

Sustainability in Schools
Germany – Finland co-operation seminar 3.4.2007
(see www.umweltschulen.de/audit/duesseldorf/finland.html)

Summary of the workshop results

Group 1

Coordinator Erkka Laininen

Group work 1a; Participation and influencing of pupils in school

What:

- Arranging special schooldays
- Pupils' associations & clubs
- School leaders & teachers listen to pupils' needs
- Courses
- Meals
- Trips
- Break time activities
- School rules
- Projects
- Teaching methods
- Taking care of the environment near the school
- Cleaning the school yard
- Planting flowers
- Planning new school yard

Why:

- It's important to be heard and say one's own opinions
- Democracy
- School is for the pupils
- Studying active citizenship
- It makes pupils learn at deeper level
- Important for school spirit
- Should be open dialogue – every voice deserves to be heard
- Empowerment
- Helps to size up the big picture

How:

- Students parliaments or committees in decision making
- Working together with teachers, staff and the outside world
- A part of a course
- Environmental group
- A part of education -> participative methods
- Student council
- Ask opinion always when possible
- External financing from e.g. local company
- Co-operation with external partners
- Dialogue between students, teachers and other school staff

Group work 1b; Participation and influencing of teachers and staff in school

WHAT:

- When staff participate they get the feeling that the project is their own → their opinions are heard by others and taken into consideration
- Direct participation is needed instead of, or in addition to representative democracy
- Deciding what projects we take or what aspects of curriculum we emphasize and how

WHY:

- Important for motivation
- Empowerment
- Readiness to act
- Because of the sustainability of development and the climate change
- We cannot miss any opinion → there could be goldmines!
- Because the staff need to feel that their opinion is of importance, which leads to greater engagement
- Engagement of the staff has effect on students
- It's important to be heard and say one's own opinions
- Democracy
- School is for pupils
- Studying active citizenship

HOW:

- Discussing with students about important things
- Discussion
- Weekly lesson about important things in the class
- Project management
- Shared jobs, shared responsibility

Group 2.

Coordinator: Eeva Hämeenoja

2a. Responsible behaviour in school: what and how?

What:

Ecological responsibility in school and in the society

- Recycling, waste prevention and waste management
- Minimising consumption
- Care for today, care for tomorrow
- Learning to live moderately, making responsible choices
- No litter in nature
- Collective responsibility for the environment
- Eco-Identity is created (People as part of nature), love for nature

- Individuals should see themselves as part of a bigger picture → the school → society

Social responsibility in school and in the society

- Learning to live in peace with each other
- Pupils manage their own conflicts
- Children are allowed (and encouraged) to teach adults
- Common goals to which everyone is committed

How:

Set a good example

- Act and teach the same way, teachers (and other adults) as good models and examples
- Finding good models (adults, other students, celebrities etc.)
- Reward responsible behaviour: make the responsible ones heroes!
- Give the young ones some idols who act responsibly

Awareness and knowledge of the effects of one's own choices

- Considering the effects of your choices → knowledge
- More communication about responsible behaviour
- Students need to see the consequences of their actions, both positive and negative

Encourage responsible behaviour in school's own culture

- Grow with the tasks
- Clear responsibilities at school: who is responsible for what
- Interfere whenever pupils' abuse, bullying or other violations of rules or the environment is noticed
- Make school common rules WITH the pupils and staff, and make sure that everyone knows them
- Debates about what responsible behaviour means (views of the adults and views of the students)
- Pupils need arrangements for trying (and practicing) responsible behaviour

Responsibility through emotions and experiences

- More outdoor education and more contact with nature to promote environmental sensitivity
- Responsibility towards nature through emotional trainings
- Knowledge + affect + emotions & experiences → responsible behaviour

2b. Mutual respect and tolerance: what and how?

What:

- Get to know other cultures and history → roots and backgrounds
- Different religions
- Same (human) rights despite the differences
- Make different interests visible
- Learning to understand the characteristics of different people
- Everyone has a chance to express his/her opinions
- Listening to others viewpoints and trying to understand also opinions that are different from one's own opinions
- Almost everything except violence and racism
- Taking care of disabled students
- To learn to value myself and others
- Everyone has the right to be himself/herself, but not to offend others
- We all have some constitutional rights, e.g. a right to feel safe among other people

How:

- Debate exercises: to first see the opposite points of view, then to change sides and to defend the point of view that is opposite to your own
- Class tutors spend more contact time with their pupils
- Professional training opportunities for teachers in welfare are needed
- Welfare support in school (e.g. nurse, psychologist)
- Listen to the others
- Try to understand others
- Talk about your own thoughts, aspects and feelings
- The teaching groups (classes) should not be too big
- International school exchange (e.g. Comenius programme)
- To learn about the countries where other students (in the class) come from
- Co-operation with different groups in school: headmaster, teachers, students, management
- Co-operation with/between different people
- To discuss environmental and cultural issues, and try to understand why people have different opinions & where they come from
- To give each other the time and space to express themselves and accept their different starting points in communication
- Meet and interact with representatives or different minority groups – consider life from their points of view

Group 3:

Coordinator: Risto Tenhunen

Group work 3a: Schools role to society (output)

LOCAL LEVEL

- Co-operation with local companies
- The city education department
- Communication
- Children's opinions to city planning; co-operation with planners and architects
- Meeting with elderly people, e.g., walk in parks, elderly people as "experts", school visits
- Waste recycling system in municipality
- To cook for homeless people
- Children educate parents
- Pupils as sustainability agents bringing the message to homes
- New ideas to society from schools
- Example about how different people can work together
- Parents, information
- Advising younger children is SD issues and achievements
- Inviting pupils in social projects in the community (nursing home,...)
- Nearby schools like church, firms
- Students can bring outside VIP's (e.g. city administration) "back to bottom/roots"
- Food shops, pupils advice consumers in SD
- Engaging parents, helping with "environmental problem projects"

NATIONAL LEVEL

- Co-operation / consulting with other schools
- Well-educated people / active citizens
- Media, board of education, government
- Voluntary working days
- To share new knowledge /information

GLOBAL LEVEL

- Co-operation with other schools on local, national and international level
- Project for better understanding of world, especially so called "third world"
- The UN and EU

Group work 3b; Stakeholders' role to school (input)

LOCAL LEVEL

- Support to school in different ways
- Expertise (environmental protection, town planning)
- Parents' sponsoring
- Respect
- Company as a sponsor (knowledge, resources)
- Encouraging the school to participate in local activities
- Associations and local companies inform about their work / activity, and how it can effect pupils or the environment in a positive or a negative way
- Taking part in the decision making on the municipal level
- Information of stakeholders' requirements concerning SD issues

NATIONAL LEVEL

- Project funding
- Cooperation with external partners increases the general interest towards school's operation
- Input can be positive "disturbance" because of other viewpoints, work methods, and cultural backgrounds

GLOBAL LEVEL

- Use of fair trade products
- School trips to foreign countries increase students' tolerance, knowledge and language skills
- A serious reason to learn foreign languages
- Co-operation on every level with other organisations (Information, visitors)

Group 4: Students' workshop

Coordinator: Kati Lundgren

What is sustainable development in school from the students' point of view?
How can students participate in the schools SD activities?

(Coordinators comment: many issues mentioned on mind maps answered to both questions: *what* and *how*)

4a. General education (basic education and upper secondary school)

Sustainable development

- Energy saving
 - o heating
 - o switching off the lights
- Recycling
 - o waste prevention and recycling in e.g. planning the school parties and celebrations

- recycling together
- General attitude → responsibility
 - knowledge
- The atmosphere in school
 - common trips and activities
- To learn to know other countries cultures
 - students can tell and share their own experiences
 - study trips to other countries
- Communication with other schools
 - locally and globally
 - Idea: Environmental competition together with other schools. The competition could take place in nature and could include camping in tents overnight. Competing in teams where different school are represented in each team.

4b. Vocational education (VET and polytechnics)

Sustainable development

- Cultural and social aspects
 - Comenius projects
 - friendship schools
 - information channels (e.g. intranet, e-mails, video conferences) → more communication
- Ecological aspects
 - events that promote environmental awareness
 - saving resources
 - waste management
 - on-site learning
 - information channels (e.g. intranet, e-mails, video conferences) → material savings and less need to travel
- Economical aspects
 - energy saving
 - material saving
 - business co-operation (projects)
 - Information channels (e.g. intranet, e-mails, video conferences) → savings in material and travel costs
- School culture
 - Participation
 - environmental workgroup
 - feedback: students ← → teachers
 - Good learning environment
 - Open mindedness
 - Equality

Some conclusions from the coordinator:

- Focus still rather strongly on ecological aspects
- The school atmosphere was brought up in both groups – in group a. common activities in school was emphasised (common trips, organising events etc.)
- Students brought themselves up the networking and co-operation locally and globally with other schools and other organisations (in vocational group also co-operation with enterprises was mentioned), for the younger generations the networking seems to be already a very natural thing
- The innovative idea of the environmental competition by the group a. was a great example of SD in school, combining both ecological, cultural and social aspects of SD, combining both knowledge, experience and emotional levels of learning, combining all three aspects of environmental education (by Palmer) and also promoting ecological, social, communicational and organisational skills, when organised and planned with students. I certainly hope this project could one day be realised!!