



INTRODUCTION TO THE YOUTHXCHANGE WEBSITE

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Part I: Conceptual introduction

Education as a strategy for social awareness and action: why is it important to address sustainable consumption issues in teaching and learning settings?

Education is a pivotal instrument in delivering the **cultural change** needed for a transition towards more sustainable consumption patterns, particularly in terms of developing the knowledge, values, skills and competencies needed to make sustainable lifestyles a reality. Education for sustainable consumption is a **social strategy** to enable students to take informed and responsible decisions and actions, now and in their lives. In particular, education approaches which facilitate **critical thinking**, self-reflection, skills in media analysis, personal decision-making and problem-solving are important to an effective education for a sustainable future.

Achieving more sustainable consumption patterns requires both **business practices** and **government policies** that broaden the range of choices and guarantee clear and reliable information open to consumers to make environmentally and ethically sound decisions. Education plays a particularly important role in catalysing this process in that it creates the underlying culture for young consumers and citizens to internalise sustainability in their **personal, civic and professional** choices. Education is thereby a critical complement to other social and economic policies, and for improving dissemination and implementation of new ideas and practices. This is important for a society as a whole, because understanding is the foundation for people to play a role as responsible citizens.

Most **communication** towards the adoption of a consumerist lifestyle is addressed to **youth**, the most delicate age for the development of ourselves as a person. Therefore, for their potential as consumer and vulnerability to society pressure, youth are a **key target** for sustainable consumption and production policies to reach with information and capacity building.

With millions of young people spending large periods of time in education (in both formal and non-formal settings), the role of schools and other youth educators in promoting sustainable behaviours and lifestyles is to design the **road map** to the **values and behaviours** that underlie more sustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles.

Education for sustainable consumption is not an extra curricular activity but a **crosscutting discipline** that can be integrated in existing curricula and provide the opportunity to enrich teaching by showing the **concrete applications** of abstract subjects to reality. Education for sustainable consumption can help in:

- ▶ understanding of **key concepts** related to sustainability by linking a complex concept such as sustainable development (or aspects of it such as economics, ethics and environment) to concrete **day to day life**;
- ▶ reflecting on **personal** consumption behaviours, assumptions and experiences;
- ▶ analysing patterns, causes and **impacts** of global and personal patterns of consumption;
- ▶ unfolding the **ethical dimension** of reducing the social and ecological impacts of human productive activities at global level;
- ▶ recognising in society the **good signals** that show a steady trend towards a different way of living in harmony with men and nature.



"Creating the future?"

Education can stimulate the creation or perhaps the re-creation of a social contract and/or practical solutions which will secure a global society characterised by a concept of well-being based on social and economic justice, co-operation and caring.

Several UNESCO reports on education have emphasised the fact that education systems suffer from fragmentation of knowledge into often meaningless and irrelevant units. What is needed is a more **integrated approach** in which knowledge is focussed in seeking the **solutions to real problems**. This does not mean merely adding topics to curriculum but rather rearranging and developing education in ways in which the following cultures prosper:

- ▶ **Culture of reflection and debate/dialogue** where the bonds between science civil society and education would be further strengthened. Such a culture of reflection would involve teaching and using the art of consultation and strategic questioning. It would include developing an awareness of the influences and processes involved in decision making on a personal as well as at collective level. A culture of reflection in schools would also foster respect for quality, beauty, silence and visual space.
- ▶ **Culture of peace** - Kofi Annan, secretary general of the United Nations has explained: *"peace mean more than the absence of war. Human security can no longer be understood in purely military terms. Rather, it must encompass economic development, social justice, environmental protection, democratisation, disarmament and respect of human rights and the rule of law"*. The culture of peace, which has been growing across the globe (despite the conflicts and military interventions also existing), involves developing empathy and respect for diversity: national, regional, local and individual integrity.
- ▶ **Culture of encouragement** where one finds an environment conducive to positive self-acceptance and self-esteem. Consumers are repeatedly represented in the mass media as victims. Cynicism dominates. Guilt directs many consumers' choices. None of these attitudes can stimulate human resources and unleash the potential needed for finding creative solutions to tomorrow's challenges. It is important that teachers share the examples of sustainable life styles rather than merely criticise the existing status quo. Mainstream social models of sustainable lifestyles that modern youth can identify with should be used in teaching process.
- ▶ **Culture of involvement** where service to humanity is focused upon and civic action, community involvement, is revitalised. Following the principles of Agenda 21, it would consist of identifying reachable goals and maintaining efforts to accomplish them. A culture of involvement can only be constructed on the conviction that the consumer is not a victim but an agent for change. Such a culture emphasises the mutually dependent nature of human existence reiterating the fact that the consumer is ultimately responsible to the whole humanity."

[source: "Using, choosing or creating the future", proceedings of Consumer Citizens Network Conference, Paris 2004]

How can education concretely contribute to a transition to sustainable consumption?

- ▶ By engaging on **individual consumption** behaviours when young learners act on their knowledge of sustainable consumption concepts and values! Sustainable consumption education encourages learners to concretely transform their reflection into action in the school, community and beyond - making more informed choices today and in the future.
- ▶ By engaging the **school community** when innovatory classroom approaches run hand in hand with exemplary demonstration and understanding of the principles of sustainability! Schools that encourage learners to conserve and recycle resources (energy, raw materials, water) are sending clear signals to their students. They are making sustainable consumption real by putting into practice notions of individual and collective responsibilities.
- ▶ By involving **local communities** when learners bring their knowledge, skills and values of sustainable consumption home to their families, to their lifestyle choices and to the improvement of communities in which they live! The fact that learning is never limited to formal settings, and can take place in a park, a shop, a museum, or even on the street means that many spaces in the community can become forum for dialogue and exchange of ideas, with different actors being brought into the learning process.
- ▶ By impacting the **education community** as a sector in itself so that it incorporates sustainable consumption principles and practices into fundamental decisions about purchasing, building design, and operations.
- ▶ By showing the often **painful links** between consumerism in **affluent society** and the injuries inflicted on the planet and on **other societies** in the world and opening eyes on new worlds and experiences, which show positive and new ways of existing and being citizens of the world.

Part II: Introducing YXC

1. What is YOUTHXCHANGE ?

UNEP UNESCO youthxchange *training kit on responsible consumption - towards sustainable lifestyles* is a tool kit to assist teachers, youth groups and NGOs in **raising awareness** of sustainable consumption concepts and issues, while developing the ability to critically reflect and debate on production and consumption processes and put **theory into practice**.

YOUTHXCHANGE answers the need for reliable, clear and yet entertaining information on the meaning and challenges of sustainable consumption among youth. The focus of the training kit is on **empowering young people** to put theory into practice by fostering what they are best at communication and exchange of ideas and practices.

YOUTHXCHANGE provides **two integrated training tools** for capacity building on sustainable consumption for youth organisations, schools, local authorities and consumer organisations:

- ▶ a printed guide
- ▶ a site web: www.youthxchange.net

Both refer to **youth icons**, to the lifestyle aspects they are more sensitive to and offer case studies from companies or organisations they know and identify with. YOUTHXCHANGE allows to communicate

about the complex concept of sustainable consumption to a young audience and to relate it to the relevant issues at international and local level. It also creates a global network in support of organisations and education institutions, which are working on sustainable consumption thus favours, the exchange of visions and experiences.

a) The target group

Young people (18 to 25 year old) are an indispensable ally in the strive towards sustainable development because of their potential as informed and concerned professionals and decision-makers:

- ▶ 1 billion world inhabitants are aged 15-24: the largest group ever entered in adulthood;
- ▶ 90% under 25 live in developing countries;
- ▶ between now and 2010, 700 million young people will enter the labour force in developing countries. An unprecedented 'demographic bonus' of human resources which looks at affluent societies work and lifestyles as something to aspire to".

[source: UN Population Fund, 2001]

These numbers speak for themselves; providing an idea of how important the impact of youth, their lifestyle and their professional decision-making patterns can be in shaping a better future. The buying and decision-making-power of one billion youths is far from homogeneous, in fact one half of the young population mentioned above is poor.

UNEP /UNESCO youthxchange targets "*global urban young consumers*". Despite the huge divide in the level and quality of consumption between developed and developing countries, middle class consumption in the world is rather homogeneous. Middle class youth have access to similar education, to information and television, and to the Internet. They have a comparable mythology (pop stars, actors, icons) and life aspirations. The number of people who belong to this middle class represents a vast majority of the population in industrialised countries and a lucky minority in developing countries. But everywhere these young people have the power to shape ideas, trends, cultures and thus consumption patterns and aspirations.

The choice of the target group was dictated by the belief that the most urgent changes in lifestyles and consumption patterns are needed among the global young consumer class. Their consumption and production patterns have a huge influence on industry and on the image of what is a wealthy society in the developing world:

- ▶ Global consumers' consumption patterns have an strong power of attraction on youth in rapid industrialising economies and are often presented by media and advertising as a model to follow (UNEP/UNESCO surveys on youth have registered this trend);
- ▶ On the production side we can observe that a large quantity of products sold on affluent markets are manufactured and assembled in countries where controls over work conditions and respect of environmental protection are rather low. An interest expressed by young consumers towards more sustainable products has already proven to influence supply chain policies by companies with as a consequence positive effect on local producers, workers conditions and the environment.

b) The objectives

In 2000, UNEP/UNESCO carried out the "*Is the future yours?*" survey on 10 000 youth in 24 countries world-wide (<http://www.uneptie.org/pc/sustain/youth/research-project.htm>). The survey and

the following expert discussions revealed that youth behaviour is a mix of cynicism and idealism, of hedonism and the desire to do the right thing.

In the marketplace, this mix provokes an emotional attachment to products and to the identity these products promise to offer. Any communication effort that intends to promote sustainable consumption among youth has to start from these contradictions and if possible turn them into an asset for promoting sustainable consumption.

With this in mind, YOUTHXCHANGE encourages young consumers to take a stand and use their power of choice to push companies, governments to make access to sustainable lifestyles a reality. How?

- ▶ Giving information and 'branding' the idea of a more sustainable lifestyle as 'cool' rather than 'needed', 'smart' rather than 'responsible' and in line with the increasingly advertised, health conscious, politically correct, spiritually oriented behaviour that fashion magazines and the media report.
- ▶ Stimulating the natural need of youth to prove their own independence by making an autonomous choice and having their opinion heard.
- ▶ Giving examples of how a combination of legislation and peoples' pressure for environmental protection and social justice is already, albeit not quickly enough, changing the way companies behave.
- ▶ Offering tools to easily recognise and choose products that already are sustainable.
- ▶ Inviting young people to realise that their action can actually change things and proving that through case studies.
- ▶ Promoting the idea of networking and communication as a means for becoming a global citizen and making youth requests for more sustainable lifestyle options and infrastructures a strong and solid market driver.

2. The methodological approach of YOUTHXCHANGE

YOUTHXCHANGE recognises that young peoples behaviour is a mixture of wanting to do the right thing and hedonism. Departing from this contradiction, young consumers will be most effectively stimulated to think about their consumption behaviours when they receive reliable information presented in the language, icons and facets of everyday life that they recognise as their own, as opposed to a pre-defined set of prescriptions.

a) The use of case studies

In this way, the approach guides young people to areas in which change may be desirable and possible. The different case studies and 'stories' provided help learners to discover for themselves the connections between consumption and sustainability and the alternatives that are most meaningful for them in relation to their own family (household), the local community (town, village, area) and the global village.

Without a pre-packaged set of do and don'ts, the use of case studies - as in traditional story telling - encourages the readers to envision naturally alternative ways of living and evaluating the consequences of those alternatives.

"Stories have the power to reach within us, to command emotion, to compel involvement, and to transport us into timelessness. Stories are a way of thinking, a primary organiser of information and ideas, the soul of a culture, and the consciousness of a people. Stories are a way in which we can know, remember and understand." [Livo, N. and Rietz, S. *Storytelling: Process and Practice*, Libraries Unlimited, Colorado, 1986, p. 2]

The YOUTHXCHANGE case studies tell students and learners that change is possible, that thinking differently and taking care of their planet and its people is rewarding and important and that acting sustainably is not an isolated act of a tree-hugger but a sign of a wider, global, innovative and attractive trend.

At the institutional level the use of 'cases' and 'stories' has become increasingly important for raising awareness and wide spreading knowledge and a significant body of case-based information is available on the web at the website of the institutions that use such tools. Many actors involved in education for sustainability are conscious of the powerful value of 'cases' and 'stories' and this becomes even truer when referring to sustainability in everyday life and in consumption habits.

As a matter of fact, in the same way many indigenous and traditional societies have been always using the power of storytelling to transmit values and educate generations, today's grassroots groups, NGOs and other organisations working for sustainability often choose to deliver their message through success stories, which can provide hope and inspiration as well as demonstrate practical solutions to today's problems.

The innovative approach of YOUTHXCHANGE is the way cases are presented. In fact, they are not just listed and told according to a strict format, but they are crosscutting and transversal to the whole body of the web knowledge. Cases are intended to pass a messages that can be learned from as well as to provide a source of inspiration and an understanding of the worldwide dimension of the work and efforts towards sustainable lifestyles to their readers.

b) Skills and competencies

The quality of educational processes should lead to individual and collective competencies so that all students might play a role as citizens and consumers in the transition to a sustainable future.

Information and activities can be found throughout the youthxchange web-site that are designed:

- ▶ to promote conscious reflection and critical thinking around key concepts and issues, as well as sustainable consumption values, assumptions and behaviours;
- ▶ to stimulate action-competencies.

Reflection and action competencies should generate a wider commitment to community well-being, a commitment to sustainability, and a desire to act upon their new knowledge and value orientations.

i. Conscious reflection and critical thinking around key concepts and issues, values, assumptions and behaviours

Sustainability is a complex concept to understand. The fact that many people are still unaware of, not concerned with, or confused about sustainability issues and the relationships between different actions and processes, reflects the general lack of public awareness.

From the clarification of the key concepts of **sustainable consumption**, reflection on processes, linkages and their impacts, as well as changing notions of society, should emerge a set of **core values** that lie at the basis of the transition to sustainability. The **YXC guide**, but also the **case studies**, and the **facts & figures** section of the **YXC website** show how challenging common beliefs and changes away from consumerist lifestyles can lead to a more sustainable society.

ii. Action competencies

Having articulated their vision, students will need to relate their learning to concrete settings or express their creativity in **concrete actions**. Different learning activities can serve as the vehicle for getting to grips with concepts and appreciating values and meaning. Action competencies enable people to **engage** and **participate** towards sustainable practices in concrete terms. What do we mean by action competencies? These include:

- ▶ the capacities of young people to engage in **independent** and **group research**,
- ▶ to **analyse** patterns, to weigh up relative merits,
- ▶ to draw their own **conclusions**,
- ▶ to **take a position**, to engage in teamwork (co-operating with people of different backgrounds and ages, and with different points of view)
- ▶ to **present** fruits of their work in a concise way to implicated actors,
- ▶ to **take responsibility** for their actions
- ▶ and to **monitor** the impacts of the changes they stimulate.

In this way, the learning process enables young people to

- ▶ envisage **alternative** ways of behaviour and consumption;
- ▶ make **plans** for achieving desired visions;
- ▶ take **personal** and **community actions**, even on a small scale, to bring such visions into effect.

Action competencies will be stimulated by the **class works** proposed by the web-site and by observation. Inspiration is provided by the **case studies** of the nine thematic rooms, from the **facts & figures**, the **dep't store** and the **jobs** section.

Media literacy would be an example of an area where the of the two competences mentioned above are being applied. Different media have created fabulous possibilities for generating and sharing knowledge, but when it comes to consumption, there seems to be a blind spot. Learners are often unconscious about the influence of the media, and marketing in particular, on their behaviour and on value creation in society in general.

Media Literacy provides a framework to **access**, **analyse**, **evaluate** and **create** messages in a variety of forms - from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy. Media literacy should help learners to

- ▶ **Be selective and analytical** with regard to the information they receive and the information they look for;
- ▶ Consider **several aspects** of the same story;

- ▶ To be **CONSCIOUS** about the influence of the media on one's own behaviour;
- ▶ To use **different media** constructively for one's own purpose.

c) youthxchange in class room teaching

Sustainable consumption is not another subject area and learning is never limited to formal settings. Learners should be encouraged to complement their work within the classroom through self-directed activities outside. Most sustainable consumption topics reach across traditional curriculum boundaries they can be approached from many different angles, through different content areas, and using many skills and competencies already promoted within the subject areas.

The most immediate links are **subject areas** such as media studies, citizenship education, environmental education. Nonetheless, learning sustainable lifestyles can take place in many different ways.

- ▶ **Discussions** related to consumerism, sustainability, well-being and the environment can be drawn from many subject areas, including history, geography, science and technology, languages, mathematics.
- ▶ Using issues such as English or foreign language classes, arts and crafts, media studies, design, home economics or economics and business, as an occasion to stimulate discussions on **lifestyles**, curiosity on how other people live and what is the students' relation to it, where objects of everyday use come from and how they are designed.
- ▶ Using one particular sustainable consumption **topic** or thematic area as a **hub** within different subject areas. For example, a project assessing the linkages between school consumption patterns and waste has links to different subjects. Measuring quantities could link to maths. Classifying materials by type, considering the chemical composition of packaging and analysing decomposition rates links to science and geography. The activities could also link to art and design if a poster campaign is launched, and to design and technology if special bins are designed for collecting different types of waste.

Part III: youthxchange users' guidelines

This section provides an overview of the **web-site**, some ideas of exercises to make in the class room and a summary of the content of the thematic rooms as well as how to link them to subject areas

a) How does it work

Youthxchange developed a **double navigation** system to facilitate both a simple use by functions and a reading by topics. In the next page the levels are indicated with a blue arrow (**thematic rooms**) and a red arrow (**utilities**).

'Horizontal reading' along nine thematic rooms: the core of youthxchange.

A showcase of 'stories' (**case studies**) helping teachers to introduce sustainable consumption in their class activities.

The navigation through the thematic rooms follows the evolution from individuals (*1st level*), individuals & friends/family (*2nd level*) to the community at large (*3rd level*). This is the specific approach of YOUTHXCHANGE and its strength as it puts immediately in question the person and its way of living to approach global and complex issues only at a later stage. It is advisable to follow

this progression in all YOUTHXCHANGE related learning activities. Contents are selected to catch the attention of young people even those not particularly interested/aware on sustainable consumption issues. The table below visualises this structure:

YXC LEVELS YXC THEMATIC ROOMS (horizontal bar)

FIRST LEVEL

The emphasis is on individual

- ▶ 01 RESPECTING OUR BODIES
- ▶ 02 PACKAGING YOURSELF
- ▶ 03 AWAKENING YOUR SOUL

SECOND LEVEL

The emphasis shifts to individual's first community (family, school, and friends...).

- ▶ 04 LOOKING FOR A PLACE
- ▶ 05 CARRYING THE TORCH
- ▶ 06 CLEAN UP YOUR FUN

THIRD LEVEL

As the journey progresses, YXC focus switches to citizenship and participation (community at large).

- ▶ 07 SOCIAL BELONGING
- ▶ 08 PAY THE RIGHT PRICE
- ▶ 09 LOOKING AHEAD

YXC UTILITIES (vertical bar)

Along the utilities bar, which includes functions for an easier use of the materials and to complement the case studies:

- ▶ **FACTS & FIGURES:** figures, statistical overview on economics, environmental and social issues, basic and other needs; maps, diagrams, etc.
- ▶ **DEP'T STORE:** information on 'sustainable' products & services' available on the marketplace and helping consumers to switch to more sustainable lifestyles.
- ▶ **JOBS:** spotlights over interesting organisations, interviews to person who have chosen to make sustainability their profession.
- ▶ **TRAINER'S ROOM:** introduction to YXC, how to use the web site and class-works to activate participation.
- ▶ **TEST & PLAY:** tests, games, and curiosities to raise awareness having fun.
- ▶ **LINKS:** organised by issue, by area, etc. offering to the users short-paths to the best available resources.



THEMATIC ROOMS (horizontal bar)

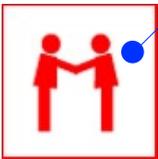
YXC UTILITIES (vertical bar)

LOCATOR (it visualises the entire path: from the home page 'till the doc you are reading: a simple tool to never loose the way! All the links are active: so you can also use it to go back)

YXC LOGO straight to the home page!

The screenshot shows the YXC website interface. At the top, there are logos for UNEP and UNESCO, followed by the 'youthXchange' logo. Below the logo is a horizontal bar with thematic rooms: 'RESPECTING OUR BODIES', 'PACKAGING YOURSELF', 'AWAKENING YOUR SOUL', 'LOOKING FOR A PLACE', 'CARRYING THE TORCH', 'CLEAN UP YOUR FUN', 'SOCIAL BELONGING', 'PAY THE RIGHT PRICE', and 'LOOKING AHEAD'. The main content area features a red header for 'jobs/success stories' with a date filter and an info icon. The article title is 'FABIO ROSA: THE SUN SHINES FOR ALL'. The source is cited as David Bornstein's 'How to Change the World'. The contact information for Fabio Luiz de Oliveira Rosa is provided. A grid of utility icons is shown below the article, with some highlighted in red. The main text of the article describes the challenge of electricity access in rural Brazil and the solution implemented by Fabio Rosa. A left menu lists various categories like 'cool contacts', 'spotlights', and 'success stories'. A vertical bar on the right contains utility icons for search, home, and favorites.

MAIN IKON back to this section' intro



SOURCE

cool contacts

- > arts & communication
- > consumers
- > education
- > environment
- > finance & biz
- > humanitarian
- > science & technology
- > social services
- > sport & leisure
- > tourism & hospitality

CONTACT

spotlights

- > consumers
- > cultural services
- > environment
- > human rights
- > info-tech
- > social services
- > trade

success stories

- > activist
- > artist
- > athlete
- > civil servant
- > consultant
- > journalist
- > manager
- > researcher
- > teacher

related issues

facts & figures/general data
> industry/by sector/Fossil fuels

facts & figures/environment
> energy/demand & supply/Access to energy
> energy/demand & supply/Electricity consumption
> energy/renewables/Alternatives market-share
> climate change/population impact/???

facts & figures/basic needs
> housing/home quality/Sustainable building

dep't store
> appliances/Solar refrigerator
> transport/Solar bikes

name: Fabio Luiz de Oliveira Rosa
organisations: STA and IDEAAS
country: Brazil
type of biz: reduced-cost electrical distribution

Approximately 25 million people in Brazil do not have access to electricity. Fabio Rosa, a local social entrepreneur, is aiming to fill this need through low-cost rural electrification models to improve the quality of life for the rural poor and to slow urban migration.

YXC has developed an imaginary interview with Rosa, economist and lawyer, agronomist by trade, founder of a for-profit corporation, Agroelectric System of Appropriate Technology (STA) and a not-for-profit organisation, the Institute for Development of Natural Energy and Sustainability (IDEAAS). Both STA and IDEAAS have been working to bring electricity and community development to rural Brazil since the mid-1980s. YXC thanks his virtual interlocutor for this contribution.

How did your activity begin? When I was appointed Secretary of Agriculture of Palmares do Sul (a rural municipality in southern Brazil) at age 22, I realised that lack of electricity was making farming significantly less productive and causing people to flock to the cities in pursuit of a better life. I began to explore new business models that could serve the needs of the millions of potential customers that had been left without access to electricity. In fact it all started in the late 1990s, when Brazil hastily privatised its electric utilities.

DATE OF ENTRY

LEFT MENU it visualises the section's structure. Click on a link and you get the most recent case study (or other doc) within the chosen sub-directory.

To move to another subsection, simply use this menu.

To explore other contents of the same sub-section you should go back to the intro or use the links suggested as 'related issues'.

RELATED ISSUES it's a list of 'suggested docs', closely interlinked to the doc you are reading.

Scope of the list is also to make easier a crossed reading between the (related) UTILITIES content - at the top of the list - and other case studies displayed in the same or in another THEMATIC ROOM (starting from the room in which you are).

RELATED ISSUES IKONS they visualise the availability of interesting related docs.

The first 6 ikons indicate the availability *utility by utility* (RED if something is there, GRAY if any related doc is available).

The last 3 ikons refer to the *thematic rooms*. We have chosen to visualise a max of 3 of them (the closest to the issue you're reading about).

SEND - PRINT - My YXC make you easier - respectively - to e-mail the doc you are reading to a friend; to print it out; to put it in your 'favourites'.

MAIN TEXT

b) Overview of suggested methodologies according to levels of actions

FIRST LEVEL: *personal reflection and action*

▶ What does sustainability mean to us as individuals? ▶ What can we do to become more responsible? ▶ Do we all need to do the same thing? What should we do first - save the environment or eradicate poverty? ▶ What comes first, the planet's well-being or our own?

Individuals thinking about their own consumption behaviours, how meaningful they actually are, and the interconnectedness of all living things and processes are good starting points. **Young people** beginning to value others for who they are (rather than for what they wear, drive, or own) and recognising the dignity of all people living on the planet are simple but important acts that underlie a more just society.

The consumer who buys eco-friendly or recycled products at the supermarket or who rejects a product because it is over-packaged is taking **positive action**. Likewise those who reflect on where the product came from, the processes used to make it and where it might end up afterwards can make informed choices that create wider environmental and social benefits. By thinking and putting in place these kind of actions, learners begin to explore **alternative** ways of leading their lives and appreciating the consequences of those alternatives.

Also, at personal level, measuring **household** consumption and identifying the areas in which change may be desirable and possible is an outcome of learning activities started in the classroom. Learners look for alternative ways of running the household and relay critical messages on sustainable consumption to their **families**.

SECOND LEVEL: *school connections*

Learning environments contribute to influencing consumption patterns, both through the taught subject areas and through acting as sustainable communities in their own right. In **schools**, measures might include saving money by cutting down on energy and water use, launching campaigns to reduce waste, creating a Sustainable Consumption Committee, or Sustainable Consumption Charter, holding a School Action Day, improving the management of the school buildings, transportation and generally promoting healthy living among the students.

It might be a good idea to look at which areas require more urgent action - and this involves a thorough review of every environmental and social aspect of your school. The **teacher** has a large role to play here, carrying the views of **students** to school management. The learners in turn can play a critical role by providing feedback on what they have learned, both within the school settings and to implicated actors within the wider community. Students could also design quantitative and qualitative indicators to **monitor** how far their school is progressing towards sustainable consumption.

THIRD LEVEL: *local/global community connections*

One of the aims of YOUTHXCHANGE is to raise general awareness of school activities throughout the **community** intended as **global village** - and to make sure that as many people as possible get a chance to take part. Learners should be encouraged to take ideas into the community in far away communities to establish a link with youth internationally and put into practice, knowing that ones' actions will ultimately have a global value and global effects.

Swapping ideas and **sharing experiences** between all young people, community leaders, NGOs, businesses and local governments working all over the world towards making sustainable consumption

a reality, helps to create a sense movement and plays a key role in communicating the values by which we want to shape our societies.

You should encourage the learners to explore for themselves the **Internet** links providing throughout the YOUTHXCHANGE web-site, as well as identifying potential partners in their community and globally.

In the first place YXC is a tool for youth to **communicate** and **exchange** perspectives, experiences and ideas with youth in other countries. School activities belonging to this level should encourage this exchange.

Involving the wider community brings a range of **benefits**. Local and international stakeholders (public authorities, business, non governmental organisations) and young people everywhere can be sources of advice, information, practical help and even provide resources for applied activities. There are also obvious benefits in linking up to different actors who can contribute to sustainable consumption projects. Some of the consumption related **WORK** can include:

- ▶ classroom discussions, and brainstorming;
- ▶ personal, household, school and community audits;
- ▶ other school-related activities;
- ▶ community connections.

Classroom discussions, and brainstorming

Classroom discussions and debates are particularly useful in clarifying **concepts** and making **connections** between broader processes. Learners get a chance to talk about and reflect on their own personal experiences in their families, communities and friendship networks and relate those experiences to wider world contexts. They also get a chance to talk about what drives their behaviour, to articulate what their visions are, and why they want to be involved in finding solutions. Through asking positive **QUESTIONS** (and teaching others to ask open-ended, asset and value-oriented questions), the teacher can assess what the students think is important in their communities.

An appropriate exercise is analysing **products** from a life cycle perspective within a classroom discussion. This allows students and teachers to address different dimensions of products, which are not always obvious. The analysis should be extended to the production, distribution, usage and waste of the product, as well as its sociological and psychological symbolic value. Any product can be analysed, and it is interesting to select a product that is part of the student's everyday-life, such as chocolate, a hamburger, shoes or clothes.

Classroom discussions should also be seen as **brainstorming** exercises wherein everyone participates and throws out ideas. Learners contribute by answering questions posed by the teacher related to sustainable production and consumption systems at global level and issues including, energy and resource consumption, population growth and distribution, differences in cultural patterns and assumptions, differing notions of social justice and equity, health, economy, security, legal relationships and environment. Additional categories and questions can be added, if the teacher would like to focus on aspects, which are of particular interest to his/her curriculum area.

Every learner should be encouraged to get involved in classroom **dialogue**. They can express themselves and stimulate discussions making use of traditional forms of media, such as story-telling, drama, poetry and song. They can also bring photos, mementos, sketches, writing, recordings or

whatever best reflects the experience, along with a reflection on how consumption and lifestyle related experiences are related to life in the community locally and internationally.

Personal, household, school and community audits

From a pedagogical point of view, audits can be a way of getting learners to think carefully about how much they consume products un-necessarily and how energy sources, water supply and waste disposal could be more efficiently managed.

Personal and household audits will reinforce classroom discussions by getting learners thinking about where the products they actually use come from, who is involved and what are the processes and impacts (often in far away countries). They can be used as a springboard for more focussed discussions on **ethical issues** such as child labour, workers rights, animal testing etc. They are also a relationship building exercise - getting to know one another's habits and behaviours.

From a **community** and societal perspective, learners gain hands-on experience and insight into how energy, resource and waste management systems operate. Audits challenge them to find sustainable solutions for complex problems. More importantly, learners are challenged to act on their ideas and to take responsibility for the information they have discovered.

Audit Options:

- ▶ Personal audits
- ▶ Household audits
- ▶ School audits
- ▶ Community audits

Action plans

School-based activities can take many different forms. Building on the results of audits, for example learners can **work together** to create a *School Action Plan*. It is the teacher's role to help learners develop manageable, achievable projects within a relatively short time, and have set up concrete small projects as such or as foundations for a larger one. Setting up school gardens or re-use and exchange schemes for clothing or shoes or various products that students can exchange or share are excellent examples of concrete projects resulting from a well thought action plan. Other examples is having students work at the school for the school by, for instance, designing an information campaign for other students on energy and water use and measuring the concrete improvement in energy and water use at the school or investigating where the canteen food comes from...

Field Trips

Values and meaning in relation to sustainable consumption can be discussed and debated with local stakeholders, businesses and decision makers through field trips to various places and spaces within the public realm implicated in **shaping societal behaviours**. These could include supermarkets, local businesses, energy and water supply companies, waste collection or recycling centres. All of these places will have different interpretations according to the culture, histories and values of the individual learner. They can become the stimulus for **dialogue** and **critical reflection** on contemporary urban issues and, through the identification of common concerns and creative teamwork, the forging of new behaviour patterns. These trips make sense when and if they are arranged with other stakeholders, so business, NGOs and local authorities can contribute to the trip with an explanation of their point of view on the trip 'destination' that can stimulate the debate among students.