

“IN AND OUT – INTO THE OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS ADAPTION OF NEW SUBJECT-RELATED APPROACHES IN DIFFERENT LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS”

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Using learning arenas outside the classroom is a well known pedagogical tool in building a varied and sustainable education. It is shown to enhance learning outcome, motivation, physical activity and social behavior among pupils and students (Fägerstam, 2012, Mygind 2007). Learning in different environments has many faces, from excursions to monuments and natural sites, over adventure trips to fieldwork and community based development projects (Rickinson et al, 2004). Most of the outdoor practice in the primary and lower secondary school systems tends to focus on environmental, social and personal development aspects in the pupils' general education, and is often limited to school subjects related logically to the outdoors, such as physical education and wild life nature activities in nature or natural environments. But going outside can offer possibilities in many aspects of the school-based curriculum, using the outside in a broad sense, as both natural settings and geoparks, museums, visitors centres etc. It is not only about changing the room and leaving the roofed settings – it also implies changes in teachers' role and learning styles.

As the teacher shifts the closed ceiling to the open air, he can also shift his mind and the biased expectations upon his role. The change of room can be liberation from sedentary school day, driven by its own inner scheduled logic, to a more flexible, purpose driven learning situation. As the children in Europe use many hours and many years in the school, it is inevitably to use various and varied learning approaches to ensure an education for all kinds of children. In this light, getting the formal and the non-formal learning professionals to cooperate in developing learning activities show its importance. The non-formal environments offer expertise and well developed educational approaches connected to subjects. The teachers in the school must take the responsibility to let these non-formal educational activities fit into the curriculum and supplement the indoor lessons. In this field, it is of interest to let the two groups – the non-formal and the formal educators, meet to develop new insights and exchange knowledge, plans and goals. If we can encourage the schools to use frequent, curriculum based activities outside the classroom, and walk into the authentic settings with objects and artefacts connected to the subject in the non-formal museums, galleries, geoparks, educational centres, visiting trails etc., we can offer a much broader and more holistic learning environment for the children (Szczepanski, 2007). From the point of view of the non-formal educators, working closely together with the formal educational system can improve the educational offers and their learning environment.

Using geoparks as “places of learning” is more than experiencing outside the classroom, is discovering and understanding the connections between geodiversity, biodiversity and cultural identity in a historical evolution. A geopark offers students the possibility to integrate separate disciplines, contextualize knowledge to real life, develop the sense of responsibility and solidarity. Geopark`s educators develop and operate educational programs at different levels not only as a prerequisite in order to spread awareness and preserve our geological heritage and it's

links to our natural and cultural heritages but at the same time to reinforce community involvement, pride, and strengthen of local identity (UNESCO Homepage). A geopark is a framework for close cooperation and partnership in order to foster a multi-stakeholder approach in developing educational activities and educational tools, supporting active participation and involvement of teachers, non-formal educators and children

Polishing the content of geopark educational offers to fit more precisely into the goals of the school can develop the usefulness and for example also the amount of visitors, and maybe open up for other ways of using the resource – e.g. working systematically with mathematics by using the time span in geology, understanding graphs and mapping, developing language in presentations, writing stories about the life of extinct animals, reading poems and listening to music – that is, using many subjects at the site visit.

In this project funded by the European committee under the Leonardo da Vinci Lifelong Learning Program, we focus on the cooperation between the formal and the non-formal professions to strengthen the educational value of field trips and learning outside the classroom. During the project period, the two main target groups, teachers from the formal sector as well as guides and youth workers from the non-formal sector, have been working together and developed a foundation course and a subject related course, using the authentic settings outside the classroom as learning arenas. In Denmark, Germany, Romania and Sweden the dual target group have been taking part at and evaluated two courses; one on the basic concepts of learning theories, and one on the practical development and presentation of subject related curriculum based courses in the non-formal learning environments.

This workshop will work within conference topics no 3: “Education in Geoparks”, and will be divided into parts: Initially, we will present our results, course aims, background, course schedule and target group at an indoor session. Secondly, we will take participants outside the conference room to demonstrate some of the practical activities developed during the project period. Last our external advisor Prof. Dr Martin Gröger will give a short presentation upon his work with science education outside the classroom.

- The idea and the theoretical background for the project (Senior Lecturer and Project Manager Karen Barfod, VIA University College, Denmark)
- The Course Content, practical activities outside the classroom (Martin Lindner, University of Marburg, Germany and Senior lecturer Eva Kätting, University of Linköping, Sweden), followed by discussions and questions

As some of the workshop will consist of practical activities outside, proper clothing and shoes are necessary. Project homepage: <http://viauc.com/projects/inandout/Pages/inandout.aspx>

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