

LORET – Locally Relevant Teaching

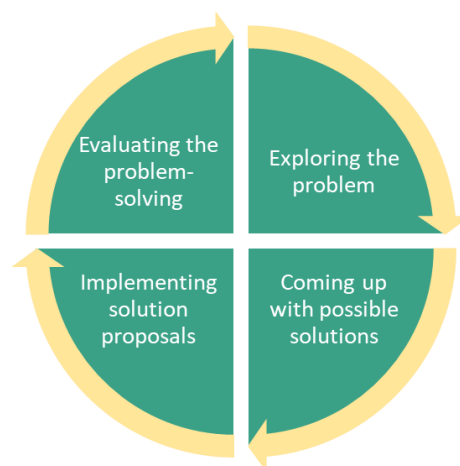
An introduction

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Introduction

LORET (Locally Relevant Teaching) was invented by Leif Östman and Staffan Svanberg in 2004, while working on a project on education for sustainable development in Mongolia. Since then, it has been used in many countries in Asia, Africa, South-America and Europe.

LORET is designed to support teachers in using real-world problems relevant to the local community as a starting point for education. The guiding principle is to combine engagement with societal problems and the realisation of curriculum objectives and, in doing so, offer students unique educational learning opportunities and hope. Through LORET workshops, teacher teams develop a plan for implementing locally relevant teaching and design a series of lessons that take students along in an authentic sustainability problem-solving process.



In the SEAS project, the LORET-based open schooling in the Belgian local network was analysed by Ghent University and EduQuality and resulted in the further development and refinement of the methodology as described below.

LORET workshop trajectory

LORET supports teacher teams and partners in open schooling collaborations by offering a step-by-step procedure to plan sustainable development teaching by addressing locally relevant challenges while, all the same, teaching subject knowledge as prescribed by the curriculum. This enables facilitators and teachers to collaborate effectively towards clear and tangible results while, all the same, providing openness to tailor the LORET work to the specific context, needs, objectives and opportunities of each participating school.

Preparatory assignments	Workshop meetings
A1: Identifying locally relevant sustainable development issues	W1: Turning sustainability problems into educational content – didactical carving
A2: Identifying fruitful resources for supporting the students' inquiry	W2: From inventory to planning
A3: Preparing a LORET plan – Part I	W3: Creating a LORET plan – Part I
A4: Preparing a LORET plan – Part II	W4: Creating a LORET plan – Part II
A5: Documenting the LORET work	W5: Looking back and looking ahead

LORET workshops are designed according to the principle of 'blended learning'. The trajectory consists of an alternation of meetings and preparatory assignments. Planning locally

relevant sustainability teaching with LORET involves five workshop meetings, each prepared by the participants through an assignment carried out in advance. Before the first workshop meeting, a

preparatory meeting is organised in order to tailor the LORET work to the school-specific context (see below). After the last meeting, LORET plans and lesson plans are uploaded on a digital library so that they can inspire other teachers and schools

Preparatory assignment 1: Identifying locally relevant sustainable development issues

The trajectory starts with preparatory work done by the teachers in the LORET team who list locally relevant sustainability problems. As decided in the preparatory meeting, this can be done with or without the active participation of students and/or local stakeholders. LORET offers frameworks and tools to support teachers in this work.



Workshop meeting 1: Turning sustainability problems into educational content – didactical carving

The participants select a sustainability problem from the list of identified locally relevant challenges and turn this real-world problem into educational content through a process of 'didactic carving'. That is, they 'carve out' of this massive societal problem a (sub)problem that will be suitable for the students to work with: a problem that is manageable and susceptible for the students and that bears the potential to take them along in an authentic sustainability problem solving process.

Preparatory assignment 2: Identifying fruitful resources for supporting the students' inquiry

The teachers make an inventory of resources that can help the students to address the problem? They list what the school subjects they teach have to offer in this respect as well as what the local environment, actors in the local community, organisations, media, etc. have to offer.

Workshop meeting 2: From inventory to planning

The participants present their preparatory work and construct a collective mapping of fruitful resources for supporting the students' inquiry. If the result is too much to address in one project or one school year, a prioritisation is made regarding which curriculum and local environment resources will be in focus in the LORET plan.

Preparatory assignment 3: Preparing a LORET plan

The teachers reflect on how they can design lessons in which their students first explore the locally relevant sustainability problem and subsequently generate possible ways to solve it. They identify connections to the curriculum goals they aim to address, determine the number of lessons they will spend on it and the content for each lesson, identify the teaching methods and activities, and formulate ideas on how to collaborate with colleagues and organise the lessons so that the students can effectively integrate the knowledge from the different school subjects.

Workshop meeting 3: Creating a LORET plan

The participants present their preparatory work and bring it together in a collective overall teaching plan. The collective result is critically examined: Is the teaching content well-chosen? Do the chosen teaching methods and activities foster authentic inquiry? Are ecological as well as economic and social aspects of sustainable development covered? Are students stimulated to integrate knowledge from different school subjects? Will students learn theoretical/abstract knowledge and insights as well as practical skills, communication skills, inquiry skills, attitudinal aspects, ethical and democratic competences, etc.? Are there strong connections to the local community? Etc.



Photo: Lynn Delbeecke

Preparatory assignment 4: Preparing a LORET plan – Part II

After performing the lessons planned in workshop meeting 3, the teachers reflect on how they can design follow-up lessons in which their students experiment with implementing (one/some of) the generated solution proposals and evaluate their problem-solving process. Each for their own teaching practice, they again identify connections to the curriculum goals they aim to address, determine the number of lessons they will spend on it and the content for each lesson, identify the teaching methods and activities, and formulate ideas on how to collaborate with colleagues and organise the lessons so that the students can effectively integrate the knowledge from the different school subjects.

Workshop meeting 4: Creating a LORET plan – Part II

The participants present their preparatory work and bring it together in a collective overall teaching plan. The collective result is critically examined: Is the teaching content well-chosen? Do the chosen teaching methods and activities foster authentic inquiry? Are ecological as well as economic and social aspects of sustainable development covered? Are students stimulated to integrate knowledge from different school subjects? Will students learn theoretical/abstract knowledge and insights as well as practical skills, communication skills, inquiry skills, attitudinal aspects, ethical and democratic competences, etc.? Are there strong connections to the local community? Etc.

Preparatory assignment 5: Document the LORET work

The teachers document their LORET plan and lessons – with the help of user-friendly templates – so that these can be shared and inspire other teachers. They reflect on what went well, what could be improved, and if there is any need/desire to follow-up the LORET work in a subsequent trajectory with the same or other students.



Workshop meeting 5: Looking back and looking ahead

In this final meeting, we share experiences and reflections, celebrate the joint achievements and discuss whether/how the LORET trajectory requires follow-up in the future.

Tailoring LORET to the school-specific context

LORET allows to work tailor-made, adapted to the school-specific context:

- The school team decides 'what', it chooses the theme and focus for the work and LORET facilitators offer didactic tools and support in line with that.
- The school team decides 'with whom': Which teachers (and therefore subjects)? Which classes or courses? The whole school maybe? In collaboration with local partners? An abundance of possibilities...
- The school team decides 'when' and how intensively: An annual theme? A project week? An integrated strategy? They can choose what seems to be the best way of working for their school.

Practical aspects and expectations

In order to make the LORET-workshop efficient, the following practical arrangements are necessary:

- Before the start of a LORET trajectory, a formal commitment from the school is required.
- During the preparatory meeting with the participating teachers, which lasts about an hour, the facilitators inform the team about LORET, set dates for the meetings and make decisions on how to tailor the work to the school-specific context.
- It is important that the participating teaching team has the opportunity to gather for 5 meetings that take 2 hours each.
- Between these meetings, some time is needed to carry out the preparatory assignments.
- To provide time for the preparatory work, there are about 3 weeks between the meetings. Meeting 4 takes place after the lessons planned in meeting 3 have been performed.
- The meetings can take place digitally or in-person.
- A LORET teaching team can consist of 2-10 teachers.
- Participating in a LORET trajectory implies the commitment to upload the LORET-plan on the digital library in order to enable collegial learning.





Science Education for Action and engagement towards Sustainability

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 824522.