

Abstract

# Non-Formal Ecological Education: Innovative Methods Tested in Lake Peipsi Communities <sup>†</sup>

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Our continent faces serious problems in areas such as biodiversity loss, limited natural resources, the impacts of climate change, etc. Thus, during the last decade, environmental education gained importance globally as the “alarm clock” that is now ringing loud, and educators, as well as politicians, understand the urgent need to better educate young people on the complexity and interconnection of ecological, economic, political, cultural issues and develop creative problem-solving skills. This requires new types of educational methods, as recent research also suggests that non-formal and interactive approaches to ecological education are more effective than purely fact-based teaching. This article describes innovative, interactive methods tested by the Estonian NGO Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation in regional schools and also during public events. Deliverables such as textbooks/worksheets on Peipsi ecosystems, the LoqQuiz orientation game, crossword and educational videos with quizzes on Peipsi ecology, and Educational Live-Action Role Play (EduLARP) were among the tasks that had the highest interest among our target group [1]. Our experience suggests that interactive and narrative approaches in environmental education such as problem-solving exercises and role play can be more effective in the long run and engage pupils better than fact-based (classroom) teaching. Non-formal learning is characterized as learning by doing, foremost from the specific situations that pupils experience, while their attitudes and values shape their future behavior [2]. Also, ecological education should focus more on the importance of individual responsibility as well as the role of collective action, and it is very important to constantly work with educators, especially in more peripheral areas.

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