

LEARNING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

Children who learn social entrepreneurship are exposed to the real world and to issues relating to sustainable development. These include, for example, issues such as marine plastic pollution and global warming, but also the quality of life in a neighbourhood, prejudice, discrimination and poverty. All these aspects are reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals formulated by the United Nations¹. Children who learn about social entrepreneurship discover how, however young they may be, they can take the initiative, create value and, in doing so, make a difference.

Education with this focus is known as *Social Entrepreneurship Education*. The emphasis is on learning and it could therefore be interpreted as 'learning to engage in social entrepreneurship'.



Learning to engage in social entrepreneurship rests on a **threefold foundation**. It encompasses a pedagogical dimension, a societal dimension and an action-oriented dimension. Within the context of learning to engage in social entrepreneurship, these dimensions are described as: *being a subject, contributing to sustainable development, and entrepreneurship*.

Being a subject focuses on personal development and discovering one's own motivations and passions. It includes how individuals relate to others and to the world, and how perspectives can be explored together (De Winter, 2017). In addition, it involves seeking a healthy balance between what is desirable for oneself, for others and for the world. Biesta refers to this as "grown-up freedom" (Biesta, 2018).

The second element is **contributing to sustainable development**, centered around the Sustainable Development Goals. Education is regarded as a crucial factor in achieving sustainable development (Leicht, Combes, Buyn, & Agbedahin, 2018).

Entrepreneurship is about taking the initiative, recognizing and seizing opportunities, and subsequently adding value and creating positive change.

Learning social entrepreneurship itself consists of a number of components. These can be represented by symbols. It looks like this:



¹ www.sdgnerland.nl



The heart symbolises **being connected** - connected to yourself, to others and to the world. It involves developing compassion, empathy and care to explore a problem or challenge and connect with it.



The exclamation marks represent **recognizing opportunities**. If there is something you would like to change, what opportunities do you see to contribute?



Next you ask yourself: What possibilities do I see for bringing about change? What ideas do I have? You take the time for **generating ideas**.



Tightening the lightbulb stands for: What am I going to do? Which idea will I choose? It is about **taking the initiative** for action.



Through the action taken, you have added something and **created value**. Hence the plus sign. You have undertaken something with the intention of making a positive contribution to sustainable coexistence and development.



During and after social entrepreneurship activities, **reflection** takes place. This process is symbolized by the arrows. Are you satisfied, or would you like to make further adjustments? Would you like to scale up your action and share the outcomes widely to increase impact? Do you want to develop another idea? And what does entrepreneurship teach you about yourself, other people and the world?

Learning social entrepreneurship and citizenship education

Learning about social entrepreneurship is a way of focusing on social action within citizenship education. The ideas and initiatives originating from pupils themselves take centre stage. Consider, for example, devising and organizing a neighbourhood celebration to bring local residents together. Another example is setting up a school shop that sells lunch boxes and reusable water bottles. In this way, pupils help reduce the use of disposable plastic bottles and bags while contributing to sustainable development.

Competencies

Various skills are developed whilst learning through social entrepreneurship. The key skills are as follows: compassion, empathy and caring, sustainable thinking, collaboration and communication, leadership, entrepreneurship, creative, critical and systemic thinking, and appreciation, learning and reflection.

The Education & Social Entrepreneurship research group conducts research into learning to engage in social entrepreneurship. Do you have any questions, suggestions and/or would you like to get involved? Please contact Dr Stella van der Wal-Maris (s.vdwal@hsmarnix.nl).

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