EducAction - WP1
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Young Led Civic Initiative Report

ACTIONAID

Introduction

In order to define the problems which are more relevant to the students of Oriani Mazzini School, different participatory methodologies have been used:

- Brainstorming (in classroom and online)
- Work in small groups and then presentation in plenary
- Guided discussions among students
- Action research questionnaires
- Telephone interviews

Priority Problem identified

Through a button-up approach for choosing priority problems, it emerged that the main problem for students which will be faced in the following months of the projects is: **the need of acquiring practical skills at school and the weak linkage with the labour market, especially in the context of a vocational school. Students should therefore participate more in identifying areas of interest, subjects and extracurricular activities in order to improve their educational experience and have a more student-led school.**

Why this problem and what are the most relevant issues

This problem has been chosen because it is directly linked to the vocational school objectives and its solution will allow them to improve their practical skills needed for entering to the labour market, enhance the School-Work Alternation and finally encourage the creation of a student-led school where students are more engaged in the decisions that matter to them.

As a result of this problem, many students face disappointment over their school place, thinking about their future they feel lost and doubtful and this is mainly due both to the school's weak orientation policy that does not provide enough career advice and to the drawbacks and defects of *School-Work Alternation,* which for the moment is just a big, missed opportunity and to the lack of involvement in school decisions making process about their course and future.

Even if the curriculum includes job placement effort (students often go to workplaces to get a first practical experience) several problems occur which need to be tackled:

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- Few employers available to choose from
- Some employers only accept legal age students.
- Little involvement of the students in the choice of venue/job because it is strongly conditioned by the teachers and the school
- Employers are often not well prepared to host students and find *School-Work Alternation* a burden because they have to train students and don't have a clear advantage from this situation
- Post-graduate orientation days are not very appreciated. They usually consist of frontal presentations of the activities that take place in that area of work or in that field of study, without bringing in any direct experiences of the speakers.

"The Young Led Civic Initiative": practical and feasible solutions to implement

The main goal is to define and put in place specific actions that can improve the practical and operational aspects of vocational training inside the school and in connection with the local businesses. More attention will be paid to the organisation of *School-Work Alternation* in connection with local institutions, social services and centres, employers and local businesses in order to facilitate the transition to the labour market.

As this is a vocational school, the students should alternate frontal lessons with workshops in the subjects they are studying (psychology - hygiene - operational methodology) following a teaching approach based not only on knowledge and theoretical lesson but above all on know-how, learning by doing and acquiring practical skills.

A series of "Initiatives" have been designed to address these issues:

Actions	Objectives	Timetable
Include articles, interviews, analysis, suggestions and proposals in the School's newspaper written and managed by the students directed to teachers, managers and parents.	Increase and improve communication between students and the school community in order to show student's interests, problems and priorities	February 2021
Collaborating with specific proposals to amend and improve the School-work placement agreement	Review the terms and the quality of the involvement of students and of the employers' offer so to strengthen the mutual commitment among the actors involved	March 2021
Mapping of services and employers in the community	Increase the range of choices for *School-Work Alternation* establishing more links between schools and local	April 2021

	business in order to foster new partnerships.	
Organise an orientation day (also open to parents)	Offer students the opportunity to have a clearer and more concrete orientation and job placement advices	September 2021
Start an online forum on the school website including employer's database, students' comments and advice, general information and faq on job placement	Encouraging and increasing peer-to-peer discussion on *school-Work Alternation* experiences.	October 2021

Expected results

From these initiatives, we expect to have an improvement of the educational offer including a more participative methodology, an improved motivation of the students that will beneficiate from defining their own educational path, a better connection and collaboration with labour market and local businesses, an increased awareness of students' potential and opportunities and an increased trust and confidence for students to have the power to influence policies that concern to their education and their professional future. Therefore, more practical activities and and a biggest focus on practical skills will strengthen and improve students' motivation and interest in school, complementing theoretical knowledge.

Contacts with the local community will make possible to ensure a mutual and fruitful exchange between the realities of the labour market and the school so that to increase the participation of young people in the life of the neighbourhood, maintain relationships grown in the school context and encourage a civic engagement at local level such as voluntary work in youth associations or social centres.

Actors involved

Actors involved in the design and implementation of the above actions will be:

- Sstudents from the Oriani Mazzini and from local schools
- Students' school representatives
- Teachers and Teacher's council
- Parents and parent's council
- School principal and school managers
- Organisations, employers, social services and local stakeholder from the community
- Local Institutions
- Editors of the school newspaper.

Conclusions

This process of investigating problems, choosing priorities, devising solutions and discuss with their peers and community stakeholders might be used by participants as a model to refer to in many other contexts, leading them to be active citizens and to enhance public good and civic engagement.

UCLL

1. Introduction

In September we started working at Het Atheneum Hasselt with a motivated class of 20 students. The active school lab sessions were developed and implemented by UCLL researchers Nele Kelchtermans and Chloe Mentens. The content was closely monitored by Ine Kemerlinckx, teacher of the class group. In the active school lab sessions we started by introducing concepts such as participation, children's rights, the levels in participation, the decision making bodies and their authority and so on. After this, the students themselves went to work in smaller groups to carry out a research at their own school to see what could be improved and if they have a say in it.

Using brainstorming activities, students listed what they thought could be improved at school or what they would like to get involved in. Themes that are picked here are mainly based on the wellbeing of their fellow students. This content also leans most closely to their own expertise and interests and is in line with their field of study. Research questions or problems that students are working on, seperated per group:

- 'Explore how to strengthen students' motivation to come to school.'

- 'Help or make sure that all students enjoy going to school.'

- 'To prevent or reduce stress at school.'

- 'Not all students are motivated. Why is it and how we can change this by taking a critical look at the current system.'

- 'We want to improve the psychological well-being of our fellow students.'

- 'We believe it is important for each student to have a positive self-image.'

For each group, these are the chosen research questions or statements that they will work on. Throughout the school labs they continue to work in these research groups.

2. Practical and feasible solution

They were guided in setting up a scientific study using a tips and tricks booklet that was prepared by UCLL. In this booklet, they found tips on how to search for scientific sources online and how to analyze them. Per group they determined a main research question and 3 subquestions. At the end of this research, they should obtain an answer to their main research question

For each sub-question, we drew up a research method they could use for this purpose. The following methods were recommended: an interview with relevant stakeholders, a large-scale survey, a literature review. Each group planned each recommended method to obtain an answer to their sub-questions. For example, in a study of current motivation in school, the main question is how to better motivate students at school.

The first sub-question is: 'How is motivation determined and what factors play an important role?' The students investigated this through a literature review. The second sub-question is: 'What is the current state of motivation in school at this time. They figured this out by conducting a large-scale survey among their peers. As a third sub-question, they wondered what already existing initiatives are in place at school to motivate their students. For this, they chose the method of conducting an interview with relevant persons in the school, in this case the principal. The answer to their main question is a combination of the various answers to these sub-questions.

They received the necessary support and feedback each time during the sessions. Time is also provided here to reflect, discuss obstacles and so on.

The input gathered from the surveys, interviews, and literature review is mapped by group and presented as a research paper. The literature review is mainly for information and inspiration, the interview and survey are mainly to check their ideas about actions with other actors in the school and with relevant stakeholders.

This is a listing of the statements for each group with a brief motivation of why this is important to them and in what way they want to fix/add/improve/solve it (methodology). Their proposed solution is also added.

'Make school fun again!' (Laura, Tristan, Arjuna, Celia)
- The students state, based on their literature review, that not everyone is motivated at school. They want to find out if this motivation can be improved by making small or large changes in the education system. Such as certain content adjustments in different lessons so that they are more attuned to the lifestyles of the students or major adjustments such as a complete educational reform.

- 1. Starting point
    - We want to reduce the negative impact of school on the mental well-being of our peers.
- 2. What do we want to do to improve the current situation?
    - We want to organize a talk hour where students feel safe and comfortable to express their feelings. We want to make this a positive experience. We want to do this by organizing activities and themes.
        - What? A talking workshop
        - When? Several times a year, 1 hour
        - Where? In class

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- Who? Students per class.
- How? By creating a comfortable vibe to empower students to talk about their feelings or worries.
  - o 3. Who can help?
    - Students involvement
  - o 4. We should pay attention to:
    - Plenty of variety in activities and continue to motivate students to make it a positive workshop.
  - o 5. Arguments to convince the school board:
    - According to the students, the school influences their mental being in a negative way. We want to do something about this.
    - The students will feel safer and more comfortable in their own school.
    - The students' motivation will improve.

'Psychological well-being of our fellow students.' (Britt, Isolde, Hanne, Maxime)

- o Partly because of corona, these students are concerned about the psychological and mental well-being of their fellow students. They want to investigate where students can go to with their problems and whether this is sufficient.

- o 1. Starting point
  - How can we improve the psychological well being of our fellow students?
- o 2. What do we want to do to improve the current situation?
  - Breaking the taboo of mental health. By involving people who have or have had mental health problems themselves. We want to let them talk about their experiences to make the subject open for discussion.
    - What? Invite people with psychological problems to have a small talk
    - When? During the seminar of 'push your limit's' (1hour) for every two weeks during 1 trimester.
    - Where? At school
    - Who? Young adults and adults who want to talk about their experiences
    - How? Involve students on a creative way. The experiences of the 'speaker' can be a theme that will be discussed in group.
- o 3. Who can help?
  - School board to give permission
  - Stakeholders to bring us into contact with people who want to visit our school to talk about mental health
- o 4. We should pay attention to:
  - It is important to have a clear communication between the schools and the goal of these activities should be well motivated.
  - What if we can not find enough people who are willing to talk?
- o 5. Arguments to convince the school board:
  - Several studies show that people who tell about their own experiences can help others deal with their mental health problems.
  - It is also applied in other schools with success
  - It doesn't cost any money.

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- o 6. Step by step
  - Convincing and involving the school board(by the students) – Timing: during the webinar of 12th of march.
  - Networking and contacting potential people to invite at school – Timing (depends on Covid 19)
  - Involve the students who are interested to discuss the potential themas/ structure of the workshops - Timing (depends on Covid 19)

'How we can increase students' self-esteem.' (Anouck, Hellen, Tuur)

- o We want to gain a view of the factors that currently influence their fellow students' self-esteem. Based on this, they want to initiate initiatives to improve the self-esteem of their peers.From personal experiences, these students can see that not every student has a positive self-esteem. Through a literature review, they gained a better understanding of the importance of a positive self-image. Based on a survey of their peers, they want to find out the main causes of low self-esteem and how their self-esteem can be stimulated. On the basis of interviews with confidants and the school administration they found out what actions already exists in the school to stimulate the self-esteem of their students.

- o 1. Starting point
  - How can we improve the self esteem of our fellow students?
- o 2. What do we want to do to improve the current situation?
  - Throughout the school building we want to place mirrors with compliments written on them. This can increase students' self love'.
    - What? Placing mirrors with different compliments on them.
    - When? As long as possible (and change the compliments every now and then)
    - Where? At school
    - Who? Students
    - How? With lovely quotes (removable ink).
- o 3. Who can help?
  - School board to give permission
  - Students to share their inspirational quotes
- o 4. We should pay attention to:
  - Who is in charge of this project, how can we maintain this initiative?
- o 5. Arguments to convince the school board:
  - It is only a minor intervention.
  - It brings a positive vibe.
  - There is nothing to lose?
- o 6. Step by step
  - Provide the material that is needed (by the school) – Timing: anytime
  - Provide the quotes (by the students) – Timing: anytime
  - Attach the mirrors with quotes.

'What is the relationship between the educational level and student motivation?' (Luna, Lucca, Maithé)

- Based on their literature review, the students state that, as time goes on, school becomes less and less loved. They took an interview with the studentscouncelors to ask their opinion. In their questionnaire, the students found out what the main cause is among students why they would not like to go to school. They also collected ideas of what the students think the school can do to change this.

- 1. Starting point
  - What is the current state of our fellow students motivation? (To what extent is this influenced by the school system?)
  - The taboo between the different study directions.(There is little contact between the different fields of study, which creates prejudices).
- 2. What do we want to do to improve the current situation?
  - An activity in which students of different study directions get to know each other and each other's interests.
    - What? A day filled with activities
    - When? Several times a year, during a whole day.
    - Where? Depends on the activities that will be selected
    - Who? Students from Hasselt, over the different schools. So as a student, you get in touch with students from other schools and with different interests/skills.
    - How? A working group will be formed across schools to determine the activity. Online, the opportunity is offered for all students to register.
- 3. Who can help?
  - School board, teachers and students
- 4. We should pay attention to:
  - It is important to have a clear communication between the schools and the goal of these activities should be well motivated.
- 5. Arguments to convince the school board:
  - It should have a positive impact on the motivation of students to come to school
  - It should reduce the taboo that exists between different study directions
  - Students can learn new skills and insights in an interactive way…
- 6. Step by step
  - Considering and drafting activities (by the students) – Timing (depends on Covid 19)
  - Involve the school board (By the students + school board) – Timing (depends on Covid 19)
  - Involve other schools (By the students + school boards- Timing (depends on Covid 19)
  - Spread the message and involve as many students as possible – Timing (depends on Covid 19)

'*Motivation at school.' (Hailey, Romeo, Jutta)*

- At this school, students are given the several hours per week of free space. These hours are filled in according to the student's own interest such as: art subjects, drama, sign language and so on. However, according to the pupils, the choice is limited. They have done research on intrinsic motivation and are convinced that students will be more motivated to come to school if there is more attention for their own interests and talents. Based on their interview with the school board and survey among other students they want to know if it is possible to add extra options.

- Their proposed solution is to get a clear idea of the interests of their fellow students and then based on this, see if it is possible to offer additional activities that the students can participate in during this free space.

'What impact does stress have on young people's lives and how to reduce it?' (Adna & Nermin)

- The students of this group have the impression that many students experience stress at school. In a literature review they informed themselves about the different types of stress and how it is possible to prevent it. Based on their interview, the students found out what this stress among students is based on.

- In an interivew with teachers, studentcouncelors etc they will make a lists of current initiatives at school to reduce or prevent stress and how they can add or improve initiatives against stress at school.

3.Actors involved

Students

The school sessions take place with a group of 20 students. They are very actively involved. In consultation with the principal, we have been assigned this class that will work on both the school and the community labs during this project. The classgroup is in their second last year of secondary school and their main subject is human sciences. This is a theoretical orientation with a curriculum that focuses on subjects such as psychology, behavioral sciences, cultural sciences and so on. The class group is a close-knit group who are generally very motivated in school. The sessions take place during behavioral science classes.

They form smaller groups of 3 to 4 students in which they initiate their own research. In this research, they will look for, among other things, the current situation of their school. In most groups a large scale survey was done to find out the opinion of their fellow students. Each group chose its own relevant target group for the survey. This could be specifically one grade but it could also relate to all students in the school. The surveys were successful and involved more than 300 students in total.

Some research groups also chose to include the opinions of students from other schools in order to make a comparison. This makes that dozens of students from other schools were also involved in this study.

During the project, they keep their school and stakeholders informed by taking over the EducAction_hasselt instagram account.

Teachers and school manager

UCLL set the foundation for a cooperation with the Atheneum Hasselt and took the initiative for a possible collaboration. The principal of this school, Vanessa Oeyen, was very receptive and promoted the project within the school. She is also kept informed about the content of the project.

The sessions take place during behavioral science classes. Therefore, the content of the sessions was discussed in detail with Ine Kemerlinckx, the teacher responsible for this subject. The lessons themselves were largely taught by Nele Kelchtermans and Chloe Mentens, both researchers at UCLL but Ine Kemerlinckx provided feedback for the content of the lessons. She also monitored the quality and that the content was in line with the learning objectives.

Ine is present each time during the sessions. Between sessions, she also ensures that she can support the students in the research as needed.

To ensure the research has the intended quality, this research project is discussed during other classes. For example, for the subject Dutch they learned how to make a comprehensive summary. The students will be assessed on this research paper, so the students have to pay extra attention to their grammar and spelling. But also the layout and bibliography will be assessed. In their 'English class', students must write an essay. The theme for this essay is a summary of the research they conducted for the EducAction project. For the subject

In the research project, each group also applied the method of conducting an in-depth interview with relevant stakeholders. These stakeholders varied by group according to the purpose of the interview and the research topic. Relevant actors who were involved are; teachers, student supervisors, the school management, coordinators and parents. In the interviews, they want to look at the current state of affairs based mainly on these actors, what the existing initiatives are and how they can improve them. The students also already propose some solutions to map out their opinions.

During the webinar, all teachers will be invited.

Other experts

In the data analysis phase, we also engaged an internal expert from UCLL, Sebastiaan Jans, who is experienced in visualizing research results. In an active workshop, the students worked together with Sebastiaan to analyze and visualize their results from their surveys.

During the webinar, relevant experts will be invited (The community of Hasselt, other researchers, teachers and student from other schools, experts working on youth participation,…).

Conclusions

It was mainly important to give the students insight into the current structure of the school and to show that they themselves can play an active role in their own school. Because the students have worked with themes from their own field of interest, they are very motivated to bring the research to a successful conclusion. Because of the covid19 crisis it is somewhat less obvious to involve more stakeholders but the students manage quite well to form a nuanced picture about their themes. For example, during the large-scale survey, they noticed that the results were not always in line with their expectations; this indicates the importance of student representation. In addition, they also get to know their school better through the interviews with different actors within their school. This makes them more involved and gives them a better sense of responsibility.

ECOS

Introduction

The problems were identified by the students, in the school context, based on the following methodology:

- "Reference Scale for Participatory Citizenship Schools" - through contact and knowledge/appropriation of the assessment instrument and its application in the two classes, in small working groups;
- Analysis of the results obtained through the Reference Scale, in plenary (each group indicated the level of decision making and participation they considered they had in each of the dimensions and sub-dimensions of the Scale. These levels were noted on the blackboard and discussed among all. When the choices of decision making/participation levels varied from group to group, through structured debate, we reached a favorable consensus accepted by the whole class, in order to obtain a single result in each dimension/sub-dimension);
- Brainstorming;
- Work in small groups and then presentation in plenary;
- Guided discussions among students;
- Questionnaires for "external students"[1] .

Problems chosen by voting (results of the two classes and of the external students)

1. Assessment methods too focused on written tests[2]

This problem was transversal to both classes and to the external students.
The students consider that the assessment methods are not appropriate for their progression in school and that they do not reflect the results of the teaching-learning process.

2. Lack of inter-class tournaments/sports activities[3]

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[1] By "external students" we meant students from Pinheiro e Rosa High School, that belong to other classes/school years .

[2] Learning Dimension, according to the Scale of Reference for Participatory Citizenship Schools

[3] Being part of a larger community Dimension (Scale of Reference for Participatory Citizenship Schools)

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This problem (also common to classes and students outside of them), was pointed out as one of the reasons for the gap between theoretical classes and moments of leisure, of young people's healthy and integral development and as an obstacle to the acquisition of relational, social, and emotional skills.

3. Need for greater integration of foreign students[4]

Although the school has a good offer in terms of classes, support and activities that guarantee the support of foreign students and intend to break barriers, namely language barriers and integration in the education system, the students consider that this problem needs to be better addressed.

Priority Problem identified

The first two problems mentioned above are out of students' control and ability to intervene. This was the students general opinion, expressed in the School Labs sessions designed in order to to tackle proposals of practical and feasible solutions for resolving the problems identified.

For instance, the issue of assessment methods is being addressed by the Ministry of Education in order to reformulate the way in which students are assessed, to make these methods more comprehensive and diverse, according to their suitability for what is currently expected in terms of the schooling and training of young people.

The lack of inter-class sports tournaments and activities is related to the social distancing measures and restrictions to prevent and fight the pandemic. In a regular/typical situation, Pinheiro e Rosa High School offers a range of sports-related activities, through which the school aims to promote physical and mental health and peer socialization.

Considering these arguments, the students decided to address the third problem that was highlighted: the need for greater integration of foreign students.

Why this problem and what are the most relevant issues

Although the school has a good offer in terms of guidance and assistance, adapted classes and activities that guarantee the support of foreign students and aim at breaking barriers - namely the ones related to language and integration in the education system - the students consider that this problem needs to be better adressed.

The students recognize that there are already support mechanisms designed and avaiable for these students, but they need to be strengthened. From their point of view, the importance of support for foreign students is related to issues such as:

- difficulties in adapting to a new school and also to a new country, to a new city and a different language;
- everyone has the right to feel comfortable in the place where they live;
- school is a big part of students' lives, so if they are not well adjusted at school, they will not feel as "at home" in general;

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[4] Inclusion Dimension (Scale of Reference for Participatory Citizenship Schools)

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- cross-cultural interactions: they allow foreign students to learn to speak the language, to get to know the culture and the lifestyle of the host country; but they also allow, in these exchanges, foreign students to provide portuguese students a more global perspective of the world, as well as teach other languages and elements about different cultures, which are fundamental to the personal development of young people;

- inequalities in the education system among the various countries of Europe and the world: the structure of the portuguese education system and the variety in the educational offer may be obstacles, for example, in the choice of a course by foreign students;

- facilitate student adaptation and promote a multicultural and inclusive school environment.

"The Young Led Civic Initiative": practical and feasible solutions to implement

Considering the reasons why the students chose the abovementioned problem and since we are working on and with the school context in a holistic perspective, the implementation of activities as a way to solve it, should take into account the strategic areas and objectives of the School Educational Project (2019-2022) and contribute to its achievement in a participatory and democratic way. The three strategic areas on the School Educational Projecto (SEP) were: **1**. **Educational Sucess**; **2. School Management and Organization**; **3. School Culture and Educational Environment**.

The solutions proposed by the students were the folowing:

- creation of **work rooms** (online and face-to-face) - a more academic component, where students could clarify doubts, express difficulties, study in groups, etc;

- creation of a "**sharing club**" - a more peer-to-peer/informal and social component - to foster the inclusion and integration of new students, get to know each other and make friends, create a feeling of multi and inter culturality and of belonging to the community.

Thus, we have created a pratical framework that can show the relation between the strategic areas of the Educaction Project and the relevance of the solutions proposed by the students (tackling both SEP and solutions general objectives).

SEP Strategic Area	Strategic Area Objectives	Solution	Solution Objectives
1. Educational Success	Improve the academic results in Secondary Education	**Work rooms**	Promote academic success throughout the student's educational path
	To value attitudes that promote citizenship	**Work rooms**	Encourage the personal, social and civic development of school community, as well as the the sense of belonging to the community
2. School Management and Organization	Promote practices of organization and management of the curriculum and learning for an inclusive education	**Work rooms**	Provide guidance and support to foreign students
3. School Culture and	Promote the personal development and well-being of the educational community	**Sharing Club**	Guarantee a culture of accountability among the school community

Educational Environment	Take responsibility	**Sharing Club**	Promote a culture of co-responsability among the school community
	Valorization of students sucess	**Work rooms**	Foster school engagment through the valorization of school results
	Valorization of social results	**Sharing Club**	Foster school engagment through the valorization of social and relational results

In this regard, it seems that the students' proposals are accurate and in line with the educational goals of the school.

Solution	Common Actions	Specific Actions	Tools and activities	Timetable
Work rooms	**A.** Mapping of foreign students (number of foreign students in the school, age, school year, nacionality, mother tongue, knowledge of portuguese and other languages)	**(Work rooms)** Regular online meetings on school learning platform scheduled for academic/educational purposes	Meetings	**Implementation and dissemination phase:** March 2021 - June 2021
			Non-formal interviews	
			Mentoring	
			Group work and study	
Sharing Club	**B.** Mapping of doubts needs, expectatives, aspirations/dreams and interests (both academic and personal levels) **C.** Understand students doubts, needs, expectatives, aspirations/dreams and interests regarding their sense of belonging to the community **D.** Mapping of local cultural organizations that could strengthen the relationship between	**(Sharing Club)** Creation and management - by the "host" student - of the sharing club social media page and is dissemination on school's website	Meetings, chat room, games, sports and other ludic activities Share of information about the country, the city, the school, local events, local organization, etc.	**Monitoring and evaluation phase:** March 2021 - until the end of the EducAction project **Management phase:** March 2021 - after the end of EducAction project (depending on the autonomy, responsibility and level of involvement of the students responsible for the management of both proposals)

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	the students, their knowledge, interest and curiosity about each others culture, traditions, way of living			

In order to implement the two proposals, we present the following framework[5]:

Expected results

Através destas propostas esperamos alcançar os seguintes resultados:

- minize the difficulties in the adaptation of foreign students;

- promote in this students the sense of belonging to the entire community and ensure that they feel comfortable in their surrounding environments;

- raise school and community awarness about the role of the school as a central element in promoting students' adaptation to a "new life", a new reality;

- promote cross-cultural interactions and multicultural and inclusive school environment;

- minimize the difficulties experienced by the foreign students due to inequalities in the education system among the various countries of Europe and the world;

- engage the local community in this adaption process;

- through a better inclusion and support, facilitate the participation as well as strengthen the social and civic engagement of this students in both school and community life.

Actors involved

The actors involved in the design and implementation of the above actions (both commun and specific), tools and activities will be:

- students from Pinheiro e Rosa High School;

- school board;

- teachers;

- parents;

- local organizations, institutions and stakeholders from the community.

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[5] Please note that this framework is a draft version that will be improved later and along with the school community.

Conclusions

The entire process inherent to school labs, from identifying problems to finding solutions that solve them, can confirm the idea that it is a mistake to believe that young people do not have the capacity to be actively involved in society, to have an active voice and role in transformation processes. And it's a mistake that many adults make: to devalue the impact of the ideas of young people, just because we think "they are young". And notice how this bias is obvious in sentences that are formulated with a derogatory or discrediting sense of opinion: "You're still too young to talk about that" or "when you're older you'll understand". But contrary to what some adults may think, today's youth are very informed and enlightened. And assuming that information is the basis of participation, the better our capacity and curiosity to get coherent and solid information, the better we will be in counteracting these bias and prejudices and, consequently, develop more integrating spaces, where age is not a limit to promote the participation and empowerment of all citizens.

Beyond the school, the truth is that any context in which we intervene always offers room for more - to go from "real to ideal". Therefore, room to dream and to achieve. However, it is necessary to listen to all voices, to share decisions and responsabilities and take into consideration: problems, potentials, and solutions. Through the School Labs we manage to bring together different perspectives and generate transformation. And in this particular case, that transformation is intended to drive increasingly active, integral, and empowered youth participation.

ASTERI

Introduction

Aiming to define the problems which are more relevant to the students and imagine and create the solutions of 2nd Protypo High School "White Tower", different methodologies were used:

- Creative Brainstorming (online and outside of class)
- Team Work in small groups & presentations in plenary
- Teacher Guided discussions among students
- ASTERI Organization members guided discussions
- Political representatives
- Action research questionnaires
- Telephone interviews

Priority Problem identified

Through a well introduced presentation and a careful approach from the members of ASTERI Organization and the great help of teach Zaharoula Kouni students were introduced to the projects, most of their answers were cleared and the presentation of problems was really eye opener. The need for prioritization started with all parts taking the floor. It seemed that the need for brief explanation about the Authorities position, the way they operate the citizens' rights and obligations was on the

table in order for their problems to start reaching the "ears" of the Authorities and the people responsible.

The identified problems were initially presented by the groups and were followed by their investigation and evaluation by themselves and their classmates with the support of their teachers and the ASTERI Association Team, while the Vice Mayor, of Social Issues Mr. Iakovou Konstantinos listened carefully and commented to the students in order to help them organize their plans.

Students identified that there is not lesson to teach them how to participate or to behave as citizen, so they graduate and have no idea what' s going on around them in the City in the Country.

This although is a very serious problem students can do very little to change and this project was like an "Oasis" to them.

The problems and the proposals

STUDENT WEEK +CREATION

Since community has no idea what school students are doing beside their lessons and also their voices regarding changes in the City are not heard the idea of the Creation of a STUDENT Festival with community engagement came to the table very promising. THE student proposed to send invitation together with the Vice Mayor of Education, Mrs Kosmopoulou and ASTERI Organization to Schools in the area of the Municipality of Thessaloniki asking them to choose an issue – problem, which they face, and present their solutions in the Festival.

The Festival Idea is Students for a Better city, as well as to accompany these presentations with some activities the schools students do, such as music, sports and artistic activities, ecological actions, etc.. The Vice Mayor liked the idea and asked for a formal letter addressed to the Municipality in order το examine it with the Municipal council and to support it by giving space and examine the possibly to support with all the material needed and the potential of sponsors to provide refreshments etc.

CONSTRUCTION OF PARKS FOR CULTURAL AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES

The absence of parks friendly to students was another issue that came up very strong in the meetings. Proposal and presentation of the ideal park through the eyes of teenagers, free wifi, study and reading areas so that students can carry out their school-homework enjoying a quiet and beautiful environment. Safe and with eco responsibility, with areas to enjoy in a picnic areas their drink or food, ponds, quiet, and also possibilities to plant trees and flowers and take care of them.

This park will also provide the possibility for various activities that could be done in the parks such as skateboard, rollers, cycling with some open air fitness equipment, for all people to exercise outdoors, installation of new playground equipment as well as tables, kiosks and benches to function as a gathering place for friends.

The Vice Mayor listened very carefully and was amazed by the presentation. She told the students and the Teachers that this also will have to be presented to the Architectural department and together the students can come up with a cost and examine after that if this can be part of the Municipality future plans.

MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY PROBLEMS AND VISION PROBLEMS

The students while discussing the first days in school about the project EDUCACTION and then when we all went out for a walk presented their interest to cover the gap for the their students with mobility problems by researching the problems and addressing solutions for a more friendly City.

The research shown, lack of ramps in several central parts of the city and destruction or lack of specially designed guides on the sidewalks for the visually impaired. Students proposed proper education to the new generation about the lives of these people and the difficulties they face, renovation of sidewalks and ramps, installation of more traffic lights with noise for recognition, construction of ramps in public companies and schools and penalty for those (young and older people) who do not respect the specially designed infrastructure.

Providing solutions for this problem will give equal opportunities to all students in the Municipality and a better future for all.

GRAFFITI ISSUES NEW AREAS & RESPECT

The Team that was interested in the Graffiti issue of the city, searched the Town and gathered some of the "paintings" with no meaning etc and proposed for the following. A research with the students, to record, photograph and suggest. Recording can be done easily from students with their mobile phones and uploading on a close group of a social media provider and then invite some artists and a rep from the Municipality to evaluate and decide how this can be done in another way. All the smudges will have to be cleared with the Municipality's help while in chosen places new ideas and proposals can be received and as it happens in others cities of the World the artists that will "win" this unofficial contest will receive paints and the construction needed to create the Graffiti ART for the people to admire. This way a lot more people will be responsible to protect and respect the artists work, and this can give every year a Contest for the new areas that will need to be designed. No of the kids liked the idea of smudging especially in signs where visibility can be a problem or else.

The presentations in Greek can be seen attached.

While addressing these problems the students with the ASTERI team and their teachers realized how many extra professions that kids did not have in mind appear and there were important in order to execute the solutions.

Also it made clear to all participants how unprepared are to join the public life and be Active Valuable Citizens.

Since a lot of the problems can not be solved by students their teachers promised to cooperate with ASTERI team and the Vice Mayors in order to presend the need for these professions as part of external lesson or introduction to the students with the beginning of next year. This way some of the students with luck of orientation like find or choose to follow a profession or improve their skills in different areas and have an active engagement with the Municipality.

The Youth Board Members of Thessaloniki, a brand new Group of young people that appeared for the first time this year listened these presentations as well and found them very interesting.

Also the students agreed to interview their parents in order to discuss the project with them and receive their opinions too. Part of these interviews might be used in the film that is being under construction.

In the meantime, students learned that they can view the Municipality Board meeting in the Local TV and this was quite exciting since we all agreed to check one of them and discuss it all together later. Which actually happened and the results were quite amazing.

The students faced the situation of the Municipal members not to agree on the issue that will benefit the City just because they belong in different parties. That was an issue no one could explain, but, gave the students food for thought on how future Boards could work for the citizens benefit and not for the parties.

Actions	Objectives	Timetable
Include research, walks in the City, interviews with teachers, parents etc, analysis, suggestions and proposals managed by the students directed to teachers, experts and parents.	Upgrade and improved communication among students. Active communication with their teachers and the reps from the Authorities as well as ASTERI members and show of interests, problems and priorities	March – May 2021
Student Team separation Collaboration for better results Proposal specification evaluation	Analysis of all issues that aroused. Questions answered and queries as well. Dynamic presence after the first meeting high interest and close cooperation	March – May – June 2021
Mapping of services and employment in the community	Presentation of most of Municipal structure and employment positions Creation of links between school and Authorities and some of local business people in order to cooperate	May - June 2021
Organise School Festival (also open to parents stakeholders etc)	Offer students the opportunity to have the opportunity to present their positions for The City they dream	September 2021
Start an online cooperation community on Social Media including Authorities and	Encouraging student active participation in the decision making and in new ideas	October 2021

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stakeholders comments and advice	and engagement .	

Expected results

Coping with these initiatives and proposals, we aim to create an active team of young people participating in the City's council on a regular basis, learn and engage. This group will be the first and we aim to establish that since the first impression of the Mayor and his Colleagues was really interesting and they created a demo Youth Council Group to start cooperating.

The students will benefit, for several reasons, they will learn, they will engage, they will participate, they will get educated and maybe find their profession through this cooperation, Also by getting engaged in the common problems and with the community in general it gives a great opportunity for students, children to learn to behave as citizens and get more active and more creative.

Therefore their future becomes a lot more prospective and more interesting, taking into account that since these young people learned what they can do, how they can participate, how to search and evaluate, learned part of their rights and their obligations, they automatically became more interested in taking positions and propose. Also they had to search and improve their knowledge in several issues in order to be able to complete their mission.

Contacts with the local community will make these students/children a lot more positive citizens, and their participation will increase the elder's responsibility when taking decisions which affect them. Participating also voluntary gives them the clear definition of volunteering which has been quite far away for a lot of them

Actors involved

Actors involved in the design and implementation of the above actions will be:

- Students from 2nd Protypo High School and from all the other invited local and private schools
- Students school representatives for the participation in the Board of Youth Municipal members
- Teachers and Experts
- Parents and the parent's council
- School principal and school managers
- Municipality & Prefecture as Well as representatives from the Northern Greece Ministry
- Social services and local stakeholder from the community
- Institutions

Conclusions

The project created a process of investigating the problems, evaluating and choosing the priorities, proposing and evaluating solutions, continuing discussion and communication their team and students as well as the Representatives of the Authorities and the community stakeholders .

This will definitely lead to more engaged and active citizens and will provide a better environment for students and civic engagement.