



SCHOOL LABS FRAMEWORK

1. PARTICIPATION

Promoting effective participation in public life is a prerequisite for a peaceful and democratic society, is useful and increasingly necessary in a context where there are more and more variables and interests to be taken into consideration for those who have to administer the public thing.

ActionAid believes that drafting decisions together with people directly involved, helps to respond to the real needs of citizens and to mediate between different needs that sometimes become the cause of conflicts. The most prepared interlocutors to provide qualitative answers for their territory are its inhabitants. Furthermore, deciding together is also useful for strengthening the bonds between people and for creating communities that are more active and resilient to external threats.

Since the 1990s, "participatory experiments" - some of which have been codified today - have spread rapidly in the European context: local Agenda 21, health plans, participatory urban planning experiences (eg. European Awareness Scenario Workshop, planning for real, Charrette), participatory budgets, municipal councils for children and young people and e- democracy, are just some of the many examples of experiences that have been successfully conducted so far (Ciaffi, Mela, 2006). These interesting experiences are still too episodic and experimentally to present a common framework to refer to.

ECOS' (WP leader) main expertise is on the development of participatory-based projects in the field of education and youth aiming at creating spaces of learning and development among different stakeholders and at promoting youth and civic participation. ECOS has been working with the youth and public-school sectors supporting the development of new educational approaches, more inclusive and enhanced learning and working environments, where the participants take an active role as actors of their own learning process.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability for ActionAid and ECOS concerns those public and private entities that make decisions for the community. Specifically, it refers to the duty on the part of these subjects to give an account to citizens regarding the choices made, the results obtained and the related consequences.

This principle therefore recognizes the right of the community to be informed about decisions, to criticize them and to have answers from decision-makers. Decisions and reasons should be made public, so that there are possibilities for communication, criticism and contradictory. At the same time, we believe that the process of making decisions should be open at all the stages to the ones that will be influenced by it, so we believe in an open and structured process of dialogue between the individuals, civil society and decision makers

For the partners, the concept of accountability is the basis of the right to change, a fundamental approach to fight against poverty and social exclusion, in the North as well as in the South of the world. Accountability consists of three main elements: participation, responsibility and transparency. Responsibility means good management, both public and private, in line with the obligations and commitments made. Transparency is the possibility for anyone to find information and data, in order to verify what has been said and done by the institutions. Participation, finally, means that all decisions are the more effective as they mature through a common and shared path, which enhances the possibility of people



(and especially of the most excluded and marginalized) to be able to express themselves and play an active role in influencing, monitor and evaluate the actions that impact on the community.

3. METHODOLOGIES FOR SCHOOL LABS

The ludic-didactic activities promoted in the school laboratories are based on active didactic methodologies, in order to:

- develop different and more autonomous learning processes (by discovery, by action, by problems);
- guarantee a flexible training offer (so as to adapt it to the peculiarities of the class);
- promote the interest and motivation of students (especially adolescent students).

We always use techniques that actively involve the student in the learning process which are characterized by:

- an active participation of the students (referring to their daily life);
- constant control over learning and self-assessment (monitoring tests, but also questions and requests for feedback on the spot);
- situational training (it favours reflection and sharing and);
- group training;

To encourage the participation of students and a critical acquisition of knowledge and skills, among the methodological techniques used in formal and non-formal teaching, we generally favour:

- **Simulation techniques, including role playing for the interpretation of behaviours and situations:**

The role playing is the simulation of the behaviour and attitudes generally adopted in real life. Students must take on the roles assigned by the teacher/educators and behave as they think they would actually behave in that situation. This technique therefore has the aim of acquiring the ability to play a role and to understand in depth what the role requires, understanding different perspectives and way of thinking.

- **Analysis of the situation by using real cases:**

The case study technic consists of the detailed description of a real situation. It is intended to develop in students the analytical skills necessary to systematically deal with a complex situation. The situation to be examined may also concern a problematic case, but we must not forget that the objective of this technique is not only to solve a problem, but especially to learn to deal with situations and problems and to identify them.

The description is given to students who study the case individually and then discuss it in a group, thus multiplying the alternating approaches to the case itself. In addition to the development of analytical skills, the case study method also presents other important training aspects, if used as a group technique. The interaction between the students, in fact:

- it promotes the knowledge, discouraging from making simplistic judgments;
- it allows to understand how the same situations or problems can be evaluated differently by different people;
- it allows to break down easy generalizations, useful only as individual defences;
- sensitizes and shapes interaction and discussion by creating conditions that facilitate better mutual understanding;
- highlights the difficulties presented by thinking about a real problem and reaching a possible group solution.

- **Research and documentation on *the web* and on the field, such as qualitative or quantitative interviews:**



Through the method of discovery, the students are gradually led to discover for himself what he wishes to know through a constant and active involvement in research and interpretation. With this action-research, students understand the complexity of the systems in which people intervenes.

- Use of technology and communications tools (eg. Video, photograph):

All reproduction techniques (such as video, photography, writing an article for a newspaper) allow students to get excited about a project, to acquire technical knowledge, to experiment with their own aptitudes.

- Cooperative learning:

Cooperative learning is a didactic-educational method of learning consisting of the cooperation between the students, each of whom makes his knowledge and skills available to the group. Cooperative learning is very effective not only on the cognitive level, but also as regards the activation of positive socio-relational processes, each component, in fact, increases students' self-esteem, they take responsibility for learning processes, grow in social skills, learn to cooperate to achieve a common goal.

“Neighbourhood walking” is a participatory method that can be used as an "active listening" technique of the territory. The laboratory *outputs* are always designed to be shared on social networks so as to promote the use of technologies (in particular twitter and Instagram), but also to be communicated and disseminated externally, in particular to parents or other schoolmates.

4. PEER EDUCATION

“Peer Education” is an educational approach that makes students the active subjects of their training, involving them in a completely different if compared to traditional training methods. With Peer Education, in fact, it is no longer adults who transfer content, values, experiences: it is instead the young people themselves who confront each other, exchanging points of view, reconstructing problems and independently imagining solutions, while knowing that they can count on the collaboration of experienced adults. Peer Education, in this sense, exploiting the strong ability of young people to transmit knowledge to their peers, has shown to be a valid and effective tool, able, among other things, to develop and strengthen the cognitive and relational skills of individuals and at the same time to enhance the educational function of the group, making the class itself a resource for learning, a tool for growth and change.

In this way, students become individuals with resources, knowledge and skills.

It is a very interesting methodology also because:

- makes peer educators more mature;
- teaches everyone that the relationship between peers, while still pleasant, can also have higher purposes than the simple game - pastime;
- facilitates learning, as the peer educator is naturally able to use the most appropriate language and to adapt the work to the needs of the group;
- it helps adults to better understand the real dynamics and needs of the group and to be accepted not as an "invading" actor, but as an adult-friend who is available to listen without prejudice.

5. THE ACTORS TO INVOLVE IN THE LABS

Before starting the participatory planning with the laboratories, it is necessary to dwell on the subjects to be involved, providing, if necessary, ad hoc solutions to optimize resources and results and ensure that all interests are represented.



In this sense, the mapping carried out in the analysis phase, of the public and private actors involved in the process for various reasons and for different reasons, is a useful tool for set up dedicated moments and tools.

Students are fundamental to understanding the needs and desires of younger generations. The value of the participation of students is manifold: it is above all an innovative and educational experience that allows them to learn how to become citizens and to develop a sense of community.

It is crucial therefore to make prior contact with the School Director and the teaching staff involved to share the planning of the activities and to maintain a constant relationship over time, in order to monitor the effectiveness of actions and assess achievement of objectives. Adults will participate in specific laboratories and will interact with students and teachers.

It is therefore the task of the educators to make the needs and ideas proposed by the students, dialogue with those of the adults. The exchange will enhance the work of the labs and motivate the participation of the students. It is also useful to involve "experts" who provide all the necessary information but also innovative ideas and solutions to develop. The involvement of the experts is often requested by the participants themselves, the issues to be explored therefore follow the evolution of the labs and adapt accordingly to the needs. In this sense it is possible to imagine that local associations and local institutions also play the role of experts as they have direct knowledge of the territory and its peculiarities.

7. THE FACILITATOR TOOL BOX

There are many tool kits and methodologies to use to better manage the schools labs. In support of the listening phase, social research suggests a number of survey tools, among which we recognize: questionnaires (for quantitative surveys) and interview (for qualitative surveys). The theory suggests directing the interviews mainly to the subjects who have a preponderant role with respect to the object of the participatory process, identified through a specific map of the actors. The interviews with the actors involved more marginally can be expanded later. The structured interview, i.e. with a list of pre - form questions based on the information to be searched, allows to reduce the time to devote to the interview, increase the number of actors to be interviewed and thus collect the largest number of necessary information.

In the engagement phase, the choice of the most suitable participatory tools is dictated by the nature of the process and its purpose. Some tools are, for example, more useful to discuss problematic issues (World Café, OST, Focus Group and Bar Camp) but, some need a large number of participants (Bar Camp and OST) others are more suitable for small groups (Focus Group and World Café). Some require the presence of external facilitators (OST and Focus Group) while others test the autonomy of the participants (World Café and Bar Camp). Some are more suited to involving specific targets (e.g. students) and others can be addressed without distinction to all citizens.

The sector manuals offer numerous ideas in this sense. In any case, these are flexible tools that can always be adapted to the reference context.

8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation actions are essential in order to verify before, during and after the achievement of the goals and the impact of each participatory process during the labs. For this process is thus important to assess effects both with respect to what happened during the activities (with the achievement of short-term results), and with respect to the general objective (the long term results). The evaluation can be conducted internally by the partners who coordinate the process or by an external evaluator. The monitoring and evaluation work of a participatory process must be able to integrate the quantitative and qualitative aspects, and therefore to look at the results in numerical and qualitative terms.



The Logical Framework approach is one of the most effective tools for monitoring and evaluating the project. This tool allows to organize the expected results in a rational and systematic scheme; structures the objectives and activities in a cause / effect logic, showing how the activities lead to the achievement of objectives which in turn contribute to achieving the general objective. The theory suggests establishing a hierarchy between the objectives of the project and a time frame within which to achieve them.

This should be integrated with other tools for monitoring and evaluation which enable to verify that the actions planned are actually useful to achieve the expected results and that they can determine not expected effects, positive or negative. Examples are: structured questionnaires to be handed out to participants (also online), Focus Groups, brainstorming and group interviews.

These moments of evaluation must take place during the work and / or at the end of the project and their results must be made public in various formats (eg reports but also videos, presentations, workshops etc.). The challenge of monitoring and evaluation is to understand the expected results which, in some cases, may occur beyond the course of the process. Flexible monitoring and evaluation tools allow local actors to resume, at any time, the activity verifying the effects, even unexpected, which the process has triggered. The long-term objectives need years to come to fruition, the evaluator therefore has the task of repeating the evaluation operations over time, at regular intervals, to verify whether or not they have been achieved.

9. SCALE OF REFERENCE FOR PARTICIPATORY CITIZENSHIP SCHOOLS

Participation is a Human Right with an inherent value and, at the same time, it is a pedagogical process, meaning that the best way to learn how to participate is by participating, developing skills and competences, values and attitudes to a more active and responsible citizenship (learning by doing).

At school young people can experience Participation, not only by taking responsibility and making decisions about their own learning processes, but also by taking part in discussions and actions that relate to local, regional, national, and global matters. In this context, schools can and should play a major role in providing knowledge and experiences of citizenship, allowing and encouraging Participation of the various actors (students, teachers, parents/tutors and school non-teaching staff) in building solutions covering, not only the school environment and the surrounding community (local citizenship), but also enabling the development of a sense of belonging in the European and global communities (European and global citizenship).

Therefore, The Scale of Reference for Participatory Citizenship Schools was developed In order to support schools in this process, as an evaluation instrument able to address the need for **(1) comprehensive and adequate tools** that may act as practical guidelines for fostering Participation, as well as, based on the dynamics of its practical application and on the analysis of the results obtained in this process, contribute to **(2) the development of strategies to engage** students and the other relevant school actors.

The Scale of Reference for Participatory Citizenship Schools is a practical self-assessment tool in terms of school actors' Participation in learning, governance and community relations. It can be used as a standard framework for schools across the European Union that wish to understand in what level they are in terms of Participation, as well as to be inspired to take steps in order to become more participatory.

It was designed to be applied by secondary schools or equivalent. Although it can be adapted to early school years, in such cases, it will be important to take into account the different roles of parents/tutors, teachers, other school staff and students in each school level. The scale is built in steps so that each step corresponds to a higher level of Participation of the school actors and correspondingly, to a greater degree of active citizenship promotion by the schools.

This Scale is not only a tool, but also a process that invites schools to become more participatory. This process is composed by a participatory self-assessment activity involving all relevant actors (students, teachers, other school staff, parents/tutors and other community actors, such as local authorities, civil society organizations,



other schools, etc.), as well as the development, together and with the support of school relevant stakeholders, of a Strategic Plan to become a more participatory school.

The main objective is that each school follows its own pace and finds its own path to become a participatory space. Therefore, the Scale was designed to work as a selfassessment tool, does not include any external control mechanism and it is flexible enough to allow each school to find its own way of using and adapting it to its reality. This is the reason why, in order to understand progresses made, schools shall register the criteria used during each self-assessment activity, allowing future comparisons between different years' results.

On the other hand, the Scale was not created to generate comparative or competitive conclusions among different schools. However, if schools from a similar context want to use this tool to learn from each other, they can do it and generate comparative conclusions between them, by previously agreeing on common criteria. The Scale of Reference for Participatory Citizenship Schools is the result of a collaborative work between three Schools and three Civil Society Organizations (CSO), from Portugal, Poland and Slovenia, under the project **Network of Democratic Citizenship Schools**.

9.1. USING THE SCALE OF REFERENCE

For the purpose of this self-assessment, the school universe is divided in four dimensions:

A) Learning;

B) Governing;

C) Being part of a larger community;

D) Inclusion - consisting on a transversal dimension that emphasizes the Participation of certain individuals or groups in all other dimensions.

For each dimension, there are several sub-dimensions that shall be assessed by schools taking into consideration the existence of four relevant groups, corresponding to the existing schools actors, considered for the purpose of this assessment such as: students; teachers; parents/tutors; non-teaching staff.

The evaluation is to be done in four evaluation tables, one per dimension, and it shall be done actor by actor. So, starting with the first table on "Learning" and with the first actor "Students", schools shall chose the Participation Levels corresponding to the Students engagement in each of the sub-dimensions presented.

The Levels of Participation are identified near each table with specific symbols and a small statement and are graded from 0 to 4.

For each Participation level chosen, schools shall answer the question "Why did you choose these levels?" by adding a short description and examples of the procedures or processes in place that justify their choice. In the future, these descriptions may serve as examples/guidelines for other schools. Once the "Students" lines are all completed, schools shall sum up the total score reached and record it in "Total". After finishing "Students" evaluation, schools shall move on and evaluate the Participation of the following school actor, and so on, up until all the 4 evaluation tables are completed.

When those filling in the assessment have no information regarding a certain actor's Participation in a specific sub-dimension, they can choose the option "**No Info**". In that case, the results achieved will be similar to a non-participation result, meaning that the school will score zero in that sub-dimension. We expect that this "rule" will encourage schools to further their self-awareness regarding that specific actor's Participation.

In certain situations, it may be widely accepted, at regional or national levels, that parents/ tutor or non-teaching staff's Participation is not relevant for the assessment of a specific dimension or sub-dimension. In those cases the schools can consider a dimension or a sub-dimension as "Non-Applicable" for that actor, by cutting out the corresponding part of the table and by subtracting from the final scores the total score that would correspond to that part of the evaluation. Note that this exception can only be applied to parents/tutor or non-teaching staff's; Students and/or teachers' Participation can never be considered as "Non-Applicable".

Once the self-evaluation in dimensions A), B), C) and D) is finalized, schools shall copy all the scores obtained on "Total" for each actor to the final assessment table and sum them up into total scores. The total score will correspond to a School's Participation Level.

It is also possible to check the levels of Participation of the school per actor and per dimension.



To help schools filling in the assessment some examples of actions, activities, projects and initiatives are given along the document. Schools can look at these, relate them to their specific reality and decide upon that, the Participation levels to choose.

For more detailed information about the Scale of Reference for Participatory Citizenship Schools, please consult the documents and material available at <http://democraticschools.ecos.pt/>

SCHOOL LABS FRAMEWORK

No. of Labs: 14 (tbc) labs (date TBC), duration variable from 1h30 to 3h00/session

No. of students/teachers/parents involved: see minutes' reports

Degree of satisfaction: see questionnaire results report

Outputs and goals:

- Problem Statements report: analysis of the problems
- Communication Package: brochure, logo, website and social media
- Young led civic initiative report: co design in plenary labs at least one initiative to solve the problem prioritized
- Open day to present to the school and the community the reports and the school labs results

SCHOOL LABS FRAMEWORK

Phase I. Diagnostic and Initial Data collection

Session	Date	Duration	Actions	Outputs	Methodologies
1	TBC	2h00	<p>A. Getting to know each other and the project;</p> <p>B. Pre-Questionnaire application;</p> <p>C. Introducing the main concepts of the project, starting with "Participation" and "Democracy".</p>	<p>A. Create group empathy and cohesion, build a safe and trustable relationship between participants and facilitators; work on motivation, expectations and desires;</p> <p>B. Assessing the pre-questionnaire results on participants soft/hard skills and opinions and expectations at the beginning of the project;</p>	<p>A. Energizers; icebreakers</p> <p>B. Pre-Questionnaire</p> <p>C) Brainstorming; small-groups work on the ideas and concepts/definitions and their application in real life situations</p> <p>C. The circle way (check-</p>



				C. Understanding the interest and commitment on the project and the general knowledge/opinions about the topic.	in and check.out)
2	TBC	2h00	<p>A. Briefing on the last session and introduction of new concepts (Citizenship; Cooperation; Autonomy; Critical-thinking; (...);</p> <p>B. Scale of Reference application</p>	<p>A. Highlight and consolidation of the project's main concepts;</p> <p>B. Assessing and evaluating school's participation level at the beginning of the project</p>	<p>A. Brainstorming; Jigsaw method;</p> <p>B. Scale of Reference for Participatory Citizenship Schools</p>

Phase II. Research and Design of the Action Plan

Session	Date	Duration	Actions	Outputs	Methodologies
3	TBC	<p>A) 1h30</p> <p>B) 1h00</p>	<p>A. Individual Assemblies with each one of the actors involve on the project individually (30 minutes each), guided by one facilitator on each group, to present and discuss both evaluation instrument results.</p>	<p>A)/B) Collecting information, conclusions and reflexions, in order to design an action plan on democratic participation.</p> <p>This plan should answer to the results of both instruments of evaluation and the qualitative data</p>	A)/B) Proaction Café



			B. General Assembly with all the actors together to present and discuss the ideas and issues that emerged on the individual assemblies.	from the assemblies.	
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Phase III. “Get your hands dirty - From Plan to Action”

Session	Date	Duration	Actions	Outputs	Methodologies
4	TBC	3h00	<p>A. “It’s only a problem if there is no solution” - Problem mapping for each Scale of Reference dimension with integration of the topics evaluated by the pre-questionnaire ;*</p> <p>B. Work on causes and consequences of every problem identified.</p>	A)/B) Identify school needs, problems and challenges and their causes and consequences (in short and long term)	A)/B) Proaction Café; Collective Mind-mapping;
*Choose one problem, for each dimension, that is urgent and realistic to solve and to work on the next sessions and accomplished further in one specific session.					
5	TBC	2h00	A. “My dream school” -	A. Addressing common	A. “1,2,3 All! Technique”;



			Working on solutions for the problems spotted	solutions to work on the cause and on the consequences of the problems spotted	“appreciative inquiry”
6	TBC	2h00	A. “Detective on the field”	A. Researching for the ideal stakeholders to co-work with on the need spotted and on solutions implementation.	<p>A. Community immersion trips and active research on local stakeholders;</p> <p>Research (online and on the field through meetings and information collection) in small groups; Gathering all the information and discuss within the “in-groups”; present the information collected to all the participants in a way to achieve greater solutions.</p> <p>“Who/what/when Matrix”; “Critical Thinking Mindset”</p>



7	TBC	2h00	A. “Put solutions into practice” - Dimension Learning	A. Implementing all the common solutions found to address problems in this specific participation dimension.	TBC depending on the problem/solutions
8	TBC	2h00	A. “Put solutions into practice” - Dimension Governing	A. Implementing all the common solutions found to address problems in this specific participation dimension.	TBC depending on the problem/solutions
9	TBC	2h00	A. “Put solutions into practice” - Dimension Being part of a larger community	A. Implementing all the common solutions found to address problems in this specific participation dimension.	TBC depending on the problem/solutions
10	TBC	2h00	A. “Put solutions into practice” - Dimension Inclusion	A. Implementing all the common solutions found to address problems in this specific participation dimension.	TBC depending on the problem/solutions
11/12/13	TBC	2h000	A. Final events plan	A. Plan of two Young Led Civic Initiatives; B. Finalization of all the products of the project and of the materials to be	A. /B) Methodology used and compilation and edition of material that reflects the work done on the project;



				<p>presented.</p> <p>C. Addressing all the logistic/human/structural/(...) resources needed for the events.</p>	<p>B. Plan of the events setting.</p> <p>“Visual storytelling presentation” for each group of participants</p>
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Phase IV. Young Led Civic Initiatives - Public Events

Date	Duration	Actions	General Goal
TBC	2h00	A. Public Event open to school community	A. Present the project and all its results and the participants achievements.
TBC	2h00	A. Public Event with local authorities and other stakeholders	A. Present the project and all its results and the participants achievements.

Phase V. Reflections and Final Data Collection

Session	Date	Duration	Actions	Outputs	Methodologies
14	TBC	3h00	<p>A. “Keep in touch”;</p> <p>B. Post-Questionnaire application;</p> <p>C. Scale of Reference application</p>	<p>A. Highlight the continuity of the project and the proximity between the participants and the facilitators.</p> <p>B. Assessing the pos-questionnaire</p>	<p>A. Energizers; icebreakers</p> <p>B. Post-Questionnaire</p> <p>C) Scale of Reference for Participatory</p>



			D. Time to share and celebrate - officialization of the end of the project.	<p>results on participants soft/hard skills and opinions and expectations;</p> <p>C. Assessing and evaluating school's participation level at the end of the project</p>	<p>Citizenship Schools</p> <p>D) The circle way (check-in and check.out)</p>
	TBC	1h30	A. Develop two Focus-group sessions (1h00 each) - one with students and 1 with teachers	<p>A. Assess qualitative feedback on issues related to the impact of the project on improving beneficiaries participation in the decision making processes inside and outside the school.</p>	A. Focus group and semi-structured interview methods

Phase VI. Transition between Labs

Date	Duration	Actions	General Goal
TBC	2h00	A. Transition from School Labs to Community Labs	A. Facilitate the transition and clarify the connection between the School and the Community Labs