

Setting a Framework for Zero Waste. The Case of Neue Shule Athen.

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Abstract

For a long time, we have been experiencing the effects of the environmental and climate crisis, which are now becoming increasingly severe and intense, affecting more people and communities. Forest fires, floods, pollution of land and water resources and an array of natural disasters are becoming more frequent, imposing major threats to people and resulting in a collapse of wild populations and the degradation of biodiversity.

However, as more and more people become aware of the major ecological challenges that we face, especially young people, teachers, students, and educators, they acknowledge their own responsibility to tackle these challenges and contribute to sustainable solutions and lifestyles. This gives a new perspective to the younger generation and supports a transition to environmentally and socially responsible consumption patterns and lifestyles.

Schools and educational institutions can become the leaders of this transition and actively promote and support circular, sustainable models. A zero-waste model not only provides major environmental benefits, but also becomes an example for all students, teachers, parents, and the local community, demonstrating the effectiveness of sustainable schemes in waste management.

Implementation of zero waste becomes part of the environmental education, targeting not only students, but their parents and families as well. Learning by example is the most practical and effective way to change attitudes and behaviors.

In this article, we will present the case of a zero-waste school, located in the municipality of Helioupolis, in Attica region: Neue Shule Athen.

We will discuss the design and introduction of a zero-waste framework, the main challenges addressed, the implementation of the project and sustained efforts to achieve zero waste. A qualitative and quantitative analysis implemented to assess the progress towards zero waste will also be discussed.

We will also present issues related to the collaboration with municipal authorities and other educational institutions, and the main problems encountered throughout this project.

More specifically, in this paper we will discuss the following:

- The zero-waste plan: design and introduction
- Implementation of this project and problems encountered.
- Zero waste events in the school.
- Attitudes and responses of students, teachers, and parents.
- Collaboration with the local community
- Assessment of the program effectiveness.
- Collaboration with municipal authorities
- Proposals for the implementation of the project in other local schools and local business as well

Key words: environmental crisis, zero waste school, environmental education, circular economy.

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