

Using PBL in sustainable development projects in Mexico. Methods and Insights

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All the steps in “Sustainable Creative Learning Lab” depart from Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030)



What?

- Creative Learning Lab
- Researchers' aim: The aim is two-fold; instead of looking only at "research based teaching" - we turned the aim around and seek to create "teaching based research" too.
- Collaboration with municipality in Mexico. They define what is important, and what the students should look in to. Students chose which issue they wanted to focus on (sewage and waste).

Creative Learning Lab

The students' challenge is to:

Depart from the pervasive “tourism business as usual” scenarios, where “status quo” situations are maintained

---> explore the extent to which we (various social agents and students) can facilitate **sustainable transformation through collaboration/co-creation** rather than **simple exchange of knowledge**.

Who?

- Municipality and Tourism Office
- 8th semester students from Aalborg University were given tasks from Municipality and Tourism Office in a smaller town in Mexico
- Solutions had to address issues included in the SDGs

Why?

- To engage students to solve problems in new contexts
- Encourage thinking out of the box, 'co-creation'
- Student driven solutions in collaboration with local actors in town in Mexico.

What did we do?

- Preparation for field trip – many things need to be arranged
 - Collaboration with Mexican universities and researchers
 - A lot of work beforehand
 - Context, contacts, etc.
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- And then things do not go as planned – productive failure, part of learning process for everybody

Who decides – representation?

- Municipality decides the focus-area of tasks
- Students become critical of their own role as ‘consultants’ → expectation, that they ‘have the answers’, because they come from a university in Denmark.

Productive failure

- Students discover that municipality has already addressed solutions to some of the suggestions they come up with
- Back and forth several times to municipality -> co-creation!

External stakeholders

- Municipality
- NGOs
- "Local residents"
- Business owners
- Tourists
- Mexican ambassador (Cph)

PBL

- Ongoing research project
- Co-writing academic papers in collaboration with students
- Teaching-based research and research based teaching
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Context
- Power relations – town in charge of formulating tasks
- Teamwork 'real' problems, employability

Students acquire learning skills and competences related to:

- Elaborating reports and insights into sustainable implementation processes
- Experience with several of the SDGs: collaborative project work, a process, which involves international partners, local regional and national authorities, fellow students and NGOs, and social movements.
- Gaining valuable knowledge about improving efficiency in decision-making through task focus
- Thematic, theoretical or practical inspiration for semester projects

North-South Research Cooperation

- Topics and tasks defined in the town by local stakeholders
- Hands-on projects where students apply academic skills
- Students interact with Municipality and Tourism Office
- Mutual benefits – students' projects are being applied
- Collaboration with Mexican Universities and researchers