

matís

Kids Cuisine

Practical edutainment about food traditions, local food consumption and sustainability for primary schools

Project and procedure description



Project management

Project Manager at Matis:

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Design and testing of the project:

Sveinn Margeirsson, drafted the idea, which was then implemented by Rakel Halldórsdóttir in collaboration with participating schools on testing the project, master chefs Sveinn Kjartansson and Hinrik Carl Ellertsson, and Brynja Laxdal, project manager at Matarauður Íslands (e. Iceland's culinary treasures). Testing of the implementation of the project took place in the northern part of Iceland (Skagafjörður) during the school year 2018. The initial design and testing was financially supported by Matarauður Íslands.

Further testing aimed at measuring children's food engagement and teacher's feedback took place in the Capital area of Iceland (Reykjavík area) and was carried out in the school year 2020 under the supervision of Kolbrún Sveinsdóttir, project manager at Matis, in collaboration with Anna Sigríður Ólafsdóttir, professor in nutrition within the Faculty of Health promotion, and sport and leisure studies at the University of Iceland. Further testing was financially supported by EIT Food, co-funded by the European Union (WeValueFood, Ref.: 19152-20).

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Introduction

Local or national food traditions and the origin of food are often unclear to children today, as the connection from farm to fork is more vague than before. The image of local food and its consumption needs to be promoted, and interest in the use of raw materials and natural products from one's own local environment must be encouraged. Children are the future and they possess creativity and power of innovation which needs to be directed towards a healthy lifestyle in line with the United Nations' global goals for the sustainability of the world's societies (SDG's). Consuming natural and fresh food, directly from the local environment is a recognized way to ensure good nutrition, as the food is fresher than products that have been transported a long way and/or have been extensively processed before consumption. At the same time, local food contributes to less pollution and more sustainability.

Health, well-being, and sustainability, are among the main components of educational curricula in primary schools. These components of education cover society, culture, environment and nature literacy towards mental and physical development, needed to function in society and work with others. They also involve future vision, ability and willingness to influence and engage in maintaining one's society, change it and develop it.

Kids Cuisine is designed from the viewpoint that primary schools can easily and effectively use the project in education on health, well-being and sustainability, through entertainment and education, combined in edutainment. The edutainment concept is straight forward. Children learn about sustainability, environmental impact, nutrition, and home economics, and are simultaneously entertained with local food meal preparation sessions as well as visits to, and discussions with, local food producers. The highlight activity is to engage students in creating short videos on the children's obtainment of local food ingredients and then cooking from these ingredients, and to spread the message among peers. The videos can be made available on the school websites and social media such as Instagram or TikTok accounts supervised by the responsible schools.

In many countries, health and sustainability are emphasised in the national curriculum guides for compulsory schools, often based on international programmes such as health promoting schools and eco schools.

Health-Promoting Primary Schools

The World Health Organization's (WHO's) Global School Health Initiative¹ aims to strengthen health promotion and education activities to improve health through schools. One of the focus points of health promoting schools is influencing health-related behaviours, with regard to e.g., knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. Education and diet are important components of health-related behaviour, and education about a healthy diet should be linked to as many school subjects as possible.

Eco-Schools

Eco-Schools is one of the largest global sustainable school programme² and is operated by the Foundation for Environmental Education³. They offer a solution-based approach to empower young people to create a more environmentally conscious world. The aim is to encourage young people to engage in their environment by allowing them the opportunity to actively protect it, by action-based learning.

Eco-Schools Iceland project is supervised by Landvernd (e. Land protection)⁴, aimed at children's education in sustainability and environmental conservation. One of the topics is reduced waste, such as food waste.

¹ <https://www.who.int/health-topics/health-promoting-schools>

² <https://www.ecoschools.global/>

³ <https://www.fee.global/>

⁴ <https://landvernd.is/graenfaninn/>



The aim of the project Kids Cuisine

The project is based on the idea of edutainment⁵ and has the purpose of using play to engage and educate children about regional primary food production, the rich nature and how it is connected to food gathering. The project also emphasises animal and human welfare and sustainable production methods. The focus is placed on responsible consumption, with respect for nature and primary producers.

An important question when introducing the project is: **WHAT WOULD YOU EAT IF THERE WAS NO GROCERY STORE?** In this way, children's awareness and ideas about the origin of the food they consume are directed towards the possibilities which the local environment has to offer as food resource.

Food traditions and the origin of food are often unclear to children, as the connection from farm to fork is more vague than before. Local food and its consumption, needs to be promoted and interest in the use of raw materials and natural products from one's own local environment must be encouraged. Children are the future and they possess creativity and power of innovation which needs to be directed towards a healthy lifestyle in line with the United Nations' global goals for the sustainability of the world's societies.

Among the concepts that could be addressed are: Clean food, how we read packaging, food waste, local consumption, ecological footprint, culinary trends, food memories, sustainability, packaging and use of plastic, food traditions, seasonal food, local food, indoor cultivation, outdoor cultivation, diet to prevent diseases and etc.

Important terms (to be introduced to the children))



<i>Primary producers:</i>	Producers who produce food directly from resources, such as farmers and fishermen (hunting and raising animals and the production of their products, e.g. fish, meat, eggs, milk, honey for human consumption).
<i>Edutainment:</i>	Education through educating play.
<i>Local production:</i>	Primary production of the respective region.
<i>Local consumption:</i>	Consumption of food that originates in the community's environment.
<i>Food preparation process:</i>	A process that starts with finding and collecting products (in this case from the local environment) and ends with prepared meals.

Testing of project implementation

First testing of the implementation of the project took place in the northern part of Iceland during the school year 2018-2019. The project was perceived as both enjoyable and informative. In autumn 2020, the project implementation was tested again, including evaluation of children's (age 11-12) food engagement and teachers feedback in four schools in the capital area of Iceland. After the project implementation, the children's food engagement was increased and their experience of the project was perceived very good according to all teachers. The teachers were mostly very positive towards the project: *"Fun, positive and maybe because the children were so positive, they found it so exciting, my opinion is colored by their opinion"* (teacher 3.), *"They [the children] respected the ingredients more after obtaining them themselves"* (teacher 2). However, the teachers mentioned terms such

⁵ Definition of edutainment: entertainment that is designed to teach something.

as local consumption, sustainability, carbon footprint, role models when it comes to food, food production and best before date on packaging, as terminologies that many children of this age had difficulty in understanding: *“Big and new terminologies are always complicated for them and we have to explain them well”* (teacher 1). This is important to keep in mind during project implementation.

The project Kids Cuisine suits well as a part of secondary school subjects covering e.g home economics, social studies and natural science. The implementation is not fixed and it is in the hands of each school to shape it as best suited within the project process description frame. During the implementation testing, one school integrated the study material within home economics and arts, but the other three schools conducted the project in home economics. One of the teachers said that in their implementation the children made posters, recipes and food menus so they unintentionally integrated the project with Icelandic and technical education. One of the teachers mentioned the multiple approaches of the project: *“This is a very fun project because it has so much educational value and is also fun and so multifaceted, this isn’t just home economics, it’s also environmental education and technical education because the children are making a video and all that stuff”* (teacher 4).

Kids Cuisine is a vivid project, where the focus is on the children’s positive and enjoyable experience of the food preparation procedure, that starts with collecting or obtaining local raw materials or ingredients and ends with food that the children prepare, cook and consume. The project assumes that the entire process, from the acquisition of ingredients to consumption, is video recorded and made into a short documentary, 5-10 minutes. This video can be made accessible, e.g. via social media, to children from elsewhere which then can learn about food traditions and primary production of other parts of the country or even other countries through the documentaries of the project.



ATTENTION! Schools must take care to obtain permission from children’s parents/guardians before publication of images of their children in connection with the project, as image publication is dependent on such permission. However, image publication is in no way a condition for children’s participation in the project. These permissions must be taken into account for any publications within the project.

A video of the initial testing of the project implementation is available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1cZ4cbl1Gd8>



Project benefits/usefulness

In the light of the SDG’s, the support of society of its own primary production and its products is important. The project can be a tool to promote local production, supply and innovation of quality food.

Most food policies today are based on respect for each country’s resources. In order to ensure innovation, maintenance and development of primary production, it is important that the society works systematically to strengthen its image from within.

The children are the future and hope for a better world can become a reality with them. If we succeed in creating a living curriculum in which the skills of food production, cooking and responsible consumption become desirable knowledge, it can become a platform for certain talents to flourish, for the benefit of society and nature. Food is an essential part of life, and getting to know the positive experience of the food preparation process, from the acquisition of ingredients to the consumption of food, is a factor in increasing quality of life, as food preparation can truly bring beauty and joy to life.



Implementation of the project in schools

1. Part of the work – Project Preparation:

Selection of project supervisors within the school

- Project supervisor (most likely a teacher) at each school is chosen and cooperation is established between school subjects. It is encouraged that the project is connected to subjects other than home economics within the schools as appropriate, such as history (the national history, food traditions and customs), social studies (sustainability of society/responsible consumption), chemistry/physics (chemistry/ physics of food), natural science/geography (food resources). The project could also be part of a school theme week if appropriate. Some schools grow herbs or vegetables to some extent, and it is ideal to connect the project to such cultivation if appropriate.
- A group of children at each school is selected (e.g. a certain age group/certain class or all students, may differ from school to school depending on the number of students and the different setup of classes).
- Supervisor of the project's documentation (video production) and the recorder(s) are selected for each school (this could be teacher(s) and student(s) of an optional course on electronic communication or video production, but it could also be the teacher, or a student who is sly with the camera, depending on what suits best). Please note! Complex, or perfect video production is not expected, but accessible technology of the type that people use daily and in general (such as video phone/tablet recordings with a "homemade feel" that are edited and processed into a more complete video with sound/ pictures/text messages etc.). Each school decides on this implementation based on the conditions at each location. Here, imagination and creativity can lead the way in creating a short, informative and descriptive overview video of the implementation of the project at the school.

Example of indoor plant growing (<https://plugin-magazine.com/living/ikeas-space10-offers-open-source-designs-for-the-grow-room/>) where ingenuity is used to create an interesting solution for growing plants of various kinds in a small indoor space.

Here, the idea of vertical cultivation is utilised, but in this way the water used for irrigation can be utilised to the most, as excess water falls to the next level.



2. Part of the work – Project Launch:

- A) The United Nations Global Goals (SDG's) presented to the children.
- B) The purpose of the project and its implementation presented to the children.
- C) Resources and food traditions of the region introduced to the children.
- D) Creating a menu based on resources and food traditions of the region. Preparation of field trips in nature or visits to farmers or producers.

A. Children's group presented with the United Nations Global Goals (SDG's):



This presentation/discussion can for example take place in home economics class, social studies or within any other appropriate subject.



First briefly introduce the children to the global goals in general and then discuss the global goals that are most relevant to the project, e.g. goals 11, 12 and 13. The 11th goal relates to how local consumption makes cities and communities more sustainable, e.g. where there is no need to transport food from far away. The 12th goal relates, among other things, to minimizing food waste and pollution of the environment and the 13th goal relates to how we protect the earth and its resources, for example by not overusing resources and making good use of the food that resources give us.

SDG's platforms

The United Nations encourage learning about sustainable development from an early age. Their platform contains accessible information about introduction to the SDG's and related projects:

- <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/student-resources/>

Food Educators is an EIT Food programme that aims to promote healthy and sustainable food choices among young people and encourage them to be the agents of change that our food system needs. They offer teaching materials adjusted to different age levels within the food themes health, sustainability, science, systems, jobs and carriers:

- <https://www.foodeducators.eu/resources>

Other useful sites:

- <https://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/>
- <https://www.project-everyone.org/>



B. The purpose of the project and its implementation presented to the children

Next, the children are introduced to the Kids Cuisine project and its implementation.

The children introduced to the work process:

The children are asked and the teacher leads a discussion about the main question:
WHAT WOULD YOU EAT IF THERE WERE NO SHOPS NEARBY? and the questions it raises:

Can we survive without access to food in stores?

What food can we get directly from the wild nature of our local environment?

What food can we get directly from the primary producers of the area?

Main goal presented: The attention and interest of the children aroused in the improved utilisation of food raw materials and food products, the use of local products in cooking. The children encouraged to use imagination and innovation in cooking from traditional products.



Discuss how the project alligns with SDG´s 11, 12 and 13.

Possible topics of discussion:

- The country's potential as a sustainable country that uses its own resources for food production:
 - Types of primary production in the country: Animal husbandry (cattle, horses, sheep, goats, pigs, poultry etc.), vegetable and fruit farming, fishing, aquaculture, collection of foods from nature (berries, mushrooms, eggs, herbs, fruits, shellfish, seaweed etc.), game hunting.
 - Conditions in the country for primary production. For example, is it more difficult to grow vegetables or fruits here than in many places abroad? Is there sufficient water and electricity?
 - The fish in the sea and fisheries management.

- Domestic food production compared to foreign production:
 - Lower carbon footprint when food does not have to be transported long distances .
 - Less packaging used when buying directly from farmers and primary producers.
 - Raw materials collected directly from nature, berries, mushrooms, seaweed, wild shellfish – cost nothing, ecological.
 - How supporting the local community's production is a factor in maintaining food production in the region, also maintaining the community and contributing to the country's sustainability regarding the ability to feeding the nation.

- The countries rich resources and the protection and maintainance of natural resources:
 - Pure nature for production.
 - Naturally sustainable production.
 - The importance of maintaining resources, such as resting fields, land reclamation, not overgrazing, not overfishing, etc.

- The importance of not wasting food and using everything as well as possible:
 - Yarn and wool used in home furnishings/decoration/clothing
 - Animal skin used in leather making
 - Bone and cartilage used in supplement production
 - Fish oil
 - Food acidified for storage
 - Food jammed for storage
 - Food frozen for storage
 - Food dried/smoked/boiled for storage



C) Resources and food traditions of the region introduced to the children

Talk to the children about how the natural resources of each region are the basis and create the food traditions of that region.

Ask the children questions such as:

What is typical authentic food for our country?

What did your grandparents/great-grandparents eat? Do we still eat this today?

Discuss how we can keep the old traditions but also use the traditions in innovation, play with the ingredients and create new versions using our imagination.

The food production of their own region is the basis of the children's work in the project.

D) Creating a menu based on resources and food traditions of the region. Preparation of field trips in nature or visits to farmers or producers

The teacher/project supervisor decides the menu in line with the natural resources, primary production and food traditions of the region. The menu must reflect primary production/products of the nature of the region, but be simple in design and execution, tailored to children. A visit to at least one primary producer for raw material procurement (one field trip) and/or at least one field trip to the wild nature to collect raw materials (berry picking, mushroom picking, herb picking, fishing etc.) is assumed.

Note: When preparing the menu, other ingredients/products can be used in the menu if needed, although products from the local environment will be the main focus.

The teacher/project supervisor prepares visits to farmers/primary producers and a field trip in nature in line with the menu.



3. Part of the work – Project Implementation:

The children and the teacher/project supervisor carry out each task, and a registrar registers/records. Visits to farmers/primary producers, field trip to forage food from nature. Meal preparation and the food consumed.

Practical part of the implementation:

- 1) Field trip/trips to procure ingredients to farmers/primary producers in the area in line with the set menu.
- And/or -
- 2) Field trip/trips to collect raw materials in nature (berry picking, mushroom picking, herb picking, fishing etc.). As a part of this project, the school can also encourage and promote the cultivation of own food (such as vegetables), within the school building or in its immediate surroundings, where the children participate in the cultivation.
- 3) It may be necessary to pre-process or cook products for storage before the meal preparation, e.g. by using drying, pickling, salting, cooling, freezing or other storage methods.
- 4) In line with the menu, meal preparation in the kitchen from ingredients that have been obtained/grown and processed for storage, (note that other ingredients/products can be used in the menu if needed, although main focus is on products from the local environment).
- 5) The meal consumed. This task can be carried out by each school as it chooses (e.g. it can be a party that the participating students can invite their parents to, or simply the children and the teacher/project supervisor having a shared meal).

It is important that all tasks of the practical part are registered/recorded.

The following points should be kept in mind and presented to the participants for the implementation of the project and recording/video production:



- Video production of children can only contain materials which parents/guardians have provided written permission for.
- Emphasis should be placed on positiveness in the project.
- Courtesy must be used in all communication and use of words.
- Care must be taken not to engage in propaganda or other activities for which the project is not a platform.



4. Part of the work – Project End

Project registration finalised and video prepared for each group of participants. Videos sent to Matis for review and publication on social media.

Each school's recorders/videographers put together the final product, a video about the practical part of the project. The video can be created and designed in any way the school chooses, and creativity is the way to go. The video should not be longer than 5-10 min.

After finalisation, the video is sent to Matis (www.matis.is) for review and transfer to social media, as an introduction to the implementation of the project at the respective school. The video/source about the school's participation in the project is hereby confirmed and made available to other schools and school children for their education and enjoyment.

It is intended that schools can in the future use other schools' videos to introduce to children the different food traditions and resources of the various regions.



Lastly

We hope that the project will be an educational and enjoyable experience for children everywhere and an effective way to stimulate their understanding on the importance of food production and food resources in their local environment, as well as the importance of all of us making an effort to protect and maintain natural resources and make good use of the products derived from them.

Useful sites and information



- <https://www.who.int/health-topics/health-promoting-schools>
- <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/student-resources/>
- <https://www.ecoschools.global/>
- <https://www.fee.global/>
- <https://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/>
- <https://www.project-everyone.org/>
- <https://www.foodeducators.eu/resources>

Please add other helpful information if relevant for your country, such as projects or links to national or local sources of information, see Icelandic version at top of document.



