



CHILDREN IN PERMACULTURE

Appendix to Manual

Inspiring Others

2018

Children in Permaculture (CiP) is an Erasmus+ project in which seven European organisations are working together to improve the education of children in formal, informal and non-formal settings through the development of resources such as case studies, curricula, session plans, films and other resources. These resources will enable kindergarten and school teachers, permaculture practitioners, parents and other educators to engage in holistic, sustainable education with children based on permaculture ethics and principles.

Project Partner Organisations



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The value and impact of a good project is amplified by sharing it with a wider community. After investing a great deal of energy in a beautiful permaculture project with children, it is worthwhile to take a few extra steps so that not only the children that participate directly, but also other educators, parents and policy-makers can benefit. This chapter gives inspiration, tips and ideas about what actions could be done to get the most out of a children's permaculture project (most suggestions could easily be adapted to other types of projects).

Before starting, a brief explanation about the terms used here could be useful:

- Visibility is about whether outside people see or hear about the project. This can be increased through for example, promotion, raising the project's profile, marketing, image building, media presence, logos, visual identity etc.
- Dissemination is about spreading the results of the project widely through the local community and communities of interest (e.g. permaculture, education etc.). This can be done through, for example: mailing lists, presenting results, launching products, distributing leaflets etc.

Improving dissemination and visibility is about increasing the value of the group's efforts to make the limited resources (work, time, money, etc.) go as far as possible, using the experiences and results of the project in a multitude of different contexts and to harvest the most possible opportunities for change out of the project. It is an expression of the permaculture principle "Obtain a yield" and the ethic of "Fair share."

David Holmgren's 12 permaculture principles are used here as a framework for creating and organising a dissemination strategy.

1. Observe and Interact

Think before you act.



Before starting dissemination work, find out who the audience is, where they go, what media they prefer etc. Ask key stakeholders and everyone in the organisation (for example the headteacher, teachers, children, parents) what they would like to see, what resources, networks and skills they have. Then it will be possible to adapt the message and dissemination actions to the target group, taking into account the project's strengths and weaknesses, as well as possible opportunities and constraints.

Asking the following questions in this order, could help to plan the implementation of the dissemination activities:

1. What is the main aim of dissemination? Who could benefit?
2. What are the likely results (e.g. publication, policy recommendations, learning)?
3. Who is the main target audience for the dissemination, and who else could benefit too? (e.g. teachers, local politicians, the mayor, policy makers)?
4. What dissemination action could be done (e.g. open day for teachers, speak to the town council)?

5. What kind of message, or action does the target group need, in what timing and format (e.g. a factual message, articles, event with media involved)?
6. What would be needed to be able to spread such a message (e.g. pictures, videos, recommendations)? Who will do it (e.g. photographer, video maker, journalist)?

2. Catch and Store Energy

You have more resources than you think.



Looking carefully at the different elements and stages of the project, notice that many resources are already on board that can make it easier to disseminate the results of the project. “Make hay while the sun shines!” planning the project from the start to make dissemination much easier.

Make sure there is always someone in charge of taking pictures or filming while the activities are carried out. Photographs and videos are valuable resources that can be used in many ways in the future - for promotion (leaflets, posters, websites etc.), presentations, articles, funders and more.

It is a good habit to sort out photos and videos in an organised way immediately following each event so that they are easy to find when needed.

Check what skills and passions are available within the organisation(s). Some people could be skilled in computing or social media, others may be talented in drawing or photography, someone may excel at writing articles etc. The competences already available within a group of people can be surprising!

3. Obtain a Yield

Improve the reputation and recognition of the project



There are lots of yields possible in a project, such as learning, fun, healing, money, food etc. Measuring these benefits, then disseminating the results to colleagues, other schools/organisations, and the wider community can help the project and/or individuals to receive support socially, financially and physically in the future.

The yields of dissemination can be measured both quantitatively, in the number of people reached, and qualitatively, showing the depth of the audience’s learning. For example, ‘50,000 viewers on the website’ is different to ‘12 people attended a two-day workshop’. All of this dissemination work will lead to raising the profile of the organisation, project and/or activities.

4. Apply Self-Regulation and Accept Feedback

Receive feedback from all people and in many different ways and improve systems for the future.



Feedback can be received in many different ways, such as:

- Statistics of websites can demonstrate which pages are popular, where links have come from and more;
- On social media the number of 'likes' and 'shares' can help decipher which posts are popular and the audience can be researched;
- Questionnaires can be handed out at events and sent out using the internet (emails, websites etc.);
- Staff meetings can be used to discuss dissemination strategies and receive direct feedback and new ideas;
- Registration forms can ask where participants heard about the project;
- Asking people informally how they heard about the project or event.

The dissemination strategy and systems can be improved based on this feedback.

Promoting activities and results in different media or at relevant meetings, means that the people involved in the project will be proud of their achievements, and happier in their work.

When creating a product, ask the target group(s) to test it and offer their feedback. For example, before starting to publish hundreds or thousands of copies of something which may not be understandable or usable, submit a draft for feedback to some people in the target group and collect their in-depth feedback.

5. Use and Value Renewable Resources and Services

Do more with limited resources



Time, money and energy are always limited resources. With a relatively little time and energy into disseminating the project's results, the impact and results can be increased further. Thus the group's work becomes more efficient and effective.

Optimise the use of the existing communication instruments that you have easy access to (and often don't cost extra). Some suggestions are: the kindergarten or school's newsletter/website/social media, an electronic mailing list (sending a group email), a newsletter for members, add the project in activity-calendar on thematic websites, work in partnership with other local groups with different or wider distribution channels, write articles for different newsletters, and/or invite the local press.

To create a low maintenance system, think of a strategy, in which people disseminate the topic and the project "by themselves", without your constant input. For instance, post results of the activities on social networks and offer platforms to discuss education. Ask open-ended questions about that topic

or relate interesting episodes that happened during the activities, to attract interest so that people then share the posts, and discuss them in other forums etc.

6. Produce No Waste

Generate savings from not 're-inventing the wheel'



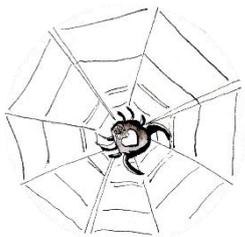
Base new projects on the results of similar previous projects, adapting them to the current and local needs and context, as this will reduce the workload and avoid making the same mistakes.

Keep a list of people who must be included in dissemination activities (e.g. policy makers, funders) and decide how much information is necessary for which audience. Leaflets, products, booklets, reports, powerpoints, etc can all be useful for different audiences. Bear in mind that if too many resources are distributed, then the resources may go to waste (or to the recycling bin at best).

Focus your energy and time, instead of investing in random directions. Survey the most effective media, groups, networks that can attract people potentially interested in the project. For example don't waste time and money in printing hundreds of fancy flyers if the main audience mostly uses email and social networks.

7. Design from Patterns to Details

Keep in mind the big picture



Ensure that the project is not a one-off activity, but rather that the experience is used for new projects, continued learning, influencing policy, etc. This way the project results will last longer and benefit more people.

Feed the policy process. Communicate the project results to policy-makers, providing them regularly with experience-based information and recommendations from the projects (so-called 'mainstreaming') to help influence educational policy.

8. Integrate Rather Than Segregate

Create spin-off effects.



As well as the main target group, there are lots of people involved with the project: the school board, parents, grandparents, neighbours, friends, local authorities, community, shopkeepers, community councils, gardeners, janitors, charities, the press. Involve all of them for more impact.

When taking part in festivals, conferences, public events and speeches always remember to integrate explanatory materials about the project and approach in order to stack functions.

9. Slow and Small Solutions

Do only as much as you can handle.



Focus first on the main dissemination goal, and thus the target audience. Start focusing on the project itself – the participants of the project, the organisations involved, the local community and partner organisations directly linked to the project. Only then, move further out to target the sector more widely such as other organisations active in the educational sector. Finally, can consider impact at a national, European, or international level feeding policy developments.

It is possible to impact on any of these levels, just keep in mind one of the key guidelines from Bill Mollison's Permaculture Designers Manual - 'start small, get it under control and then slowly expand the perimeter'.

10. Use and Value Diversity

Understand and include what is different.



Find out the different target audience's preferred means and style of communication and target messages and media accordingly. Are there times that are better or worse for contacting the target group (e.g. holiday periods, elections, linked events in media, etc.)? Use a communication style appropriate to this audience, e.g. use informal and funny communication to target children and families, and more professional language when communicating with teachers, policy-makers, academics etc.

Diverse communication styles will reach diverse audiences, and thus dissemination will be greater.

11. Use Edge and Value the Marginal

Opportunities hide where least expected.



There are many different edges to consider during dissemination. Think about not just the obvious potential partners, but also some of the more marginalised people in the community, for example, the parents of disadvantaged children, those who cannot read, or those who do not speak the national language.

To find new places to disseminate, consider places which are not directly connected to ecological education such as churches, children's bookshops, toy shop, playgrounds, and sport and music clubs.

It is easy to show and disseminate concrete tangible products (e.g. through making a video or a book). But often most of the results from educational projects are intangible or invisible (e.g. learning, approaches, network, policy recommendations, etc.). The challenge lies not so much in working more towards tangible products, but in making the invisible results from projects visible, so that they can be

shared with others. As mentioned above, this can be measured through feedback, quantitative research and/or qualitative research. Other suggestions to document the intangible results include: giving certificates, documenting life stories, collecting testimonials, distributing self-assessment activities, photographing or videoing the activities, writing up the methods used, writing educational conclusions or recommendations, making a bibliography or webography of the resources used etc.

12. Creatively Use and Respond to Change

Find the positive in the unexpected.



It is natural that things change over time, organisations come and go, people change email addresses, people change jobs and roles in organisations, so make sure that all systems (e.g. mailing lists) can adapt to these changes. Keep an eye out for new places to disseminate results (e.g. new newspapers, new social media channels, new organisations). Keep adapting the methods and styles of communication, and tuning them to the audience.