

Workshop 8

Lund Calling

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The Young Masters Programme for Sustainable Development, YMP for short, is an initiative by the IIIIEE¹, is an online teaching resource that may be used completely free of charge.

The IIIIEE has developed and managed this resource for a number of years and are counting students in the tens of thousands across the world, mainly in China where it is often used in English classes. The programme is divided up into several separate courses that can be taken online², each one ends with a learning activity that takes place outside of the software, preferably in the local community and surroundings. When all courses are finished a project work of the students own design is carried out—they work in groups of approximately three to five individuals—that is then submitted to the institute for evaluation. All projects are posted on the website and best contributions get to go to an annual convention organized by the institute.

Torvald Jacobsson, director of the YMP, shows us the website, the contents of the course and provides for us users so we can log in as teachers. There is no cost related to the registration but since the institute wants to be sure that the teachers that use the software really are teachers some information is collected concerning their school etc., information that is checked before teachers are approved. Once that process is completed teachers may register students on the website. The course runs parallel all over the world so when students enter into their virtual classrooms their bench mate may well sit in Tajikistan or Kenya, but most probably China. There is an overwhelming majority of Chinese students using the resource³

¹ The International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics at Lund University.

² For low-bandwidth users the entire content can be downloaded and run locally.

³ Thus the 'Lund Calling' initiative is a collaboration between the University in Lund and the Municipality to get schools in Lund to use it teaching.

According to Jacobsson the software can handle up to 100 000 simultaneous users and that is what has guided the choice though it is by no means a finished concept. Jacobsson points to several weaknesses in the framework that are to be fixed and mended. To reach those levels of participants structures are needed locally to spread the use of the resource. The software itself is decent enough though a quick browse through the content reveals a problem that Jacobsson on a question from IIEEE board member Anthony Simon addresses; it is too general. In order to maintain relevancy of the content without frequent costly revisions it has been formulated on a level of generality that is less than optimal. The problem is of course that it is an integral part of the project that it is free of charge and thus the programme requires further funding to reach full potential. An interesting development of the project that Jacobsson mentions is the wiki-structure that is planned to go along the project work presentations. The exacts of this seems to be on the drawing board still but it brings about interesting parallels to e.g. Bill Sutherland's project that aims to set up a user driven, evidence based database for conservationists on the model taken from medicine.