

Action Research for School Development

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Abstract : The interdisciplinary laboratory EDEN, Educational Environments with Nature, born in 2020 at the Faculty of Education of the Free University of Bolzano, is working on a research path initiated in 2012 on the relationship between pedagogy and architecture in the design process of school buildings. Between 2016 and 2018, advisory support activity for schools was born, which combined the need to qualify the physical spaces of the school with the need to update teaching practices and develop school organization with the aim of improving pupils' and teachers' sense of well-being. The goal of accompanying the development of school communities through research-training paths concerns the process of designing together pedagogical-didactic and architectural environments in which to stage the educational relationship, involving professionals from education, educational research, architecture and design, and local administration. Between 2019 and 2024, more than 30 schools and educational communities throughout Italy have entered into research-training agreements with the university, focusing increasingly on the need to create new spaces and teaching methods capable of imagining educational spaces as places of well-being and where cultural development can be presided over. The paper will focus on the presentation of the research path and on the mixed methods used to support schools and educational communities: identification of the research question, development of the research objective, experimentation, and data collection for analysis and reflection. School and educational communities are involved in a participative and active manner. The quality of the action-research work is enriched by a special focus on the relationship with plants and nature in general. Plants are seen as mediators of processes that unhinge traditional didactics and invite teachers, students, parents, and administrators to think about the quality of learning spaces and relationships based on well-being. The contribution is characterized by a particular focus on research methodologies and tools developed together with teachers to answer the issues raised and to measure the impact of the actions undertaken.

Keywords : school development, learning space, wellbeing, plants and nature

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