Diane Hendrick ● Ursula Schwendenwein ● Rüdiger Teutsch

Peace Education and Conflict Resolution

Handbook for School-based Projects

"Peace is a value to be acquired and acquisition of values involves interaction between intellectual and emotional development of the child. The processes of thinking: knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation must be co-ordinated with the affective component. In the subconscious of the student are impulses, attitudes and values that give direction and quality to action."

MOLLY FERNANDES

ST. JOHN'S HIGH SCHOOL

BOMBAY, INDIA

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Vorwort

Im Jahr 1994 wurden auf Initiative des BMUK die ersten Planungsgespräche für ein internationales Schulnetzwerk zum Thema "PE&CR" geführt. Zum damaligen Zeitpunkt war die bewußte Auseinandersetzung mit Konfliktbearbeitungsstrategien weder in der Gesellschaft noch in den Schulen ein wichtiges Thema. Dies hat sich inzwischen grundlegend geändert. Wie die Projekterfahrungen gezeigt haben, war die Arbeit an Konflikten ein bereits überfälliges Thema. Überall, wo Menschen miteinander zu tun haben, können Konfliktsituationen auftreten. Auch bei dieser Arbeit war es jedoch symptomatisch, daß viele Beteiligte zunächst der Ansicht waren, es gäbe ,eigentlich' in ihrem Bereich keine ,wirklichen' Konflikte. Und daß einige Zeit der Projektarbeit damit verbracht wurde, solche sie selbst betreffende Konflikte zu identifizieren und zu beschreiben.

Konflikte binden viel Energie, vergeuden Ressourcen. Auch wenn sie nicht wahrgenommen werden, beeinträchtigen sie menschliches Zusammenleben. Daß das Thema Konfliktbearbeitung in den letzten Jahren populär geworden ist, man allgemein die Wichtigkeit dieses Themas erkannt hat, dazu hat auch dieses Projekt seinen Beitrag geleistet.

Konflikte wird es immer geben. Sie können auch ein Motor für die menschliche Entwicklung sein. Um dieses Potential zu realisieren, bedarf es allerdings der konstruktiven, gewaltfreien Auseinandersetzung mit ihnen. Sich in der Schule in Form eines Projektes damit auseinander zu setzen, ermöglicht ein Training für den Ernstfall, ob in der Familie, in der Schule oder im Arbeitsleben. Ursachen von Konflikten auf den Grund zu gehen, ist die Basis für persönliche Veränderung, aber auch für die Veränderung gesellschaftlicher Strukturen.

Wesentlich bei diesem internationalen Pilotprojekt war auch die interkulturelle Zusammenarbeit. Sie ermöglichte den Projektteilnehmern Einblick in kulturabhängige Konflikte und Lösungsansätze und war ein wertvoller Spiegel für eigenes Handeln. Ein zusätzliches Lernelement bot hier die Kommunikationssprache Englisch für alle Schulen.

In allen beteiligten Schulen hat sich gezeigt, daß, wenn es gelingt, das kreative Potential von Konflikten zu aktivieren, dies für alle eine sehr bereichernde Erfahrung und ein wertvoller Beitrag zur Persönlichkeitsentwicklung ist. Daß sich das Projekt in so positiver Weise entwickelte, ist sicher auch auf die kompetente Konzeption, Anleitung und Betreuung durch das Leitungsteam des Interkulturellen Zentrums in Wien zurückzuführen. Ihm und allen Beteiligten möchte ich an dieser Stelle für alles danken, was zu einem so positiven Gelingen dieser weltweiten Zusammenarbeit geführt hat.

Mögen sich viele SchülerInnen und Lehrkräfte von den hier dargestellten Modellen anregen lassen, selbst so ein Projekt durchzuführen. Die vorliegende Broschüre und noch weitere Materialien sollen dafür eine Hilfe sein.

Mag. Josef Neumüller
Ministerium für Unterricht und kulturelle Angelegenheiten
Leiter der Abteilung für Internationale Beziehungen

Preface

In 1994, at the initiative of the Federal Ministry of Education and the Arts, a series of planning meetings for the development of an international school network dealing with "PE&CR" were held. At that time, strategies for handling conflicts were not an important topic, neither in the society at large nor in schools. In the meantime the situation has changed fundamentally.

Experience in the project showed that work on conflicts had been long overdue. Situations of conflict may arise wherever people interact. Yet those involved in the project work typically claimed that there were 'actually' no 'real' conflicts within their field of activity. Consequently, time had to be dedicated initially to identifying and describing the conflicts affecting the individual participants.

Conflicts use up a lot of energy and cause resources to be squandered. Even if they are not consciously registered they impair human interaction. The present project has contributed to bringing the topic of conflict resolution to the fore, and to the recognition of its general importance.

There will always be conflicts. They can be a motor for human development. However, in order to realize this potential a constructive, non-violent way of handling conflicts is necessary. Dealing with conflicts at school within the framework of projects offers the opportunity to prepare for more serious situations, be it within the family, at school or in the world of work. Fathoming the causes of conflict is the basis for personal change, but also for changes in the societal structure.

Intercultural cooperation was a crucial element in this international pilot project. Through this cooperation the participants gained insight into culture-related conflicts and possible solutions and were motivated to reflect on their own actions. An additional element of the learning experience was the use of English for inter-school communication.

At all the schools involved it was found that if the creative potential of conflicts can be activated everyone can derive valuable experience from it and benefit in terms of personal development. The project's favourable development is certainly due to the competent project design, preparation and guidance by the management team of the Intercultural Centre in Vienna. I should like to use this opportunity to thank them, as well as everyone else involved, for their contribution to the positive outcome of this worldwide cooperation.

May the models described stimulate many pupils and teachers to start their own projects. This brochure, as well as additional related material, is meant to support them in this task.

Mag. Josef Neumüller
Ministry of Education
Head of Dept. of International Relations

Introduction

This handbook about project-work on peace education and conflict resolution in schools is based on the experiences of the International School Network: Peace Education and Conflict Resolution from 1994 - 1998. This initiative of the Austrian Ministry of Education, specifically the Department for International Relations and Exchanges, brought together more than 1200 students and some 60 teachers from Rosario (Argentina), Bunbury (Australia), Graz (Austria), Vienna (Austria), Tamsweg (Austria), Szolnok (Hungary), Bombay (India), Skopje (FYROM), Geldrop (the Netherlands), Lagos (Nigeria), Bratislava (Slovakia), Bermeo (Spain, the Basque Country.), Bristol (United Kingdom) and Kennebunk (USA).

The aims of the Network were to create an international community of researchers, to learn skills of conflict analysis and conflict resolution, to learn research skills, to co-operate across cultures to resolve conflicts, to gain insight into different possibilities for conflict resolution in different settings and cultures and to make a contribution to the theory and practice of conflict resolution.

The tasks of the involved teachers and students were to raise the awareness of problems and conflict areas in their school environment, to identify concrete conflicts and to analyse the situation, the b ehaviour and the attitudes of the involved people or parties. Finally the students and their teachers worked out proposals of conflict resolution and acted as mediators.

The students and teachers not only exchanged information about their school system, the cultural background and everyday life but focused very strongly on the topic of conflict. Various methodological approaches to identify conflicts (e.g. action research, questionnaires, interviews, observation, taking photos, etc.) was introduced and discussed with the linked schools in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and North- and South-America.

The project was accompanied by three international training seminars for the teachers co-ordinating the projects in the schools all over the world. These seminars supported the teachers in planning their conflict resolution project according to the work-phases "introduction", "awareness", "analysis", "dealing with conflicts" and "evaluation". The teachers also acquired skills of action research, prepared the structure of international communication (e-mail, fax, letters, videos) and became familiar with various aspects of society, culture and history of their partner schools. An international team of trainers and researchers planned and organised the project and carried out a study about the personal development of students and teachers as well as the changes of the school organisation as a result of the conflict resolution project.

We are convinced that projects cannot be reproduced and teachers and students who want to deal with conflicts at school have to find their own approach according to the specific environment of their school. But we hope that this resource book will stimulate your ideas and provide you with experiences and practical help.

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Intercultural Centre, Vienna (Austria)

Vienna, September1998

What is "conflict"?

- conflict is not negative - not conflict suppression or avoidance

- constructive ways to handle conflict need to be found - conflict situation, behaviour, attitudes

- objective and subjective elements

- dynamics

- interests/positions, values, needs, fears

- conflict identification, analysis, constructive approaches:

- basis for constructive conflict handling: self-esteem, communication skills, reflection skills, analysis skills, creative thinking, problem-solving orientation or third party intervention e.g. mediation -

- reconciliation processes - re-establishing of relationships and

- development of conflict prevention approaches including techniques, structures, institutions - attitudes as well as behaviours - development of a culture of peace - conflict transformation

The word conflict conjures up associations of tension, disruption, and violence with the expectation of anything from uncomfortable to life-threatening situations. From such a perspective conflict is something to be avoided or even suppressed. However, there is another side to - the bringing of a unjust situation to the surface or public arena, the stimulation to look for creative solutions and the challenging of outmoded ideas and patterns of thinking. In this way conflict can be a spur to creativity and development and can lead to a higher synthesis beyond contending views or positions. So conflict in itself is not to be eliminated but ways need to be developed to handle conflict which liberate its creative potential and curtail its destructive manifestations.

A common definition of conflict in the literature on conflict analysis is a situation in which two or more individuals or groups perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals. C. R. Mitchell puts forward a composite definition of conflict which is analytically useful. He distinguishes between: the conflict situation; conflict behaviour; and conflict attitudes and perceptions. Each of these aspects of conflict are interacting and affecting each other shaping the development of the conflict.

Conflicts can be seen as possessing objective and subjective elements. By objective is meant the basis for the conflict situation in terms of competition for resources or positions e.g. positions of power or control, land, oil, budgets, etc. The subjective elements are those attitudes and perceptions which may have a role in determining the course of the conflict and are in turn affected by behaviour in the course of the conflict e.g. feelings about and perceptions (or misperceptions) of the opponent or other conflict party. Conflicts are most often a mix of these two elements and it is generally agreed that the subjective elements seldom cause conflict without some objective basis.. Mitchell formulates the relationship between the objective and subjective elements of conflict thus: 'While a conflict may be objective at a particular point in time, changes in the parties' objectives,

preferences, evaluations, and calculations that occur over a period of time render it a changeable and hence an intensely subjective phenomenon. conflict may be described as subjective, then, in the sense that changes occur within the parties themselves (and in their orientations to the dispute forming par of their environment), rather than in the 'objective' situation external to them from which the originally mutually incompatible goals arose.' These subjective aspects play an increasingly important role the longer the conflict continues to the extent that they may constitute the major obstacle to reaching an amelioration or resolution of the conflict. Therefore, it is not sufficient to deal with the objective base of the conflict situation but also to deal with the perceptions and feelings of the conflict parties in order to have a hope of reaching a resolution of the conflict.

Conflicts are not static but possess their own dynamics including spirals of escalation and de-escalation. By observing and reviewing conflicts it is possible to identify phases and turning points in their development which form a general pattern. This is a useful exercises for awareness raising and sensitizing oneself to the consequences of one's action or behaviour in a conflict situation. It can also form the basis for an understanding of what type of approaches or interventions are appropriate at particular stages of a conflict.

In addition to the elements and dynamics of the conflict are the levels at which the conflict can be addressed. Once a conflict situation has arisen conflict parties tend to present their positions (or to represent their interests) i.e. what they wish to gain or achieve. However, these are the result of a combination of factors - emotional attachments, calculations of advantage, hard bargaining stances - which can be altered in the course of a negotiation or mediation process. At a deeper level are the needs of the individuals or groups involved and it is necessary to probe beyond the level of positions to discover what are the real needs that lie behind them. Only by seeking solutions at this level (where the sources of the conflict can be found) can a lasting resolution be found. Values, whether ideological, moral, religious or other, also play a role in conflict. Where there is a value-based conflict it is likely to be much more difficult to resolve as values are part of the core identity of the person and are not to be bargained away in a negotiation process. It is also important to try to understand the fears of the conflict parties which may be fuelling the conflict or forming an insuperable barrier to resolution and seek to respond to them in the search for solutions.

In some situations conflict is latent. It has not yet come to the surface or it has not been recognized. The identification and acknowledgement of conflict is the first step in handling it. An analysis of the conflict including the conflict situation, identification of the parties to the conflict, the issues involved at the level of positions and needs and the development of the conflict so far should be undertaken. On the basis of such an analysis constructive approaches for handling the situation can be developed.

We all face conflicts and handle them the best way we can when they arise but training can help us to be more effective and constructive in our approaches. Through a combination of increased self-awareness and skills training we can learn to be more effective agents of conflict transformation or possibly even make useful interventions in conflicts in which we are not directly involved. A training for constructive conflict handling would include:

- *strengthening self esteem* - a feeling of low self-worth or helplessness on the part of an individual or a group can lead to inappropriate passive or aggressive responses to conflicts which serve to maintain the status quo or even exacerbate the conflict.

- *developing reflection skills* - developing an ability to reflect on one's own strengths and weaknesses, examine one's motivations and behaviour in a critical light with a view to learning from experience.

- *improving communication skills* - training in the skills of listening and assertiveness, and developing the ability to empathize. This is necessary to minimize misunderstanding, to clearly express thoughts and feelings and to be able to work together towards solutions.

- *sharpening analytical skills* - necessary for a clear understanding of the conflict.

- *stimulating creative thinking and encouraging a problem-solving orientation* - necessary in seeking alternative solutions that take into account the needs of all parties involved

- In addition there may be the need for external intervention in the form of a *mediator*. The same basis of training is required for a mediator in order for s/he to be able to carry out the tasks effectively.

Even after a conflict has been resolved there may often be damage left behind physical and/or psychological. The post conflict period is characterized by work for reconstruction and reconciliation including the healing of psychological wounds and the re-establishment of relationships (and possibly the re-building of structures and institutions). Ideally post conflict action should at the same time be conflict prevention action. When conflicts are not seen as isolated incidents to which one seeks resolution, when they are not seen as an aberration from the norm, then one can begin to speak of processes of conflict transformation where the handling of a particular conflict broadens to include a conflict prevention perspective. Such a perspective seeks to establish procedures and institutions, but also attitudes and behaviour, which will allow any re-occurrence of the conflict, or any new conflicts that develop, to be handled in a constructive and co-operative way. In conflict transformation the aim is a broader based change in the social and political reality.

Work at the school level can begin the consciousness-raising process with regard to conflict and the formation of skills and attitudes conducive to the constructive handling of conflict and, in the longer term, contribute to conflict transformation and peacebuilding on a broader social scale. The PECR project illustrates the way that some schools around the world have already taken small steps in this direction.

Project Work

Aims of project work

In general the term "project" is used to describe a framework for a teachers-students co-operation that is based on the individual and social needs of the persons involved as well as the requirements of the society they live in. The main aim is to bridge the gap between "learning for school" and "learning for life". Education should provide relevant knowledge and applicable skills for the students and enable them to participate as responsible members of a modern democratic society.

In other terms project work

- supports co-operation, helps to establish co-operative structures rather than competition between students;

- aims at relevant knowledge and skills that can be applied in everyday life;

- combines cognitive, affective and the motor dimension of learning;

- tries to build on and make use of individual skills and competences of the students;

- relates school to out-of-school life;

- motivates to start cross-curricular activities;

- stimulates motivation of both students and teachers;

- contributes to a continuous development of the school organisation, ...

Structure of project work

Project work is based on a new understanding of the relationship between teachers and students. It is not any longer the teachers' responsiblity to plan the educational process in general, to give theoretical inputs, to correct homework, to evaluate tests or to discipline students. Teachers and students are partners in education. Inspite of the fact that the specific knowledge and various skills of the teachers might - in many cases - be more developed, the characteristics of the social relationship between students and teachers should be equality and mutual respect.

While the topic itself is determined by the framework of the curriculum, the theme as well as the methods of planning, collecting, analyzing and evaluating data should be chosen in co-operation by teachers and students. Project work focuses on the interests and needs of the students in order to keep their motivation high and to share the responsibility for the learning process between teachers and students.

The setting of project work is different to traditional lessons. Instead of the teacher on the one hand "giving" and the students on the other hand "receiving", the work is carried out in small groups which can structure the internal communication themselves.

A very important aim of project work is the development of management skills. This means in particular that students learn to plan the project in a co-operative way. Negotiations take place in students groups to find out which one of the different proposals put forward by the group-members seems to lead to the most satisfying results. During this democratic discourse emphasis is put on the persuasive power of ideas and arguments. Besides planning the management of a project needs the distribution of tasks and responsibilities among the group members. Finally, information has to be collected, tested and summarised, which again supports the improvement of management skills.

In order to develop strategies to achieve good results, or even to find solutions to existing problems it is necessary to cross the traditional borders between subjects and to make use of the advantages of interdisciplinary approaches.

Another aspect of project work is in the involvement of various senses. In order to analyse a specific phenomenon it is important to look, to listen, to touch and sometimes also to smell. In this way a subtly diversified awareness can be risen that goes far beyond a theoretical insight into facts.

All this of course definitely changes the role of the teacher. Rather than providing theoretical inputs it is much more important to help students to structure their planning and decision-making processes, to raise the awareness of the social dimension of communication and to support the application of new methods and techniques.

Phases of project work

In practice the methodology of project work follows certain phases:

1. In the **beginning** time has to be spent to define the project idea. Teachers and students should intensively discuss the focus of the project and finally reach an agreement on a project theme.

2. As a second step the **main objectives** of the project have to be established. Planning stands for the analysis of available resources of information, the means to get access to useful data, the distribution of responsiblities among the group members, the development of a work-plan and time schedule, and the timing and form of ongoing and final evaluation.

3. Having clarified the framework in which the project can be carried out the group prepares for the **practical work**. Relevant information often cannot be found in the classroom, so the students' groups have to go to libraries, meet experts, interview people in public places, observe certain areas of the environment, visit companies, etc. During this phase substantial information is recorded in written form, documented by means of tape-recorder or video, etc.

4. If necessary, **interim reflections** help to overcome problems and stimulate students to try out different approaches. Sometimes it becomes the task of the teachers to provide emotional security and to support the development of self-esteem.

5. A very important phase is the **analysis** of the collected information. Selection and structure of data and the verification of the initially developed hypothesis are the key issues of the analytic process.

6. Finally the **results** need to be presented in a proper way. Depending on the audience and the aims of the project different ways can be chosen: newsletter, video-presentation, edition of a survey, role-play or drama, exhibition etc. could serve the purpose.

7. In order to reflect the quality of the educational process an **evaluation** should be carried out. The topic of this evaluation is the educational interaction in general rather than the knowledge and the skills students have acquired.

Dealing with conflicts - step by step

Phase 1: Introduction
During this phase the teachers established and motivated groups at their schools, asked colleagues for co-operation, introduced the project to the parents of their students and prepared an individual work-plan.

Phase 2: Awareness
As a result of the introduction phase the teachers realised that there is hardly any awareness of everyday conflicts in school. Therefore it was necessary to raise the sensitivity for problems or conflict areas. The groups then worked on the topic "personal identity" and trained communication skills in order to feel safe enough to break taboos and to deal with conflicts.

Phase 3: Analysis
having developed a certain stability in the group, students chose different ways to identify conflict areas in their school environment. A worksheet to analyse conflicts given by the project coordinators helped the groups to identify the social structure of the conflicts that occur in their classes.

Phase 4: Dealing with conflicts
According to the type of conflict and the people involved in it the students chose different strategies to deal with the conflict. Approaches of conflict resolution like "mediation" were tried out. In most cases the students were successful, some of the conflicts could not be solved immediately because they needed more attention from all concerned.

Phase 5: Evaluation
In order to evaluate the project in a thorough way teachers and students together reflected on the process and the results.

Getting started

Preparation of the teacher

Before starting to teach the students conflict management training the teacher has to be trained in basic communication and conflict management skills. Reading about conflict skills, methods and ideas is not a sufficient base on which to build the project.

Teaching young people about conflicts and helping them to understand something of the complexity of peace processes, cannot be done by providing cognitive knowledge of conflicts and conflict resolution alone, especially when the conflicts they are dealing with are rooted in their own experience. Since in "normal" situations children are seldom confronted with world wide conflicts, peace education has to use other conflicts, which can be recognized by them. To be effective peace education has to go beyond the present conflict, to offer pupils a better and farther reaching understanding of conflict in general, both at the micro level of personal life and the macro level of political interaction. This understanding includes all levels of human knowledge:

- the affective level which contains the domain of values, norms, intuitions:

- the cognitive level which contains knowledge, insight, analysis and integration

- the practical level which includes action and skills

So peace education in practice tries to elaborate a sensitivity for „peace values" such as non-violence, social justice, tolerance for other groups (cultural, religious, etc.) and responsibility for a humane future.

Terminology

Before introducing the project to the school teachers should think of the terminology they will use to present the project. "Peace Education" has different meanings in different countries and the connotations of this term for some are not always helpful when starting a project and looking for partners.

The word conflict" is not always appreciated by teachers and students. In some cultures "teachers do not to have conflicts" because having conflicts would be seen as a lack of expertise. The experiences in the School Network Peace Education and Conflict Resolution rather recommend to use words like „mediation training" or „improvement of communication", "training of social skills" or „initiative to improve the relation between teachers, students and parents".

Co-operation with colleagues

There are many reasons for developing a team of teachers to co-operate on a conflict management project at school. Working with conflicts can be very demanding because teachers often are involved in school conflicts themselves or may become so during the project. For example, When students start to realise that blaming several teachers, other students or their own parents is not a

successful way of solving problems they might become frustrated and aggressive towards the teacher who, at that point becomes a „conflict partner"

Mutual feedback, on-going reflection in the team of teachers or an external supervisor have proved to be valuable means of enhancing the learning process and developing the quality of teaching. An additional advantage of co-operation with colleagues is the involvement of different subject areas which can provide a broader access to the topic.

Informing the staff

Conflict management projects should not be left with teachers of foreign language or religious instruction, only even subjects like mathematics or chemistry may contribute to the project.

Since a conflict management project might have strong implications for the development of the school as a whole colleagues should be aware of new ways of communication and interaction or possible changes of the students' attitudes and behaviour that might also affect their lessons.

Examples:

- Mireija Uranga (teacher at Benito Barrueta High School, Basque Country):

  „I had a meeting with all teachers. I presented the project and answered all the questions they had. As you saw in my first report, many of the conflicts we are analyzing have to do with teachers, therefore, I wanted to warn them about the possibility of having students interviewing them or trying to talk about a conflict. I wanted to know the personal reaction of each teacher, regardless of whether they got involved and I asked them to answer some questions. I passed a sheet with these questions:

  1. What do you think about the project ?

  (Interesting/useless/negative/ anything else)

  2. Would you like to take part ?

  (No/ yes, but I can´t/yes/anything else)

  3. How would you like to participate ?

  (Get my students involved/Offer my experiences)

- Ilona Mrena (teacher at Varga Katalin Gimnazium Szolnok, Hungary)

  „I invited my colleagues who teach my class in order to participate in a workshop. The aims of the workshop were: practise active listening, building close relationships between pupils and teachers and finding our „project - subject."

Involvement of the headteacher

In order to receive support from the headteacher she/he has to be properly informed. Since projects dealing with conflicts might cause uncertainty and uneasiness among the staff and among students a clear agreement with the school-management is recommended. The headteacher can play an important role in processes of change by motivating all involved persons, giving permission to attend in-service teacher training activities or backing new developments concerning changes or improvement in the climate of the school. Finally, the recognition and the acceptance of the project in the whole school depends on positive feedback from the headteacher.

Example:
- Paulette Forssen (Kennebunk Middle School, USA) started with a meeting with the superintendent and the headteacher in order to clarify the legal basis of the project.

Formation of a student group

With whom do you want to work?
- with your class?
- with a class you normally don´t teach ?
- with a group of volunteers?
- with the class speakers (class representatives)?
- with a group the headmaster chooses?
- with the class which causes most of the existing conflicts?

How to present the project to the students?

The best way to start the project is to propose a start-up workshop. It is important to take enough time (at least 4 hours) to create a comfortable atmosphere, to present the philosophy of the project and a time-line. The workshop agenda should also include the generation of ideas (brainstorming, visions, etc.) about possible approaches, the exchange of expectations and the discussion of individual contributions. It was found that the development of trust within the group is a pre-condition for successful project work. Here is an idea from India:

Example:
- Autobiographical time line by Molly Fernandes, St. John's High School, Bombay, India

  Pupils create a time line of events from their own lives to see the relationship of the past to the present.

  1. Have students make lists of the most significant events in their lives, with the dates if possible with everyone´s first item being their birth: I was born on March 13, 1976 and I had a dimple; my parents named me Ram after my uncle; (birthdays of sisters or brothers, school, injury or other high point)

2. *Pupils write each item on a paper with an illustration. They staple it on a string to make a time - line. These time-line can be hung in classrooms.*

3. *Afterwards let the pupils brainstorm things they would like to do in the future and share them aloud. Teacher elicits specific details. Let them include events which will contribute to betterment of world. So that time-line includes contribution to peace or social justice.*

4. *Let each pupil write the future events in his life on paper with an illustration as he did before.*

5. *Let this time-line show the past and future events.*

6. *Let the pupils hang them around the room.*

How many groups of students?

Experiences show that the involvement of more than a single class might have a positive impact on the project. The Macedonian teacher Marija Duzevic: „*This class is the only one in this school and in Macedonia which works on Conflict Resolution. So it is hard that the other students think that these students are in a privileged position.*"

If the project is run with very mixed group of students (for example students' representatives from different years) the difficulty of finding a suitable time and place in school has to be considered.

Information of parents

Parents should be informed about conflict management projects. Therefore a meeting should be organized to present the philosophy and aims of the project.

Example:

- Jane Sleigh (Cotham Grammar School, Bristol, UK) organised an intercultural evening with parents and students. Parents, teachers and students brought food from their cultural or ethnic group, they played music and danced all together. Although she was not able to motivate all parents it was a successful evening and helped everybody to get to know each other.

Working with the class

First steps

The introduction of the project needs a warm atmosphere in which teacher/s and students feel at ease and comfortable in order to develop mutual understanding and trust. In this phase a „spirit of the project" should be achieved. Here are some ideas how to start:

- Molly Fernandes (St. John's High School, Bombay, India) initiated two teacher training activities for staff members of the primary and secondary level in order to spread the idea of the project and to train teachers to co-operate.

- Paulette Forssen (Kennebunk Middle School, USA) initiated a group of peer mediators from middle and high school which developed common rules for further co-operation.

- Erich Sammer (Sacré Coeur Graz, Austria) started with a two day extra-curricular workshop for students in order to introduce the project philosophy, to clarify expectations and to develop common aims.

- Uli Teutsch and Kurt Herlt (BRG 18 Vienna, Austria) started as a team and dealt with a psychological approach towards identity, personal needs and expectations.

- Ilona Mrena (Vardga Katalin Gimnazium Szolnok, Hungary) started with a workshop for students and teachers in order to set up a participant centred framework. They practised „active listening", tried to build a closer relationship between students and teachers, and found out their „project subject".

- Marija Duzevic (Orce Nikolov Vocational School, Macedonia) motivated students to develop a questionnaire concerning the atmosphere of the school.

    - Do you feel good in this school ?
    - Are there places in the school that you consider more pleasant then others ?
    - Are you satisfied with the atmosphere in the class ?
    - Are there situations or places that you consider frightening or embarrassing?

- Remi Olukoya (Queen's College Lagos, Nigeria) arranged a first meeting with the students to discuss their experiences with personal conflicts as well as introducing the different types of conflicts.

- Viera Wallnerova (Independent High School Bratislava, Slovakia) was confronted with a serious conflict in her class. She decided to use it as a concrete example for dealing with problems.

- Mireia Uranga Arakistain (Benito Barrueta High School Bermeo, Basque Country/Spain) started with three different groups involving seven teachers to work on fears and doubts about the project and the way to organise time and place for the common work.

Subjects to work on

After having introduced the project and set up a feasible framework (time, room, size of students-group) the work should focus on the raising of awareness for problems and the development of sensitivity for personal or social needs. The training of perception, the expression of feelings and needs contribute to the development of trust and tolerance and help to strengthen the students' identity.

There are lots of different ways to identify the conflicts students want to work on. But it is not recommended that teachers choose the conflicts for the project - the students should find them.

Here are some **examples** of conflicts on which students proposed to work:

- boys - girls conflict (Vienna/Austria)
- democracy at school (Skopje/Macedonia)
- front benchers - back benchers(Lagos/ Nigeria)
- students - teachers conflict (Bermeo/Spain, Vienna/Austria, Skopje/Macedonia)
- lack of respect (Kennebunk, USA)
- relationship between students (Tamsweg, Austria)
- competition between students (Graz/Austria)
- prejudices and stereotypes (Szolnok/Hungary)
- violence in the family, in the streets, in schools (Rosario, Argentina)

While students are concentrating on the identification of conflicts at school severe conflicts might be happening "outside": In Graz (Austria) students felt very helpless when they were informed about a racist bomb-attack against members of an ethnic minority. The students decided to research the political circumstances and work on their own feelings about the crime.

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RACIST BOMBERS KILL GIPSIES
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Four gypsy were killed and a man seriously injured in separate bomb blasts believed to be racially motivated attacks. The government condemned the incidents as attempts to destabilise democracy and damage Austria`s image abroad. The Catholic Church, trades unions and politicians from all parties said they were deeply affected by the explosions.

Conflict analysis

When analyzing conflicts the following questions may be helpful:

- *Which parties are involved in the conflict ?*

- *What are the interests of the parties which are involved ?*

- *What are the motives to start a conflict and/or to escalate it ?*

- *What are the power relations ?*

The approaches that can be used to analyse conflicts depend on the teacher's subjects as well as on the motivation, skills, ideas, interests or knowledge of the students and teachers. Here are some practical examples:

Media analysis (Argentina)

After brainstorming, pupils in Argentina voted for four major conflict areas:

– family violence

– racism and discrimination

– violence in the streets

– violence in schools

The procedure is described by Alicia Cabezudo: *"The next step was to divide in groups of interest and begin the investigation trying to read the society through newspapers. We decided to cut from the principal papers all the news that appeared about the subject. All the class cut news and photos and handed them to the responsible group."*

A graphic archive was installed and a list of people investigating the subjects was prepared. Journalists, lawyers, politicians or parents were to be interviewed. A famous Christian priest known for his work with "street-children" and problems of family violence was invited for interview.

The choice of the conflicts exemplifies the interdependence between the interest of the students and the social reality. *Alicia Cabezudo* comments that *"in Latin America the social reality is more important than individuals because of the crisis in economy and politics. The students "think that problems in school or between group members are little ones in comparison with others in the city or in the country".*

Interviews with experts (Graz/Austria)

In order to develop the understanding of the term "conflict" the project-group explored the results of the first brainstorm in co-operation with experts. One approach was a visit to the "Museum of Perception" exercising one's capabilities for smelling, tasting, observing processes of change, etc. The students were confronted *"with a view of reality which - strangely and paradoxically - seems to turn our perception upside down: in alternating exhibitions and installations of perception and awareness it is put in concrete terms that our perception and awareness does not produce an image of reality."* The students were motivated to discuss questions focusing on the construction of reality. *"Is reality just a production of our senses, our thinking and our habits? Is reality just a description, is reality a construction?"***Interview with students to find out major conflicts in school (Kennebunk, USA)**

The phase one report by Paulette Forssen, teacher of Kennebunk Middle School, describes the conflict topic selection as a multi-dimensional process. It started right after the set up of an extra-

curricular group that took part in a community-wide meeting to discuss problems of young people in Kennebunk. Looking at negative behaviour that contributes to conflicts was intended to be a positive start to think about conflicts that need to be solved.

Following this the students identified basic conflict areas in school: prejudice, lack of respect and time management. The focus of the interviews was on the issue of "respect", questions were, for example

– *"What does respect mean for you?"*

– *"Do you have conflicts in your life due to lack of respect?" or*

– *"What do you need to feel respected?".*

"As a result of these interviews with approximately 85 students outside of the project, the students determined that, indeed, lack of respect causes major conflicts in our school environment. This lack of respect was seen to extend from students to teachers, teachers to students and students among themselves" Skye Campbell and Emily Weaver, student observers of the Kennebunk group, also mention the problem they had to face while they interviewed people - they were confronted with a lack of respect against themselves as researchers.

The different drafts of the questionnaire were discussed and finally put together. A survey was taken in three classes. The main questions dealt with competition between the classes, friendships between pupils of different classes, disadvantages of classmates, climate and boys-girls conflict. Later an evaluation was made of the information compiled.

Observation of 'students'/teachers' behaviour (Bermeo/Basque Country, Spain)

The project was introduced by the Ethics-teacher Mireija Uranga Arakistain to three different groups of students:

"We decided:

1. *To spend time doing a reflection around the theory of conflict, learning about the perceptions we have about conflict, detecting the amount of positive potential (...) and providing training.*

2. *To combine the theoretical work with action research about the conflicts we have and want to solve"*

The action research approach was applied through the methodology of the "peer observation" (participant observation) in which the student researchers observe on an affective and cognitive level. It was challenging for the teacher to develop the students' ability to be personally involved and at the same time, to be objective in their observation. It was found out that students *"are not used to analyzing problems and looking for their own responsibilities. They are used to complaining and feeling that their requests will not be heard ... On the other hand teachers tend to blame students and are not ready to see themselves as part of the problem."*

The observation of student and teacher behaviour led to the identification of three major conflict areas:

1.   conflict between language-teacher and students (lack of respect)

2. punctuality (teachers take students' punctuality more serious than their own)

3. smoking (differing standards /rules for students and teachers)

Observation and documentation of conflict areas using drawings & drama sketch (Lagos/Nigeria)

The class in Lagos was prepared for the project by Mrs. Remi Olukoya. She introduced the basic theory on conflict and opportunities to deal with conflicts (settlement vs. resolution). Students were motivated to observe everyday problems in the classroom.

This led to the enumeration of conflicts between

− day students and boarders (on the sharing of cleaning responsibilities)

− efunjokej house members and members of other five houses (as a result of the suspicious first position in the last Inter-house Sports)

− front benchers - back benchers

− senior girls - teachers (treatment of junior girls, fagging)

− prefects and their classmates on the issue of discipline

After a discussion the group decided to work on the front bencher-back bencher problem. The students first described the conflict situation. They then wrote a drama sketch about it with volunteers as actors. The reflection on the role-play was guided by the following questions:

− Are there some roles that some people don't want to play?

− Are there other popular roles that everybody wants to play?

− Are there some people that do not want any role at all? Who will direct the performance?

− Does the performance give a better insight?

− Was there any effect on the former attitude? Etc.

As a second approach, in addition to the verbal attempts to analyze the situation the students devised a graphical representation of the conflict. It shows the students together with a teacher in the classroom and the usual communication of front- and back benchers is illustrated through typical actions or written sentences.

Observation and documentation of conflict areas using photos (Vienna, Austria)

A team of teachers initiated the project work at the Viennese school. During the introductory phase exercises to create awareness and sensitivity for dynamic group processes were carried out. Emphasis was also put on the topic of personal identity and mutual respect as a basis for peaceful social interaction. The selection process for the conflict topic began with discussions, in pairs, of personally experienced conflicts. Next, students were placed into groups of four and asked to bring cameras to take pictures of those places in school which the students associate with conflict or, if that was too difficult, to take photos of those areas, objects, persons and situations which are connected with peace, joy and confidence. The teachers planned to gather the results, to let the

students comment on the identified scenarios and to use both photos and stories as an important aid to the discovery of problem- or non-problem areas in the school building.

Role-play to develop understanding of conflict parties (Bombay, India)

Molly Fernandes is convinced that, "Peace is a value to be acquired and acquisition of values involves interaction between intellectual and emotional development of the child. The processes of thinking: knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation must be co-ordinated with the affective component. In the subconscious of the student are impulses, attitudes and values that give direction and quality to action." Based on this idea different approaches were followed at St. Johns School, Bombay, including parable-telling, the production of a peace journal, exercises to develop awareness or painting peace-related pictures. Various role-plays were also used to develop the understanding of personal and interpersonal conflicts.

The students of "Tagore House" presented a skit on jealousy (jealousy among brothers), "Jilak House" developed a skit the topic of unfair treatment due to the complexion of the skin, "Gandhis House" dealt with the everyday problem of watching TV and its effect on children's behaviour. The role-plays were intensively prepared and then presented to the whole school.

Field study to support the development of analytic skills (Bratislava, Slovakia)

Three groups from different grades have been involved in the conflict resolution project in Bratislava. The working method of a field study which was carried out by one of these groups, was intended to enable the students to gather data about a conflict area and to gain personal experience. During a brainstorming session the students had chosen four major topic with which they wanted to deal:

– generation problems

– homelessness

– skin-head movements

– national minorities.

The field study on homelessness motivated the 16-year-old students not only to research the reasons for the situation of homelessness but also to observe their own behaviour during the process of data collecting. For this reason the group split up into researchers and observers which furthered reflection on the cognitive and the affective dimensions of student research. A girls group developed a questionnaire to ask people in the street about their opinion on the generation gap. This group also structured their working process according to function: the team comprised reporters, observers and researchers.

Interpretation of literature to develop comprehension of own situation
(Szolnok, Hungary)

Ilona Mrena, a Hungarian language teacher, proposed an approach via literature. The class read extracts from "Tom Sawyer" by Mark Twain:

>*"...Huckleberry was cordially hated and dreaded by all the mothers of the town,*

because he was idle and lawless and vulgar and bad ... Huckleberry came and went, at his own free will. He slept on the doorsteps in fine weather and in empty hogsheads in wet; he did not have to go to school or to church, or call any being master or obey anybody ... In a word, everything that goes to make life precious that boy had ...".

The first task was to discover the different opinions of adults and children in the story and to look for judgements made without really knowing the person Huckleberry. Then the class discussed prejudices that influence modern life in Hungary (regarding non-whites, gypsies, Chinese, policemen). The students discussed the effects of prejudices in the relationship between teachers and students or among different classes at the school.

"Inner monologue" about injuries to identity (Graz/Austria)

The term "inner monologue" is used to describe personal perceptions, feelings, associations and expectations expressed in the first person in narrative form. Many examples can be drawn from literature - Arthur Schnitzler (Lieutenant Gustl), James Joyce (Ulysses, monologue of Molly Bloom), Shakespeare (Hamlet). This form allows the protagonist to gain an insight into his or her unconsciousness and to improve empathic skills.

This poetic-psychological approach was introduced, among others, at the school in Graz (Austria) to gain a better understanding of the situation that emerged through the bomb attack against the Austrian Roma minority. After the students had studied various historical and linguistic documents to increase their cognitive knowledge, they were asked to elaborate inner monologues to gain access to their emotions and to improve their empathic skills.

Poetry workshop (USA, Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia, Austria, ...)

To make use of a non-analytic approach to the exploration of the phenomenon "conflict" different project-groups used poetry writing. Students expressed their personal experiences of being hurt by someone:

"...The words I thought you'd never say to any one
came from your lips with no hesitation.
Your words were like daggers, harsh and piercing.
They rolled from your tongue and shot through my heart"
Audrey O'BRIEN, USA.

In addition to inter-personal conflicts the students also addressed feelings of fear they have to deal with within their society. A student from the Republic of Macedonia put her insecurity about the future into a poem:

"... The Sun is sparkling in my eyes
Life is war I realized
Life is war, life is love,
life is hate, life is lie
can you look through your eye?"
Aleksandra ILIEVA, Macedonia.

Conflict resolution: The home-work conflict project

The students at Cotham's Grammar School broke their project down into four areas as shown in the "spidergram" during a brainstorming session. They split into four groups, each with a different area to cover and prepared questionnaires.

Diagramm by Katy Birchenall and LYNCS, Bristol 1995

In the "parents group" students asked more than 160 adults about their opinion. The results were collected and evaluated:

– 50% of both groups (year 8, year 10) say there is sufficient home work, 50% say not!

– Parents think half an hours homework per night is too little, one hour is about right.

– The most common complaint they hear from their children about homework is that it is not explained well enough and that it is set on the wrong day.

– The students asked a question about the amount of conflict there is in the home due to homework and the results were:

Conflicts due to homework	year 8	year 10
never	9	8
frequently	45	42
occasionally	29	29

Other groups worked out questionnaires for students and teachers. The evaluation carried out by the students also included some interviews to back up the questionnaires and look at ways in which they can help solve the conflicts they had discovered.

One interesting result that emerged was that at least some teachers did not deal with homework in a proper way. They did not give clear explanations, they did not correct it, etc. In particular, the results of the group that was concerned with the teachers' attitudes and behaviour towards homework caused some troubles in the school. Teachers had not been criticised in this way before.

Since a new homework policy had just been put together in the school the students were asked for comments on the proposal. The results of the research were taken very seriously which was felt as a recognition of the valuable work done by the students. A booklet titled „HOME-WORK" was published and distributed to all parents with children at the school.

Evaluation

In any kind of project evaluation is a valuable, if not to say, vital function and where an action research approach is taken it is indispensable. Evaluation is a key part of the learning process and establishes and strengthens reflection and analysis skills and, of course, has the practical advantage that the project can be improved as it goes along by strengthening the good points, recognizing and responding to the weak points and learning from successes and mistakes. Evaluation should not only be result orientated (although a comparison of aims with results is always to be included) but should also consider processes. Evaluation can take place at a variety of levels and be on-going and/or periodic.

Action-research

In order to support a structured development of skills and competences of students and teachers elements of action-research can be introduced at the beginning of the project. Action research involves the following two levels:

The first is observation and reflection of social interactions. This research can be applied to conflicts in which students and teachers are involved as a part of the school society. It can be carried out by interviews, questionnaires, observation, photos of critical situations and places etc. For example, when groups are working on a task or discussing a topic, an observer, by noting what s/he observes and afterwards reporting this to the group, can help to make conscious processes of communication and interaction which may not be noticed by members of the group at the time. A list of questions can help to focus the observer's attention. The same questions can be distributed to group members to help them reflect on what happened within their group interaction.

Example: Observing dynamics in a group

(developed by Uli Teutsch and Kurt Herlt, BRG 18 Vienna, Austria)

1. *How was the group organised (reporter, chairperson, timekeeper, etc.)?*

2. *How was the beginning of the working process co-ordinated? Did anybody take responsibility for this? How?*

3. *Was the group clear about the task to be worked on?*

4. *Did any group members help to clarify the task ? How?*

5. *Did any group members encourage discussion? How?*

6. *Did every member of the group contribute to the discussion?*

7. *Were there strong opinions in the group? How were these expressed?*

8. *Did everyone in the group feel that they were listened to properly? If not, why not?*

9. *Were there attempts to dominate the discussion? If so, how was this done?*

10. *Which behaviour helped the group to work on the task? Why?*

11. *Which behaviour hindered the group from achieving the task? Why?*

12. *Were there tensions or conflicts within the group during the discussion? Why?*

13. *How were these handled?*

14. *Was the group brought to a common opinion or agreement consensus)? How was this done?*

The second is the reflection of personal feelings and thoughts by both teachers and students. A diary serves as one tool to reflect the personal development.

Example: Diary or reflection log

Students and teachers can maintain a log or diary which they can use throughout the whole process of conflict management. In it can be recorded thoughts, ideas, feelings, experiences which can be used as a basis for reflecting on processes. The following points on the use and value of such a diary can be presented to teachers and students:

− *This log will support reflection and communication within an action research approach.*

− *It will allow you to keep track of thoughts and ideas allowing you to see their development.*

− *You do not have to decide whether you want to share your thoughts and feelings at the time of writing but can think it over and decide what you wish to communicate to others.*

− *It is meant for your personal use only, no one else will read it and you can keep it for yourself.*

− *It should be kept separate from working notes you take during lessons or workshops.*

− *It is meant to help you remember things and is a support for evaluation.*

− *You can include thoughts and feelings both positive and negative or ideas that you might be able to use later.*

− *You can keep a record of new ideas and knowledge that you acquire or the response of others to your ideas.*

− *You can write about why something you tried worked well or did not.*

− *You can also keep a note of suggestions for the organizers to help them in their planning such as alternative approaches, or new ways of doing things.*

Internal evaluation

An internal evaluation can be carried out by the teachers who co-ordinate the project at school. A specific focus should be on the development of the students, the teachers and the school as an organisational entity. Several tools such as questionnaires, personal descriptions and discussions, can be used. Questionnaires are useful for providing individual feedback anonymously and can be used, together with other evaluation methods, at key points in the project. However, a questionnaire requires careful design. First of all there should be a clear idea of what information is required from the respondents - how detailed, how nuanced, - what purpose it is supposed to serve and how the information will be used. The form of questions - open, closed, neutrally formulated, etc. - also has to be carefully considered. An alternative to questions is to use statements and some form of indicator for the degree to which the respondent agrees or disagrees. This method was used in the questionnaire for the final evaluation of the PECR project (see below).

External evaluation

The International Network: Peace Education and Conflict Resolution was evaluated by the project management team (see: questionnaire) and the social faculty of the Utrecht University (The Netherlands). Students and experts carried out research on the experiences of the Dutch students and teachers and compared it to the developments at the schools in Bristol (England), Vienna (Austria) and Bratislava (Slovakia) . For this reason the whole process of training, conflict analysis and conflict resolution was observed by university students. If the help of an external institution is not available teachers who are not directly involved in the conflict resolution project can serve as external evaluators. In order to carry out that function colleagues should be invited to observe lessons or meetings of the project group and give feedback to the group.

The evaluation done by the project management team was based on a questionnaire which was handed out to all teachers and students. The questions focused on topics like „motivation,„ „learning by projects,„ „development of students,„ „development of teachers,„ „school-development,„ etc. The results of the questionnaire were compared between the schools in different countries as well as between teachers and students of the same school.

Example: Questionnaire
(Developed by Diane Hendrick/Rηdiger Teutsch)

1.   *It is more motivating for students to be involved in international project work than usual lessons.*

disagree   agree
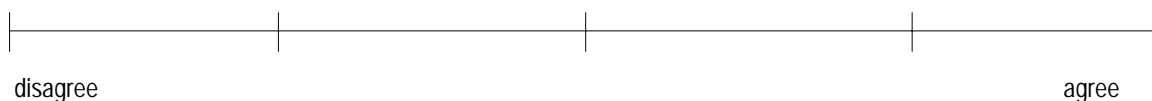
2.   *The International School Network on Peace Education and Conflict Resolution increases the student's motivation to work.*

3.   *It is difficult for students to remain engaged in a project over a long period of time.*

4.   *Students enjoy taking responsibility for planning and running this project.*

5.   *Project work is more effective than conventional teaching methods.*

6.   *Students use the skills gained through this project in everyday life.*

7.   *The awareness and understanding of conflict have allowed students to deal with problems in a more satisfying way.*

8.   *Participation of the students in this project has contributed to their deeper understanding of other cultures, respect for other peoples and fostering of peaceful relations.*

9.   *International projects are valuable even if face-to-face meetings of the students are not possible.*

10.   *It is more enjoyable for teachers to use the methodology of project work.*

11.   *Projects such as International School Network on Peace Education and Conflict Resolution promote the creativity of the teacher.*

12.   *The support of the headteacher and other colleagues is indispensable when conducting a project of this type.*

13.   *International project work brings with it additional emotional strains for the teacher.*

14.   *Co-operation with teachers from other countries enriches the life of a teacher.*

15.   *The International School Network provides a good opportunity to try out interdisciplinary ways of working.*

16.   *Action research was important in improving pedagogical interaction between teacher and class.*

17.   *The awareness and understanding of conflict have allowed teachers to deal with problems in a more satisfying way.*

18.   *The PECR project contributed to my personal development.*

19.   *Schools need more projects of this kind to further personal development.*

20.   *Using creative methods of dealing with conflict frees energy and resources for constructive purposes.*

21.   *The various skills acquired through the project have a positive impact on everyday life in the school.*

22.   *During the period of the project teachers and students have learned to see problems from the point of view of others.*

23.   *The PECR project stimulated awareness of stereotypes and prejudices.*

24.   *International communication and exchange encourage a positive attitude towards one's culture.*

25.   *What I have learned through this project is also of use in 'real life'.*

26.   *This project has led to a new understanding of teaching and education in our school.*

27.   *New forms of cooperation have been established among staff members.*

28.   *The project has created links between different classes and age groups.*

29   *Participation in this project has broadened the range of contacts outside of the school.*

30.   *This project has stimulated the involvement of parents in school matters.*

31.   *The PECR project has raised the awareness of the importance of democratic structures within the school.*

International Projects

Establishing your school project on the international level can be a highly interesting and stimulating experience. Above all the opportunities for intercultural learning and exchange are rich and varied. Such a project can help students and teachers to:

1. Gain more knowledge about their own and others' cultures

2. Increase understanding of their own and others' cultures

3. Increase tolerance for those with other lifestyles, beliefs and ideas

Communication media can be utilized in order to establish an international link between schools where the exchange of ideas and experience and co-operation on tasks and projects can take place at a distance.

Knowledge about cultures

Many avenues are opened up for exploring similarities and differences between the cultures involved in the project or network:-

- How is the issue of language handled within the school?
    - Are their minorities with specific needs?
    - Which are the foreign languages that are used?
    - Which will be the language of the project?

- How does a particular culture express itself - language, music, folklore, family life, etc.?

- How is the local culture reflected in the structure and life of the school?

- What role does religion play in society and in the school?
    - Is it an integrated part of school life?
    - Is it taught from a nominally 'neutral' or 'scientific' standpoint as in some secular schools in the West?
    - Has religion been suppressed in the past as in some post communist societies where it is now being reintroduced as part of cultural life?
    - Is the school part of a multi-cultural, multi-religion society and is this reflected in the school?

- What is the school culture?
    - What are the roles of pupils at different ages?
    - What are the roles or position of pupils vis-a-vis teachers?

- What sort of system or organization does the school possess - hierarchical, liberal, democratic, etc.?

- Is this typical of the region or country?

- What are the physical circumstances of the school - the size of class, the type of school, the timetable and school year schedule?

- To what extent are subjects such as peace and human rights integrated into the currciulum?

  - Are there other activities or groups within the schools that explore or work on such issues?

  - What sort of conflicts exist within the schools and in the societies?

  - Are they different from each other or are there commonalties?

- How is conflict understood in the society or in the school? How is it usually handled?

Who to work with?

When looking for a partner school from another country a number of factors need to be borne in mind. You may decide to make contact with schools in neighbouring countries. Perhaps it seems, on the surface, that the cultural differences between neighbouring countries are not so great. Perhaps communication links are better and it would be easier to eventually meet due to the relative proximity of the partner schools.

The attraction of forming a partnership with schools in distant countries is the greater contrast, the allure of the unknown or unfamiliar. However, while this may be more motivating initially there may be difficulties of access, perhaps of communication, which will mean that maintaining motivation may be harder in the long run.

One country or more?

Maybe your class or school is interested in making contact with a school from a different country. The exercise is seen as a bilateral exchange and learning process. Planning and preparation before establishing a partnership between classes or schools will increase the chances of getting the best out of the contact. Concentrating efforts and attention on one partner school provides the opportunity to work in more depth. Initial investigation and exploration of facets of the culture of the partner country and school, development of clear aims for the relationship and some idea of a timeframe for the exchanges and contacts between the schools, will all help to structure and maintain the partnership.

While working with one partner class or school requires organization and the delineation of clear responsibilities for those involved, working with a number of other schools will require even more time, commitment and structure. A small network of interested schools in different countries may be preferred. If the network is too big it may either reduce the sense of community or result in sub-networks developing in an ad hoc way in which only a few schools intensively communicate and co-operate (by design or default).

Some kind of structure or framework may be required to give impetus to the work of the networked schools or classes e.g. specific tasks with deadlines for completion, regular contact dates, a periodical review of activities in the network, etc. Perhaps there is some organisational structure, within or external to the network of schools which can take on organizational and informational tasks. There are already regional networks existing which may provide a starting point or a basis from which to gain experience before trying to set up a new partnership or network.

Support

Where teachers are attempting to introduce peace studies, conflict resolution or mediation into a school there may be benefits to be gained from being part of a network of schools working on these topics in terms of ideas generated as well as practical and moral support. If a teacher is working on an international project (it is possible that, as already mentioned, the topic of conflict in school raises suspicion among other teachers) then support from outside would be important for the teacher as well as the students.

Clearly having a group consisting of teachers, perhaps more than one class, etc. within a school, co-operating on such a project, has a number of advantages:

- the sharing of tasks and responsibilities
- additional support
- greater variety of ideas and talents
- a larger group who are really committed and interested in the project

There may also be external orgnizations or groups (in local or national government, NGO's, community-based organizations, etc.) who may be good sources of ideas, materials and support for teachers and students working on particular projects (e.g. on conflicts or social problems, etc.).

Some Suggestions for Activities within an International School Partnership

Presentation of class and culture
- photos
- stories,
- video and audio tapes
- drawings,
- posters, etc.

Investigation of the other culture
- literature
- poetry
- art

 – history

 – geography

 – society

 – politics, etc.

Examples:

- Ilona Mrena (Varga Katalin Gimnazium, Szolnok, Hungary) working together with a class in Hungary created a day programme on India to highlight the life and culture of the partner school in Bombay. Some other teachers and students were invited and various members of class made presentations on previously researched topics e.g. the history of India, Indian music and dance, Hungarian travellers in India, Indian religions, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Mother Theresa, etc. As well as using this event to involve other members of the school community the project group attracted local TV and Radio and some students were interviewed about the international links and activities of the school.

- In the frame-work of this project the "global classroom exercise", developed by Teutsch/Schwendenwein/Hendrick was useful:

  Here are some ideas to exchange materials with your partner/s in other countries:

  1. *Take pictures of places, where you find violence or destruction in school*

     a) students take 3 - 5 pictures

     b) teachers take 3 - 5 pictures

  2. *Take a picture of the Peace Education and Conflict Resolution Group of your school*

  3. *Record the atmosphere of your school during the break*

     - a noisy 5 minute tape

     a) in the staff room

     b) on the corridor/in the hall

  4. *Present your time-table of this school year*

     a) a teacher's week

     b) a students' week

  5. *Record two statements (2 minutes each) with teachers in your mother tongue.
     (Please give a brief summary in English)*

     - „What do you suffer from in our school?"

       „What could be different in our school?"

  6. *Record five statements of students in your mother tongue.
     (Please give a brief summary in English)*

- *„What do you dislike in your school ?"*

7. *Send a copy of a written exam in Maths*
   - *which failed / didn´t pass*
   - *which got the best mark*

8. *Ask students to write down some „unliked sentences" or proverbs they hear almost every day in school. Find those sayings yourself as well!*

9. *Find or create a „poem for peace"*

10. *Ask your students to create a poster „Visions of a peaceful life"*

11. *Give some important information about your country*

    Include the story of two historical heroes (female and male), a description of the national holiday, a famous work of a contemporary painter concerning peace, a famous pop song in your language/s.

12. *Send a surprise ....?*

Work on stereotypes and prejudice

– *Perception*

Sacre Coeur School in Graz used a visit to the Museum of Perception as an introduction to exercises and discussions on how we perceive ourselves and others

– *Stereotypes*

International contacts can be useful as a spur to the examination of prejudices and stereotypes and how they arise. One way that this can be done is by allowing the students from the schools in the partner countries to discover the stereotypes that they have about themselves and others by, for example:

- listing words which they spontaneously associate with a particular cultural group
- drawing a picture of a typical representative of that cultural group
- noting which animals or cars one would associate with the cultural group
- identifying what institution/tradition, etc. is so important to this particular cultural group that it would cause a riot if it were removed

The results can be exchanged and reactions recorded and discussed e.g. where do the images match or differ? What was found offensive or complimentary? Where do stereotypes and prejudices come from and why did they develop? How can negative and harmful stereotypes and prejudices be overcome or at least made be conscious?

These topics are obviously sensitive and the timing of exercises and discussions, according to their depth and extent, should be based on a consideration of how open and ready the students are to

explore such subjects. It may be better to begin such work on a within school basis before attempting to exchange between schools from different cultural groups. If such work is taken too deep, too soon it may result in resistance leading to a reduction in the effectiveness of the exercise or to alienation due to offence or resentment.

Exploration of feelings

At a later stage of the PECR project some students wrote accounts of incidents or developments in their lives which had been affected by the exploration of the topic of conflict and how to handle it. In these accounts they discussed their personal feelings and reflected on their experiences. This approach is valuable not only as part of a final evaluation but as part of an ongoing reflection process. The following scheme was used by Uli Teutsch and Kurt Herlt (BRG 18 Vienna, Austria) in order to observe and reflect dynamics in the classroom:

Example: Observing dynamics in a group

1. *How was the group organized (reporter, chairperson, timekeeper, etc.)?*

2. *How was the beginning of the working process co-ordinated? Did anybody take responsibility for this? How?*

3. *Was the group clear about the task to be worked on?*

4. *Did any group members help to clarify the task ? How?*

5. *Did any group members encourage discussion? How?*

6. *Did every member of the group contribute to the discussion?*

7. *Were there strong opinions in the group? How were these expressed?*

8. *Did everyone in the group feel that they were listened to properly? If not, why not?*

9. *Were there attempts to dominate the discussion? If so, how was this done?*

10. *Which behaviour helped the group to work on the task? Why?*

11. *Which behaviour hindered the group from achieving the task? Why?*

12. *Were there tensions or conflicts within the group during the discussion? Why?*

13. *How were these handled?*

14. *Was the group brought to a common opinion or agreement consensus)? How was this done?*

Work on conflict in school

– exchange information on types of conflict - similarities and differences

– request ideas for handling conflict in general

– propose ideas for handling specific conflict

– share ideas for developing skills for handling conflict - games, exercises, matrials, etc.

– work together on the same conflict - real or imagined

– share ideas and resources and experiences

− use as starting point for discussion of culture and conflict - differences in definition of conflict, ways of dealing with conflicts, etc.

For the purposes of comparison the following case-study (developed by Teutsch/Schwendenwein/ Hendrick) was used:

The most common conflict in schools is the conflict between students and teachers. This has been evidenced by the frequency with which this conflict emerged in the analysis of conflict areas within the schools in the project. Even where schools chose to work on other conflicts the tension between students and teachers was recognized during the conflict identification process. It would be of great value to draw together the experience of the International School Network to develop proposals to deal with this everyday phenomenon. For this reason, we would like to introduce a case study based on the following scenario:

> There is a class of fourteen year olds. They are taught by different teachers of differing age and experience. The class likes most of the teachers and can work and co-operate well with them. However, there are some difficulties with one particular teacher. As a result, there is a lack of discipline in class, the students make little progress in their work, the students are dissatisfied and unmotivated. The students finally complain about this situation to a teacher in whom they trust.

We would like you to do two things:

1. To develop ideas for a successful structure for communication (eg who could be involved? Is a mediator necessary? Who could be the mediator? What would be the right setting - time, place? etc)

2. What further steps would you propose to resolve the conflict? Now, use your imagination! What could be done to prevent such a conflict? Does the structure of the school system need to be changed? What would an ideal school look like, one in which understanding and mutual respect are part of the school culture?

To meet or not to meet, that is the question

When an international school partnership is set up hopes and expectations of an eventual meeting between the students (perhaps also between the teachers) may be raised. Experience has shown that international exchange and communication is possible, useful and enjoyable without having a face to face meeting. However, some feel that in terms of **motivation** a proposed meeting at some point gives stimulus and encouragement to work on the project.

There are very practical considerations of **funding** which would have to be taken into account and where there is no outside agency supporting the project or network, raising money for exchange trips or face to face encounters may be time and energy-consuming and bring little in terms of concrete results. Various possibilities are available including the usual type of fund-raising events at school fairs, small sales, raffles, etc. but these do not raise much money. Sponsorship from firms or institutions is more on the scale required but is often difficult to obtain and demands a certain investment in terms of preparation and follow through.

It may be that the **aims** of the international project or school partnership that you wish to set up would not necessarily be served by such meetings. The focus may be on intercultural exchange as an enrichment of lessons within the curriculum and within the life of the school. If these aims are made explicit to all partners in the project or network at the beginning than creativity may be harnessed to develop alternative means of motivation to generate interest and commitment to the project over time.

However, where there are significant **communication** problems between the schools the exchange of ideas, materials and experiences may prove to be erratic and unsatisfying and a face to face meeting would provide a sense of reality to the contact and relationship between the students and teachers from the different countries.

Types of meeting

− Teacher exchange - short-term or over an extended period. Such schemes exist within certain education systems.

− Teacher workshops - group meetings. Specific training or encounter groups between teachers within an international network or working on a joint project.

− Students exchange on individual level. This could be self-financed or part of an official scheme.

− Student delegation visits. A selected group travels to the partner school for a visit.

− Joint meetings/workshops. All those involved in the network or project, or representatives of those involved, meet together for exchange, encounter or specific workshops.

Difficulties that might arise - things to bear in mind

Communication

When setting up a partnership between classes or schools, or establishing a network, the type of communication means available will play a decisive role. When deciding upon the aims and timetable of the project try to be as realistic as possible and do some investigation of what is available in your own school and the school(s) with which you wish to work. Establish what is feasible. For example:

− Is e-mail available in the school? Who has access - teachers, students?

− Is there one or more fax machines in the school? Who has access? What are the costs for faxes from the countries with which you wish to work? How reliable is this type of communication in that particular country?

− Sending information and materials by post is always possible but how reliable is the postal service and how long does the post take?

− Are there differences in the school year which will require co-ordination of communication e.g. holidays at different times of the year. When are students in school to work with information received or to prepare things to exchange?

In the light of the above questions you might want to consider the need for a budget for communications and how this might be raised.

Who is responsible?

In order for a school partnership, or an international project or membership in (or creation of) a network to be effective and sustainable someone, or some group, has to be responsible. The type of organizational structure and distribution of responsibility will depend on the type of activity.

– *School level:*

The head teacher? A group of teachers? A joint student-teacher group?

– *Class level*

The teacher? A group of students? All students in the participating group or class? Will there be sub-groups in class working on specific tasks?

– *Individual level*

If there is a pen pal scheme will the initiative and responsibility be left to individuals?

Preparation

International partnerships or projects require sufficient preparation beforehand so that the quality of the contact is not too superficial. While such contacts are a learning process it is better not to start from zero but to demonstrate some cultural awareness and engagement in the process right at the beginning.

Structure and timetable

An open-ended ad hoc exchange between schools or classes may result in very little happening or in one party taking most of the burden for sustaining the interaction. In the medium- to long-run this is likely to prove frustrating and de-motivating. If a common project or specific tasks are introduced this will give more focus and coherence to the work. Establishing agreed deadlines for pieces of work or exchange of information also encourages responsibility.

Stimulation and motivation

It is likely that the initial stages of an international project or partnership will be marked by enthusiasm and engagement on the part of the participants. Naturally if this relationship is to be maintained some means of sustaining the interest and involvement of the students and teachers will be required. Times of celebration and rites of passage within a society and a school provide natural foci around which fresh interest can be generated on the intercultural level. Where the partners are working on conflicts within their schools or societies the development of the conflict, and the attempts to handle it being made by participants, will provide 'news' to be exchanged and material on which to work.

Commitment and responsibility

The level at which the participating classes or schools work should be considered beforehand. This will depend on a number of factors: the age of the groups involved, the experience of the teachers and students in intercultural work and (if conflict is the focus) working with conflict, the situations of the partner school(s) - their political, economic, social context. Will this be an initial exploratory exercise or is the aim to challenge assumptions or even bring about change? The deeper the level

of engagement in terms of subject matter and intervention, the greater the risk and the higher the requirment for commitment and responsibility from all participants. It may, of course, happen that a longer term connection between classes leads to a natural deepening of the interaction.

If the project or partnership is intended to be something more than short-term then it will be desirable to create and seek to maintain a sense of common purpose and on-going connection. It would be good at an early stage to develop a vision for the project or partnerhsip and to identify clear goals. Periodic review with reference to the vision and goals can be a useful way of developing self-reflective skills and clarifying which way the participants would like to proceed.

Language

On international projects there will be a decision about which language to use within the project or network. This will usually be decided according to pragmatic considerations and will determine the type of involvement of various student age groups by virtue of their language proficiency

Understanding/interpretation of tasks

One of the challenges of communication is coping with all the misinterpretation and misunderstanding that is generated as a by-product of the process. When groups are from different cultures the likelihood of misunderstanding or wrong assumptions and interpretations is increased. This is part of intercultural learning and while looking to provide some structure and organisation in the partnership or project, flexibility should be allowed in the interpretation of tasks and roles and a genuine dialogue on how to proceed should be maintained. Tasks or projects are likely to be understood and realized in different ways in different cultural settings. However, some attempt at a common understanding of the aims of the project is important to provide cohesion.

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