

Final report

Go Out and Learn

Curricular-based Outdoor Learning

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Introduction

This final report sums up results from the last year of the Go Out and Learn (GOaL) Project. Based on presentations given on the final webinar given in November 2020, this document is a way of disseminating experiences and results from the GOaL project.

The introduction presents the common theoretical framework used for the development of good outdoor learning practices.

There is a presentation of national contexts and results from all countries.

In the final part, we set up common guidelines for outdoor learning practices that are applicable for implementation of curricular-based learning strategies in all countries.

We also present the national results disseminated during our final webinar in November 2020.

The schools presented their own projects with photos and video-clips, and these can be seen on the project web page on the Erasmus+ platform. The summary here is based on presentations given of the results from each country and common results for all participants in the project.

All four higher education institutions and all four schools were active participants and contributors to the webinar as presenters and producers of videos of projects in their schools. These were:

Italy, Tiziano Terzani Primary School, Cinzia Petrucciani

Belgium, Buitenschool De Bergop, An Dubuquoy

England, Beechwood Primary Academy, Lisa Evans

Norway, Ormåsen, Anne Jeanette Bergelien

From Universities:

Plymouth University: Kelly Davis and Rowena Passy

University of Bologna: Alessandro Bortolotti

UC Leuven Limburg: Danielle Cools and Gorik van Helleputte

University of South-Eastern Norway: Ingunn Fjørtoft, Ann Christin Ferrari Holme, Kari Anne Jørgensen-Vittersø

Introduction

GOaL: a presentation of the project and aims.

The Go Out and Learn Erasmus+ project (2017 – 2020) was focused on developing curricular outdoor learning activities in each of the four participating countries of Belgium, England, Italy and Norway. Project participants were a University and primary school from each country. The aim was to develop and share activities across the four schools; to discover commonalities, to utilise others' ideas in different national contexts and, through these activities, to increase knowledge and understanding of how outdoor learning activities can be accommodated in differing national curricular requirements.

The model below gives a view on the what, who and how in the project.



Fig.1 Model on the what, who and how of the GOaL project

The participating higher education institutions were University of Plymouth, University of Bologna, UC Leuven Limburg and University of South-Eastern Norway.

The schools were; Beechwood Primary Academy, England; Buitenschool De Bergop, Belgium; Tiziano Terzani School, Italy; and Ormåsen Primary School, Norway.



Fig.2 Participating institutions

All schools were selected because they were already engaged with outdoor learning and involved in cooperation with the higher education institutions. As European Primary Schools, they all represented different national and geographical settings. They had different topics of importance for the project. The UK school were involved in a national Natural Connection projects; the Italian school were working with inclusion and outdoor journeys; the Belgian school were engaged in outdoor learning, and development of projects and places in their outdoor areas; and the Norwegian school had an agenda for sustainability and outdoor learning.

Aims of the GOaL project:

- The primary focus for this project was promoting the acquisition of skills and competences of teachers, pupils aged 5-12 and practitioners in higher education through international collaboration on developing curricular-based outdoor learning.
- An international cooperation opened possibilities to share, learn and develop outdoor learning in a project where the schools were the driving force framed by school curricula and local environments

Theoretical framing of strategies for outdoor learning

Even though the schools developed their practices within different national and local curricula, there was a common theoretical framing.

The learning was connected to real life outside school and to authentic learning situations. Situated learning and sociocultural learning settings (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and experiential learning and reflection (Dewey, 1938). Pupils' possibilities were substantial for :

- Exploring
- Experiencing;
- Inquiring,
- Problem solving
- Reflection.

Place matters

The schools' location and geography differed, and all offered different affordances for learning outdoors in their local areas. The term "affordances" describes the functions environmental objects can provide an individual. Children perceive environmental objects as functions: affordances to climb, slide, balance, hide, construct, explore, experiment, play, and as teachers we can see possibilities for implementing different themes for learning at different places. The affordances of an environment can be potential and/or actualised and are dependent on the competence, capacity and interpretation of the individual; they will be specific for each person (Gibson, 1979).

Teaching strategies related to place

Ideas relating to affordances can be further expanded through Mannion and Lynch's (2015) theoretical approach to place-based OL. For Mannion and Lynch (2015), there are three types of OL that exist on a 'continuum of place-responsiveness':

- place-ambivalent, in which teaching strategies take little account of the place as a contributing factor in teaching and learning
- place-sensitive, in which some active account is taken of the role that place will play in teaching and learning, and
- place-essential, in which teaching strategies are planned for a specific location and cannot be enacted if that location is unavailable (Mannion & Lynch, 2015, p.12)

These three categorisations help to demonstrate how OL is related to place, and all three strategies were implemented within the project.

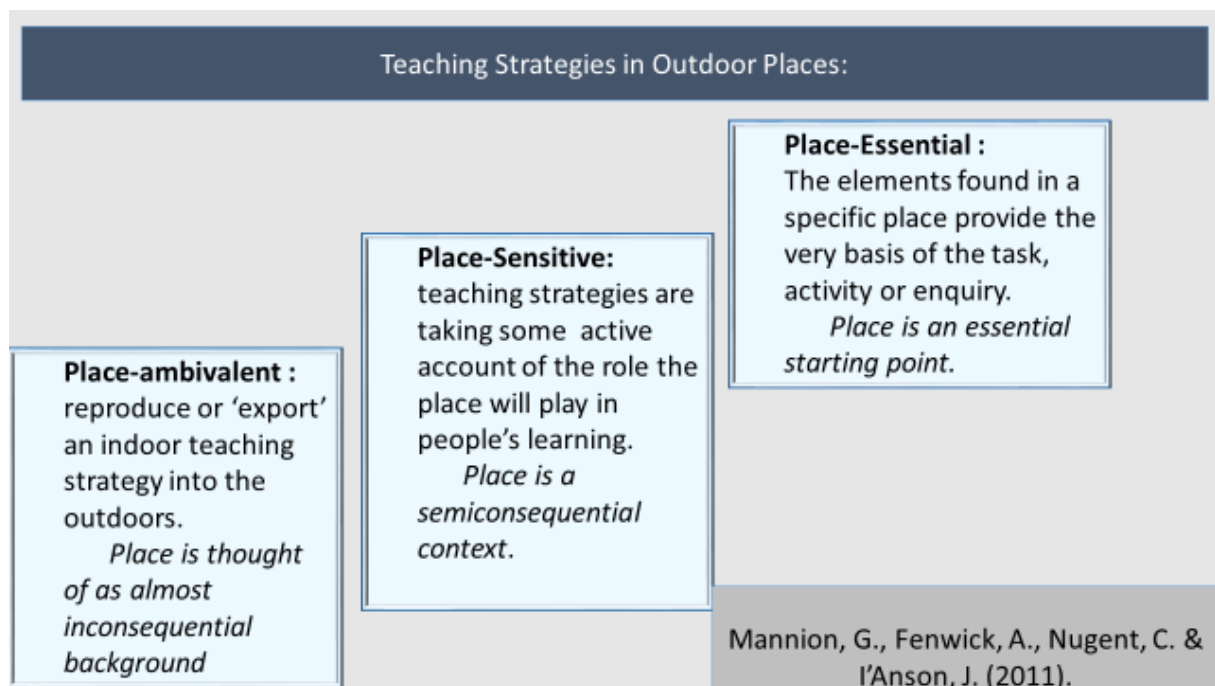


Fig.3 Outdoor learning as a continuum of 'place-responsiveness'

National contexts and cooperations

England – experiences and possibilities



Text from presentation Kelly Davis and Rowena Passy

National context

- The National Curriculum in England is a statutory framework of core and broader curriculum subjects that must be taught in all state maintained schools.
- There are two main phases of education 4-11 (primary) and 11-18 (secondary).
- The curriculum content in the primary phase is heavily dominated by Maths and English.
- Maths and English are monitored by standardised tests taken at 7 and 11.
- The results of these tests help to form a ranking system of high and low performing schools.
- Schools are inspected by the governmental body Ofsted.
- This statutory framework, external testing and Ofsted monitoring can be a barrier to interesting and imaginative pedagogy such as Outdoor Learning.

Outdoor learning in schools in England

- Outdoor learning has no official place in the National Curriculum in England.
- There is hope! England's diversity in interpretation and implementation of the National Curriculum allows for pockets of teachers and other school and community

members to encourage Outdoor Learning in some schools. Passy et al. (2019) describe this as a ‘bottom-up’ approach to encouraging Outdoor Learning in England.

- The 2019 Ofsted framework is now moving away from the attainment- and progress-driven approach and towards encouraging more interesting and engaging pedagogy including Outdoor Learning.
- The Department for Education is now starting to fund projects aimed at encouraging schools to take children outdoors to learn.

Evaluation and development of the process at the English school.



Fig.4 Process English School

Project findings England

- Outdoor learning comes in all shapes and sizes – learning in the ‘open air’ can mean learning in a concrete playground or a forest. All environments offer opportunities for exciting and engaging outdoor pedagogy
- Senior leaders and teachers drive the success of Outdoor Learning in schools, regardless of curriculum constraints
- Time, space, collaborative planning and CPD help to build a positive culture where Outdoor Learning occurs frequently and becomes part of the school community

- There are many differences in approach across different international partners . There are also numerous similarities, and collaborative working between teachers generated new ideas and enthusiasm to try new things
- Everyday Outdoor Learning occurred frequently in the English schools, but often teachers did not consider lessons Outdoor Learning – more frequently they reflected on full day events or large scale projects
- Core curriculum areas can be taught effectively outdoors.

Italy



From presentation given by Alessandro Bortolotti

The Italian school aimed to encourage innovative, creative and inclusive approaches to Outdoor Learning that are good for teachers' professional development. The main focus was inclusion and the school has many children with special needs.

The pedagogy of outdoor journeys developed as an outdoor learning approach by Simon Beames was central for the work at the Marano school. This is ensuring that outdoor trips and excursions taking place on a regular basis; they are low-cost activities; they are meaningful for the pupils as they enhance hands on learning and cross-curricular themes. The themes of outdoor journeys used different locations such as the cultural history of a local river going back to the Roman times.

Experiences from outdoor journey projects before the GOaL project

The journeys have become increasingly ambitious;

Pupils generating questions about their surroundings has been incorporated into the school's approach to teaching and learning;

Pupils' suggestions greatly contribute to the project's improvement;

Alliances between parents, the community, and the school are hugely important;

The inclusive, cross-age and cross-ability ethos is a key feature.

Outdoor Journey had a transformative effect, making teachers and pupils feel more like a community.

Pupils' Observations - first GOaL year

Pupils selection criteria: one from each class, some kind of "disability" and potential at the same time.

Working plan: to describe each selected pupil about his/her general situation, and within different settings (individual and team work, indoor and outdoor lessons)

Development of inclusive practices in OJ

The project had an impact on:

Motivation, peer to peer-cooperative learning, better relationships between the pupils and between the teachers and pupils.

The last year's suggestions from the Marano teachers

- Outdoor experiences should be offered to the many pupils who cannot have them
- Place affordances have a great educational value, e.g. hill hiking can be seen as an evocative metaphor of the learning/teaching process:
- To facilitate mastery learning, children should have opportunity to explore and learn through trial-and-error experiences
- In outdoor problem-solving situations, pupils' holistic "functioning" towards learning arise, both at an individual level (personal blocks and skills), and at a group level (socialization, fellowship, isolation)
- It is fundamental to share a common plan both for pupils and teacher

- Because of a potential loss of pupil control, out of doors teachers can sometimes feel uncomfortable, but these challenges can open horizons to teachers themselves, as well as to pupils.

In Italy the work on inclusion using Outdoor Learning practices has inspired other schools and Marano school is now a «beacon school» of the Italian OL School Network, Rete nazionale scuole statali all'aperto.

Belgium



Presentation given by Gorik van Helleputte and Danielle Cools

Outdoor Learning & National Curriculum: 'The playground'

'Freedom of education' – built on trust in professional expertise, grounded in common 'eindtermen' (End Goals)

Outdoor learning!

- no explicit reference is made in the curriculum
- some subjects suggest to use the outdoors
- schools use 'freedom of education' to go outdoors

Quality assurance ~ freedom education

Inspection = observed facts + contextualisation via dialogue

Result = report with specific advice

What did we do? 'The game played'

PRE-Project: what we could build on

Open minded team with a growing vision, open and transparant in their 'work in progress' Headteacher giving freedom and trust to team

Teachers with commitment, team spirit and a growth mindset

Outdoor learning inspired playground

Overview 3 year programme

- Year 1: playground OL activities -> focus on observing 'involvement' inside/outside (1 class)
- Year 2: 'place-based' & 'inquiry-based' learning -> introd. methodology (2X 2 classes)
- Year 3: 'place-based' & 'inquiry-based' learning -> observation and feedback (2X 2 classes)

Year 1 Playground OL activities - observing 'involvement' (1 class)

What the school did 'business as usual' -> regularly teaching parts of the curriculum outside

Focus on concept of 'outdoor games'

Use playground zones

What we did, HEI staff:

Observed 'involvement' indoors and outdoors

What we took along

- Involvement of pupils does not change because of going outdoors as such
- Involvement of pupils changes because going outdoors means a change of:
 - way of giving instructions
 - relationship teacher-child
 - children working in groups

- Games, fun, active involvement, ...
- For teachers going outdoors -> influences dynamics of involvement

Year 2:

‘place-based’ and ‘inquiry-based’ learning – introducing methodology (2X 2classes)

What the school did

- Try-out of 2 place-based ‘inquiry-based learning’ projects
- 2 different crossover classroom collaborations
- 2 different locations for ‘place-based learning’

What we did

- Initiate the try-out
- Facilitate behind the scenes:
 - based on needs formulated by teachers
 - based on observations made
- Collaborate in practice where extra help was needed

What we took along

- Growing trust in teacher’s expertise and self confidence
- in PBL in combo with IBL
- In working together with other classes
- Growing interest within school team for new approaches to learning
- Children were very motivated and engaged
- Teachers were positively surprised by their pupils' capabilities

Year 3 ‘place-based’ and ‘inquiry-based’ learning – observation and feedback (2X 2classes)

- What the school did
- Try-out of 2 place-based ‘inquiry-based learning’ projects

- 2 different crossover classroom collaborations
- 2 different locations for ‘place-based learning’
- What we did
- Initiate the try-out
- Collaborate where extra help was needed
- Observation of the school team
- Observation of the children

What we took along

- Growing enthusiasm for PBL/IBL in the whole school
- Our support of teachers is important for ‘self confidence’ of teacher (team)
- Growing self-confidence and self-management of children engaged for the second time

Lessons learned Belgium

A big growth throughout the three years -> facilitating factors:

- A supportive head teacher is key
- A small team is a pro
- No pressure of inspection
- New curriculum-design facilitated experiment
- Children get see outdoor learning as normal
- Playground design has positive impact
- External support gives momentum to professional self confidence

Norway



Presentation Kari Anne Jørgensen-Vittersø, Ingunn Fjørtoft, Ann Christin Ferrari Holme

National setting

- The Nordic Model of Education
- We have a national core curriculum
- Positive attitudes to taking children outdoors
- National projects on sustainability «The Sustainable Backpack» was an inspiration for further development of outdoor learning at Ormåsen school

Norwegian curriculum and learning outdoors

- Encourages use of the outdoors and inquiry based learning
- Outdoor learning has a strong connection to nature science and the theme outdoor life in physical education
- The local schools develop their own annual plans framed by the national curricula.

Cooperation and implementation Ormåsen

- The administration
- All teachers
- The pupils
- The parents
- The local municipality

Quality and learning outcomes

- National tests based on international test system
- Learning outcomes for the different subjects and basic skills
- Evaluation – process, product

- Lifelong learning and in depth learning

Outdoor Learning progress at Ormåsen School

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<p>Meeting international group GoAL Working with a project on sustainability, 'The Riddle of the Newths'</p> <p>Workshop with all teachers – to implement outdoor learning for all pupils using different subjects.</p> <p>Developing outdoor education practises and highlighted and developed further the 'Green arts and Crafts Project'</p> <p>Variation in evaluation methods</p>	<p>Green Arts and Craft Project presented at the midway conference Leuven Belgium</p> <p>New projects developed focus on - 'The miner and crofter project'</p> <p>Annual plans. Many parallel outdoor learning plans implemented and coordinated using the school ground, the local forest and cultural landscapes</p> <p>Example the bird and bees projects, math outdoors, language</p> <p>Norway GOAL Erasmus +</p>	<p>Continued - 'The miner and crofter project'</p> <p>Annual plans. Many parallel outdoor learning plans implemented and coordinated using the school ground, the local forest and cultural landscapes</p> <p>Implemented ideas from partner schools in the project</p> <p>The corona situation increased the use of outdoor learning practises Ormåsen had well developed resources ready in their local plans and staff that were trained to use the outdoors</p>

Fig. 5 Projects development Norwegian School

The school also developed annual plans for outdoor learning for all classes.

Achievement of international cooperation

- Learn about new ways of using environments – actualise affordances
- Inspiration to develop outdoor learning within different subjects and cross curricular themes
- Challenges in the use of digital platforms and the value of meetings
- Workshops with colleagues in an international network

Lessons learned from the GOaL project

- Affordances of the landscapes and importance of place
- Real life outside school
- Authentic learning situations

- Realistic learning
- Experiential learning
- Trying, Exploring, Experiencing
- Inquiring,
- Problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Literacy

Final Part: Guidelines for curricular based Outdoor Learning and Learning Outdoors

Achievements

- All schools have developed place-based and place-responsive practices. There are plans for outdoor learning in the schools and plans for places to develop and places to use. The schools have tested and developed examples of curricular outdoor learning.
- The universities have contact with teachers to identify good arenas for outdoor learning and support teachers in evaluating and implementing best practices.
- To consider diversity in local contexts and practice, to develop common understanding of values and concepts are all aspects of importance

The primary schools

- Project development was driven by a bottom–up strategy. The staff cooperated and actively developed outdoor learning based on their own local context, culture, curriculum and use of local landscapes. They all developed and shared good practices of outdoor learning.
- Place, time and cooperation matters

Cooperation HEI and primary schools

- The staff from the HEI institutions have contributed with knowledge, supervision and support

- There has been a learning process going both directions involving school staff, pupils and school leaders

International cooperation

The most important achievement is sharing

- Direct meetings were important
- Digital platforms afforded challenges and possibilities
- We could have wished for more contact between the pupils in the participating schools

For the future outdoor learning for 21st century skills

Results of the project point towards the importance of outdoor learning and teaching strategies for developing 21st century skills.

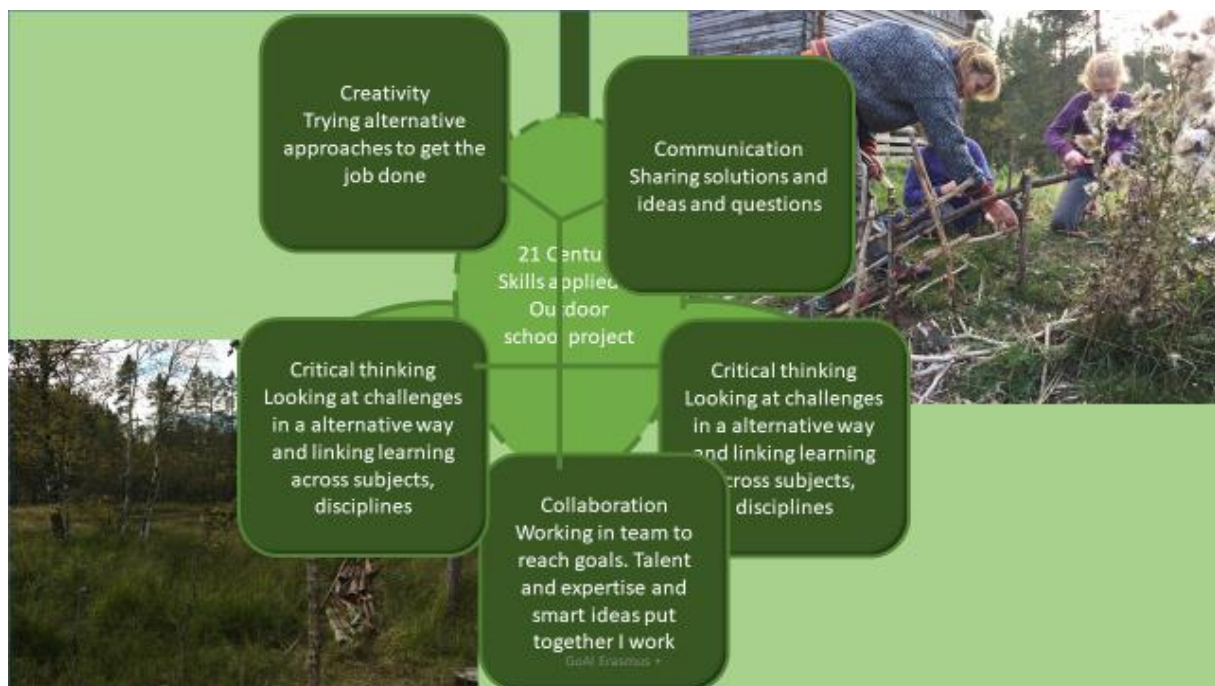


Fig.6 Towards 21st century skills

Final guidelines for curricular-based outdoor learning

Outdoor learning should take place outdoors using the environments from the three perspectives on place; ambivalent, sensitive and essential

Implementation of outdoor learning practices should be framed by the curriculum and developed in local contexts based on environmental affordances

Outdoor learning should be a part of the school's everyday practices, policy and curriculum

Outdoor learning needs to be inclusive and enhance outdoor learning possibilities for all children

All outdoor learning should include sustainable learning and enhance the implementation of UN goals for sustainable development and 21st century skills

These guidelines is recommendations for schools and stakeholders with an influence on development of educational policy.

We hope the experiences of the GOAL project will inspire schools and teachers to create their own outdoor learning activities, offering their children experiences that, although curriculum-based, provide far more in terms of socio-cultural and ecological learning.

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