



SYNERGY AND ENVIRONMENT TO
EMPOWER DECENTRALISED SCHOOLS

TOOLKIT GREEN S.E.E.D.S.

MODULE 3 Seeds for Managing

UNIT 1 School organisation



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

RESPONSIBLE FOR IO1 “TOOLKIT GREEN S.E.E.D.S.”

Ángeles Parrilla Latas (University of Vigo)

AUTHORS

CIES-UVigo, ES

Ángeles Parrilla Latas | Manuela Raposo Rivas | Esther Martínez Figueira | Silvia Sierra Martínez | Almudena Alonso Ferreiro | María Zabalza Cerdeiriña | Isabel Fernández-Menor | Adoración de la Fuente Fernández

SYNTHESIS CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION LTD, CY

RESPONSIBLE FOR TRAINING ACTIVITIES AND THE “TOOLKIT GREEN S.E.E.D.S.” TESTING

Giulia Benvenuto (IC Bosco Chiesanuova, IT) | Alice Dalle (Région Vallée d'Aoste/Regione Valle d'Aosta, IT) | Golfo Kateva (Synthesis Center, CY) | Noemi Nieto Blanco (University of Vigo) | Miljenka Padovan Bogdanović (Srednja Skola Vela Luka, HR) | Eftychia Vlysidou (Dieftthinsi Deft-erovathmias Ekpedefsis Chiou, GR)

PROJECT

GREEN S.E.E.D.S. - Synergy and Environment to Empower Decentralised Schools, www.green-seeds.eu

PROJECT COORDINATOR

Maria Carla Italia (Glocal Factory, Italy)

PROJECT PARTNERSHIP

This document is one of the 15 units of the "Toolkit GREEN S.E.E.D.S.", the Intellectual Output n.1 of the homonymous project. It has been led by the University of Vigo and undertaken with the support of all the Partners, with particular reference to the training on the toolkit contents, which has worked also to test them. The Units have been developed from September 2019 to the end of January 2020. The subsequent training, in two steps, lasted until the end of June 2020:

1. Training of the national responsible (5-6.03.2020)
2. Training of the teachers at local level (1.04.2020 – 31.06.2020)

HOW TO CITE THIS DOCUMENT

SYNTHESIS CENTER LTD, *Unit 1 – School organisation, Module 3 – Seeds for Managing*, “Toolkit GREEN S.E.E.D.S.”, Project GREEN S.E.E.D.S. - Synergy and Environment to Empower Decentralised Schools, 2020

PARTNERS



Universida de Vigo



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



UNIT 3.1

SCHOOL ORGANISATION

"It is clearer today than ever that educators need to learn, and that's why professional learning has replaced professional development. Developing is not enough. Educators must be knowledgeable and wise. They must know enough in order to change. They must change to get different results. They must become learners ..." (Easton, 2008).

According to the OECD (2016), the most important task of the schools today is to give students the knowledge and skills so that they could succeed in the rapidly changing present and future. As it is certainly a difficult task to prepare the students for uncertainty, OECD proposes the schools to seek to achieve the concept of a **learning organisation**, which would allow the schools to become more flexible, which is an important characteristic in the times of change.

This unit intends to answer the question of what the necessary steps are to transform a school into a learning organisation a place where everybody learns including teachers.

1. What is a learning organisation?

According to OECD (2016), learning organisations are focused on:

- ◆ developing and sharing a vision centred on the learning of all students

- ◆ creating and supporting continuous learning opportunities for all staff
- ◆ promoting team learning and collaboration among all staff
- ◆ establishing a culture of inquiry, innovation and exploration
- ◆ embedding systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning
- ◆ learning with and from the external environment and larger learning system
- ◆ modelling and growing learning leadership.

Those seven objectives listed are general goals to make schools more adequate for the 21st-century challenges. This is an ideal model of a successful learning organisation and many of the current schools might have already adopted this model, as well many schools might still be far from obtaining the learning organisation model goals.

Researches (Kugelmass, 2010) have shown that the most important aspects for carrying out a reform in a school are:

- ◆ commitment to a central philosophy and belief system
- ◆ teacher initiatives supported by the principal
- ◆ structures that support the change and improvement.

Researchers (Kugelmass, 2010) have claimed that teachers are often the key-figures in making sustainable innovations in already collaborative schools. If the school already has a working culture in which teachers are encouraged to be innovative and play their active part in developing the school, the collaborations often evolve spontaneously, although the support of the leaders (for example principal) is crucial. Naturally, teachers would work on the initiatives they see as important, which guarantees the inner motivation of the teacher and therefore make the innovation more sustainable. In those conditions, teachers' work is often voluntary, informal and outside of administratively fixed schedules.

- ✚ How close is your school to becoming a learning organisation? Are there aspects that you have already achieved? Which are the aspects you need to pay the most attention?

2. What are the communities of learning?

Rather than thinking about the school as a strict and hierarchical institution, one might find the idea of community more useful. When leaving the rigid role boundaries among the school staff aside mutual respect, equity and reciprocity are easier to achieve within the educational community which sets an example of inclusiveness to students and the wider community alike (Kugelmass, 2010).

Schools have plenty to gain when they create their communities of learning which would engage not only the teachers and students but also other professionals working at school, parents, families and wider community. It is no doubt that most of the schools already have some community who are engaging with the school. Those communities might be big or small, distant and passive or close and active. To get the most out of the community and to allow them to contribute to the success of the school, it is important to do the often-time-consuming work of collaboration and involvement of the community. In order to collaborate more, it is necessary to know the current situation.

The Network of Democratic Citizenship Schools

(<http://democraticschools.ecos.pt/>) has created a tool for self-assessment for schools to understand better how collaborative is their school (Franco & Morgado, 2016).



To assess the level of participation among different groups, the following collaboration levels were created:

- 1) **No participation** – “Sometimes we invite you to attend or be part of our actions and initiatives.”
- 2) **Information** – “We will keep you informed.”
- 3) **Consultation** – “We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how your input influenced our decision. We will seek your input on drafts and proposals.”

- 4) **Involvement** – “We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how your input influenced the decision.”
- 5) **Collaboration and Empowerment** - “We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.”

Areas of involvement:

- A1 – Learning and teaching
- A2 – Governing of the school
- A3 – Being part of the larger community

		N PARTI- CIPATION	INFORMATION	CONSULTA- TION	INVOLVEMENT	COLLABORATION EMPOWERMENT
STUDENTS	A1					
	A2					
	A3					
PARENTS	A1					
	A2					
	A3					
NON- TEACHING STAFF	A1					
	A2					
	A3					
COMMUNITY	A1					
	A2					
	A3					

For more information on the self-assessment scale: http://democraticschools.ecos.pt/wp-content/uploads/Escala_EN_site.pdf



Try to assess your school with the self-assessment tool of community engagement. What could be the most achievable changes for your school to make your school more collaborative?

3. How can contextual factors affect changes in a school?

When trying to change any aspect in school, contextual factors might have a big impact on the success of the innovation.

In the process of planning a change, the researchers have suggested (Owston, 2004) that the following aspects should be considered:

- ◆ What is the need for the change?
- ◆ How clear are our goals and means for achieving them?
- ◆ How complex is the change?
- ◆ What is the quality and practicality of the change?

As previously mentioned in the current unit, it is also necessary that all the parties affected by the change would at least know the answers to those

questions, but even better would be, if all the affected parties would be active in finding the answers to those questions. It has been found that teachers working in schools with hierarchical leadership and low culture of collaboration frequently resist the reforms imposed externally, although these reforms might, in fact, support the teachers' personal beliefs (Kugelmass, 2010).

Researchers (Owston, 2004) have also listed different factors which are important for creating sustainable innovation in school. The important factors are divided into two:

- ◆ Essential factors – necessary for innovations to happen, but not enough for sustaining the innovations.
- ◆ Contributing factors – important for the sustainability of the innovations.

ESSENTIAL FACTORS FOR INNOVATION	CONTRIBUTING FACTORS FOR INNOVATION
Teacher Support	Support within school
Administrative support	Support from outside school
	Supportive plans and policies
	Funding
	Innovation champions

Table A. Essential and contributing factors for innovation.



ESSENTIAL FACTORS FOR TEACHER SUPPORT
The perceived value of innovation
Administrative support
Student support
Teacher profession development

Table B. Essential factors for Teacher Support.

As discussed previously the support of the teacher is critical for implementing and sustaining innovation in education. As seen from the table, teacher support itself is dependent on various aspects.

- ✚ What is the most important contextual factor which helps to create educational innovation in your school?



4. Principal as a leader or a team builder?

Successful school leaders, both in urban and rural settings, are often characterised as **team-builders, cooperative, visionary, supportive, accommodating, community-focused, decisive**. The qualities listed here are all the necessary basis of creating a culture of collaboration in school (Preston & Barnes, 2017).

As was discussed at the beginning of the unit, the schools need to prepare their students for the unpredictable changes

the future holds for the next generations. For achieving that not only the curriculums must change. The change starts from the way the school is operated by the principal or any other leader. It has been found that if the principals cultivate collaborative relationships and seek out to the knowledge, skills and experiences that the staff members have, the school becomes a productive and informed community who can successfully tackle the many obstacles rural schools have today – decreasing student enrolment, lack of teachers, transportation issues etc. (Preston & Barnes, 2017).

Many researchers have claimed that the school principal should be an active participant in the community life outside of school. It is especially important for small rural schools as the schools and their communities will need mutual support. For example, schools can offer their communities the infrastructures the schools have when they are not in use (Preston & Barnes, 2017).

ARE THERE ANY POSITIVE EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CO-OPERATION IN YOUR COMMUNITY?



REFERENCES

Easton, L. B. (2008). *From Professional Development to Professional Learning*. Phi Delta Kappan, 89 (10), pp. 755-759, 761. Available at:

http://www.pdkmembers.org/members_online/publications/Archive/pdf/k0806eas.pdf

Franco, J., Morgado, A. (2016). *Scale of Reference for Participatory Citizenship Schools. Network of Democratic Citizenship Schools*. Available at:

http://democraticschools.ecos.pt/wp-content/uploads/Escala_EN_site.pdf

Kugelmass, W. J. (2010). Collaboration and compromise in creating and sustaining an inclusive school. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 5(1), 74-65. Available at: 2019

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13603110121498>

OECD (2016). *What makes a school a learning organisation? A guide for policy makers, school leaders and teachers*. OECD. Paris. Available at:

<http://www.oecd.org/education/school/school-learning-organisation.pdf>

Owston, D. R. (2004). *Contextual factors that sustain innovative pedagogical practice using technology: An international study*. *Journal of Educational Change*, 8 (1), 61-77. Available at:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225325093_Contextual_fac-](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/225325093_Contextual_factors_that_sustain_innovative_pedagogical_practice_using_technology_An_international_study)

[tors that sustain innovative pedagogical practice using technology An international study](#)

Preston, J. P., Barnes, E. R. K. (2017). *Successful Leadership in Rural Schools: Cultivating Collaboration*. *Rural Educator*, 38 (1), 6-15. Available at:

<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1225156>



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union