4. Action Research in Sweden

Ilse Hakvoort, Ann-Katrin Swärd & Kajsa Svensson

The University of Gothenburg has been the partner organisation (project partner) responsible for implementing the LCP action research project in Sweden. In particular, staff from the Department of Education and Special Education, Faculty of Education, are involved. The University of Gothenburg is the second largest university in Sweden, is a public university and is state-funded. Advocating the importance and value of international collaborations, staff members get support when they become a partner in an Erasmus+ strategic partnership project.

The Department of Education and Special Education has staff with excellence in conflict resolution in schools. They are responsible for lecturing, workshops and seminars for pre-service and in-service teacher training. In addition, they conduct research in this field. Some of them are also knowledge-able about intercultural questions, norm-critical approaches, peace education, bullying and special education. Furthermore, the department has a well-established research group with a long tradition of conducting action research and being involved in school development projects.

4.1. Research context

In this section, the Swedish research context and its educational system are described in general, and the context in which the collaborating pilot school is located is described in particular. The content is based on the context analyses conducted during the first months of our collaboration with the Swedish pilot school, complemented by information collected during the action research period and general information about the educational system in Sweden.

4.1.1. General information about the Swedish educational system

Sweden offers free education (preschool class, primary, secondary and tertiary) for its citizens. The Ministry of Education has established two governmental agencies, the National Agency of Education and the School Inspectorate, which are responsible for ensuring that education is available to every child, that the quality of the education provided is equivalent across the country and that proper conditions for children's development and learning are in place.

Swedish schools follow a national goal-steered system but have a high degree of local responsibility. The Swedish Parliament and Government draw up the overall national goals for the Education Act as well as for the curricula and syllabi for preschool, preschool class, primary school, lower and higher secondary education, and the leisure-time centre. Thus, it is the government that decides on rules, values, goals, overall learning outcomes, course plans and curriculum.

The municipalities are responsible for running the schools, decide on how government grants are divided among the schools in their municipality, and are the employer of school staff. In their work, they need to follow national governing documents. In the municipality where the Swedish pilot school is located, the Child and Youth Office is responsible for implementing educational policies. The head of administration at this office is directly employed by politicians of the municipality (who are always democratically chosen). Under this head of administration several officers operate. The school principal reports to the officer for primary school education at the Child and Youth Office.

Every Swedish school can be seen as an autonomous unit and every municipality is responsible for monitoring that schools follow the governing documents, and providing the economic resources they need. The School Inspectorate, one of the governmental agencies, conducts randomized controls by visiting, observing and interviewing staff as well as controlling the written documentation of teachers and the principal concerning students' performance and other matters related to teachers' work and responsibility.

It sometimes seems that schools are under strict control but, in reality, that is not the case. Every school is more or less an autonomous unit and can therefore make many pedagogical and didactic decisions itself. Every teacher can also decide if they wish to be involved in different research or projects such as LCP. Nobody can force them to be involved. When the university wishes to collaborate with schools, we only need to contact the principal and teachers at a school. They can say no or yes. If no, we can look for another school that is interested in collaborating with actors outside the school. Inside the school, teachers always collaborate within working teams. With regard to the LCP project, the first school we asked said no to our request to be involved as they already were involved in another project. The second school we asked was interested in working with us in this international European project.

Schools in Sweden have to work systematically on maintaining a high and comparable quality. This quality work, defined in the Education Act, must focus on meeting the national goals for education. Governmental agencies such as the National Agency for Education and the School Inspectorate provide general advice for systematic quality work. The results of this work are followed up, analyzed, and assessed in relation to what scientific studies and proven experience highlight as important. It is also important to consider current research when planning and prioritizing development initiatives.

Everyone's participation is fundamental to this quality work. The management of the school, the staff, the students and the custodians need to contribute with views, voices and documentation that make the quality of the school visible. Ultimately, it is about offering all students an equivalent high-quality education regardless of the place of residence, gender and social or economic background. Equal education does not mean that it should be uniform or that all students should receive the same amount of resources. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, together with school law and curricula, is the basis for quality work in relation to the participation of students and their influence.

Students must be given the opportunity to participate in the quality work of the school. The degree and kind of participation depends on age and level of development of the student. The preschool manager and the principal are responsible for ensuring that the custodians are also given the opportunity to participate in the quality work. Furthermore, each preschool and school unit must annually set up plans concerning discrimination, harassment and degrading treatment that describe how the work should be carried out, in order for the national goals of promoting equal treatment and prevention of harassment and degrading treatment to be achieved.

The Education Act obliges Swedish schools to establish a plan to counteract degrading treatment. Up to January 1 2017, the Discrimination Act obliged schools to write a yearly plan for preventing and counteracting any form of discrimination and harassment (often referred to as an 'equal treatment plan'). However, on 1 January 2017, the provisions of the Discrimination Act were amended, and the formal requirement for an equal treatment plan was replaced by the requirement that schools document all the work they do in relation to harassment and discrimination, which need to cover all seven grounds of discrimination (and not only five as previously). This legislative change concerns harassment and discrimination (regulated by the Discrimination Act), and not degrading treatment (regulated by the Education Act).

Schools still need to write a yearly plan to counteract degrading treatment. The pilot school we worked with has such a plan in which it outlines the situation regarding the well-being of its students. It is the principal who is responsible for ensuring that a plan is written, implemented and annually evaluated. Every year, concrete goals are formulated on the basis of a survey that gathers information about the current situation for the students in school (for example, on whether they feel safe and secure). Furthermore, identification of rules, norms and organisational aspects that could marginalize some and not others should be included in this survey. The demand for a yearly survey is linked to the idea that school improvement needs to have an evidence-based and/or scientific foundation. The School Inspectorate has developed criteria to assess, during inspecting of a school, if it is following the law.

In this school-year plan (2018/2019), our pilot school stated that all staff at school and the leisure-time centre must create an environment where everyone should feel safe and respected. The overall goal is that no-one should be subjected to any form of degrading treatment. It is stated that the staff will work with the students on the importance of three key wordings: Consideration, Responsibility and Community. In the first weeks of the school year, all teachers will work with the students on the routines and rules that need to be learned and followed. At the leisure-time centre, the students give their views about how to work with the indoors and outdoors environment through the recreation councils. Every year in grade two and five, the students are asked to answer a questionnaire. The formulated plan is presented and discussed with the school parents association and posted on the school website. As the evaluation of the concrete goals and aims of last year's plan concern the school year 2017/2018, during which the project team worked with the school on the LCP project, the findings of the evaluation are presented below (referred to as 'data').

4.1.2. Conflict resolution

In the relevant articles of the Education and the Discrimination Act, it is stated that "degrading treatment, harassment and discrimination are forbidden" and "schools have to promote human rights and equal values, and prevent violent situations happening". Neither Act, however, uses the term conflict, and teachers and other school staff do not get support in ways they can manage, resolve or transform the conflicts they encounter every day in the school.

Fortunately, we have seen increased attention given to conflict resolution in the Swedish teacher training programmes since 2005. While the Swedish government decides on goals, directives and distribution of resources for the teacher training programmes, the Swedish Higher Education Authority (one of the governmental agencies) is responsible for the quality of teacher education and the descriptions of the teacher education degrees. With the reforms of the teacher education programmes in 2011, *Social relations, conflict resolution and educational leadership* was included as one of eight educational core areas of priority in the official teacher education degree descriptions. Consequently, all higher-education institutions (HEIs) that provide teacher education were from now on required to offer courses/modules to address this theme. Even though length, content and quality in conflict resolution education differs across the various HEIs, it has been seen as a step forward in providing teachers with the knowledge and skills to manage the conflicts that occur in their classrooms (from minor distractions and disturbances to escalated conflict situations). This means that it is possible that some of the newly employed teachers at the pilot school have had some education in conflict resolution; while those who followed the earlier programmes might not (if they did not choose to take a free-choice course in this subject).

4.2. Where the practice took place

The Swedish pilot school is located in a community with about 41,000 inhabitants – 27,000 in the central city and 14,000 in the surrounding villages. This community is located within commuting distance of the second largest city in Sweden, Gothenburg. The community is responsible for all the schools in this area.

The selected pilot school is a public primary school for students aged six (preschool class) to 12 (Grade 6) (Sweden also has private schools). Class numbers vary between 17 and 27. The school has approximately 339 students, 20 teachers, 10 teachers for the leisure-time centre, 10 assistants for students in need of extra support, one administrator, one caretaker, one vice-principal and one principal. While the school principal is chosen by the community board responsible for education, the principal herself is responsible for interviewing staff for the school before asking the community to employ them. We discussed the LCP project with the principal during April-October 2017; the vice-principal (already one of the delegates in the LCP pilot school team) then became principal in November 2017. The school has access to a health team employed by the central community organization – consisting of a special needs educator, social worker, school nurse and psychologist. The cleaning staff and staff responsible for hot meals (served during lunch-time in Swedish schools) are employed by organizations contracted to provide these services.

Around 70% of the 339 students have parents with Swedish roots, and 30% have one or two parents born in Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Eritrea, Albania, the Netherlands and England. While 25% of the students are girls, 75% are boys. Regarding economic background, the student families vary greatly, from socially and economically disadvantaged to higher socio-economic standards. (It's interesting to note that most of the families with low social-economic standards live on one side of a street and most with high socio-economic standards on the other side.) Most of the students live within walking distance of the school.

In most Swedish schools, school starts at around 08:00 and finishes between 13:00 and 15:00 (the younger children, aged 6-9, finish most days at 13:00; the older ones, aged 10-12, between 14:00 and 15:00). Students are welcome to attend the leisure-time centre before school, from 06:00, and after school until 18:30. Both school, before-school and after-school activities use the same buildings and property (the principal is responsible for both staff categories – leisure-time-centre teachers are often 'extra resources' during school hours).

The school has a relatively active parent association even though it does not represent all the parents.

The schoolyard is big and complex since it is spread out around the school. It is not easy for one teacher to control what's going on among the students when they are on the other side of the school building.

4.3. Working climate and action research support

Project team at the Department of Education and Special Education, University of Gothenburg

All three members of the University of Gothenburg team had heard about action research and some had read about it but none had carried out an action research project by themselves. Two members of the team are researchers and have conducted various studies with other qualitative research approaches. The team consisted of staff with 30-35 years of experience in doing research. In addition, it included a staff member with 30 years' experience of working in and with primary schools, as well

as staff competent in working with conflict resolution in practice. At the department, we have access to a research group that is specialised in action research and school development.

The project team consisted of:

- Kajsa Svensson: university teacher, drama pedagogue/teacher educator with competences in intercultural questions, conflict resolution
- Ilse Hakvoort: associate professor, researcher/teacher educator with competence in conflict resolution, fundamental values, degrading treatment
- Ann-Katrin Swärd: assistant professor, researcher/teacher educator with competence in special education, degrading treatment

We also worked several times with an external expert, Bernard LeRoux, with competences in dialogue about complex questions, conflict resolution, transformative mediation and deep democracy.

4.3.1. The Swedish pilot school

The pilot school was totally new for the team of the University of Gothenburg, which meant that we needed to get to know them. In March and April 2016 we held two introduction meetings with the then principal. The aim of the introduction meetings was twofold. First, to find out if the principal and the school were interested in participating, and secondly, to start with a context analysis. The principal informed the staff of the school about her interest in participating in the LCP project, and the benefits she could see for the school, and asked the staff for their support. Furthermore, as four delegates of the school would join the workshop in Zadar, Croatia, the staff was asked to hand in a motivation letter if they wished to represent the school, participate in the workshop and become members of the group delegates of the school. Nine motivation letters were handed in from which the principal choose three. The fourth person was the vice-principal as she is part of the school leading team.

While writing a context analysis, we reflected on possible and interesting community members, for example:

- The lower secondary school in the neighbourhood where most of the students go after finishing this school
- Municipality: the head of administration at the Child and Youth Office
- Municipality: the officer responsible for primary school education
- Health team
- Parent association
- Social workers at the Social Service Office, called in when students and their families are having problems
- Child and youth psychiatrists
- Leisure-time activities organizations (e.g. handball, soccer)
- Churches
- Community workers involved with issues such as drugs, alcohol

4.3.2. Leading the action research process

To update the knowledge of the project partners concerning action research, short introductions on action research and participatory research designs were given during the Joint Staff Training week in Antwerp (Jan/Feb 2017). In addition, the participants of this training week, three from each project partner, exchanged ideas about the knowledge and competences they possessed on action research and related research methodologies.

LEARNING
COMMUNITIES
FOR
PEACE
SWEDEN

LCPTOOLKIT

To inform the pilot schools about the LCP project, action research process and impact evaluation and to stimulate them to start their process, four delegates of the five pilot schools attended a two-day workshop in Zadar (Croatia) in April 2017, the European Learning Communities for Peace Lab. Project partners each sent one trainer to prepare the workshop during the days before the school delegates arrived. These trainers, among other things, were introduced to the process of action research during a workshop led by Klara Bilic Mestric, an action researcher from the University of Zagreb, Croatia. The trainers were also in charge of leading the workshop and shared their newly received knowledge about action research with the delegates of the schools.

The process of implementing and leading the action research process in the Swedish pilot school was discussed between the project partner and the four delegates of the school. All four delegates felt short in their knowledge and skills, as well as not familiar enough with the procedure of leading an action research process. They tended to see the process as owned by the project partner. It was decided that two members of the project partner would lead the action research process. In early autumn 2017, they had access to online lectures by Karin Rönnerman, professor in education at the department (both in Swedish and in English). Additionally, they read several texts from Karin Rönnerman, Anette Olin, Åsa Hirsch and other experts in action research in order to learn and develop their understanding of the Nordic action research approach applied at the University of Gothenburg. They also participated in a one-day international conference about action research (August 2017) with Stephen Kemmis as one of the presenters, followed by a seminar series on action research at the university. During the rest of autumn 2017, they participated in a series of seminars specially designed for the department staff to learn about doing action research. In other words, the project partner became educated in action research through the educational activities offered by the department. They were thus prepared for studying their own practices; that is, the action research process they were responsible for guiding (the project partner action research activities). Not being a member of staff at the pilot school meant that they could only indirectly study the school practice. According to action research principles, participants study their own practice, and thus the staff of the pilot school were the ones who could influence and study the daily practice of the school. It was decided that the project partner should lead the process by guiding the delegates of the school in conducting action research activities with their colleagues. The project partner was given the responsibility to collect information/data about how these pilot school actions went. Interesting to mention is that, at the end of the collaboration between the project partner and pilot school, it was observed that the principal had collected information about some of the actions (which will be described below).

Along with their own action research education, the project partner made plans to guide the school through the following phases: Reflect on (with a. Identify challenges/areas for change, b, Prioritise the identified areas for change, and c. Why do the participants perceive this as problematic? In need of change?), Action plan (identifying possible actions), Act (implementation of the actions), Observe and collect data to evaluate the actions, and Reflect again (with analyses of the data and conclusions, preparing for a new action research cycle).

In the following section we will mostly reflect on the process of the members of the project partner, even though we are aware that they conducted activities with the school and collected information from them. At the end we will reflect on the process involving the actors in the school.

4.4. Action research process
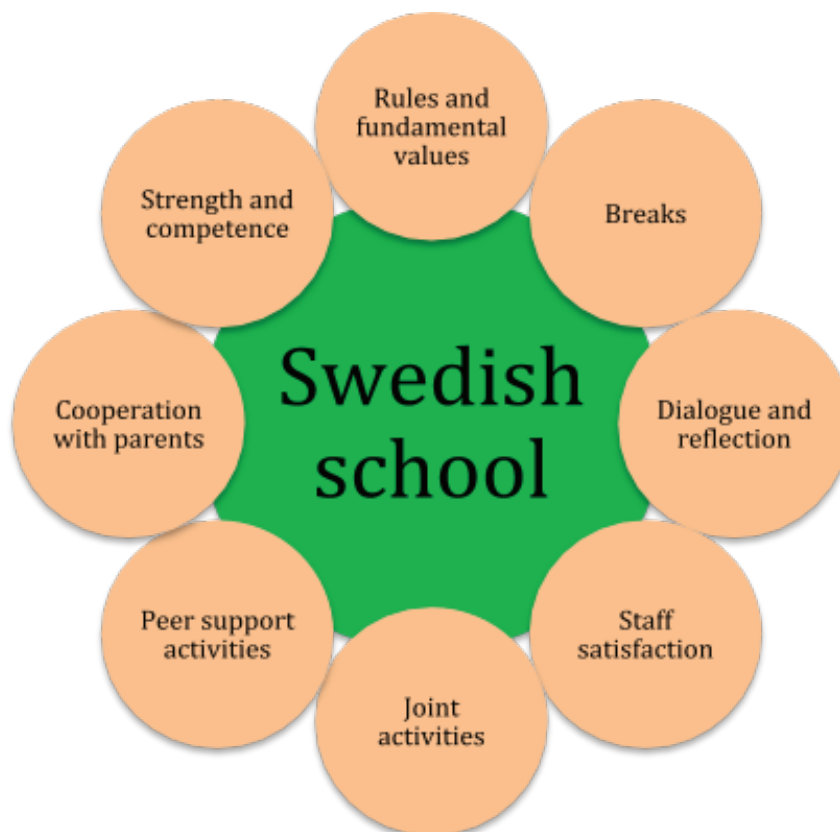
4.4.1. Reflect

Mapping is an important tool and often used to identify areas for change. The pilot school was assigned the task of identifying areas, issues or challenges that were not working, were problematic or

were regarded as in need of improvement and change. Assigning this task to the school was based on a central action research assumption that the educator her or himself has knowledge about and experience of their own practice and thus is the most suitable person to find out what is in need of change or improvement. The four delegates of the Swedish pilot school started this identification process during the training in Zadar (April 2017) and continued when back home (spring and autumn 2017). The project partner organized a follow-up Zadar meeting with the delegates of the school aiming at discussing their ideas and possible steps to take (14 June 2017). The delegates said they had found out and decided what the school needed to work with. Their 'knowing' challenged the principles of action research and the idea of co-constructing/co-designing, which builds on democratic forms of learning together, hearing all voices within (and maybe outside) the school that need to be heard, and also participatory dialogue. During the meeting the project partner asked several questions regarding participation and co-determination, co-constructing and co-designing, and persisted with involving the rest of the staff of the school.

Reflect on part one: Identifying challenges/areas for change

The delegates of the school said a staff meeting was organized to inform the staff during two-day staff meeting at a conference centre before the start of the next academic year, August 2017 (with staff from the pilot school only, and not with members of the project partner as this could disturb the bringing-together process). Activities and ideas from the workshop in Zadar were shared, and during these two days the staff would have time to discuss the challenges/areas of improvement. Eight challenges were identified by the staff of the school.

The eight areas of improvement

The identified challenges (summarized from staff meeting)

| 1. Challenges or areas for improvement | What challenges can you identify to work with in relation to building a 'Learning Community for Peace'? Identify areas of improvements or areas to focus on | **1. Rules and fundamental values**
A need exists for a more coherent understanding of fundamental values and unity in the approaches staff use to apply rules.
2. Breaks
A need for less conflict between students, better structure and planned activities.
3. Dialogue and reflection
Reflect and understand together when critical incidents occur between staff, and even between students.
4. Staff satisfaction
To have fun and get to know each other (also the new staff) better.
5. Joint activities
Create a community between students and an 'us' feeling.
6. Peer support activities
Need for a safe and secure environment between students.
7. Society/community and parents
Need for better cooperation with parents.
8. Strength and competence
To be acknowledged, developing fields of expertise and being able to make use of each other's expertise. |

Reflect on part 2: Prioritise the challenges/areas for improvement

For continuation and follow-up of the process, meetings were organized between the project partner and the delegates of the pilot school. On 11 October 2017, there was a catch-up meeting for the delegates to report back from the two-day staff meeting in August, collect the identified challenges and discuss plans for the autumn. During this meeting it was decided that Kajsa Svensson, from the project partner, would organize and lead a workshop for all school staff to prioritize the eight challenges (25 October 2016).

Participatory open democratic ranking process workshop for all school staff (led by Kajsa Svensson)

Aim: This workshop aimed at: a) enlarging an understanding of the interest of all colleagues, b) underlining the importance of all voices, and c) finding out where most of the staff members would like to start.

Central question: What are the challenges/areas of improvement that are most important for the school to start working with at the moment?

Note: It was not decided beforehand how many areas would be prioritized.

Description of the activity: Every staff member got two post-it notes, on each of which they wrote their first name. Each working team used another colour, that is F-3 (teachers working in preparation class up to grade 3), 4-6 (teachers for grades 4-6) and teachers working with the leisure-time-centre. An important aspect was that the process was not anonymous. One member of the staff asked why? Maybe they were more used to anonymity. As this was a very important step in mapping and understanding choices and finding out both majority and minority interests, non-anonymity was essential. All the eight areas identified by the staff (during the two-day conference in August) were presented, briefly explained, and written on big sheets of paper which were posted on the wall (thus, eight sheets on the wall).

Example of sheet posted on wall (left Breaks, right Society and Parents)
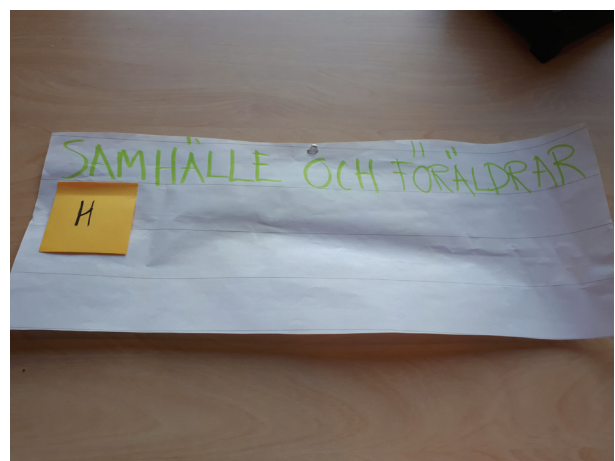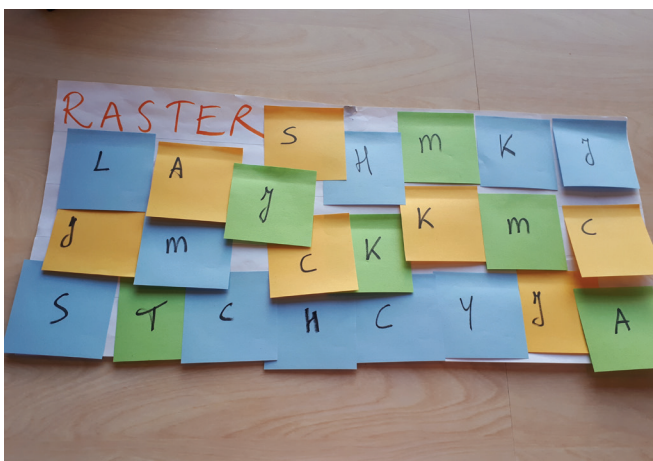
The staff could put their two post-it notes on the same or different sheets. The instruction was: put your name on the sheet for the area you think is the most important at this moment to work with. To have two post-it notes meant they did not need to consider 'should I put my name on this one or that sheet?'. No-one really knew beforehand what the result could be.

The following two challenges were ranked one and two:

1. **Rules and fundamental values**
2. **Breaks**

After the participatory open democratic ranking process, Kajsa led and guided conversations with small group exchanges between staff (World Café format). The small group exchanges aimed at initiating conversations around why these areas were of high importance.

Reflect on part three: Why are the different areas of improvement important?

Time to deepen understanding…

Two activities were organized by the project partner to deepen the understanding of the staff from the pilot school as well as of the members of the project partner as to why these two areas needed to improve.

1. Guided conversations with small group exchanges between staff (an adopted variation of a World Café)
2. Tutorial sessions with each staff group, F-3, 4-6 and leisure time/recreation staff

Information collected from the three sessions led by a member of the project partner and attended by the principal

Three tutorial sessions were conducted:

1) Session with the F-3 teachers (F= preschool class) and principal (9 January 2018)
2) Session with the teachers responsible for leisure-time centre, and principal (10 January 2018)
3) Session with 4-6 teachers and principal (10 January 2018)

In the meetings with the three teachers' teams, different voices came up. The leisure-time-centre teachers said they regularly felt excluded from the discussions when their competences were not as accounted for or used as they wished. They also said that they earlier had been responsible for indoors break activities, which worked very well. They suggested ways in which the time schedule for the breaks could be changed.

The teacher team for teachers in grades F-3 talked mostly about conflicts between students. Some of the students brought conflicts emerging in their families and/or during break-time into the class-room. That affected the teaching, as it could take a lot of time to solve the conflict before the lesson could start. The project partner noted that, from the discussions, it seemed to be clear that both students and teachers did not really know how to manage the many conflicts.

The teacher team for teachers in grade 4-6 discussed how knowledge concerning rules varied among the staff. Newly employed teachers were not aware of some special old rules. The team also highlighted problems with grade six and their wish to stay indoors instead of being forced to go out during their breaks. The teachers had different opinions about this and also about the meaning of 'all students are all teachers' responsibility'. The discussion was mostly about lack of supporting each other. They agreed about some changes that were needed.

Reflection after the tutorial sessions

Several of the teachers and leisure-time-centre teachers mentioned afterwards that they had not felt fully prepared for the tutorial sessions. The information had been posted on the electronic BlackBoard for staff to read. For example, one of the teachers said they had prepared an agenda for their meeting, not being aware of the fact that members from the project partner were coming. Miscommunication? The project partner had decided not to send out materials for reading in advance, mainly out of concern not to demand too much of the teachers. Maybe this was a wrong decision, and sending materials for reading could have helped to prepare for the tutorial sessions. Another participant noted that "we were mainly talking about problems" and "it nearly sounded that we only have problems in this school and that is not the case". These comments raised the question: Is it difficult or is there resistance to talking about what is not working well? What happens if we do so?

Information from school staff collected during the workshop and supervision

| 2. Values | Why is this important for me, my colleagues, students and their parents? How can it improve our work and the work of the school? | It is important to work with **rules and fundamental values** because:

● We live in an individual-centred society.

● The school has a large turnover of staff and they do not know the rules and haven't been involved in the discussions about them.

● It is important to have consensus concerning rules.

● They can lead to recurring conflicts and misunderstanding.

● The students have other rules at home, and have not learned which rules are needed to manage themselves in society.

● It is important to ensure clarity about the rules during the whole day (6-18.30).

● We believe that the students know the rules but do not follow them.

● Disrespectful language occurs.

● Home and school differ in their values.

● At present conflicts indicated that it does not work.

● We want to improve the climate for students (between teachers/staff and students).

● The school has lost its focus in its work with fundamental values. At present, most focus is put on knowledge outcomes. |

		It is important to work with breaks because: ● They are an important part of the daily life of students in school. ● There are many conflicts during the breaks. ● When students do something that is not allowed, there are no clear consequences.. ● It would be good to systematize adult supervision during the breaks. ● There are too few adults outside during the breaks (staff shortage). There is so much happening that we need to notice. ● We have older students that are bored or sad, and anxious and insecure children. ● Anxiety during breaks causes anxiety in the classroom and during after-school activities. Conflicts that are not managed during the break continue during the whole day. ● The schoolyard is very big and is split up by the different school buildings which makes it difficult to guard the students as they spread out. ● The children need to be seen. ● Sometimes the school need to take over the responsibility of the parents. ● The school lacks activities; students do not know what to do; many children do not manage free play; they need to find out what they can do by themselves. ● There are several power battles during the breaks. ● Nearly every break, fights or violence take place. ● Students find it hard to be outside without adults.

Information from the impact evaluation

In the LCP project application, it was planned that the results from the 'baseline' impact evaluation data collection could serve as an input for selecting areas of improvement for the pilot school. We were able to plan the activities for the data collection with both staff and students for November and December 2017. The impact evaluation consisted of two activities: a short survey for students and staff, and a visual voice activity for students and staff. The school asked for guidance on the process of data collection with the staff (survey and Visual Voices with staff) and written instruction for the school delegates for the collection of the data from the children (survey and Visual Voices with children in their respective classes). These were provided.

The evaluator from the University of Cambridge was, however, not able to visit the school to interview staff and listen to the visual voice presentations from the children before January 2018. The visit of the evaluator was regarded as a very positive experience, especially by the students. They en-

joyed speaking English with the evaluator, recognized him during his breaks and lunch meal (many waved). After returning home, the evaluator processed the data and wrote a report. This was long after the school had decided on the areas they wanted to work with.

An extra activity

Two Croatian teachers and one person from the Osijek Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights visited the school (1 December 2017). This visit was much appreciated by the teachers, students and principal.

An intensive LCP week 15-18 January 2018

1. An evening organized by the project partner, with all school staff and Bernard LeRoux (15 January 2018). The aim of the meeting was to hear each other's voices, come together as a group, get some extra input on thinking about rules, values and conflicts, and be ready to make decisions on which actions to implement.
2. 16-19 January: Evaluator visits the school with the aim of participating in the visual voice sessions with the children and collecting data through interviews with staff from the school and the project team.

4.4.2. Action plan

Based on the information and ideas collected from all staff during autumn 2017 and the intensive LCP week in January 2018, there were follow-up meetings attended by the project partner and the delegates of the pilot school (6 February and 9 May 2018). The meetings focused on discussing and elaborating possible actions, and reflecting on the possibilities of implementing certain actions. In this process, only the project partner and the school delegates were involved. The members of the project partner summarized the discussions in research questions and aims, as follows.

Research questions and aims

3. Research question	What can we do with the challenge we face with regard to the breaks?	1. We can plan organized and joint activities. 2. We can review our supervision system. 3. We can buy new outdoors materials. 4. We can examine the causes of the problems during the breaks.
4. Aim	What do we want to achieve?	● Create community among the staff ● Reduce the number of bored students and increase the number who enjoy themselves and think it is fun to be outdoors ● Reduce the number of conflicts during the breaks and those conflicts that are carried into the classroom after the break ● Gain more insight into what works and doesn't work in our organization and our work

LEARNING
COMMUNITIES
FOR
PEACE
SWEDEN

LCPTOOLKIT

4.4.3. Actions

During the spring term, several actions were identified and developed that could change and improve the school practice.

Note: We noticed that the school often indicated that there was not enough time and they could not give priority to the project. But when we talked to them, reflected and got feedback, we found that they do a lot that is not always reported.

Action 1: Outdoor break schedule for staff

The pilot school was united in agreeing on the important principle that at least one staff member (preferable more) would be outside during student break-time. The outdoor break schedule was not working well. The first action after all the meetings and discussions was to look over the schedule for the adults to supervise outdoor activities during the breaks, which was done by the principal. A first discovery was that the notion that some staff were not scheduling themselves for outdoor breaks was incorrect. Every one signed up for the agreed number of 'outdoor supervision' sessions. However, the table used had far too many gaps, given the number of staff working at the school. The principal realized that it would be important to inform her staff during a staff meeting that each and every one fulfilled their supervision tasks and that a totally different schedule was needed. A new schedule had to be developed with fewer gaps, to be implemented for the new academic year 2018/2019. All teachers should be involved and responsible for the students' indoor and outdoor breaks.

Action 2 Reactivating indoor break activities for the older students

It was also discussed that it would be feasible during spring 2018 to reactivate indoor breaks for the older students. This was something that the school had been doing but the arrangement just disappeared. One of the teachers for the leisure-time centre was asked to lead this indoor-break activity for the students of grade five and six twice a week. The principal provided some responses about this action, including: "*Indoor break activities for the older students were organized two days a week. When the pedagogue was ill on one of the occasions, the students came to tell me that the activity could not be cancelled like that and asked the principal if she could be there instead.*" We interpreted this as an expression of importance from the students.

Action 3 Addressing activities for students during the breaks

a. Changing break-time schedules to allow joint activities
b. More and different materials for the schoolyard
c. Indoor organized breaks for grade 5 and 6
d. Parents cleaning and painting the schoolyard

a) For the start of the new academic year 2018/2019, ideas were developed to change the morning break-time schedule for all students. Until then, classes had been scheduled to go outside one after the other. That is, first one or two classes during 20 min, followed by the next classes during 20 min and so on. This meant that for three periods of 20 minutes for the morning breaks, adults needed to be scheduled to be outside in turn. The school considered if it was possible to change the series of morning breaks to one break for all. Consequently, fewer staff had to be scheduled to be outdoors during the morning breaks, joint activities could be organised by an adult or a group of students, and older and younger students were able to play together. During the lunch breaks, students are outdoors in smaller groups. One group eating; another group outdoors.

b) In addition, new outdoor playing material was bought and spread out in different places around the schoolyard so that the students had more choices of what to play with.

c) The parent organisation took the responsibility of freshening up the schoolyard by painting games on the floors (e.g. Kingcourts) and checking the materials.

d) Indoor activities for the students in grade five and six on certain weekdays continued.

Action 4 Evening staff meeting with all staff and principal where three fundamental value words were discussed

The value words 'Consideration, Responsibility and Community' were discussed during an evening staff meeting (pilot school activity). These three words are now displayed all over the school.

Action 5 Reducing the number of students in the corridors before school starts

Instead of children walking into the school building when arriving at school, they (and their parents) are welcomed by the staff and sometimes the principal in the schoolyard. The bell for 'going in' rings five minutes before school starts, thus not allowing students to hang around in corridors, etc.

Possible and planned actions

6. Actions	What can we do to fulfil our goals?	
	6.1 Will we read something?	
	6.2 What actions are planned with colleagues?	- Two-day conference at a conference hotel with all staff (to identify challenges the school is facing and discuss fundamental values) (reflection & dialogue) - Open, democratic, ranking workshop with Kajsa Svensson (reflection & dialogue) - Tutorial sessions with the three staff groups (F-3/4-5/leisure-time centre staff) (deepening) and principal (reflection & dialogue) - Evening with Bernard LeRoux (reflection & dialogue) - Principal examined the schedule for staff supervisors during break-time and found out that, even though every staff member was doing their duty and was outdoors as required, the schedule had too many gaps. - Evening staff meeting with all staff and principal where three fundamental value words discussed.

		Actions for the schoolyear 2018/2019 ● Implement a new schedule for break supervision. ● Schedule joint breaks for all classes during the morning (instead of one after the other). ● Develop activities for all students during the breaks, led by staff or older students. ● Staff and sometimes the principal should be out in the schoolyard before school hours to welcome the children in. ● The school bell should be rung five minutes before school starts so that do not hang around, e.g. in corridors. ● Evaluate the new break-time system (October 2018). The team with delegates from the school are three teachers and the principal who the project partner met every 4-6 weeks for dialogue and follow-up. The four delegates from the pilot school were in Zadar for inspiration and to get to know the delegates from the other schools in this project. Already in Zadar, they were asked to reflect on the project's research problem in relation to their own school context. School visit of two teachers and one representative of the NGO in Croatia. One teacher and the principal participated in the UK school visits and the Conflict Matters conference in London. Common activities: Visual voice and surveys for the impact evaluations. Collecting information about the situation at present and time for reflection.

	6.3 What actions are planned with students?	- Indoor breaks for grades 5 and 6 (11-12-13 year-olds) with a teacher - Buying new outdoor materials for playing - Participating in the visual voice (impact evaluation) – students were able to listen to each other and their explanations of the pictures - Reorganization of the breaks: all students should have the same 20 minutes' break during the morning (more children to play with and easier for the adult supervision system). - The common break-time during the morning creates possibilities for joint organized and guided activities. - Buying a GaGapit (see picture)
	6.4 What actions are planned with parents?	Parents association: helping out with repainting the schoolyard **Discussed plans for the school year 2018/19** Different start of the new school year; inviting parents for a parents meeting together with their children (we know that this has not been done) Aiming to: show what the school is good at, to make a parent meeting interesting and stimulating and create more space for contacts
	6.5 What actions are planned with the local community?	

GaGapit

4.4.4. Observing and collecting data

During the school year, the project partner collected information from activities conducted in order to reflect and to plan actions. The activities as well as the written material from the activities supported the process of reflection and dialogue of those involved (project partner, delegates from school and all staff). Some of the activities were partner action research activities, others were pilot school action research activities.

Action research activities initiated by the project partner – we collected:

- Notes from follow-up meeting between the project partner and delegates of the pilot school
- Notes from the project partner meetings
- Process and outcome of the participatory open democratic ranking process workshop
- Outcomes in the form of large sheets from the small group discussions (World Café)
- Summaries from the tutorial sessions
- Baseline data from the impact evaluation

Data collected by the project partner to understand what actions had been implemented and how they worked – we collected:

- Harvesting from the feedback session (December 2018) between project partner, and principal and teacher (both delegates) from the school
- Final data from the impact evaluation

- Feedback during the dissemination seminar at the school where the project was summarized and results from the impact evaluation presented – during the discussion, staff responded to the presented results and expressed their own experiences of change

Action research activities initiated by the pilot school – we collected:

- Reports from the two-day conference involving school staff
- Evaluation of the new break-system
- Evaluation and update of last year's plan to counteract degrading treatment (found in the formal documents of the school)

Project partner

Harvest from the feedback session with principal and teacher

On 5 December 2018, Kajsa Svensson, Ann-Katrin Swärd and Ilse Hakvoort (the project partner) met with two delegates from the school, the principal and a teacher. Two teachers, who had represented the school the previous year, left the school to move on in their teaching careers. The purpose of the meeting was twofold: (1) preparing for the dissemination activities for spring 2019 and (2) a spontaneous feedback session on the accomplishments of the pilot school.

During this feedback session, we used the whiteboard to write down what the headmaster and the teacher were telling us.

Notes from whiteboard (collected statements and reflections from the two delegates)

§ More tranquillity in the corridors

§ Since November a calmer start of the day (oral comment: We decided that we ring the bell 07:55 in the morning 5 minutes before the lessons. The children are not allowed to go into the school before. The principal and other teachers were often on the schoolyard to welcome the children.)

§ Fewer conflicts between children despite the many children outside

§ Staff are able to show the children more area to play and things to play with

§ Younger children less afraid of the older children

§ Increased togetherness between students and staff

§ Organising the morning break-time for all students at the same time provides a space for planned/ organised activities for children to join in

§ Grade 5 and 6 continued with their inside break-time a few times a week.

§ Parents have mentioned that they heard it was calmer during the breaks at school

§ The student council has reported that not all children have access to the swings, too few of them

§ Classroom teachers, guess all of them, work with the three value words/fundamental values

§ GaGa pit [a rink for playing GaGa, a variant of dodgeball] – a schedule is needed for the many children that want to play there – maybe we buy one more

§ More sense of community between the staff

§ Increase of exchange between working groups

§ Organised for spring 2019– a theme week on community

§ Cleaning evening for all staff to help: afterwards the tables were nicely set with a pizza buffet for everyone that helped

§ In the parent association there are several inspiring parents

§ There are more balls, 'Kingcourts', other ball games to play with

§ The staff still miss common planning and reflection time

§ The staff have evaluated their experience of the change of the break schedule

Summary from our harvesting

The feedback session showed that several of the actions planned to be implemented at the start of school year 2018/2019 (and thus after the project partner had finalized their intervention) were actually implemented – such as morning break-time for all students at the same time, purchasing new materials for the school yard, a new schedule for the teachers being outside during the breaks, and continuation of classroom activities with the children with regard to fundamental values as well as of indoor break-time activities for the older students.

The principal and the teacher were astonished when they looked at all the notes on the whiteboard, and realized how much they had achieved in the school. They were clearly overwhelmed. This made us conclude that there is little time during school hours to step back and reflect. This was clearly the role of the project partner.

Pilot school

Pilot school evaluation on changes to the morning break-time schedule

The change in the morning break-time schedule was implemented at the start of the school year 2018/2019 and evaluated by the staff in October 2018. The staff evaluation was led by the principal (own initiative to collect data/information) who shared the outcome with the project partner. Seventeen positive and 10 critical responses were given. On the positive side, it was said that there were noticeably more staff/adults outdoors, spread out over the different corners of the school-yard, children were not always allowed to do as they liked because collective activities could be organized, older and younger children mixed and thus there were many more choices about whom to play with and less conflict, even though there were more children outdoors. The critical voices said that there were more queues for equipment, the younger children did not always dare to join certain activities such as football, more conflicts could be observed because there were more students in the school-yard, and in particular the grade one children would not benefit. All the voices in the evaluation suggested that the morning break could be improved even more. As an extra voice, the principal said: "Parents of a student who used to attend our school requested if their child could start again as they heard that the atmosphere in particular during the breaks had improved so much."

Evaluation of last year's plan (public information on the internet)

The school evaluated last year's plan with students through interviews and surveys around their three keywords, as well as formal and informal conversations with the students and conversation in the staff group. Observation was another method to collect data about how the plan worked. The evaluation focused on joint activities. It was noted that the wearing of a yellow vest by staff outdoors had increased safety outdoors. Working with the keywords led the students to reflect more on themselves. Most children know the keywords but some students said they could feel insecure in certain places, especially when older students were in the corridor. Another issue that was obvious in the evaluation was that teachers need to continue working with the keywords. To gain more knowledge and skills in dealing with students with special needs, the staff will be educated in competence about children with neuropsychiatric conditions. In addition, more adults are needed during the breaks and

to cover the different spots in the schoolyard. In the evaluation part of the plan, it is noted that the school bought new toys and a GaGa pit to to provide more structured activities.

This way of working reminds us about action research. There is a starting point and knowledge of what needs to be developed. After that, it is time to plan and implement the steps. Once the efforts have been completed, you need to follow up the results again. The different parts link with each other and each requires an analysis. This systematic process means seeing the whole, and that each part is dependent on the whole and affects the other parts.

4.5. Conclusion

Looking back on our collaboration with the pilot school

The collaboration between the project partner and pilot school can be divided into different periods: a pre-period, intensive period and post-period.

During the pre-period (February-June 2017), the project partner and delegates of the school worked together to prepare the more intensive collaboration period. Preparations consisted of a first 'getting to know each other', the beginning of a context analysis, exchange of information, the LCP lab for the delegates of all five schools, and a meeting to discuss how to start the work at the school with all school staff after the summer holidays.

During one school year (end of August 2017-June 2018), the project partner and pilot school worked intensively on different activities related to the action research cycle. The first six months were focused predominantly on identifying the issues the school wanted to work with and improve. The university team was used to work with reflection, slowing down processes so as to allow better understanding, and including all voices possible; the pilot school was used to work with actions and moving forwards, sometimes on the bases of decisions by a smaller group of people.

Two very different cultures, a school culture and an academic culture, with different paces and ways of working, met and sometimes clashed. In these collisions, the question of co-designing was apparent more than ever. Who decided on the pace? Who should be involved? Was there a middle way? While the voice of the project partner was louder in relation to time for reflection and involving all staff at school, the voice of the pilot school was listened to with regard to defining community. The school preferred to focus on the actors in the school first before reaching out to others beyond the school. The way forward seemed to be when all were ready to take a next step.

After six months, both project partner and pilot school were ready for the implementation of some actions. The frustration of the school about the slowness of the process was noticeable. They longed for actions and experiencing improvements, and wanted to drop the phase of discussing issues that were not going so well. From January to June, a few actions could be implemented but not many, as there were other important, non-LCP-project issues that asked for the attention of the school. Several suggested actions needed larger re-organisation and had to wait for the new school year to start. When the project partner ended their direct involvement (June 2018), an action plan was developed and the school had started with their actions.

The post-period of our collaboration ran from September 2018 to April 2019. During this period the school worked independently on the implementation of more actions; the evaluators from the University of Cambridge collected their final data for the impact evaluation; the project partner collected information about the process through a feedback session, and several dissemination activities were prepared and put into practice. Looking back, this post-period turned out to be a very essential period of the project. It was during this period that changes and improvements were discovered. We

all moved from wondering 'what the LCP project in the end brought and what it taught us' to experiencing real changes and finding out how much we had learned – from co-designing a project and egalitarian dialogues to learning how to do action research; from deepening our understanding of the culture of the school to the time it takes to implement change.

The importance of the post-period

During the post-period, the school was able to independently implement suggested actions as formulated in the action plan. Experienced and presumed improvements by the staff of the pilot school were confirmed by the results of the impact evaluation. The staff had noticed, for example, a decrease in the number of escalated conflicts outdoors and in the corridors, and the results of the impact evaluation confirmed this assumption by pointing to an improvement in the school climate and an increase in the number of students and adults who said they felt more listened to.

While the pilot school, in September-October 2018, was sceptical about what it had accomplished, in April 2019 they came with another picture to the dissemination seminar in Gothenburg. Positive changes in the school had become noticeable, and the post-period as well as the preparations for the dissemination activities had given the school time to reflect on the process. After their presentation, the principal and the teacher both mentioned how much fun it was to talk about their experiences and that only now had they come to understand all the achievements of the school.

"When you come to school, it is then that we understand what we have been doing" – one of the delegates

A parent of a former student (who had changed school) contacted the school saying they would like their child to return to the school as they had heard how much it had improved (reported by one of the delegates).