

DEMOCRACY

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EQUALITY
AGIRE
CONFUSING
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DIVERSITÀ
MOTIVATING
GENTE
YOU
PACE
PEOPLE
INTERESTING
NOI
UNIQUE
ENTUSIASMANTE



Fishbowl Youth



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Democracy, democracy



It all started back in Athens around 508 BC

They were sitting with the king
Someone got up and began to sing
"Democracy is the one for me"
The thing about democracy is
Everyone has a say
Everyone has a voice so they know
Everything is ok

Because of democracy, most of us can vote
And that helps to keep us all afloat!

Chorus:

But democracy had problems
Some of them in schools
Some people sat down and tried to fix it
Because they're all really cool
They came up with a project
Called democracy explored
And it kept us all from being bored

One school from Italy
Two schools from Clare
Came together, their knowledge they would share
About their school systems
And the government too
And then we wrote this song for you!
La, la, la, democracy...
Democracy for you and me!!!!

Written by Enda and Caoimhe

Why this publication?

This booklet is created as a tool for Organisations interested in organising a democracy project (1.3) in the Youth in Action Programme. It consists of examples of activities and actions we organised in this framework, tips and pitfalls to look out for in order to ensure a successful project and key aspects of how a non-formal group can work successfully in a formal environment.

The organisations involved

The project “Democracy in Schools” was co-ordinated by two non-formal groups:

How well do you know your partners?
Ensure equal partnership in the project!!

Fishbowl Youth is a youth organisation, situated in county Clare in Ireland. We live in a very rural environment, with little to do for young people. The organisation helps young people – mainly 15 to 18 year olds to organise their own social activities, and to develop activities in their area of interest. Besides this the organisation is very active in the Youth in Action programme and has organised, hosted and co-ordinated many international activities over the last six years.

Binaro Uno is a youth organization situated in Rome that aims to promote active participation and intercultural dialogue among people aged 15 to 30 through international youth meetings, and youth led local initiatives. The group has been active for about 4 years, and has been involved within the Youth in Action programme, the European Youth foundation, the 5th municipality of Rome and has contributed to the empowerment of dozens of young people.

And the following 3 schools

Ireland

Scarriff Community College is the local secondary school, catering for 310 Students.

Youth Reach is a learning centre providing second-chance education and training. It offers a flexible and dynamic programme of integrated general education, vocational training and work experience.

Italy

Liceo Scientifico Nomentano Rome is a high school in the eastern suburbs of Rome. It is a huge institution that gathers over 1200 students from the surrounding areas. The school has always been open to projects and initiatives to provide the students with alternative forms of education, and to foster their initiative and motivation.



THE PROJECT

The aim of our project was to explore and compare democratic processes in our schools, developing more understanding between teachers and students, thus improving student/teacher relationships, and exploring/developing best practise for participation in schools, while creating peer educators who would be able to bring the project forward to next year's students.

The seed was planted about 4 years ago when a number of our members were on student councils in their own schools. All these young people involved in the councils were experiencing frustration with what they were encountering. From the lack of any real power and respect to disorganisation none of them felt they were able to make the positive impact on their schools they had hoped for.

From this frustration there came many discussions. Ultimately the young people wanted to find a way to have their student councils be youth lead.

These students were the young people who were involved in the original application and who participated in the first planning meeting in November 2008. They were senior students who knew the changes would not be made in their time at school but who were dedicated to youth democracy for the future of their schools and school councils

OVERVIEW OF OUR PROJECT

The project was based on a research that was going to be carried out in all three schools. From this research we wanted to come to an understanding of how the schools are governed and how this governing system is perceived by young people and teachers alike.

Below is a short overview of the project as it was planned and implemented

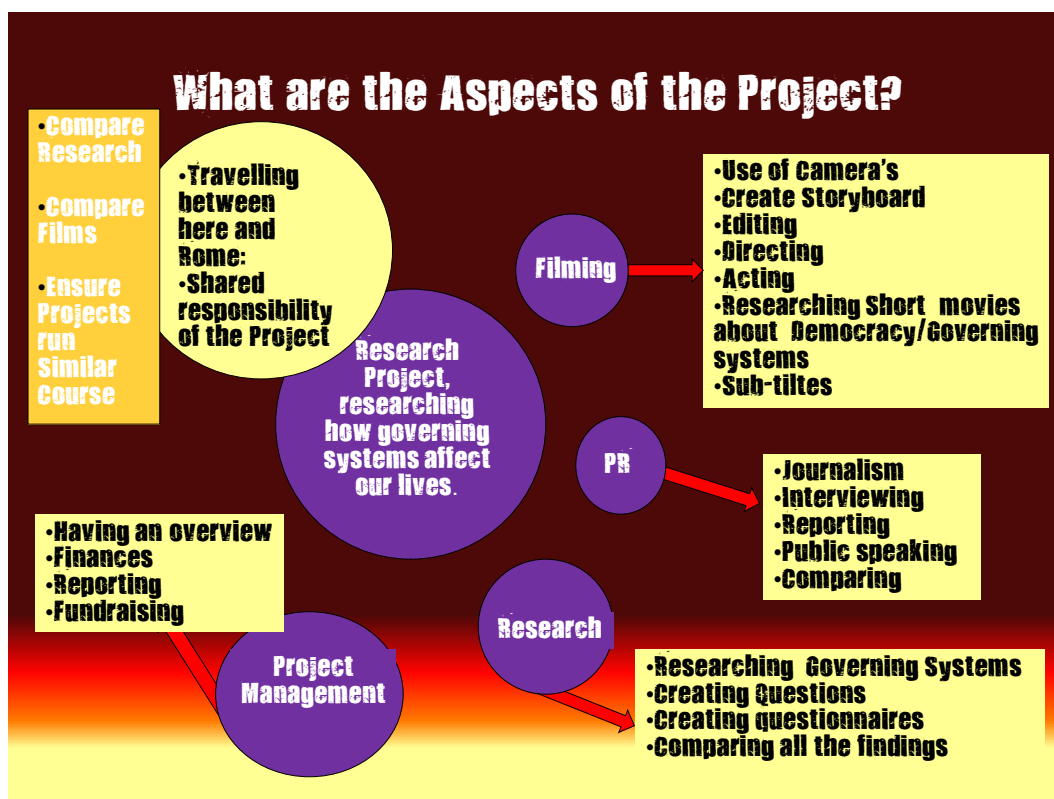
- Workshops in Schools - general overview
- Advanced Planning visit - planning exchange
- Exchange to Italy - comparing school systems
- Gathering information in own country
- Study visit to Ireland - resolving gathered info
- Questionnaires and Interviews
- Study visit to Italy - comparing results and looking for solutions
- Analysing data and making film
- Evaluation
- Presenting project outcome

BUT FIRST OF ALL.... WHAT IS A PROJECT?

- ⇒ **Characteristics of projects**
- ⇒ **Projects have a purpose:** projects have clearly-defined aims and set out to produce clearly-defined results. Their purpose is to solve a "problem", and this involves analysing needs beforehand. Suggesting one or more solutions, it aims at lasting social change.
- ⇒ **Projects are realistic:** their aims must be achievable, and this means taking account both of requirements and of the financial and human resources available.
- ⇒ **Projects are limited in time and space:** they have a beginning and an end and are implemented in a specific place and context.
- ⇒ **Projects are complex:** projects call on various planning and implementation skills, and involve various partners and players.
- ⇒ **Projects are collective:** projects are the product of collective endeavour. They are run by teams, involve various partners and cater for the needs of others.
- ⇒ **Projects are unique:** all projects stem from new ideas. They provide a specific response to a need (problem) in a specific context. They are innovative.
- ⇒ **Projects are an adventure:** every project is different and ground-breaking; they always involve some uncertainty and risk.
- ⇒ **Projects can be assessed:** projects are planned and broken down into measurable aims, which must be open to evaluation.
- ⇒ **Projects are made up of stages:** projects have distinct, identifiable stages

THE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT

In order to implement all the planned activities we had foreseen the following elements incorporated in the project: filming, PR, research and project management. Students could choose one or two of these elements and we organised skill building workshops according to the needs.



Looking at the above a bit closer, it becomes clear that this simple programme worked out to be a very complicated one.

Each section had sub-sections and each sub-section needed a lot of support and input of the co-ordinating organisations.

And... don't forget all the meetings between the leaders, the leaders and schools, peer leaders and participants etc. that were needed to keep the project afloat!

Below is a more detailed description of the programme, this programme shows a more realistic flow of the implemented project

OUR EXPERIENCE

It was hard to support all participants in their different groups, due to many reasons:

- Time restrictions: we are all volunteers with work and family commitments
- It was hard to build relationships with participants, due to the formal mould we worked in. Because of this participants might not have felt secure enough to ask for help
- Outside support did not feel connected to the objective of the project
- Finding the right people with enough time to work with each group

"People see things as they are and ask why. I dream things that never were and ask why not?"

-George Bernard Shaw

FLOW OF THE PROJECT

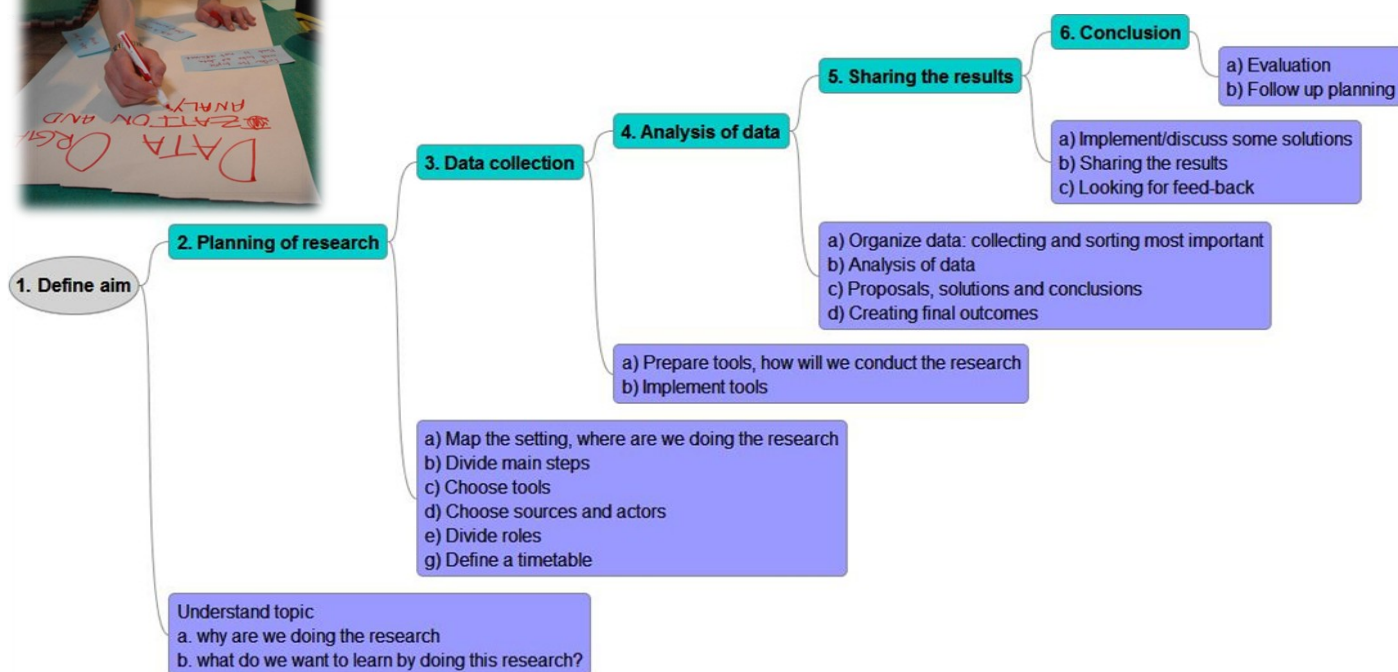
1. **Preparation with the core group – meetings, preparing the workshops and research, what is democracy?**
2. **Introduction of the project to the schools**
 - Meeting 1 – intro to our NGO's, Democracy and NFL – Games etc.
 - Meeting 2 – deeper into what is democracy and team building
 - Meeting 3 – introduction of the entire project with all its aspects
3. **Starting to work with the group that chose to be participants** – in Italy the entire class was going to take part so they carried on exploring their governing system and the skills they need to make it work
4. **Advance Planning Visit for the Exchange**
5. **Preparation for the exchange and the exchange**
 - Meetings with participants
 - Meeting the parents
 - Preparing workshops for exchange
6. **The exchange**
Used as the preparation of the project, non formal methods were used to:
 - to explore what democracy is
 - to experience democratic systems
 - to role-play how we can find solutions to problems
 - to learn how to implement research
 - to explore the governing system in our schools
 - to compare schools and the different school systems
 - Skill building – what skills are needed for this project
7. **Skill building continues in own country**
 - workshops on the different aspects of the project
8. **Meeting in Ireland**
 - Prepare the research
What do we need to research
What do we need to ask
How will we ask it
 - Develop a logo
 - What will we do with the documentary, how will we structure it?
 - Visit school and NGO
 - See a local attraction
9. **Research**
 - Finalise the questionnaires
 - Introduce the project to the wider school community
 - Hand out questionnaires to teachers and students
 - Put results into computer
10. **Meeting in Italy**
 - Finish computer input
 - Create flowcharts
 - Work with the results
 - Create “problem trees” to find solutions
 - Visit school in Rome and experience an assembly
11. **Meetings:**
 - to work with the results
 - type up the work from Italy – was all on flipcharts
 - to finalise the documentary
return to the story board
interviews
editing
6. **Final meeting in Ireland**
 - Prepare the final evening
 - To clarify the outcomes of the overall project
 - Evaluating the project
 - Discussing and preparing follow up
6. **Final evening with local politicians, youth service and VEC**
7. **Prepare final report, finances and booklet**

How to keep motivation going over such a long period?

PLAN OF ACTION



For the research we developed the following plan of action:



OUR EXPERIENCE

Although the research was central to our project, we realised that we failed to notice that we were making it too big. It would have been better if we had spent more time understanding the exact aim of the research, look for aspects to research, narrow those aspects down again until left with the basic questions to ask. We created a questionnaire that was too big and had too many questions. We realised only afterwards that many of these questions were not relevant to researching the governing system, and the overload of questions created a lot of confusion, work and was quite de-motivating for the group

SO... WHAT IS NON FORMAL, FORMAL AND IN-FORMAL LEARNING???

Formal learning is typically provided by education or training institutions, with structured learning objectives, learning time and learning support. It is intentional on the part of the learner and leads to certification.

Non-formal learning is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. However, it is intentional on the part of the learner and has structured objectives, times and support.

Informal learning results from daily activities related to work, family life or leisure. It is not structured and usually does not lead to certification. In most cases, it is unintentional on the part of the learner.

Workshop with Suzanne sturton, PR Consultant
Wrote articles local newsletters and website

Did not work very well

Too busy

Needed more training in public speaking, even if it was addressed through workshops during the exchange

Both film and pr lacked support, as all resources went into dealing with the research and the outcomes

We needed outside expertise. It would have helped the process, the confidence of the participants, and the quality of the work produced if this support had been there continuously—instead of sporadic.

Make contact with news papers early on in the project

Know how to take pictures that work in papers or web sites

Ensure people work in two's or small groups, not on their own or in big groups

Regular meetings to monitor progress

It was our aim to have a film that represented democracy through the eyes and experiences of the participants. The film was to be a collaboration of what they had encountered through their experience of the research and what key reflections and ideas they had following the research.

Example of activities: 1 day film workshop on basic camera use

Tips:

- keep ideas for filming simple- a film about what happened on a project will often not be very interesting to other people so find the key points of interest and break them down into their simplest form using other short films can be helpful
- all who use equipment to be trained in using the equipment safely and competently -cameras, sound equipment, computer and software
- make sure batteries for camera are kept charged
- have plenty of back up tapes so no tape needs to be taped over
- clearly label all footage
- be very particular with what footage is shot so as not to end up with hours and hours of footage -so time consuming to troll through for editing
- ideally have one computer that is used solely for filming so there is no chance of viruses interfering and crashing the computer
- when using professional people to help be sure to prep them on what you expect from them e.g. that they are not to use the equipment only teach, highlight the way in which you work with a group and what they should expect from the group
- be sure you or someone has the skills to complete the film in the way in which you describe it to the young people
- leave as little to last minute as possible- so many things can go wrong from the burning of DVDs to the sound or vision not being compatible or out of sync to crashing of systems

Beginners workshop in filming

Aim of the workshop is for the participants to become capable of using the cameras in a safe and competent manner themselves and to begin to understand how one would make a film successfully.

Agreement of a contract of how, when, where and who uses the equipment

This will be done through teaching the participants the following skills:

how to work the camera

transferring footage to the computer to have it ready for editing

checking sound and light for shots

how to convey information, thoughts, feelings through film

12 introductions workshop leader and group

12:10 warm up activity related to filming that would help the group relax and get to know each other

12:20 introduction to camera

brainstorm ideas for short films

LOOKING AT THE GRAPHS - Democratic System - Ireland

These observations were generated during workshop in Italy comparing the results of the questionnaires

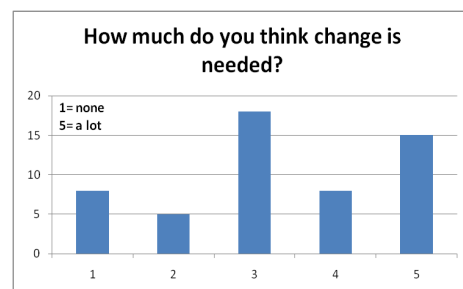
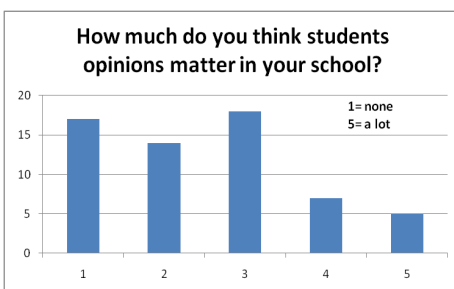
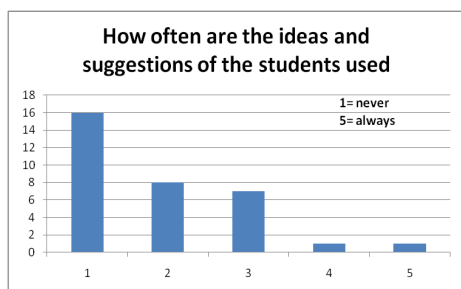
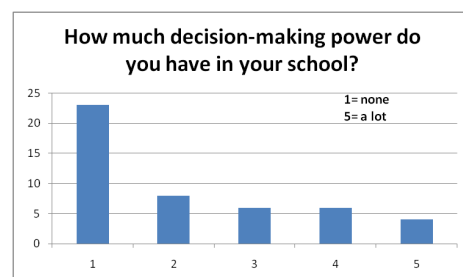
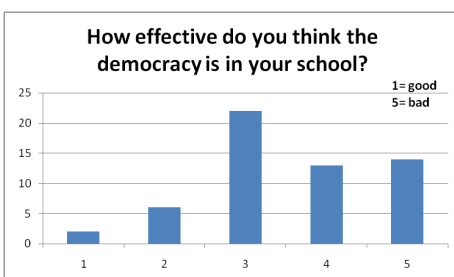
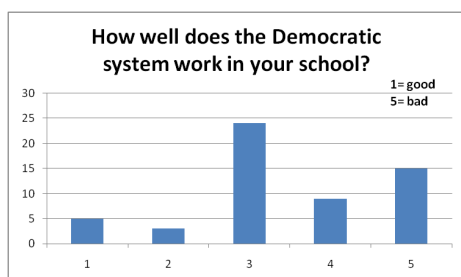
Positive observations

Youthreach

- Decisions are made in a team meeting with us and the teachers
- Team meetings help us decide a lot of tough things and we are treated as equals
- We have a lot of say in what happens
- Direct line of communication between students, teachers and co-ordinator
- If we all have the same opinion, then they have a lot of decision making power
- The VEC are lovely

Scariff Community College

- Irish students feel their opinion matters more than Italian students in school
- We have a voice
- Ideas are passed through students council
- Decision-making is done democratically
- Irish vice-principal has more power than Italian vice-principal



Negative observations

Youthreach

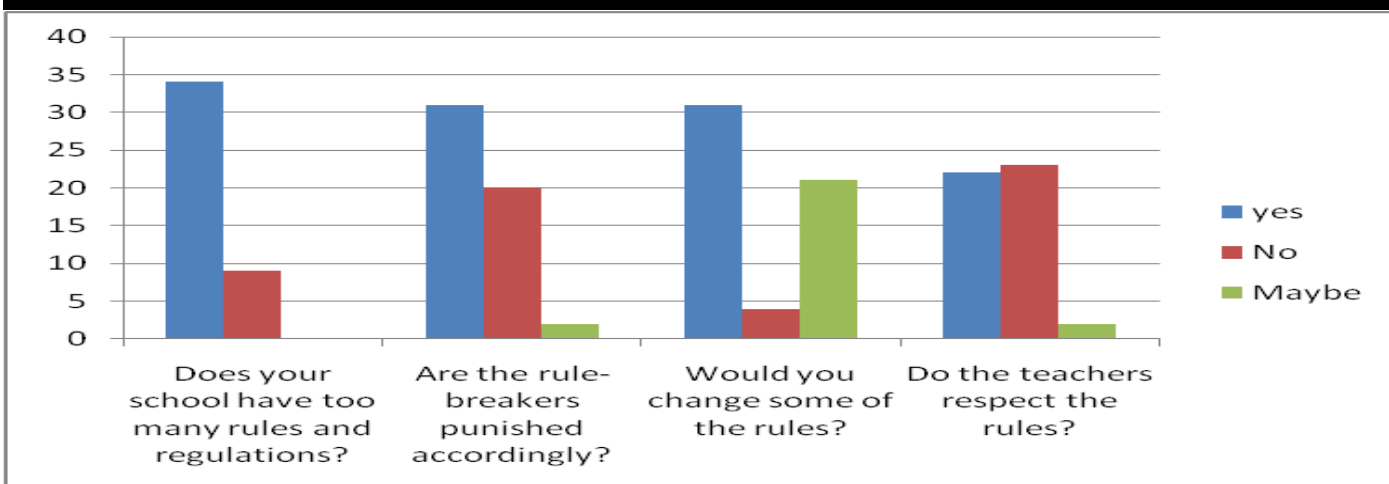
- There is no recourse for us when criticized by teachers

Scariff Community College

- We have a limited input
- We have a small say in our school
- We don't get to choose our class representatives
- We believe that the democratic system is not good enough in our school
- Student representatives don't have much power
- Students believe they have little power
- Our decision-making power is low
- We didn't get to vote for our representatives
- If the teachers have their mind made up, there is no changing them
- Prefects are chosen by teachers impressions of them
- People don't feel comfortable going to the student rep. as they might not know them
- Principal has too much power
- Some teachers have too much power
- Most people don't know who their student rep. is

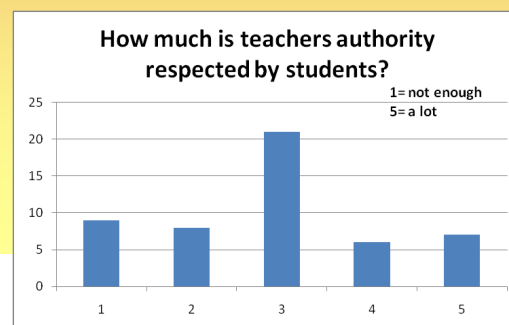
I think I was obsessed; I have never put so much effort into anything else
(quote from participant)

LOOKING AT THE GRAPHS - Rules - Ireland



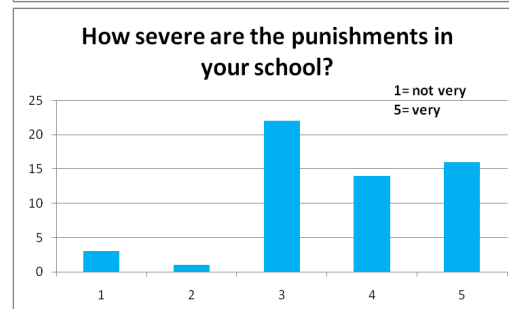
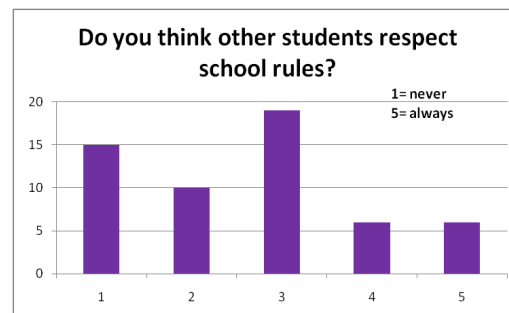
Positive observations

- Teachers feel their authority is respected
- People won't break rules if they are punished
- Rules help to keep order
- Rules provide nicer atmosphere
- Rules bring mutual respect in the school
- From questionnaire it looks like YR students respect the rules more than the YR teachers do.
- Less violence
- Can wear own shoes
- Uniform give identity less competition
- Breaking rules can be fun
- The rules are to promote equality between teachers
- Punctuality rules are relaxed in most cases
- Rules are fair and relevant.



Negative observations

- Irish punishment severe.
- Too many rules
- Teachers talk about students in staff room
- Students don't have a say in what punishments are in place
- some rules not effective e.g smoking
- Detention is just writing not very effective
- School scarf
- Uniform rules are way too strict
- Uniform rules are unfair maybe a dress should be introduced instead
- Teachers don't get punished if they break the rules



FROM ANALYSIS TO SOLUTIONS: how to improve relationships with student representatives - Italy

"Problem tree" explained

Problem tree is divided in several phase:

first phase consists in a **problem brainstorm** related to the topic that was chosen (in this case, meeting between students and representatives)

In this phase all problems that are related to this issues are written on paper as a list.

The second phase of the brain-

storm consist in **merging or dividing the issues** witch were brought up, so to make them clear and specific without any repetitions.

After this phase, comes the actual problem tree making: the goal of this phase is to **put all the problems in relationships of cause and effect**. This

produces a tree with the main issues on top, and the specific reasons for these issues at the bottom.

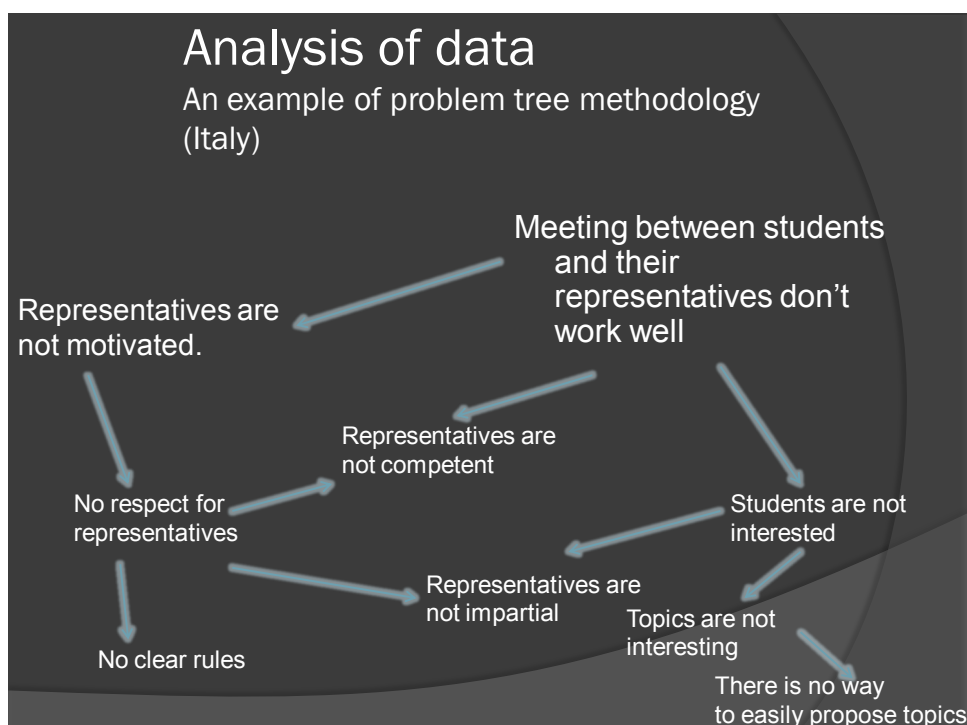
Of course a single problem has many reasons.

Your purpose at this point is to keep developing the tree, adding other issues if necessary, until you reach issues at the bottom that are specific enough to be immediately turned into solutions:

While saying, "representatives are not motivated" is not something that can be automatically turned into a solutions, the issue "no clear rules" can be! just create rules and you will solve part of the problems above...

What you get **in the end is a tree of solutions**, were at the bottom you have your activities, and at the top your objectives.

So for example: "to make representatives more motivated" is a goal.. "to establish clear guidelines and rules



Problem:

The meetings between students and their representatives do not work well

Solutions:

- Create training for student representatives
- Create a box to propose topics and ideas for meetings

From the SOLUTION to ACTION - an example, the newspaper

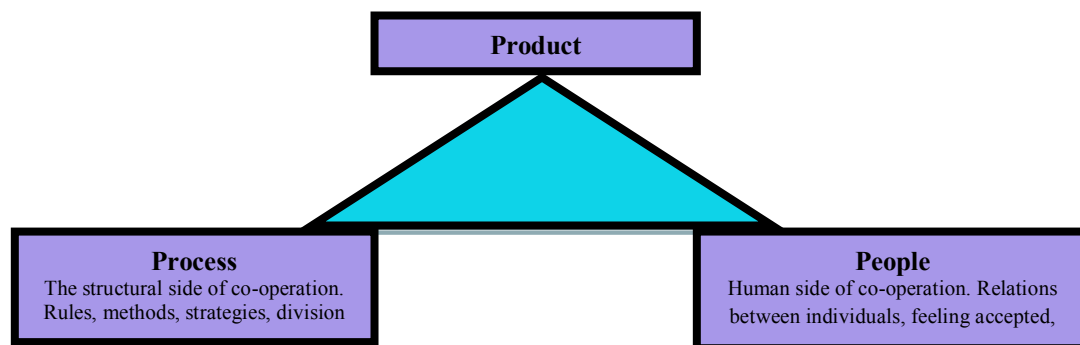
- It started from an idea and now the Italian school has a new newspaper un by students
- We shared articles with other schools, and it is now growing more and more

My optimism is not based primarily on the successful march of democracy in recent times but rather is based on the experience of having lived in a fear society and studied the mechanics of tyranny that sustain such a society. - Natan Sharansky

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

A project this large and with so many partners and aspects to it needed a lot of managing. Both NGO's are experienced in managing international projects, but this one, as any other project, still managed to give us plenty of surprises, conflicts, difficulties and just plain desperation... when it went well it gave plenty of joy, pride, satisfaction, adventure etc. As an underlying aspect throughout the project there was a line of continuous learning.

THE 3 P's



**“The project must make progress, it has deadlines to reach and work to be done.
The people steering the project need to become an effective team.....” (Lawrie, 1996)**

The 3'Ps' triangle symbolises the fact that for a team to become effective, there has to be a balance between the product, the procedure and the people in the team.

The triangle symbolises that in an efficient team there has to be a balance between these three poles:

- Too much attention to procedures, too strict rules will kill the creativity and the spontaneity of the people. People will feel less good and this will have an effect on the product (result)
- Too much attention to the people side, too much talking about how we feel, how we like or dislike each other will take the focus away from the result, a project team is not a therapeutic growth group ;
- Too much focus on the product (result) will hinder the team in finding good working procedures and will have an effect on the people side (there is less time to listen to each others ideas, to evaluate the work and the process) Many teams are strongly focused on the product (result). They don't take the time to get to know each other, to think about procedures on how to work together, to evaluate how people feel in the team mostly because a lack of time. “We only have two days for this prep-meeting...”

At the first sight it looks of course more efficient to put all the attention on the task, the product; if you don't have to take the time to listen to different ideas you have more time to execute the task. But in the longer term listening to each other, taking time for each other will be much more efficient. For example, the real cause of a problem can become clear or really listening to each other can help to motivate that person (listening = giving attention = recognise the person, you are important for this team = motivation to work better)

A dynamic balance between product – procedure – people will help a team function much better in the longer term.

From Project Management T-Kit 3

OUR EXPERIENCE

During the project we came across many challenges that were at times new for us and but also the old familiar ones did appear of course.

MEETINGS, MEETINGS, MEETINGS!! This was even more important due to the length of the project. Regular meetings were essential for the motivation, to keep focus and to stay in touch.

WHO OWNS THE PROJECT? this project was very much unlike any other project we have done in our organisations previously. The problem being that although the project was instigated by young people, it was carried out and implemented by a different group of young people. At times the NGO's felt that ownership lay by them, and no-one else. This was not a healthy situation, and more non formal workshops would have helped a lot to avoid this.

COMMUNICATION... between leaders, between participants and leaders, participants and teachers between peer leaders and leaders, between the NGO's between schools and NGO's, between the media and the project, etc, etc. At times we had to ask ourselves the question: Is it impossible for a voluntary group?

In a workshop the young people came up with the following tips:

Who will keep an overview of the project? It is very helpful to have one person to do just that!

Product	Process	People
How can you get the best result? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a leader/facilitator • make sure that everyone understands the purpose • Make sure that your work will reach your aim, concentrate on the purpose • Focus on what's relevant • Time management • Split in small groups • Listen to each other • Work together and help each other • Making sure that everyone in the group works • Choose the most relevant ideas and remove the least relevant • Being aware of the groups abilities • Encouraging each other to concentrate 	How can you make the process efficient? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone must work together – do not be lazy • When in small groups everybody must be in agreement and voice their opinions • Facilitation must be prepared for every occasion • Don't let people avoid doing their share of work <p>Divide into small groups: brain storm and choose the best idea and put it into practise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the aim • Realise a good action plan • Involve everybody • Try to assign tasks to every person • establish clear guidelines • Highlight skills which will be useful to achieve to aim • Hold a meeting at the end to • make a common decision 	How can you make people feel good when you work? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let everyone have a chance to speak and show their own ideas and opinions • Give everyone the role they want to take and that suites them best • Avoid useless arguments • Use peoples knowledge/ability • working in small groups • Involving all the people in the group • Allowing elections • Remind them that they did a good job – tap on the back • encourage the team • Have fun

Keep the question "do you want participate?" open

OUR EXPERIENCE

- Working with the schools made us feel obliged that we had to keep all participants involved in the project. It would have been good to state at the beginning that we would expect everyone to be fully involved and to have the freedom to let go of participants if they did not show interest or motivation for the project. We did not challenge the participants enough at times
- There were questions around parental support for the project and the lack of it feeding into their mind set. Many parents want their children to focus on their school work as they are now in their final two years in school. This also puts into perspective the difficulties the school in Italy had, as they were not in a transition year and needed to fit the project around "real" school work all the time.
- We never fully broke down the teacher like relationship; again here the role of the peer educators was important as they did work on a more equal basis. The older leaders in fishbowl stayed very much figures of authority and this did not help the project in developing along Non Formal learning principals. It was not easy to build a positive and open relationship with them, and we were surprised to realise that this was the case after working together for over a year.
- Workshops focussing on motivation and exploration of the theme would have improved the overall attitude

I was surprised that it was so interesting, everyone who came -to the political evening - was really impressed (quote from participant)

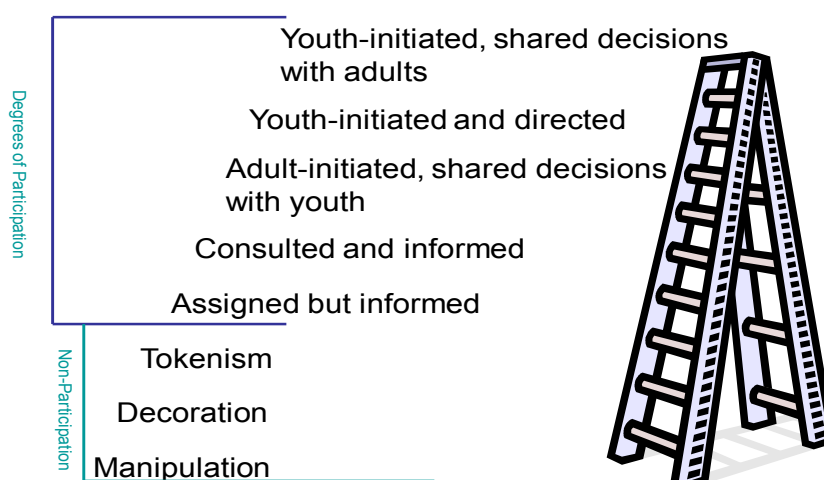
PARTICIPATION

We would like to give some background theory about participation. Participation is central in a project like this. The young people should participate, take action themselves but often they need the support of the adults around them. In our case the NGO's supported the young people.

But what is participation? The figure of the ladder on the next page shows an example of how we can differentiate between different levels of participation. What is important to keep in mind that there is no project that lives on only one step of this ladder, most projects move from one step to the other, both upwards and downwards. This ladder is not about judging the project, the top being the best. This ladder is about recognising where you and your young people fit.

LADDER OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION

It is not enough to say that young people do or do not participate. There are different degrees to which youth can be involved or can take over responsibility, depending on the local situation, resources, needs and level of experience. Roger Hart proposes a model of the so-called "ladder of children's participation", which illustrates the different degrees of involvement of children and young people in projects, organisations or communities. Roger Hart defines eight degrees of youth involvement, each of the degrees corresponding to one rung of a ladder.



Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Rung 8: Shared decision-making

Projects or ideas are initiated by young people, who invite the adults to take part in the decision-making process as partners.

Rung 7: Young people led and initiated

Projects or ideas are initiated and directed by young people; the adults might get invited to provide any necessary support, but a project can carry on without their intervention.

Rung 6: Adult-initiated, shared decision making

Adults initiate projects but young people are invited to share the decision-making power and responsibilities as equal partners.

Rung 5: Young people consulted and informed

Projects are initiated and run by adults,

but young people provide advice and suggestions and are informed how these suggestions contribute to the final decisions or results.

Rung 4: Young people assigned and informed

Projects are initiated and run by adults; young people are invited to take on some specific roles or tasks within the project, but they are aware of what influence they have in reality.

Rung 3: Young people tokenised (tokenism)

Young people are given some roles within projects but they have no real influence on any decisions. The illusion is created (either on purpose or unintentionally) that young people participate, when in fact they have no choice about what they do and how

Rung 2: Young people as decoration

Young people are needed in the project to represent youth as an underprivileged group. They have no meaningful role (except from being present) and – as happens with any decorations – they are put in a visible position within a project or organisation, so that they can easily be seen by outsiders.

Rung 1: Young people manipulated

Young people are invited to take part in the project, but they have no real influence on decisions and their outcomes. In fact, their presence is used to achieve some other goal, such as winning a local election, creating a better impression of an institution or securing some extra funds from institutions that support youth participation.

The ladder of youth participation can be a very useful tool for practitioners, who want to look critically at how participatory projects or initiatives work in their own communities. But this model can also falsely suggest a hierarchy of degrees of youth participation and can encourage efforts to reach the highest rungs at any price. It is therefore important to remember that the degree to which young people are or should be involved depends on the local situation, on what needs to be achieved, what experience exists, etc. It can sometimes be rather difficult to see precisely what the level of participation is within a project, either due to its complexity or to the fact that there are no clear borders between different rungs. The degree of involvement can also evolve over time.

Have your say Manual

Space

Young people need physical space to meet, to spend time or to organise their own activities. As far as participation in school activities or other organised curricula is concerned, facilities are usually provided (in classrooms, gyms or youth clubs, for example). But it is much more difficult for young people to find a place to meet in if they are interested in getting involved in non-organised initiatives. That is why we are seeing the Internet being used more and more frequently by young people as a space for exchanging views or even setting up projects with other likeminded people.

But this RMSOS factor is not only about physical space, it is much more about the space to participate within the institutional framework of policy making. This essentially means that young people's views, recommendations and conclusions should have a real impact on decisions that are made. Very often young people are invited to participate in processes, but in fact they have little possibility to influence and shape the final outcome. This is called "token representation".

Opportunity

In order to be able to participate actively young people need to be provided with the opportunity to do so. This means, for example, that young people must have easy access to information on how to get involved, what the opportunities available are and where they are. When they know what is going on in their local community in terms of youth participation they can make informed decisions about their involvement. It is sometimes the case that young people do not participate, not because they have no interest, but simply because they do not get information about existing opportunities.

Secondly, events, decision-making processes and systems need to be youth-friendly. There should not only be space for young people within these processes and structures, but the way they are organised and the way they work should be such that young people can understand them and can fully contribute if they so wish. It therefore has to be ensured, for example, that young people have the opportunity to participate in terms of having sufficient time and supportive structures.

Support

Young people have lots of talent and the potential to participate, but without the necessary support, their involvement might not be as efficient as it could be. They should have access to various forms of support. These include, for example, financial, moral and institutional support at a number of different levels – personal, organisational or at local community level. Ideally, local authorities should provide adequate financial support to cover expenses and structural costs, but it is still the case that in many communities, youth issues do not have priority in terms of local financial management.

Young people also need to have access to moral support and advice. This can be provided, for example, by a person referred to in the revised charter as a guarantor³² or, alternatively, by a youth worker or other professional who has the necessary experience and expertise in working in the field of youth-adult partnerships or in working with young people. Lastly, the institution or community as a whole needs to support and recognise the importance and contribution of youth participation, not only for young people, but also for public authorities and society in general.

It has been already mentioned that all five elements of the RMSOS approach need to be present in order that meaningful participation by young people can take place. If, for example, their right to participate is denied, it does not matter what means, space or support will be provided, they will not be able to get involved. On the other hand, having the right, but insufficient support means that this right cannot be exercised. Although each of the RMSOS factors has been analysed separately in this chapter, one therefore needs to see all the elements as parts of an interconnected system, one that is balanced and operates well only when all the elements function properly.

Have your say Manual

OUR EXPERIENCE

Looking at our project it was clear that we started at the top step of this ladder, young people came to us and wanted to change something in their schools. They took some initiatives in their school, joined their school councils, hoping that they could instigate changes. We supported them in this process but this initiative did not work out well. **They spoke to us about ways to create a change** and we realised that a democracy project could be the tool to help us. They joined us in the feasibility meeting that we organised with our Italian partners. This meeting was used to explore our options and to share our experiences and look for ways to work on a positive solution. After this meeting these young people left school and we started working with a new group. We took on the idea of the previous group and moved a few steps down, **we initiated the project with the new group, but we shared ideas and decisions.**

When we went to the schools we moved a few steps down again! **We informed a group of young people about the project, and we assigned tasks to them.** This was a very unusual step for us, but the only way that we could see the project move ahead!

While the project was in full swing we went through many stages, at times it was **youth initiated and directed**, this is when everything went really well. At times the motivation was very low, and during those times the travelling became an incentive to for people to keep going. **This could be called "manipulation"!**

During the entire project we worked with 2 or 3 peer educators and they stayed with us on the top of the **ladder** all the time, leading the rest of the group and the project.

"Democracy is pretty much what you understand yourself; it is what you make it"
(quote from participant)



Another very useful tool we used was the “RMSO” approach

During the final evaluation we explained the meaning of the “RMSO” (rights, means, support, opportunity and space) we then handed out a graph in which the participants could gauge their participation in their schools and to see how they rated each pillar, to what level do they feel they can participate in their school according to the 5 headings. They did this individually. When everyone was finished they shared their graphs in national groups and they then created one that represented the participation in each school.

5					
4.5					
4					
3.5					
3					
2.5					
2					
1.5					
1					
0.5					
	Right	Means/ Motivation	Support/ Training	Opportunity	Space

The charter’s approach to participation is the so-called “RMSOS” approach and is based on the five keywords mentioned in the document’s preamble: right, means, space, opportunity and support.

It is based on the principle that meaningful youth participation can only take place when the right conditions have been created and all the actors involved in participatory work have been given the responsibility to ensure that these conditions are present. The five keywords, Right, Means, Space, Opportunity and Support, represent the main factors having an influence on youth involvement at local level (they will be explained more in detail later in this chapter).

Each of them focuses on a different support measure, but they are closely interrelated, and **they all have to be fulfilled for young people to be able to participate fully in the activities or decisions** that interest them.

Right

Young people have an implicit right to participate and, as has been already mentioned in Chapter 1, it is referred to as a human right or citizen’s right. Ideally, there should be a law at local and/or regional level stating that young people have to be consulted and have the right to participate in issues, actions and decisions affecting them. But even in communities where no such law officially exists, young people have a right to participate. In other words, it is not dependent on local or regional authorities to grant such a right, but it is a fundamental right that all young people have and should demand.

Young people should be active in promoting their rights. In practice, this means much more than influencing local decisions by consultations or voting. It implies that the activities, projects or organisations should promote rights that young people have in all areas of life, and this means not only civil or political rights, but also social, economic or cultural ones.

Means

Life can be more difficult for young people who have insufficient resources in life (financial resources, for example) and who live in poverty due to unemployment or other difficulties. This may mean that their basic needs like food or shelter are not met and they may feel isolated or left out of society as a result. It is natural that, in such circumstances, the priority is to try to look for different ways of obtaining the missing resources and, as a result, young people might lack the time or motivation to participate in the life of an organisation or community.

In order to encourage young people to get involved, therefore, it has to be ensured that basic needs are met. These include sufficient social security, education, housing, health care, transportation, know-how and access to technology.

Democracy must be something more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner.
James Bovard

THE EXCHANGE

The exchange was not applied for in the project, but was a very important event within the project. The exchange was essential for building the group dynamics and to create understanding and motivation.

It was a very intense and hard working exchange and the programme came very close to the programme of a training course.

Many of the results of the workshops from the exchange are in this booklet, the exchange was used to set the stage of the project, to explore what was needed for the implementation and to build the skills to do so.

The effect of the exchange was to be felt throughout the project, and we would advise to always incorporate at least one residential in a project if this is possible.

	Day 1 Know the subject	Day 2 Analyze the school situation	Day 3 Research	Day 4 Building of skills	Day 5 Youth in Action and evaluation
8.00-9.00	Breakfast				
9.30-12.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the project • Expectations • Team building activities • Creation of common rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simulation of research: uniforms in school. • Presentation of the researches • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School hierarchy and democratic system • Breaking down the research into small steps • Tools, guidelines and roles for each small step 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill building on teamwork • Creating a learning plan • Making our own pasta! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Youth in Action” presentation: overview of the EU program • Planning the next steps in the project • creating a final timetable
13.00-15.00	Lunch				
15.00-18.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is democracy? • What is participation? • Simulation of democratic process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills, tools and guidelines for each part of a research • Comparison of schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills are connected to each role? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill building: Project management • Facilitation • PR and Media • Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the project • Cleaning up
	National Reflection groups and Team meeting				
18.30-20.30	Dinner				
		Intercultural evening		Intercultural dinner	

OUR EXPERIENCE

Have you worked with young people in a formal environment before? If not, you could take the following into account:

- Have enough non-formal activities and team building activities to build the team, to build trust and to break out of the formal mould
- Young people know each other very well, but they do not always feel safe with each other.
- Patterns of friendships/interaction are already set, they need to be looked at, understood and sometimes re-structured. i.e. Is everyone in the group respected?
- Create good and open relationship between leaders and participants. We found it very hard to build an open relationship with the young people, as we stayed figures of authority for most of them
- Workshops focussing on motivation and exploration of the theme would have improved the overall attitude
- Set goals with the group and revisit them regularly. Coming from a formal background, they are used to being led, and not to lead.
- Incorporate personal development more deeply

COMPARISON OF THE SCHOOLS

During the exchange a comparison of the 3 schools was carried out. This exercise was very interesting and it created a lot of clarity about the differences that exist between the schools. The students were first asked what they wanted to know about each other's schools, these questions were written on big flipcharts, and grouped into similar questions. Each group of questions was put in different areas in the room and students were asked to answer them in mixed nationality groups. Flipcharts were provided for writing the answers on. The exercise was finished with a general discussion about the differences and similarities.

General questions about the schools

Questions	Scarriff Community College	Youth Reach	Liceo Scientifico Nomentano Rome
How many lessons per day?	9 Lessons per day	6 but we have some double classes too	Between 4-5.
How many people in a class?	25- 30	13 in school, 5 in my class	20-30
How long are the classes?	35-40 minutes	45 minute classes	55-60 minutes
What is your school timetable?	Monday to Friday 9.00-15.25	Monday to Thursday 9.30-15.30 Friday 9.30-13.00	Monday to Saturday from 8.30 – 13.30. Thursday until 14.30.
Can you leave the premises?	We cannot leave the school till 15.25	We can leave on 11.00-11.30 and 13.00-14.00	We can't leave the school until the end of lessons (until 14.30)
Do you have to change classrooms?	Yes, we must change classrooms. Teachers have their own classrooms	Yes	No we don't have to change classrooms, teachers move from class to class.
Where do you eat your lunch?	In the classroom assigned to you. Or outside or in the hall or the corridors	Anywhere, we cook and clean.	School finishes at 13.30/14.30 there is no canteen. We go home for lunch.
How many teachers? How many students per teacher?	There are 26 teachers – 325 students. Number of students per class is 24	around 7 teachers 13 students	There are about 130 teachers - 1,200 students and. The average number of students per class ranges from 19-29.

OUR EXPERIENCE

Tips for non formal and formal organisations meeting each other in a project:

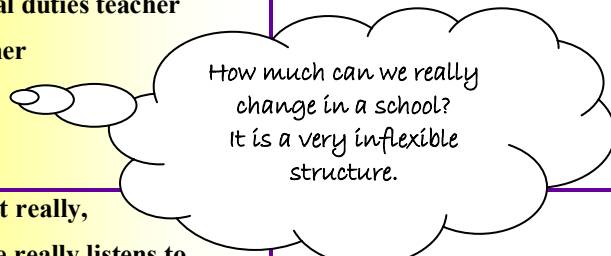
Take enough time to work with the schools, to really incorporate them in the process

- Explain what we expect of the school, but recognise the fact that it is hard to know how the project will exactly work before you actually start, even if there is a clear plan of action
- Ask to be introduced to all the staff
- Let all the teachers know what you are doing
- Let the teachers know you are open to feedback
- Have more teachers involved or at least one teacher fully involved
- Find ways for more overall connection between leaders and teachers
- Teachers can be part of preparing workshops
- Teachers could document the process
- Ask school for help where appropriate
- Explain how our organisations work
- Decide before project what roles people will have
- Have one person to be the intermediary between the teacher and the leaders. This person can explain the process, and the activities
- Show the results of the project regularly



Questions specific for the Democracy Project

Questions	Scarriff Community College	Youth Reach	Liceo Scientifico Nomentano Rome
What is the hierarchy in your school?	Principal Deputy principal Assistant principal Special duties teacher Teacher	Teachers Students	Principal Deputy principal Assistant of principal (or deputy) Head department Class co-ordinator Teacher Representative of students council
Are the student's views taken into account?	No not really, no one really listens to our opinions.	Definite yes	Not really but occasionally we're listened to
Do you have a say in the schools?	Not really teachers make all the decisions	Yes	A bit.
Do you have meeting of all the youth "presidents" of the schools in the region	No. Never	No	Yes, at least twice every four months
Do you get to vote for the class council (the right to elect)?	We used to but now we have a class prefect and no elected representative.	We don't have a student council, but a student meeting once a week.	All students have the right to vote their representative who sits in the student council
Do you have a student council? If yes how does it work?	Yes we do representatives from each year meets with some teacher and discuss things that are happening.	No. But we have team meetings.	Yes, we have. Each class elects two representatives and all the representatives have a meeting once a month. They have to decide when the students meetings have to be and the topic that will be discussed.
Do you have student assembly (General students meeting)?	Sometimes we have assemblies but only with our year groups.	No there's only 13 people in Youth Reach	Yes, we have.
What flaw do you see in your school system?	Student council. Lack of student's authority. Lack of democratic decision making. Ideas not taken into account.	No real flaws. Issues are discussed in a weekly team meeting and sorted out.	Money is not sufficient for the project in the schools.
What would you change in your school?	Better relationship with principal.	Don't think any changes need to be made. The team meeting is there for just that	More cleaning. Relationship with headmaster.



Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

ROLES and skills identified

In order to implement the research we identified roles and the skills needed for these roles. During the exchange we organised skill building workshops to improve the skills, but we also realised that throughout the project many of the so called "soft skills" are developed on an ongoing basis.

It is interesting to see how many natural skills come to the surface in a project like this and it is great to be able to nurture and develop these skills further.

On the other hand time was always a problem, so we did not manage to facilitate as many workshops as needed. This was mostly visible in the PR and the filming as both these groups needed specialised training, and this training could have been improved on if **time** would

Some realistic thoughts of time
time cannot be saved
time cannot be exchanged
time cannot be bought
time cannot be sold
time can only be used

Roles	Skills
Chairman in meetings	Needs to have authority Needs to be: good time keeper Able to differentiate between important and non important discussions
Secretary	Needs to be able to: write fast, listen carefully able to follow the communication able to differentiate between important and not important issues
Interviewer / Spokes person / P.R.	Needs to be: a Communicator, polite, good listener, interactive and sociable speak clearly, use good grammar informative and informed about the topics Confident, flexible, eager to succeed
Researcher	Needs to: Know what you are trying to research Be able to use technology i.e. excel Able to explain what and why you are researching
Photographer / Filming	Needs to be: able to take pictures, good at using camera know how to use video recorder know the reason for filming or taking pictures able to explain why you are taking pictures Fast, at the right moment in the right place Creative
Editor	Needs to have: organisation skills editorial skills planning skills summarising skills to be able to define relevant aspects
Artist	creative artistic know how to use art materials
Writer Typist	fast at typing and writing able to read other's hand writing

FACILITATION AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

What is the role of the facilitator/leader?

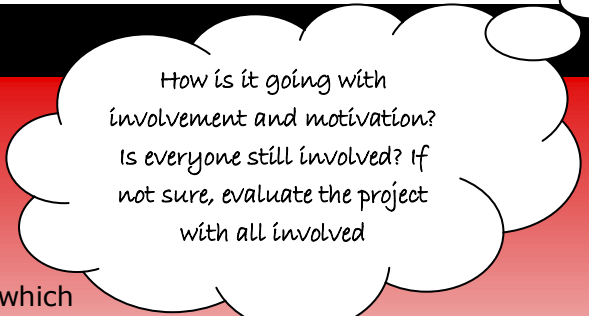
A facilitator is an individual who's job is to help to manage a process of information exchange.

In short, the facilitator's responsibility is to address the journey, rather than the destination.

The role of a skilled facilitator is to create conditions in which a group can work together effectively to get a task done efficiently. The facilitator does not provide "expert" answers to problems the group faces. Rather, he/she provides a process which enables the group to develop its' own answers out of its' own collective expertise or to guide them in the right direction to find answers.

Essentially, the effective facilitator functions as a catalyst for group productivity. The end result is two-fold. First, the group gets its' task done efficiently. Second, the group learns how to work together effectively

A professional facilitator gradually transfers these skills to the group itself, so that in the future they can be just as effective and efficient without outside facilitation.




How is it going with involvement and motivation?
Is everyone still involved? If not sure, evaluate the project with all involved

OUR EXPERIENCE

Role of a facilitator or leader was very important for this project. A lot of the facilitation was done by the peer leaders. During the exchange we explored the important aspects of facilitation below are some of the outcomes of this session

A Facilitator enables the following:

- Making the process pleasant for the people.
 - Making the process efficient.
 - Getting great results.



Are you clear about what participation means???

Practical skills needed

- allowing people to participate
- allowing each person to have their say
- don't lose track of the aim
- divide people into small groups
- try to assign tasks to every person
- we have to vote if there is no consent
- give clear guidelines
- realise a good action plan
- facilitator should be objective
- keep in mind the purpose of whole project or exercise
- time management
- organising skills

Social Skills needed

- be polite and respect all the people
- acknowledge peoples effort
- respect all opinions
- pay attention to everyone's ideas
- let everyone speak freely and show his/her own idea
- encourage people to use their talents
- must be prepared to be calm
- involve everyone in the activity
- don't let anyone impose over someone else
- avoid useless arguments
- encourage the team and make sure that everybody understand the purpose

"Many forms of Government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time".

Sir Winston Churchill

GUIDELINES for meetings with institutions and authority figures

For the project we envisaged that the young people needed the skills to interacting with figures of authority, and during the role-plays this became even clearer. We designed workshops in order to build skills for this purpose. This was a three-part process

- role-play, they interviewed their teachers about a tricky subject
- workshops analysing the previous session
- creating guidelines for meeting with institutions and authority figures

Preparation:

- Arrange the meeting (make an appointment, etc.)
- Try to get some information about the people you're going to meet
- Set a clear objective for the meeting
- Plan the questions
- Be sure you know the answers to the questions they could ask you
- Discuss roles (example: one speaks, one takes notes)
- Make some research to provide facts and statistics as support
- Have an idea of possible/ideal outcome for the meeting
- Bring representatives of both boys and girls, and make sure they have equal opportunity to speak
- Think about your dress-code, be presentable and well-mannered
- In two words: **be prepared!**

During the meeting:

- Have clear introductions
- Always make eye contact
- Use appropriate vocabulary
- Be confident in your presentation
- Be ready to think on your feet, stay relaxed, don't create uncomfortable silent moments
- Be precise and concrete, especially about technicalities
- Prepare and bring with you notes and written presentations, and know them well!
- Speak clearly
- Be polite

After the meeting:

- Evaluate the meeting
 - ◊ what went well, what went wrong?
 - ◊ did we reach our goals?
- Put together all the information you acquired
- Draw conclusions



GUIDELINES for managing meetings

Step by step:

Appoint a chair person

His/her tasks are:

- Ensures the meeting follows the agenda points
- Ensures proper participation of the all group members
- Ensures decisions are made democratically
- Keeps the time

Appoint a secretary

His/her tasks are:

- Writes down all the important decisions
- Writes down all the tasks and the person who will do the task
- Asks for clarification if something is not clear

Read last minutes from previous meeting:

Write down matters arising from the minutes, issues that still need to be discussed

Write the agenda – both chair person and the secretary write
Write down the agenda points, do not discuss at this time!

Discuss the agenda points

Make decisions – secretary, write these down!!

Decide on who will do what task. – Secretary, writes these down!!

Template that can be used for meetings:

Date:

Present:

Matters arising:

1.

2.

3.

Agenda:

1.

2.

3.

4.

Tasks

What:	Who:	When:

CONCLUSION

NEEDS TO BE WRITTEN

They have recognised the weaknesses in the system and come up with very helpful real ways to deal with them and work with them. Over all students learned a lot and objectives were met but there is still the question about how much do they know about democracy and if they do understand it any better? We had hoped for a deeper understanding and motivation after the project.

We have many good and visible outcomes and should not forget that! It is important to finalise these outcomes and implement them. We have at least two participants who are very interested in follow up and we need to sit together with them and utilise their motivation and enthusiasm.

Working with Youthreach was very easy, but as we had only two participants coming from this school it was hard to give it equal attention and at times we felt that we forgot about them. The school runs very different and it was very good to have them involved.

- Set goals and parameters for participation with the group and revisit them regularly
- Create realistic expectation and motivation
Travelling will keep people motivated but shouldn't be the only motivation
- Keep tasks to very doable size regular checking in
- Who will travel and come on residentials? Ensure that friendships created can be followed up.
- Exchange at the beginning was very valuable the group could get to know each other and focus on the task at hand
- But... they never saw each other again, which was not productive

Questionnaires

The questionnaire had more than 50 questions about:

- Buildings and Equipment
- Democratic System
- Relationships
- Rules
- Teachers
- Students
- Information
- Class and school program

