

Our Recommendations for the Role of NGOs in South-North School Partnerships

1. Be patient when advising teaching staff, as there are many other school matters that require a lot of time, but be persistent – question the aims again and again; charitable purposes do not necessarily support exchange on an equal level! The partners also have firm opinions to all topics, even if they are expressed differently than what is normal for us.
2. Encourage a change in perspective again and again, and help in the process of involving the views of the partners – even in the case of conflicts or misunderstandings. This also applies to partners from the global South.
3. Build up contacts with local migrants from the relevant partner country and train them as multipliers for dialogue with the schools. Your understanding of living conditions of both sides helps to undertake a change in perspective again and again.
4. During the preparation and follow-up of meetings (on both sides!), pay attention to establishing a good group atmosphere, which can hold in difficult irritating situations too, of which there can be a number of on the ground. This should also apply for the partners from the Global South. Don't forget to address the global context in the communication with the partners.
5. Teaching staff are often overwhelmed with the search for sources of finance. Use your relevant know-how to support them.
6. Look for communication models which promote independence and pupil participation e.g. via the internet and in web 2.0.
7. Through your contacts and many years of involvement, you can provide many suggestions for a lively partnership (further training, resources, internet forums, inviting speakers, literature or music events, amongst other things). This networking can also help schools to learn from other examples.

He who goes to foreign parts, should
open his eyes, not his mouth
(Proverb from West Africa)

Further information

- KATE Kontaktstelle für Umwelt und Entwicklung, Berlin, www.kateberlin.de
- ASET - Intercultural atelier Angelo Soliman – Echanges – Treffpunkt: www.aset-ev.de

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South-North School Partnerships



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The idea

Through partnership relationships between schools in the Global South and North, children and youths can experience globalisation and global relationships sustainably and in practice. Friendships across borders are developed... The development of the whole school can profit from this; it moulds the school's cosmopolitanism and hospitality.

As non-governmental organisations with partners in the global South, we can contribute a lot to the initiation of such partnerships, their lively development and their contribution to sustainable development – in their surroundings, too.

The experience

As Berlin non-governmental development organisations, we have supported schools in Berlin with finding partner schools in Central America, Cameroon and Senegal or with qualifying existing relationships. These South-North school partnerships have developed different profiles in the process:

- There are those, which put emphasis on meetings.
- Others maintain the exchange through internet platforms.
- Particularly in the case of youths, there is an exchange through photos and letters (delivered through personal contact or through correspondence by mail).
- Some schools rather see their contribution as fundraising campaigns now and again.
- There are those partnerships, which are connected with a city partnership,
- There are also schools, which work with each other in the same network.

In each individual case, it is important to explore the potential and clarify needs, in order to continually, reliably and equally help the partnership, as far as possible, to be implemented.

The challenge

What "pictures" of the partner country and the life of people of the same age are we confronted with in the global North and South respectively? Workshops on these questions around making people aware of values, prejudices and clichés, as well as the background of these, repeatedly determine the programme of accompanying measures. At meetings particularly,



Change in perspective: Youths from Berlin reading texts from Nicaragua and El Salvador

School representatives are usually very thankful for such support: in the course of everyday school business, the time-consuming partnership always remains an additional burden. However, highlights, such as new friendship, a successful project or the experiences of visitors, prove time and time again that the effort is worth it.

being foreign is associated with strong feelings – fear too.

What "picture" do we have of the global South? How do we deal with the comparison, when we hear reports from youths that are not consistent with our "picture"? What is "authentic"? We would like to move away from the "single stories" (Chimamanda Adichie), from the fixation with "typical" features and conditions of a continent – such as "real African" – towards a diverse view of the world.



Both school leaders are involved help support the programme.

Working on a shared issue

Thus, KATE e.V. opened a platform, where youths from Berlin could exchange with youths from El Salvador and Nicaragua about their everyday lives in the form of text and pictures and question each other on different topics. In the process, they then also can talk about this during "normal" lessons and are able to express how their views and clichés have changed. ASET e.V. has supported a school from Spandau in an exchange with its partner school in Cameroon: In 2011, a group of pupils and teachers went to Kumba; in 2012 a return visit to Berlin took place. How can a "meeting on an equal level" take place, if the initial conditions are already so very different? This not only refers to the living

conditions of the families and the school conditions, but also to the possibility of finding funds to finance such a programme. How can the dominance of the global North resulting from this be dealt with? How do we react to generous donations, which on the one hand contribute to overcoming the financial hurdles or make meaningful projects realisable, but on the other hand can also increase feelings of above and below? How do we stand on the negative ecological impact of the meetings? Are there respective local challenges for the youths, which could mean unhelpful irritations? Which experiences must be reviewed in the follow-up?

An exercise:

In one workshop we work with a picture from El Salvador, which shows youths working in a field. Only one pupil is allowed to see it. He then describes it to only one classmate, without showing it to him/her – and that pupil describes it again to the next one etc. At the end, the last pupil draws what he/she has in mind from the account of the penultimate pupil. How has the picture changed through verbal correspondence? In our example, at the end it was a picture of exploited field workers, almost prisoners ...

Further activities as part of our project were the invitations of partners from the global South to a big international conference in Berlin and to a future workshop around school partnerships. Direct dialogue helped here to extend the view and to include the various aspects of problems and conditions for success for South-North school partnerships.



Partners in discussion at the future workshop on South-North school partnerships, October 2011