

Engaging Young People in Youth Social Action

Social action teaching in the primary classroom

Youth social action is when Young peoples/students work together to tackle common challenges that directly impact their lives and the lives of others in their community/city/world. If adolescents have more capacity and agency to develop a social action project from the early stages, the ability of younger children to do this should not be undermined; however, the quality of the teaching is a determinant factor in the realisation and progress that children will make through the process.

One aspect of quality social action teaching is developing a culture of asking 'effective' questions related to the study topics in the classroom. An effective way to start is to simplify the planning of activities by engaging children with simple resources that introduce them to the focus area and raise their awareness of how this affects their lives.

As a rule of effective practice, teachers should try to structure the activities that teach social action skills in a child-led manner by getting children to think about the problem they want them to think about rather than by telling them. This way, Young peoples take ownership of their learning and are more likely to develop the intended skills.

With very young children, this work and attitude to learning can become part of the learning culture by getting young people used to making observations about the outside world: 'What is special about my school?'; 'Who are the people working in my school?'; 'What do they do for us?'; and look at what they are willing to investigate to inform your social action planning.

This could start by taking notes of what problems they notice and allowing them to investigate further and act examples of this e.g. class/groups design questions to interview kitchen staff, grounds people, etc. Simple questions to include may be what 2 things would make your life easier at school? Educating Young people promotes 21st-century knowledge and skills and builds their social-emotional competencies.