

Learning through health promotion interventions in schools – challenges and visions

Monica Carlsson
Department of Education
Aarhus University

Session outline

1. Health promotion interventions in schools
2. Learning through health promoting interventions - the two case studies:
 - "Exploring learning outcomes in school based health promotion"
 - "Learning through school meals"

1) Health promotion interventions in schools

- Health promotion = health education x healthy public policy (Green & Tones 2010, p. 17)
- Health promotion intervention funding is often from health sector – aiming at to promoting/documenting health outcomes.
- "The aim of school is education and the aim of education is learning" - health promotion interventions in schools are not sustainable if they can't document learning outcomes.

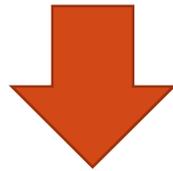
Learning through health promotion intervention in schools

Questions asked in this session:

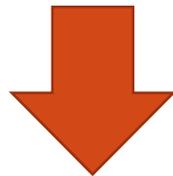
- Was there any learning taking place in the two intervention projects?
- potentials and challenges in "learning through health promotion interventions in schools"?
- is it possible to learn without an educational component in the interventions?
- what matters when it comes to "learning through health promotion interventions in schools"?

Health promotion program theory

- Needs analysis - Health promotion intervention

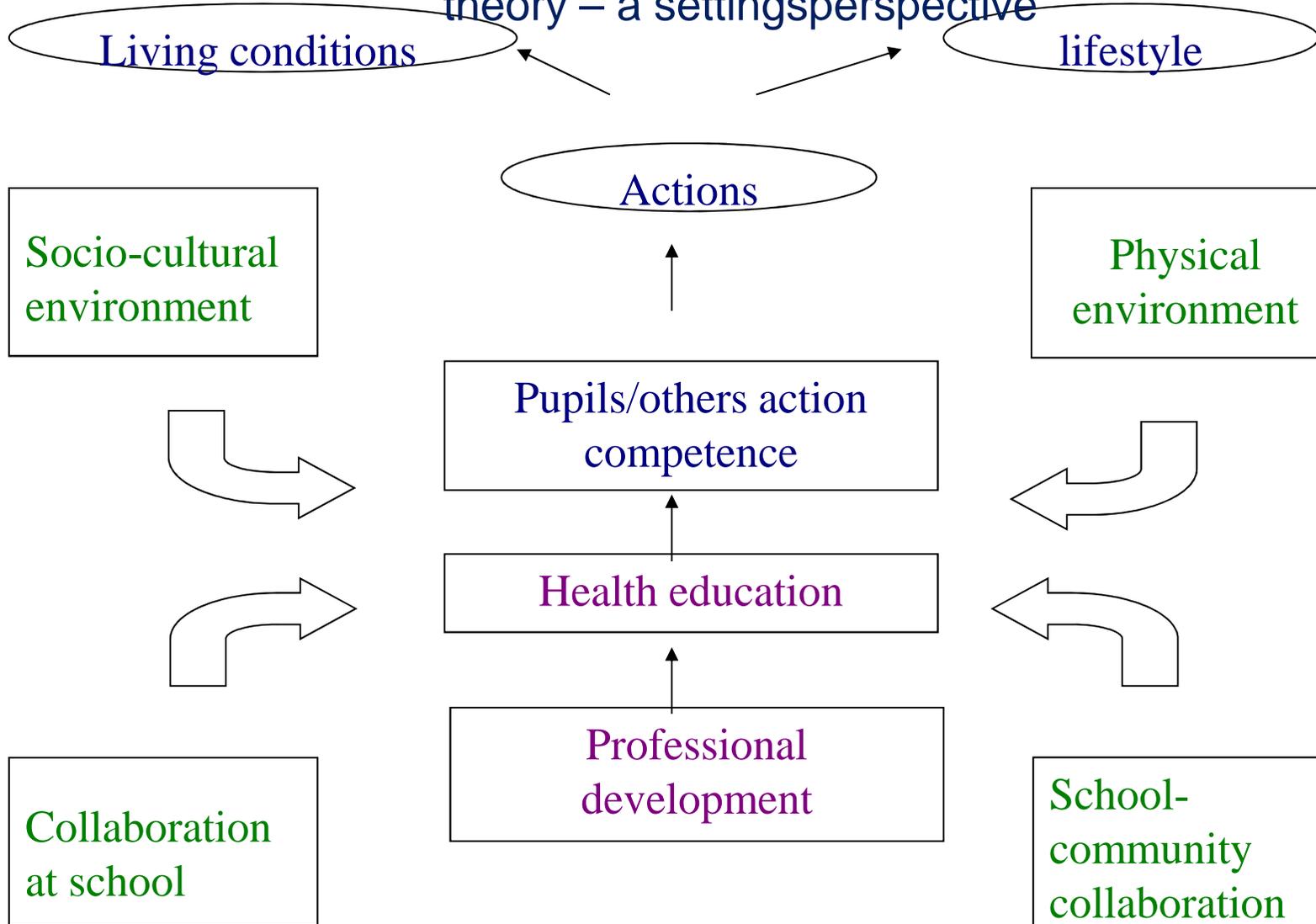


- Educational outcomes (cognitive, affective, behavioural change)



- Health outcomes (better health)

School based health promotion theory – a settingsperspective



HEALTH PROMOTION INTERVENTIONS IN

schools designed as development projects

Reflections on needs, focus, target groups etc.



Development of evidence

Development of project plan

Evaluation of processes and outcomes

Implementing and adapting the plan

Why evidence?

- Evidence is a form of knowledge characterized by its 'reability' (reliable knowledge) and 'usability' (what works).
- Knowledge about effects of interventions can be established and used in implementations of new interventions.
- Professionals needs evidence in order to take qualified decisions in relation to problemsolving.

promoting interventions in schools

The intervention – The Shape Up project

- Aim “addressing social determinants of healthy eating and physical activity and developing pupils’ action competence, i.e. their capacity to critically explore and act to improve health-related conditions, practices and choices”.
- In each case school a team of pedagogical and development consultants supported the schools in development of local projects.
- Approach: Based on a participatory, collaborative and IVAC approaches (Investigations, Visions, Action, Change)

A multiple-case study from the Shape Up project

Aim

- To explore learning outcomes in Shape Up and uncover key mechanisms conducive to these outcomes.

Methods

- Case studies made in five schools: Spain, Denmark, Austria, Italy, Netherlands
- Data generation: Document analysis, observations and interviews with local coordinators, teachers, pupils

Focus on how the action competence and IVAC approach was understood and implemented in different cultural contexts

Action competence and the IVAC approach

The different phases in IVAC are interconnected, although not necessarily in a linear way, and emphasize:

- (i) knowledge development through pupils' own 'Investigations' of health issues,
- (ii) development of commitment, motivation and engagement through pupils' 'Vision' work,
- (iii) development of pupils' experiences with taking 'Action' and initiating health-promoting 'Change'.

Analytical framework

- "What works for whom in what circumstances?"
- Knowledge about outcomes,
- diverse participants perspectives,
- multiple contexts and their affordances,
- a variety of processes relating to a range of educational as well as health outcomes.

Pawson & Tilley (1997) Realistic Evaluation

Context – Mechanisms - Outcomes

- Educational practices in the five case schools are treated as crucial *contextual* factors in relation to the learning outcomes.
- The interplay between the IVAC approach in the Shape Up project and the schools' educational practices is treated as part of the *mechanisms* for change.
- The changes in children's action competence operationalized in four main categories: Knowledge; Commitment; Visions; and Action-experience are treated as learning *outcomes*.

What did the pupils learn and what influenced the learning outcomes?

Context	+	Mechanisms	=	Outcome patterns
Teaching based on a notion of learning through action experiences that target action and change was not embedded in the educational practices of the case schools.		Modifications of the IVAC approach: IVAc model (four interconnected phases) IV/AC model (disconnected phases)		IVAc model seems to be conducive to changes related to pupils' knowledge, commitment, visions and action experiences. IV/AC model seems to be conducive mainly to changes related to pupils' knowledge and visions.

Learning in the Shape Up project – potentials and challenges

- the interplay between the project implementation and contextual factors substantially influences the scope of the outcomes
- findings suggested that socio-cultural factors in the regions might have mattered: the case studies from the two schools in the southern region stress that the teachers seem to find it necessary to protect the pupils from making decisions related to the action- and change phases of IVAC approach
- the interconnectedness between the phases in the IVAC approach is essential in order to support changes in all four components of action

Learning through school meals?

Multiple case study

Aim

- evaluating the effects of free school meal interventions on pupils' development of knowledge and competencies, and on the learning environment in schools

Method

- individual and focus group interviews conducted with students in grades 5 to 7 and grades 8 to 9.
- interviews were conducted with the class teacher, head master and/or the person responsible for school meals

Analytical framework

Focus on contextual factors, implementation processes and learning outcomes:

- the involved actors' perceptions of the school meal project and the meals, including places, times and contexts,
- the pupils' concepts and competencies in relation to food, meals and health, as well as their involvement in the school meal project.

Learning in the school meals projects –challenges

- a requirement that the meals should be related to education - but the intervention projects did not include planned educational components
- teachers see school meals less as part of education and learning, and more as part of school health policy and practice
- if school meals are to be further developed as a learning arena, greater consideration must be given to the interaction between pupil, school meal and teacher, and the potentials for learning through school meals clarified and discussed in the schools.

Potentials

- the study concludes that school meals can contribute to learning, whether planned or not
- the teachers and headmasters see a learning potential in school meals if pupils and teachers are offered a more central role
- the learning arena in school meals is created both in the pupils' interaction with the practical and social circumstances of the school meal itself, and in the teachers' interaction with the pupils and the school meal

Dilemmas in learning through school meals

- Should the lunch break be free time for the pupils - or a timetabled educational activity?
- Should school meals be 'food for learning' - or primarily enjoyable events for the school community?
- Should school meals be based on participation and shared responsibility among pupils and teachers - or just a catering option?
- Is food in schools a common, public responsibility - or the private responsibility of the families?

~~What matters in learning through~~ health promotion interventions in schools?

- In both interventions the interplay between the project implementation and contextual factors influences the scope of the outcomes.
- The study of the school meal intervention concludes that school meals can contribute to learning, whether planned or not: It is possible to learn without a planned educational component in health promotion interventions.

Contextual factors matters and implementation factors matters

- Shape Up based on a strong educational component – but the implementation of the IVAC approach “learning through action and change” was not embedded in the educational practices of the case schools – and was therefore modified in different ways.
- In the School meals project - without an educational component – the learning was more limited than it had to be because teachers and headmasters didn’t see the school meal as a learning arena.

Visions for learning through health promotion interventions in schools?

- Developing educational strategies and supporting educational practices that matches the complexity in the setting approach in school health promotion – e.g. focus on both health promotion activities and curriculum development.
- Less focus on the "health education in the formal teaching arena" and more on the potentials in the unformal arenas of schools everyday life?
- ?
- ?
- ?