

THE PEDAGOGICAL USE OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL LEARNING PLACES SURVEY: PRESENTATION OF AN INSTRUMENT

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Keywords: out-of-school learning; learning environment; informal learning

The study examines curriculum-based out-of-school lessons organized by public schools, which can be realized in wide variety of venues. Museums, science centres, zoos, libraries, botanical gardens or modern factories are especially suited to develop 21st century competencies (*Bentsen, Mygind and Randrup, 2009*), and the broadest possible involvement of out-of-schools spaces into formal education could be a solution to the well known problems of the Hungarian system of education (such as a steady decline in students' motivation and learning attitude or students' below average achievements in OECD-PISA surveys). Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of out-of-school learning in the learning process (e.g. *Eshach, 2007; Holmes, 2011; Tal and Morag, 2007*).

The main aim of the study is to determine how Hungarian public schools use opportunities provided by out-of school learning settings. Up to now, there has not been such research data available that would provide a comprehensive picture about the frequency and methods of including out-of-school learning environments in national public education. Therefore, a questionnaire was developed to explore (1) how often and in what form public schools rely on out-of school learning spaces and (2) what teachers' attitudes are toward the outdoor class visits or field trips in general. By mapping the use of outdoor places, regional practices may be identified and differences between schools in this aspect can be described. At present, there is no information on the purpose and frequency with which schools visit different learning spaces, nor on the kinds of learning methods dominating in these.

The national measurement consists of two inventories: The Use of Out-Of-School Learning Places Questionnaire (1) and Teachers' Attitudes toward Field Trips in General (2). The first is a device developed for the present purposes and consists of mainly selection items and four point Likert scale items. The second is a questionnaire adapted from *Orion* at *Hofstein (1994)*, which consist of 3 dimensions: (1) the field trip as a learning tool; (2) individualized learning as learning method during field trip; (3) the social aspect of field trips. Both questionnaires were sent to all Hungarian public schools.

With this data collection from a national sample we can get a general picture about the issue as a basis for further, more limited, efficiency assessment. This study is a very important stage in an out-of-school learning studies in Hungarian conditions, because the National Curriculum offers the involvement of outdoor spaces to schools and yet there is no empirical data in this research area.