

Community Schools: exploiting the city as a learning environment?

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Conference: ECER 2014, The Past, the Present and the Future of Educational Research

Network: [05. Children and Youth at Risk and Urban Education](#)

Format: Paper

Session Information

05 SES 01, Extended Services, Informal Education and Community Schools

Paper Session

Time: 2014-09-02

13:15-14:45

Room: B017 Anfiteatro

Chair: Dolf van Veen

Contribution

Community Schools: exploiting the city as a learning environment?

In Flanders the following framework on community schools (the term "broad schools" is used) is developed in 2010, based on international literature and three year pilot project funding (Joos & Ernalsteen, 2010; Joos, Ernalsteen, et al, 2006): "A community school aims at ameliorating the broad development of all children and youngsters by supporting and/or creating a broad learning and living environment in which children and youngsters can gain a wide range of learning and living experiences. In order to achieve this goal, a broad network is established between organizations and authorities from the various sectors that jointly shape and support the learning and living of children and youngsters."

The personality of children and youngsters only fully develops when they are invited to do so and when a lot is expected from them. Community schools represent this expectant invitation to develop their talents. By providing children and youngsters with a multitude of experiences and encounters, their environment becomes a rich and safe training area for the complex society in which they will have to find their own place later on. They have to develop an enormous amount of competencies. For instance: dealing with information, being able and daring to adopt a critical attitude, problem-solving thinking, sports skills, co-operating, finding a job, communicating fluently, being creative, being able to make choices, expressing their proper ideas and feelings in various ways, enjoying it, ... Children and youngsters must not only have many skills, they are also challenged to move in different and ever-changing environments. Participating in a multiform society requires a wide range of competencies that are flexibly deployable in changing socio-

cultural contexts. This flexibility can only be acquired when you have the opportunity to develop broadly within and outside school. When we talk about learning, it means all forms of developing competencies, also by playing, by enjoying activities, in a formal or in a more informal way (Bentley, 1998, Thomas & Pattison, 2007; Dumont et al, 2010). Children and youngsters also need and are entitled to free space and time allowing them to actively explore without constant accompaniment (Gill, 2010; Gray, 2013). For instance, a Community school may support questions from youngsters for accommodation for their own activities, or meet these wishes in collaboration with the youngsters. A Community school can also see to it that children and youngsters stay the owner of their own projects, even if they are not immediately successful in that way. Failure then is part of a process resulting in new goals and developments (Gray, 2013)

A Community school essentially aims at providing children and youngsters with a maximum of opportunities and chances to realise such a broad development. It focuses on the connection between the different aspects of every concrete learning and living experience and between the many learning and living experiences children and youngsters are confronted with every day.

In this paper we will focus on the extent to which Community Schools in Flanders reach the above described objectives of giving children and youngsters a variety of opportunities to develop, to learn, to discover their talents. How do community schools use the environment of the city, during and after school hours to create this learning environment?

Method

In our research we've selected 4 community schools in Flanders, located in the so called "central cities" , these are 13 bigger cities that get extra funding from the government, and 2 community schools in Brussels. These community schools exist for at least 2 years, form part of a coordinated network and their reference frame builds on the framework described above. We also selected 6 "regular" schools, in similar neighbourhoods. These schools do not form part of an extended network. The selected neighbourhoods are described as "disadvantaged", this means with a high proportion of the population with lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Dyson, 2011). In our research, we first analyse the way the "broad learning and living environment" and "learning" is described in the policy documents of the community and regular schools. In interviews, we present our analysis with the coordinators of the community schools and the principals of the regular schools (Rapley, 2007). We also map the activities in the (school) year 2013-2014 that are going on. We do this in two ways. First, we list the activities organised by the community school (during and after school hours) and the regular schools and use our previously developed scheme of 'broad living and learning environment (Ernalsteen & Joos, 2011). Secondly we map the area (and distances) around the school, different places children visit (during and after school hours) and activities going on. Finally, we will interview children in these schools regarding their vision on learning and learning opportunities, talents and their knowledge of the neighbourhood (what does the neighbourhood offers them, do they participate, ...). Finally, we will compare the data between the way a broad living and learning environment is created in the extended schools and the regular schools.

Expected Outcomes

This research is currently carried out, we expect that the definition of the “broad learning and living environment” and “learning” differs between the regular and the community schools. We expect that learning in community schools is broader defined and that in regular schools learning is mostly defined as in-school formal learning. Community schools –ideally- will offer a wide range of activities for children (in and out of school). We expect that children in the community schools will report more learning and report more knowledge of different organisations that work in their neighbourhood and possibilities for them.

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Community Schools: Using the City as a Learning Environment?

ECER – Children and youth at risk and urban education

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INTRODUCTION

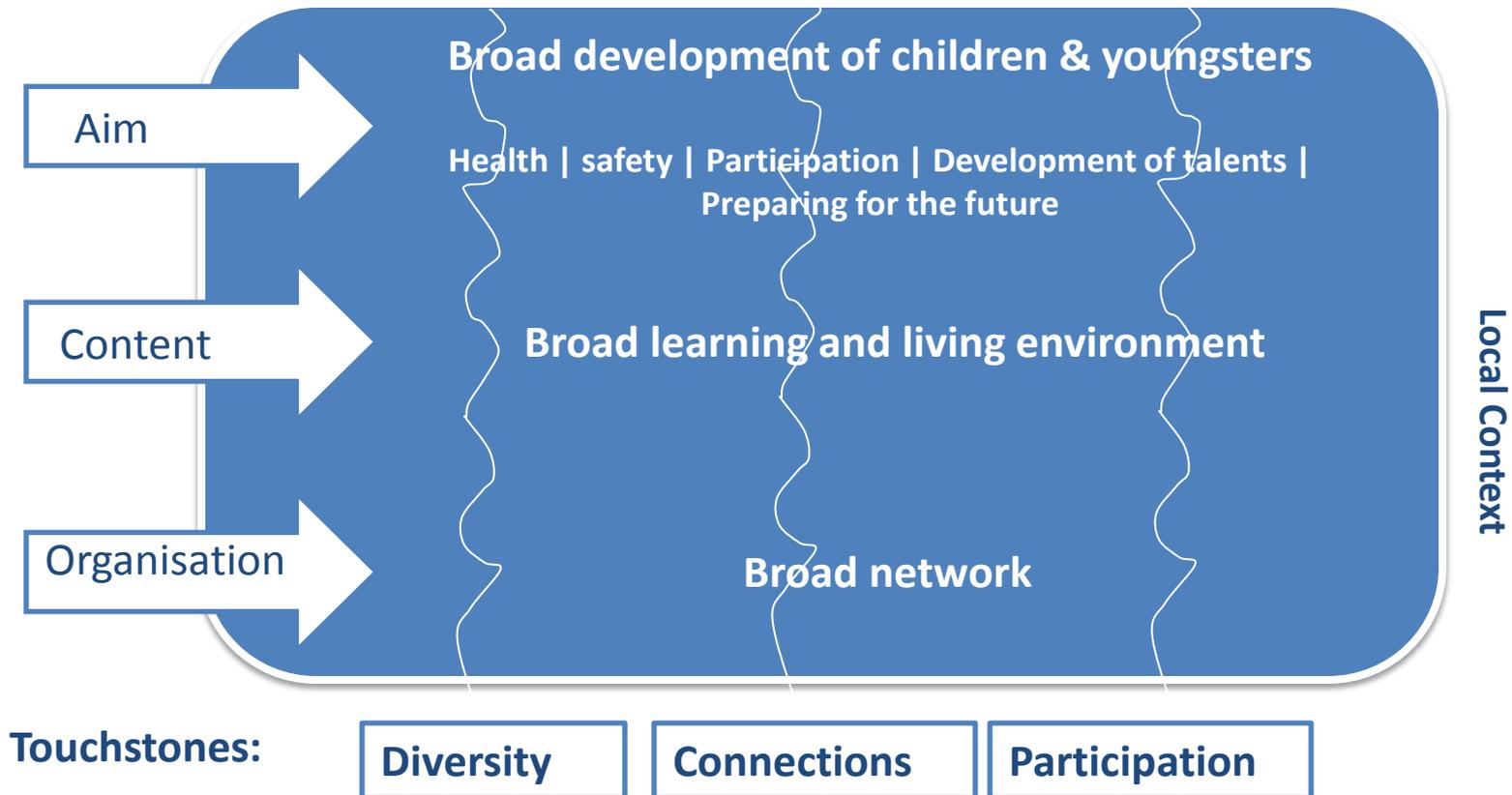


Lia Blaton

What is a community school?

“A community school aims at ameliorating the **broad development** of all children and youngsters by supporting and/or creating a **broad learning and living environment** in which children and youngsters can gain a **wide range of learning and living experiences**. In order to achieve this goal, a broad network is established between organizations and authorities from the various sectors that jointly shape and support the learning and living of children and youngsters.”

What is a community school?



Broad living and learning environment

Broadening		New contexts	Existing activities/ Organisations	Infrastructure
Strengthening		Barriers	Environment	Environment/ Infrastructure
Broad Learning		Participate	Meet	Practice

THIS PRESENTATION

How do community schools use the environment of the city, during and after school hours to create this learning environment?

2 community schools in Brussels

2 community schools in Ghent

→Analysing activities 2013-2014

→Using reference framework

RESULTS

Community Schools in Brussels and Ghent

Ghent	Brussels
Policy: City Council	Policy: Flemish Community Commission & Flemish government (Minister - Brussels)
Community school in selected neighborhoods	Community Schools in different neighborhoods
Coordinator/Community School (appointed by the city)	Subsidy (+ coordinator)
Coordinator – coordinating team (city-level)	Support Team at VGC (Flemish Community Commission)
2001 → ...	2012

Community in Brussels and Ghent



Bron: extended schools, an overview

Ghent

- Community School BP
 - Network: 7 primary schools (& pre-schools), youth clubs, sports clubs, after-school care, cultural organisations
 - Activities:
 - Reading (at home/preschool – in library)
 - Free time: lessons at schools
 - Teachers: discovering the neighborhood
 - Safer neighborhood (mobility)
 - Vacations: youthwork



Ghent

- Community School STH
 - Network: 4 primary schools, health care center, theater, library, youth clubs, sports clubs
 - Activities
 - Health: Vita Mike (food, sports)
 - Sports: two events/year
 - Theater: for different pre-schools, focus: language
 - School visits for parents
 - Reading at home
 - Free time activities for children at school



Brussels

- Community School BRES
 - Network: municipality, 3 schools, music education, musea, theater, ...
 - Activities
 - Camping in the library
 - Penpals (4th year, +/- 10 year olds)
 - Talent suitcases (pre-school children)
 - Theater
 - Sports
 - Choir
 - Six-up: writing a newspaper
 - Very Important parents
 - In the classroom (getting teachers involved, 1st year of primary school)
 - Toys



Brussels

- Community School PG
 - Network: 1 school, library, community center, opera house
 - Activities
 - Parents meet parents (meal)
 - Reading project in library
 - Library: Guided tour for parents & training: how to read aloud
 - Workshops art in the school
 - School
 - Visiting the opera
 - Parents visit the school
 - gym



Summary

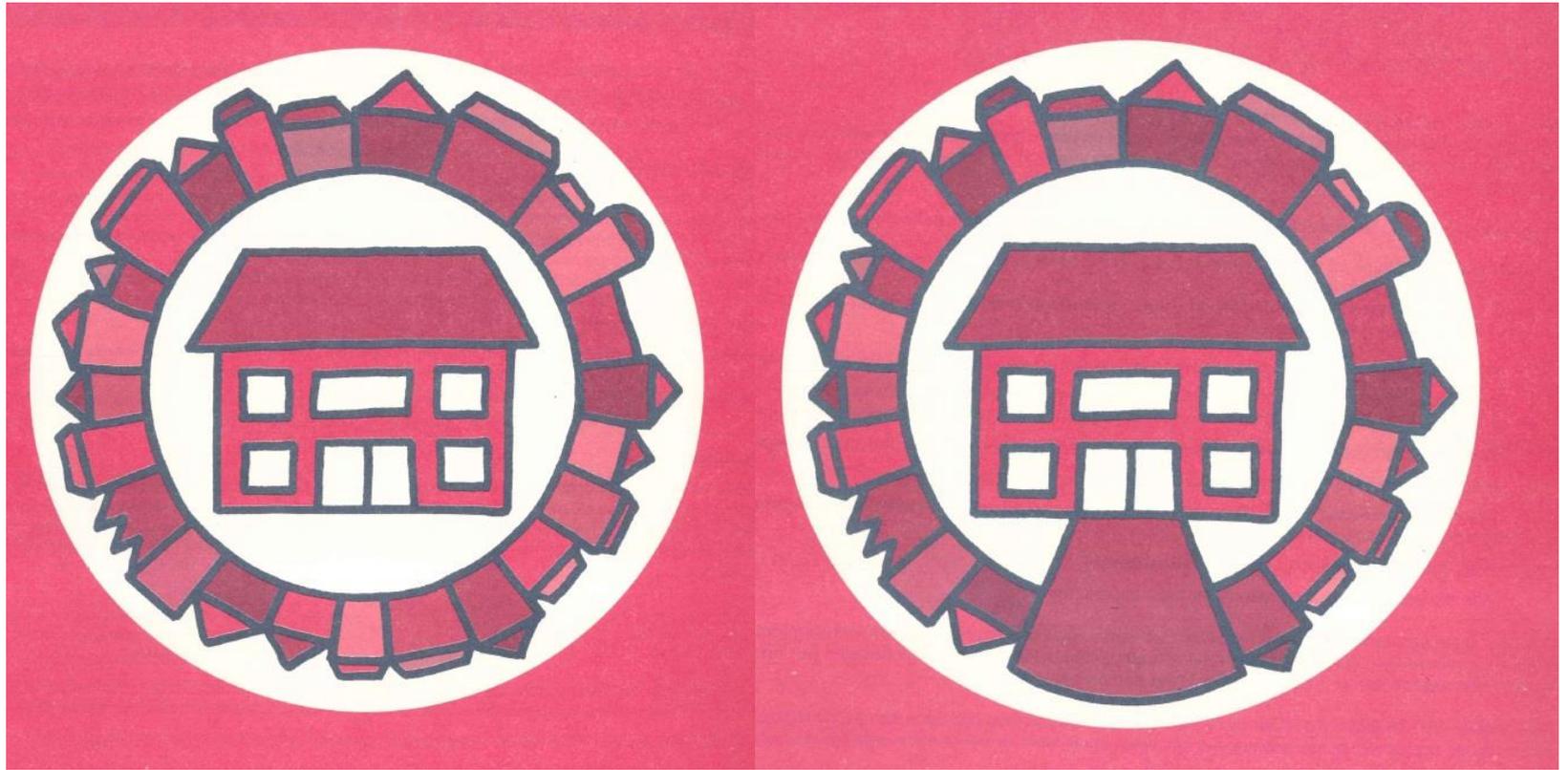
Broadening	New contexts BP, STH, PS, BRES	Existing activities/ Organisations BP, STH, PS, BRES	Infrastructure
Strengthening	Barriers BP, STH, PS, BRES	Environment BP, STH, PS, BRES	Environment BP
Broad Learning	Participate BRES	Meet	Practice

CONCLUSIONS

Broad living and learning environment



1. At school/in the neighborhood



2. Transfer

- Goal orientedness?
- Activities: out of school activities → transfer to learning going on in the school?
 - f/e theater workshops/sports/...
 - Cfr. Evaluation study in the Netherlands

3. And during school hours?

- Free time activities
- Getting teachers involved?



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QUESTIONS?

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Brede School



* pdf. te downloaden via: www.diversiteitenleren.be (klik op afbeeldingen: directe link naar pdf-documenten)

www.bredeschool.org

COLOFON NIEUWS WEGWIJZER

BREDE SCHOOL

Thema's Kenniscentrum Methodieken In praktijk

Netwerk rond kinderen & jongeren

Een Brede School is een samenwerkingsverband tussen verschillende sectoren die samen werken aan een brede leer- en leefomgeving in de vrije tijd én op school, met als doel maximale ontwikkelingskansen voor alle kinderen en jongeren.



Waar vinden we subsidies voor Brede School?

Nieuws

- [Inspiratiedag Brede School \(29 april 2014\)](#)
- [Verslag inspiratiebezoek ouderbetrokkenheid](#)

steunpunt diversiteit & leren

Vlaanderen verbeelding werkt

- Wat is een Brede School
- Brede leer- en leefomgeving
- Organisatie van een Brede School
- Beleid en Brede School