



Conceptual Paper for The PLACES Project

Playful LeArning and storytelling that Create Engagement for the SDG's among children and young people.

Contributions from all partners in the project





Getting started

The aim of this conceptual paper for the PLACES Project is to create a shared understanding among the project partners, and other stakeholders, of the project's main theoretical concept, models and framework, as well as linking its key approaches in a meaningful way to the objectives of the project.

WHY: The relevance and importance of the PLACES Project

The PLACES Project (Playful LeArning and storytelling that Create Engagement for the SDGs among children and young people) will engage children and make them ambassadors for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for the sake of a sustainable future.

In 2015, the UN formulated the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the world's strategic plan to create a better world focusing on "people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership" with the aim of ending extreme poverty, reducing inequalities, and protecting the Planet against climate change. As a response, the SDGs were adopted by the EU member states, which work together with the European Commission (EC) on various strategies, plans and programmes to support the implementation of the SDGs. There is a clear and strategic desire from the EC to engage the European citizens in the implementation of the SDGs and the best way to do this, is by making them aware of what they mean concretely, and how they are related to their everyday life.

PLACES is therefore created to support the implementation of the SDGs in a European context, close to the European citizens. The project uses SDG 3; "Good Health and Well Being", SDG 4 "Quality Education" and SDG 10 "Reduced Inequalities" as subject matter to show how playful learning and the use of storytelling, can create participative and inclusive education, which can promote engagement and active participation among children and young people towards the SDGs, the European Integration Project that supports Europe's contribution to the SDGs, and the sustainable development of our European society in general.

We are not aiming to offer fixed curricula, schedules, and roadmaps for teachers, but to inspire journeys that will be unique for every teacher and group of pupils, with the shared goal to engage children and young people through feelings of empowerment and enabling them to become part of a change. A small change that may fuel bigger ones, through cascade engagement from pupils to parents and further on to the society.





WHAT: Reaching the SDGs through curiosity, creative thinking and a willingness to engage

The specific objective of PLACES is to develop, test and propose a didactic learning design with teacher guidelines, and concrete learning material, which is based on design thinking, playful learning, storytelling and inclusive education as methodologies. Working with this learning design and material in schools, will ensure that children and young people gain knowledge, courage and action competences to be better prepared to take responsibility towards and engage more actively in the implementation of the SDGs and the European Inclusion Project.

As mentioned above, we have chosen to work with three SDGs in PLACES as subject area for the development of the didactic learning design, and in the following these are shortly described.

SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing: Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being at all ages is essential to sustainable development.



SDG 3 is a response to the recognized fact that increased national wealth is associated with improved health, but also that good public health contributes to economic growth. Research shows that it is important for countries to invest in the health of their populations, not only because better health is a desirable objective in its own right, but also because it is an important determinant of economic growth and competitiveness. Amongst other things, the research presents evidence that health matters for a number of economic outcomes

such as wages, earnings, the number of hours worked, labor force participation, longer working lives and the labor supply of those giving care to ill household members. Research also focuses on the cost-of-illness, showing that the magnitudes of the economic impacts are substantial.

SDG 4: Quality Education: Providing quality education for all is fundamental to creating a peaceful and prosperous world. Education gives people the knowledge and skills they need to stay healthy, get jobs and foster tolerance.



As one of the popular quotes from Nelson Mandela says, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". And the SDG 4 is a direct response to the fact that we know from research that societies with a higher rate of education completion and levels of education, seem to be generally more healthy, have higher rates of economic stability, lower crime rates, and greater level of equality.

An overview of EU progress towards the SDGs over the past 5 years shows that very moderate progress has been achieved to reach a state of quality education.

SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries: Reducing inequalities and ensuring no one is left behind are integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Inequality within and among countries is a persistent cause for concern.



SDG 10 is a response to the fact that social inequality and hence social inequality in health is an ethical challenge in our society. Research shows inconclusively that the expected lifespan of an individual is closely linked to that same individual's income. Research also suggests that one way of dealing with social inequality apart from reduction in economic disparities and reduction of economic inequality between countries is through social inclusion.

Implementing the SDGs in Europe

In PLACES, we are relating the SDGs to European policies and initiatives. The entire societal project of bringing the Europeans together, to work together and to use our diversity as a lever to create innovation and development, to reach a sustainable European society, is called "The European Integration Project" (EIP).



PLACES sees the European Integration Project as a foundation and prerequisite for the way Europe should work towards the implementation of the SDGs. It is a foundation where diversity, a European feeling of belonging and identity, "the European way of living" and democratic participation are important and common values. The didactic learning design, and the teaching material that PLACES develops to be used in schools, should therefore be based on a European context and use examples and situations that Europeans can identify with.

In relation to the implementation of the SDGs within Europe, it is therefore important to look into the main policies and initiatives that PLACES should relate to, and these are the following;

As for **SDG 3**, health and medical care is the sole responsibility of the Member States (MS). The European Commission (EC) has to respect this and can in no way propose any kind of harmonization of laws and regulations in this policy area. The EC can only propose initiatives that complement national policies and encourage collaboration between the MS within areas such as research, monitoring, evaluation and exchange of good practice, early detection of diseases, quality and safety standards of e.g., medical products, cross border health as well as the protection of public health regarding tobacco and abuse of alcohol.

The overall aim of European policies and actions within the area of health can therefore be summarized as follows;

- protect and improve the health of EU citizens
- support the modernisation and digitalisation of health systems and infrastructure
- improve the resilience of Europe's health systems
- equip EU countries to better prevent and address future pandemics

On a European level, education is a priority area, and the way the education policy and initiatives contributes to the implementation of **SDG 4** is by supporting, through lifelong learning, the educational, professional and personal development of people in education, training, youth and sport,



in Europe and beyond, thereby contributing to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, to driving innovation, and to strengthening European identity and active citizenship.

In relation to the implementation of **SDG 10**, The European Commission has recently published, as a concrete response to the COVID crisis, the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, which is the guiding stone to a 'fair, inclusive and full of opportunity' Europe. In this plan, inequalities and a life in dignity is one of the prioritized principles, together with the promotion of health and ensuring care for all. Within these principles, it is stated that it is important to invest in children and early interventions, which can help preventing that (health) inequalities are installed already early in life. Reaching the objectives of the pillar should be in a joint effort by the EU institutions and national as well as regional authorities, social partners and civil society organisations.

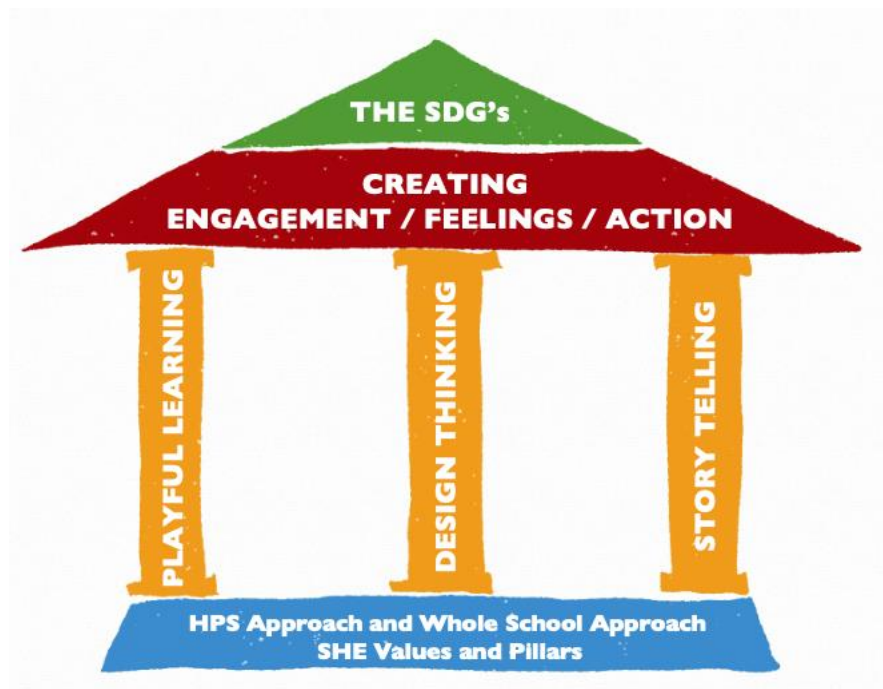
HOW: The methods to be applied in the PLACES project

In PLACES we will work with 4 different concepts and approaches as a basis for the development of the didactic learning design and the learning material, which are all known to have a significant effect on pupils' motivation and engagement. These are;

- Playful Learning
- Design Thinking
- Storytelling
- Health Promoting School approach

In a visual way, the concept can be presented like this;

The PLACES House of living, learning and playing





Through the didactic learning design and the learning material, PLACES will support teachers in delivering modern, high-quality teaching in primary schools and lower secondary schools, which will enable them to reach the children and young people in a way that they will be able to engage their parents and the surrounding community, and through this connection create a “cascade engagement”.

By translating the SDGs into lessons, concrete learning objectives and everyday actions, it will make the pupils feel part of the solution and give them the possibility to identify their own role in the implementation of the SDGs. Working hands-on with teaching materials that are based on the above mentioned concepts and approaches, that stimulate feelings playful relations, active problem solving and inclusive learning, PLACES will pave the way for children and young people to understand the SDGs and their status as worldwide goals that they can impact.

If we want to create engagement, we need to find ways to support teachers and teacher’s trainers, showing them how to frame activities where children have an active role to play, where they have fun and activate their feelings.

In the following a short presentation of the 4 concepts and approaches will be presented.

Playful approaches to learning

The playful learning approach that we apply in PLACES is based on Dewey (1997), Lave & Wenger (1991) and Lenon (2015). According to Dewey, learning activities with subject matter must be based on real life problems, in real life settings, where learners can take action to explore. Those actions are, following Lave & Wenger, always done in communities of others and in communities of learning practices. This approach understands knowledge in close connection with action and is constantly co-created in connection with others. Lastly, with Lennon we point to the importance of actions – learning practices – which are always bodily and sensory situated, and those practices make creation of knowledge and imagination strongly connected.

In PLACES the understanding of play is based on the mood perspective of play (Skovbjerg, 2021a; Skovbjerg, 2021b) and the concept of play qualities (Skovbjerg & Jørgensen, 2021). Following the mood perspective, an important point is that when aiming at definitions of play we need to work both conceptually and empirically, on the one hand developing concepts that fits the phenomenon, and on the other hand letting those concepts be grounded in a very concrete context in which play is taking place. It consists of a number of concepts: *Play order* is a concept for the special logic that play is. The point made with the concept of play order is that play has its own logic, which is different from everyday life. Play order must constantly be confirmed and developed to stay alive, and that relation, development and confirmation is taking place through at least two dimensions: Materials, conceptualised as *play media* (Skovbjerg, 2021, p. 31ff), which is a concept for all the materials that are used when we play, which are entangled; through actions, conceptualised as *play practices* (Skovbjerg, 2021, p. 61ff). The play practices can be understood as actions of play, which take place in the rhythm between repeating something and breaking with the rhythm of





something. Some play orders are well defined through clear repetitive actions, others are much blurrier, if the rhythms of the actions are changing all the time. The concept of *play qualities* is connected to the play practices and can be defined pointing to three dimensions. First, as the nature of somebody/something [beschaffenheit], which means the specific play-ness of something. Second, the qualities are always qualities for something/someone and hereby follows the third dimension, that play qualities are always defined contextually, connecting to participants, relations and context.

In PLACES we are specifically interested in play qualities related to storytelling and imagination, and the types of actions that support these.

For more information:

About play qualities and identifying play qualities: <https://dl.designresearchsociety.org/drs-conference-papers/drs2022/researchpapers/14/>

About applying play qualities to didactic learning designs: https://issuu.com/sile-kp/docs/playfulllearning_playbook3_eng_online

Design thinking

The playful approach to learning will be realised through design thinking. Design thinking is about framing an issue or problem by "opening it up": asking lots of questions, challenging, and maybe reframing it to find out what the real or most interesting problem is. Different methods and tools such as visualisation and prototyping are then used to research, test and iterate concepts and solutions and to communicate possible solutions. A design thinking process is a highly tangible and pragmatic approach to innovation, where insights and results are developed, documented, and communicated in a way that is easily understood and shared inside a design team and outside.



Many models have been produced to reflect the design thinking process. The "Double Diamond", the "Design Squiggle" and the "6C Model" all visualize parts of what constitutes a design thinking approach. Because a Design Thinking approach is not a simple five-stage gate process, but more like a complex and creative "dance" between different and opposite positions that push the innovation process forward. Between finding problems and creating solutions, choosing the frame and dealing with detail, analysis and synthesis, divergent (open) and convergent (closed) thinking, abstract (thinking) and practical/tangible actions, working by yourself and cooperating with others, developing an idea and communicating about it, dealing with aesthetics and with technology and functionality.

In a former ERASMUS + project called Future Teaching (The FUTE Project), a European partnership, lead by Design Skolen i Kolding and SDEO, developed a concrete design thinking model and design thinking method cards, that are specifically developed to meet the needs of teachers, and propose concrete co-creation and design methods that can be applied in collaboration with pupils and / or colleagues. The knowledge and results from the FUTE project will be applied in PLACES.

Link to FUTE: www.fute-project.eu



Storytelling

Storytelling is directly addressed at an audience and without using a written script. With the use of dramaturgical, bodily and verbal tools, the recipients/listeners are guided towards creating images in their minds, their limbic systems are activated, and emotions arise.

As stories activate more centres in the brain, they give us the opportunity to target and reach pupils with different learning patterns.

Different kinds of stories can have different functions, some of which may coincide. Among those are:

- Springboard stories; designed to spring the listener into new insights and following action.
- Didactic stories; designed to learn. The brain remembers much more when information is disguised in a story and facts do not stand alone.
- Healing stories; designed to give hope in relation to mental and physical issues.
- Children's own stories: Engaging children in producing stories empowers them; gives them a place in the world and instruments for participating.



The stories that we develop in PLACES will in varying degrees draw on the above-mentioned types of stories, but mostly on springboard stories.

In more than one sense, some of the springboard stories we will offer are merely beginnings, i.e. they will open up a world, a problem, and with the help of the learning material the pupils are to develop them further, make the ends. And at the same time, they will start a journey of another, more inclusive, way of learning.

The stories will be filmed in English, French, Greek, Danish and Italian.

Studies on the effect of storytelling often use films, books or reading from books as the story offering praxis, but we are convinced that storytelling in our definition has not only the same effect as reading etc., but also an even greater one. This greater effect among other things may be because storytelling does not require the same abilities and/or effort from the recipient/listener. Our assumption is *inter alia* based on our experiences with storytelling for hospitalized children in Copenhagen.

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/science_of_the_story

https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-05-storytelling-pain-stress-oxytocin-hospitalized.html?fbclid=IwAR0V_AAXIYiOgkpE1_q3fdVGIp79mPzputGKSCX1Axd0029u1UP-EDnUvVI

<http://fortaelletid.dk/>



The Health Promoting School (HPS) Approach

The idea of bringing the health promoting school approach into PLACES, stems from the fact, that the underlying values of the HPS, and the way that this approach understands the school as an inclusive setting for living, learning, and playing is a kind of precondition for the other three concepts to function in an optimal way. What is also relevant in relation to the introduction of the HPS approach into PLACES, is the way that health and wellbeing of the child, is understood in a holistic way covering the physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Bringing in the mental and social well-being are important factors for playful, engaging, participatory and empowering learning to flourish.



The following core values and pillars are shared within the SHE (Schools for Health in Europe Network Foundation) community to be essential building blocks for the health promoting school approach as the preconditions to create an inclusive school setting for living, learning and playing. These will be applied in - and adapted to - PLACES, as important factors for a successful implementation of the playful, participative and engaging activities that PLACES develops.

SHE Values

- **Equity.** Equal access for all to education, participation, and well-being.
- **Sustainability.** Health, education, and development are linked. Activities and programmes are implemented in a systematic way over a prolonged period.
- **Inclusion.** Diversity is celebrated. Schools are communities of learning, where all feel trusted and respected.
- **Empowerment.** All members of the school community are actively involved.
- **Democracy.** Health promoting schools are based on democratic values.

SHE Pillars

- **Whole school approach to sustainability.** Combine education about sustainability in – or outside - the classroom with development of school policies, the school environment, life competencies and involving the whole school community.
- **Participation.** A sense of ownership by students, staff, and parents.
- **School quality.** Health promoting schools create better teaching and learning processes and outcomes. Healthy students learn better; healthy staff works better.
- **Evidence.** Development of new approaches and practices based on existing and emerging research.
- **School and community.** Schools are seen as active agents for community development.

The SHE community has developed different kind of school management- and teacher resources, that can be used to create a health promoting school. In the ERASMUS + project “SHE4AHA” a pixie version of the school manual has been developed, which can give a quick introduction to the HPS approach and the proposed implementation model.

Link to SHE4AHA www.healththroughoutlife.eu

Link to SHE website, where the original values and pillars can be consulted www.schoolsforhealth.org



Conclusion

As described in the beginning of this conceptual paper, PLACES will develop a didactic learning design and teaching material, that uses the four concepts and approaches that have been presented in this paper, which is one of the innovative aspects of PLACES, as they have not been brought together in this way before.

PLACES wishes to make more structural changes in relation to how schools can work actively and engaged with the SDGs, at the same time as the project, through the SDGs as a subject matter, wants to show how schools can introduce a learning design that stimulates playful learning, engagement and action competences. The long-term objective of PLACES is thus to create diversified teaching, better learning, more engaged pupils, less dropouts, and more active citizens.



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