

Course title	Learning in nature: exploring outdoor education
Course code	022
Course category	Methodologies and practices
Course purpose and overview	<p>Outdoor Education is one of the most innovative educational approaches in the European context, as well as worldwide. New generations of children and youth have few opportunities for direct and authentic experiences in nature, making outdoor education a good solution to the challenge of reconnection to the natural world. Moreover, the outdoor experience can create great opportunities for meaningful learning experiences, both for students and for teachers. We can teach and learn curricular subjects outdoors, grow social and personal skills and develop a sense of wonder and responsibility for the natural world. Based in an outdoor training centre located in a rural setting, the course provides an immersive and experiential programme. In this course you will find an introduction to Outdoor Education theory and methodology, some practical tools, personal and professional insights and the opportunity for sharing and networking with passionate colleagues.</p>
Course structure and content	<p><u>INTRODUCTION</u></p> <p>Grounded experiences and many studies show that outdoor education (outdoor learning, adventure education, nature-based education, etc.) is an innovative way for the development of many competencies, most of them nearly connected to the European key competencies (2006/962/CE):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - civic and social competencies that can be developed through a direct relation with the environment and who lives in it. - cultural awareness and expression, based on the possibility of living global learning experiences; - leadership and entrepreneurship that are challenged by facing new contexts and problem-solving situations; - creative thinking and imagination, fostered by a structured but meaningful settings; - cognitive and scientific competences, that are based on knowledge and exploration of natural world. <p>This training course provide on opportunity of a deep introduction about outdoor education approach, gaining the fundamental knowledge and understanding from theories, methodologies, and practice. Outdoor education occurs when the natural context is intentionally taken as a learning setting. The learning process not only happens in nature but also with nature and for nature.</p> <p><i>In nature.</i> The outdoor learning process could be in a school garden, in a public space, in a farm or a wild area very far from the city. Nature is everywhere and as teacher we can see learning opportunities in different places and contexts, simple and extreme, urban and not urban, with short or long time at disposal.</p> <p><i>With nature.</i> We cannot deliver traditional and adult directed lessons in nature and call it outdoor education. We must find tools and strategy to connect the real experience of learners with learning objectives and outcomes. The teacher's skills of observation, reflection and conceptualization are the mail important in managing an experiential learning process. Nature can be the best co-trainer if we learn how to create the better conditions for outdoor learning within the groups of our participants.</p>

For nature. Outdoor education is not directly connected to environmental issues. Outdoor we can teach and learn subjects as well as social and emotional skills. But, at the same time, meaningful experiences in nature provide a sense of connection, appreciation and responsibility for the natural world that are the inner conditions of an ecological awareness and a sustainable behavior.

YESTERDAY AND TODAY

There is a long pedagogical tradition about outdoor education: from Froebel to Maria Montessori, from the experience of Kurt Hahn and Outward-Bound Schools to the Forest Schools Movement. There are lots of path in outdoor education each of them connected with different focuses: learners ages, learning tasks, type of context, social and cultural condition and so on. Understanding our own professional context is crucial to try to integrate outdoor learning in our practice. Nowadays there are lots of experiences and studies about outdoor education, and many evidences of the value of connection to nature in education are growing. From the work of Richard Louv, we learn that children and you appear disconnected to natural world, both in term of quantity of time spent in nature that in term of quality of experience. An iper-protective approach in families and school tends to increase the separation from a fundamental time and space for growing, in term of health and learning. This lack of experience tends not to facilitate the develop of specific competencies.

Outdoor education offers a great variety of possibilities in term of learning objectives. This course is not for specific target so we will explore them in general terms and then we will focus on the ones more connected with learners learning needs.

A QUALITY APPROACH IN OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Make outdoor learning possible is not simply related to specific or extreme natural settings. For providing quality outdoor learning processes the teachers competencies and a well-grounded methodological approach are crucial. We strongly focus on the understanding the inner structure of outdoor learning process, in connection with validated theory and practice. Experiential learning, combining practice and reflection, action and theory, personal and group focus, appears the better frame to understand and project outdoor learning experiences.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL INSIGHTS

It is not possible to make innovation, especially in teaching, without a deep personal involvement. Change is easier if we try something out of our comfort zone. The idea of transformational learning (Mezirow) is a key concept of this course and the training is balanced with personal and professional areas.

Participant are invited to explore their personal relation with natural contexts in order to find their path in outdoor education and grow professionally.

Out of the classroom, the teaching experience deeply changes: teachers need to foster many non- technical skills as self and situation awareness, observation skills, flexibility, creativity, and a strong curiosity. In nature all human being are learners and, as teacher, we are called to turn our posture, discovering the world around us with our learners more than simple transferring our previous knowledge.

EXPERIMENT AND DISCOVER: COURSE METHODOLOGY

	<p>The training course puts a strong emphasis on first hand experiment and learning out of the comfort zone. Participant are involved in a discovery process, both individually and in group with the other participants, through challenging activity in natural context and in the classroom. The methodology of this training course is highly experiential.</p> <p>The main ingredients of our learning approach are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting from direct experience, with holistic approach. We believe that learning is better and deeper when are involved the three H: hands, head and heart. • The group as learning resource. We invest in sharing, discussion, and feedback. We start from group resources and needs in order to better orient the program. • Group and personal reflection on experience. We allow time for introspection and dialogue for give opportunity for generation of insights and new ideas. • Cooperative learning process, discussion, and personal study for export theoretical aspects. We do not love very much frontal lessons and we prefer learning with interactions in a participate process. • Opportunity for experimentation, simulation, and project works. Challenge ourselves designing and delivering short outdoor activity in the group or for local participants is a great way to make learning real and create impact. • Learn from feedback and mentoring. The learning process include moment of review and feedback between participants and with the trainer. Feedback is a great resource for fix success and identify development points. The trainer can offer his experience as a mentor, coaching and listen for special learning needs. <p><u>LIVING IN AN OUTDOOR CENTRE: VISIT, OBSERVE, INTERACT, PARTICIPATE</u></p> <p>Outdoor education is mostly focused on the power of context and holistic experience for generate learning and transformation. Living an immersive experience in an outdoor learning centre could be a great add value of this training course.</p> <p>Depending on the group composition and needs and the activity of the centre, we can:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. involve participants in visiting the centre, understanding also some organizational aspect as management and community relationship, 2. observe different groups during outdoor education programs, 3. interact with our staff, discovering specific competencies and sharing time together and, if possible, 4. participate directly in some activity, working with groups or individuals of the local community.
Duration	One week
Daily programme example	<p>Here is an example of the programme:</p> <p><i>Day 0</i> (usually Sunday) Arrival date</p> <p><i>Day 1</i> Course introduction Letting know each other. Competences assessment. Intro: learning approach, individual and group objectives, expectations and needs. Group and personal experience 1: nature-based experiences, team building activities and discovering exercises in the nature. My nature in nature. Personal and professional storytelling.</p>

	<p>Feedback day 1</p> <p><i>Day 2</i></p> <p>Group and personal experience 2: nature-based experiences, outdoor learning activities and discovering exercises in the nature. Learning from experience: reflection on group and personal experience. Philosophy, theory, and practices of experiential education and environmental education. Key principles and benefits about outdoor education and outdoor learning</p> <p><i>Day 3</i></p> <p>Group and personal experience 3: reflection in nature, subjects outdoors. What, how and why outdoor. Cooperative learning workshop. How to design, plan and deliver outdoor education activities. Role of reflection and reflective practice in outdoor education. Teaching outdoor: outdoor education for curriculum development and for personal/group development. Cultural and social activities</p> <p><i>Day 4</i></p> <p>Project work. Participants have space and time to plan the practice of day 5, connected with their learning objectives. Advanced workshop on topic connected with participant interests. Could be about theoretical, methodological, or practical aspect. Visit and observation to the learning activities of the outdoor education centre Cultural and social activities</p> <p><i>Day 5</i></p> <p>Sharing practice with colleagues or with group of youth of the local community. Feedback, reflection, and discussion about the practice experience. Discussion of future cooperation and planning follow-up activities / Brainstorming dissemination ideas Final feedback Validation of learning outcomes and a certification ceremony Cultural and social activities</p> <p><i>Day 6</i></p> <p>Social, cultural, and professional interactions between participants Sociocultural activities Exchanges of contacts and discussion of future cooperation</p> <p><i>Day 7</i></p> <p>Departure date</p> <p>Programme details may be subject to amendment based on trainer, participant needs and other factors such public holidays. Changes might be needed to make up for time lost due to unforeseen or changing circumstances which might be out of the reasonable control of the hosting organisation.</p>
Learning objectives	<p>The main objective of this training course is to provide a deep introduction in outdoor education. More specifically, the learning objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the cultural needs for outdoor learning and trend in outdoor education, in Europe and worldwide. • Understand the different learning opportunities offered by outdoors. • Learn to read the natural contexts in term of learning options, as urban as rural as wild ones. • Know and understand experiential learning approach for planning and manage outdoor education programs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore and discover personal inclinations and resources connected to teaching outdoors. • Gain confidence in teaching outdoor. • Create a learning community during the course and after.
Learning outcomes	<p>After this training course we expect you develop your basic competencies as an outdoor teacher/educator. More specifically you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know the fundamental aspect of theory and method of outdoor education. • Understand how to integrate outdoor activities and processes in your own professional practice. • Understand how use outdoor learning for soft skills development. • Be able to plan and project outdoor leaning programs. • Rise awareness about your personal relation with nature and education in nature. • Gain tools and strategies for provide outdoor activities and reflection.
Assessment and validation of learning outcomes	<p>In this course we will use two main assessment startegy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-assessment test before and after the training about the competence of an outdoor educator. It is an assessment tool and, at same time, a learning and reflection tool. 2. Qualitative evaluation, made through final reflection and sharing about the personal and professional learning outcomes. This validation can be written but also it can be expressed using creative methods for example drawing. <p>Individual evaluation will be combined with group final feedback and learning assessment.</p>
Target audience	This training course is for teachers, educators, school's directors who want to gain a basic introduction to outdoor education.
Admission requirements for participants	No specific requirements
Language of delivery	English
Language level requirements for participants	B1 or more
Maximum number of participants	14

Please note that the course outlined is intended as an example only and may not necessarily be fully executed in accordance with all its details. Our need analysis is primarily based on enrolment information, information shared at kick-off meetings, and pre-evaluation of competencies. As such, it is possible that the programme may be adjusted to better accommodate the diverse needs of participants.