

BARE FEET ONLY

Evaluating perspectives from
the partners of GLOBAL ROOTS

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This article is based on an evaluation survey done by Ulrich Consult

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the project

Global Roots is an EU-funded strategic partnership project under the Erasmus+ school's track. The focal point of Global Roots is art and culture. The aim of Global Roots is to include professionally facilitated arts and culture in the school's methodological development, thus contributing to the goal of a school life focused on participation, co-responsibility and rights.

Overall objectives of the project

● To strengthen children's voices through the development of participatory methods in the interaction between general school subjects and aesthetic subjects, arts and culture.

● To increase children's understanding of equality and democratic rights, including their knowledge of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

● To develop learning environments where children can relate to and act on sustainable development with reference to the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

● To facilitate and qualify inter-professional collaborations between school staff, artists and cultural mediators.

● To develop common models, tools and inspirational materials to support the inclusion of different disciplines in educational contexts.

● To develop an implementation strategy to ensure the project's broad relevance and applicability to schools at local, national and international levels (<http://globalroots.eu/about/project/>)

'Kulturprinsen' (Denmark) is the host of the project. The other partners in the project have been Villa Zebra (The Netherlands), 'Spark' (The Netherlands), 'sideviews' (Germany), Kabóca Puppet Theatre (Hungary), 'BMMK - Børns Møde Med Kunsten' (Denmark) and 'Kulturskolan' (Sweden).

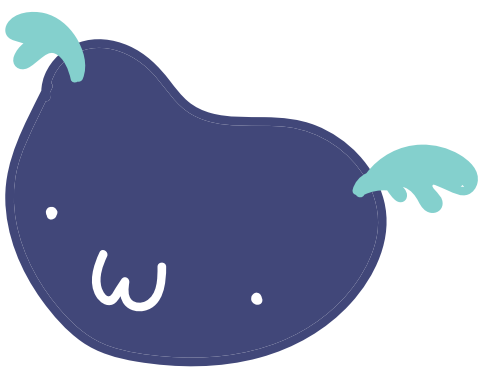
The purpose of this evaluation is to focus on two central elements of the project. The partners' local practices and co-operation with local actors along with the internal partnership between the 7 partners will be evaluated.

Data collection

For use in the evaluation, a qualitative questionnaire has been sent to the project's 7 partners. The participants have been invited to fill in the questionnaire on the basis of a dialogue with the local project participants.

The data collection method that has been used means that it is the project participants' and the project partner's own assessments of the project's progress and results that form the basis of the evaluation. The evaluation is, therefore, an expression of a summary of the project participants and project partners' own assessments of the project's progress and results.





THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE LOCAL PARTICIPANTS

New benefits

Across all the sub-projects, there is broad agreement that the project has created a lot of benefit for the local participants. This applies both when it comes to carrying out the project activities and when it comes to the mutual working relationships.

Firstly, looking at the mutual working relationships, several of the participants point out that the different skillsets that have been brought together, have been mutually enriching. Some point to the fact that they have approached each other's expertise in such a way that they have each integrated elements from other people's expertise into their own expertise. For example, the artists have been inspired by the schoolteachers' learning focus, so that they have become more aware of how to present and communicate art to children. One of the project participants expresses it like this:

"Being aware of the schoolteachers' focus on the children's learning output and how the activities encouraged the children to participate in new ways, expanded the artists/culture workers' understanding of how artistic and cultural strategies can be used when working with children."

But learning has been reciprocal. Several of the project participants point out that the school schoolteachers have been inspired didactically through their collaboration with the artists. A project partner thus says that the collaboration has given the schoolteachers a greater focus on the benefit of an experience-based learning approach, and an understanding of how to work with aesthetic learning processes thus to the benefit of schoolteachers' learning. Another project partner says, in expansion, to this that:

"(...) the artists/culture workers inspired the schoolteachers to have a more sensual and playful approach to learning, and this has a special value when working with abstract and complex subjects as sustainability."

It is, of course, valuable when a collaboration around artistic activities can result in mutual learning for the participants involved. However, it can also be less ambitious. Thus, there are several

participants who point to the fact that the close cooperation between different participants and professions has also resulted in a greater understanding of each other's professions and approaches. They may not have absorbed new elements in their own approaches, but they have become aware of the benefit of other elements and others' approaches. Thus, it has also been seen that if you have respect for the fact that different skills and approaches can complement each other, then you can create benefit for the children's learning and education. A mutual respect and recognition that can also be drawn on in later collaborations.

The collaboration on the project activities has not only had impact on the participants' learning and mutual understanding. The work with the project activities has also engendered a realization that particularly art and aesthetics can help to support many purposes other than those that lie within a narrower approach to art education. This is quite significant when it comes to the understanding of sustainability, which is also an overriding learning ambition for the entire Global Roots project. One of the partners reflects on this point as follows:

"The school system is programmed to set clear boundaries when addressing the

results of art workshops. It is common to look only at the output on an artistic level. We found out that answering the question "What insights have the children gained?" needs to reflect upon more outcomes and different substantive goals. For example, it can involve looking at ways that children communicate, learn to reflect on their own behavior, gain self-esteem or other goals that are traditionally not linked to the art lessons. The connection between most of the UN goals on sustainability could possibly be linked in this way to art education."

An aim with the work in Global Roots is supporting professionals in developing new methods of involvement. Many of the participants point out that these tools have been very useful and has led to new learning. One of the partners expresses it this way:

"The schoolteachers have learned to reflect on the workshops what effect they see at children structurally and in an accessible way using a specially mind map. (...) This has resulted in an increasing understanding of the importance of creating time and space for reflection on the process both in the schools and in the institution."



has meant that the schoolteachers will generally use more creative methods within their teaching. Furthermore, it is assessed that the mental release that the artistic processes initiate also finds a broader presence within the schoolteachers' teaching.

Furthermore, experience also shows that the artistic work can help to support the students' general well-being, which also encourages the schoolteachers to use art and artistic processes more broadly in their professional work. In this connection, one of the partners assessed

that the project has helped to give the schoolteachers a more holistic approach to their teaching, and that this also results in the artistic tools being used to a greater extent within the school.

The fact that the project has put sustainability on the agenda, and that the work with sustainability can be done through involvement and more experimental processes is also considered to mean that the sustainability agenda itself, and the work with involvement and experimental methods take up more space in the schools that

have been involved in the project.

New opportunities – now and in the future

Many development projects tend to implode - in terms of both scope and time. We have, therefore, asked whether the participants can see if their project activities have had a broader impact than the concrete project practice. And we have asked if they can see whether there are signs that any of the results of the project activities have also created changes that extend beyond the scope of the project and time horizon.

Another participant points out that the new methods of involvement are particularly suitable for work with sustainability. Traditional education in sustainability tends to focus on the factual conditions and on the destructive factors. But that's not the case when you use Global Root's methods because they are very playful and creative, and it takes away the frightening aspect of e.g., the climate crisis.

In general, there is a great deal of agreement among the participants that working with Global Roots has created significant learning, which aligns well with the objectives behind Global Roots. If we look deeper at how partners assessed that the project has left a concrete mark on the participants and the participating institutions, it can be assessed that the project has made a positive difference on several parameters.

Several of the participants found that the project had resulted in changes in the schoolteachers' teaching practice. The collaboration with the artists





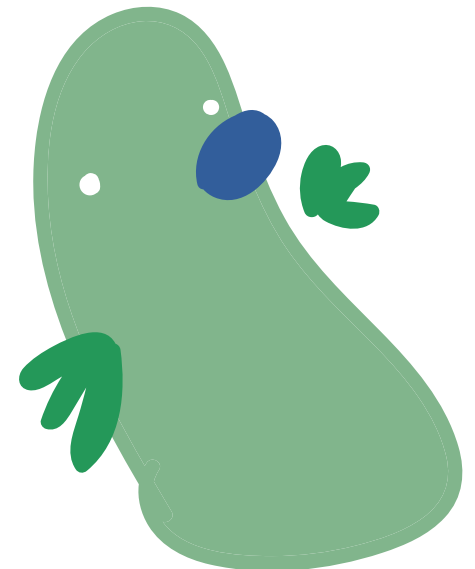
And here the feedback is overwhelming. Many examples are mentioned of project activities having brought about changes - like rings in the water. Several mention that their project activity has involved more than just the required participants – e.g., one mentions for example, that the work with Global Roots have made it possible for the school to train the entire team of schoolteachers with workshops and interventions and therefore making art more common within the entire school program. Several others come up with concrete examples of new projects or initiatives being established as a consequence of the work with Global Roots.

However, experience also shows that one should not be too ambitious when starting new initiatives. In your eagerness to reach as far as possible and create positive changes for as many people as possible, you may well be too ambitious and want to bring too much into the project. Thus, one of the partners has learned that you have to be careful not to spread yourself too thinly, but instead be focused on going in depth with the activities that you initiate. To go in depth instead of dabbling could perhaps be the learning point from this experience.

Succinctly put, you can divide the project

impact for new collaborations into three levels: 1) Someone mentions that they have been inspired by others through the work with the project activities, and that this inspiration will influence on their future work. 2) Others mention that, through working with the project activities, they have become aware of other relevant persons who can be contacted on a later occasion. 3) and others mention that, as a consequence of their work in Global Roots, they have agreed concrete new formalized cooperation agreements.

In summary, one can, therefore, say that the impact of the project for future collaborations is partly about the establishment of concrete collaboration agreements, the formation of network relationships that can be used in the future and new inspiration for daily work.



Challenges

Much suggests that nearly all the project partners believe that new benefits and new approaches have been created through the project's activities. But virtually all the partners point out that it takes effort to realize these benefits. It requires time. It requires coordination. It requires good communication and involvement, and it requires prioritizing relationship work.

Specifically, the last point - the relationship work - has proved difficult, as during the project period the participants have been challenged by COVID-19, and restrictions in relation to being able to meet in person. Almost all the participants point out that COVID-19 has been a significant obstacle to the implementation of their activities. Many have tried to change the activities to virtual forms, but there is broad consensus that you get much further in terms of learning by carrying out the activities while physically present rather than trying to carry them out virtually.

Benefits for the children

The initiated activities in Global Roots have resulted in several forms of acquired benefits for the children. These benefits can generally be divided into three levels: 1) The children have acquired new knowledge and new skills, 2)

the children have acquired new social skills, and 3) the children have had a good experience. In the following, the three levels are looked at in more detail.

Several of the participants point out that the children have gained useful new knowledge about the environment and sustainability. They have gained a greater understanding of how overall considerations of sustainability can be related to their everyday life and to their local environment. For example, one of the participating children, in connection with their work on a waste theme, is quoted as saying: *"What sucker throws this away! You can still use that!"*.

The children's concept of art has also been challenged and expanded. One of the project partners points out that the children's understanding of an artistic work has expanded considerably. The project partner formulates it as follows:

"At the start of the project Children can expected to make 'art' a more traditional way (e.g., drawing, making a painting on a picture frame). That has changed noticeably, because we emphasize an open process instead of a predetermined product. E.g., the steps: first look/feel,

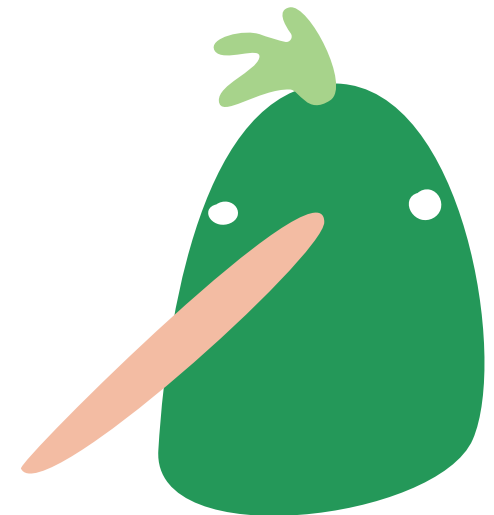
investigate, then make something and thereby bring about something in others. After collecting garbage on the street and cleaning it, the children don't have the idea that they were 'making art'. But this changed during the workshops. Statements such as 'collecting is also making art', 'if you put many things together, it becomes something', 'you can also make something else out of it' or a child who experiments and says 'I don't know what to do with it yet' are examples of this".

In addition to the new knowledge about sustainability, the children have also, through their work with the sustainability issue through artistic and aesthetic processes, acquired new collaboration skills and new understandings of how they are part of social processes. A single project partner also points out that the work with global sustainability has meant that the children have gained a greater understanding that they are part of a larger world – there is an important world outside the national boundaries.

One of Global Root's main methodological approaches is to work closely with practical aspects. And the practical approach is referenced as also contributing to the fact that the children have become more critical thinkers, and have become better at questioning what they

see and feel. Others point out that the practical approach has also resulted in the children strengthening their ability to concentrate.

And finally, there are several who point out that the children have had a good experience of being part of the project. Just doing something different and getting education in a new way has been exciting.



THE INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

The goal of the international collaboration

International collaboration is, of course, a premise of the Global Roots project. For the project partners, there have been several concurrent objectives in relation to participation in the international collaboration.

Making contacts, being inspired by other (foreign) different national approaches and creating international networks has been a common ambition that all the partners agree on. The fact that you can learn from others, who are exponents of cultures, working methods and skills that are different from your own, is seen as a major benefit of entering into an international collaboration such as Global Roots.

The way you approach teaching, the way you work with children and the way you work with art in practice is very different from country to country and from one local project to another. It is this diversity that several of the partners mention as a significant reason why they have found Global Roots important – here lies a potential for development and synergy.

Challenges of international cooperation

There have been some language barriers in the work with Global Roots, which, to overcome, required effort and trust-building between the partners. The fact that COVID-19 has made it difficult to meet, in person, across borders has not made it any easier. But overall, it does not appear that these difficulties have significantly affected the success of the project.

Several of the partners also point out that the differences between the individual projects have been wide. On the one hand, this difference has meant that it has sometimes been difficult to fully understand the other projects. And if nothing else, it has required time and resources to reach an understanding. On the other hand, this difference has also meant that the inspiration that can be drawn from the other projects becomes even larger.



What has been realized through the international cooperation?

As mentioned, one of the central ambitions of participating in the project was that you could form networks and be inspired across the projects and across the countries. And many of the participants point out with satisfaction that this has largely been successful. In this context, several mention that part of the reason for this success is that the overall project management behind Global Roots has done a good and tenacious piece of work.

The international dimension of Global Roots has resulted in a lot of new inspiration - both in relation to achieving new ideas for methods and skills, and understandings of how to work with the relationship between art, sustainability and learning.

The fact that the project participants have been as diverse as they have been has also meant that, through the collaboration, they have been able to take a critical look at themselves and at the methods and approaches from which they have built up a workable routine.

Summary

As a kind of summary of this evaluation, you as a reader can acquire a concrete insight into how one of the local projects – Villa Zebra from the Netherlands

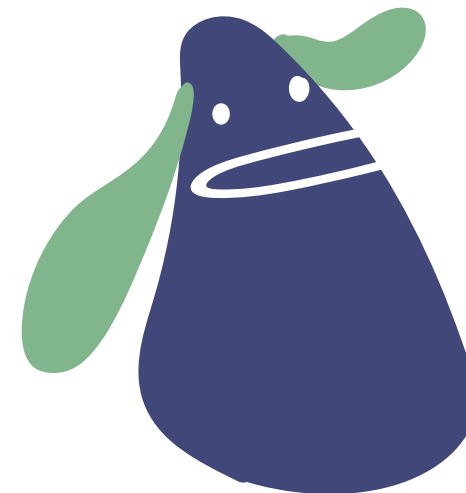
– have worked with the relationship between art and learning in practice:

“Ieke Trinks started four workshops with groups of students from group 5 of the Islamic primary school Ibn-i Sina in Charlois in an artstudio elsewhere in the district. It already started on the way to the studio with collecting materials from the street and sorting and cleaning them. Next time it was exciting but very motivating to ring at people’s doors to ask for things they no longer want. In groups, the children made new products from these materials: e.g., a dining castle, table, medal. After the last workshop, after a noisy procession calling for recycling, the products were displayed in school. The children were overjoyed when they visited Villa Zebra with their class, half of which had worked with Ieke, and saw their products in a space made of cardboard, a Shop. There they made an advertising poster for a product and worked together with Yvonne Bronner and Simone van der Meer (see below). In Villa Zebra, Ieke and the individual public, created more products, the interior of the store has been expanded and the necessary advertising materials have been made.

Yvonne Bronner and Simone van der Meer explored a hill of garden soil with children in Villa Zebra with an individual audience. Bare feet were obliged. As a

kind of ritual, first shyly but more and more freely, they explore the soil with all the senses, whether or not talking to each other. In co-creation it was then researched and recorded using overhead projector, photography, observing, studying, looking, organizing, collecting.

Yvonne and Simone were inspired and guided by the children’s questions to collect and visualize more and more perspectives, fantasies, stories and images about the soil/earth. It became visible using the overhead projector on a large sheet of paper. Every day shapes were depicted in a different color. Experiments were carried out in the soil with two different types of cloth. That turned out to appeal to the imagination. The many children who dug holes, inspired Yvonne to make plaster sculptures.”



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