



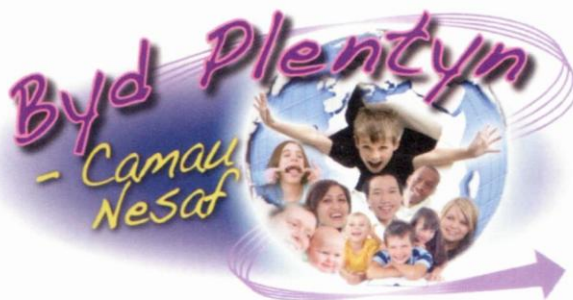
A Child's World International Conference

25-27th June 2014

**Aberystwyth University, Penglais Campus, Aberystwyth,
Wales, United Kingdom.**

Conference Programme

**Organised and hosted by the School of Education and Lifelong Learning,
Aberystwyth University.**



Session 4d	Curriculum – Learner Engagement and Support / Paper 4 [THU-S4D-134] Room: Hugh Owen C4
Title of Abstract	<i>Learner engagement in the construction of a relevant curriculum: the project RRC</i> Dr. Francisco Sousa, University of the Azores, Portugal
Abstract	<p>The project “Researching for a relevant curriculum” (RRC) started in 2007, when some elementary school teachers from the Azores, Portugal, who were worried about some pupils’ lack of interest for the curriculum, decided to address that problem, in collaboration with university professors, through action research. Other possibilities notwithstanding, the team explored the hypothesis that some pupils were not interested in the curriculum because they did not acknowledge its relevance for their extra-school lives, considering that content is not frequently presented “as a means of understanding the world around us, but as a series of separate pieces of information (...) that [the pupils] are subsequently incapable of using” (Esteve, 2000, p. 12).</p> <p>Each action research cycle lasted one year. In the Autumn each teacher described, on the basis of systematic classroom observation, certain pupils’ behaviours that suggested lack of interest for the curriculum, interviewed those pupils, and analysed the transcripts of the interviews. The interpretation of the pupils’ answers prompted the emergence of new teaching strategies, which were implemented throughout the rest of the school year. Continued classroom observation and a new round of interviews generated evidence on the improvement of pupils’ acknowledgement of curriculum relevance.</p> <p>Usually in the first round of interviews many pupils did not acknowledge usefulness of what they were learning in school for their extra-school lives. A minority acknowledged relevance for activities that were strongly connected with the school, such as helping their younger siblings with homework. Another minority projected the acknowledgement of curriculum relevance towards the future. This deficit of acknowledgement tended to decrease after the implementation of the new teaching strategies. An increased attention to the pupils’ experiences and to their views of the relationship between the curriculum and their lives outside the school contributed to the emergence of teaching strategies that fostered their engagement in the curriculum. The fact that five cycles of the project were completed is noteworthy, considering that in the Azores there are no official incentives for elementary and secondary school teachers’ participation in research projects. Even under such constraint, collaboration between university professors and teachers of elementary education through action research is possible and may enhance learner engagement.</p> <p>References</p> <p>Esteve, J. M. (2000), “Culture in the school: Assessment and the content of education”, <i>European Journal of Teacher Education</i>, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp.5-18.</p>
Key Words	curriculum relevance; action research