Intellectual Output 1:

CEPNET Handbook

Project:	Children's Empowerment in Primary schools Network
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1. Background to CEPNET Project

The CEPNET Project has worked with 423 children and 43 teachers in primary school settings with the aim of introducing them to new approaches in relation to promoting empowerment and self-activation within the classroom.

As part of this project, the students have received a chance to carry out self-directed project based activities, looking at issues in their lives that connect them to the UN's sustainable development goals (SDGs). They have discussed and debated these issues at length within their classrooms with teachers and external experts and facilitators, before carrying out action research projects on topics that motivate them. They have followed this work up by presenting their findings to a wide range of different audiences. This has included members of the school community, as well as members of the wider community. The project happened over a stressful period for our schools, with lockdowns and school closures and with teachers moving their teaching online. The CEPNET team came up with many different ways of circumventing these challenges and supporting our students and teachers to work within these challenging times.

The methodology used during CEPNET is based on a prior project[1], where over 2000 young people from across Europe worked together to develop and refine a means of advocating and communicating their concerns and voices about issues that were affecting them. Through this previous project, these children and young people influenced change in their schools and colleges, set up activist groups and became leaders within their communities. They also discovered innovative ways of taking a stand and expressing their opinions.

This new project takes the research team and the learning from WYRED and has seamlessly transferred it to the specific environment of the primary school. Throughout the CEPNET project, the primary level students have shared experiences and interacted with their peers from schools in Ireland, Italy, Austria and the north of Ireland. The teachers likewise got to work with peers from these same schools, as they shared their tips and techniques in making children and young people into the leaders and active citizens of tomorrow. In the background, research teams in each country provided support to the teachers and continued to document and disseminate the results.

The project was driven by the students and they formed a student council with their peers from the other schools. The project made extensive use of online tools and techniques and in the current climate, have looked at how to make the most of blended learning opportunities. The project has lasted 2 years and our long term project aim is to promote these CEPNET resources that can be used by teachers across Europe.

The methodology used in each school is outlined in this handbook. The methodology was brought into the classrooms in the four schools over two separate cycles. Each cycle lasted for up to 12 weeks and involved a series of classroom based activities and lessons. Each teacher adapted these guidelines and lesson plans to allow for their students to take the lead and shape the programme of work.

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[1] More information can be found here about the WYRED Project: https://wyredproject.eu/

The team worked together on developing and documenting a competence framework that links the curricula in each country and demonstrates how the CEPNET methodology connects closely with key elements of the curriculum in each country.

As well as this document that presents a practical guide to using the methodology within the primary classroom, there are other guides that focus on bringing the online world to life and explaining how the project worked to connect children together in a virtual manner, whereby they can discuss these themes and share their insights. A further resource is available that documents the competence framework. All materials are available on the project website. (www.cepnet.eu)

2. Handbook Approach and Linked Resources

This handbook is intended to act as a guide for any teachers and other facilitators wishing to make use of CEPNET's work within their schools. The guidebook is based on intensive work carried out by researchers and teachers who combined over 2 years to bring these new learning approaches into their classrooms, all the while capturing outcomes and documenting results.

This has allowed the guidebook to act as a resource whereby the approach can be delivered as a 12 week series of linked classroom based sessions (with lesson plans, resources and structures to support each session) or otherwise where the guide can also be used to dip in and out of, as a "lucky bag" of materials, where as a teacher or facilitator, tips and resources can be used to fit within any specific classroom environment. In this way, each teacher may make use of lesson plans and accompanying resources in a more flexible manner. The aim of the handbook is to provide a scaffolding, whereby the methodology can be implemented, the participants can get the most from their experience and the teachers and researchers can evaluate the process.

The handbook has been updated over time, with new resources added or referenced. These resources are also available on the project website, which will continue to be updated as new and complementary materials are produced or suggested. The website includes access to the following supports:

- **Synthesis section on delivering the CEPNET approach,** where the handbooks (including this document) is broken down into separate easily accessible subsections.
- **Evaluation reports**, based on feedback from each primary school where the approach is piloted, providing detailed accounts of the way the programme has functioned. These evaluative comments from teachers, parents and the students themselves play an important role in the transferability of the approach since they provide accessible stories that help potential adopters to engage imaginatively with the approach.
- **Project section with reports** on particular research projects carried out by groups of students, describing the research questions, the SDGs that were being researched, methodology used, results and how and to whom they were presented. This section also provides descriptions of the phases of the approach within the classroom that facilitated the student projects (dialogues, research project, interpretation). Within the individual project descriptions and presentations, the range of different activities are highlighted.
- **Benefits of the methodology** – a breakdown of resources providing advice and guidelines for facilitators and learners using this approach that permit stand-alone use, where necessary, of the approach. These will include advice relating to logistical aspects. Again, this contributes to transferability. Short videos from teachers, principals and students bring these benefits to life and give insights into managing the process and extracting as much value as possible from the approach. This section also provides strategic advice and tips relating to the adoption of the approach in primary schools, setting out different contextual variants, as well as information about common issues that can arise and related strategies.

While the project approach can be applicable in a wide range of domains, the CEPNET focus has been on the topics of the UN Agenda 2030, grouping the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

into environmental, social and economic sustainability clusters based on the interests of students. These SDG themes and issues are brought into the classroom and introduced to the students through games and activities to spark an interest and prompt the dialogue/discussion phase.

This handbook offers a suite of options and ideas that can be used to instigate debate on the SDGs and their connection to the lives of primary school children. Feedback has been gathered from the students as they moved through the phases into research and presentation. The research partners worked closely with teachers to ensure that these steps are thoroughly reviewed and evaluated.

This work provides an approach for teachers and schools to work on the SDGs within the curriculum using a tried and tested methodology that has already proved successful with children and young people. In addition to this impact, a range of other impacts on learners and schools have been evidenced including increased learner motivation and participation, improved learner competences and adaptability and better voicing of the concerns of young people, which has potential impacts on policy and the wider society

The handbook presents a series of ideas, resources and occasional sample templates that can be used to work within the classroom to instigate debate, research and a sharing of views. There are also ideas presented as to how a teacher or facilitator can examine outcome and impact indicators associated with the methodology, from the perspective of the student, teacher and the wider school environment. These questionnaires are included on the project website as resources.

3. CEPNET Competence Framework

There are a wide range of competence frameworks being applied in all of our primary education systems, focusing on how best our children and young people can develop transversal competences and skills while in the latter stages of their primary education career. These national frameworks tend to make use of international indicators, including those developed through the UN and EU. This section looks at the common elements of these developments and how we can make use of this learning within our project.

Rather than re-inventing a new framework, the CEPNET model makes use of these overarching approaches and is designed to help our teachers and educators to examine the stimulus of the Sustainable Development Goals to allow for our students to further progress their attainment of transversal competences. The aim of our framework is that it can be used at a very practical level in the classroom, allowing students to clearly understand where they are at and where they would like to get.

Through participation in CEPNET, our teachers are provided with a parallel support as they work to equip their students with a set of core competencies as articulated by each national framework. By core competencies, we are referring to the essential knowledge, skills, concepts, dispositions, attitudes and values which enable the children to adapt and deal with a range of situations, challenges and contexts. Our SDG focus means that the children will be supported to navigate a wide variety of contexts and situations, to be able to interact and engage with the world around them and come to an appreciation of its value and their responsibilities as custodians of it.

The following figure highlights the key elements of the CEPNET competence framework. It is clear as we look at the breakdown of the competences as they are defined and articulated in each country, that there is strong common ground. It is within this overlapping set of skills, attitudes and knowledge, where we have developed and tested our methodology. It is through this sharing of perspectives that we can examine new approaches and reflect on how we can embed these in our own practices.

Figure 1: CEPNET Competence Framework

These 6 core competences support and underpin the project vision.

- Navigating- media and information literacy
- Interpreting- critical thinking
- Interacting with others- interpersonal skills
- Interacting with self- intrapersonal skills
- Creativity and agency- innovative thinking
- Taking responsibility- global citizenship

These key competences present an overlap between skills, attitudes and knowledge. For example, the emphasis is on locating, critiquing and using knowledge as well as appreciating knowledge for its own sake. In this way, our competences enable and foster deep learning while also contributing to holistic development.

The competences have been embedded across all CEPNET project phases, ensuring their relevance across the 4 national curricula while providing continuity and connectivity in children's learning as they progress through primary school.

A key focus within this competence framework, given the importance of the SDGs within our overall approach, has been connected to how we can foster within children the knowledge, skills, concepts, attitudes, values and dispositions that motivate and empower them as citizens to take positive actions to live justly, sustainably and with regard for the rights of others.

This framework has been used as a means of scaffolding our engagement with our schools, teachers and students. Through regularly returning to our framework, we have endeavoured to examine results as we spin the wheel at the core of this framework, to see what is emerging in relation to how our participants have progressed.

We have worked carefully to examine the extent to which we have helped to encourage children to question, critique and understand what is happening in the world within a framework of human rights, equality and social justice.

We asked our participants to help us to understand how they see notions of wellbeing, resilience and self-care. They have in turn assisted us in framing the project's achievements in fostering self-awareness and promoting the importance of children seeing themselves as capable and resourceful, as well as positive and engaged in their learning.

These practices and values are already in place in our schools, so when we use the CEPNET project resources to discuss and situate democratic practices at the centre of the learning process, we are providing extra support to the schools and teachers in their ongoing work with their students. By focusing on such competences, the CEPNET project has explicitly sought to develop children's capacity and motivation for active and meaningful participation in society at local, national and global levels.

We have worked in partnership with the school curriculum and infrastructure to promote the child's ability to contribute positively and compassionately towards the creation of a more sustainable and just world. (See Appendix 1 for further examples of a national primary school framework)

4. Pre-Planning Work

4.1 Practical Concerns

Before the work can begin, a review is required to examine practical classroom issues in relation to the numbers of children and the levels of support available. It is also important to review the levels of access to technology and equipment.

The following table addresses these practical concerns.

Practical Preparations for Each Class	
How many students will be involved in your application of the CEPNET approach in your classroom?	
How many teachers/support staff will be available for your group?	
What levels of ICT access will there be for your students? (PCs, tablets, one for each)	
What level of connectivity in your classroom? (wifi, only access for teacher)	
Are there specific Covid restrictions in place in the classroom? (children must remain in specific pods, they cannot leave the classroom, no guests can come into class, masks must be worn by all adults at all time)	

4.2 Familiarisation with the Methodology

Our methodology has been used extensively within CEPNET and in other work with children and young people across Europe. For example, within one of these projects, a range of useful resources was developed to demonstrate how each stage of the process can be delivered. Furthermore a wide range of the projects produced by the children and young people can be viewed. Videos, presentations and handbooks are all available to assist in this familiarisation work. These resources can be found at this link: https://wyredproject.eu/

It might be useful to consider a review of this project as a stepping off point. It describes how to go about different types of research, creative and journalistic type projects with a class. There are lots of tips, insights and examples.

4.3 Familiarisation with the Competence Framework

It is important for all partners from research and teaching perspectives that we are all familiar with the competence framework. This is in many ways the engine that is driving us.

We are interested in developing the skills, attitudes and knowledge base for our students. When we are looking at the potential for our students to develop over the course of the project, we are looking at the range and scope of the student's potential development.

It is useful to evaluate and review progress happening in your classroom through using the CEPNET approach, but this can be challenging with limited time available. It might be worth considering the capture of interesting classroom examples or case studies through which you can highlight the value of the approach for your students and the importance of allowing them to be exposed to different ways that they can express themselves and their ideas and opinions.

It is also important that we can find ways of explaining this to the children in the classes so that they can take pride and ownership of their individual and group progress.

The manner in which we capture this learning can also evolve over time as you are more accustomed to using the approach. It is worth capturing feedback as it emerges from the students as they participate and actively engage; as well as some feedback from the teachers' perspective in how they have noticed specific changes in a student's behaviour or levels of engagement; other feedback can come through the student council (if you have access to such school based structures); finally also from other members of the school community including principals and families.

4.4   Familiarisation with the SDG Framework

The teaching of the SDGs in schools can often be linked to the delivery of a specific part of the curriculum and much like other aspects of the curriculum, some students may not fully engage with the key messages. This may be linked to the time available to the teachers to include such a focus in their lessons, or the lack of appropriate or accessible resources.

It is important that as teachers and researchers, we become familiar with the range of issues within each of the 17 SDGs. Through CEPNET, we have the opportunity to organise webinars or discussion groups on specific themes, should there be an interest.

Certain themes may be of greater interest to our students and they could be encouraged to examine and interpret some of the key messages. For instance the following target 4.7 could be explained within a class discussion and could elicit a response as to how it may relate to their lives.

> "by 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development"

There may be shorter texts that the children can seek to focus on and potentially use as the basis for posters within the classroom.

4.5   Key CEPNET Principles

As we prepare for the initial classroom based activities, it is no harm to remind ourselves of the key principles that underpin and inform the CEPNET approach.

These include the following:

- VOICE: Importance of the children taking the lead, the adults as facilitators; Fostering the voice of the child
- DEBATE: Ensuring debate and discussion about the core issues
- ANALYSIS: Research acting as a tool to promote critical thinking
- WORLDVIEW: Democracy and the role of the children's council; Engagement of wider community where possible; Bringing issues of sustainability into the processes
- ACTION: Active learning and participation at all times; Action as an outcome of the learning

These child-centred values already form the basis for how our schools work with their students and how our teachers create empowering environments in their classrooms. Participation in the CEPNET project is offering a space and opportunity for taking all these principles and values and adding a new methodology that can bind these together. As part of how we understand the project progress, we also want to be able to better understand how our approach can enhance these values within the classroom and the wider school community.

We will develop an outline of these principles and values so that they can be communicated clearly to the children. Posters can be created by the students to highlight what these mean. They can then add their understanding as to what this means in practice as they participate and evaluate the phases of the cycles.

4.6   Summary of Pre-planning Steps

The preparation for the initial student engagement will involve the following steps to be completed by the teachers with the support of their research partners

1. Complete the questions on practical concerns
2. Review some of the background materials, tips and previous presentations
3. Review the competence framework
4. Create an outline of the CEPNET values

5. Planning the Implementation

5.1   Creating "Something Different"

While the project will take place during the school day and for the most part in the classroom, the students need to feel that they are not doing their normal work, they need to feel that when they are carrying out CEPNET activities, that they are involved in "something different".

So before the initial classroom activity begins, it is important to plan for different approaches to the usual school-day. The CEPNET project operates over three separate phases, so here are some considerations:

Discussion Phase

Phase 1 involves discussion and dialogue in relation to the key issues. To make this different, there are a suite of games and activities that can be employed. From ice-breakers to specific SDG-related games, the aim is to encourage the children to actively contribute to a discussion. The aim is that they are developing specific interests as this phase progresses. They may be interested in a specific environmental issue that can be encouraged. Some may need more stimulus to create a spark of interest. The games can be used to assist in this aspect. In the following section, these games are described and links are provided.

Other activities in this phase can focus on the students looking at the types of values or principles linked to the CEPNET approach, as well as on specific SDGs. Posters can be developed and through art based activities, discussion can be encouraged.

At the beginning of each session, a "check-in" round can be done, whereby each child has to indicate their energy levels or happiness levels or a fact about their day, etc. This type of ice-breaker allows for a clear distinction to be made between what has gone before and their CEPNET activities.

Research Phase

Phase 2 is focused on research. During Phase 1, the student develops an idea or interest that can be turned into a research question. Their focus now changes from debate and discussion to articulating a question that they want to answer. Phase 2 then supports them to become critical, start thinking more deeply about the subject and to work out what they would like to research. Some students may prefer to work in a group, some individually. As the research focus becomes identified, the teachers and researchers step back. Where support is asked, it can be provided, but the aim is that the children will take on the initiative to find out new information. They will need to describe this and find ways of collecting the information. They will need access to the online world, they may want to carry out a questionnaire, they may need to interview or phone people. The aim of this phase is that they carry out their fact-finding missions themselves.

How they choose to pull the information together will again be down to them. They may want to make a poster, produce a PowerPoint presentation or even a report on their new information. They may be more creative and use rap, rhyme or art. They may use more digital tools, such as a

podcast, video or a sound recording. As they look to create a means to demonstrate the results of their research, again, the adult is in the background, offering support when asked.

Presentation Phase

Phase 3 provides the space for the students to now think about how they will organise action associated with the learning. Some students may have already started this through Phase 2, others may have waited until the research work is completed before they start planning on what they will do with it in terms of a presentation. A key feature of the methodology is that the students are involved in a process that is leading them to take action. They have already discussed and debated the issues, before finding their specific interest. They have then taken that through a phase of research to find out something new. They may have carried out this research with a group of friends or on their own. They may have interviewed or surveyed members of the school community or the wider area. They may have developed their research results into a report or a poster or a video.

Phase 3 now focuses on what they will do with this research product. They may decide to link it to a school event, where they can present their findings. They may seek to present their work to a political or social or sporting body in their community. They may upload their podcast to a national website and give an interview to a radio show. They will decide how they want to take action. Again, the adults can provide support, but in the background.

Within each of these phases, the key focus for the teachers and the researcher is to give the keys of the car to the children and allow them to drive the lessons. It is no problem to provide support if and when some students are struggling to take the next step.

5.2   Planning Practicalities

Before the work can begin, some pre-planning work has already taken place to look at the teacher's awareness of the methodology and some practical concerns associated with the classroom and the numbers of children involved. A second layer of planning is now required to examine practical implementation issues in relation to the sessions and how these will be managed.

The following table addresses some of these practical concerns. This table can be refined for each school if useful in assisting the planning process.

Practical Planning for Each Class	
How many sessions will be delivered using the CEPNET approach? (a full cycle can include 12 sessions, but no problem in picking and choosing if more appropriate- the approach allows for flexibility)	
How long will each session be?	
Are there specific Covid restrictions that might affect group work? (students in pods, moving all the chairs to form a single circle)	
During the 3 Phases, can the students leave the classroom? (to work in groups, make use of technology room/library)	
Will the parents be required to complete a consent form to cover off all aspects of the project work?	
Will it be possible for the students to leave the school premises to carry out elements of the research work? (interviews, surveys)	
What types of opportunities are in place for reflection and review sessions?	

5.3   Resources Required

All relevant resources that have been developed during previous projects are available through the CEPNET website. These are structured according to the three phases of work and contain examples of good practice and feedback from participants and teachers.

New resources will be added to this repository as they are introduced and tested.

A CEPNET compendium of session plans is also available, with links to all games and activities. Many of these games have been developed with the intention to encourage children to get to know about the SDGs. In some instances, these games require the printing out of new materials for the classroom.

A list of icebreakers and other strategies that can be used to ensure that the class is always immediately aware that they are moving from "schoolwork" to CEPNET work.

5.4   Lesson Plans

Sample lesson plans are available online. Where teachers are seeking structured support to assist in the delivery of each lesson, plans will be developed to cover a 12 week programme where classroom procedures for each CEPNET Phase can be found

Each teacher can access these resources where they require this support or to gather insights.

For each phase to be delivered successfully teachers may decide to use these plans as a set of guidelines or a framework, there is no need to follow each lesson plan to the full.

5.5   Evaluation Templates

Each teacher can examine the optimal means of gathering feedback from the children in relation to how they have experienced each lesson and each phase. Where practical, the children will be encouraged to offer their feedback on a regular basis.

Innovative approaches such as using art or posters to gather feedback can be used. Students can be encouraged to find examples of how they have developed new skills or knowledge bases. It is more challenging to examine how their attitudes may have been impacted, but efforts will be made to try and capture their progress. This can be especially important during Phase 3.

This process will focus positively on one of the thematic concerns, CEPNET principles as well as the practical achievements. They will in turn receive a CEPNET Certificate on completion of the 3 Phases.

5.6   Engaging with a Student Council

During the pre-planning and planning work, teachers might decide to work out how best to engage with a pre-existing student council or use the CEPNET project as an opportunity to establish a council that can support the project implementation. If this is an option, the planning phase should consider how best to gather candidates for such a local student council.

This council, once established, can play an active role within the overall project planning and their input will be considered as a valuable contribution to any project review (again if this is to be carried out by teachers and facilitators). Every effort should be made to ensure that the students serving on the council are supported fully to act as representatives of their peers during the project activities.

5.7   Summary of Planning Steps

The preparation for the initial student engagement involves the following steps to be completed by the teachers with support where possible

1. Reflect on how classroom can be made feel different
2. Complete the planning questions
3. Consider the types of resources required
4. Review lesson plans to see if you need them
5. Start planning for Student Council selection

6. Implementation Phase 1: Dialogues and Discussion

6.1   Creating a Phase 1 Plan

If the overall plan for CEPNET in the school is that the teacher has the opportunity to operate CEPNET over a 12 week period or 12 sessions, it is suggested that sessions 1-4 are focused on Phase 1.

The main aim of phase 1 is that the children have engaged in a process of dialogue and discussion and they have begun to focus on an area of research based on an interest.

The stimulus used in the first sessions should allow for an energetic and excited response.

Icebreakers can be used to kickstart each session, even when the games or activities are being introduced. A check-in process is recommended and if used at every CEPNET session, this can allow the children to become aware that they have now moved from their normal schoolwork into a separate part of the day.

Powerpoint based session plans are available on the website, as are other lesson plan templates. Teachers can be supported at all times through this phase by these resources. Teachers may also reach out to teachers in other schools who have experience of delivering CEPNET through its trial and test period.

Parental consent forms may need to be completed and collected if required. Sample forms are available through the CEPNET website.

6.2   Considering the initial stimulus

In order to create a new dynamic within the classroom, the initial work with the students has a specific focus on generating a fun and enjoyable experience.

If possible, the initial lesson plans should involve the use of the SDG information resources (Appendix 1) compendium of games and activities (Appendix 2). These can be reviewed in advance and integrated into the first sessions.

These resources and games are designed to spark debate and discussion regarding many of the themes associated with the SDGs.

6.3   Establishing Rules

The establishment of rules is a useful starting point for one of the initial sessions. The children must develop their own rules and seek to agree or develop consensus. These rules can be written up as a poster and can become a reference point as the project continues.

Where one child is in conflict with another during a classroom session, they should be encouraged to review the rules as they apply and where possible to restore the relationship using their own initiative.

6.4   Explaining the CEPNET Project

An introduction to the project is also clearly necessary.

An activity linked to this could be to look at some of the CEPNET principles and values and get the students to focus on portraying these themes on posters, with each group looking to explain how they may be applied in practice over their participation within the project.

Explaining that they may also be communicating with peers in other schools has represented an important element for children and young people who participated in the test and trial period as well as in previous such projects.

Introducing the idea of the Children's/Student's Council may also create further interest and insight into how the project will view the importance of their voice.

Highlighting the support that they will receive from the adults in the room, but very much in the background, will also allow the students to understand that the phases will be child-led. Posters to indicate these values can be placed on the classroom walls to remind all of these important CEPNET principles.

6.5   Maintaining the focus of debate and dialogue
It is useful to maintain a focus on games and such interactive tools, while also moving more towards discussion and debate regarding the manner in which the SDGs are present in their lives. Exercises can be built into lesson plans number 2 and 3, whereby smaller groups within the classroom can look to explore different themes. A world café approach can be modified and used.[2] A key feature of this approach is that the participants decide themselves when to move to another group. Hosts of each group are encouraged to develop specific themes.

Again, art can be used as a means of encouraging groups to express themselves in relation to themes under focus.

Role play and drama techniques can also be used to allow the children to further express their interests and concerns about SDG related issues and how they may affect them in their lives. Sample exercises are to be found in the relevant lesson plans, including games such as getting the students to consider priorities if they were to become ministers within a Government cabinet. These priorities then need to be articulated and they need to convince their classmates about their specific priorities being as important or even more important than others. Some of the class can act as the media in posing questions to the ministers about their plans. This exercise proved very successful in creating much heated debate in many of the test classrooms.

6.6   Arriving at the "Big Interest"
As these discussions continue into session 3, the aim at this stage is to encourage the children to start developing a "big interest", i.e. a passion or a desire to learn more about a specific theme or issue. It could be linked to the products that they use every day and where they are sourced from, such as a sports jersey, pair of shoes or their mobile phone. It could be focusing on the level of recycling opportunities in their area, the presence of a cycling infrastructure, the impact of the pandemic on older people, the nature of support for asylum seekers, and on and on.

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[2] http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/

The children should be encouraged to think as "big" as possible, but ideally during these sessions, they are starting to shape their "big interest" into a form that they can now start to see as a question. The next step is taking their interest and translating it into a research question. They can start to look at the nature of a research question or a hypothesis.

6.7   Facilitating the emergence of groups and/or individuals

As the students begin to formulate a specific interest, they can look to their peers in the class to see whether they share a potential focus. They may want to form a group and work together on Phase 2 and Phase 3. They may already be thinking of how they might carry out their research and their presentation.

As they get closer to this point, they should be encouraged to write down these thoughts and share them within the class. This might inspire others as they begin to formalise their interest into a research question.

6.8   Connecting with other schools

During the test and trial phase, children in a range of schools were able to connect with each other to chat, discuss and share ideas and results. Where possible, every effort should be made to facilitate interactions between children in different schools, where there are links, locally or internationally. This may be planned as a synchronous activity once the technology is tested in advance, as well as the types of questions and answer sessions.

Asynchronous activities may also be organised. These may be pre-recordings of children posing questions to their peers and in turn the responses.

During the testing of CEPNET, the children found that the contact with children in other schools and countries to be a particular highlight. Even if sometimes they were communicating at a superficial level and not focused on the project themes, they expressed that these encounters were very memorable.

So it is important as part of the planning of each Phase that we all take note and aim to plan for at least one structured engagement. As different schools move through the CEPNET Phases, there will be increased opportunities for contact. Maybe some projects have clear overlapping potential, maybe there is an interest in podcasting in a number of schools or maybe the interest in student journalism can lead to joint initiatives across schools.

6.9   Documenting Phase 1

Where possible, it is very useful to allow for review and recording of activities as each Phase comes to an end and the next phase is ready to kick off. Structures and systems for gathering input (from the student perspective, the peer perspective and the teacher perspective) can be put in place during Phase 1. A model that fits the school and classroom can allow for each student to select an indicator from the CEPNET values list as well as from the competence framework.

Recording of activities can take place where appropriate. Where more than one class in the school is participating in the project, sharing of feedback can be organised from class to class. Where a particular student is interested in being a "class reporter", there is scope for appointing

one of the students as a child journalist, who will document the progress of the debates and continue through the other Phases of the project.

A selection process for the student council can be discussed and agreed so that the selection can take place in Phase 2

A review session will also take place between teachers, principal and external facilitators if relevant to examine all learning points. The end point of Phase 1 involves all class members with a first version of their "big interest" being ready to be shaped into a research question.

7. Implementation Phase 2: Research

7.1 Creating a Phase 2 Plan

Having delivered 4 sessions in Phase 1, it is suggested that sessions 5-9 are now focused on Phase 2. During this phase, the children are mostly working within their groups or on an individual basis (if that has been their choice). They will be carrying out their research work and looking to document their work in a creative manner. The support from the adults during this phase should again be from the background.

The aim is that they are gradually building up the material that will allow them to produce a research artefact or product. This can be in a wide range of formats, from the creative approach that might involve song, art or drama, or a more traditional approach that focuses on a report, presentation or document, or indeed an ICT based approach where the result is a podcast or a video or sound recording.

Once the initial sessions manage to get across the idea of research and how it can take so many forms, the following session plans during this phase can be seen as outline in the provision of "invisible" support.

7.2 Introducing research skills

It is important as the children have by now identified their "big interest" that we are encouraging them to consider a possible "research question" that would build on their motivation. The initial session should allow for a discussion and possibly a presentation on how research operates. The children need to understand the importance of having a research question or hypothesis. This question will help them to stay focused through this Phase. It will also allow them to become critical thinkers and analysts as they take a deep dive into the topic.

It may be useful to present a video from the CEPNET project archive where completed presentations and documents are available. Within these resources, children speak about their research work and what they discovered. These resources are available on the website.

Other resources that can be accessed are linked to research toolkits. Such resources can possibly be printed out and left within the classroom for students to read if they are seeking specific advice on such approaches as designing a questionnaire or tips in carrying out interviews.

7.3 Selecting a Student Council

If there is a decision to put a student council in place, the aim is to select the members during this phase. The aim is that there will be a group of 4 children who can be supported to engage with the teachers and external facilitators if relevant, to give feedback and advice on how to capture learning and how to make improvements.

They will be encouraged to read any materials, especially those being used to document progress within the project. This may involve contributing to the school based student journalism approach if this was to be carried out. They would also be supported to create a "clinic" whereby other classmates can bring any issues or concerns to them and their representatives could relay these to the teachers or researcher if appropriate.

7.4   Bringing in external expertise

During this Phase, many of the students might want to access external expertise to carry out their research work. This may involve the need to communicate directly with a wide range of local stakeholders, including NGOs, politicians, sports organisations, local businesses or indeed the parent body within the school.

The nature of this communication can be discussed with their teachers and researchers. The students should be encouraged to take the initiative in this aspect of the research. The teachers can provide a level of support and oversight in this aspect. This may involve helping to phrase an email, locate a phone number or make initial contact with the relevant body.

If it makes sense to a particular classroom, it might be useful to arrange a specific input during a CEPNET session. For instance, if an NGO with specialist expertise in environmental issues has a spokesperson with an interest in our project, an interview could be arranged to take place with the full class asking questions. In the test and trial phase, representatives from organisations working on such topics as homelessness and housing, marine pollution, biodiversity and wildlife and climate change provided input into classroom discussions. If it becomes possible, the students may also be interested in visiting local organisations, businesses or services to carry out their research.

7.5   Assisting from a distance

As we have made clear from the outset, a key feature of the project and especially Phase 2 is that the children are taking their own initiative when it comes to the research. The teachers and researchers can provide some guidance in explaining the nature of a research question or hypothesis.

It was the experience of the testing and trialling of CEPNET that the children got to understand this idea very quickly and were happy to then take over. Once they have all identified their question or hypothesis ("*if* this is the case, *then* we expect this to happen") and they have received some instruction on the range of research approaches, they can take their own lead.

Clearly if any groups or individuals are seen to be struggling, some extra support can be provided. But ideally this is in the form of further questions and ideas, rather than direct engagement and "solving" the issues that are facing the students. The greater their engagement in managing their research, the greater the payoff for their learning.

7.6   Connecting with other schools

As with Phase 1, where it is possible to have some level of engagement (either synchronous or asynchronous) with another school or schools, this can be programmed into the sessions. The children can give their feedback, maybe through the Student Council representative, as to how this worked and what might be done differently. It will be important where possible to try to match the age groups when linking the schools. During Phase 2, there can be increased levels of opportunity for cross-pollination of ideas between schools and groups of student researchers.

Where appropriate, the teachers can create linkages by maintaining a list of projects and research approaches. So where the theme or approach overlaps, there may be an opportunity for a Zoom call involving fewer numbers of children rather than the class as a whole.

7.7   Documenting Phase 2

As well as documenting the results of the student work in Phase 2, there are also a number of key elements that it is very useful to better understand. These include the following:

- Research questions into projects: How have the students managed this step? Did they need more support or less?
- Examining research approaches: Did the students seize on one particular approach and run with it, e.g. survey? Did some struggle to decide on how they would find answers?
- Progression in relation to competencies: Have we been able to get the students to look at how they are learning and the outcomes? Have they got examples that they can relate to the competencies' or values as explained to them in Phase 1 (voice, debate, analysis, worldview, action)?
- Engagement with other children in other schools (if this has been possible): Has the interaction with other schools acted to inspire and encourage new mind-sets or ideas?
- Use of ICTs: Have the children embraced opportunities of using the online or digital world to access information and record results?

Through using the evaluation templates at the end of the CEPNET cycle in the school, teachers can gain extra learning about their students and the groupwork happening in their classrooms. This learning should be useful in other aspects of class activities and programmes. The use of classroom reporting through this phase can allow for a bottom up view as to how the students are getting on in their groups or on their own.

8. Implementation Phase 3: Presentation

8.1 Creating a Phase 3 Plan

The final stretch of the project is now about wrapping up the research work, synthesising the results and looking at how the children will be taking action or simply presenting the results. Over a 12 session plan, the suggestion is that this Phase 3 would involve sessions 10-12.

As with the earlier Phases, these are estimates. If in Phase 1, the debate and discussion is really stimulating the whole class and some of the quieter children are starting to get more involved, there is no problem in extending this timeframe. If the research work is leading to more breakthroughs, again the timeline can be re-focused.

However, it is very important that Phase 3 is given adequate time to ensure that the Action element of the CEPNET approach is realised.

As we are explaining to the children from the outset- that their research is not being designed to sit on a shelf, it must lead to something new, different and impactful.

They need to take full ownership of this key principle or we will not have been successful.

Therefore this Phase is very important in allowing the children to plan how they will take their new learning and share it within their world.

This may involve organising a specific school event (challenging during the test phase when schools were dealing with Covid restrictions) but could be done online to include the parents of their classes as well as the teachers and wider school community. The presentation of the findings can also be fed back to any relevant stakeholders that had been involved in Phase 1 or Phase 2.

Lesson plans in this Phase are more structured at the initial stage and then will revert to the provision of invisible support. As with all other resources mentioned within this guide, these can be found on the website.

8.2 Introducing presentation skills

The initial session for Phase 3 will focus on the nature of presentation and the wide range of approaches. The children will need to consider potential audiences, presentation styles and roles within their groups.

Again, if useful, video resources are available within the website of children presenting their CEPNET research findings in school or peer-to-peer settings.

The children who have worked on more traditional research approaches, such as surveys, may well have important findings to report about their primary research. They may decide to use a presentation with figures, charts and quotes. Other research teams may seek to use more creative means to present their results. This may involve a role play, song or rap[3], where they

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[3] An example of a rap that was produced by children as part of their CEPNET work can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=osKFwb3b3W8

have written or developed an original response to the research results. Other groups may use a podcast approach, where a series of interviews have been cut and they would like to make the results available online.

These final sessions are now focused on the students taking a lead again in how they would like to disseminate their findings.

The key function of the teachers and researchers during this Phase is to support the ambitions of the students as much as possible. A speech to the UN General Assembly may not be a realistic possibility, but what is the next best option?

8.3   Bringing in school and wider community

Each school community and their local partners represent a huge resource when it comes to the presentation phase. It is worth considering some of these questions:

- Are there parents or friends of the school with contacts when it comes to getting the student message out?
- Are there opportunities to use local media channels to increase the visibility of the children and the messages that they would like to disseminate?
- Are there local politicians or community organisations that would like to be able to share their findings?

Through making use of any local "multipliers", the children may find a number of different means of sharing their presentations.

8.4   Organising events

The ideal scenario for the sharing of all of the student work is through a single school-based event.

During such an event, all achievements can be equally recognised, valued and validated. The students can present their results to an audience and the parents and guardians can see their children in a different light. Feedback from CEPNET project presentations indicated that many students excelled in this new role and many parents were dumbfounded to see their child on a stage confidently presenting their work.

Given Covid-related restrictions, it was challenging to organise such an event during the trial and test phase for CEPNET, but a range of online opportunities were also explored when face to face formats were not possible.

It may be an option that a series of group based presentations are organised with selected audiences in mind. For example a project on examining the sourcing of materials for a football jersey may involve a presentation to members of a local football club or a project that focuses on a specific environmental project may present to political or NGO representatives.

8.5   Dissemination of research results

While the students will take the initiative in the local presentation of their results, the wider dissemination of the results can be further carried out through the project website.

Within the CEPNET website, the key messages and learnings collected across all schools will be collected, collated and shared as widely as possible through all relevant local and international networks and policy making spaces.

8.6   Connecting with other schools

As the children start to put a final shape on their presentations, they will be encouraged to practise and hone their new skills in sharing their results with their peers in the other schools. They can seek feedback on their presentation styles, content and manner. This will allow for a further level of ownership of the results both within the schools and across the schools.

It will also be useful for the teachers to share their approaches through this Phase to get new ideas about how best to promote the student results.

8.7   Documenting Phase 3

As with previous Phases, the importance of review and reflection will be increasingly important through this Phase. While the students may already have much experience of debate and discussion and also to a more limited degree of carrying out research projects, it is unlikely that the students will have significant experience of presenting to an audience. Therefore this Phase will require that the teachers and the students move outside a possible comfort zone and that there is extra effort required to capture how this has worked.

From the perspective of the children as they come to the end of their CEPNET experience, it is useful to be aware as to the extent to which they have learned new approaches and skills. Where teachers have the opportunity, they can ask the students as they move towards these final sessions to try to articulate how they have experienced the CEPNET approach in creative ways. It can be useful to return to the original posters and ask them to name anything that they have learned under each of the 5 headings (voice, debate, analysis, worldview, action).

Similarly the teachers may want to link in with other schools where this has been possible to review the process and to reflect on the achievements and any shared learnings. That feedback will inform any future efforts with other class groups.

Appendix 1: Competencies linked to National Frameworks[4]

Key competency	Attributes
Being an active citizen	• Developing an understanding and acting on the rights and responsibilities of myself and others • Experiencing learning through democratic practices • Recognising injustice and inequality and ways to take action • Developing capacity to make choices in favour of a sustainable future
Being creative	• Participating in and enjoying creative and cultural experiences • Being curious • Being imaginative • Being innovative • Using creative processes • Exploring alternative ways of communicating
Being a digital learner	• Communicating and collaborating with others through digital technology • Accessing, analysing and managing content using digital technology • Enabling content creation, problem-solving and creativity using digital technology • Interacting ethically and responsibly with digital technology
Being mathematical	• Thinking and communicating mathematically • Solving problems and making sense of the world using mathematics • Estimating, predicting and calculating • Recognising relationships, trends, connections and patterns • Interpreting and processing information and data
Communicating and using language	• Developing understanding and enjoyment of words and language • Developing oracy • Reading for enjoyment and with critical understanding • Writing for different purposes and for a variety of audiences • Exploring and creating a variety of texts
Fostering wellbeing	• Showing awareness of how to make good choices in relation to wellbeing • Participating with growing confidence and skill in physical activity • Being self-aware and resilient • Acting responsibly and showing care towards self and others • Being spiritual and having a sense of purpose and meaning • Being persistent and flexible in solving problems • Being able to assess risk and respond
Learning to be a learner	• Playing, learning and working with others • Caring for and showing empathy towards others • Being able to reflect on learning • Fostering and maintaining positive relationships • Dealing with conflict • Respecting difference • Learning about others

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[4] https://ncca.ie/media/4456/ncca-primary-curriculum-framework-2020.pdf

Appendix 2: Sample SDG Resources[5]

5 https://sdgtoolkit.org/tool/sdgs-for-kids/

ACTIVITY 1

THINKING CAPS

Aim: To get young people thinking about what the new SDGs mean to them personally and how they connect to their every-day lives.

Age: 6+   **Time:** 45 MIN   **Theme:** All goals   **Materials:** Flipchart paper, markers, a copy of the 17 SDGs

What to do:

- Ask your group to split into smaller groups of 4/5.
- When they are in their smaller groups, give them a sheet of flipchart paper, a copy of the 17 SDGs and markers so that they can record their answers and discussion – the more creatively, the better!
- Go through the 17 SDGS and pose some/all of the following questions to the groups (depending on time and group):
  - Looking at the 17 goals – where do you see a connection with yourself as an individual and your role as a volunteer, young person, employee, student, citizen, academic, etc.?
  - Are some goals more important to you than others? What are the most important? Why do you think there are so many?

- Do you see any barriers/challenges to these new goals? Explain…
- Do you think it is important for other children and young people to hear about these goals? Why is this?
- If there was one or two key messages that you would want those in power to hear (President, Minister, Politicians, development experts, etc.), what would that message be?
- What action will you take (if any) around these new goals – what will you do in the short/long term; personally, and otherwise?
- What support do you need from the key players/ leaders/stakeholders to enable/empower you to make a contribution/take action on the new goals?
- Was this a difficult exercise to do?

Some of the issues that link to the Sustainable Development Goals can include:

POVERTY GENDER SDGs MDGs IRISH AID AID DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

DEBT FAIR TRADE EDUCATION VOLUNTEERING PARTICIPATION & ACTION VIOLENCE CONFLICT

CLIMATE CHANGE HIV & AIDS JUSTICE ENVIRONMENT

HUNGER COFFEE YOUNG PEOPLE & DEVELOPMENT HUMAN RIGHTS

CONSUMPTION SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT CLIMATE JUSTICE MIGRATION

WATER CHILD LABOUR GLOBALISATION DEMOCRACY WORK CHILD SOLDIERS

https://www.youth.ie/documents/sdgs-youth-resource-pack/

Appendix 3: SDG Overview

Box 1. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

1. No Poverty – End poverty in all its forms everywhere

2. Zero Hunger – End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

3. Good Health and Well-Being – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

4. Quality Education – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

5. Gender Equality – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

6. Clean Water and Sanitation – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

7. Affordable and Clean Energy – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and clean energy for all

8. Decent Work and Economic Growth – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

10. Reduced Inequalities – Reduce inequality within and among countries

11. Sustainable Cities and Communities – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

12. Responsible Consumption and Production – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

13. Climate Action – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

14. Life below Water – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

15. Life on Land – Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

17. Partnerships for the Goals – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Source: http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals

Box 1.1. Key competencies for sustainability

Systems thinking competency: the abilities to recognize and understand relationships; to analyse complex systems; to think of how systems are embedded within different domains and different scales; and to deal with uncertainty.

Anticipatory competency: the abilities to understand and evaluate multiple futures – possible, probable and desirable; to create one's own visions for the future; to apply the precautionary principle; to assess the consequences of actions; and to deal with risks and changes.

Normative competency: the abilities to understand and reflect on the norms and values that underlie one's actions; and to negotiate sustainability values, principles, goals, and targets, in a context of conflicts of interests and trade-offs, uncertain knowledge and contradictions.

Strategic competency: the abilities to collectively develop and implement innovative actions that further sustainability at the local level and further afield.

Collaboration competency: the abilities to learn from others; to understand and respect the needs, perspectives and actions of others (empathy); to understand, relate to and be sensitive to others (empathic leadership); to deal with conflicts in a group; and to facilitate collaborative and participatory problem solving.

Critical thinking competency: the ability to question norms, practices and opinions; to reflect on own one's values, perceptions and actions; and to take a position in the sustainability discourse.

Self-awareness competency: the ability to reflect on one's own role in the local community and (global) society; to continually evaluate and further motivate one's actions; and to deal with one's feelings and desires.

Integrated problem-solving competency: the overarching ability to apply different problem-solving frameworks to complex sustainability problems and develop viable, inclusive and equitable solution options that promote sustainable development, integrating the above-mentioned competences.

Appendix 4: Classroom Exercises and Games

List of classroom exercises

https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/classroom-exercises

Scramble for wealth and power

http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/hreduseries/tb1b/Section2/activity2.html

Inequality and gender

https://www.findevcanada.ca/en/blog/unequalopolis-immersive-board-game-addresses-gender-inequality

https://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/fun_games_and_inequality

Games about activism

https://store.tesacollective.com/collections/games/products/rise-up

https://www.storybasedstrategy.org/resistance-bingo

UN designed game on SDGs

https://go-goals.org/

Co-opoly- everyone wins or loses together

https://store.tesacollective.com/products/co-opoly-the-game-of-co-operatives

https://outofordergames.com/blocbybloc/

Social Determinants of Health

https://nccdh.ca/resources/entry/the-last-straw

Online game with focus on racism

https://fairplaygame.org/about/

Environmental focus- Turn up the heat

https://tidal.northwestern.edu/greenhomegames/

Appendix 5: Sample Lesson Plan

What is the core lesson concept?

Exploring different cultures can help children to appreciate variety and diversity)

Does it connect to a strand from the curriculum?

Yes, strand: Myself and the wider world

What is the key focus for the lesson?

Developing citizenship, looking at national, European and wider communities

What are the lesson objectives?

- Recognise and acknowledge the various cultural, religious, ethnic or other groups that exist in a community or society and explore ways in which these differences can be respected
- Become aware of some of the cultures, life styles and languages of some countries in the European Union and the wider world
- Practise and recognise the importance of care and consideration, courtesy and good manners with others

Can this be integrated with other subject areas?

English strands; Arts Education and Drama to explore feelings, ideas and understanding; Geography strands with focus on human environment

Are there any issues to deal with in terms of planning?

As this lesson involves a visit to the class by an adult(s) who was born in another country, it will be necessary to meet those involved and plan the lesson with them.

What resources are needed?

Copies, pencils, worksheet for reflection on lessons

Summary of class procedure

- Introduction
- Group Work
- Role Play
- Reflection

Detailed Procedures to be found here:

https://pdst.ie/sites/default/files/08%20Walk%20Tall%206th%20Class_0.pdf#page=291