DIGITAL HANDBOOK FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES FOR SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Imprint

Content

Introduction

Community and school working together on sustainable devel-opment

Sustainable communities aim at a balanced and intregrated society, meeting the needs of existing and future generations and yet respecting those of other communities to make their communities sustainable as well. They are communities planned, built, or modified to promote sustainable living and working conditions. This may include environmental sustainability aspects relating to water, transportation, energy, waste and materials. It also relates to economics, education or governance (citizen involvement, equality, public services) The integration of all areas of sustainability - economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social equity/inclusion - are necessary for the creation of a sustainable community.

Each community is governed by a Local or Regional Authority. These authorities comprise both the selected section of a local government (elected officials or politicians) and the administrative authorities. Together they deal with the immediate community and its needs and are thus responsible for the sustainable development of the community. As such they provide services for school development such as giving and managing school budgets, transport planning and green spaces. In many countries this institution is responsible for providing public services, in some also for (some) schools.

Schools are central to the communities that they serve, and the issues that sustainable development brings about offer greater opportunities for them to develop closer relationships with the communities they are located in. They can enrich community development, by educating young people, initiating sports and leisure activities, integrating aspects of community living into the classroom and providing a venue for community based activities. However, schools are often located <u>in</u> communities but often not an integral part <u>of</u> communities. Teaching and learning is often disconnected from the day-to-day life of the community. Students do not see how the skills they acquire <u>in</u> school are useful at work, at home, in other communities <u>beyond</u> school. This can lead learners to perceive school learning as separate from life learning. This disconnect is reinforced by narrowly defined scientific ways of knowing that are separated from context and personal experience.

Successful school-community collaborations use the shared knowledge and expertise of those within the schools and the communities to both build lasting and mutually beneficial relationships and offer meaningful learning opportunities for young people and thus secure a good future for them locally. By creating learning environments with connected meaning for learners, students use science knowledge and skills to develop a sense of being able to make a difference in their community.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) promotes a systematic approach to sustainabality, empowering communities and building new networks and collaborations. By putting children and young people in the focus communities strive to become more sustainable.

> ESD1 is about promising changes in what we do; facilitating behaviours and ways of thinking. It is learning <u>about</u> sustainable development.

> ESD2 focuses on building capacity to think critically about (and beyond) what experts say and to test sustainable development ideas. This suggests that we explore the contradictions inherent in sustainable living. It is learning <u>as</u> sustainable development (Vare & Scott 2007).

A Guide for Local Authorities

Municipalities across Europe and the world are aware of the need for a transition towards a low-carbon society. They are faced with the challenges of providing quality of life and well-being for their citizens including stronger cohesion and citizen involvement, safer communities, improved health and well-being, tackling exclusion and promoting diversity, enhancing the local economy (jobs, effective public services) and securing environmental sustainability (resources, housing, transport).

At the same time most communities and their governing authorities are facing severe financial crises, resulting in dramatic budget cuts and less space to manoeuvre. In order to address these challenges, the need for transformative change is great and new 'businesses' and 'learning' models are emerging.

CoDeS *(www.comenius-codes.eu)* is a Comenius multilateral Network funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme from EU with a focus on school community collaboration addressing sustainability. The activities of the network aim at pro-

viding a European perspective on the processes of learning, value sharing and model and tool creation for successful collaboration. Based on partners' extensive experience and background in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), the network will produce, publish and disseminate a range of products useful for school and community stakeholders to translate into successful practice.

The CoDeS **Digital Handbook for Local Authorities** aims to contribute towards an improved understanding on how the transition towards sustainable local communities can be achieved through effective school-community collaborations. At the heart of this Guide are reallife experiences with school-community collaboration, mainly collected through the CoDeS partners' 360° blog *(https://codescases.word-press.com)*. A sample of rich descriptions of CoDeS cases, literature searches and valuable discussions and reflection among CoDeS partners in conferences and working meetings have added richness and relevance to the guide.

We hope that this Handbook is a helpful guide for local and regional authorities on how they may support and benefit from school-community collaboration for sustainable community development through rich insights and practical approaches, through illustrative examples of activities and projects based on the rich experience of CoDeS network partners.

The following guiding questions and themes (see Figure 1) serve as 'navigational chart':
*   **Why** is it important for local authorities and schools to collaborate?
*   **What** is being sought through the collaboration?
*   **How** can the collaboration process work and be supported?
*   **Who** are the key partners and stakeholders in the collaboration?
*   **When** are the best times to be active within the collaboration process?
*   **Where** are the best places to carry out collaborative sustainable development work?

Figure 1: Guiding Questions and Themes

WHAT? Areas & Actions

Creating Community Capital

Local Authorities actively looking to the future of their community can use different forms of community capital to measure current resources and identify the potential for improvements. Community capital is any type of resource or asset capable of producing additional resources within communities; the resources in a community that have the potential to be invested, saved, or used (Jacobs 2007).

- **Natural Capital** – the ecological stocks and flows that provide a yield of valuable goods and services as well as critical life support systems; i.e. the environment, natural beauty, lakes, rivers and streams, forests, wildlife, soil, the local landscape.
- **Cultural Capital** – shared experience through traditions, norms, values, heritage, and history; i.e. ethnicity, generations, stories and traditions, spirituality and habits.
- **Human Capital** – the competencies of individuals that facilitate the formation of personal (e.g. health), social and economic well-being; i.e. all the skills and abilities of people, leadership, knowl-edge, and the ability to access resources.
- **Social Capital** – the interpersonal interactions, networks and customs that contribute to stronger community fabric; i.e. groups, organizations, networks in the community and links to external communities, sense of belonging and bonds between people.
- **Political Capital** – the capacity of local municipal leaders to extend their authority, engage citizens and build local pride and trust; i.e. connections to people in power, access to resources, leverage, and influence to achieve goals.
- **Built Capital** – Material resources that can be used to produce a flow of future income; i.e. buildings and infrastructure in a community, schools, roads, water and sewer systems, and main streets.
- **Financial Capital** – the allocation of resources and materials from which society can withdraw interest or income; i.e. money, charitable giving, grants, access to funding and wealth.

Strengthening the forms of community capital is most effective when municipalities take a systems perspective to sustainable development; this entails recognizing the importance of the interconnections between the different capitals. Strengthening the forms of community capital is most effective when municipalities take a systems perspective to sustainable development.

Figure 2: Areas for Building Community Capital

Taking Action Fields

A community can contribute and benefit from school-community collaboration in many ways. This is an overview of concrete Action Fields followed by an illustration with exemplary CoDeS cases:

- (Agro)Ecology Food & drink – *urban gardening, school gardens*
- Land use and Planning – *participatory planning and design*
- Water – *cleaning river banks*
- Architecture, Buildings, Grounds – *citizen solar plant, green school yard*
- Cultural heritage – *restore historical building*
- Energy – *energy-efficient infrastructure, solar technology*
- Transport, Travel & Mobility – *safe way to school, bike-it, develop e-bikes*
- Work & Work Place – *skills & jobs through internships and training*
- Purchasing & Waste – *green purchasing of equipment*
- Social Inclusion – *intergenerational learning*
- Health & Local Well-being – *food & drink*
- Global and Active Local Citizenship – *democratic processes in youth parliaments*

Sources: CODES cases blog. Pitt (2009). DCSF (2008).

As with the different forms of capital, these Action Fields cannot be taken in isolation because they often interrelate to generate the new, emergent, forms of capital and, in consequence, have a different impact on different stakeholders. It should also be recognized that enhancing one form of capital e.g. community engagement in school through exercise or ICT will have implications for the amount of carbon generated by that school; this is important if the latter measure is not adapted to take account of the additional activity.

POLITICAL CAPITAL - Active engagement in democratic processes – Participatory planning
Engaging young people and children in political and social change are values that run through many successful sustainable development collaborations. Giving young people a voice in their future environment enables those with power now to engage and educate young people in the political system – thereby increasing social capital in the community.

The YOUNGSTERS MUNICIPALITY COUNCIL ('Consiglio Comunale dei Ragazzi') of the Paesana Municipality in Piemonte, Italy aims to develop youngsters' awareness and abilities to self-organize their free time with sport and music and other activities. The meetings of the board are held at school during school hours. Elections also take place in school, and sport activities usually take place in the school gym.

In the Norwegian city of Strange, the project 'CHILDREN'S TRACKS' developed out of a desire to involve children in local planning processes. The aim was to actively implement children's right to participate in local land use planning. Children mapped and reported how they used and experienced their local surroundings in order to find safe ways and places to play.

FINANCIAL CAPITAL & BUILT CAPITAL – Saving energy and costs

The 50/50 European Network of Education Centres *www.euronet50-50.eu* aims to create a European network of schools in favour of saving energy and fighting climate change. Schools are the ideal place to promote energy sustainability, ensuring that future generations consume energy responsibly and influence their families at the same time. The partners are local municipalities, agencies, and educational institutes. Based on Germany's experience the 50/50 concept includes economic incentives for saving

energy: 50% of savings achieved from the energy efficiency measures taken by the pupils and behaviour changes are returned by way of an economic transfer, while the other 50% will be a net saving on the bills for the body that pays them. The result is that everyone wins; the school improves its implementation possibilities, the authorities have less energy costs and society benefits due to the reduction in the environmental impact. 58 schools have been involved implementing 50/50 methodology and have achieved these results (2011): 6900 pupils, teachers, caretakers and 43 city councils working together towards tackling climate change; 70% of schools have achieved energy savings: 339 t less of greenhouse gases emitted, more than 1.100 MWh not used and 2.100 € saved per school.

The TEENERGY SCHOOLS project in Lucca, Italy has successfully implemented a multi-issues platform as an interactive Network for the gathering of a common data base and the dissemination of best practices regarding energy efficient retrofitting and new building of secondary schools in the Mediterranean climate context. A common Action Plan, Guidelines and several Pilot Projects resulted in the experimentation of energy saving techniques, integration of innovative materials and renewable energies, including passive cooling for reducing costs and consumption in the school buildings. *(http://teenergy.commpla.com)*

SOCIAL CAPITAL – Promoting social inclusion
Projects can bring diverse groups together in order to form a charter for inclusion in the locality. Inclusion is the key to the longevity of any ESD project, regardless of its focus, and thus contributes to leveraging social and human capital in the community.

SOCIAL INCLUSION in Wiener Neudorf, Austria
This project was borne out of the concern for the values of inclusivity and first drafted in 2006 with the goal of developing a 'culture of cooperation' within the educational institutions that make up the municipality. With an eye on the practical considerations of enabling transitions between institutions (e.g. kindergarten-school), a cooperative network was developed with all existing educational institutions (and future institutions) in order to establish an agreed 'Index for Inclusion' which is evident in the culture, structure and everyday practices of the schools.

CULTURAL CAPITAL - Intergenerational learning
School-community collaborative projects can also contribute to increasing cultural and social capital by fostering intergenerational understanding and learning:

> In the ORAL HISTORIES project German course–students in Bruchköbel, Germany produce literary or journalistic portraits of local citizens. This establishes contact and communication between young and old generations, between school and community and between school and community life experiences.

HUMAN CAPITAL – Learning science and securing employment
Learning science in ESD2 mode can also contribute to better understanding of abstract topics and technologies by locating them in, and applying them to, 'real world' world settings. Moreover, the training gained through internships or work placements may provide better qualifications and thus better job outlooks for participating students, in the future.

> In the UK, the BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE programme was motivated by a desire to reduce carbon emissions, with 15% of UK public sector emissions being attributed to schools. Alongside these environmental concerns, the intention to rebuild and renovate schools was based around concerns that these older buildings were not fit for education in the 21st Century. Researchers at De Montfort University identified the potential for the development of a 'real world' sustainable development education programme that could engage pupils in the planning of these new schools and wider science education in Leicester. As experts they collaborated with teachers and pupils, teaching them about the 'science' behind sustainable buildings, giving a voice to pupils who then worked with school designers on their vision for their new learning environments. Pupils, who took part in engagement activities during the planning sessions with PhD students, identified that their knowledge of science had increased. Alongside, teaching packages were developed and STEM Ambassadors were recruited and trained.

MATERIAL CAPITAL / BUILT CAPITAL - Designing energy-efficient infrastructure
The local implementation of national initiatives often requires that diverse groups work together, engaging children and young people in sustainability education. The development of a sustainability education initiative within the Building Schools for the Future, UK, to tackle energy consumption exemplifies how the global challenge of reducing carbon emissions can help form new working collaborations and opportunities for learning - in this case the challenge of designing and building a new energy-efficient school.

> Building Schools for the Future (BSF) was a nationwide programme initiated by the previous UK government to rebuild and refurbish all secondary schools in England. A project in Leicester engaged the school community in the science, engineering and technology of a low-energy school so that when they were asked to participate in the BSF process, pupils, teachers and governors would be in a better position to make informed decisions for their new schools.
>
> The collaboration of HILD SCHOOL'S INITIATIVE in West Hungary originated from summer camps where students of a vocational secondary school visited villages to learn about folk architecture and sustainability through drawing houses and making interviews with elder inhabitants. Later on, the project developed its own network involving local authorities, institutions responsible for reconstruction of old buildings and other schools (also from Austria) through which students got actively involved in the reconstruction of village houses in the region.

NATURAL CAPITAL – Greening the School Grounds
Many school-community collaborations for ESD aim at reducing the carbon footprint of schools as well as educating pupils about sustainability. Such activities can also contribute to increasing material capital (e.g. buildings) and social capital (e.g. new networks):

Small scale projects often develop through a desire to work together to improve a feature of the environment of pupils; from this opportunity for sustainability learning can develop. This can be seen in the commitment of one school in Romania to improve the school yard, working together to plan, develop and maintain a sustainable environment:

> A teacher in Cluj, Romania felt that by improving the school yard, pupils would play outside more and they could learn through the process of development. With their support, a collaboration was developed between teachers, pupils, a special 'after school' parents association and the Diakonia

Foundation for Life organization that supports disadvantaged children through after school programmes. The GREEN SCHOOL YARD showcases not only the commitments and talents of the staff, pupils and parents of the school but the impact of the support of school administrators in this process. With an eye on inclusivity, disadvantaged pupils were part of this collaboration.

WHY? Visions & Values

Building a project based on a strong vision and real local needs

A desire for change in a community can emerge for a variety of reasons, with education for sustainable development often being one aspect of a new initiative or a vehicle for other concerns. The desire for a pleasant place to play, concerns about waste water facilities or a wish for full educational inclusion inspire projects initiated by individual schools and groups around local, specific issues that have an impact on the daily well-being of pupils. Local concerns bring groups together and can inspire the type of vision and enthusiasm that sustains projects.

This can be exemplified by the Building Schools for the Future (UK) initiative, where academics worked with policy makers, teachers, students and architects to create a shared vision in the social context of real-life, and varied, problems and solutions.

The TEENERGY SCHOOLS project based in Lucca/Italy has successfully implemented a multi-issues platform as an interactive Network for the gathering of a common data base and the dissemination of best practices regarding energy efficient retrofitting and new building of secondary schools in the Mediterranean climate context. The Project operated from 2009 to 2011 in four countries of the Mediterranean (Italy, Spain, Cyprus and Greece) and pointed out the lack of energy saving benchmarks targeted to south Europe climatic conditions and the low energy efficiency of existing school buildings taking into account not only heating but also cooling needs.

A real and concrete issue is ideally framed within a common vision which evolves around the question „What can we contribute together to make our community and school a better place to live in, and work for, in the next 15 years?".

The vision of the NATIONAL PARK SCHOOL in Winklern, Austria is written down in its goals. Students understand that the national park plays a central role in the well-balanced, sustainable development of the region ecologically, socially, and economically. They also learn to value the natural and cultural heritage and are later prepared to accept responsibility for the region's future welfare. Pupils learn also about the relationships and tensions in the region, being a National Park that aims at protecting nature,

but at the same time being a living habitat and economic system where people live and work primarily through the practice of farming and tourism.

Supporting a shared vision and clear goals

A shared vision of both long and short term goals is essential and local authorities can facilitate this process. The following are issues to be considered:

- Where do we want to **make a difference**? **Why** is it important?
- What is it we want to **do together**?
- What are the **goals** that can only be reached through working together?
- What forms of **capital** could be utilised and promoted within a new collaboration?
- What **ideas** do we want to change?
- How can we create a **win/win situation** in which all stakeholders benefit?
- Is it appropriate to create a **mission statement**? If so, how do you ensure that this represents everyone's ideas?
- What are the **challenges** to creating a shared vision of an ESD project in our locality?

Respecting values and recognizing potential negative impacts

When planning and implementing a new collaboration, the impact on all stake-holders should be ad-dressed as well as the way in which sustainability issues interconnect, sometimes in contradictory ways (e.g. as with the previous example of enhanced community engagement and higher carbon).

> The BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE initiative in the UK showed that building new, sustainable, schools may have a negative impact on 'local well being' in the short term with the disruptions through noise and extra traffic to sites, whilst having a positive affect on the pupils involved in the decision making process.

WHO? Roles & Responsibilities

Complex problems require many types and sources of knowledge. A local authority is often one partner and an 'enabler' of successful collaboration.

The unique position of the Local Authority in supporting local schools as 'change agents'

A strong theme, a motivated initiator – the idea for projects can come from within the school (students, teachers, parents) or from within the local authority (council members, etc.). Ideas may also come from third parties who are active in out-of-school youth work or environmental movements.

In the majority of CoDeS cases motivated and engaged individuals raise issues and put forward suggestions for collaboration. Individual champions within schools and day care centres may identify problems or features of their work that they would like to change.

> The drive to develop greater levels of inclusivity came out of the ideas of two teachers who had attended a conference on inclusivity and identified that this could be a source of improved social and human capital in their own location. What started as a school-based initiative, turned into a widely accepted and recognized SOCIAL INCLUSION PROJECT in the community of Wiener Neudorf, Austria.

This type of 'grassroots' bottom-up development will be led by steering groups of local stakeholders, such as enthusiastic teachers, parents, pupils and local interest groups. They may seek support from local and national officials as the project develops, in terms of funding, promotion and organization, driven by a passion and commitment for change (see chapter "HOW?" below).

Local Authorities are in the position to support initiatives that use sustainability issues as a means of supporting both education and community cohesion. They have sometimes major, sometimes minor roles in many school community colla-borations for ESD. Most frequently they act as 'enablers' by providing funding and other resources or 'brokers' by linking schools to localor (inter)national activities and partners and making results visible. Less frequently they act as a 'client' for school ESD science projects. Yet there are certain things that only a Local Authority can

do and thus policy-makers and decision-takers can take active leadership. These **unique competences** are to **govern** and **steer** their community. In the context of School-Community collaboration for Education for Sustainable Development this may relate to
- **encouraging participation in democratic processes**, e.g. by engaging young people in dialogue to inform about the practice and workings of local politics (power, limits of resources, etc.)
- **integrating outcomes in planning and strategy** (‚mandate‘), e.g. by taking over the results of a low-carbon building prototype into buildings regulations, zoning & planning.

Enjoy the benefits - beware of obstacles

The implementation of actions within ESD projects contribute to improving welfare and well-being in and with the community. Though some politicians may fear relinquishing control through the distribution of responsibility and leadership, they can learn a great deal from students and teachers and also benefit from a better image in society through the support of inclusive practices in governance and politics. Thus they reach out to future voters.

School-community collaborations need to build and maintain trust to work effectively. Thinking and acting beyond short-term election cycles and party politics is necessary, otherwise acts of political allegiance or misuse of political power will most certainly backfire.

> Within the SOCIAL INCLUSION PROJECT in the community of Wiener Neudorf, Austria an all-partisan platform was founded to make sure that the project can flourish beyond party politics.

Encouraging distributive leadership

Working with experts, professionals and other highly enthusiastic people in mixed teams requires the alignment of differences in style of communicating and in the processes of participation and decision making. At the heart of such a collaborative endeavour must be empathy and a 'sense of audience'.

"The biggest hurdle to take is the difference in speed of deciding and working. Companies (and we as RCE) tend to plan, negotiate and act in a short span of time, whereas

local authorities (and many schools too) tend to plan, negotiate, plan, talk, deliberate, wait and discuss again before they act." OPEDUCA Rhine Meeus, Netherlands.

Distributive leadership spreads decision-making authority throughout the project team, creating a flatter, more representative governance structure. This raises efficiency and effectiveness which can be supported by the Local Authority.

Local Authorities often also encourage transparency and accountability by acknowledging the tension between individual goals and joint vision or by raising ethical questions. Are motivations and intentions authentic rather than profit-oriented? Do activities focus only on "showcases"; are they truly sustainability-oriented?

Mobilizing useful collaborators and stakeholders

Change does not happen overnight. Building effective and lasting partnerships takes time and an effective team. Local authorities and community leaders such as a member of the school board or chamber of commerce can help in generating attention and lining up prospective partners.

Local Authorities also tend to have information about and access to useful collaborators with time and skills to act as mentors such as citizen groups, (post)graduate students with research skills and an interest in the project theme, parents of the young people involved in the project, and retired experts interested in science and sustainability communication.

Whereas NGOs are usually easy to draw in, businesses or the media are harder to reach. How-ever, establishing contacts with businesses and researchers, and utilizing them as key educational resources, can be invaluable within school-community collaborations.

> Engagement activities, such as those used within the BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE project in the UK, did not only engage young people but also offered opportunities for media promotion. The promise of positive public relations can be used to engage these more challenging stakeholders.

Local authorities are often in charge of vital infrastructure systems and services such as water, energy, and transport system in the community. Public utility companies in charge of the construction and maintenance, management and delivery of services can inform about relevant 'sustainability' related issues, and thereby raise raise interest interest in them and an appreciation about their importance for the community. They can also provide, not only state-of-the-art technology and knowl-edge, but 'hands-on' ESD learning opportunities for students in a student-centred school business co-operation project (e.g. gathering data on energy use and potentially supporting carbon and financial savings for schools). Last but not least public utility companies can provide local traning and job opportunities for young people.

> Professionally trained National Park Rangers in the national park community WINKLERN in Austria inform and guide the students during the outdoor programme „Nature-Sports-Fun" where the students spend some days in the national park. After some courses the pupils have the opportunity to become a "Junior National Park Ranger".

Other important stakeholders in school-community collaborationis can be local and national policy-makers and local authorities can be instrumental in providing quick access to these, securing their commitment and alleviating bureaucratical hurdles when it comes to issuing permits or authorizations.

It is important for project participants to understand the roles and responsibilities of the political process (e.g. the role played by officers as opposed to elected offi-cials) and how best to address and to engage with these different actors; this may differ considerably between cultures and contexts.

Schools often feel "lost in translation" when dealing with government departments. This may be due to a lack of flexibility in the bureaucratic system, a lack of cham-pions and/or resources to undertake the process or inadequate experience of such communication and collaboration with schools, and vice-versa. Local authorities may also help schools get in contact with relevant technical service departments within the municipality and thereby help to overcome the silos of departmental and "expert / specialist" thinking.

WHERE? Places & Spaces

School buildings and grounds can provide an excellent location and space for the school community collaborations that seek new ways to educate their students and other local stakeholders about sustainability issues. In so doing they can also make significant practical improvements to both the school and community environments.

> Within the BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE project in the UK, collaboration took place both inside and outside schools; for example 'inspirational visits' motivated key stakeholders and maintained engagement. Within the project stakeholders of all levels were involved in the planning of environmentally friendly schools. Events also took place in a variety of school and community locations with and information was shared among all stakeholders encouraging community involvement and enhancing a sense of inclusion.

Nevertheless, the wider community can be utilized as an attractive out-of-school learning environment. A local authority can facilitate the process of moving colla-boration out of schools and into the community. Locations are often chosen because of geographical proximity and existing contacts.

In terms of collaboration, public spaces such as community halls, council buildings, city learning centres, libraries, etc. provide excellent meeting venues. Public and private companies as well as universities and research centres can also provide out-of-school learning environments (e.g. laboratories).

> SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION IN WASTE-TO-RESOURCE MANAGEMENT in Malaysia provides an opportunity for knowledge developed through university research to be implemented in schools as a response to everyday problems faced in real life. One success story during the process of implementation of waste-to-resource management activity carried out in schools based on research conducted in university included the positive influence on the school canteen operator to provide organic waste for composting. Some students also started to implement waste-to-resource management at home. Collaboration with the university has been supported by the state education departments and has raised the school's standing in the eyes of the local community.

Many projects use outdoor spaces for the mainstay of their project work, such as parks, rivers and lakes.

> Within the outdoor programme "Nature-Sports-Fun" pupils in the national park community WINKLERN in Austria spend some days in the National Park (NP) and are guided and taught by park rangers. Leaving the traditional teaching environment "school" and make use of the "learning environment nature" in front of the classroom's door, pupils can experience the fascinating nature of the NP region with all senses. Thus, the learning environment created covers the knowledge passed on by teachers and NP rangers, and the reflective insights derived from practical, action oriented approach.

WHEN? Challenges & Critical Phases

Giving credibility and legitimation in the launching phase

In the beginning of a project, local Authorities can give credibility and legitimation by acknowledging their goals and expected impact. This can be required as a formal necessity to carry out the cooperation (e.g. funding requirements) but is more often an informal "entry ticket" to engage with larger institutions and corporations.

Helping turn ideas into projects

A project has a goal which may be the result but also the process leading towards it. It has a start and an end, and it needs resources, time and money. Utilising the knowledge of stakeholders enables grassroots ideas to develop into systematically planned projects. Experience shows that local authorities can contribute to the planning of such collaborations by encouraging the setting of, and providing their own, clear personal and collective goals (both explicit and implicit ones). Clear planning helps to communicate goals and monitor progress. It is also important for all partners involved - organizations and/or individuals - to agree on the learning objectives, expectations, and time commitment for each project or partnership, for instance:
- What skills and knowledge should students, teachers, planners etc. attain?
- How often will they meet and for how long, and is there a final project involved?
- What is expected in terms of behaviour and responsibilities?

Many projects draft simple contracts that spell out each partner's expectations over time in a few sentences and some do not need formal agreements:

> This is the case in Winklern in the National Park Hohe Tauern in Austria because the collaboration grew over a long period of time and at the initial workshop expectations and obligations were clarified and aims were set.

Maintaining the momentum

Though politicians, principals and professionals may change, with a strong commitment from all institutions and a concrete cooperation structure with nominated key persons on each side, projects can maintain momentum.

Joint planning – the support from external moderation, and ongoing communication in a working group, were key to keeping the NATIONAL PARK WINKLERN project alive. For this purpose, the existing communication channels of the school were used as it was the only secondary school in the region and maintained good relations with the local authority.

Within the BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE the project hosted regular events to celebrate its success; these were organised at various stages of the project to ensure that interest was maintained.

Many projects successfully use social media to maintain discourse, interest and potentially build interest as the project develops. It is essential that this communication is two way and that any feed-back to, or interaction with, authority (local authority, project management, school governors etc.) is meaningful.

The Educational Policy of LEGAMBIENTE, the larger Environmental NGO in Italy, has been based from its start on the relationship between school community as the necessary component of whatever cultural and environmental development. In recent years the sustainability of the school building has been chosen as the focus of different but complementary initiatives. Legambiente utilizes various popular social media channels *(e.g. https://www.facebook.com/legambiente.onlus)* to communicate with the wider interested public.

Sustaining the collaboration

One off events and cooperative projects may act as catalysts for community improvement with practical outcomes and benefits; they may serve as 'entry points' for longer-term partnerships. However, if poorly executed (e.g. through the 'blind pursuit' of targets rather than the meaningful engagement with stakeholders) trust can be compromised jeopardizing the potential for collaboration into the future!

PARTNERSHIP

PROJEKT

EVENT
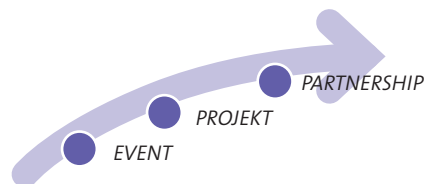
Long-term collaboration and partnerships between schools and community members that are intentionally organized to investigate problems of practice and implement solutions for improving community development (adapted from Coburn et al. 2013). In order to extend the cooperation beyond the project's life time, the following issues need to be taken into consideration:

• Partnerships are founded on the principles of shared interest and mutual benefit, working as an active network of exchange.
• Cooperation is embedded in school development (curriculum) with students as active partners.
• Cooperation is embedded in community development e.g. economic prosperity, social cohesion, ecology, built environment.
• An awareness of the political cycle (election times, topics for debate and the timing for policy formulation and implementation etc.) and the impact that this can have on the type and extent of support provided by both elected members and officers is important.

HOW? Resources & Responsibilities

Local Authorities can open doors and build bridges among diverse people and interests in projects and partnerships. They can find and 'deliver' attractive (genuinely interested) partners and their competencies.

Providing funding and professional support

Local authorities can provide cash and equipment as well as other non-cash resources for school-community collaborations. They can also approach businesses to donate and contribute in various ways. Local policy makers not only have access to knowledge about other funding sources, they have the professional organizational know how to provide administrative and technical project management support.

"Schools are constrained for several reasons. These could be financial but are often due to a risk-avoiding at-titude. Another critical issue is communication e.g. schools often ignore their e-mails and fail to respond to questions asked. This slows down the organizational process and the progress of the work that should be done." OPEDUCA Rhine Meuse, Netherlands.

Many projects require considerable administrative and technical support and a local authority may have useful management skills in this area. This ranges from office and secretarial support to assistance with proposal writing, specialist knowledge of land management and purchase issues to knowledge of risk assessment processes.

> The GREEN SCHOOL YARD Project in Cluj, Romania flourished when the local municipality offered its' adminstrative support. A small scale project such as this that aimed to improve the school grounds required the expertise of local administrators to move it beyond the ideas stage.
>
> Within the BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE (UK) project, the local authority helped set the environmental standards of the planned buildings, helped to select the consortium and helped with advice on tenders during the planning process. This can be a win/win situation, however, in terms of knowledge transfer, as academic experts were able to advise the city council about the science behind the building of carbon neutral schools.

Increasing the visibility of the project and its results

Local Authorities can provide the resources and knowledge to increase the visibility of ESD projects. In turn, they receive publicity and recognition for work in their area beyond their own community and create wider networks with neighbouring communities. Concrete activities include:

- Sharing successes with a larger audience of **interested public** on local/ national websites.
- Showcasing the project to **visitors** and dignatories as an exciting feature of your area.
- Connecting with regional **media**.
- Disseminating progress about the project in school and council **newsletters** regularly.

Promoting participation in networks and campaigns

School-community collaborations often evolve out of wider societal or global concerns but focus in on local issues. As global organizations such as the United Nations begin to legislate for environmental sustainability, more opportunities will emerge for local communities to tackle sustainability issues on their doorstep. Groups of 'local' experts who form part of global networks can develop new tools to tackle local challenges as well as providing funding opportunities for local initiatives.

> The city of Espoo was elected as a member of the UN University´s 'REGIONAL CENTRES OF EX-PERTISE (RCE) on Education for Sustainable Development' global network. This group focuses on what they identified as local concerns: to integrate sustainability into the everyday practices of day-care services and schools, increase the expertise of teachers and day care workers through training/access to resources and educate and engage all citizens in sustainable development.
>
> The long-term purpose of the campaign CO2NNECT – CO2 on the way to school *http://www.co2nnect.org* is to improve the understanding and practice of Education for Sustainable Development. To achieve this, schools are offered an international, internet-based school activity in which schools,

researchers and local decision-makers cooperate on the topic of CO_2 emissions from local transport. Schools are encouraged to work closely with local authorities, parents, businesses, organisations or other stakeholders during the project. Students could investigate what policies or programmes the school or community already have for transport and climate gas emissions before presenting and discuss their findings and exploring how the local transportation systems could be made more sustainable.

Monitoring progress and reflecting impact

A signed contract does not guarantee a smooth running project; partners need to establish regular communication about 'perceived' progress with students, mentors, and supervisors at the project site. Self-evaluation encourages reflection and the individual and collective documentation of thoughts about the progress of a project (what is going well, what can be improved and how it may continue?).

Reflection during various stages of a project is essential to provide opportunities for learning. Conferences and workshops can be useful forums through which reflection can take place; they can also build social capital, get others interested in the project and reassess goals. Many projects were phased, allowing for reflection; this is where steering groups can be very helpful providing guidance about issues such as:
- Are resources being used optimally? Does the project require new resources?
- Have the goals of the project shifted? If so, is this change positive? Do the goals of the project still represent all stakeholders?
- Can new collaborators be brought into the project?

(Self)evaluation tools tools can be provided at various stages of a project. The very nature of an ESD project means that you are probably in for the long term. A Local Authority may have the skills and resources to:
- Disseminate evaluation tools such as online questionnaires
- Organize focus groups
- Arrange visits
- Review the project literature

All activities should be co-created and act as tools for reflection and more, most, importantly – celebration!

Interested to learn and do more?

The CoDeS Cases Blog at *www.comenius-codes.eu*

SUSTAIN.NO - Your ICT platform for collaboration at *www.miljolare.no/en/codes*

References

Bouillion L.M., Gomez L.M. (2001)
Connecting school and community with science learning: real world problems and school-community partnerships as contextual scaffolds. Journal of Research in Science Teaching 38 (8): 878-898.

Brown J.S., Collins A., Duguid P. (1989)
Situated cognition and the culture of learning. Educational Researcher 18: 32-42.

Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur (2008)
Kooperation zwischen Schulen und Gemeinden – erfolgreich, nachhaltig, innovativ. Available at
http://www.fairnessaward.at/content/docs/BMUKK-Flyer_Kooperation-endg.pdf

Coburn C.E., Penuel W.R., Gell K.E. (2013):
Research-practice partnerships: a strategy for leveraging research for educational improvement in school districts. William T. Grant Foundation, New York, NY.

DCSF (2008)
Sustainable Schools Framework.
http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools/framework/framework_detail.cfm.

Jacobs, C (2007)
Measuring Success in Communities: Understanding the Community Capitals Framework. White paper, South Dakota State University.

Lave J.L., Wenger E. (1991)
Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pitt J. (2009)
Blurring the boundaries – STEM education and education for sustainable development. Design and Technology Education: An International Journal 14 (1): 37-48.

Maliene V., Durney-Knight N., Sertyesilisik B., Malys N. (2012)
Challenges and Opportunities in Developing Sustainable Communities in the North West of England. Challenges 2012 (3): 133-152; doi:10.3390/challe3020133

SE2, Severn Wye Energy Agency, Margaret Fleming, Groundwork Leicester and Leicestershire (2008)
Education on Climate Change and Sustainable Energy in Secondary Schools in England. How Stakeholders Can Help. A report prepared for the Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes.