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WORKSHOP 3

Spain – Permanent landscape education activities for the primary school

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This document proposes a methodology, and activities to develop it, that can be used in different landscapes and can harmonise the pedagogical guidelines promoting exchanges and co-operation among various schools of primary and secondary education, and university.

With regard to formal education, education of the landscape must start from kindergarten and continue through primary and secondary schools, introducing concepts and strategies for the interpretation of the landscape according to different ages, and to be continued at the college level.

We will specify in this report a series of activities about landscape aimed at the primary school as a first step, to lay the foundations of knowledge and landscape interpretation, although the methodology is useful at any level of education.

The goal is to provide a basic box of educational tools that allow us to understand the landscape, as defined in the European Landscape Convention. Later, and depending on the local specific terrain and the level of knowledge, some tools needed to progress the pupils' understanding of the landscape may be added.

The landscape itself is educationally an object of study and at the same time a resource that can be studied from the perspective of different subjects or disciplines.

The methodology is based on the idea of landscape as a system in which all its elements are interrelated, and which demonstrates its dynamics and the importance of anthropogenic actions that are carried out on it. It is necessary to understand the interrelationships between elements and fluxes and to learn how to predict the possible evolution of the landscape, as it is not static but dynamic. Human beings are as much a part of this environment as any other element. Not only are the natural elements taken into account but also the socio-economic and the cultural ones too. The systemic paradigm implies establishing structures and dynamics and accepting principles of uncertainty, chaotic systems, indeterminacy and complexity.

The landscape, understood as an open system, exchanges matter and energy with the outside. It can be studied from a theoretical model of landscape, the geosystem. Similarly to way the ecosystem studies the interrelationships between living beings that occupy a territory, the geosystem, as a reality model, is the landscape. Geosystems study the interrelation between the elements (abiotic, biotic and anthropic) and fluxes or energies (anthropogenic and natural) that shape this real landscape, located spatially and temporarily since "the landscape is not more than the geosystem in a given space and time".¹

The function and features of a landscape are not determined by the sum of the characteristics and properties of its elements and fluxes but it must be approached holistically, as a whole. Linear and reductionist methodologies are not enough. A systemic study is required, which foresees non-linearity, the complexity and therefore the emergent properties. The landscape is not something static, it is in continuous evolution.

A practical approach is to consider the elements that make the landscape by definition, and the fluxes responsible for its dynamics. This holistic, global landscape interpretation is the best way to contribute to landscape protection, management and planning for present and future generations.

The landscape programme, which is based on the methodology of the studies of landscape as a system, is presented with the aim of achieving a landscape literacy of the population and starting from the formal education at primary level. The programme establishes five sections of activities: explore, classify, investigate, act and report.

Activities, from perception to the analysis, classification, diagnosis, prognosis and syneresis (prevention) are presented. They allow students and teachers to advance gradually in the understanding of the landscape and the importance of landscapes as indicators of quality of life.

The section "Explore", as its name suggests, invites students to go out and discover the near landscape, mainly through the senses, "Classify" already requires identification of the elements and

1. M. de Bolòs, 2001.

fluxes that characterise every landscape, while “Investigate” delves more into the particularities of the elements and their interactions, and “Act” allows for reflection on the impact of actions on the landscape according to their dynamics. Finally “Report” requires an exercise in communication of the knowledge acquired on a student’s own landscape and exchange with other students who live in other landscapes.

It should be noted that all the activities of this didactic proposal for primary pupils respond to a global proposal that should prevail in school for their full development and attainment of objectives and contents of the study of the landscape.

Primary education, as it has been said, is a key stage to lay the groundwork in the training of students, and thus it is important that teachers share the model to avoid undermining its globalism, so that the activities are not isolated from their purpose.

In educational practice, the study of landscape is considered a research project on the territory from an interdisciplinary, communicative and emotional perspective. Therefore we must ensure the meaning of learning, through the assimilation of knowledge linked to near realities, and also through the generalisation of knowledge and its application to different situations.

This comprehensive proposal should be understood, as a whole, as a project of action research in an innovative concept intended to enhance problem-solving. It is necessary to learn how to read and interpret the landscape, predict its possible evolution and become aware of the importance of prevention in order to find land use alternatives that depend on its potentiality and what is desirable. The motivation must be constant and be accompanied by those more subtle and useful learning strategies. This didactic proposal is established from the methodological sequence of landscape studies in the context of the scientific implementation, adaptable for each educational stage. In relation to the different phases, all procedures and relevant techniques that will materialise in different learning activities are highlighted.

If landscape literacy is intended, it should begin in the early, formative stages. The conceptual bases are established and then strengthened with increasing complexity in later educational stages, such as secondary school or university. However landscape education does not end at the end of the regulated studies but rather for citizens it is convenient to maintain a non-formal or informal lifelong learning. We will live and will act in the landscapes and it is desirable that individuals opine democratically on interventions that are carried out around them.

This education in the landscape “should provide an opportunity for pupils to discover the role of each individual in his or her role as an inhabitant of the landscape surrounding them, as a guardian of its identity and its culture and as a protagonist aware of its future development” (Appendix to Recommendation CM/rec 2013).

The proposal of “Landscape” does not provide any references or specific material to be used since every village, city and European country, especially those attached to the European Landscape Convention, currently have multiple resources.

The development of this programme can also provide much useful information at educational level. The different experiences that are carried out in primary schools can be collected and disseminated,

commented on, and put into practice with the corresponding adaptations in each place and thus increase knowledge about the educational practices in landscape.

The future is complex, with rapid change, and the objective of education must be to teach how to “learn to learn”, in order to adapt to this uncertain world.

To act and self-organise in diverse contexts and complex situations, competencies must be exercised and acquired through action, based on experience and reflection.

On the other hand, children and young people of the third millennium must develop multiple intelligences (affective, rational, intuitive, experimental...), be self-taught and learn in their own way according to their interests, presenting a high level of perception (physical, mental, emotional, social, psychological and spiritual). They have to manage the two cerebral hemispheres, the rational and the creative, be participatory and collaborative, observe and discover, be socially responsible and wish to improve the world.

The Landscape programme is designed for these generations of the third millennium, which present a level of alertness that makes it easier to adapt to rapid changes. Endowed with high capacities, they need a more holistic and integral education. The programme allows for flexible curricula so that learning habits serve forever, consolidating the ability to adapt to new situations and contexts, avoiding individualistic or competitive methodologies.

The activities proposed in the Landscape programme allow active learning (act and reflect on experiences) and transformative learning (create new knowledge by questioning the already known). The programme presented is conceived as a good educational tool to develop each and every one of the intelligences of these new generations and from this holistic education citizens are formed aware, critical and committed to new societies and the landscape.