems, reach the zones of proximal development and find their own way, while using the appropriate knowledge, skills and didactics in a multiple intelligence way? The key words are change (of society) and choose (by the learner). The project 'Multiple choice identity' is a map to help young people not to get lost in the Network Society.

We may recognize seven developments or global waves. These waves are interconnected. First there is the wave of the Network Society, a system in which all the parts are linked. National and regional boundaries are gone and transferred into Localities and Globalities. The lifeblood of the Network Society is information and it's in constant flow.

The second wave is the digital revolution and it's used intensively and interactively by the net-generation.

Thirdly there's a lot of past that's no history. The past is revitalised over and over again and unsolved problems are waiting for us in the future. From this perspective the event of 9/11 is a crucial, making the future and the past unpredictable.

Closely related to 9/11 is the fourth wave, the human rights movement. People are afraid and looking for safety, a new framework. The neo-conservatives (mis)used 9/11 as their historical chance to sacrifice freedom for security.

Europe is wave number five. Young people will live in Europe. Since 2004 Eastern European countries are part of the European Union. The changes are great and fast and hard to cope within a lifetime.

The sixth global wave is the theory of multiple intelligence (Howard Gardner and Project Zero). It's a 'democratic' learning style respecting the possibilities and talents of each individual. Or like Howard Gardner once said to me: 'Less children are called stupid'. The Network Society has many entry points and multiple intelligence uses them all.

The seventh wave is about aesthetics, enabling us to read the world in a complex, deep and creative way. Aesthetics and especially music is an area of human exchanges.

Is the project 'Multiple choice identity' well timed? On the t-shirt of the project is written: 'MI MCI? The 'MCI-project' is a medium to transfer these global waves into brainwaves of the learner. It's about preparing young people for the future by developing an own identity. Let's take a closer look at the relation between the seven waves and the MCI-project, between the network-society and the learning-style.

1. The aim of the project is to learn young people from 3 to 25 years to develop an own identity in Europe and not one universal European identity. Diversity is the starting point and the aim.

2. We try to find a balance between old and new learning-strategies and didactics. Although we use a clear structure to organize the learning process, there's a lot of freedom for the learner and the teacher. Although creativity and especially the use of music is important, the gathering of sufficient knowledge is also essential. Aesthetics are closely related to better learning results. The project is learner-oriented as well as teacher-oriented. The learner and the teacher should be active both. In 'blended learning' digital and analogue tools are used.

3. Systems-thinking is important in the project to see the relations and to understand the dynamic of the system. The didactic tool is a route with the seven steps. Each step is the next phase in the learning process (Vygotsky) and all the steps are linked. The route is a route through the Network Society. It's 'a long and winding road that leads to your door' (Paul McCartney). Step 1 is the sense opener and step is knowledge based using different entry points (Howard Gardner). In step 3 the new knowledge is applied in reality and communicated about in step 4. Step 5 is the productive one, because the learners visualize or 'audiolize' what that they have learned. They share it with others in step 6 and reflect on it in step 7. In each step information and material (f.e. music, images or poems) is prepared. It's important to realize that each route is a self-standing module for reuse in multiple contexts.

4. The knowledge is performative, as a preparedness for change. It's constructivistic, meaningful and real-learning. Artefacts, performances, webpages, presentations, speeches and essays are the products.

5. It's searching for 'the unknown' (David Perkins). Since almost all the grand narratives are gone, 'choicism' may be the alternative ism. 'The multiple choice identity' is a diverse, flexible and creative identity and a context is needed with sufficient free space.

6. Bono said to Barroso: 'Young people don't have a feeling for Europe'. Young people should have a feeling for other young people in Europe. The appropriate way to fascinate them is through music. Music may be a sense opener, a source of knowledge, a way of communication, presenting and reflecting. And it's great fun. Seven key-terms guarantee the individual learning process in each route. It's about aesthetics but also about knowledge, basic skills and attitude.

7. We believe in the creative power and the spirit of each individual learner to keep his own learning process going, choosing his individual learning strategy. Inspired by the theory of 'multi-level-learning' (Fred Korthagen), we try to activate the drive, the commitment of the learner. Music is the most appropriate direct, deep and concrete tool. During the tests we are amazed by the possibilities of the learners f.e. young children of 3 to 6 years may understand a lot of things through music. The learner needs a structure (the route), a system in which his energy is managed, guided, focussed and shared ('energie'). He also needs free space as a 'multiple choice identity'. We try to fine tune the balance between structural and creative learning.

8. The project is about culture and not about economics, politics, nationalism or the free market. It's an aesthetical project, using music, drama, poetry, film, photography, painting and design.

9. Educational gaming is used as one of the new didactical tools. It fits in the net-generation, network-learning and the Network Society.

10. We are looking at the future and not at the past. Howard Gardner writes about five minds for the future. Young people should be prepared for the times to come. They should learn to use knowledge in a disciplined, integrative and creative way. They should stay inside the framework of human rights with a respective and ethical mind. Otherwise young people will be in trouble.

11. Young people should use all their talents or multiple intelligences to approach the Network Society from different entry points. We start with the quadrant as the context instead of the national state. National states are rather new and artificial constructions, causing a lot of problems in the past. The past is against Europe and that's why we should look at the future. The codes of a quadrant are not only older, deeper and more natural, but also more challenging and open.

12. The 'MCI-project' is a real European project because the routes and the educational material is designed in cooperation with colleagues from the other quadrants. This multi-perspectivistic view is necessary to understand what's going on in Europe and to construct 'a multiple choice identity'. Cooperative designing and learning from a European perspective are a condition to get the whole picture.

13. Theory and practice are always interrelated to legitimise the learning style and the didactics. It's about abstract ideas high up in the sky and about good practice down to earth.

Summarizing: In the 'MCI-project Network-learning, Network-thinking and the Network Society are mixed and linked. It's a reflection on the Network Society and a reflection on the future that's not like it was before. It's hard fun.