

Boy's Traffic and Risk-Taking

(update: 10 February 2005)

BOYS IN TRAFFIC: LEARNING AND RISK-TAKING; SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS AND EDUCATION

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WJ5 135 Traffic 4b.doc

Paper for the 4th Biennial Conference 'Working with Boys, Building Fine Men' From Practice to Practice Melbourne, Australia 3-5 April '05. This text is intentionally not protected by copyright. If copying, please mention the source and site www.laukwoltring.nl

Motto: If youngsters would really learn from every incident or (near-) accident in traffic, traffic would be very safe by now! So the key question is: what prevents them from learning?

Introduction

Traffic is often dominated by engineers, police, law-people and technicians, with sometimes traditional ideas about top-down instruction, hard line confrontation and systems based on rewards and punishment. The decreasing impact of sheer technical and managerial measures to make traffic more safe, makes way for more behavioural approaches. In this text you'll find an introduction to some new practices in the Netherlands. Some traffic instructors do already a very fine job, but in this domain one has seldom dreamt about something as 'working with boys' and introduction of knowledge from neurobiology and new learning strategies.

Much knowledge about working with boys is more or less problem-bound and has been developed in school-settings, health promotion, the juvenal criminal system and or youth social work. Traffic is a good example of a completely different field in which boys do learn very much with a high intensity and motivation. Recently developed know-how about constructive work with boys can be implemented here easily. In the Dutch system driving instructors do have 30-50 hours 1:1 contact with young men of 18-19 years old. Traffic offers an almost ideal setting for tailor-made learning experiences, direct feedback, contact, alternately quiet and high-pressure situations. There are opportunities for direct action and reflection.... all leading to basic automatized actions and so making room for more complicated reflective actions.

New learning strategies are based on a mix of self reflection and internal goal setting on the one hand, and rich experiences, instruction, emotional coaching, cognitive guidance and limit setting on the other hand.

Campaigning in traffic safety was usually derived from the advertisement industry. This industry makes it their trade to switch off the more calm and reflective thinking. In order to sell they play on the primary emotions and link them to a product. We cannot 'sell' safety in this way, on the contrary. Traffic has a strong impact on primary emotions and reactions which we have to overcome. Man has made roads, cars and other things to cope with he just needs his more complex mental facilities. We try to invite and enable youngsters to use these and develop them further. Keywords: Discovering traffic: What does it with you? Which abilities does it demand? Which do you already have mastered? What can you learn from your experiences in traffic? Who may correct you? How? So there are plenty of possibilities for new approaches.

In my contribution to the Melbourne conference I like to illustrate some of them. Here in Holland there is a fast growing interest in this field and it turned out to be very stimulating for everyone thus far concerned.

In traffic boys are generally seen as a major risk-group. Youngsters make much more accidents than adults, and young men do form and meet a far higher risk than young women. The first four years after the entrance in car traffic the accident risk is rapidly growing, reaching the top after 1 or 2 years and then it descends slowly. Some young men develop long staying patterns of risky driving behaviours. A closer look reveals that the kind of incidents that young men make in traffic is very different from girls. Whereas girls tend to take (sometimes too) many factors in account, show uncertainty trying to decide what to do, or show some care freeness, boys have a tendency to reduce their scope to immediate acting. Boys show stress-related acting out and risk behaviour and a disproportional high assessment of their own competences. They compensate in traffic for lack of possibilities or too high demands elsewhere. There are also elements of bluff and bravado linked with low self esteem while they're lacking some emotional and empathic skills.

Another perspective is to see their behaviour in cars also as learning behaviour: seeking limits and testing their abilities. It is a field in which they (can) learn much more than just handle a car. Traffic is much more than going effectively from A to B. One may conclude that young men face specific developmental tasks once they're confronted with the demands that traffic places upon them. They have to relate to themselves, they have to learn how to direct their own energy and to relate to others in what is also *social* traffic. The relation between stress and learning is crucial. Stress in a person, in a group, in the instructor-pupil relation or stress related to examinations. Under stress the primary reactions dominate, learning during the traffic instruction period may under stress conditions easily transform into obeying (externally oriented) and therefore the effects are temporary: "*Wait till I have my license, than you'll see me doing what I want*". In a less stressful situation, there is more room for reflection, the learning is more open and creative, intrinsic, more experience based, coming from the inside and can more easily lead to autonomy and more responsibility.

Traffic education and instruction in the car or at school offers good opportunities to relate to young men on an age where many of them do not have much constructive low-stress communications with adult men and women. Driving instructors have - depending on the country and its specific regulations - 20 till 50 hours 1:1 contact and they can offer 'tailor'-made learning opportunities. In the car there is a lot of talk about other things than just traffic. These easy communications are very important and can be used to help pupils develop themselves, prepare for their tasks in traffic and prevent them from getting involved in risky situations and interactions.

In several European countries there are new regulations or there are experiments on 2nd phase driving licensing (one year or a half year after the basic driving license a new course with testing, leading to an update). In the Dutch pilotproject - called *Young drivers experience* - we have developed some material and courses to train driving instructors in adjusting their professional competences to the learning competences of individual boys and girls, taking in account their specific developmental needs, their already developed qualities and the peculiar way in which boys and girls learn in traffic, all under the heading: *Learning in and from traffic experiences*.

The here described programme is developed for the second phase driving pilot programme in Holland and has in the meantime been tested and assessed^[1]. In my contribution to this programme I have transferred knowledge from the realms of neurobiology, socialisation, education, youth social work and 'boys work' into the field of traffic education. More backgrounds on my bilingual website (www.laukwoltring.nl). The original text^[2] has been spread among the members of the CIECA/NovEv working group.

The working elements in the Dutch project are:

Learning by doing

Self assessment, peer assessment and instructor assessment

Interaction via website

simulated experiences (video)
Group discussions

The principles of this text now are the key of a larger pilot in the Netherlands^[3] for the development of new ways of traffic-instruction and traffic-education, also in the first phase. Originally that pilot was especially developed to meet the problems of road-raging, aggression and the high numbers of male youngsters that die or get severely wounded in traffic. In the meanwhile this pilot is broadened and now designed for all driving instruction in the new 'step-by-step' initial traffic training scheme.

1. Structure of the pilotproject *Young Drivers Experience*^[4]

Youngsters have been selected with a half or full year driving experience. Basic first question was: "*What did you learn the past (half) year?*". In the here displayed view the *driving license* is more of a *learning permit*. You can't let youngsters enter car traffic without some instruction and training. The initial training is meant for basic skills; the learning has to be completed in traffic and later assessed in a 2nd phase (it takes some 30-40.000 miles experience to automatize some skills, freeing attention and energy for really complex incident avoiding manoeuvres). After the first phase they did not prove to be good drivers, but in this view they have shown to be able to learn and that they have mastered basic skills. This process needs some extra assessment.

- a. It starts with a questionnaire on a website (restricted accessibility) including moving images from traffic asking for a reaction. Participants (boys and girls) make a self assessment in such situations.
- b. A profile is made of each participant based on this questionnaire.
- c. During a period of three weeks they fill in a weekly self report on this website.
- d. Followed with one day with many activities. First (1) a mutually assessed tour in a car by two youngsters accompanied by a driving instructor. After the drive they compare their self-assessment, mutual assessment and the assessment by the driving instructor, then the envelop containing their profile stemming from the questionnaire (step b) is opened, followed by a short discussion in the car.
- e. Directly after this tour (2) there is a series of track experiences aiming at discovering their own reactions in extreme situations (slippery road, full-stop if an imitation-child is crossing, full stop of a car ahead, etc.). These track experiences are on a test station, *not* for improvement of their competences (with less than 30.000 miles road-experience dangerous for leading to overestimation of themselves) but for 'learning their own limits' and raising their risk awareness.
- f. After these track experiences (3) there is a group discussion with a video specially developed for this project.
- g. Then there is another series of 3 weekly self reports via the website.
- h. Closing with a last assessment drive with a driving instructor.

2. Essence of the Dutch Project: learning in/from traffic experiences

This project is about young drivers: so we're talking about their behaviour, their car, also their incident or accident. It's their life, their future and their capability to make

something of their life (and that's what matters!). So: *they* should learn, it is their responsibility. We can only make arrangements to learn from it, see the steps above.

Important notes about learning (stimuli, emotions, feeling, social emotions, higher mental processes) can be derived from neurobiology^[5]. Here we can find important grips for understanding behaviour in traffic and how to learn from it. We distinguish:

- **Simple/fast acting:** A stimulus (internal and/or external) leads to a primary emotion (joy or sorrow) and in danger/stress it is soon followed by action, hardly reflected.
- **Complex acting:** A stimulus (internal and/or external) leads to a primary emotion (joy or sorrow), followed by more complex emotions, feeling them, comparing them with memory, leading to thinking, reflection and decision making, followed by (more or less aware) acting upon these. In the latter case we make more use of our higher intellectual functions in the neocortex, especially the frontal lobes.

Under stress people tend to relapse into the simple case (not using higher functions, because these need more time). Mankind has survived by a highly developed sensitivity for danger, so our stress-sensors work very fast. Only under calm and safe conditions 'we switch on' the frontal neocortex (conscious memory, thought, ethics, planning, analysing, more complex decision making).

Boys even tend to switch off the higher brain functions sooner than girls do (see a.o. Gurian 2001) and are more inclined to act swift in the stress-mode. Of course we do better not reduce boys and girls to their sexes, there is so much more what makes someone the one he or she is. Nevertheless it's practical to acknowledge some average male-female differences in (learning-)behaviour with of course big overlaps. On average we see for example big differences in handling impulses by young women and young men, originating in:

- The adrenaline-testosterone dynamics: girls low in testosterone, more internalisation and awareness of fear; young men, high in testosterone: more externalisation and aggression and overruling fear by action (see also conference paper by Martine Delfos).
- Girls' brain functions are less lateralised than boys'. The left-right hemisphere connections in the brain grow in girls early, in young men later, especially when stimulated by experiences. Especially the link between *felt emotions, rhythm, intuition, creativity and movement* on the one hand (right hemisphere) and *language and analysis* (right) is for boys very important. These links grow later depending on experiences and conditions, and this leads us also to the importance of socialisation, examples and verbal mutual communication.
- Different roles of the primary, secondary, small brain and neo-cortex under stress (boys tend more to switch off higher mental processes under stress).
- Vision (girls look more wide-angle, boys more focussed).
- Movement, physical problem solving (boys quick, girls more hesitant), boys learn more by doing and phrasing/thinking afterwards, girls the other way around.
- Speech (boys' brain: 'only left'; girls both sides)

There are also big male/female differences in socialisation: here we look at parent-boy and parent-girl interactions, changing perspectives, distribution of paid and unpaid work; lacking or absent fathers, the impact of media and advertisement, and so on (for more info: see my website). Specific: boys and girls from a not-western background (for instance from Islamic, stable hierarchical or patriarchal cultures) do have less experience with negotiating opinions, negotiating their values and seeking truth by discussion. Self-esteem and not loosing face is here extra important to avoid stress.

Handling a car in traffic may be a different challenge for boys and girls. Many parents

and other adults may look at boys in traffic as a threat (and to girls as threatened) and in fact they are often right, but on the same hand good traffic instruction and education offer great opportunities to learn boys how to handle their own energy and motives in communication with others.

Conscious learning means giving words to rich experiences, linking emotions and feelings. Naming experiences and communicating them with others, means stopping the fast revolving kaleidoscope 'in their heads' of impressions, memories, messages and felt emotions. Reflection and consciousness is to a great extent lingual. Words and language ask for structure and decisions (present or past; active or passive; subject or object, singular or plural, and so on). So giving words to an experience and the accompanying emotion stabilises an experience, change it and makes a wider range of emotions and mental maps accessible, including memories and linked emotions and feelings. This type of learning asks for stress reduction. If boys feel endangered (by others, by traffic or by the expectations of their peers and the adult world) we need to create stimulating but safe conditions and also reduce stress in the communication itself.

Eventually self-esteem is a major emotion, so our approach is: "*After a half or one year you really know better how to do it, let's go on where you are now*". Adolescents/young adults are making their own life and decisions, so they tend to have an ambivalent relation to adults: eager to learn from them, and at the same time contesting their authority. In practice there may be a thin line between authoritarian and authoritative. A good adult instructor or educator tries to set the limits and challenges in such a way that it gives enough safety and stimuli to learn.

In the following 3 paragraphs some elements are elaborated in which the construction of the video, the interaction and communication were central: the video '*Young drivers experience*'; designed for 19-year old novice drivers. Instructions for feedback in the car and leading group discussions and some keys on learning in the car and in the group discussions about the video.

3. Design of video '*young drivers experience*'.

This video was specially designed for this project. It gives 3 short sequences of quite normal road experiences of a group of 3 young men in the car and another 4 sequences with a girl behind the wheel. During their trip they go through *low key* incidents, 'near-accidents'.

This is not just another spectacular video-clip: no blood, no sirens, no blue flashlights, no big drama. Those elements just heighten the stress and give sheer 'adrenaline-entertainment' - the good guys versus the bad guys - and are bad parameters for reflection and learning. The advertisement industry makes it their trade to switch off the thinking and play on the primary emotions and link them to a product. We cannot 'sell' safety in this way, quite the contrary. Traffic has a strong impact on primary emotions and reactions. Man has made roads, cars and other fantastic, but sometimes dangerous things. To cope with these, he needs his more complex mental facilities. We try to enable youngsters to use these and develop them further.

This video meets the requirements of learning by scenario's, context bound dilemmas in which youngsters have to make their own decisions which can be talked about in an also socially safe environment. It enables youngsters to understand their own physical reactions, emotions and feelings and to develop thoughts about them. While asking for, and discussing these thoughts, we invite and enable them to 'steer' their own behaviour in a more constructive way^[6]. Using more spectacular situations it would be 'rather simple' to offer youngsters a good day and fine group discussion, but it's harder to make it 'stick'. We focus on the transfer of our results outside the project. Assessment of the

situation, others and 'self', and acting accordingly is the ultimate goal, also outside the project.

4. Instructions for feedback in the car and in the group:

This is all about positive learning without neglecting firm boundaries or limits and confrontations where necessary, but always aiming at learning (internal control) instead of discipline and obedience (external control)^[2]. Bottom-line: Learning builds on already developed qualities: *"I do accept correction or hints from someone who also sees what I do perform well"*. So:

4.1. In the car:

Allways first point out: **"What are you doing well?"** and after a situation that asks for some instructor's intervention (*"No problem with that, you're still learning and it is ok to make mistakes, but let's see what happened"*): **"What did you see, what did you do, what's your own impression, why did I have to intervene?"**.

We learn most from our errors, but in learning from them we rest on our qualities, our already mastered skills. The key is to find the qualities, even in a mistake (some details may have been right) and make it up together, that gives confidence and trust. Many instructors are focussed on errors, establish their authority in pointing them, and find it hard to see the qualities of pupils or novice drivers. This leads to bravado or to doubts, low self esteem and stress: maybe good for disciplining, but bad for learning.

Second: "What needs some improvement?" Give them first an opportunity to find an answer themselves. Than: *"What does the other novice driver see?"* (again: *"What's good and what can be done better"*) *"Does he have some advice?"* and at last: the observation from the instructor (the message here to driving instructors is: *"Do not deny them your experience, knowledge or wisdom, but give it as an extra, a surplus on what they already found out themselves and what you have confirmed. It's only than that your remarks may be welcomed"*). In the process they learn to judge each other and speak about it as well. First comes questioning, later speaking.

- How much control do you have: Over yourself? Over the car? What's good? What needs improvement?
- How do you react in traffic situations? What's good? What needs improvement?
- What is your risk-perception? What do you see? What didn't you see?
- Where is your breath? Low in the belly (calm) or high in the chest (aroused)?
- Which muscles are relaxed? Which are tense?
- What effects do the road situations have on you? Can you master these effects?
- What is the effect of your driving on others in traffic? Flow or stress?
- Would you like to be a passenger in the car of your co-driver? Why yes? Why hesitant?
- And more alike.....

Here it is important that the youngsters, especially the boys, give *words* to their impressions and thoughts. Phrasing leads to structuring and reflection in a social context! Evaluation of this type of instruction brings out that most boys learn to enjoy this - if it's played 'fair' and not submitting and humiliating - and tend to spread this in their social environment as well.

4.2. In the group:

The best basic attitude of the instructor who is leading the group discussion in our pilot (he is also there at the test track experience) is *'questioning instead of instructing'*. Only at last they give giving their assessment, their observation, their opinion and their knowledge. Boys do know much more about their own and each other's behaviour and its consequences than we think, but it is not yet put in words (or just defensive), they can

learn to trust their own insights and develop them. Most of it is already there in their bodies and heads, but they do not yet use it always, they do not feel socially safe enough or they do not know yet how to *act* on this knowledge without losing their face or loose their image (also for themselves...).

A distinction is made here between *knowledge stemming from their own 'inside'* experience (or simulated nearby experience with vivid scenario's and videos) and knowledge coming from *outside sources* in fragmented rules, instructions, and so on. Whereas the first is more connected to their own emotions and motives, more linked with their body and bodily reactions, the latter is more cognitive, more associated with language, their own incompetence, with compliance and obedience to systems they do not always comprehend.

To their own experiences and self management we *add* instructions where needed (in stead of starting with instructions and asking for discipline and obedience). Without neglecting the importance of compliance with rules in traffic, we again focus *first* on self-management and we *add* traffic rules, being a socially agreed management of flow and safety in traffic as a necessary means in managing social interaction in the specific conditions of road traffic. Even a youth gang has its own rules; boys do know that they need rules to structure their relations and be safe for each other, but at the same time they want to test the rules of the adult world. Basically this is a constructive process, needing to be steered by interested and dedicated grown-ups, who can discuss and transfer the value of traffic-rules. Without reliable agreements traffic would be a mess and slaughterhouse; even every risk prone boy will understand this.

1. Short opening (Who is who? Give them opportunity to speak out and let them hear their own voices in this new space; this lowers the threshold for later participation and verbal contributions)
2. Why this group-discussion? Short!
3. Some simple rules ("*Together we know everything; everybody can contribute something; there is no such thing as a stupid question; the only stupid question is the unphrased question*", etc.)
4. "*What was your most important impression this morning on the track outside? What did you see? What caught your attention? What did you learn out there?*" Short, in catchwords on the whiteboard. Only a wide spread of remarks; try to avoid in this stadium lengthy discussions. Here we just sample the richness of all their reactions.
5. Direct after this show the 6 or 7 scenes one by one. Basic questions are every time in this order:
Again first: "What's happening here, what did the driver well?"
Second: "What needs some improvement?" (What is your own experience in these situations? What would you do?)

Slowly we divert from the video to their own experiences without blaming if they make themselves too vulnerable, even by bluffing. It's easy to burst their storytelling. It's better to neglect bravado, have some laughs and slowly come to the heart of the matter. If it comes too close (defence-mechanisms are starting) one can always go back to the video that is more neutral.

The whiteboard ('living minutes': you can wipe away old words and write down new) diverts from confrontation whenever that is blocking the learning. The whiteboard gives some focus and it means that what you say is useful and at the same time it diverts from the person who did the contribution to the groupdiscussion, so there is less chance for competition, mutual degrading, etc. Looking at the whiteboard activates vision, not only

listening, it enables thinking and contribution. We do not only train them in awareness of their own traffic experience, but also to communicate about them; we give living examples how to support and correct each other without humiliation. So we lower the stress and make reflective and social learning possible.

One of the major elements in giving feedback in the car and communication in the group is to de-activate defence mechanisms (like withdrawal, bluff, bravado) and to activate learning. Again: it is not *our* message that's most important, it's *their* learning!

6. Another important question to youngsters is: "*From who do you accept hints and corrections? How should they do it? How do you like to be addressed?*". (It turned out that many boys did like these questions particularly).

7. At the end we put the youngsters in the chair of advisors: "*If we have another group like yours next week: which elements should we maintain, and what should we alter...*".

Here is double profit: (1) it will give us extra data for our own work, and (2) it reinforces their experience, because we take them as serious ones, so they are invited to take their own experiences serious as well. And they do!

Disorderly conduct must be stopped of course, in the car as well in the group: be short and clear, explain why, don't discuss, one warning, if necessary expulsion. It's safer for all others. It happened to us rarely; the participants in our course have volunteered. These phrases are also necessary in the instruction of the traffic-instructors to make *them* feel safe in what *they* are doing; of course there are limits to understanding and 'enabling'. An instructor who does not feel safe and does not act upon that feeling is a bad example for the young men; they have a sharp radar for that!

The aimed process with the young drivers in discussing needed improvement is: going from external attribution - "*It was the weather, that stupid other driver, the road, or the car*" - to internal attribution - "*How did I cope with these situations?*" - without blaming (blaming invokes defence-mechanisms that stop learning) but pointing to their responsibilities as far as they are able to make them come true. This is very important; our attitude should not imbalance their not yet fully balanced self-assessment. This is not soft on risky behaviour but wise in learning.

5 Some catchwords on learning in the car and in group discussions on the video 'young drivers experience'.

Traffic skills consist of:

- Technical skills: knowing how to handle the car in different situations.
- Ego-skills: knowing which effect the car and the traffic has on self-management; directing your own energy; learning from your body, including your emotions; being master 'in' instead of 'over' yourself, etc. Plus the other way around: knowing how all kinds of emotions do influence your driving.
- Social Skills (traffic is social traffic under special conditions): empathy, communication, giving way, clear signs, steady in your track, reliability, etc.

5.1. Traffic is much more than efficient movement from A to B

Traffic is also an emotional arena: self-expression, trial, competition, compensation and so on. It's our task to help youngsters in learning from their traffic experience playing on their drives, understanding their emotions and feelings, enabling their higher mental facilities and helping them to neutralise blocking influences.

Most people learn from trial and error. Boys even more so than girls. And 90% of our

learning is not on purpose, but by experience, trial and error, examples, imitation or identification. Despite all kinds of campaigns there are still many road accidents with youngsters. Everybody has been in an accident or near-accident, has lost friends and relatives or found them back in a hospital. We may conclude that there is something blocking the learning processes in traffic. So we ask ourselves:

5.2. What is blocking their learning?

- Stress, above all caused by fear, overload and aggression (in traffic, or in the communication with the instructor or examiner)
- Propensity to high stimuli.
- Isolation and anonymity in their steel cages, invisibility, switching off social interaction by tinted windows or helmets on mopeds, motorcycles. The illusion of being mighty in their own car.
- Under- and overestimation of their own capabilities.
- Acted self-manifestation (as-if) instead of real self-manifestation.
- Compensation for low or not fitting challenges elsewhere.
- Bad examples of adult role models.
- Constant negative feedback emphasizing inabilities, degradation and humiliation.
- Extreme competition (e.g. to overcome low self-respect) leads away from self-reflection.
- Advertisement industry (fast cars!) stimulates primary emotions, tries to stop deliberate thinking and tries to compensate for not realised wishes by selling products.

5.2. What is stimulating their learning?

- Curiosity, eagerness to learn, widening horizons.
- Developing skills, being able to show skills and being confirmed in these.
- 'Being there', rest, harmony, calmness.
- A sense of 'self', also without action.
- Sound thinking, common sense.
- Wanting to survive (short and long term).
- Self-esteem.
- Being appreciated by others for what you are, instead of what you act.
- Being part of a positive social network, positive relations to adults and peers.
- Constructive values.
- Wanting to contribute, being asked to contribute.

5.3. Some developmental tasks in traffic, especially for young men

- Feeling part of it all (instead of "*Me against the rest of the world*" with the peergroup on one's back)
- Real self esteem
- Proportionate reactions
- Broad view instead of 'blind focus'
- Breath control (low deep breath) under stress conditions
- Development of empathy
- Social behaviour instead of merely self expression
- Able to be like water (part of the flow, flexible response to other traffic participants)
- Able to be like rock (knowing who you are and what you want; standing up to group pressure towards risky behaviour, bluff and bravado)

6 What you see is what you get . Traffic instructors are traffic-coaches.

The principles mentioned above and tested in the pilot can also be used in first phase

driving instruction. Traffic instruction offers nearly ideal situations to organise positive learning: 20-40 hours with a youngster in the car under sometimes calm and sometimes difficult traffic conditions. Most educationalists can only dream of so much one-to-one contact. Many fathers don't have so much significant communication with their sons or daughters at that age. And instead of embarrassing questions, driving instructors have something to offer what boys really want: a driving license, space, mobility, real life skills, attention, direct feedback. There is a hidden golden vein out there.

So following the course of this project we can actually revalue driving instructors in their job and give them - when needed, some do already an excellent job - training in feedback-principles and skills (not top-down teaching, but bottom-up learning). In society their profession has a low standing, while in reality these men and women are for many youngsters the only adults who have so much contact over a longer period. They can choose the situation that fits best with the already learned skills, can choose moments of silence and interaction. What is learned can be applied directly, effective feedback is possible, many situations can be repeated. Pupils are allowed to make mistakes, instructors can stop the car and look back: *"What happened? Why did I have to intervene?"*

In Holland we have a saying: *"The eye of the master makes the horse fat"*, or in nowadays ICT-speak: *What you see is what you get.* .. If you see in a pupil a dangerous boy and treat him alike, he may become a living risk on the road. If you see a learning boy, eager to master new skills, you may warn him for mistakes, but you'll reinforce his tendency to learn, and he will listen if you do it right... It's the interaction that matter's. Some instructors may operate on a commanding instruction level, but others are in fact real traffic-educationalists or can become so. In this training of instructors we build their profession on the zone of nearest development (Vygotsky):

Steering energy

Young people want to give meaning to their lives and look for boundaries. They like to test adults' integrity but still have difficulty in recognising authority. Competition and rivalry may boost outside orientation and pushes internal reflection aside. What really matters is finding your own meaningful way through life in cooperation with others. Correction is sometimes needed, but we can also support young men in their search for new paths. This means, first of all, being able to make contact, to listen and show appreciation, and also establishing boundaries, explaining them clearly and maintaining them, preferably with humour and a way out without losing face. No humiliation; nobody needs to be shown up. Genuine interest really works.

Learning is often a matter of falling down and getting up on your feet again. Limiting someone in what he is already able to do or judge, equals humiliating and/or creates laziness. Linking up with the qualities and abilities of a boy on the other hand confirms his self-esteem and makes him grow. Setting him a task that is bound to go wrong or will endanger himself or others leads to failure and flop. That is also humiliating or may lead to fear. It is more fit to limit him in those areas where he crosses his own boundaries and those of others by far and to support him in those things that are only just out of his reach unless he gets some help. That gives self-confidence and trust in the person who helps him grow in his abilities. Events that have not been coped with and negative experiences ask for help and support in finding words to name them or 'process' them some other way. Otherwise, the learning process stops and a knot develops or some hidden grudge or grief or even anger.

These principles can be applied in traffic education along the lines displayed in this pilot programme and are now gradually being implemented in new forms of driving instruction in the Netherlands. Anyway: the same principles as in working with youngsters apply to anyone who is participating in the project (instructors, managers, scientists, 'experts', including me...)

More info (see other pages on this site, backgrounds): www.laukwoltring.nl Questions? lauk.woltring@planet.nl All remarks are very much welcomed.

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[¹] CIECA Final Report on the evaluation of novice driver training schemes in 6 EU member states. 6-10-2004

[²] Amsterdam 15-1-2004 CIECA, NovEv-meeting A European Working Group on the novice drivers experiments in 7 European countries (see <http://www.cieca-drivinglicence.org/html/eng/engstart.htm> click on NovEv)

[³] Woltring.L. *Traffic education for youth at risk as part of road instruction in steps*, - commissioned by CBR The national Dutch Authority on driving licenses and a public/private Expertise centre for traffic safety

[⁴] Developed by ROVG Regional Board for Road Safety in Gelderland (a Dutch Province) and SWOV = Dutch Institute for Road Safety Research

[⁵] See e.g. the work of the neurobiologist and philosopher Antonio Damasio *Looking for Spinoza. Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (Heinemann London 2003), more specific derivations for boys and girls: Woltring (only in Dutch, see website), in English available: Michael Gurian, *Boys and Girls learn differently* San Francisco 2001

[⁶] The video-part of the Dutch Novice Driver Pilotproject, interaction strategies and the accompanying group discussion are developed along some lines that are very similar to those in the Rock and Water project (feeling and understanding your own movements, getting grip on your own movements and motives, also developing self-confidence, self-control, self-respect and aiming for safety, integrity and solidarity. See www.rotsenwater.nl (a bilingual site, click for English on The Gadaku Institute.

[⁷] In this view heated, psychopathic and/or always trespassing drivers, unable to develop some sane self-control, have to be met by police measures and are only under very special circumstances accessible for educational measures. Real madmen just have to be excluded from road traffic. Letting them go is a bad message to the risk group around these drivers.