Environmental Education through Art

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim is to describe and to frame the development of a project in Portugal concerning environmental education, which explores several fields of knowledge in general and of arts in particular. This forms a multi-target point of view, involving school community and the general population.

The project (with over a decade of existence) has been developed upon several fields of knowledge and environmental concerns, such as water, waste, energy, forests and ecological footprint.

The main goal is to develop environmental and artistic culture, introducing other educational areas and methodologies in the school programs, through a multidisciplinary perspective.

The project is based on training courses and in artistic workshops with students during one scholar year and culminates in a widely broadcasted show that joins together all classes and subjects explored throughout the project. It involves environmental education and artistic education on dancing, drama, fine arts and music.

The success of the developed projects let us conclude that there is a lack of information and activities in the mentioned areas. The project develops not only the creation of individual and group work habits in the artistic areas but also the environment awareness to the need of change habits and behaviours, aiming the environmental protection. This achieves not only the school community, but also the population in general (parents, families and community in general) that participate and interact in the entire project.

INTRODUCTION

The value of education/training is consensual. People show signs when they lack education and the Portuguese are in disadvantage among them and compared to the rest of the Europeans.

Information on environmental education is very important for the future and urgent now. This was the context that motivated a group of teachers to “educate for the environment through art”, putting together artists, teachers and students as they look towards the present.

The project «Environmental Education through Art» puts together environmental training for the education and the development of skills and values that allow to re-evaluate behaviours and its consequences upon the environment in a broad perspective. It aims to develop in children biological, psychological, social and physical skills, using their creativity, expressiveness and
conscience of aesthetic values, as well as moral and ethical, incorporating artistic fields of educational dancing, drama, fine arts and music.

**KEYWORDS**

Environmental Education, Sensitization, Environment, Formation, Art.

**MAIN GOALS**

Develop environmental and artistic culture.

Promote other educational areas and methodologies in the school programs, through a multidisciplinary perspective.

Create working habits (individual and in group) stimulating research.

Promote attitude and behaviour changes.

Alert to the urgency of a sustained and sustainable environment through correct environmental habits.

**TARGET**

Primary target: Scholl community

Secondary target: General population

**METHODOLOGY**

«Environmental Education through Art» is a project based on training courses and in artistic workshops with students. The project culminates in a widely broadcasted show that joins together all classes and subjects explored throughout the project.

It involves environmental education and the exploitation of several artistic areas, in which are included: Educational Dancing, Drama, Fine Arts and Music.

The initiatives of environmental training courses are intended to spread the awareness of different environmental themes, through a passive method, which is considered the most correct to apply in schools. In order to enlarge formation course’s attractiveness, several audiovisual resources, illustrated panels and activities are explored and several workshops are proposed. The formation courses concern the interconnection with other project areas.

The thematic artistic workshops develop not only the technique, but also the student’s imagination and creativity, answering their recreational and expressive needs. Several activities, in the different areas, that are put into action, will prepare the students for their contribution in the final show, where the stage scenario is built and adapted to reality by the active elements – students, teachers, sensitization agents – that are responsible for the acting and the presentation of the developed work throughout the project to their parents, family and general community.

«Environmental Education through Art» includes the following phases in order to achieve the main goals and its success:
Definition of the environmental theme and narrative (dramaturgy or tale).

Advertising and school invitations.

Training courses to the interested teachers, in several educational fields, such as dancing, drama, fine arts and music.

Selection of the school classes.

Workshops by thematic artistic area for each class, in accordance to the established chronogram.

Training courses and environmental education to all classes within the project, in accordance to the chronogram.

Reutilization of objects in the creation of stage sceneries.

Adaptation of the narrative (dramaturgy or tale), script’s definition and rehearsals.

Rehearsals with all the participants.

Final widely broadcasted show with all the teachers and students.

PROBLEMS AND RESOLUTIONS

During the project’s implementation some problems emerged. To minimize them, we present some solutions.

Problem: Lack of proper materials in training sessions taking place in schools.
Solution: Carry own material to avoid the unexpected.

Problem: The project doesn’t embrace the totality of school students due to logistic matters.
Solution: Promote share of experience between the involved students and the not involved in the Project.
Problem: Some confusion installed during the rehearsals and the final show.  
Solution: Name teachers to be responsible for each class and define rules to these phases.

Problem: Number of tickets available for the final show is insufficient in face of demand.  
Solution: Promote more final shows.

CONCLUSION

This project is a way to spread new areas and methods, in accordance to the school programs, through a multidisciplinary perspective, introducing art and environment in school programs.

The success of the developed projects let us conclude that there is a lack of information and activities in the mentioned areas.

It develops the creation of individual and group work habits, stimulates the research and increases student’s autonomy, which is widely reflected in the interest shown by the students, in their enthusiasm in the development of the activities and in the results, which reveal creativity, technique and imagination.

The environmental education perspective translates a major benefit in the pursuit of information and public awareness to the need of change habits and behaviours, aiming the environmental protection. This achieves not only the school community, but also the population in general (parents, families and community in general).

The transmission of environmental contents using the defined method permits the concept’s achievement in an informal educational way, allowing the learning of the environmental questions and awareness of the consequences of bad environmental behaviours.

The active participation and commitment of all community involved (students, teachers, families and the general community) are important inputs to the dynamic and interactive value of the project.

In the several phases of the project, and particularly in the final show, the response is excellent and the project involves all the community. Environmental development and cultural and artistic development towards the protection of the environment are increased in schools and homes.

This project is renewed throughout the years with the introduction of new themes, but all the methodology and structure remains, allowing the continuity at different school levels, depending on the availability and motivation of the schools involved.

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