How can an operational definition of Open Schooling help us in transforming society?

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Modern societies are confronted with complex challenges, such as environmental protection and the promotion of healthy living. However, trust in scientific findings is declining—an urgent issue of our time. MULTIPLIERS has set an ambitious goal to reverse this trend by addressing the problem at its roots, using the concept of Open Schooling as its guiding framework. This document outlines the project's objectives and provides a brief overview of our operational definition of Open Schooling.

The MULTIPLIERS project, building on the strengths of an international consortium consisting of eight Beneficiaries, aims to initiate a process that helps schools' transition into innovative hubs for new ideas, practices, and scientific approaches. The project seeks to create spaces within the communities where the Beneficiaries operate, fostering open, inclusive, and inquiry-based learning on scientific issues that impact citizens' daily lives. This was accomplished by establishing partnerships ('Open Science Communities') that bring together schools, families, civil society organizations, informal education providers, policymakers, media, industry, and a wide range of scientific institutions across six diverse EU countries—Cyprus, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden—each with different geographical and economic contexts.

The MULTIPLIERS project offers a practical definition of Open Schooling for use in next phases of the project. In light of the above, we propose an Open Schooling approach that integrates three key objectives—community impact, pedagogical impact and scientific impact—while explicitly highlighting core values.

Open Schooling is an educational perspective in which schools become open to society by bidirectionally collaborating with different institutions with the aim to:

a. Improve community well-being by raising awareness and co-creating solutions to both personal and socially relevant problems that have a direct impact at a local level.

b. Enrich the curricula and pedagogical repertoire of schools, by sharing different views and expertise from both educational and non-educational agents and institutions with the aim to promote students' meaningful learning and competence development.

c. Give epistemic authority to all agents from within and outside of the school, specifically to the students and their families, by engaging them in sustained inquiry, knowledge creation, creative action, and dissemination on issues of relevance to the local community and beyond.

To do so, the projects and initiatives on Open Schooling take advantage of the knowledge, practices, visions, attitudes, resources, and values of all involved agents, empowering them to collectively transform society from a reflective and critical standpoint that focuses on sustainability, equity, social justice, and inclusion.

The operational definition also serves as a foundation for developing a unified approach to establishing Open Science Communities and creating evaluation tools to assess their effectiveness.

The MULTIPLIERS project is also a call to policy makers and other professionals in education to take concrete steps to promote open schooling. The ESD for 2030 roadmap (UNESCO, 2020) states in priority area 1:

> *"Education policy makers, in collaboration with other ministries, civil society organizations, private companies, and academia, should develop policies to systematically strengthen synergistic relationships between formal, non-formal and informal education and learning." (p. 26).*
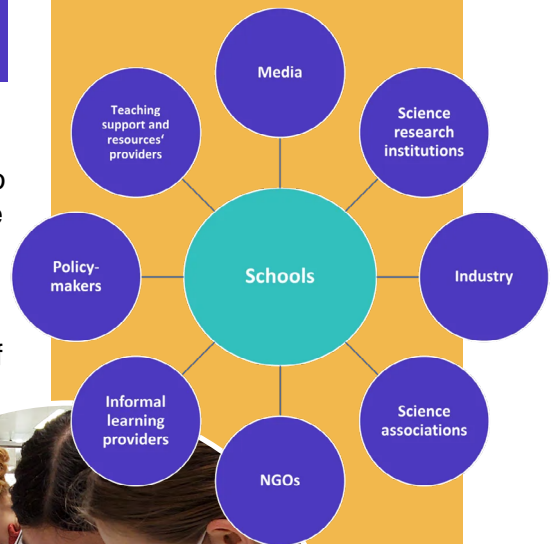
Conclusion

This policy brief offers an operational definition of Open Schooling to guide the implementation of the MULTIPLIERS project. We define Open Schooling as an educational approach where schools engage with society, integrating three core objectives—community impact, pedagogical impact, and scientific impact—while highlighting the knowledge, practices, visions, attitudes, resources, and values of all participants. This empowers them to collaboratively transform society with a reflective and critical focus on sustainability, equity, social justice, and inclusion.

The proposed operational definition of Open Schooling provides guidance to policy makers on how to integrate Education for Sustainable Development into all policies that explicitly address the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, which are at the heart of the complex challenges targeted by the project. The operational definition outlines how schools can open up to society by working bidirectionally with different educational and non-educational agents and institutions to empower all to engage in meaningful and transformative learning.

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