

9th NEPC SUMMERS SCHOOL 2016

## **Managing Change and Uncertainty: Education for the Future**

Shkembi Kavajes I Durrës 3rd – 9th July 2016

Event report





**N**etwork of Education Policy Centers (NEPC) is an international non-governmental membership organization that gathers 23 institutional members from 18 countries. NEPC has been founded in 2006 and formally established in 2008.

NEPC members are public and civil-society organizations dealing with education at different levels from educational research and policy analysis to teacher training and school-based activities.

NEPC Secretariat, established in Zagreb in 2006, has implemented over a dozen multi-country projects addressing and exploring current issues in education, driven by the need for independent and information-based policy analyses, advocacy for equity, and effective, sustainable solutions in education policy processes in the last couple of years.

The network's contribution to improving education policies in this region is reflected in its highly diverse project portfolio, which includes large projects involving several countries.

**S**ummer School is a traditional NEPC annual learning event for teachers, policy-makers, policy-analysts, practioners, researchers and education friends from all over the world.

Summer schools have covered wide range of topics related to education (teachers' policy, inclusive education, education for sustainability) with the aim of inspiring change in education system and were attended by about 30 participants every year!

Summer School gathers faculty from prestigious universities and highly experienced trainers from all over the world and it combines theory, practice and interactive sessions.

## Content

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Introduction.....   | 4  |
| Degrowth, Democracy, Education .....  | 5  |
| The skills needed to cope with changes.....   | 9  |
| Good education as a basic right: global challenges and trends in a local context..... | 14 |
| Finnish education system and curricular reform 2016.....                              | 17 |
| #croatiacandobetter – the curricular reform story.....                                | 20 |
| Introducing the 3R model.....   | 23 |
| Case Studies by Participants .....  | 26 |
| In conclusion.....  | 30 |

## Introduction

When facing the challenges of transition of our societies to the path of sustainability, education is always put on the forefront of the struggle. As much as we, as educators, believe in the power of education and appreciate the realization that the role of education is crucial for achieving sustainability, we must be fully aware that it also presents enormous challenges for teachers, schools and systems.

There is the urgent need to operationalize social, environmental and economic sustainability at education level defining what social, environmental and economic sustainable school/education actually mean.

The future active citizens require content as well as a set of skills in order to manage change processes and make decisions in the conditions of uncertainty. There is no doubt that local and global events affect the functioning of the school and education whether they are of economic, social or environmental nature and that a truly child centred education should not ignore them but provide a safe environment for discussing and processing the effects of such events.

In order to explore, (re)discover and (re)imagine the challenges and solutions to the operationalization of sustainability in education systems, the Summer School program provided theoretical and practical frameworks meant to introduce new concepts, ideas and skills to tackle this issue.

Onofrio Romano presented the movement / philosophy of Degrowth, with his own view on its perspective, strong sides and shortcomings. He also showcased the idea of disappearing identities and the means by which some Mediterranean people preserved their identities through means which relate to some ideas of Degrowth.

Marija Roth introduced us to some of the basics of managing change and uncertainty within a broader education contest.

Grzegorz Mazurkiewicz talked about global challenges and trends in a local context regarding good education as a basic right. The issue starts with the definition of “good education” and what education is, could be and should be.

Arne Verhaegen familiarized us with the fabled Finnish general education system – how it works, why it works and what makes it work.

The NEPC team, led by Lana Jurko, presented its innovative 3R concept of resilient, reactive and resourceful schools as a means of operationalizing sustainability in schools.

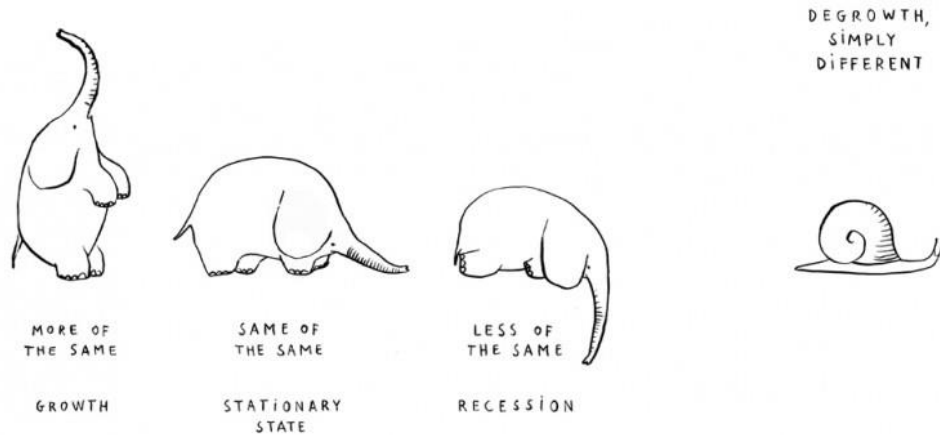
Lana also gave us a brief overview of the Croatian curricular reform of 2015/2016.

School participants presented case studies from their countries pertaining to education for sustainability

And finally, the learning sessions provided the input of the participants’ own views and understanding of the ideas and concepts presented during the course of the Summer School.

# Degrowth, Democracy, Education

Onofrio Romano – University of Bari, Department of Political Sciences



Degrowth is not a homogenous and consistent socio-political theory, nor is it a specific way to read and understand social life and social action. It signifies, first and foremost, a critique of the current growth regime and the economy it propagates. This critique is based on the reality that the growth regime, along with the democracy it purports to function under, are not in the hands of the citizens. In fact, the growth regime engenders an ecological and social crisis, ultimately jeopardizing life itself. In this context, both degrowth and democracy are far from the spirit of the time, but should be pursued even though it is difficult to promote them.

The ecological aspect of the crisis is apparent from the general modus operandi of human activity, which transforms energy and materials of low entropy into waste and pollution with high entropy. Ultimately, a regime of unlimited growth is bound to become incompatible with the available non-renewable resources and with the regenerative capacities of the biosphere and its renewable resources. As this happens,

pollution and waste are mainly poured onto the peripheries of the world, engendering environmental injustice. Thus, a radical change is necessary to prevent a brutal and tragic catastrophe.

From the social aspect, the crisis is visible from the fact that the well-being produced by the growth regime is an illusion. If all the noxious products of the economy, such as costs of pollution, health care, prisons etc., are deducted from GDP, a negative progression is present in all Western countries during the last few decades. It has been established by Kubiszewski et al. in 2013 that the Genuine Progress Indicator, which takes into account the depreciation of community capital in the calculation of the welfare reduced by economic activity, does not increase further once the \$7000 GDP/capita has been surpassed. However, a huge increase in inequality and social injustice does exist as a result of the growth regime spearheaded by the neoliberal ideology and its framework. The general process of commodification promoted by growth erodes the non-utilitarian

dimensions of human being and constantly weakens social relations. In effect, well-being is detrimental to well-being.

As a challenge to the dominant regime and the crisis it caused, Degrowth calls for the decolonization of public debate from the idiom of economism and for the abolishment of economic growth as a social objective. It is important to note here that “Degrowth” is not the same as negative GDP growth, but is in fact a green, caring and communal economy likely to secure a good life but unlikely to increase gross domestic activity. Degrowth transition is not accomplished through a sustained trajectory of descent, but through a transition to convivial societies which live simply, in common and with less, in pursuit of autonomy and free from external imperatives and givens - and not simply an adaptation to inevitable limits.

Degrowthers generally assume that Degrowth and democracy are co-substantial, going hand in hand towards a shared destiny, mutually reinforced by their alliance. In effect, a degrowth society will result in the rebirth of democracy, while a truly democratic society will naturally choose degrowth. Thus, degrowth is a grassroots alternative based on a radical, direct democracy of proximity. Power is not seized, the “Winter Palace” is not stormed. Instead, the movement is amplified through providing an alternative and a means to reinforce the democratic ideal.

This general assumption may or may not be true. Whether the degrowth project can indeed contribute to the rediscovery of real democracy and whether the establishment of a real democracy would lead to the building of a degrowth society remains in question. And if the answer is negative, we should be re-thinking the approach.

In modernity, democracy can be defined as the freedom in the search for “truth” – while being aware that there is no on given

truth. Men are granted to shape their lives based on autonomously elaborated meanings and values. In this context, democracy thrives when there are major opportunities for the masses of ordinary people to actively participate, through discussion and autonomous organization, in shaping the agenda of public life. The more context variables that affect individual lives are consciously determined by citizens themselves through collective discussion, the more a regime is democratic. Common life, in democracy, is the output of a collective exercise of *legein*.

Legein is defined as the deployment of words, reasoning, argumentation, speech and everything suitable to represent and interpret reality, giving it a meaning. It connects and looks for relations among men and between men and environment. As each individual can potentially carry his or her own vision and meaning, and, being a human construct, any vision of ruling the world is groundless, questionable and revocable by everyone, a paradox is inherent to legein. This is because the implementation of any political vision is structurally prevented by the primacy granted to each individual in defining and pursuing his or her own idea of “good”, in effect causing the recognition of micro-freedom to become a veto to the greater (collective) freedom. Thus, everyone is encouraged to build their “world”, but the possibility to actually implement their idea is structurally prevented.

The legein paradox gave rise to the neutralitarian regime and *teukein*. In teukein, public authority becomes neutral and passive in the face of the infinite variety of visions carried by citizens, allowing every vision, but legitimising none of them. Teukein basically refers to the development of the Promethean ability to do things, to act over the world, regardless of the meaning and the values framing each action. In effect, a technical system replaces

collective decisions on how to shape the world – democracy is emptied, and the aim of politics becomes the mere preservation of life: “life for life’s sake”. This preservation of organic life is necessary in order to allow humans to use it as they wish. Thus, the neutralitarian regime is directly responsible for the stress on “growth for growth”: it obeys the aim to increase the substantial opportunities for everyone to choose and achieve their own goals.

Within this context, the questions that must be answered are:

Does degrowth, in its current formulation, contribute to dispel the neutralitarian regime and the primacy of *teukein*?

Does it contribute to overcome the *legein* paradox, to promote the collective discourse (i.e. democracy) in determining the features of the public sphere?

By waving the threat of catastrophe, degrowth only evokes the necessity of setting up a system compatible with our species’ life, without considering the sense of such a life. It is only a technique, not concerned with the meaning of life, focusing only on the conditions for the reproduction of life. There is a change in strategy, from “growth” to “degrowth”, but the underlying goal remains the same – “life” beyond all “sense”. Under the assumption that democracy is the collective creation of an idea of the “good society” and its implementation, a society is not necessarily democratic if its fundamental goal is the preservation of its own existence.

Degrowth is trapped by voluntarism. It relies on voluntary simplicity, i.e. the secession from the public arena where the majority of people lie in order to build a small world together with those who share the same values and visions. This “elite”, which is the most aware of the necessity of degrowth, will set an example by staging

degrowth practices, hoping that their practical virtues will stand out so obviously that they will eventually “infect” the rest of the citizens, those “poor ones” who are still unaware – all that would happen without actively seizing the power. In theory, the need for degrowth is presented as something very urgent, but spreading it by an elitist strategy of voluntary simplicity can only be a very slow process. Degrowth theorists and supporters do not care much to embody and relate their arguments to actual, existing social and historical processes and frameworks.

This leads to the conclusion that degrowth does not in fact foster the degrowth of democracy for two reasons – it works as a technical and prepolitical containment device and it proposes a further expansion, a redoubling of modern subjectivity (more soberness, more temperance, more rationality, more self-control, more utilitarian attitude).

In order to revive democracy (and itself), degrowth should be intended in a radical “anthropological” sense: a degrowth of the modern subject in order to defuse the *legein* paradox. Basically, we must yield autonomy to gain more autonomy. Only a subject who is able to accept the deflation of his/her own vision could also accept and implement the vision built by the community he/she belongs to. Only a subject who accepts “to be evermore less” can also accept “to have evermore less” – a new pattern of subjectivity must be developed.

An inspiration for degrowth can be found within the concept of the Mediterranean disappearing identity. Rooted in the mythological story of Ulysses and Polyphemus, the identity simulation (Ulysses – Noman) can be found in many inner regions of the Mediterranean, such as the Lower Adriatic. It relies on the peripheral anti-identitarian double movement – mimicry (“accepting” and

“submitting” to the dominating, conquering power – not openly insisting on own identity) and a steady logic of social reproduction (maintaining local customs and community ties). The disappearing identity undermines the logic of economic exploitation with a twofold strategy for livelihood: the “parasitic” capture of resource flows from the colonizing powers and the maintaining of small scale self-production.

By not being able to hold their own in the growth run, Mediterranean countries are becoming more peripheral and excluded,

losing any competitive advantages they might hold in the international arena. This gives them a chance to put a stop to the blind *teukein*, cutting their dependence ties with global competition and restoring “habitation” by politics, while taking into account environmental compatibilities and stressing paths of self-production. Ultimately, it should result in the role (and amount) of work in people’s lives being reconsidered, and *depense* activities, such as social dances, agonistic games, public debates about the meaning of life being fostered.



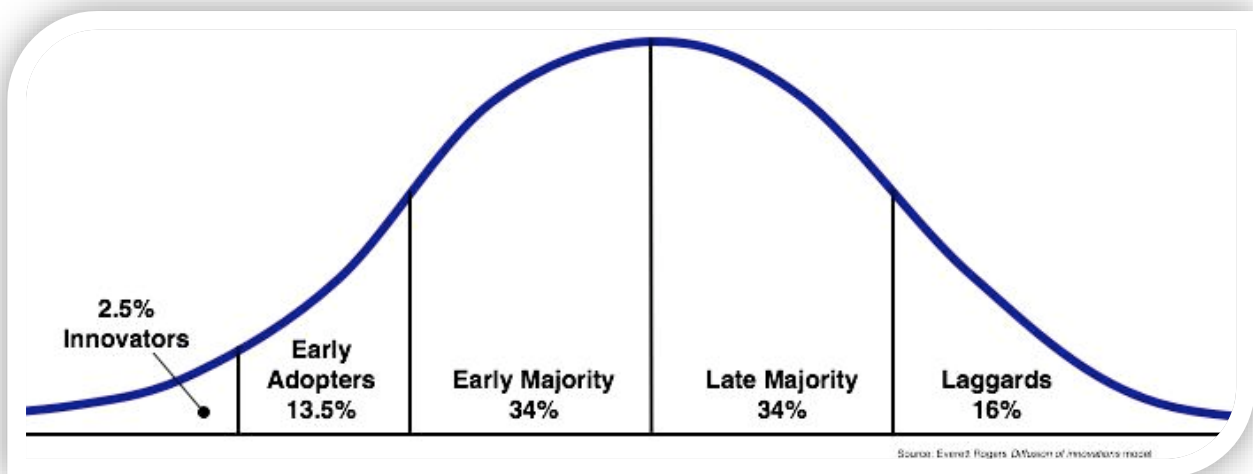
## The skills needed to cope with changes

Marija Roth – X Gymnasium Ivan Supek, Zagreb

Marija talked both through her personal experience and her professional experience as a school psychologist and a psychotherapist. She offered us several definitions of “change”, such as “to become different”, “to undergo transformation or transition”, “to go from one phase to another”, “to make an exchange”, “to transfer from one conveyance to another”, “to put on other clothing”; along with several definitions of “uncertainty” – “these nouns refer to the condition of being unsure about someone or something”, “the state of being uncertain; doubt; hesitancy”, “an instance of doubt or hesitancy”, “unpredictability; indefiniteness”, “the least forceful, merely denotes a lack of assurance of conviction”.

It is important to note that change is unavoidable as no society or individual remains static – change is a natural element of human existence. A learning organization that has developed the continuous capacity to adapt and change holds a shared vision, takes into account new ways of thinking, views organization as a system of relationships, communicates openly and works together to achieve shared vision.

Resistance is part of the change process and is something that should always be worked on. Change often involves innovation, and Rogers introduced the concept of diffusion of innovation in 1962.



Uncertainty, on the other hand, should be viewed as information – something to understand and not necessarily reduce. The below table summarizes the differences in teacher/student and student/student interaction related to the strong versus weak uncertainty avoidance dimension (Based on Hofstede 1986):

| <b>SOCIETIES WITH STRONG<br/>UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE</b> | <b>SOCIETIES WITH WEAK UNCERTAINTY<br/>AVOIDANCE</b>                 |
|--|--|
| Low tolerance of ambiguity/vagueness/imprecision       | High tolerance of ambiguity/vagueness/imprecision                    |
| Low risk-taking – there is a need to avoid failure     | High risk-taking – mistakes are seen as part of the learning process |
| “Teacher knows everything”                             | Teacher can say “I don’t know”                                       |
| A good teacher uses academic language                  | A good teacher uses language to communicate                          |
| Student accuracy is rewarded                           | Student innovation is rewarded                                       |
| Strong need for affirmation and consensus              | Conflict can be used constructively and seen as fair play            |

There are certain feelings that can often be expected when change occurs such as sense of loss, confusion, mistrust, fear of letting go. Individuals often focus on themselves in these circumstances, with high uncertainty, low stability, higher levels of emotional stress and undirected energy. Control becomes a major issues which increases the possibility of conflict, especially between groups.

An organization which is aware of change and all it entails is capable of identifying the current position and providing increased awareness of others and self. It is committed to the building of relationships and explaining the purpose of the change. It provides frequent and consistent communication about change, why it is needed and what is needed to achieve it. The prerequisites for leading others through change are emotional awareness, empathy with others, listening skills, flexibility, tolerance, creativity and the ability to manage stress.

Seeing as stress is a very common occurrence in today's society, one must use it in positive ways – by limiting it instead of eliminating it and by using it to improve one's performance. Some of the skills used to cope with stress are expressing one's feelings, efficient time management, looking at the big picture, setting reasonable standards for oneself and others. Also, trying to control the uncontrollable is an unnecessary expenditure of time and energy. Efficient communication, learning to say no and reserving time for fun and relaxation also contribute to effective coping.

In today's globalized world multiple cultures are regularly represented within classrooms. This is approached through either assimilation, multiculturalism or interculturalism. Interculturalism is the most inclusive and desired approach as it takes into account all forms of diversity in the

classroom, thinking about it in a broad sense. This includes gender, religion, disability, sexuality, socio economic status, nationality, parental support, status, motivation, social skills etc.. Differences are considered useful (and a focus is on what different individuals have in common) and diversity is omnipresent. The competences associated with interculturalism are communication skills, collaboration skills, flexibility and adaptability, initiative and entrepreneurship, critical thinking and creativity. Intercultural education, within which students learn from each other through well-structured interaction with each other and not only from the teacher, has different dimensions - knowledge (what we want our students to learn or understand), skills and competences (important to live in a diverse society) and attitudes towards diversity.

A global achievement gap exists in education systems worldwide between what even our best schools are teaching and testing and the skills all students will need in the 21st century. For example, we do not teach intercultural competences to our students, and yet we (and employers) expect them to have these competences at the end of their education.

Another important element that is often disregarded, but invaluable, is creativity. There are numerous definitions of creativity – it is most often linked to the capability of creating new ideas or discovering that which is unexpected, yet useful and efficient. Creativity is about divergent thinking, as opposed to convergent thinking. Within the context of 47% of professions bound to disappear during the next 10-20 years (research from Oxford University), the role of teachers is, or should be, changing from a provider of facts, data, theories and information towards that of a mentor who directs learning by teaching their students to handle information, check it, consolidate it, cooperate with data, solve problems with data and use intercultural competences. It is important to note that, even though in these days information on anything is available anywhere and anytime, guidance and rules must still be provided in order to provide the best environment for creativity. The promotion of creativity includes encouraging intellectual curiosity, taking risks, having the right to make mistakes.

Creative people are verbally fluent, able to visualize problems, independent, high in energy, flexible, confident, assertive and able to accept opposing characteristics within themselves. Creative schools promote active learning, develop intercultural competence, accept diversity, have an individualized approach and clear criteria for success. Feedback is always provided and encouraged. Creative teachers strive to understand their students and believe in them. They are flexible, they lead (but are not leaders), they offer practical experience, collaborate and share knowledge. Different methods are employed, both in and out of class.

Research in the X. Gimnazija „Ivan Supek“ vocational school on 180 students and 56 teachers has shown that the main reasons for not using creative techniques and approaches were lack of time and outdated plans and programs (64%). Apparent lack of student interest or lack of knowledge on how to implement creative methods was cited by a smaller proportion of participants (10 – 20%). A negligible number of participants cited their scepticism on the learning benefits of such an approach (2%) and no one said they lacked the interest to try it.

Some other reasons for not using the approach were „too many students in class“, „too much administration“, „lack of central support and equipment“, „big workload“ etc.

There are three main ways for a teacher to structure his or her lessons – competitively, individualistically or cooperatively. Cooperative learning just might be one of the answers to the need to change. It is a way to practice intercultural competences and it gives everyone a chance to learn. Good preparation is of utmost importance – simply putting desks together is not enough for cooperative learning to happen. Everyone in the group (groups are composed by the teacher) has a special role (facilitator/organizer, reporter, material manager, planner and harmonizer) and shares the responsibility for understanding the topic. Nobody is finished until everybody has finished. The facilitator/organizer makes sure that the group is working on the assignment, makes sure everyone understands the instructions and that everyone participates. The facilitator calls the teacher only if the group is stuck at a task. The material manager is the only person who can leave his or her place to get the group the materials which might be needed and also makes sure the materials are returned to the teacher undamaged. The planner keeps an eye on time and develops a schedule for the planned work, keeps an eye on time and decides when to start and stop specific activities accordingly. The harmonizer encourages students to contribute to the work and to work together in an appropriate manner, encouraging group members to help each other out. He praises the students for a job well done and make sure no one feels left out. The teacher's role in all this is to guide the students and not tell them what to do as cooperative learning stands on four basic principles: positive interdependence, individual responsibility, equal participation and simultaneous interaction.

Learning, no matter what type, always ends up being assessed. There are five principles of assessment for learning, as established by the UK Assessment Reform Group in 2009:

1. The provision of effective feedback to students
2. The active involvement of students in their own learning
3. Adjusting teaching to take into account the results of the assessment
4. Recognition of the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of pupils, both of which are critical influences on learning
5. The need for students to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve.

Different methods of assessment exist: summative assessment, which is the traditional way of evaluation resorting to „pass“ or „fail“ and classifying students according to their success – focusing on the product and signalling employability and selection for employment; peer assessment and self-assessment which provide and insight into the process of evaluation, involve reflection, critical thinking and self-awareness and has clear evaluation objectives; and, finally, formative assessment which motivates students, is guided by feedback, measures understanding during the learning process and trains students for evaluation (self-evaluation and peer evaluation). Thousands of studies have shown that formative assessment gives the best results.

Some of the different means of assessment and grading are tests, essays, blogs, songs, presentations, photo essays, posters, publications, exhibitions, stories ... there are plenty of possibilities.

The work of civil society organizations active in promoting people's engagement, participation and cultural integration has a direct impact on the realization of a more open, inclusive, cohesive and equal society as well as on the advancement of the values of solidarity, social justice and social responsibilities. This is often done through advocating, encouraging and enabling active citizenship through activities such as volunteering. Schools have an important role in active citizenship as they are in a position to improve competencies like cooperation and communication, promote critical thinking, reduce prejudice and build tolerance, understanding, empathy and openness to diversity.

## Good education as a basic right: global challenges and trends in a local context

Grzegorz Mazurkiewicz – Jagiellonian University, Faculty of Management and Social Communication

Schools operate in a particular context – a complex and ever-changing world with challenges, ranging from ecological to humanitarian, that are difficult to overcome. Education can address these challenges, but in order to do so it first needs to become aware of that context. At the moment, most education systems are based on outdated beliefs. This includes a lack of awareness of the crisis of ideology, an intellectual order that supports neoliberalism and monopoly of the „free market“, a rise in democratic illiteracy and a drive towards specialization and narrow expertise and control in favour of cooperation, participation and creativity. Instead of quick solutions to these issues, we need self-organization, time and deliberation.

There are cultural and political reasons the world is not benefitting from advances in technology as much as it should – we are much faster with technological development than we are with moral or political development. This is mostly due to the neoliberal vision of social structure being influenced by economic decisions regulated by a free market. Democracy, however, cannot be reduced to the metaphor of „free market“ or reforms, such as deregulation and privatization, appealing to the market model. There is a clear need to rebuild social solidarity, strengthen social structures and establish a new democratic society without a dominating elite.

Education systems, and, through them, schools have always depended on a social contract of sorts, influenced by the context. As political institutions, schools today reproduce the existing unfair social hierarchy, facade of democracy and tolerance along with an unrealistic promise of development. Important issues are often ignored in order to avoid risk and controversy, compromise is resorted to far too often while new ideas are not being allowed to surface. Education and school needs to be defined from the beginning: „new“ skills, such as cooperation, dialogue, relation building and self-management should be worked on. There needs to be an awareness that the learning process is a complex socially and psychological phenomenon, and not a procedure that needs to be implemented through automatism. Since we always address our knowledge, the borders of our knowledge are the borders of our reality. Modification of knowledge happens through social interactions and shapes reality.

Common, accessible and good quality education is one of the main aims of every society. The definition of „good quality“ seems to be relative though, as there is disagreement on what is really important – is it about the children? Or the economy? Should test results matter? Or skills acquired and their viability on the job market? It is visible that schools today corrupt students, kill passion and creativity and are responsible for the reproduction of unfairness and class structure. As education,

by its very tradition, cannot forego authority or tradition, it is important to transform schools into democratic public spheres where students learn the knowledge and skills necessary to create a critical democracy. Education should be liberated, which means it should consist of acts of cognition, not transfer of information. This will enable students to deepen their understanding of self, the world and possibility of transformation.

The systemic conditions teachers need to build schools that change reality should be initiated by the deconstruction of the current theoretical models. Good ideas fail due to thinking models – new concepts fail when introduced because they contradict the existing models on how the world functions. We must be aware of the social nature of reality, which is constructed through human interaction, communication and cooperation. Reality does not exist as long as people do not agree that it exists. Thus, it is necessary to reconstruct the metaphor of education from an image of education as a process of production to that of a place of democratic practices we are all responsible for.

It is only then that we will break free from the industrial school mentality, still present today, which takes for granted, for instance, that kids have deficits and school will fix it. Or that learning happens in heads (and not in the whole body). Or that everyone learns in the same way and some kids are smart and some are stupid. Rigid categorization of knowledge is also part of that mentality, as is the unquestionable „truth“ taught in schools. Obedience is the main value in such schools and language is used as a construction tool for reality. Educational

leaders are controllers of teachers (who are controllers of students), and the educational market increases inequality.

Conversation about values of democracy, solidarity and fairness are dramatically needed as aims of education in democratic societies are an object of constant discussion and deliberation. As dialogue is an existential necessity, it cannot be reduced to an exchange of information or opinion. It should be an act of creation, not of domination – it cannot truly exist without love for people and the world, without humility and faith in humanity.

So how do we build a school that changes reality? A reality in which one's mother's education and family wealth are the most important predictors of wealth? A school that changes reality should aim for quality learning, building a climate of individual and organizational learning, using adequate methods and supporting learning and individual approach. It should aim for justice, equality and solidarity, helping every student to overcome natural obstacles. It should also promote democracy and civic dialogue, creating a culture of dialogue that promotes open and active attitudes towards the world, while at the same time developing the skills of cooperation. Change must come from within the system. We need critical intellectuals who understand the complexity of the world and understand how the world functions, what people think and what are the consequences of that in the area of education. They must take a more critical and political role in defining the nature of their work. We need educational activists who are able to act and implement the social change which should be the main aim

of education. Without the willingness to change the unfair reality, leaders become only an element of the oppression system. We do not need another democratic school reform; we need democracy, and that will never appear without citizens. We need cooperating professionals who use and inquiry based approach to the process of teaching and learning that enables constant revision of the knowledge possesses, as well as skill and mastery on how to bring about an active and independent construction of their own reflection through research, reflection, dialogue and cooperation with others. The term „professionalism“ refers to a constant reflection, dialogue and development leading to a strengthened and self-

regulated profession. Professional teacher are able to build their professional knowledge, conduct research, publish articles and hold discussions.

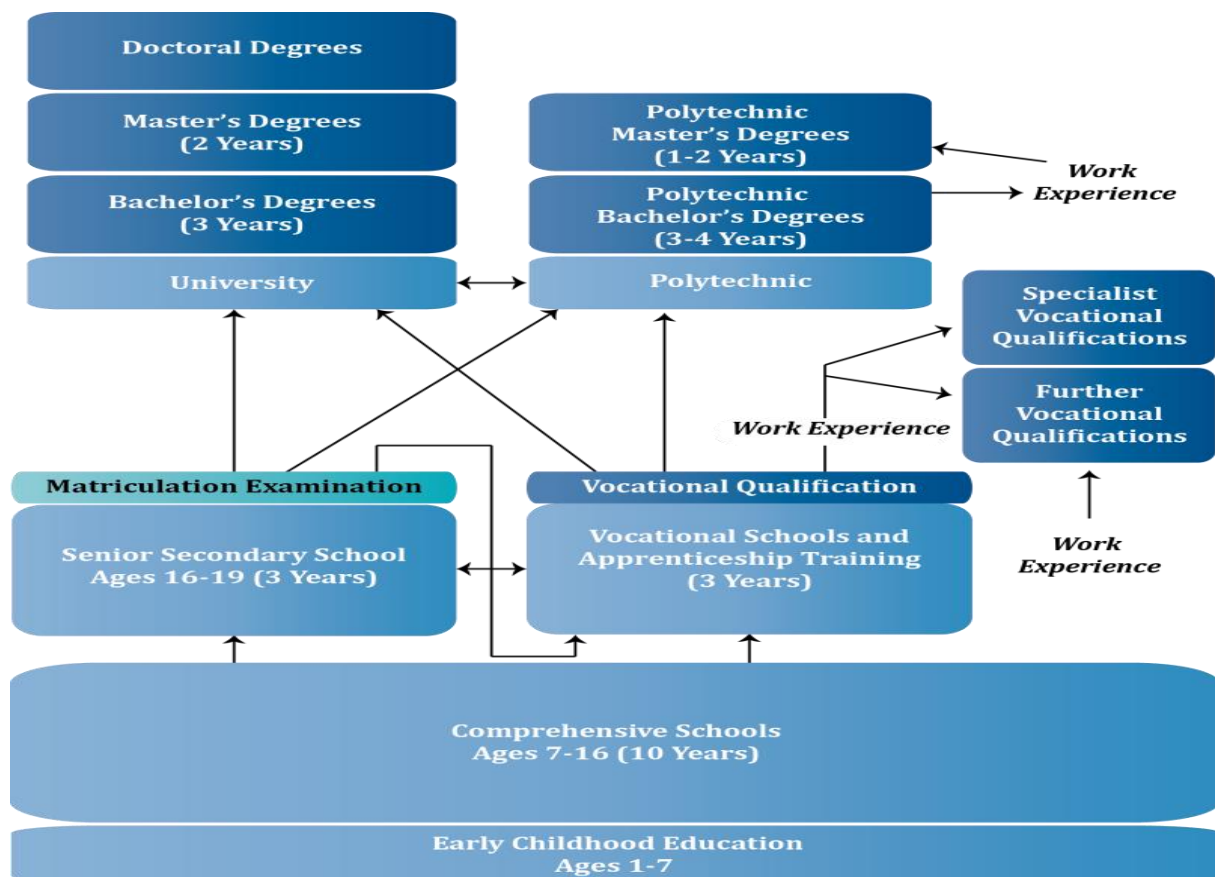
Basically, it is a simple matter of focusing on processes in the classroom with attention and energy devoted to relations, communication and cooperation (versus competition). Teachers should be supported in their development and cooperation, empowered to bring their own decisions. School principals should be prepared for the role of educational leaders. A systemic focus on political, social, administrative and relational areas is necessary. Ultimately, it is not about choice, it is about needs. First for survival, then for an understanding of the world and finally for a common life.



## Finnish education system and curricular reform 2016

Arne Verhaegen - EduFuture

The Finnish education system is considered one of the best and highest-performing education systems in the world. Its basic principles are enshrined in an equal and qualitative comprehensive education with highly qualified and competent teachers. It is a student-oriented and flexible system based on empowerment through student counselling, tutoring and special needs education. As seen from the diagram below, there are no dead ends in the education system. The finances are secured primarily through the government and local authorities, with a bit under 6% of the GDP allocated to education. For those reasons, education is truly considered a matter of high significance in the Finnish society. The teaching profession, in spite of the basic salary of 1800€, is in high demand with only 10% of those applying for a teaching degree being accepted to the university.



The pre-primary education, intended for 6 year old, is voluntary. 95% of children attend it. The teaching materials, text books, school transports and school meals are free (the latter was a great incentive during harder times in Finland's past). The subjects are language and interaction, mathematics, environmental and natural studies, health, physical and motor development and

art and culture. Learning through playing outside is essential to enable the students to digest what they learned in the classrooms.

Basic education consists of a nine-year comprehensive curriculum for the whole 7-16 year old age group. The national core curriculum leaves room for local variations. Teaching is provided by schools near the home, so competition is limited. There are no national tests and no degrees. The text books, teaching materials, transport and school meals remain free. Educational support and student wellbeing is extremely important, resulting in an extremely low drop-out rate of 0,3%.

Secondary education is flexibly organised, with about 53% of students going to upper secondary schools which have admission criteria based on grade marks, which means a high level of competition. An individual curriculum for every student is tailored, with each student studying according to his or her own study plan. The curriculum is comprised of 47 – 52 mandatory courses, a minimum of 10 advanced courses, a maximum of 15 same subject courses and a maximum of 20 applied courses. The education is free for students, but they do have to pay for books and materials.

The remaining 47% of students enter vocational education – a 3 year program which leads to a vocational qualification. The curriculum is individualised with personal study plans worth 120 credits in total – 20 credits of general studies, 80 credits of vocational studies and 20 credits of practical studies at the work place. It is free for students, except for books and materials.

Teachers are encouraged to work together a lot, cooperate and share their knowledge and insight. There is a high degree of teacher autonomy, resulting in very motivated and inspired teachers. Hours of work outside of school are all counted into work and there is no after-school tutoring. Education is completely student oriented, with students in the centre of attention. Homework amounts to 30 minutes' worth of work per day and there is no punishment in the classical sense. Instead, constructive methods are used – for instance, when a child misbehaves, he is sent to another class for a while (for instance from the 4th to the 6th grade). Student mobility within the school is largely free and encouraged – they just have to inform the teacher where they can be found while doing individual work. Classes for children with learning difficulties exist, but children are free to attend regular classes and retreat to the learning difficulty class when they feel they can no longer follow the lesson, they are losing concentration or similar reasons. Gifted students assist in the learning process of their peers by being used as „fellow teachers“.

The entire system is flexible and financially efficient – the funding a school receives per student is 7500€ per year. Principals, as central managers of the schools, have the freedom to allocate those funds according to the school's needs and priorities – they do not have to answer to others about it. Vice principals help organize matters within the school. Nurses and psychologists are part of the schools as support services with 5 school counsellors, 1 psychologist and one nurse per 1000 students.

Despite looking great on paper, and regardless of the constantly high results on all relevant international metrics, the Finnish education system is up for another curriculum reform in 2016. If we look a bit into the recent past, we will see that curriculum reforms are an almost constant occurrence within the Finnish education system, with reforms having taken place in 1970, 1985, 1994 and 2004. One can argue that the Finnish curriculum is in a constant state of reform, which is actually complementary to the constant state of change the world is in – and the need to adapt to it. Thus, the Finns are not reforming their curriculum to keep their place at the top of some PISA table – they are doing it because they are aware that changes are needed to avoid stagnation and to keep their curriculum relevant to its primary users – the students, and their future.

The new reform was an open reform – teachers had up to the 1st of August to provide input for the new curriculum which started on 15th of August. The key competences of the reform are the active role of students, versatile learning environments, multi-disciplinary learning, interaction, phenomenon based learning, programming and robotics and self-regulation and responsibility.

The reform is based on flexibility – each school will always have a certain amount of freedom to create its own, local curriculum adapted to local needs and circumstances. The changes in the classroom should bring about a more participatory, physically active, creative and linguistically enriched schools with integrated teaching and learning. More lesson hours will be devoted to social studies, physical education, music and visual art. Multi-disciplinary studies will be encouraged and promoted, e.g. integrating biology, geography, physics and environmental studies through projects (such as how to build a green dream house). The new curriculum will also bring phenomenon based learning to the forefront, which will be community oriented, have long term benefits and will deal with real problems and real-world phenomena, such as poverty, care for the elderly, climate change, refugees etc. More focus will be directed on skills such as working skills, interaction skills, everyday skill, participation and influencing skills and the building of a sustainable future.

The reform also calls for fair and ethical, versatile and realistic assessment, based on multifaceted evidence, conceding that the same type of assessment is not ideal for every student. Assessment in the future will be used to support learning, describe the learning progress and help students understand and recognize their own learning process. This will include instructive and encouraging feedback – both individual and communal. And it will be used to develop students' capacity for self-assessment and peer-assessment, allowing them to make judgements about others' work while reflecting on their own.

## #croatiacandobetter – the curricular reform story

Lana Jurko – Network of Education Policy Centers

In October 2014, the Parliament of Croatia adopted the Strategy of Education, Science and Technology, with a comprehensive curricular reform set as one of the goals of the strategy. By January 2015 the Expert Working Group (EWG) for the curricular reform was appointed, with Boris Jokić at its head. It is important to note that dr. Jokić was not part of the political life of Croatia, nor was he a member of any political party - he had applied following a public call, and was chosen based on his references, expertise and merit.

From February to June 2015, the topic, subjects and working groups for the curricular reform were selected and appointed. 436 people, including 50 public experts and 218 consultants produced 55 curriculum documents and held 400 public presentations by the beginning of 2016 – a product of 647 live and hundreds of on-line meetings.

The curricular reform was a transparent and participatory, bottom up process. The members of the different subject work groups were selected based on their own expression of interest, motivation letter and references/experience. It was a process designed to take Croatian education from the present anachronistic system rooted in the past into the 21st century – from the way learning and teaching was conducted to the flexibility of the system according to the wishes and needs of the learners.

The majority of the people who ended up working on it were from the teaching profession – actual teachers working in actual schools – along with members of the academia and civil society organizations. The public opinion on the reform in February 2016 was overwhelmingly positive, with only 8% of those asked in polls responding they were not in favour of the reform. There are multiple reasons for this - in addition to the participatory nature and openness for dialogue, the reform was based on a positive message, a desire to replace an obsolete curriculum, a beneficial media presence and what turned out to be a very charismatic leader.

The expert consultations that were held from April to June 2016 resulted in a total of 2759 comments, 1846 conclusions from various meetings, attracting 913 experts and institutions and 64847 interested participants at the meetings – showing that the process was not only transparent, but also open to suggestions for improvement. Sadly, the public consultations planned for June 2016 never happened, and neither did the piloting in selected schools in September 2016.

Croatia got a new government at the end of January 2016, the result of a long process of post-election negotiations. The parties participating in the new government seemed to have a somewhat different agenda on what to do with education and how to conduct the reform – the same reform that was a few weeks away from producing its final documents after months of dedicated work (for which they did not receive extra money). The leak of the power-point presentation for the opening statement of the new prime minister raised alarms when it was noticed that the new government planned to abandon the reform. An impromptu (social) media campaign by NGO activists, notably from the Forum for Freedom of Education, put the reform in

focus in both media and the parliament – the result was that the prime minister claimed the power-point reference to abandoning the reform was a clerical mistake, and his minister of education confirming that the ruling coalition was indeed still on track with the reform.

Sadly, this turned out to be a lie. The following months were riddled with a (c)overt campaign to denigrate the documents produced by the working groups as well as the people at the helm of the reform. This ranged from veiled manipulation through the media and parts of the academia to outright lies about the content of the reform, claiming it lacked proper STEM content and experts or that it was inherently anti-Croatian. Numerous attempts were made to personally and professionally discredit members of the expert working group in the eyes of the public. The ministry (running general education was given to a member of an extreme right religious fundamentalist party, a minor coalition partner) started to openly obstruct the process and dry it out – even financially by not forwarding the funds for travel expenses for people working on the reform – while declaratively still backing it. The straw that finally broke the camel's back was the ruling coalition's plan to expand the expert working group, filling it with people that had so far nothing to do with the reform, but were politically very close to them. This prompted the expert working group to call for the government to back off from trying to influence the reform and for the ministry of education to fulfill its obligations to the process. As these demands were ignored, the expert working group requested the revocation of its appointment, effectively putting a stop to the reform.

The reaction of the civil society sector was swift – a big protest in Zagreb was organized within less than two weeks, with numerous smaller protests in other towns in Croatia and abroad, all on the 1st of June. Crowdfunded and self-organized, with the „croatiacandobetter“ hashtag, the protest in Zagreb gathered around 50000 people on the main square, no small feat for a traditionally „silent“ society. The 90 minute long gathering, held in a positive atmosphere, called for a resumption of the reform process and for the government to stop interfering. The government had largely ignored the protest in an attempt to keep face while bursting at the seams on account of several other political affairs. It had collapsed two weeks later, as a second (smaller) protest for the reform was being held in front of its offices. The 1st of June protest was all about reform and education – bridging the political divide in the country and avoiding explicit political messages. Not only did it demonstrate the huge support the reform still had despite numerous attempts to smear it, it also showed how people care about education and how education, although often overlooked in public debates and taken for granted, is something they are willing to take a stand for.

This outpouring of public support and interest for education is only part of the reason the Croatian curriculum story is a good story worth telling. The other reasons are that it was an honest attempt at meaningfully participative policy making (putting policy above the interests of daily politics), showing that experts and expertise can indeed function above and beyond politics and restoring a certain trust in society by showing that dialogue is still possible. Furthermore, education has been established as an important topic in political discourse, making it an unavoidable subject in the upcoming campaign. It proved that a complex process

such as this reform could be done from the ground-up in a participatory manner and that not all change is costly.

The tables below provide a glimpse into the content of the reform itself through Lana's work on the Sustainable Development as a Cross-Curricular Theme working group. The main domains/learning areas of the sustainable development theme were interdependence, action and wellbeing, with the goal to establish future oriented thinking and development of responsibility for next generations. Every cycle had planned for what a student should be capable of doing, along with knowledge, skills and attitudes on the subject matter (in this case it is sustainable development).

| 1. Cycle Domain Wellbeing                          |   |   |   |                 |
|--|---|---|---|-----------------|
| Student  | Knowledge   | Skills  | Attitude  | Recommendations |
| Identify examples of good relations between people | He/She can make a difference between good and bad relations | Solving problems and disagreements without violence | He/She is aware of importance of good relations |                 |
| Key content: mandatory and recommended             |   |   |   |                 |

| 3. Cycle Domain Interdependence                                       |  |  |   |                 |
|---|--|--|---|-----------------|
| Student   | Knowledge  | Skills   | Attitude  | Recommendations |
| Explain connection of economy activities with society and environment | Explain how economy affect society and environment | Obtain and analyse data about influence of human activities on environment | Sensitivity for responsible use of natural and public resources |                 |
| Key content: mandatory and recommended                                |  |  |   |                 |

## Introducing the 3R model

Lana Jurko – Network of Education Policy Centers

The 3Rs framework proposes a model of operationalization of sustainability education at school level.

Sustainability education in this model refers to the social, environmental and economic aspects and proposes its realization through establishing responsible and caring relationships with *environment, learners, teachers & staff and community*.

The model is learner centred and aims to draw on existing practices and capacities in schools.

*A sustainable school is **RESILIENT, RESOURCEFUL and REACTIVE**.*

**Resilient school** – refers to the capacity of the institution and its staff to remain competent and provide support when individuals or the school community are exposed to misfortune or stressful events. The staff have the skills to help minimize and overcome the effects of adversity on learners as well as colleagues

**Reactive school** – actively engages in helping to provide solutions to problems and issues, which not only affect the school as such, but also its social / economic / natural environment as well as individuals within the school. It has the capacity to quickly and efficiently manage unforeseen circumstances. A reactive school actively participates in creating policies and is quick to operationalize policy changes that enhance the learning environment. By tackling issues and readily adapting to the various educational and social challenges it might face, it provides an example and an inclusive environment for educating the future generations of responsible global citizens.

**Resourceful school** – is able to create and draw on a variety of assets and means, both from within and, through creative approaches, the capacities present in its local community, the capacities present in its local community, to provide a truly inclusive education for all its learners, and a quality working environment for its staff. The school is able to efficiently and creatively operationalize policy changes aimed at enhancing the learning environment and process. It is flexible, open to innovation and always prepared to look for new and better solutions. Teachers and staff are supported and motivated in their continuous professional and personal development.

For each 'relationship' there is a set of indicators that define the paths to establish caring and responsible interrelation to enhance all actors to be valued, inspired and welcomed to actively participate in school life.

### *Who can use the model:*

- Teachers can use the model individually to address specific school needs and /or to improve classroom-learning environment or in groups to more systematically address school challenges or revise existing practices.
- School principals can initiate the changes in school environment through Self-Assessment and proposing it to the school teachers.
- Teachers Trainers can develop training program according to the indicators and facilitate the introduction of the model in schools.
- Students and parents council can propose to school measures of improvements through analysis of indicators

### *How to use model:*

The model foresees three steps:

#### *(a) SELF-ASSESSMENT*

There are 4 interconnected fields of action. It is advisable to process with the Self-Assessment of all fields and then identify the priorities.

For each indicator you are asked to evaluate if the indicator is fully/partly/not accomplished.

In the evaluation of indicators try to be as realistic as possible:

- for an indicator you assessed it is fully accomplished you should be able to provide 3 examples that refers to the last three months and/or to have documents that can prove it (i.e. School policies).
- for an indicator you assessed it is partly accomplished you should be able to provide 3 examples that refers to the last three months and to highlight their weakness
- for an indicator you assessed it is not accomplished you should be able to provide 3 examples that refers to the last three months that show the practices/policies are not in place

If you are doing the Self-Assessment in-group, carefully listen to your colleagues and find a common assessment through open and direct communication.

#### *(b) PLANNING & ACTION*

You can define different ways to identify which indicators you will focus on, you can agree on working per field identifying 3-5 indicators to work in given period of time or you can identify 1-3 indicators in each field and work on them in parallel.

Regarding the level of assessment, either you can work firstly on indicators you assessed as not accomplished or mix partly/not accomplished.



In identifying the priorities it is important to consider your usual workload to not get overworked and consequentially to be realistic in setting the deadlines.

The examples provided per each indicator are explanatory of the indicator. It is very important that you reflect on your school needs before developing further documents, keeping in mind the aim of the model is to make your school a better and happier place and not more bureaucratic.

Once you have identified the indicators to focus on you can proceed in planning the action, you can use the *working sheet 1* or existing forms in your school.

### (c) MONITORING

Regardless you go through this model individually or in group you will need to go through Self-Assessment once a year (i.e. at the beginning and the end of school year) to check if the activities you plan made changes in the assessment, to identify further priorities and to check if any change occurred. The indicators are, at different levels, interconnected and it can happen that working on some indicators have effects on some other.

The model, along with the check lists and flow charts, is still under development. It has received useful and constructive feedback from the School participants. Look out for it on [www.edupolicy.net](http://www.edupolicy.net) where it will be available after fine-tuning and additional consultations.

## Case Studies by Participants

### Suzana Kirandziska – Step by Step, Macedonia

Suzana presented the case of the *Zdravko Cvetkovski* secondary technical and construction school in Skopje – an example on how to be sustainable in an unsustainable society, seeing as Macedonia is in a big political crisis at the moment.

The school is building on previous experience from project activities, carrying on those activities even after the projects are done. Economic sustainability is achieved by having a real company and planning office as part of the school so the work done as part of practical vocational training benefits the school community while offering real-work experience to the students, developing their life and practical skills. The school is also environmentally sustainable – its eco-friendly activities have earned it the „Green Flag“. The social sustainability of the school is achieved through its model implementation (and continuation of practices) of the Interethnic Integration in Education project which involves multi-cultural workshops, clubs, excursions, events and celebrations, teacher collaboration and parent collaboration – all with the aim to bring members of different ethnic communities closer. The example that this school sets has a big impact as its social sustainability efforts are the result of an incident in which one student was killed by another student of different ethnicity – instead of escalations, the teachers, parents and students, along with great leadership, secured constructive transformation into what is, today, a bright example of sustainability.

### Lilit Nazaryan – Open Society Foundations, Armenia

Lilit introduced us to the state of sustainability in education in Armenia. She concluded that the policies are decent, but are not being implemented with the teaching process not up to the task. There are overall problems with equal access to schools, with the 2014 reforms not really addressing the needs of rural kids and refugees.

Two examples were showcased – the Ayb School, a state of the art school paid for by public money. It was created as part of an initiative for excellent schools – and it has excellent facilities indeed. Run by a priest, it is totally inaccessible to ordinary Armenian students with only children from „established“ families able to enrol; and the Avedisian school – a new sustainable school established in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Yerevan – there is no tuition, but only children with a registered address in the neighbourhood may attend.

### Tulaha Tahir – Macedonian Civic Education Center, Macedonia

Tula presented the „Creative Workshops“ program, present in over 20 high and vocational schools in Macedonia. Through the project, the students create a joint product. Groups are composed of a balanced number of students with different cultural background, and equal usage of different languages of instruction is expected. Everything is done in a collaborative atmosphere ensuring mutual respect, socialization and respect for both similarities and differences.

The main postulates of the methodology are process orientation, group work with students by trained mentors and workshops once a week over the course of 4-6 months. The main idea is creative research and development and professional growth of youth through the art process. Selected strategies and exercises are practiced during the workshops and a public presentation is held in front of the wider community. The products of the workshops can be documentaries, theatre plays, multi-media performances, dance, exhibition, graffiti... – the main precondition is a safe environments for young people to relate to freedom of speech.

The aspects of sustainability educations of the project can be seen through the awareness and sensitization of teachers, staff, managers and students and through the self-financing at schools with creative corners providing long-term functioning. In all, the project involves a whole school approach, with lots of potential for the transfer of different practices.

#### **Viorica Postica – Pro Didactica, Moldova**

Viorica presented the good practice of the project „European Lessons“. The aim of the project was to create preconditions for the development of European values and the acknowledgement of European integration processes in Georgia and Moldova. The target groups of the project were secondary school pupils (age 16-18) and young people (age 18-29). A practicum booklet for students and a methodological guide for teachers were used to implement the project through four content modules: Europe and the evolution of the European unification idea, European institutions, areas of common interest in the EU and EU between expanding and solving present problems. Several new topics had subsequently emerged in the updated curriculum of the project, such as the single European currency, school and education in the EU, the Republic of Moldova until and after the signing of the association agreement with the EU, the EU and the migration crisis.. The updated curriculum was piloted in four secondary schools.

In conclusion, European integration is a big challenge for Moldovan society in general and its schools in particular as the program needs to be updated annually. However, the durability of education in Moldova is supported and empowered by the values and principles of the European Community. The experience with the project contributes to the maintaining and amplification of European values and culture

#### **Driton Berisha – Kosovo Education Center, Kosovo**

Driton had a presentation about the operationalization of policy for sustainable education. The policy recommendation paper was initiated by NEPC and subsequently published in 2012. It was based on recommendations presented in a co-jointly written document by KEC and Qendra per Zhvillim te Qednruseshem ne Kosove. The recommendations were to use extra spaces for extra curriculum activities and to organize and implement 20% of foreseen subject related activities according to the needs of the schools/community.

Regarding the recommendations, KEC supported the alternative forms for a long term and sustainable development through awareness and stimulation of relevant factors by following the current and creating new extra quality curriculums for learning the concepts for sustainable

development and applying them. The aim was to raise the number of children participating in extra curriculum activities and to improve work quality. In practice, this was implemented through encouraging easier access to non-segregated institutions working on early childhood development, capacity building in preschools, development of parenting practices and working with learning centres in the field, mostly on Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian based projects. The challenges of such work were mostly due to language barriers, poverty, children being busy with work, low education level of parents.. Along with direct activities such as parents' clubs or toy libraries, logistical help was provided for access to preschool education – such as help with registration, support with school materials and food, providing mediators to improve the communication between parents and pre-schools.

During the next two year, KEC plans to continue the work, come up with at least one related policy paper recommendation for the Ministry of Education, train teachers on work methodology, invest in space in pre-schools in cooperation with municipal departments of education, continue involving pre-school children and participate in the creation of educational component of Strategy for integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities.

### Learning Sessions

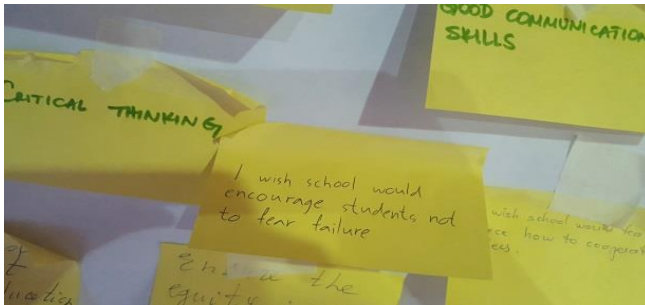
The Summer School's learning sessions were intermingled with the content, flexible and very interactive. As such, it is difficult to present them in the format of a report, but we will at least

try to provide a glimpse into the ideas and creativity the sessions prompted.



The participants provided their answers to the questions about what they heard during the week by expressing their opinions on degrowth and its place in education, change, uncertainty, manipulation and re-organization of education and all the great stuff that is being done in Finland in the form of interactive presentations, a quiz, a word game, a game of charades and a poster – showing not only that they absorbed what they learned, but also that they are well aware that creativity and

thinking outside the box are important in the learning process.



The „I wish my school would provide“ exercise yielded interesting results, showing that most participants were on the same page – sadly, the schools they went to or work with are not there quite yet. Some of the things people wished their schools would provide are: the provision of a happy and safe environment, practice reflection and self-reflection, empathy, active participation, deliberation, cooperation, provision of knowledge and skills to make change, promotion of independent and critical thinking, promotion of social justice, promotion of enjoyment of life, understanding of one's self, equity in

education, lifelong learning, respect for others, encouraging curiosity and encouraging students not to fear failure.

## In conclusion

The summer school has demonstrated the need to promote, advocate, accept and implement change in education and education systems if they are to remain relevant and beneficial to its users. The perspectives from different disciplines are united on this – from the avant-garde approach of the degrowth philosophy which appears to indeed have a place in (re)inventing social dynamics and the participants saw it as a welcoming contribution to education for sustainability efforts – to the more „to the point“ sociological analysis of the current and future practices in education systems. Marija Roth stressed the importance of accepting change and encouraging creativity – the same factors that Arne has shown us are being applied in the Finnish ever-changing education system for some time now. The challenge of actually implementing sustainability in schools and education systems is being tackled by the 3Rs system. Experience has shown that overhauling the way schools and education function and think is no small feat, but the experience from the Croatian curriculum reform has proven that constructive, participatory reforms from the ground up are indeed possible and not as costly as one would imagine. The amount and fluidity of discussion and exchange of ideas, both during the „official“ sessions and „depanse“ was inspiring and enriching – see for yourself at the 2017 Summer School :-)