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Round KA220-SCH - Cooperation partnerships in school

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

CASE STUDY AUSTRIA

CLIMATOPIA

Co-funded by the European Union

1.Innovative Teaching and Learning Methods Utilized during the Pilot

Please indicate if, during the pilot implementation, you encountered any innovative ideas that teachers, children, or parents shared to promote climate education. What pedagogical methods were used in the classroom?

The "Neue Schule" - New School in Austria, province of Lower Austria, took part in the pilot with a mixed-age class (6th - 8th grade, i.e. pupils aged 12-15). It is a private school with public authorisation. This means that the school is officially authorised to use its own curriculum, which differs from the curriculum at public schools. The organisation and structure of the lessons also differ from those at public schools:

The main subjects of maths, German and English are taught in a course setting. In addition, there are free periods in which pupils learn largely independently according to their age and maturity, their interests and agreements with the teachers.

The Climatopia materials were piloted over a period of 4 weeks. In a first unit, the project and its materials for pupils were introduced to the class in a circle. Due to the pupils' family background and various other project focuses at school, they already had a solid prior knowledge of climate protection. Therefore, there was no need to familiarise the pupils with the topic beforehand.

The teacher left it up to the pupils to decide when to complete the first online questionnaire and gave them a week to do so before introducing the Comix to the class in more detail. The pupils worked with Comix individually, in pairs and in groups.

The pupils had another week of free time to work with the materials.

On the third Friday, the teachers used a whole morning (5 lessons) to work with the materials together with the class. They worked with the comic and the workbook up to that point and continued to work on the

topic by exploring in-depth questions and continuing the story as suggested at the end of the comic. They also did this individually, in pairs or as a group, depending on their preferences. At the end of this unit, the pupils came back together in a circle and reflected on their findings.
The pupils then had another week of free time to complete the questionnaire a second time.

2. Interdisciplinary Approaches in Curriculum Design (if applicable)

Please explain what interdisciplinary approaches were used, how the materials used were integrated into the school curriculum, and whether they were included overall?

In the school presented, the interdisciplinary approach is already in place, as there is no traditional categorisation into subjects (except in the main subjects, see above).

Due to the very positive feedback from the pupils and the ease of integration into the school setting, the school staff was informed about the Climatopia Education Kit in a joint conference and the possibilities for further use were discussed. For example, it was discussed whether the materials could also be made available to younger classes, as the prior knowledge would already be available to these pupils. The older pupils could work as tutors with the younger ones and at the same time train their social and methodological skills.

In any case, there is great interest at this school in continuing to work with the Climatopia Education Kit.

3. Success Stories and Impact Achieved through the Pilot Phase

Describe what was successful during the pilot implementation phase? What specifically contributed to student engagement in the subject matter of the lessons?

It should be emphasised that the pupils at this school do all of their work in their independent study time on a voluntary basis. This means that they decide on an activity and organise the appropriate environment (learning space, learning materials and learning partners) themselves within the scope of what is possible.

It can therefore be considered a great success that all pupils chose the materials in order to engage with them voluntarily, without being explicitly asked to do so by the teachers and without any pressure.

This is most likely due to the comic format, but also to the interesting story and the invitation to think about it and become active themselves. Another success factor was the availability of in-depth knowledge that the pupils were able to acquire themselves depending on their interests.

4. Challenges Encountered Specifically in the Pilot Implementation

As the curriculum at this school provides for free working hours, there were no problems integrating the content into the lessons. The pupils were able to organise their working time with the materials at their own pace and the content did not have to be squeezed into a "lesson corset", as is often the case at Austrian regular schools.

The only challenge the teachers faced in this case was the pupils' existing prior knowledge. The presumption is that the developers of the comic assumed a lower level of prior knowledge. In the case of this school, there was not much new for the pupils to discover in terms of topic/content.

The attractive presentation in the form of a comic was therefore all the more important.

In this school, this challenge was mastered well by providing the pupils with further knowledge in the form of the handbook, which is actually addressed to the teachers. This case study is a good or even best practice example in that, despite this challenge, the pupils really enjoyed working intensively with the materials and showed an interest in engaging further with them and the topic of climate change in general.

5. Key Lessons Learned from the Pilots

What are the main insights and recommendations that arise from implementing the pilot program in schools? What recommendations are there for the future?

In general, it can be assumed that the Climatopia Education Kit is highly satisfactory. Working with the materials is fun and stimulating; the materials are also versatile:

- In a plenary situation
- In individual work
- In pair and group settings

The materials can be used at different educational levels for ages 6 - 8.

The following recommendations can be made based on the experience gained from this pilot.

For teachers

It is essential for teachers to first go through the working materials themselves and define an appropriate implementation plan that corresponds to the age, previous education, social and methodological skills of the pupils and the framework conditions at the school (workrooms, working hours, other resources).

It is also important that a teacher who introduces the topic and the materials to the class has a committed or at least open approach to the topic of climate protection.

The Climatopia Education Kit can be used as an introduction to the topic; however, this requires more intensive support from the class, as questions of understanding must be expected. One advantage of this approach is that the comic is very well received by the pupils and can be seen as very attractive.

If the class is already familiar with the topic of climate protection, the comic can be used to repeat and deepen the content. In this case, content

from the handbook for teachers can also be prepared for the class. Retelling the comic encourages pupils to find further solutions and at the same time stimulates their creativity

For the school organisation

If the topic of climate protection is to be included in the school's programme, the first step is to recognise it as a value and to see to what extent it corresponds to the school's mission statement. If necessary, the school's mission statement or the list of values can be expanded accordingly.

The school organisation can support the implementation of the Climatopia Education Kit by presenting the topic of climate protection and the materials at a teachers' conference. This can also take the form of a workshop, for example, where teachers form small groups and work together on the materials and discuss ways of implementing them in the classroom.

Forming teams of teachers who work together to develop the implementation and then use it in lessons with pupils can lead to a multiplier effect, as it is easier for other teachers if there are already clear guidelines for organising the lesson. This could form the basis for including the content in the curriculum.

In addition, the school organisation can support the use of the Climatopia Education Kit by providing illustrative materials (e.g. for building a glass house to demonstrate the greenhouse effect) for lessons.

In schools organised on a participatory basis, further climate protection activities can be planned and carried out with the involvement of pupils.

- For example, an activity can be included in the school services wheel in which pupils are responsible for identifying and reducing unnecessary electricity consumption in the school (for example,

switching off unnecessary standby devices and batteries, as well as lights in empty rooms).

- Excursions to current exhibitions or into nature (for example on the subject of biodiversity) can be organised.
- Workshops can be organised for intensive training to become "climate ambassadors".
- A climate box can be set up in which all pupils can put notes with ideas and suggestions. After a certain time, a plenary session takes place in which the slips of paper are analysed and the implementation of the best suggestions is discussed. You can also offer a prize for the best three suggestions.

At the policy level

The first step at this level is to recognise the relevance and urgency of climate protection. Recognising it as a value within education policy lifts it out of partisan and activist status and gives it prestige. Once this has happened, the topic will also rise up the priority list of teaching topics in the curriculum.

Once this step has been taken, areas can be found in the existing curricula that are related to climate protection and only need to be supplemented in terms of content.

The concrete experience from the case study shows that there are also other structural possibilities that support the implementation of climate protection. Structures should be created within the school organisation that enable and promote the following:

- More flexible time organisation (enables interdisciplinary lessons and a variety of methods)
- Independent working hours for pupils (promotes motivation and self-assessment of pupils)

- Creation of workrooms that can be used across classes (promotes tutor system and thus social and methodological skills)
- Formation of teacher teams in which joint preparation of lessons is made possible (promotes motivation and cohesion among teachers)
- More opportunities for pupil participation (promotes independence, commitment, critical thinking, motivation and self-confidence).

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