

Svobodová, H. (2019). *Outdoor education in Geography: A specific education strategy*. Brno: Masaryk University Press. 198 s. ISBN 978-80-210-9521-2.

Abstract

Using the real world is the way learning has happened for 99.9% of human existence, only in the last hundred years did we put it in a little box called a classroom.

Will Nixon, Letting Nature Shape Childhood

For a long time, outdoor education has been considered a powerful teaching strategy for understanding today's world. Although outdoor education has its irreplaceable place in many countries' curricula (Australia, Scandinavian countries, etc.), it is still problematic to implement it in some Czech schools. Outdoor education places great demands not only on teachers and pupils but also on school management and parents. For teachers who are accustomed to their dominant classroom role, outdoor education represents a significant obstacle as they can no longer assess their pupils on their achievement only, but rather on the overall course of the outdoor education activity as the tuition is of an open-ended type.

Outdoor education as a complex has not yet received sufficient attention from Czech researchers. This monograph tried at least partially to fill this research gap. The publication aims to promote outdoor education as a strong teaching strategy, to describe its links to the school curriculum, and to offer teachers a helping hand in developing the concept of outdoor education.

The first, theoretical, part of the publication deals with outdoor education as a specific educational strategy. It describes how outdoor education is established in the Czech school curriculum, outlining the steps necessary for outdoor education to be implemented in terms of the preparation of both the teachers and pupils. At the same time, this part describes the transformations of outdoor education and compares the current state of outdoor education in the Czech Republic and abroad, including a description of the most common forms of outdoor education applied currently in Czech schools. In conclusion, model preparation for outdoor education is presented. It provides specific guidelines for how to implement outdoor education for supporting both problem-solving tasks and pupils' physical activity.

The second, empiric, part of the publication is devoted to outdoor education research as a strong educational strategy. First, the research needs and the research aim are described, including the methods used. Then, the results of the research aiming at the analysis of the benefits of outdoor education for deepening of pupils' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and physical activity are presented. The fulfilment of the aim was achieved through a combination of four sub-steps (methods): a content analysis of the school educational programmes (SEP) of complete elementary schools (grades 1 to 9, i. e. ISCED 1 and 2) and the lower grades of eight-year grammar schools (grades 1 to 4; ISCED 2), followed by structured interviews with the teachers of model schools where the SEPs were analysed. At one elementary school, a questionnaire survey was conducted with pupils and their parents, who also agreed to measure the physical activity of pupils during various forms of teaching (indoor versus outdoor).

The results of the research bring interesting findings. The intended curriculum of outdoor education does not correspond with the implemented curriculum. Moreover, it is very difficult to judge the development of pupils' key competencies by outdoor education. All key competencies are developed by outdoor education, but the teachers', pupils' and parents' views differ. Teachers appreciate the pupil's skills development while pupils report that outdoor education is interesting, but from all of the assessed areas, knowledge and skills are the least important for them. The parents are most aware of the pupil's attitudes development. If the previous competencies were hard to judge, the benefits of outdoor education on pupils' physical activity are very apparent.

In conclusion, specific recommendations for the development of an outdoor education concept for elementary schools are provided. Also, the possibilities of further and more in-depth research are indicated.