

ECO BUILDING BECOMES A WINDOW TO KNOWLEDGE

*To know not only how to grow a flower, but also – where to place it
- this is the philosophy of the teachers at the Stoas University in the
Netherlands who will host the ENTER Study Days in 2014*

Nikolay Kanchev

Abstract. The article tells about Stoas University of Applied Sciences and Teacher Education – the Dutch university that is going to host the next ENTER Study Days. This is the only university in the Netherlands that train pedagogical specialists in the field of agriculture and eco technologies. Its new ‘green’ building symbolizes the openness towards light and people. It is important not only to grow, but also – where to place a flower – the Stoas teachers’ philosophy shows the attitude towards their students and the studying process.

Keywords: Stoas, agriculture, eco-friendly, education, rural, pedagogy, ENTER

Fungus Mykorrhiza’s mycelium crawls down the university floor throughout the whole building. Along the staircase it passes by halls and laboratories, not missing even the improvised classrooms specified in the lighten-up lobbies. The mystery is going to be revealed – it is a word about an architecture that symbolizes the openness towards light and people. Being the one of a kind in The Netherlands, the eco-friendly building of the Stoas University of Applied Sciences and Land Based Teacher Education is the only place in the Netherlands where you can attain pedagogical qualification in agriculture and eco technologies.

In fact, what the mycelium represents is a series of floor drawings. The reasoning behind the choice of mykorrhiza has to do with it being the uniquely useful to the symbiotic flora’s metabolism. It is also how we explain our code – the Stoas employees say – a code of a friendly and helpful society, making sense of completion to each other. Stoas teachers’ work philosophy lies not only in the knowledge of growing a flower, but also in knowing where to place it. The renowned philosophy stands not only towards the process itself, but also to the students.

Despite its small size compared to the Dutch standards, the University leaves you astonished by its outlook. Adding its eco friendliness, the building is quite



unusual. An architectural work of art - oval walls lacking the 90-degree angles of concrete, and window dressing of metal and glass eliminating the dark halls effect. The facade materials are also widely used in the whole structure and interior. Round the central atrium, there are classrooms on each floor. Some of them are 'out in the open'. It is not unusual to run into a group of students sitting down with their teachers round a long table literally in the lobby; or students laying on to the floor upon large cushions with laptops in hand spending their free time.

There are ordinary classrooms, too – mainly laboratories. A visitor will be amazed not only by the various teaching models, among which there is even an anatomic mock-up of a horse in realistic size, but also by the functionality of the rooms. For instance, a white-painted wall plays the role of a school board – you can write with a marker, show a presentation or stick objects using magnets. Some of the rooms are furnished with standard tables and chairs, others – with soft swivel armchairs. Everyone can find the comfortable surroundings in Stoas - for the time not required for outside practical lessons.

In order to graduate from Stoas, you have to attain certain amount of 'credits', adding to a solid preparation hand in hand to serious motivation for individual

work. For instance, in anatomy classes – the university claims to just ‘add up’ to the knowledge already gained in high school. The kind of specialists that graduate from Stoas are mainly vocational pedagogues, agriculture and ecology managers.

Didactics, pedagogy, team work, creating leadership skills – all these are university classes. Special attention is given to practical lessons. Along with Bachelor and Master degrees, you can graduate as an Associated Degree specialist. AD is the new educational degree to the European Union, also known as a Professional Bachelor degree. It gives the opportunity to work as a teacher’s assistant who helps through the practical lessons in high school. In spite of its fewer credit hours than the Bachelor’s, the AD is preferred by 50% of the Stoas students.

No need to be surprised by the statistics, having in mind the level of agricultural development in the Netherlands. Each and every one of the processes is mechanized or automatic. Along with the Construction Sector, the Dutch Agriculture lacks work hand mostly. It has been a long time since non-qualified employees were needed.

A ‘Green’ University

The round shape of Stoas building represents the infinity of the education cycle, the connection and coherence vision. And is planned in the most ecological possible





way there is. Vast windows and vents on top of the atrium let in maximum natural light. Most of the walls inside are covered in thematic photos such as a fragment of a sunflower or a bees' nest. Special eco-friendly and clean thermo pump system takes care of the heating and ventilation. The door numbers are made up of plenty of dots instead of thick lines. Researches show that the dot method is just as visible as the thick line, but uses 50% less paint. The architect has even thought about noise absorption by creating knotted ceiling.

ЕКОСГРАДА – ПРОЗОРЕЦ КЪМ ЗНАНИЕТО

Резюме. Статията разказва за Stoas – холандския университет, който ще е домакин на следващите ENTER Study Days. Това е единственият университет в Холандия, който обучава педагози в сферата на селското стопанство и еко технологиите. Новата му „зелена“ сграда символизира откритото отношение на академичния екип. Не е важно само да отгледаш, но и да знаеш къде да посадиш едно цвете – философията на преподавателите в Stoas показва отношението им към студентите и към учебния процес като цяло.

Nikolay Kanchev

✉ 125, Tzarigradsko Shose
1113 Sofia, Bulgaria
Email: n.kanchev@azbuki.bg