Living and Learning Democracy in Schools

*A Description of an Ongoing Democratic School Development Program
in Mainstream Schools in Germany.*

by Dorothea Schuetze and Marcus Hildebrandt.

Table of Contents

FOREWORD BY THE EDITOR

In editing this manual, I have at times felt daunted by the challenges presented in the described process of democratic school development, and awed by the courage and perseverance of the innovative educators who have successfully introduced these methods into many mainstream schools in Germany. The programs were taken up so enthusiastically and successfully there, that the authors of this manual were driven to set up a training institute to train more facilitators to carry out the work.

We live in challenging times where our so called democratic rights seem to be ever more eroded, inequality is increasing in many places, and environmental and economic threats are at an all-time high. True democracy seems to be an impossibility yet these innovators have proven that it can and does work, even in the most challenging of environments, the mainstream school system. And what better place for people to live and learn democracy than in schools where teachers, parents, students and administrators are thrown together and compelled by law to do the best they can to prepare young people for adult life.

 In democratic school development programs, improvement in school quality is inextricably connected with the development of a democratic school culture. It is this cultural change that stands to have the most benefit for any school. Any changes made in a school, practical or procedural, have the invaluable additional outcome that participants young and old, learn what true democracy is. Through participation, they experience it first hand and benefit from the resulting empowerment and self respect embedded in its philosophy and practices. These experiences of self valuing, confidence in self-expression, of knowing that you can be heard and respected, knowing that you can make a difference, impact deeply on a persons personality and are then transferred to every aspect of a person's functioning in all arenas of life. Having experienced real democracy people are empowered to create a democratic world.

Additionally school development programs are excellent vehicles for enhancing understanding, acceptance and enjoyment between diverse members of a community, resulting in decreased isolation, and in increased resilience in times of adversity. Respect is generated between younger and older members of a community. Adults are often astonished at the competence and maturity displayed by previously troublesome students when the young people, regardless of age, come to believe that they really do have a voice and their views will be respected. The need for 'acting out' in antisocial ways is diminished.

Rather than taking time away from the learning of the more traditional subject areas, living and learning democracy in schools enhances learning in those areas. Teaching is conducted with more connection and relevance to what the learners perceive to be of real interest and value to them and thus engagement is enhanced many-fold.

It may be daunting to discover how long, complex and challenging the establishment of an ongoing democratic school development program can be. However making a start will reap rewards previously unimagined. The authors of this book speak English, and are willing to answer questions and give support. See contact details at the end of the manual.

Katerina Seligman, Editor, 2015.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank all schools and school participants with whom they have worked over the years, especially for their trust, their courage and their perseverance to embark on such an intensive and sometimes challenging process. They trust that the school development programs they have facilitated will have lasting, life-enhancing effects for all in the schools in which they have worked. They applaud the patience and courage of participants and share their enjoyment of the successes, large and small.

INTRODUCTION

The material in this handbook is based on ten years experience in German Schools by Dorothea Schuetze and Marcus Hildebrandt. The concepts have been tested and put into practice with remarkable success in 10 different schools over the past 13 years and the work is continuing. With increasing frequency these innovative educators are being asked to assist as external facilitators with long term school development programs in mainstream schools. A Training Institute has been established in Berlin to train facilitators to do this work which is more and more in demand. Over the years, the approach has been tested, refined and adapted with the fundamental principles remaining constant**.**

The widespread scepticism they faced in the beginning gradually gave way to appreciation as parents, teachers, pupils and support staff experienced the benefits of the school development and problem solving processes. An essential principle of the approach described is that all the people affected by potential developments and changes are invited to participate, and are seen, respected, and taken seriously as experts in their own needs and wishes. This includes, teachers, students, parents, other school personnel and sometimes external partners such as organizations in the community.

Contrary to initial fears and doubts that the process would be too time-consuming and unproductive, participation came to be seen as a huge benefit when dealing with school related topics, common decision making and problem solving.

The use of external facilitators, which was also initially viewed with scepticism, came to be accepted as participants realized the benefits of impartial leadership. External facilitation ensured that all people involved participated equally, that differences were fully expressed, and that the interests and needs of everyone were heard and considered.

After several years of testing, evaluation and further development, these ideas are now being offered to a wider audience and a Training Institute for facilitators has been established in Berlin. This handbook is offered in the hope that schools world-wide will benefit from the Democratic School Development processes described, and embrace these ideas for the benefit of all.

The handbook is of interest to potential facilitators as well as to whole school communities: parents, teachers, pupils and support staff, and other community organizations.

What to expect from the handbook

Readers will be familiarized with the central principles of Democratic School Development, the abilities required, and the methods which have been successfully used. The question of whether it is realistic for young children to participate, with equal rights, in a democratic school development process is addressed.

The procedures and implementation of the method are described and practical examples are given. The authors explain the dynamics of the negotiation process between teachers, parents and students. They then discuss the implications of continuing the development program long term in any particular school.

Advice is offered regarding the roles and competencies required of facilitators in a democratic school development program and the factors which can enhance or hinder the process are discussed.

A helpful CD rom describing the school development program, including exercises and games, is available in German. It is recommended that German speakers read this handbook (available in German and English) before using the CD rom. See contact details at the end of this manual to access these materials.

DESCRIPTION OF THE APPROACH
Impartial facilitation
Ideally external facilitators are employed to guide the process. When people within the system take on this role it is much more difficult to maintain an impartial attitude, though in some situations it may be possible. Impartial facilitation does not mean that the facilitators should have nothing to do with school. On the contrary, it is essential that they have detailed knowledge of the particular school and the school system generally. The required knowledge should be gained prior the commencement of the school development process. Observing experienced facilitators at work can greatly assist those wishing to facilitate in the future.

Teachers, educators, social workers, parents, former students, mediators, and consultants can all potentially become facilitators. It is recommended that they work only with a school in which they are not directly involved to avoid a confusion of roles and conflicts of interest.

It is helpful for facilitators to have previously experienced a democratic school development program, and if this is not possible, to at least understand the process in depth.

Brief overview
Democratic school development is not a project with a pre-determined end, but a long term process which ideally evolves continuously and is supported by all participants. It can result in changes in any aspect of a school, depending on the wishes of the participants. Developments can include improved cooperation between the school and the parents, teamwork within staff, the development of new school rules, human rights issues, improved quality of learning, and many other things of relevance to the particular school.

In order to develop and design schools in a democratic way it is necessary that all the different interest groups within the school participate. This includes teachers, students, parents, counsellors, educators, social workers, and also technical staff and possibly some external partners (e.g. government authorities, management staff, community organizations). Each party or stakeholder group comes to know the needs and wishes of the others. Thus all the relevant groups embark on a journey together to develop the school in a variety of ways and enhance it as a life-giving place of learning and working.

The foundation for this process involves identifying the strengths, the positive qualities of the school, and the wishes of all the people involved. These strengths and wishes can be in regard to school organisation, the curriculum, teaching methods, the way people interact with each other, projects, physical surroundings and so on.

Dialogue amongst all people involved reveals the common ground. Positive feedback is encouraged, and typically a supportive culture of appreciation develops in the school. Perspectives, needs, and demands of the participating sub-groups can vary considerably, and can lead to conflicts or misunderstandings. A central pillar of this model is negotiation: Consensus-oriented negotiation is the core of everyday democratic functioning and is basic to the model.

It must be restated that participants sometimes begin with reluctance, scepticism and resistance, believing that the process is likely to be cumbersome, ineffective and a waste of precious time. It is only after experiencing the process that they begin to appreciate the value of a truly democratic way of functioning.

Beginnings in German schools
The school development model described here was first tested in a high school in Berlin, Germany during 2002 and 2003. After evaluating the first experiences, three further schools started their programs by the end of 2003. These were a primary school with many migrant students, and two high schools. Parts of the model were also used in many other schools at that time. Since then many schools have embarked on full democratic school development programs.

CENTRAL PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT
Basic components
The school development approach consists of five basic components:
quality development, resource orientation, democracy development, achievement of objectives, and development of competencies. Democratic school development can only be achieved in a sustainable and lasting way if all five factors are integrated successfully. It is essential that existing resources and strengths of the school are recognized and honoured. The way decisions are made plays a central role in the process. To achieve good democratic decision making, some competencies are required which have to be learned or enhanced.

Let everyone participate!
Because of existing hierarchical power structures, and the diverse interests of the different people involved, the "school system" presents big challenges for democratic development. Therefore, it is desirable that everyone, teachers, students, families, social workers, technical, administrative and other support staff, and possibly external partners, are all part of the process and that individual perspectives and requirements are taken seriously and considered equally during the process of negotiation.

Change can evoke fear and resistance in many people. If these people are not co-creators of the change, it is likely that they will not support the new developments, and in some cases, might hinder or sabotage them. If all people who will be affected by future changes do not participate, then the solutions can never be optimal, as all perspectives did not contribute to their creation. Important views, needs, and competencies are missed, to the detriment of the whole process. For example, parents and students have been found to contribute completely new insights, creative ideas and suggestions that the teaching staff would never have thought of. These become part of the solution which benefits everyone.

Create short term benefits for everybody
It is not only the quality of the school development process that matters. Generally, people are willing to participate in a process of change if they can see immediate benefits for themselves. Therefore, each stage of the school's development should involve perceivable benefits in the near future. These benefits might be things such as increased understanding and cooperation, improved learning, improved planning of classes and activities, better timetabling, more efficient use of facilities, more enjoyment at school, to name some examples.

Inclusion, appreciation and dialogue from the outset
The events held at the beginning of the school development program, during which the existing strengths of the school and the wishes of all participants are identified, are central to the whole process. These initial events generate intensive discussion and reflection between and within the different subgroups involved. It is crucial that each person knows that their contribution is important and will impact on the resulting school development.

Every school does have its strengths and these have been built up over many years. The acknowledgement of these strengths and appreciation of the work that has been accomplished is very important. This validation builds up the confidence of those who contributed. It is not uncommon that in schools there is a lack of expressed appreciation. In many schools the focus is often on difficulties, deficits and defects rather than strengths. This incomplete and therefore inaccurate perception may be reinforced within the school, and sometimes comes from outside as well, for example from media, school authorities and politicians. The establishment of a "culture of appreciation" within and between all subgroups is a crucially important part of the work, and impacts on everyone's well-being.

In addition to the development of a culture of appreciation, promotion of dialogue between the different subgroups, by means of specific activities, is important. When participants see that their ideas are discussed by others and are taken seriously, increased confidence and self-respect result.

Democratic development is a learning process for everybody
Learning democratic functioning is not a process that is transmitted from teacher to student, but rather a process in which all participants (adults, children and teenagers) learn and grow. Self-reflection and the questioning of existing power structures are encouraged. Democratic functioning and decision making are learned and practised, and their value experienced first hand. People who have previously learned and embraced democratic ways of functioning are in a good position to model these behaviours to others.

Expanding the understanding of democracy
"Democracy" is taught in social science and history classes, mostly in a theoretical way and in connection to governmental systems. The few practical experiences people have with democracy in school are often limited to the way school committees and other such groups function. These experiences present only a small part of the possible dimensions of democracy.

The participation in a democratic school development process offers the chance to experience a broader dimension of democracy, and to use school as a place to learn and live democracy. It becomes clear that democracy can be much more than a tick in the box at elections. Democracy can be a form of social interaction where everybody is respected and taken seriously with his or her different interests and needs. Democratic behaviours can be learned, practised and extended further in the school setting. Practical everyday examples include how students deal with each other in class, how conflicts are resolved, how decisions are made, and how the concerns wishes and visions of students, teachers, parents and all other people involved are included. Democratic exercises and experiences have been designed which demonstrate that win-win-solutions are possible for all parties involved and are worth the effort.

Democracy in the wider society
The experiencing of democracy at school has effects well beyond the school context. Participants gain a new awareness of what constitutes real democracy, and can then take responsibility in the creation of a new democratic paradigm in many other situations in society. Their idea of what it means to be a participating citizen is reinvigorated.

Gaining awareness of discrimination and discriminatory power structures

Gaining awareness of discriminatory power structures is one of the most important aspects of democratic school development. It is also one of the biggest challenges. The aim is to develop a democratic culture, sensitising all participants to undemocratic, discriminating, racist or contemptuous attitudes and unjust behaviours, and enabling them to take a stand and to develop new and effective ways of dealing with a situation.

Obvious and hidden forms of discrimination in school (and in society generally) need to be considered. Discriminating remarks and behaviour which often go unchallenged, must be acknowledged and addressed in a democratic system. To achieve this it is necessary to ensure that all participants have access to relevant information and get the opportunity to participate. For example, parents of migrant families who do not speak the local language, would need to have material translated and have translators available in group sessions. In Germany this particularly applies to the many Turkish, Arab, and East European immigrants. In the New Zealand context, opportunities to deepen understanding of race relations between Maori, Pacific and Pakeha communities would be particularly relevant.

Traditionally, school is a system based on hierarchical structures and imbalances of power. All individuals living, learning and working in this system are affected by these structures. The way things operate are so natural, normal and influential that they are rarely questioned. Actively learning, practising and evolving democratic ways of functioning is not always an easy task. In the first instance it is necessary to become aware of one's own involvement in existing discriminating power structures, and to reflect on their consequences. The most obvious power positions within school are the teachers' position in relation to the students and adults' position generally in relation to children and teenagers. To question these power positions can be hurtful to some people and can create insecurity and fear of unproductive chaos. Thus strong resistance may be encountered.

Training activities and projects can be offered to assist in the raising of awareness about the school environment and any discriminating structures that exist within it. In the field of anti-discrimination there are multiple training possibilities that can be applied in schools, preferably with the support of external facilitators, as this topic is not an easy one. No matter which way a school chooses to go, if it claims to be democratic and takes its educational task seriously, non-discriminating structures and behaviours must be developed and permanently cultivated.

Guidelines for a democratic school culture.

It is not essential that all existing structures and responsibilities in a school are revised. Teachers have to fulfil their educational tasks, and they have to do this within a framework set by the Ministry of Education and school authorities. Adults, not children, are ultimately responsible for decisions and actions.

Nevertheless, awareness of the different roles and power structures within a school system are necessary for democratic school development to proceed, whether change is to take place or not. It is important for participants to reach agreement on what roles, relationships and power structures do exist in the system, and this ideally should happen at the beginning of the school development program. It may be helpful to create "guidelines for a democratic school culture", and review these from time to time.

Examples of changes made in schools
One example is dealing differently with assessments. Students, for instance, can learn to measure and assess their own progress by setting their own achievement goals and applying methods of self-assessment. Teachers and students can then enter into dialogue over their assessments, and together formulate achievement goals. This means that the teacher can be a partner, companion and advisor in the assessment process. The assessment criteria of the teacher become transparent to the students, and can be discussed and negotiated with them. There are also opportunities to develop and use feedback systems which provide the teachers with feedback about their own functioning from their students. This idea is discussed later in the manual. (See section entitled 'A Practical Example of School Development'.)

Some other examples: Children and young adults can have an influence on the decision making process in regards to the content and the teaching methods. They can bring themselves in as experts on certain topics or skills in class. Students can practise democratic principles in student-led committees. Regular time can be allocated in class for democratic processes to be experienced through games and exercises. These are just a few of the many ways democratic functioning can be practised in schools.

Additionally, the roles of parents in relation to school can change dramatically. Rather than the common separation between school and home, parents and teaching staff can become partners supporting each other, exchanging information perspectives and concerns.

These are not new ideas. They are the norm in some schools, and while they may offer big challenges for participants, the benefits are invaluable. Once participants experience the benefits, their willingness and level of engagement increases many-fold. It should be noted that not every approach is applicable to every school. Each school has its own specific conditions and prerequisites and therefore has to find its own appropriate ways by means of negotiation with all participants.

The principle of consensus in negotiation processes
A central principle of the concept of Democratic School Development described here is the principle of consensus in negotiation processes. Majority votes are only used in exceptional cases. Majority voting may result in a situation where up to half the participants are not happy and may not support, or may even sabotage the decided course of action, causing very inefficient use of time and resources. A decision which all the participants can support is much more likely to result in successful outcomes.

With consensus decision-making, reservations that people hold are taken seriously. At the same time the people who are unsure or against a decision are called to account to clearly define their doubts and make alternative suggestions. It is not enough to simply be against something. Sometimes only minor changes are enough to bring about consensus agreement. (eg, wording, dates, deadlines) and at other times more fundamental changes are needed.

Expressed reservations or suggestions for a change often mean that matters previously not yet thought of are given consideration. Thus reservations and doubts are important for quality decisions to be made. If decisions are made by a majority vote, important aspects may be overlooked, and outvoted people may block progress. In a truly democratic system, the goal is that all participants are heard equally and there are no "losers". This means that decisions are 'owned' by

all participants enabling the highest level of engagement and support.

The facilitator acts as a midwife
Democratic school development attempts to take into account all existing resources, stakeholder groups, problems and processes. This means there is no standardized set of methods. Each intervention, each workshop, each event is designed by the facilitators for the particular situation. Different ideas and methods are mixed and adapted to maximize exchange of information, creativity, and fair negotiation to achieve the defined goals.

The facilitation of this process is based on the idea that the participants themselves are the experts, and that the facilitator acts as a kind of midwife, providing a safe environment by giving structure, methodology and an appropriate framework so that the existing resources and competencies of the participants can be utilized to maximum effect. When choosing different methods, the stakeholder groups' ages and backgrounds are taken into account. The discussions are designed in a way that allows everyone to participate. With small children for instance, it is recommended to use painting, clay modelling and role plays for the children's views to be expressed. When different age-groups are involved, several working groups may need to be formed, dealing with the same questions, but using different methods. The results of each group are then brought together.

Clearly, facilitators require experience of group dynamics with groups of different ages and backgrounds, a high degree of creativity and a broad repertoire of methods. (See section entitled 'Requirements for Good Facilitation'.)

THE DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS IN ACTION
Beginning the process: Exploring strengths and wishes.
At the beginning of a democratic school development process, workshops are held where participants express their views about the strengths of the school as they perceive them. They then formulate wishes in relation to each individual sub-group in the school community (including their own). This includes commenting on structural aspects, on the quality of the teaching in the classroom and school administration.

The 'strengths and wishes' approach differs from a commonly used one which focuses on strengths and weaknesses. People are used to focusing on irregularities, deficits and difficulties. Such a focus may have a place in the school development process. However the approach suggested here deliberately focuses on strengths and wishes. A collection of weaknesses can easily have a demotivating and paralysing effect whereas the identification of strengths and wishes supports self-confidence and a culture of appreciation. The deficits perceived by the participants are indirectly expressed when their wishes are explored. In comparison to a list of weaknesses, the formulation of wishes is forward-looking and constructive. This approach follows methods of modern organizational development. The 'strengths and wishes' list can help in the formulation of the school charter, the local curriculum and their corresponding developmental goals.

The relevance of strengths
The strengths in a school, when acknowledged and valued become building blocks for the developmental process. The different perspectives of all participants in the school are gathered to clarify how each stakeholder group and each individual perceive the school; what they like, what is important for them, and what they want to maintain or cultivate. The different perspectives and views when put together, result in a diverse and often impressive picture which provides everybody with an overview of the degree to which existing structures and activities are valued. From this, the

school gains strength and energy to take the next steps.

Through the gathering of the school's strengths, the participants not only come to know each other and the prevailing views better, they also learn about the common ground they share with others, and the differences and imbalances. They then reflect on the possible reasons for commonalities and differences.

Some examples of questions raised during a 'strengths and wishes' workshop:
-how come all stakeholder groups agree that "the school and toilets are nice and clean", except the cleaner whose wish is that "boys should pee in the urinal and not everywhere else".
-why is it that all groups apart from the parents consider that the school has a "good school atmosphere".
-why do the cleaning staff not mention the students in regards to 'polite manners'.
-how come students rank "natural science" and "vocational guidance" under strengths, but do not mention other subjects such as maths, languages or history on their strengths list.
-why do only the teachers name "good learning atmosphere" as a strength, and all the other groups don't?
-how come students and parents but nobody on the teaching staff see field trips as central strength.

These questions were excellent starting points in coming to understand what was occurring in one particular school.

Rationalization of activities and increased enjoyment
Often participants, especially teachers, fear that the process will require more of their energy and time. Teachers and other members of the school community are often already overburdened, making more engagement virtually impossible. Therefore, as well as producing an increase in quality, each school development program should lead to a rationalization of activities. By surveying the school's strengths as perceived by the different stakeholder groups, the school finds out which activities and initiatives the participants want to maintain. Time and energy consuming activities which are not valued by the school community can sometimes be given up, and the freed energy can be used for the further development of acknowledged strengths. Thus, energy and engagement can be focused and prioritized. When implemented well, a school development program leads to increased enjoyment and a decreased sense of being burdened for teachers as well as for other participants.

The relevance of wishes
When considering the surveyed wishes, all participants learn what others consider to be a "good school". The wish lists also reveal a lot about existing conflicts and differences which might already be visible, but most often are hidden and unspoken. Hidden conflicts lead to latent tensions and dissatisfaction, and generally have negative effects on the school atmosphere. The wish list provides precious information about areas in which there is a need for development and change. Thus, the collection of wishes is the engine which drives school development.

Strengths as the energy source and wishes as the engine for school development
Strengths and wishes are not considered separately within the development process. After the school has decided to cultivate a few central strengths, the expressed wishes are consulted to extend those chosen strengths. *This means that the wishes which can enhance already acknowledged strengths have priority in the way forward.*
Often, the focus on strengths and wishes is considered sceptically. It might be thought that, in case of a teaching deficit for example, chances for improvement would be small if the focus lies

primarily on the development of the strengths. However, this is refuted in practice. When asking for wishes, facilitators explicitly ask for wishes in relation to quality of teaching. Most often, wishes in this area turn out to be central wishes. The most important wishes are assigned to the corresponding strengths of the school. Measures are then formulated to fulfil these wishes and, at the same time, to cultivate or to extend the chosen strengths. This means that the wishes are the basis of any future development. The strengths determine in which area the realization of the wishes is tackled.

An example: let's suppose that a high priority wish is to increase the use of computers in class. This wish is common in many schools. However, all schools are different. One school might have 'sprinter classes' on their list of strengths, ('sprinter classes' allow for a school leaving certificate in a shorter than usual time period). Another school's strength might be a "school with courage and without racism". Accordingly, focussing on strengths, the possible effects of the wish for 'increased use of computers in the classroom' are different:
In the school with 'sprinter classes' the increased use of computers could provide self-learning opportunities so that the students become familiar with the abundance of learning materials available to them online.
In the school "with courage and without racism" computers could be used to explore websites dealing with racism, and work with material developed by anti-racist organisations for use in schools.
Thus the wish for more use of computers is met by applying it to the identified strength.

A culture of cooperation influences teaching methods
A culture of cooperation in a school plays a central role in changing ways of teaching. If there is lack of cooperation among the teachers or between the teaching staff and the students, it is not easy to introduce new learning methods based on participation and learning partnerships. However, if the democratic school development process has a positive influence on the cooperation of all participants, this can open up new perspectives for changing the way teaching occurs. Schools which give importance to values, cooperation, and ritual prove to be very successful when restructuring their existing teaching methods.

OECD educational policy: key competencies

Since 1996 international organisations have increasingly supported these ideas about democratic functioning within the field of educational policy, among them the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development). The OECD has looked at economic development in relation to various aspects of quality of life, and especially in relation to educational and social outcomes. In 2005, it formulated "key competencies for a successful life and a well-functioning society".

Some of these competencies are summarized as follow:
Specialist competence
-to build up knowledge and experience of democratic functioning.
-to detect and assess problems in democratic functioning.

Methodical competence
-to act systematically and bring projects to fruition.
-to effectively reach the public

Self competence
-to be aware of and develop own interests, opinions and goals
 -to clearly communicate own interests in democratic decision-making processes
 -to be self-motivated, show initiative and use opportunities for participation
 -to understand and communicate own values, convictions and actions in a broader context

Social competence
-to understand and accept the perspective of others
-to negotiate norms, ideas and goals in a democratic and cooperative way
-to deal with diversity and differences constructively and solve conflicts in a fair way
-to show empathy, solidarity and responsibility towards others

The competencies listed above are important and are promoted as far as is possible within a democratic school development program. However they cannot be accomplished to the same degree for all participants. Differences are especially observed between those who participate regularly in the negotiation rounds, where intensive experiences of democratic processes are gained, and those who are only partially involved. How far democratic competencies can be developed during any one program will depend in part on the extent to which the prerequisites for the success of a democratic school development are in place. These factors are discussed later this manual. (See section entitled 'Factors for Success'.)

Desired outcomes of school development
Additional desired outcomes for school development, not mentioned explicitly in the table above, are summarized as follows:
-learning for all participants should occur (children/teenagers and adults).
-participants come to see different perspectives and opinions as opportunities rather than problems.
 -a culture of acknowledgement and appreciation develops.
-awareness of power imbalances and discriminating structures at school and in society generally is heightened.
-participants build up confidence in their abilities to be effective.
-participants increase their understanding and appreciation of consensus decision-making, (and the ineffectiveness of a winner-loser mentality).
-participants come to value 'participative management' in school administration.

Learning democratic competencies
In order to facilitate the learning of democratic competencies, specific methods are applied in the school development events and workshops.

The task is to create stimulating experiences where the whole school atmosphere becomes more relaxed, participants get to know each other in new ways, improve communication, become aware of group dynamics and learn the theory of democratic functioning and its practical applications in a playful way.

Sometimes the work can be intense and challenging. The aim, always, is to stimulate the imagination, creativity, strengths and abilities of the participants. The methods include group dynamics exercises, role plays, communication games, 'get to know each other' games, warm-up games, reunion games, cooperation games, group division games, reflection games, and so on. (A separate manual has been compiled describing some of these games and exercises. Email the editor for a digital copy: katselig@xtra.co.nz).

The methods used assist in the development of a range of abilities and enhance communication and cooperation within the school. Some activities are specifically designed to teach awareness of democratic functioning. In particular the highly stimulating and innovative "Betzavta" exercises increase awareness of how we habitually behave, and increase our awareness of what democratic functioning can be. (These exercises are described later in this manual in the section entitled Stages of a School Development Program/Betzavta).

In addition participants learn, in small groups, to present their concerns, to speak in front of larger groups, to argue, to debate, and to listen to and appreciate others. Consensus oriented negotiation is learned, where each person participates with equal rights. A repertoire of discussion, feedback and analysis methods, is employed. Children teenagers and adults all benefit a great deal from this learning which can be applied in other areas of life outside the school context.

Development of democratic functioning in children and teenagers
Adults are often surprised at the abilities displayed by children and teenagers participating in the activities described above. Students commonly develop ideas and suggestions with each other and then present them to the adult group. By standing up in front of adults and explaining their ideas, they reveal abilities not previously perceived or encouraged. When their ideas are taken seriously, the young people grow in confidence and ability to contribute in a valuable way. These experiences have a lasting effect on the personality and future development of the young participants. Above all, they develop trust in the democratic process. Students previously perceived as trouble-makers particularly benefit from this kind of involvement.

An example from a participating primary school in Germany
During the negotiation rounds students who were perceived by the teachers as "unable to concentrate" had the chance to experience new and playful ways to participate. The issue of homework arose. The wishes expressed by the children were "less homework", "no homework" or "voluntary homework". The children created paintings, wrote their suggestions on posters, and presented their ideas in the form of a short theatre piece. The negotiations with the adults that followed had the result that there was some obligatory homework, (multiplication tables and spelling as these were especially important to the teachers), and in addition, a choice from a list of voluntary homework. It was decided that one day per week there would be no homework at all. This arrangement was introduced in the whole school. The unexpected result was that the children now do more homework than before the implementation of the new rules. The fact that the children were democratically involved in the decision-making enabled them to feel good about the decisions reached, rather than experience them as rules imposed from above.

Children came to be seen in a new way by some of the adults. Abilities were displayed and developed which previously had not had space for expression in the everyday life of school and home. The children had the experience of their voices being respected, and felt proud of the result they achieved. They came to know that they could influence decision-making, and be a part of real change in the school.

Working democratically with small children
How are democratic processes possible with small children? Often adults doubt that this is possible and we hear statements and questions such as:"Don't you need certain boundaries and rules to protect the children?", "Aren't they too small and inexperienced to take responsibility for certain things?", "If we let the children decide for themselves they will play all day and learn nothing at school."

Children having equal rights in negotiation does not mean that they will be left unprotected from possible dangers, or will be left to make decisions by themselves. The opposite is the case. It is fundamental to perceive the needs and interests of the children and take them seriously, and in particular to take seriously their desire to play. It is well known that everyone can learn through play, and children often request more opportunities to do this.

Children often experience rules and prohibitions as limiting and arbitrary and consequently feel powerless, at the mercy of the adults and "the school system". Adults frequently do not explain to children why they should or should not do certain things. If the children are included in discussions about what is important or worrying to the adults and why, and at the same time have their own needs acknowledged, they are usually very capable of understanding and accepting the adults' perspective. They are "initiated" in the true sense of the word, into the very core of the situation or problem, and learn how to weigh up different perspectives. Transparency is necessary for anyone to assess a situation and to make sensible responses. Just as the adults listen to and respect the perspectives and motives of the children, so too do the children learn to do the same for adults.

During the school development programs facilitated by the authors, students commonly express the wish for more play time. This occurs especially in primary schools. The teachers are often opposed to more play and insist on "regular lessons". This provides the opportunity to examine the needs behind the opposing wishes. In the brainstorming of ideas during the negotiation round that follows, different needs and wishes are integrated so that, if possible, all participants are satisfied with the solution. This is not necessarily easy to achieve, but is almost always possible. In the above example it could be achieved by including more games and playful teaching methods into the lessons.

A common experience in democratic functioning is that an outcome that previously seemed impossible becomes possible. It is often assumed that to cater to the needs of two groups in apparent conflict with each other, compromise is necessary. However compromise usually means that neither group really gets what they want. Again and again, in truly democratic processes, it is discovered that both groups can get what they wish for or need, without any compromise. This may be hard to believe. It is only through the experiencing of successful democratic negotiations that trust in the power of true democracy develops.

STAGES OF A SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.
Stage1. Beginning
To begin a school development program, the agreement of all people who will be affected by future changes should be sought. In particular, initially, the teachers are made aware of the possible effects the process might have on the school. It must be emphasized again that school development is not a project with a pre-determined end, but a long term process which evolves continuously and is supported by all participants. If the teaching staff agree to embark on this journey, the next step is to consult with the parents, board of trustees, students representatives, and others involved in the school community.

Stage 2. Information sharing and reflection
During this stage, gatherings with each group of participants are held where the concept is explained by the facilitators in some detail. Individual stakeholder groups express their different ideas about "democracy in school", and consider the extent to which they are willing to give the proposed development program a chance. It is important to clarify how much support there is for the program and be receptive to the reservations. For example, teachers often fear that it will require

too much of their time and energy. Another common fear is that students will take over and make all the decisions. Students, on the other hand, are often sceptical about whether the teachers are genuinely willing to give them an equal voice in decision making. Existing fears and doubts have to be taken very seriously. They must never be ignored or dismissed. Participants must be assured that if their doubts and fears were to come about, the facilitators would deal with the situation explicitly and intervene if necessary.

Introductory events with students, usually about 45 minutes long, are held in each class. All parents are invited to come to evening events, usually in separate groups depending on the age group of their children. Additional events are held with teachers, school social workers, administrative staff, cleaners, and external partners. Some consultations happen in personal meetings and conversations. (Examples of external partners who might be considered as participants are: libraries, sports clubs, local businesses, social work agencies, action groups, local organizations).

Stage 3. 'Strengths and Wishes' workshops
The next stage is to collect and analyse the strengths and wishes of all stakeholders. When working with students, it is helpful to use different approaches to address different age groups. The following scheme has proved useful in past programs:
-School beginners: painting and story telling during a project day
-Year 3 and 4: painting, writing and role plays during a project day
-Year 5 – 13: writing strengths and wishes on cards, as well as discussions during a double period.

Teachers ideas about the strengths of the school and their wishes can be best explored during a study day. Areas such as conflict resolution, decision making processes, teaching approaches, and other school issues and problems emerge during these events if sufficient time is allowed.

The exploration with parents typically takes place in an evening or weekend event. All parents of the school are invited, with a choice of either a Friday evening or Saturday morning, often in separate groups depending on the ages of their children. (In one case in Germany, these events were held in two languages Turkish and German.)

At the conclusion of the 'strengths and wishes' workshops, the most commonly expressed strengths and wishes are identified for each stakeholder group.

Stage 4. The negotiation rounds
At the end of each strengths-and-wishes-workshop the participants are asked whether they are interested in participating in a negotiation round. Up to 30 people can participate in each negotiation round. They are made up of the following groups:
6-10 teachers, and other educators.
6 -10 parents,
10 -16 children and teenagers.
1-2 school administrators.
1-3 participants of other stakeholder group.
It is recommended that the first three groups listed are of approximately equal size, though often more children or teenagers are invited to ensure that they are not in the minority compared to the number of adults. Aside from this consideration, as long as all participants are satisfied with the process that takes place, it does not matter which group is in the majority, as no 'majority voting' takes place. If at all possible, all stakeholder groups should be represented. In principle, everyone who wants to participate should be allowed to do so, and no-one should be coerced to do so.

As the process progresses, it is not always the same people who represent each group. By including new representatives in negotiation rounds, the circle of actively engaged people within the school grows. It is important that people participating in the negotiation rounds keep in close contact with committees that form and maintain good communication with them, to ensure that the necessary flow of information takes place about decisions, the decision-making process, problem-solving, conflict resolution, strategies etc.

Selection of participants for negotiation rounds
In the experience of the authors, adults volunteer readily to participate in democratic school development programs, despite the time commitment involved, and students are usually so keen that a selection process is needed to choose representatives. (The negotiation rounds occur at four to six week intervals, take place during the late afternoon and evenings and are each 2 to 3 hours long.)

Students choose their own representatives and compile criteria for participation. For example, all age groups must be represented, equal numbers of girls and boys are chosen and helpful competencies are considered. Sometimes a 'support group' is set up which exchanges information with the selected students of the negotiation round. This support group helps in making suggestions and decisions, organizes supportive activities, and may also participate in the negotiation rounds, alternating with the selected students.

Because the student population changes during the program, the composition of the negotiation round is always changing. This also applies to other stakeholder groups, and schools advertise for new members of the negotiation rounds as needed.

Participants prepare for this creative phase, the negotiation round, by participating in exercises designed to teach democratic principles and functioning.

Betzavta: Preparation for the negotiation process
Learning democratic behaviours often involves big challenges, especially because participants have very different roles both in and out of the school context and are often entangled in hierarchical power structures. It is necessary to thoroughly understand the principles which underpin a genuinely democratic process, so that all interests and needs can be adequately represented. An excellent way to learn these principles is by participating in dynamic exercises, originating in Israel, known as Betzavta. In group sessions participants are guided through some of these exercises, and as a result go into the negotiation rounds with a better idea of what democracy really means, and a deeper understanding of their own abilities and limitations in acting democratically.

During the course of these highly innovative and effective Betzavta exercises, democratic ways of functioning are demonstrated and tested and participants come to understand common rules and procedures with regard to working and living democratically.

A description of Betzavta/Togetherness Exercises
from Maroshek-Klarmann/Henschel/Oswald/Ulrich 1997
Betzavta is an educational concept in the field of democratic development, originally developed by the "Adam Institute for Democracy and Peace" in Jerusalem, Israel. The concept was later adapted for German educational programs with the intent to provide lively experiences of democracy and democratic principles for children, teenagers and adults. In contrast to traditional methods of political education such as lectures discussions and debates, these exercises enable

participants to actually experience and reflect on democratic principles. Participants learn that true democracy is not a description of certain forms of government, but can be translated into behaviours in everyday situations.

"The founding principle of the 'Betzavta' exercises is the acknowledgement of equal rights of freedom for everybody: the ability to live according to one's own needs, values and norms. This naturally creates conflicts with other people. It is the way in which we deal with these conflicts which determines the democratic character of a society. Through participation in the Betzavta exercises, participants learn that democracy is not limited by compromise or majority vote, but rather there is a striving for the highest possible freedom for all."

The Betzavta exercises provide a simulated situation in which the group is asked to make decisions and solve problems. This is followed by an evaluation phase which examines the degree of satisfaction with the process. Participants become aware of how and why decisions or actions were made. An analysis is made of the circumstances in which needs were expressed, whether the needs were taken seriously or ignored, whether everybody was able to express their needs, who imposed his or her will on others and why, alliances which formed, whether responsibility was taken or given away, whether alternative suggestions were heard and considered seriously or ignored, whether implied assumptions were checked, whether conflicts were real or imagined, and so on.

As an example, in one of the simplest Betzavta exercises, three volunteers are asked to imagine that they each seriously need the one pumpkin which is placed before them. They are then left to work out what to do. In the beginning, each participant usually makes a case for having the whole pumpkin. After a while, participants attempt to find a compromise where each person gets an equal piece of the pumpkin. The volunteers are then asked whether they satisfied with this solution. A compromise often means that no one gets what they really need or want. For many it is an enlightening realization that everyone can get their needs fully met. In the above example, one person may have only wanted the seeds for future plantings, the second only the flesh to make soup, and the third only the skin to make a Halloween lantern. These needs only become apparent if participants communicate adequately with each other. Other possible solutions may also arise from the audience during the course of the exercise.

In another exercise involving two large groups, each group is given a task which appears to completely interfere with the task of the other group.   It appears impossible for both groups to achieve their goals and chaos often ensues. Eventually, as participants become aware of their own functioning, and move towards more democratic ways, they discover that a much broader range of solutions is possible, and against all expectations everyone's needs can be met.

One essential principle of the "Betzavta" concept is the in depth exploration of viewpoints, and of the interests and needs behind them. If viewpoints and "positions" alone are expressed, the discussions often focus on pros and cons, whereas the disclosure of needs generally leads to an understanding of individual motives and opens up a completely new and extended view of the situation and the possible ways of dealing with it.

Participation in these exercises paves the way to effectively address current issues and conflicts within the school.

The first negotiation round

Ideally, the participants of the first negotiation round gather at a weekend event, at an independent venue outside of their usual living and school environments. A neutral place allows the participants to get to know each other in a new way, providing an important basis for all further meetings. At the beginning of the negotiation process the results of the 'strengths and wishes' analysis are considered, and the participants work to come to a common understanding of the strengths. In the course of this process, they record the commonalities in the different perspectives, and discuss the differences. For example: In one school, both parent and student groups mentioned "field trips" as a central strength. However teachers did not regard field trips as a strength of the school. The goal of the discussion was to find the reasons for this difference. It became clear that the teachers definitely acknowledged the field trips as a positive activity, but they experienced the unpaid work involved as a burden and therefore did not perceive these trips as a strength.

The negotiation round provides the opportunity to hear and understand different points of view. All groups enter into conversations with each other and this is often a new experience which breaks down existing reservations and prejudices towards other stakeholder groups. First ideas for new developments start to arise. For example, in the above case of "field trips", some parents spontaneously volunteered to support the teachers more fully with future field trips.

After these conversations the whole group decides on a 'first project' for the school's development. The group chooses a strength which is preferably agreed upon by all stakeholder groups, and important qualities of the central strength are identified.

The goal is to extend the strength by working towards fulfilling highly chosen wishes. The next task therefore is to decide on the wishes which support the chosen central strength. To achieve this, each stakeholder group chooses, from all wishes of their own group, a list of wishes which would benefit the central strength.

Each group then comes up with suggestions of actions or measures as to how these wishes could be fulfilled, and presents them to the other groups using posters or other forms of presentation. After each presentation, the audience is asked for feedback. The main focus of this feedback is appreciation. It is also a time to express agreement or disagreement with the ideas presented. Additional ideas, alternatives and doubts are expressed. The presenters later revise their suggestions taking into account the new ideas, alternatives and doubts that were expressed. There might be several revisions for a single suggestion. Only if all participants (adults, teenagers and children) agree with the suggestion, will it be adopted. This can sometimes take some time, but in some instances, suggestions may be accepted after the first presentation round.

Working with wishes: some examples
Example 1. Parent involvement: The following wishes occur in almost every school from both parents and teachers: "more interest of the parents in the everyday life of school", "more commitment", "more support" and, very specifically, "regular participation in school events". The small numbers of parents who participate in parents' evenings is an issue that frequently arises. While working on these wishes, the following questions arise: "What prevents some parents from having a higher commitment? What would assist parents in becoming more interested in the school and in attending parent evenings?"

During one negotiation round a suggestion was made that all parents of the school should be asked directly why they do not commit more time and energy to the school and what they would need to

feel more welcomed at parent evenings. This suggestion was accepted by all the participants of the negotiation round, and it was agreed to hold a parent meeting on the topic of parent evenings. The children participating in the negotiation round came up with an idea of how to invite the parents to this meeting, to make sure that as many parents as possible turned up. The children's idea was put into practice a few days later: With teacher consent, students from the negotiation round went from class to class explaining to their fellow students why it was important that parents participate in an upcoming parent meeting. The children of each class then designed an invitation letter which included a small glass "gem stone". This initiative resulted in 90 fathers and mothers attending the parent meeting! At this meeting the parents were asked for their wishes and ideas regarding parent evenings which resulted in a whole catalogue of suggestions. The ideas were discussed again within the next negotiation round, and then summarized in a report entitled "Recommendations for the Planning and Realization of Future Parent Evenings" and given to the teaching staff.

These recommendations provided precious information about the interests and concerns of parents and plans were made accordingly. Parents and teachers prepared the parent evenings together, and one or two parents chaired the meetings. Seating was arranged in a circle and finger-food and drinks were shared. Child-care was organised by the parents and translators were available for the Turkish speaking parents. Educational components were included, and other issues such as the dates of the meetings and the flow of information were considered.

Example 2. New Teaching methods. In this case, the teachers wanted to introduce "new teaching methods". This wish fitted with the wishes of the students and matched the chosen strength of the school,"quality of learning". The question arose as to whether everyone understood "new teaching methods" in the same way. There was a need to closely examine the different ideas and needs of the teachers and of the students. In this case it proved helpful to also examine other identified school strengths. The students had named "natural sciences" and "career planning" as strengths, whereas the teachers had ranked the "good learning atmosphere" very highly. Consideration was given to the qualities that the students valued in the natural sciences lessons, and whether they could be applied as new teaching methods in other areas. The question was asked "what exactly creates a "good learning atmosphere" and what methods could support this? The questions that arose in the course of the negotiation process were quite profound and provided entry points to a deeper examination that began to take place outside of the negotiation rounds as well.

Continuation of the negotiation process
After dealing with the first strength, the focus can then shift to a second and later a third strength using a similar process. This means that a great number of wishes can be addressed and gradually fulfilled. After that, wishes that are not connected to one of the existing strengths can also be considered. All participants must agree on whether the fulfilment of these wishes is of central interest for the school. If so, a completely new strength could be birthed and developed.

Negotiation within stakeholder groups
Before a proposal for change, (decided on by consensus in the negotiation round), can be put into practice, every person who would be affected by the change must be consulted. For example, a suggestion of a measure for change concerning the teaching staff, has to be negotiated and adopted among all teachers before being put into practice. The negotiation round cannot bypass other decision-making groups. However, measures that have been designed and intensively discussed within the negotiation round are usually readily accepted because many perspectives and needs have already been considered.

The ongoing negotiation rounds generally meet every four to six weeks to formulate possible measures for school development, based on the chosen school strengths and the wishes identified in the different stakeholder groups. The ideal is to agree on the proposed measures with a consensus. In the course of the negotiation rounds, the measures are reviewed and, if possible, adapted to the needs of everyone concerned with the proposal. Ensuring that all perspectives and interests are expressed in a negotiation round prepares the way for a smooth transition to action.

Additional activities while negotiations are in progress
Engagement in a school development project generates expectations, optimism and enthusiasm throughout the school community and this positive energy can be put to good use while negotiations are in progress. The whole process, from the selection of the strengths and wishes, to the formulation of suggested measures for change, to the final realization of the vision, takes some time, and requires patience and perseverance, especially from those not involved in the negotiation rounds. While waiting for visible results, issues can be addressed which do not require the involvement of all stakeholder groups, but which directly affect different groups and indirectly, the whole school. Activities which contribute to the strengthening of competencies within individual stakeholder groups are especially helpful.

Examples of concurrent activities
-specific measures to support the school administration (e.g. management coaching)
 -the development of strategies and measures to improve the internal communication and the flow of information,
 -training of student representatives,
-the setting up of a mentoring program between older and younger students or – as was done in one of the schools in Germany – lessons or projects where students pass on their competencies and knowledge to other students or to teachers.
-dealing with current problems crises or conflicts.
-cooperation and solidarity within different stakeholder groups.
-cooperation between different professional groups within the staff.
-development of a democratic meeting culture (e.g. incorporating principles of the democratic school development process such as dialogue and consensual decision making into meetings).
-the establishment of a 'parents' café' to provide opportunities for exchange among the parents. This has been done successfully where parents meet regularly for social interaction, information exchange, and mutual support. They invite guest speakers and prepare issues for the negotiation round. Parents come to experience the school as "their place", a place where they belong and can co-create the school that they really want.
- a 'parents support office', run by parents for parents. This is being done where the office is open twice a week, and parents seeking advice visit with their questions.
-increased cooperative activities with external partners (e.g. local organizations, community initiatives, other schools in the neighbourhood, NGOs). For example, collaborative environmental and social activities. The school becomes a driving force behind positive changes which radiate into the wider community. Participants experience being engaged citizens, creating the world they want to live in.

Anchoring results in the school.
It is important that results achieved during the course of a school development program are thoroughly integrated and anchored in the school. A great deal of effort and time goes into revealing and analysing strengths and wishes, negotiating measures for change, and putting them into practice. The analysis of the strengths results in a statement about the school profile, and the

expressed wishes give information about possible areas of development within the school. These results are documented and become part of the overall school profile including the school's principles, goals and activities.

A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE OF SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT
The following describes how in one school, a controversial suggested measure which was initially rejected, came to be accepted and implemented with awe-inspiring success.

The school in this example started the negotiation process with a weekend event. 28 teachers, parents, students and administrative staff participated. In a previous meeting they had already decided on the central school strength they wanted to work on, namely "democratic cooperation". After some preparatory 'Betzavta' exercises and after preparing a draft 'model for democratic school culture' they began with the selection of wishes which supported the chosen strength. To do this the different stakeholder groups initially worked separately. After the selection of wishes (chosen from the wish-pool of each stakeholder group) they developed suggestions for corresponding measures to fulfil the wishes. The students brought six suggestions into the negotiation round, the parents two, the teachers three, and the school administration came up with one measure, a total of twelve suggested measures. All twelve suggestions were presented one after another to the whole negotiation group, and the degree of support for each was indicated by a show of hands. This was followed by a feedback session which provided the opportunity to express positive feedback, doubts, ask for clarification and make additional suggestions.

After this lively 'feedback and discussion round', the different stakeholder groups were asked to incorporate the feedback into their suggestions and then present the revised versions to the whole negotiation group. After each presentation the degree of support for each suggestion was checked with the group. To the delight of all participants eleven of the twelve suggestions were adopted with consensus during this round.

The only suggestion not accepted unanimously was: "teachers to be assessed by students". Two of the wishes expressed by the parents, which potentially could have been fulfilled by this rejected measure were: "teachers should be partners, not superiors or opponents of the students", and "students should not have to accept bad lessons". Even the revision of the suggestion could not dispel the doubts of some teachers. Therefore, the suggestion was deferred. At the conclusion of the negotiation weekend everyone agreed that all of the results would be presented to the whole teaching staff and that all teachers would be asked for feedback.

Soon after this, there was a meeting of the whole school staff where the results of the negotiation weekend were presented. The suggestion for an assessment of the teachers by the students was explained in detail. The doubts of the teachers and their corresponding wishes were then explored. Those who had reservations about the suggestion expressed their fear that this assessment might lead to a kind of ranking of the teachers. They imagined a list of the supposedly best and worst teachers of the school which, in the worst case scenario, would be available to the school community and the public.

The question arose as to why teachers rejected something they were regularly imposing on the students. Nevertheless the expressed reservations had to be taken very seriously because the suggested measure directly concerned all teachers and could not be implemented without their agreement. In the course of further discussions, crucial understandings crystallized. It became apparent that the word "assessment" alone had a negative connotations. The goal of the suggested

measure was reviewed. During the in-depth examination that followed, it became clear that it was not about a classification or judgement, but rather about ideas for further individual self-development. The measure was not intended to make comparisons, but a tool to enhance development and to provide a basis for a dialogue between teachers and students. This clarification caused the teachers to become a little more open to the suggestion.

In a next step, all teachers (in separate working groups) came up with a list of acceptable questions which might be asked of them, which if used, could provide helpful and relevant answers. This led to designing several questionnaires which dealt with different areas of concern: e.g. relationship between teachers and students, teaching methods, professional competence, cooperation and classroom atmosphere. During this process all participants learned a lot about the design of questionnaires and their evaluation as well assessment of lessons.

All teachers agreed to a revised suggestion regarding teacher assessment, providing that participation in the questionnaires was voluntary. This meant that the teachers would not be forced to use the survey. Everyone entered into a binding agreement that three to four teachers would use the questionnaire in their classes, and then report to their colleagues about their experiences. The teachers reserved the right to decide whether they would keep the results of the survey to themselves or discuss them with the students. This was in line with a "constructive feedback culture" which included the idea that the people receiving the feedback have the right to decide how they deal with it.

This process took four months, at the end of which a modified suggestion regarding assessment of teachers was passed with a consensus. In parallel with this process the students of the negotiation round had already developed a computerized evaluation program. In this program, teachers select one or several different questionnaires dealing with different topics. The students answer the selected questionnaires and the computer program automatically sums up the results for the teacher.

A trial period for the new feedback instrument began. The first three teachers tested the computerized evaluation program and shared their experiences with their colleagues. The result was positive and exceeded all expectations. The "test teachers" were enthusiastic about the seriousness of the feedback received, were very happy that some of the feedback was positive, and they gained important ideas as to how they could improve in specific areas. They were impressed with how open and pleasant the ensuing discussions with the students were and felt that the mutual exchange had a positive and lasting influence on the atmosphere of cooperation in class.

More and more teachers voluntarily participated in the new feedback system and the evaluation program has now been optimised to such an extent that the school has founded a company managed by students which markets this product throughout Germany!

LONG-TERM FOLLOW-UP OF NEGOTIATION ROUNDS
After the first successful implementation of measures for change in a school development program, a long term plan for future negotiation rounds and developments is put in place. Here are examples of three different way this was done in different schools in Germany:

1. A Secondary School: The name 'Parents-Teachers-Students-Negotiation-Round' (translation) was chosen and a logo was designed during a special negotiation weekend. The long term goal is to provide an open and safe environment for parents, students and teachers to discuss current issues and negotiate future developments, using all the democratic skill they have learned. They then

submit suggestions to the relevant groups within the school. The group has created a promotional flyer and organizes various events to invite new parents, students and teachers to participate. The size of the negotiation group remains relatively stable with approximately 30 committed participants.

2. A Primary School: The negotiation round of the primary school meets every two to three months, and, between meetings, the individual stakeholder groups deal with previously determined issues within their own smaller groups, in preparation for the negotiation rounds. During these preparation phases, the number of participants in each stakeholder group is extended to enable more people to participate in the preparation for the negotiation rounds.

3. A High School: The negotiation group came up with the name 'Students-Parents-Teachers-Forum' (translation). All teachers, parents, and students are invited to attend once or twice a year so that everyone has a chance to propose and negotiate central issues in the school and make suggestions for further development. New parents, teachers and students in particular are invited to participate and contribute their input to their school's development.

GAINING SUPPORT FOR A DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Gaining genuine support for a democratic school development program is no easy task. Schools are generally more heterogeneous than other organizations due to differences in age of the participants, and some of the adults concerned have little experience with team work or constructive ways to communicate dissatisfactions. Relationships within schools are often loaded with past conflicts which have left their mark, directly or indirectly, on everyone in the school community. Furthermore, schools are usually not oriented towards offering training for organizational development.

Additionally, some schools may have had previous negative experiences with external facilitators. Previous facilitators may not have had the needed experience in dealing with different age groups, the individual needs of the participants may have not been attended to, the time allowed may have been too short to be effective and facilitators may have had too little knowledge about the particular school's organizational structures.

For all of these reasons, gaining support of the school community to engage in a development program requires skill and passion on the part of at least a couple of people within the school, and on the part of the facilitators.

REQUIREMENTS FOR GOOD FACILITATION

To maximize the success of a school development program, facilitators and school participants must bring a range of qualities and abilities to the "marriage".   Clearly no individual can fulfil them all.

Roles of the facilitators.

It is essential that facilitators are aware, right from the start, of their own roles in the school development process, and that they make their competencies and responsibilities transparent to all participants. It is important to avoid a situation where participants have false or unrealistic expectations of the facilitators. Potential facilitators should take care not to offer "expert" advice to schools, as this could result in a school attempting to hand a problem and the responsibility for its solution over to the facilitator.

The facilitator can be thought of as a kind of "midwife". Each school is familiar with its own

problems and needs, and must "give birth" to its own solutions. Facilitators support and accompany this process with "birthing methods", the framework, structures and opportunities, ideally making the process as constructive, painless and efficient as possible.

An additional important role of facilitators is to give feedback, and to keep the participants informed about how things are going. Facilitators sometimes act as a mirror in which the participants are able to see their functioning reflected back to them.

The role of "advocate" is important, to ensure that minority groups are protected in conflict situations, and transgressions are named and stopped. Another important role is "guardian of the rules" ensuring that basic democratic communication rules and agreements are kept at critical moments and that all school participants are listened to, heard and seen.

The facilitators must be competent to manage conflict which may include acting as a neutral authority, a confidant, and sometimes as a provocateur to make a conflict apparent so it can be dealt with.

Tasks of the facilitators
School personnel are often operating under a great deal of stress. For this reason, facilitators, to some degree, take on many of the tasks to do with the organisation, coordination and documentation of the school development process. This does not mean the school participants completely give up their responsibility for these tasks and become dependant on the external support. However the facilitators do involve themselves very fully to make sure the process is running well, at the same time encouraging school participants to learn and take ownership of the process. It is important that facilitators do not pursue their own agenda but take up an entirely impartial position.

A smooth flow of communication is central to the success of all school development programs. The facilitators can play an important role in this by, for example, helping to create newsletters, posters and pictures to inform everyone within the school about the present state of play.

Summary of tasks and roles of the facilitators
 -Midwife
-Giver of feedback
-Mirror / reflector
-Guardian of rules
-Advocate
-Conflict manager
-Documenter
-coordinator, organizer

Required competencies
In order to be able to fulfil the tasks and roles listed above, facilitators must possess corresponding abilities, skills, and knowledge. Bringing about change in schools is challenging and cannot be hurried. It requires patience, perseverance and a high frustration tolerance.

Facilitators are confronted with very complex situations. They deal with large heterogeneous groups and often with unexpected group dynamics. There are not only large differences between the perspectives, needs and ways of communicating of adults and children, but also between the members of different stakeholder groups and individuals within those groups. Some groups and

individuals come from very different cultures and will have had different life, learning and socialization experiences. For this reason, inter-cultural competencies are essential. These involve understanding the ways people with different backgrounds or nationalities relate with each other, including differences with regard to social status and opportunities within society. Many people have never experienced opportunities to engage with equal rights and have never felt empowered to participate in the education system or in any other aspects of society. Therefore, it is crucial that facilitators know about power structures and racism in society generally, and in schools in particular, and are vigilant in identifying discriminating attitudes, structures and actions. One important goal of a democratic school development process is to empower people who usually do not have a voice.

Clearly facilitation is complex and in order to proceed in a sensitive and flexible way, the facilitation of a school development process should be conducted by a team, preferably with gender equality and a mix of cultures.

Summary of required competencies (abilities, skills, knowledge) of facilitators.:
 -patience
 -perseverance
 -high frustration tolerance
 -realistic and efficient use of resources
-experience in dealing with children, teenagers and adults
 -knowledge of school structures and procedures
 -responsibility and reliability
-creativity
-organizational talent
-media competence (internet, digital camera, office programs)
-inter-cultural competence
-the ability to identify and name discriminating structures, attitudes and actions
-acknowledgement & respect
-empathy
-awareness of own prejudices
-awareness of different perspectives
-ability to facilitate in a heterogeneous team

 Additional considerations for effective facilitation
It is impossible in this handbook to teach group dynamics and group facilitation. It is assumed that readers who plan to venture into facilitation of school development programs already have sufficient knowledge and experience to successfully carry out this challenging and rewarding work.

Some extra important considerations are:
-Facilitators must have the necessary knowledge about the prerequisites, the type of school, the current conditions in the school and the expectations of the school.
-Participants must have trust in the facilitators. If this is lacking from the outset, or lost during the process at a moment of crisis, the work cannot proceed.
-The facilitation team must have trust in the process, and be able to convey that trust that to the participants.
-the facilitators must understand and be able to model truly democratic functioning.
-must have a genuine interest in the values and concerns of all groups, and individuals.
-must be open to reflecting on their own functioning, and make time for adequate reflection and

analysis to gain insights on their own functioning in response to feedback from participants, both positive and negative.

-have a good repertoire of facilitation games and exercises, including ones which assist participants to self-present and to visualize the school they really want.

-facilitators must have an ability to be light and playful to successfully do this work.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS
Work spaces
It is important that there are suitable work spaces within the school or in the neighbourhood to accommodate large groups for the school development events. A spacious, light-filled room with sufficient space to seat the whole teaching staff in a circle is ideal. The circular seating arrangement ensures that everyone can see each other. In addition, there should be three to five adjoining rooms for smaller groups. Schools often use the assembly hall and adjoining class rooms for this purpose.

Timing of events
Some helpful guidelines for the timing of events:

-Children and teenagers can be most easily reached in the morning during class hours. It is by far more difficult to organize meetings in the afternoon or in the evenings for these groups.

-Teachers generally prefer the early morning before classes start for meetings and events, or directly after the school finishes.

-Social workers and education consultants usually cannot meet before 4 pm.

-Working parents are usually only available after 5 pm.

Materials
Storage space: It is helpful if the facilitation materials are available on site, to avoid having to transport pin-boards, flip-charts and presentation materials to the school on each occasion.

Equipment for documentation. Documentation is necessary to inform everyone, including those who have not attended meetings, about the current state of play, the processes used, conclusions reached, and actions proposed or taken. Photographing charts etc. that have been created during the events is an efficient way to do this. The results should be displayed on a large notice board in a prominent place in the school. A digital camera and laptop are essential equipment.

Contact list: Transparency is paramount and a good flow of information must take place with everyone, including school authorities, school committees and school boards. A contact list with email and telephone details of all key people representing all groups is essential.

FACTORS FOR SUCCESS
Clearly no one person can meet all the facilitator requirements completely and working in a small team works best. Less experienced facilitators can learn a lot by accompanying and assisting experienced facilitators. Facilitation practice can be gained by trainees in low risk situations such as a group of friends or students. People who can assist by offering constructive feedback and new ideas to facilitators are of great value.

Often schools do not meet all the suitability requirements for participation and some flexibility is necessary in deciding the way forward. Improvisation on the part of the facilitators helps everyone to remain alert and not rely too heavily on predetermined routines. Engagement is fostered through improvisation, while perfectionism kills off enthusiasm and can be very exhausting.

Through first hand experience, the authors have come up with a list of factors necessary for success. If any of these factors are missing the process may be hindered or jeopardized. Every school is different, so the starting points and dynamics for each school are always unique. Facilitators always reflect on what worked well or badly and why, and in what situations the process got stuck or failed. They gain knowledge about which factors, internal as well as external, have contributed to the success or failure of any particular democratic school development program. The authors have found that the following factors have played an important role in all schools they have worked in so far, and these are therefore considered to be essential for success.

1. Negotiation weekends: If the initial negotiation round is not conducted as a residential weekend, the processes of getting to know and trust each other is compromised, and this can have serious effects on the quality of the cooperation which follows. Solidarity and identification with the process of democratic negotiation develops and is especially high in schools which have carried out one or more negotiation weekends.

2. Flow of information and transparency: insufficient flow of information and lack of transparency for those who have not been directly involved in the negotiation rounds are likely to lead to misunderstandings and dissatisfactions, and possibly a perception that "nothing is happening". To prevent this, good internal communication and public relations work is necessary. It is important to submit regular information to the teaching staff and all committee and board members, and to make the documented process accessible for everybody.

3. Inclusion of all teachers: The support of the teaching staff is paramount. Initial support can decline if the process is perceived as an additional burden, and if there are insufficient obvious improvements for the teachers in the short term. Everyone's experience should improve as the program progresses. Specific interventions which improve teamwork, reduce stress and assist in the resolution of current difficulties may be necessary.

4. Discussion about the definition of democracy: In the course of the process differing definitions of democracy among the participants can lead to serious misunderstandings and cause some groups, especially the teaching staff, to distance themselves from the process. Examples of this are a belief that "democracy in school means that only the students have a say" or "the parents decide what the lessons should look like". Clearly these ideas are not attractive to the teachers. To avoid or dispel such misunderstandings it is necessary to examine the different definitions of democracy of all participants right at the beginning of the process. Ideally the school community comes up with a draft document in which the term "democratic school culture" is defined clearly for all participants, and where the different roles, competencies and positions of people within the school are taken into consideration.

5. Farewell to the external facilitators: There is a danger with intensive and long term facilitation that a dependency develops on the external support. The termination of the external facilitation, even if done gradually, may lead to insecurity and jeopardize the ongoing process. Dealing adequately with this transition requires a good deal of sensitivity. An assessment is made of the areas in which the school community is capable of progressing independently, and the areas where external support is needed. In some schools, teachers parents and students are trained to facilitate meetings before the facilitators leave. Acknowledging in which areas a school will need support is a sign of professionalism rather than weakness. Where external support is deemed necessary, a search for external advisers takes place. A farewell event can help to validate the competence of the school participants to independently plan and facilitate all or part of the ongoing development.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Engagement in a democratic school development program is voluntary, and some people participate more fully than others. Some teachers may integrate the newly developed democratic principles in their lessons, whereas others completely separate the school cultural development from their class activities. Ultimately success does involve a change in the school culture but cultural change is gradual and cannot be forced. Given the many factors contributing to the successful implementation of positive changes in a school, it is unrealistic to expect all the desired outcomes within the first few years. The hierarchical school system, shortages of personnel and material resources, curriculum requirements and other factors can mean that democratic school development proceeds slowly. However every small success along the way contributes to the well-being of all participants. It is important to remember that many important concepts and skills are learned by participants during the journey. Contrary to initial fears, the learning of literacy and numeracy by students is enhanced not compromised by the various activities involved. Self expression, self awareness, social awareness and increased confidence are just some of the outcomes. People from all groups are empowered to contribute in many areas of their lives, in and out of school.

Despite the challenges, the program described in this manual offers a way in which schools can become places where teachers, parents, students, administrators, social workers, cleaners, and all other involved people become more meaningfully connected, and together create schools and wider communities which offer enjoyment and a sense of belonging. Above all, schools become places where people have an experience of what democracy really means, and become empowered to create a truly democratic world. Children, youth and adults learn what it means to be an engaged citizen of the world.

CONTACT DETAILS

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