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# PLAY & NATURE

# PLAY & LEARN



## CHAPTER 1:

Educating in nature: Approach and techniques

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## WHY THE CONTACT WITH NATURE IS IMPORTANT?

### ● Lack of exposure to natural light

It benefits for our body due to the vitamin D3 absorption. Vitamin D deficiency is widespread in the northern hemisphere and in countries with long winters. However, some people also develop a vitamin D deficiency in summer. Why? Simple: when the temperature gets too high, many people prefer to stay in the house with air conditioning instead of going out. Vitamin D deficiency is one of the causes of increased tiredness and decreased performance, which is why the implementation to the exposition to natural light improves absorption.

In addition, exposure to sunlight brings psycho-physical benefits, such as decreased anxiety, stress, suicide, depression, and the ability to affect the quality of daily life of individuals and the community within the spaces of our cities.

### ● Students become passive beings

Development of dissociative behaviour derived from the pandemic situation of recent years that has accelerated the phenomenon of isolation of the individual already present in society.

### ● Cognitive development. Understanding, imagination, logical reasoning, relationship, memorization, concentration, attention.

### ● Relationship between physical exercise and relaxation ability

This interaction allows a deep connection between body and nature, resulting in the development of skills and abilities useful in everyday life. The installation of outdoor gymnastic equipment helps the development of connection at both the individual and group level.

- In the first years of our life, our motor skills mark and promote a high self-esteem and self-confidence. We need that contact with nature because it allows us to experience, develop creativity and sensory capacity

🔗 [https://uvadoc.uva.es/bitstream/handle/10324/33588/TFGL2218.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y\\_](https://uvadoc.uva.es/bitstream/handle/10324/33588/TFGL2218.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y_)

- To become aware of our surroundings and the problems of our society. To promote respect, tolerance, sensitivity, appreciation and emotions.

It is important to promote inclusion by breaking down social barriers; enabling greater accessibility and equal opportunities for disadvantaged individuals.

- Social development. Development aimed at enhancing the social insertion of the human being in his environment; encompasses capacities of integration, membership, linkage, relationship, collaboration, teamwork, coexistence, participation

Possibility of individual or group activities.

🔗 [https://gredos.usal.es/bitstream/handle/10366/125949/2015\\_TFG\\_Mu%c3%b1ozClorennec%2c%20Mariana\\_Educar%20en%20la%20naturaleza%20en%20Noruega%20y%20en%20Espa%c3%b1a.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y\\_](https://gredos.usal.es/bitstream/handle/10366/125949/2015_TFG_Mu%c3%b1ozClorennec%2c%20Mariana_Educar%20en%20la%20naturaleza%20en%20Noruega%20y%20en%20Espa%c3%b1a.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y_)

- **Reduces school failure.** It gives them the possibility to develop their psychomotor skills, their ability to solve problems and their sociability. In addition, it enhances the imagination, creativity and the ability to marvel, a decisive aspect to encourage motivation.

## Disadvantages of working with nature

### **1. Legislation**

Need to update and revise existing regulations concerning outdoor spaces and activities, reducing the current timeframe for drafting a new regulatory text.

Also by including more attention to disabled people in the changes.

### **2. Lack of knowledge to practice and work in nature**

The lack of knowledge of the territory and the lack of adequate preparation for carrying out specific activities leads to an underestimation of the risks and dangers of the territory. The promotion of training courses carried out prior to the activity decreases risks and dangers.

### **3. Opposition by family members**

Lack of security within public open spaces leads to overprotection and restriction by households.

### **4. Long distances to the natural environment**

Poor availability of urban connections useful for reaching the site.

Little promotion of the use of public transport available.

### **5. Adverse weather conditions**

### **6. Degree of interest**

Poor collaboration between public and private institutions, resulting in less accessibility for the community.

Moreover, the lack of encouragement for partnerships with associations makes it more difficult to live in these spaces.

## **METHODOLOGY**

**Differences between formal, non-formal and informal education**

**What elements of nature or values can be applied to education**

**Educational techniques that can be transferred from the classroom to nature**

**Empathy map: young people at risk or not at risk of exclusion**



## **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FORMAL, NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION**

The term Education means “learning of intellectual and moral principles, valid for certain purposes, in accordance with the needs of the individual and of society”.

And there are different methodologies for teaching and learning: formal, non-formal and informal.

Formal learning is responsible for the transmission of knowledge, in line with social issues, takes place in specific places such as schools and universities and sets precise rules for the dissemination of culture, through qualified professionals, specific programmes, set deadlines and shared arrangements.

Usually, formal learning takes place in a face-to-face setting or through an online learning platform. Formal learning has a set of goals to achieve. There are different teaching methods in formal learning. An educator can deliver the course content either in a traditional classroom setting or on an online learning platform.

Formal learning is fundamental for the initial period of life, so that the subject can lay the foundations of education.

It is equally important to recognize how useful non-formal education can be; in fact it is related to planned activities but not explicitly designed as learning, one that is not provided by a training institution and does not normally lead to a certification.



Non-formal learning is provided in the workplace or within the framework of activities of civil society organisations or groups (youth associations, trade unions or political parties). It may also be provided by organisations or services established to complement formal systems (such as arts, music and sports courses or private exam preparation courses).

It means the one characterized by an intentional choice of the person, which is realized outside the formal systems.

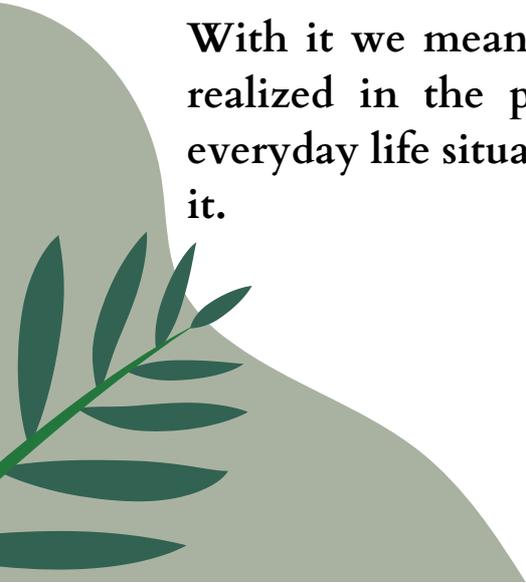
In contrast to formal and non-formal learning, informal learning is not necessarily intentional and may therefore not be recognised, sometimes by the person concerned, as a contribution to his knowledge and skills.

It refers to unplanned and unstructured learning that takes place in an informal setting. It does not take place in traditional learning environments like schools and universities.

It identifies with everyday life, in which each individual is called to activate their cognitive, relational, affective and social skills, to “be in the world”, solve problems, build links, attribute meanings.

Informal learning does not consist of a set of goals.

With it we mean what, regardless of an intentional choice, is realized in the performance by each person of activities in everyday life situations and in the interactions that take place in it.



Informal learning comes in many forms, including viewing videos, autonomous study, reading articles, participating in forums and chat rooms, performance support, coaching sessions and games ...

It works through conversation and exploration and broadening of experience. Its purpose is to cultivate communities, associations and relationships that foster human prosperity.

Despite the great differences that exist between the different methods of education and learning, training can take place in all areas and at any stage of life.

The ways in which we learn new things are increasingly linked to contexts that do not require recognition or certification. Non-formal and informal learning are those related to work, family and leisure.

While still considered subordinate to formal education and training, this area has begun to gain importance and visibility with the birth of the concept of lifelong learning and the launch of European policy actions that enhance its centrality for a knowledge that defines the entire knowledge alongside skills and abilities of the person.



We must work concepts of duration, universality, institution, structuring and intentionality.

	FORMAL EDUCATION	NON FORMAL EDUCATION	INFORMAL EDUCATION
Duration	Limitation in stages, appropriations (Compulsory schooling, from the first years of pre-school education to the end of secondary education).	Limited	Lifetime Unlimited
Universality	Universal within limits: compulsory (varies from country to country)	It affects all people, but each action is focused on one person.	It is universal, it affects everyone
Institution	The most institutionalised: within specific institutions (schools, universities, educational institutions).	It can be institutionalised or not: it can be within institutions or outside them.	Not institutionalised Not within educational institutions
Structure	Highly structured Regulated Government-controlled	structured within a limit	Unstructured
Intentionality	Intentional, planned	Intentional: optional, complementary, flexible, rarely compulsory activities.	Unintentional, unplanned, in one's own everyday interaction

- Within non-formal education we find all those educational and learning interventions that are carried out in an extracurricular context. This includes adult education, vocational education, youth skills education, basic education for out-of-school children and education for the elderly within the context of lifelong education.
- One of the characteristics of non-formal education is that its focus is on the learner. Non-formal education is not limited to specific programming places or times, such as in formal education. Non-formal education can be provided in a very flexible way that should be promoted in the future. UNESCO promotes the integration of non-formal and formal education.



## **WHAT ELEMENTS OF NATURE OR VALUES CAN BE APPLIED TO EDUCATION**

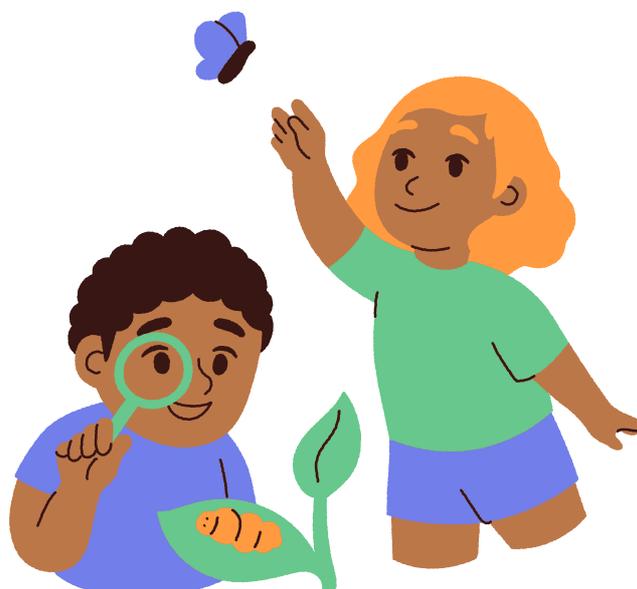
Let's start with values education. Values education is related to the ethical scale and values that serve to order priorities. It is a form of learning related to morality, ethics, empathy and respect.

Education in values makes us aware of the consequences of our actions on the planet and instills respect for nature.

Nowadays, reflecting on the main needs of children/adolescents/young people/young adults regarding learning processes, largely comes up against the observation that there is a huge lack of human values where the deficit of four fundamental values stands out: teamwork, respect, critical spirit and self-esteem.

For this reason and more and more people are slowly rethinking the ways/methods of teaching and learning. Playful/sporting activities in nature are one of the methods being studied for some years where multiple values and emotional competences can be worked on and developed, as the outdoor space is, by excellence, a place that allows free exploration and therefore constitutes a space for the production and transmission of children's play culture.

In fact, learning through experience allows exploring education in a holistic way involving the physical, emotional and intellectual aspect of the pupil/children/young people, in a concerted way with experience, perception, cognition and conduct, and not by monitoring by the teacher and memorisation of content.





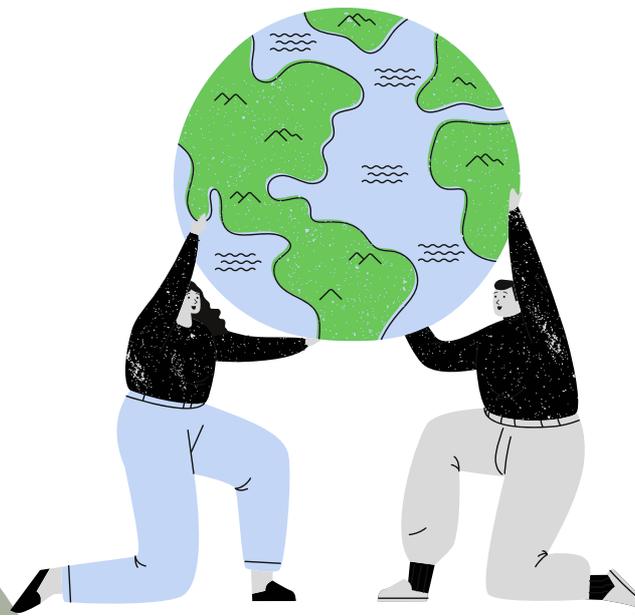
## **EDUCATIONAL TECHNIQUES THAT CAN BE TRANSFERRED FROM THE CLASSROOM TO NATURE**

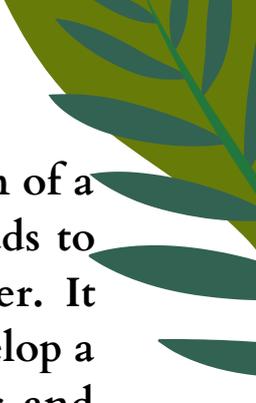
### **WHAT SHOULD CHANGE IN SCHOOLS?**

Schools, in general, should have a more ecological approach, although it is true that there are many of them that are already working on this line. A very interesting practice is to convert the courtyards into orchards, gardens or farms.



In addition to the benefits they bring to students through contact with nature, thanks to these spaces you can also learn mathematics, language or other subjects. Other interesting initiatives may include creating outdoor classrooms or introducing nature materials into classes.

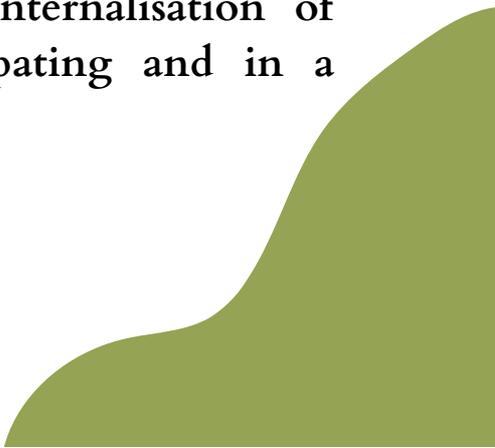




The Outdoor Training methodology expresses the conception of a space between individuals, groups and organisations that leads to groups and organisations getting to know each other better. It raises awareness of how they can improve their skills and develop a constant and coherent action plan oriented towards a clear and consensual objective. The outdoor space is equally valued, and is designed to give continuity to the activities started in the classroom, therefore an extension of the indoor space. This space has characteristics that are appropriate for each age group and offers multiple opportunities for active experiences . The natural characteristics of the spaces are respected, together with other structures that allow sliding, climbing and swinging, specificities that allow children to challenge and overcome their abilities, becoming more confident and competent. Each space educates, has its intention, its purpose. For many researchers, the reason for the success of this method lies in the experiential application of four basic elements of learning: thinking, observing, doing and feeling. It has the benefit of working/experimenting/stimulating emotions and knowledge, which enables experiences to be inwardly recorded and can be applied in later situations.

Students learn by participating, and are the main actors of their processes. Learning at their own pace, through their own goals and freely exploring their creativity and skills at the highest level, through experiential learning allows a 75% retention, while what we listen only allows us to retain 5% and what we read 10%.

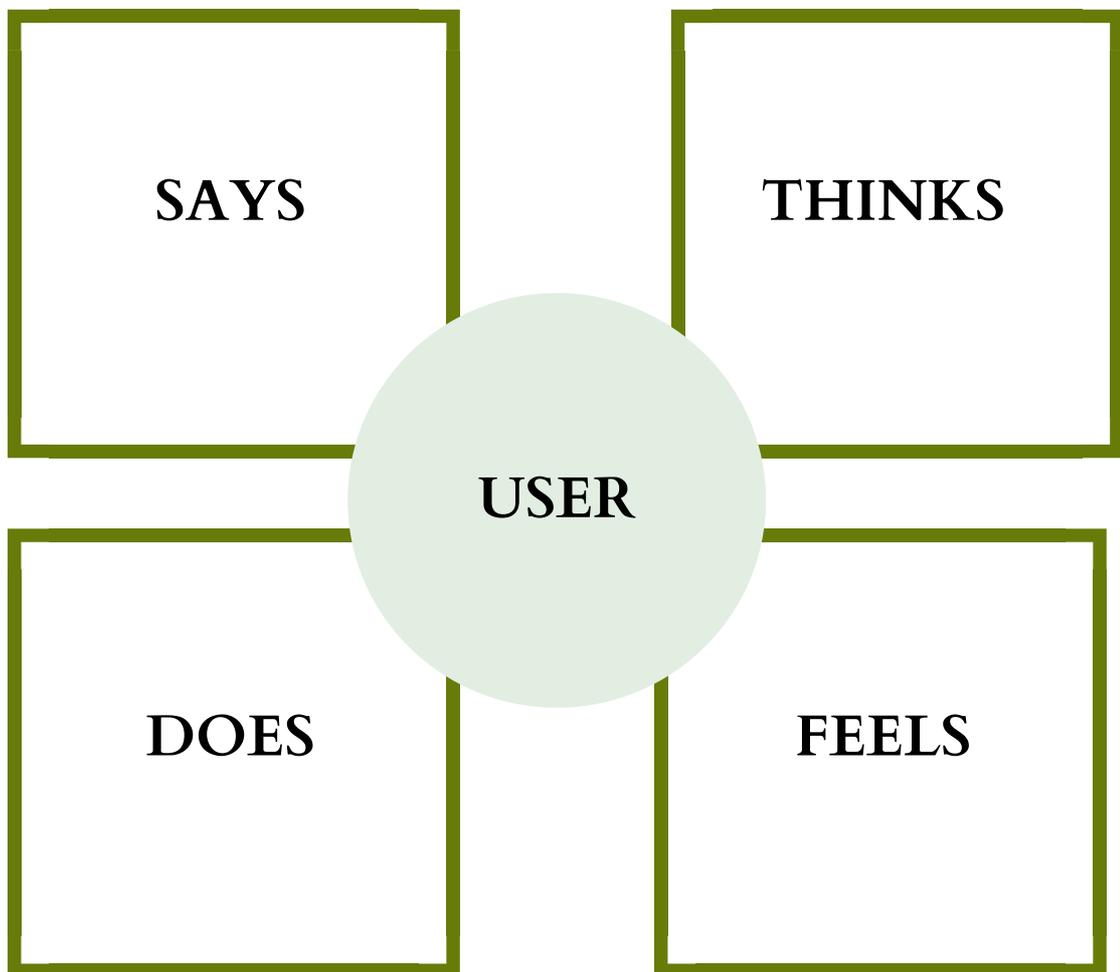
Learning is carried out in real time and the assimilation of knowledge, attitudes and behaviour is processed more deeply and effectively. Among other advantages is the internalisation of knowledge, given that you learn by participating and in a motivating context.



## **IS IT COMPATIBLE WITH NEW TECHNOLOGIES?**

No. Children spend too many hours a day. We need to reflect on the need to relate to the natural environment

### **EMPATHY MAP**



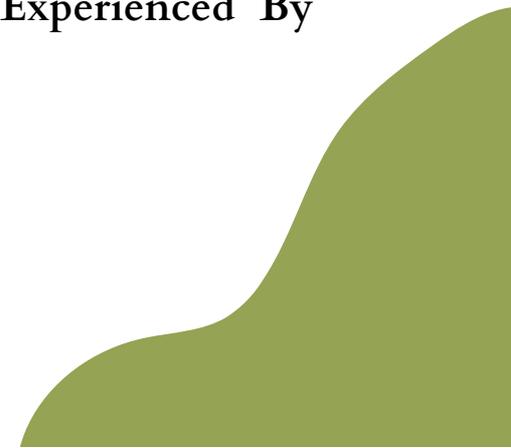


The Empathy map is a survey tool that aims to draw a detailed profile of your interlocutor: it allows you to know and understand their needs and problems, and helps you create your effective communication strategy.

The map of empathy is a useful element to help create an effective communication strategy, which makes people more aware of the importance of the activity in contact with nature.

As It Is possible to see in the table below, the Empathy map Is made of four boxes that are used to indicate the keywords referring to the user.

If you've never come across an empathy map before, they provide in-depth context about what a user is saying, thinking, feeling and doing whilst accessing a service, while means that an empathy map (Say – Think – Do – Feel model) is split into 4 quadrants, with the user or persona in the middle as shown in the following figure:

- Says – It Generally Highlights The Problem Set And Focuses Upon What Exactly A User Is Looking For.
  - Thinks – “It Concludes What The User Is Thinking All The Time While Performing Different Actions In Their Journey.
  - Does – It Is Used To Jot Down The Observed User Behavior While They Were Performing A Set Of Different Actions.
  - Feels – It Collects The General Human Emotions Like Frustration Or Delight Whichsoever Is Experienced By The Interviewee.
- 
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## **PRACTICAL CASES**

### **CASE STUDY 1**

An example of an activity that embraces the initiative is the realisation of a field trip with an overnight stay in the open air for children from 6 to 10 years old. The planned actions concern preparing one's own material carrying out activities in nature and self-management during the stay. The designated site can be reached via a footpath (also accessible to wheelchairs), but also by public and private transport.

The activity is aimed at bringing participants closer to a place in the area, offering them a space they can use outside the activity, allowing them to create an experience that is also family and social. Activities include the development of coordination, balance, concentration, but also respect for nature, cooperation and inclusion.

Participants are supervised and always in safe conditions, with theoretical moments on the right techniques to use, but they are also encouraged to be autonomous and put into practice, through orientation, plogging and knowledge of local flora and fauna. The experience is enriched with moments of sharing and reflection, aimed at making the experience not just an end in itself, but an opportunity for improvement and renewal.

## CASE STUDY 2

Another example of a practical prerequisite is participation in activities aimed at protecting the area's fauna or flora, which are carried out with the participation of many young people, making them aware of the delicate ecosystem that needs safeguarding and attention. This experience raises awareness and educates the community on the problems of local flora and fauna, making them proactive and sensitive citizens to the space around them.

In particular, for the protection of a species of toads at risk of extinction, Legambiente creates 'safe passages' that allow these animals to migrate from the mountains to the beach to lay their eggs, avoiding passage on busy roads that would cause them to be crushed. These activities are carried out in groups, on a voluntary basis, allowing socialisation and cooperation between individuals and the establishment of links and communication points.

## CASE STUDY 3

In particular, for the protection of a species of toads at risk of extinction, Legambiente creates 'safe passages' that allow these animals to migrate from the mountains to the beach to lay their eggs, avoiding passage on busy roads that would cause them to be crushed. These activities are carried out in groups, on a voluntary basis, allowing socialisation and cooperation between individuals and the establishment of links and communication points. This action allows the development of a sense of empowerment and self-determination that are fundamental to the development of individuals confident in their abilities, despite the possible difficulties present. Carrying out such activities within a heterogeneous group finally allows the education and sensitisation of individuals to respect the timing, capabilities and limitations of others.

## CASE STUDY 4

The development of activities in nature must necessarily include moments of information and education on the surrounding area, its characteristics and critical points. Through simple activities and experiences it is possible to educate the community and make it active. This allows the creation of cooperation networks between actors and entities, and also enables the community to make a practical and direct contribution to safeguarding the territory.

The Fridays for Future team creates events, activities, workshops and experiences aimed at educating people of all ages to live together actively and respectfully in space. Through workshops, games and experiences they bring an ecological and sustainable vision applicable to everyday life and reality. In the course of the activities, carried out in non-formal locations, participants can learn about the problems of the area, experience them first-hand and actively participate in solving the problem. After a theoretical moment of information on the problem of pollution, it is possible to gain direct experience of it through a clean-up practice, finally learning creative recycling techniques that can give new life to what was initially only a problem.

## CASE STUDY 5

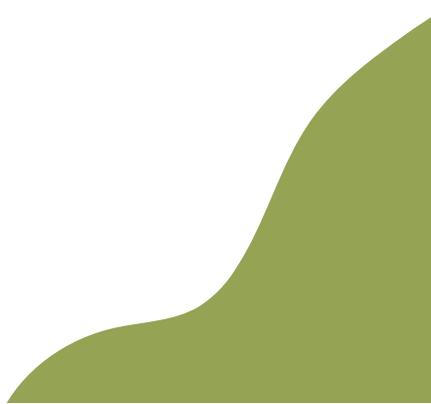
In order to build a proactive network that has as its interest the protection and preservation of the environment, it is necessary to intervene on the community, educating, informing and sensitising it. Voluntary work in a sustainable and ecological environment can contribute to the formation of individuals who are aware of and prepared to respect nature. The implementation of such experiences in non-formal venues, accompanying social moments with moments of information and discussion provides the opportunity to broaden one's viewpoints and learn new knowledge.



Legambiente, through the Eco-Ostello Parco Monte Barro, promotes and supports a sustainable and active lifestyle in many ways.

Volunteers who undertake an experience in the hostel are involved in space management and care work, creative recycling projects and participate in seminars and information sessions aimed at raising awareness and providing them with knowledge. Inside the hostel there are signs encouraging responsible actions (do not waste toilet paper, turn off the tap while brushing your teeth) and explaining how the hostel has adopted changes (time-controlled lighting, recycled furniture, honesty bar) with a view to recycling and eco-sustainability.

Volunteers end the experience enriched in terms of knowledge, relationships and ideals, bringing back and re-proposing the models they have learnt also in their own communities.



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# PLAY & NATURE

## PLAY & LEARN



CHAPTER 2: Inclusion in education:  
Difficulties and opportunities offered by sport

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## **PLAY AND LEARN. OUTDOOR TRAINING: WAYS OF LEARNING IN NATURE.**

Nowadays, reflecting on the main needs of children/adolescents/young people/young adults regarding learning processes, largely comes up against the observation that there is a huge lack of human values where the deficit of four fundamental values stands out: teamwork, respect, critical spirit and self-esteem (Santos, 2012).

For this reason and more and more people are slowly rethinking the ways/methods of teaching and learning. Playful/sporting activities in nature are one of the methods being studied for some years where multiple values and emotional competences can be worked on and developed, as the outdoor space is, by excellence, a place that allows free exploration and therefore constitutes a space for the production and transmission of children's play culture (Azevedo, 2015; Würdig, 2010)<sup>1</sup>.

Outdoor training/outdoor sports in outdoor methodologies can be defined as moments of fun outside the usual space, in which we can perform sporting activities within a programme supported by a specific methodology of work on the skills defined for each one individually and collectively. It is considered an effective method of training, encouraging and involving the human capital of an institution or organisation, regardless of their professional category and responsibility.

According to Molina (2011), the Outdoor Training methodology expresses the conception of a space between individuals, groups and organisations that leads to groups and organisations getting to know each other better. It raises awareness of how they can improve their skills and develop a constant and coherent action plan oriented towards a clear and consensual objective. The outdoor space is equally valued, and is designed to give continuity to the activities started in the classroom, therefore an extension of the indoor space. This space has characteristics that are appropriate for each age group and offers multiple opportunities for active experiences (Lino, 2013).



The natural characteristics of the spaces are respected, together with other structures that allow sliding, climbing and swinging, specificities that allow children to challenge and overcome their abilities, becoming more confident and competent. Each space educates, has its intention, its purpose (Kolb, 1984; Gass, 1990; Priest, 1990; Itin, 1999)



For many researchers, the reason for the success of this method lies in the experiential application of four basic elements of learning: thinking, observing, doing and feeling. It has the benefit of working/experimenting/stimulating emotions and knowledge, which enables experiences to be inwardly recorded and can be applied in later situations (Cadavid et al., 1999) .



In fact, learning through experience allows exploring education in a holistic way involving the physical, emotional and intellectual aspect of the pupil/children/young people, in a concerted way with experience, perception, cognition and conduct, and not by monitoring by the teacher and memorisation of content.



In the picture bellow, we can see these aspects clearly in the activities made in mountains with a little walk between trees, water courses, rocks, diversed obstaculs in local trails where students can study biology, sports, geography outdoors without books our ipads, cooperate with each others and interacte all togheter without tecnology interventions, talking, carrying about the nature and enviroment that surround them and their schools. The only materials we needed was cleaning materials like gloves,bags,clamps.



Ativities in the Nature



Students learn by participating, and are the main actors of their processes. Learning at their own pace, through their own goals and freely exploring their creativity and skills at the highest level, through experiential learning allows a 75% retention, while what we listen only allows us to retain 5% and what we read 10% (Santos,2020)<sup>5</sup>



Learning is carried out in real time and the assimilation of knowledge, attitudes and behaviour is processed more deeply and effectively. Among other advantages is the internalisation of knowledge, given that you learn by participating and in a motivating context.

For Jesús Molina Gómez (2011)<sup>6</sup>, nature is an ideal and effective place that favours the encounter between individuals because it is a new, unknown and challenging environment that generates a scenario where all participants feel equal and feel they have the same rights as the rest of the elements, there being no social strata or racial differences, sexual orientation, among others.

The program carried out in nature helps to captivate the interest of the participants, eliminating barriers and disinhibitions, allowing people to be themselves, recognizing their strengths and limitations, facilitating communication, trust, group cohesion, leading participants to be more aware of their own strengths and limitations. The experience has a greater impact on people and allows for a systemic learning process with the different types of experiences.



The picture below is a perfect example of these theoretic idea. We had experienced various sensations in contact with the nature : bees preservation, walking tracks, endermic plants, local beaches, mindfulness and energy transmission techniques, exercises outdoor for different disabilities and ages. materials used were cleaning materials: gloves, bags, clamps.





Developing skills and changing behaviour can only happen through real exercises and experiences in which people, when facing complex challenges, discover essential elements of human behaviour and nature, transporting them to a new world.



Thus, and taking into account recent research, children and adolescents with emotional intelligence learn better, have fewer behavioural problems, are less violent, are better at resolving conflicts, are less likely to engage in self-destructive behaviours, feel better about themselves, are better able to resist pressure, are more empathic, are friendlier, happier and healthier, more successful in their activities, and have a greater capacity for self-control.



## SPORT AS A FACTOR OF INCLUSION IN THE PLAY AND LEARN IN THE NATURE

The "Play and Learn in the Nature" project aimed to deepen the social inclusion of practitioners through various sports activities, with children and young people aged 5 to 20, in contact with different natural environments and in various locations and countries. Thus, it became possible to establish the relationship between sport and social recognition, social interaction, self-esteem, physical condition, body image and quality of life of people from different backgrounds and in different contexts, as well as the negative attitudes and obstacles presented throughout the various experiences.

In the picture bellow we demonstrate an activity made in “parque temático”- Santana- Madeira island with people with bone dysplasia and locals where we challenged all the participants to interact with Laurissilva UNESCO Patrimon and traditional activities in aim to achieve a better knowledge of our own island, history, biology in an environment with all included despite their personal characteristics and limitations. We used materials wickers,clay,endermic plants and leaves,made activiyes in the see, florest and tematic park.



Few social phenomena have the impact that sport has on society. Sport, in general, and specifically in nature, in playing in these ages of childhood and playing in adolescence, has a large-scale scope through its potentialities, however, the sport which we intend to value here is seen as a prolific field of possibilities of response regarding the educational, cultural and health issues of contemporary society. Contact with the environment and with different forms of animal and forest life exponentially increases the number of new and cognitively challenging experiences.

In general, sports practitioners have very high self-esteem and have a positive representation of their social inclusion as they consider that the various activities and sports contribute to the recognition of their value and sociability.

More specifically, sport has a very direct relationship with the questions of learning and education in the various natural contexts, in the sense that the rigour of the training, as well as all the versatility of its methods, allows children and young people to stimulate the logic of thought and reasoning while developing as individuals and athletes. The rigour of training immediately assumes a hierarchy, respect for others and leadership, if only by the delegation of roles, where the central focus is on the teachers/coaches/mentors and educators, as well as the main protagonists, the players/athletes/students.

In order to meet this goals with made another activity in Camacha Village- Madeira Island with people young people with mental disorders, bone displasya, and young people with risk of exclusion because of social problems like alcohol, drugs, economics, difficult behaviours, prostitution; and also with older people with Multiple Sclerosis, institutionalized in care homes, physical limitations. We made an orientation game with questions about local history in wich the teams were composed by diferent elements with diferent ages and problems/ physical dificulties and mobility. The interaction between them was a way of all togheter exchange knowledges and team values as cooperation, friendship and respect. We needed orientation material, chronometer, pens, pencils, drawing material, t-shirts, futebol balls and food without sugar and quimics (fruits of the season , waters).



JUGAR Y NATURALEZA POR EL APRENDIZAJE.  
DISEÑANDO JUNTOS ESTRATEGIAS DE INCLUSIÓN

Semana Jovem ANDO 26 de julho 2022  
II Mark Madeira Wanderes 2022



One of the reasons that lead us to believe that sport is a powerful mechanism for the reintegration of young people at risk of exclusion into society relates to the fact that this hierarchisation, in most cases, is easily identified and respected. In fact, Santos (2010, p. 3), states that sport and educational activities "physical and mental favour sociability and stimulate affective, cognitive, social, moral, cultural and linguistic reactions."

The European Charter on Sport (2001), Ap. White Paper on Sport, 2007, p. 2) , clearly refers to this aspect by stating that "all forms of physical activity which, through occasional or organised participation, aim to express or improve physical condition and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competitions at all levels".

Also, the "White Paper on Sport (2007, p. 2 , of the responsibility of the Commission of the European Communities, presents as challenges in the area of sport, the affirmation of the same as "a growing social and economic phenomenon, which makes an important contribution to the strategic objectives of solidarity and prosperity of the European Union".



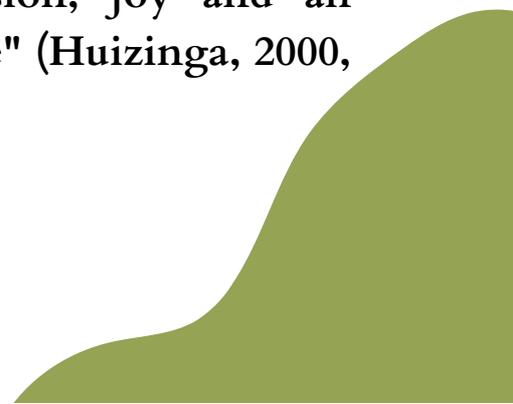


Sport thus has an enormous and recognised contribution to make to social relations, and is often considered to be a pacifier and unifier of peoples in conflict situations.

Furthermore, and according to the same document, The White Paper on Sport (2007, p. 3) , sport should protect and develop endurance, strength, speed, flexibility, etc., i.e., all physical-motor abilities, not limited to corporeality, as a biological context but in all the potentialities of the human being, which leads us to a fundamental role in the process of construction of the individual, through the learning that he acquires in the most diverse moments of his life.



The acquisition of new learning and skills and values which are inherent to the practice of sports are framed in accordance with the regulations and the consequent sporting rules. However, as Huizinga (2000) states, this harmony between the rules of the game and the social relations, of voluntary occupation, practiced within certain and determined limits of time and space, according to freely accepted rules, but absolutely obligatory, endows an end in itself, accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and an awareness of being different from "everyday life" (Huizinga, 2000, p. 24). 24).



Subjectively analysing the potentialities of this harmony between the respect for the rules of the game and for social norms, leads us to reflect more concretely on how sport can contribute to the social inclusion of young people at risk and more concretely in Nature.



Sport as a means of formation of the human condition, promoter and embodiment of transcendence and excellence claims the presence of the other, demands integrity, heroism, humanity and enables the ascent of man to the unlimited, lacks human persons formed with elevating values. Bento, 2014, p.16



The Portuguese Institute for Sport and Youth (IPDJ), and through its publication Code of Sports Ethics (2014) refers to an even more detailed list of these values, referring then that there are: values that, by their nature, are inherent to the practice of sports, namely: respect for the rules and the opponent, referee or judge; fair play or fair play; tolerance; friendship; truth; acceptance of the result; recognition of the dignity of the human person; knowing how to be and being; persistence; discipline; socialisation; healthy living habits; inter-help; responsibility; honesty; humility; loyalty; respect for the body; impartiality; cooperation and defence of social inclusion in all aspects. (IPDJ, 2014, p. 10).



These transversal values to the practice of sports and life in society also contribute to an active participation of citizens in society, to the extent that young people making use of these values, disseminate them in their most diverse tasks.

These tasks may be translated not only in the way each young person simply is as a citizen in his/her daily life, but also by the role young people play or may come to play in recreational and amateur sports associations, namely in the organisation of educational dynamics, sports competitions or even in the accomplishment of social projects.

As these amateur sports associations are mostly non-profit organisations or clubs, young people will carry out their intervention on a voluntary basis, thus bringing them more skills and knowledge inherent to their practice.

Throughout this process we find, in most situations, clear and objective processes of non-formal education such as sports activities in nature. Social projects based on the educational idea of sport and acting with young people at risk of exclusion can have a fundamental impact on their life path (PNED,2014).



It is through this civic, democratic, educational and long-term perspective of sport that opportunities arise to respond to social problems, such as the social exclusion of young people at risk. In this sense, there are many organisations of the Third Sector which implement social projects capable of tackling the problem of exclusion using non-formal education mechanisms.

Social projects that use sport, as well as other more dynamic areas such as inclusion in environmental projects or voluntary projects, through methodologies of training and enhancement of civic skills of young people at risk, are increasingly appearing within Community funding programmes because it is considered essential that it is built and implemented according to the specificities of each population.

In these two pictures bellow with can observe an activity where we joined outdoor traditional games of Easter in Madeira Island, where young people institutionalized did various sports all together, where they have showned all their skills and had the opportunity of interact with diferent youngters, games, ideas, tasks, ways of doing the games and developed new relationships in open space and with diferent elements, Educators, Vet Trainers and Families.



The acquisition of skills and development of others through non-formal education in this type of project such as "Play and Learn in the Nature" allows young people to grow emotionally in a specific but multifactorial way, since sport fosters a sense of belonging and allows young people to interact with others in the same situation as them, thus carrying out productive peer learning.



## PRACTICAL CASES

- CASE STUDY 1: Plogging in nature contexts that surrounds school;

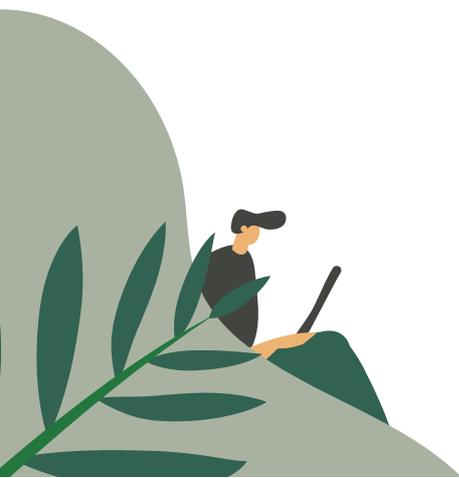
Plogging is an activity that combines running or walking with picking up litter along the way. It is a way to practice sport and at the same time contribute to the environment.

This activity can be an excellent opportunity for young people to become more aware of the importance of caring for the environment and thus develop a greater awareness of the impact our actions have on nature.

To carry out the activity, you can organise routes around schools where a clean-up is needed. Students can be divided into groups and provided with gloves and bags to pick up litter. During the activity, environmental issues can be discussed.

- CASE STUDY 2: Identifying plants/flowers with google lens.

Google lens is an artificial intelligence tool that uses the mobile phone camera to find objects and give important information about them. Using this application to identify plants and flowers can be an innovative and useful option for those who are interested in nature.



- **CASE STUDY 3** : Walking trails with people with physical disabilities and mental diseases or social problems;

Doing this activity can be a very powerful and valuable way to promote social inclusion, improve social and mental wellbeing and raise awareness of the importance of supporting people with physical disabilities and mental illness and social problems and promoting inclusion.

To carry out this activity, make sure that the trails are adapted for people with disabilities and ensure that participants are comfortable and safe throughout the walk.

For people with social and mental health problems, walking these trails can be a beneficial activity as it can reduce stress and anxiety, as well as provide a calm environment that can help improve their mood.

- **CASE STUDY 4**: Coaching and Pilates in natural environment such as beaches, forests, and trails near the sea;

This practice in a natural environment, such as beaches, forests and trails near the sea, can be a beneficial experience for the mind and body.

The practice of Pilates in a natural environment can contribute to the serenity and tranquillity of the participant, as well as improving their concentration. In addition, practising this activity on surfaces such as sand or grass increases the difficulty of the exercise but improves strength and balance.

Coaching is also an activity that can benefit from a natural environment, such as forests or beaches, as it also provides a very calm and relaxed atmosphere.

It is also important to emphasise that a great deal of caution and safety is required when practising these activities.



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# PLAY & NATURE

## PLAY & LEARN



CHAPTER 3: UNIVERSAL QUALITY:  
approach of measures to ensure quality

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# INDEX



1. Methods used to ensure the quality of outdoor.
  2. Evaluation of the needs
  3. Evaluation of the process
  4. Evaluation of the impact
  5. Evaluation of the resources available
  6. Evaluation of Risks
  7. Practical cases
- 
- 

# **METHODS USED TO ENSURE THE QUALITY OF OUTDOOR AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES:**

Evaluation of the activities:

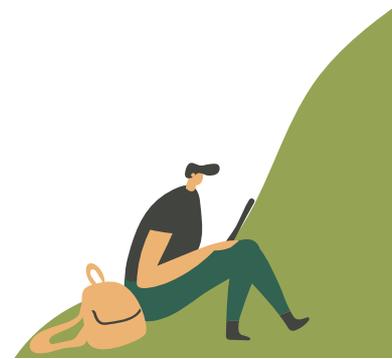
**EVALUATE  
THE NEEDS**

**EVALUATE  
THE  
PROCESS**

**EVALUATE  
THE IMPACT**

**EVALUATE  
THE  
RESOURCES  
AVAILABLE**

**EVALUATE  
THE RISKS**



## EVALUATION OF THE NEEDS

In order to ensure the success of an activity, respecting and reaching the set objectives, it is necessary to carry out an accurate assessment of the needs of the participants and their context.

First, it is necessary to evaluate the group taking into consideration several factors, such as:

- Age
- Social competition
- Number of competitors
- Any individual needs
- Any dynamics present within the group (if previously formed)
- Context in which the activity takes place

The analysis and evaluation of these parameters make it possible to plan and develop a functional and appropriate activity for the context and the group.

It is necessary to consider the age of the participants to allow the creation of a homogeneous group from a personal point of view, which allows the development of an activity suitable for their target, both from the point of view of physical development, to plan the actual performance, both from a psychological point of view, to calibrate the approach used and any moments of reflection.



The number of participants is fundamental in the evaluation and choice of spaces, the type of activity and the consequent materials used.

In the case of outdoor experiences, to combat the goal of inclusion, it is essential to consider and evaluate motor skills and any different problems of the group, trying to create an accessible and inclusive environment, aimed at developing autonomy.

Within a heterogeneous group, this process makes it possible to raise awareness and educate the group, through values such as respect, inclusion, and empathy.



Furthermore, safely accompanying participants outside their comfort zone leads them to be more prone to new experiences and allows them to develop problem solving practices.

At the end of the activities, it is essential to receive feedback from the participants (survey), which allows for an evaluation of the activity as a whole, from the objectives set to the methodology used, so as to be able to adapt and improve it in view of the future.



## **EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT**

Assessing the impact can guarantee the quality of the activity. Once the activity is completed, satisfaction surveys or direct observations should be made to measure the results.

It is necessary to organize moments of evaluation after every activity, or day of activities to observe the quality of the project and the satisfaction of the group. The evaluation could be held through individual or group activities. It is important to ask participants about their opinion shortly after the activity, or day of activities, to be able to have more accurate feedbacks, especially if we are working with kids.



A very efficient method of collecting feedbacks from a large group of participants is the survey, but it is less immediate and direct. It is suggested to break big groups in smaller ones to allow everyone to participate and feel less exposed. A person that is close to the group and trusted should follow this process in order to assure a safe and comfortable space.



Practical examples for collecting surveys and feedback

### SURVEY

- Target: young adults, adults
- Number of participants: 1 to  $\infty$
- Materials: form by phone, in-person, on the web, or by mail
- Timing: 5' to 10' depending on the length of the survey
- The survey is an efficient way to collect detailed feedbacks from a wide range of participants

### PIZZA MODEL

- Target: kids, young adults, adults
- Number of participants: 3 up to 30~
- Materials: Large sheet of paper / cardboard with drawing, markers, pens
- Timing: 10'

Every participant can draw a symbol in the slices of the pizza to evaluate the chosen aspects. The center is positive, the external part is negative. The aspects could be: group dynamics, activities, spaces, materials, food, accommodation, educators...



## SANDWICH MODEL

- Target: young adults, adults
- Number of participants: 5 up to 20 ~
- Materials: Large sheet of paper / cardboard with drawing, markers, pens
- Timing: depending on the number of participants from 15' to 45'
- Phase 1: Every participant receives one post-it/paper and has 10 minutes to reflect on three questions:
  - How did you feel during the activity/process?
  - What would you like to improve about the activity/process?
  - What did you like about the activity/process?

Phase 2: The group gathers in a circle and each participant is invited to share their inputs. It is not mandatory to share, but it is important to follow the three questions and be brief so that everyone has the chance to share

## INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION

Target: kids, young adults, adults

Number of participants: 5 up to 20~

Materials: a space with different “stations”, post it, markers, pens

Timing: depending on the number of participants from 15' to 45'

With kids: At the of the day with the whole group remember what you did during the day and make a circle of feedbacks with what everyone has liked the most. Report the feedbacks to the parents and ask them for feedback on their side.



## EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS

To evaluate the design process and the execution of the activity it is important to know the objective, which must be clear to the people involved in the organization and to the operators in order to be able to convey it to the participants.

In the planning phase it is useful to find partners who share your values or who are willing to experience new realities.

Subsequently, tasks are divided up and macro-objectives are created which will be organized and managed by the relevant manager, who assumes responsibility for them, always reporting the various steps, problems and needs to the group.

Considering the needs mentioned above, each manager will be able to start planning the activity, taking into consideration various aspects useful for carrying it out:

- Your resources (internal/external staff, volunteers, money, time, etc.)
- The space (facilities, permits, size, etc.)
- The target group (age, number of participants, special situations to consider, etc.)
- Necessary material (the one provided by the expert, the organizer or third parties)
- Timing of execution
- Plan

## **EVALUATION OF THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE**

Evaluate the resources available for the activity is essential to ensure the quality of the activity. The availability of materials, infrastructure, personnel and financial resources must be assessed.

To plan an inclusive activity that enhances the territory and the surrounding space, it is essential to carry out a careful analysis of the context and resources needed to carry out the project.

Once the activity has been defined, it is necessary to assess the materials needed to carry it out and the quantities of the latter, to guarantee their usability for each participant

It is necessary to evaluate the spatial resources, i.e., the context made available for carrying out the activity, to ensure that it possesses all the characteristics necessary for the functional and safe carrying out of the experience.

It is essential to better plan the logistics of the activity, to carry out an analysis and evaluation of the necessary resources in terms of personnel, so as to guarantee a controlled activity that is well supported by the organizers.

Finally, it is necessary to carry out an evaluation of the costs necessary to carry out the activity, analyzing each part of it and extrapolating the values of each step, to obtain a clear vision of the financial resources to be employed and the possible need for financing or sponsorship.

## **EVALUATION OF THE RISK**

Be aware of the several risks that outdoor activities may present. Safety protocols and emergency plans should be established to minimise risks and ensure safety of the participants.

In order to limit the risks, present in outdoor activities, it is necessary to carry out an accurate assessment of the space and the activity, considering any risks that the space and the experience itself may contain.

The presence on site of qualified personnel for first aid and fire prevention interventions is fundamental, with sufficient and adequate material, together with evacuation plans in case of emergencies, first aid kits and the presence of contact lists for any eventuality or need.

It is also vital to carry out a self-reflection operation on the work of the operators, to analyse the performance of the activity and evaluate any changes or recalibrations without causing damage to third parties.

This action allows the improvement of the various processes of design, development, and implementation of the projects, with a view to continuous improvement within the community.

It is essential that the planning of the activity takes place well in advance, connecting all the entities involved and informing them of the logistics and organization. It is also vital to communicate the goal and intention that underpin the activity, through simple and inclusive language, to reach as many people as possible and bring them closer to the project.



## PRACTICAL CASES

- CASE STUDY 1: How to communicate the activity to the participants according to the final objective.

Use/importance of social media to reach as many people as possible and convey the founding values of the project.

Communication must be immediate, clear, and concise to allow the effectiveness of the message using different channels to involve a wider audience.

The message can be communicated through sponsorships through:

Images (photos, posters, and illustrations) and creative videos.

Frontal interaction:

The approach of each activity must vary according to the participants and their abilities. The expert must be able to find suitable methods to best stimulate participation, while keeping the technical aspect unchanged.

A good operator must also be a good animator (from Late Lat. animator-oris = Who animates, gives life, who has the task of facilitating the achievement of the objectives of the group itself), and support the participants not only in terms of it concerns the performance of the activity, but including aspects of care and biopsychosocial well-being.



- CASE STUDY 2 : An activity must leave an example (tangible or intangible)

An important function of the activity is to leave something to the participants, be it tangible or intangible, in order not to limit the experience to just carrying out the activity itself but to make it a point of meeting, exchange and cooperation. The organizers themselves experience both personal enrichments, through the sharing of experiences and points of view, and professional enrichment, through the creation of networks and collaborations.

The Lecco Save the Lake association deals with the organization of clean-up activities on the Lario, known as Lake Como.

Save the Lake does not only raise awareness by cleaning the beaches and waters of waste and debris but serves as a starting point for modifying and re-adapting spaces, choices and habits of the community that experiences it.

A tangible example is the butt's holder, the shirt and the water bottle left to the clean-up participants.

An intangible example is awareness of caring for our planet.



- **CASE STUDY 3:** Raising awareness on sports practices of people with difficulties

Sports practice, to be meaningful, must be integrated with the transmission of values and ideals.

On 4 February 2023 we participated in an event in collaboration with Centimetri Edizioni, a publishing house that deals with publishing stories for children aimed at raising awareness of inclusion and empathy, and Oltretutto 97, an amateur sports association involved in the development and practice of sports with people with disabilities.

Initially, with the help of visual support (videos and photos), a children's comic was presented aimed at spreading an idea of inclusion and a sense of the group.

Subsequently, demonstrations and practical tests of Paralympic fencing, juggling, skateboarding, and exercises aimed at improving balance and coordination were carried out.

The development of this event has allowed the creation of a collaboration network and the awareness of the community, all with a view to cooperation between the organizers and the participants.



- CASE STUDY 4: inclusion of people with disabilities and awareness of operators

### Talita Kum Association

Each activity must leave a two-way experience, aimed at both the participant and the operator who organizes it. The Talità Kum association, based in Brillante, Turin, deals with planning, organizing, and implementing summer camps, stays and experiences for children and young people with medium/severe and non-severe disabilities. Through pet therapy practices they intend to bring children and young people closer to the natural and animal world, as a cure for the body and soul.

These activities are carried out within a heterogeneous group, to promote a perspective of attention and inclusion towards others. The operators themselves are supported by subjects with frailty, to provide an experience of autonomy and work inclusion. The activities are carried out by the members of the association, but also by volunteers from Italy and abroad, this allows operators to reflect on issues such as accessibility, interculturality and inclusion, providing food for thought and practical examples that can be assimilated and re-proposed by each participant in different contexts. The operators of the Vibes and association have collaborated and continue to collaborate with this association, teaching skateboarding, juggling, artistic and musical activities, providing and obtaining new ideas and ideas aimed at promoting a social context without architectural, economic, and social barriers.



- CASE STUDY 5: Inclusion within a group: passion and relationship

The Galbiate (Lecco) association Vibes asd deals with promoting passions, such as art, sport and much more through an inclusive point of view.

According to this concept, Vibes relates the various realities that are located throughout the territory, trying to include and connect them as much as possible.

At the center are the creativity and propensity, interests, and skills of the individual. The association works on positive vibrations and for this, the main philosophy is that no one is excluded, because the difference is not seen as a defect, but as a method of comparison that leads the group to improve and evolve. According to Vibes it's not important that you become a champion, what matters is the desire to get involved, contribute with your diversity and abilities to discover how and how beneficial it is to be part of the group.

Example: at the Lecco skatepark

Alex 33 incited and stimulated friends, acquaintances, and strangers, involving in his group anyone who wanted to be part of it and experience a free reality, devoid of distinctions of common and non-common interests, gender, age, lifestyle and geographical origin and social condition. This vision was the starting point of the Vibes asd association, which decided to adapt its individual and group approach to an inclusive perspective in every respect, creating a dimension open to all, whether they simply want to live it, support it, or actively collaborate in the project.



The acquisition of skills and development of others through non-formal education in this type of project such as "Play and Learn in the Nature" allows young people to grow emotionally in a specific but multifactorial way, since sport fosters a sense of belonging and allows young people to interact with others in the same situation as them, thus carrying out productive peer learning.



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