

KA210-SMALL SCALE PARTNERSHIPS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION

FOR LIFE FOREST EDUCATION

INTERNATIONAL ON-LINE CONFERENCE

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PARTICIPANT: Ms Ornella Pegoraro (IT)

FOREST EDUCATION IN ITALY





ABOUT ME

ORNELLA PEGORARO

From Crotone (Calabria Region) South of Italy European projects and Erasmus+ coordinator

Teacher of English and trainer

Erasmus+Ambassador School/Adult

education sector-EPALE- Calabria Region

experience Erasmus+ expert evaluator

participant in LLP study visits on educational technologies

abroad(Turkey, England, France), in Erasmus+ and

eTwinning multilateral Seminars, EPALE events, visitor to

the European Parliament.



MY INSTITUTION

ISTITUTO DI ISTRUZIONE SUPERIORE “PERTINI – SANTONI”

is a State Upper Secondary School located in Crotona, Calabria Region, south of Italy. The school offers the following curricula:

- ARTS HIGH SCHOOL (Architecture and Environment, Visual Arts, Design)
- TECHNICAL INSTITUTE:

A) DEPARTMENT OF TECHNOLOGY (Graphics and Communication, Construction, Environment and Territory, evening courses for adults who have not completed high school.)

B) DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS (Tourism)

- VOCATIONAL SCHOOL – COMMERCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
(Business and Advertising); waters management and environmental restoration, Cultural and entertainment services)

STAFF: 168 teachers, 867 students (221 commuters, 71 SEN, 13 foreign students);

TECHNICIANS, CLERKS AND CARE-TAKING STAFF: 38



Furthermore, the school hosts

a Services Centre, a Territorial Support Centre for new technologies in the area of special needs.

The school has had experience in the field of European planning since 1993 and has developed several Erasmus KA201, KA219, KA229, KA102, Ka101 staff mobility. It has recently obtained Accreditation- School sector (KA120/121).

The school's mission is taking into account the process of deep innovation aimed at empowering teachers' in acquiring new methods of teaching and raising the levels of education and skills of the students. The school is very active in the field of inclusion, migrant education, prevention of early school leaving, digital education, foreign language teaching and learning.

The school has also an outstanding experience in the field of sustainability with the presence of its "Waters managements and environmental restoration" Department whose objectives are educating to the protection of the environment and finding the right techniques aimed at managing and controlling the waste-water. The Department has just developed (CLASS 3GA- grade 11 students- March 2022) an innovative project creating a model of a small wastewater treatment plant, aimed at removing the contaminants of urban or industrial origin from waste-water. Another project, including the planning of a model of a water purifier will be carried out very soon.



FOREST EDUCATION IN ITALY

“We need nature in our lives!”: this is what the European Commission stated in 2020 its EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, “to improve our psycho-physical health and that of the Planet” (European Commission, 2020).

Educating children in the great outdoors is not new.

“Forest schools,” as they are known, started in Denmark in the 1950s. Their presence has grown all over the world and are now becoming more popular also in Italy, historically much more conservative when it comes to education. In addition to private schools, even the public system is becoming aware of the advantages offered by outdoor education.

Recently, the experiences about outdoor education in schools have been gradually spreading in Italy. Despite a quite ancient history and a favourable climate in many areas of the country, outdoor education is not yet widespread and primarily limited to pre-school, often in the private sector.

To overcome this limitation, a pilot outdoor project was tested in a primary school to verify its effectiveness in terms of disciplinary and transversal skills development, using a variety of both quantitative and qualitative tools and procedures.



School sessions in the forest focused on Italian language contents were observed and questionnaires on school well-being, parallel school tests, and, for the second class, also the results of the Invalsi tests were analysed. Interesting data emerged, especially from a qualitative point of view, as already demonstrated by many studies carried out at the European level, regarding the support of learning processes. No significant results emerged from the point of view of the discipline in the classes involved in the project, above all due to the impossibility of guaranteeing children regular sessions in the forest.

FOREST SCHOOLS IN ITALY

The experiences of Forest Kindergartens in Italy are relatively recent but expanding, even more so after the recent Covid 19 pandemic. Forest Kindergarten is very popular in Northern Europe and now it is spreading to Italy too (where is called **Asilo in Bosco**).

This experience offers children educational activities in the open air.



A TYPICAL DAY IN “ASILO IN BOSCO”

A typical day in “Asilo nel Bosco” starts with the decision of the activities, that is done all together. The activities start after a short snack at 10 o’clock (there is no strict time for entrance, so as to give kids time to sleep or stay with their parents a little bit more, if possible). After the activities are over, the kids have lunch all together in the big open space used for eating.

The afternoon is the “leisure time” and it is time for each kid to do whatever they please: running, playing, sleeping, spending time on their own or in company, everyone is free to choose a playmate and an activity

It is a really useful and important moment for teachers to observe the children. Kids go back home in the afternoon with their parents.



OUTDOOR EDUCATION”

In Italy, there is currently an increasing number of primary and secondary schools interested in “**outdoor learning**” or “**outdoor education**” that have decided to carry out at least a part of their activities in the nature, outside the traditional classroom. Actually, the common use of the term Forest Kindergartens often refers more to a pedagogical idea of education for free play in nature than to a reference to the ecosystem in which the activities should take place. This explains why it is possible to find initiatives called Forest Kindergartens that do not actually carry out their activities in a forest but, for example, in an agricultural context (even if sometimes there are specifications, such as “Agri-kindergarten”).

At national level there are no specific regulations governing this type of experiential outdoor education. It is therefore easy to imagine that the lack of legislation encourages the heterogeneity of types of Forest Kindergartens in Italy. However, in application of the national Legislative Decree 65/2017, which targets 0-6 year old educational services, some Regions have adopted laws regulating these initiatives. This is the case of the Lazio and Veneto Regions, for example.

In Italy, there isn't any official national lists of Forest Kindergartens, although there are initiatives aimed at mapping these experiences on the national territory (for example, the one promoted by the project “The kindergarten in the forest”). The lack of a unique and shared definition makes it even more difficult to draw up official lists, since it is easier to simply group in a general category all the different educational experiences carried out in nature.



OUTDOOR SCHOOLS”

The majority of Forest Kindergartens in Italy are self-organised initiatives wanted and conceived by parents and educators, organised as associations and private schools, but there are also projects recognised by the Italian Ministry of National Education, such as experimental projects in public schools and family nurseries. The use of the forest also varies greatly from project to project. For some, it is the only space dedicated to educational activities where children and educators rely on independent structures such as tents, yurts or wooden prefabs (see “**la Yurta nel Bosco**” in Arona, Piedmont). In other cases, Kindergartens rely on structures such as public schools, agritourisms or farms (also with animals), gardens, environmental educational centres, rivers beaches and other natural environments that complement the forest or sometimes even replace it. In most cases, the forest is not used exclusively for Kindergarten activities.



“OUTDOOR SCHOOLS”

Excursions, workshops, environmental didactics, agricultural activities or activities to get closer to animals are just a few examples of the initiatives that take place in conjunction with those of the Forest Kindergartens. Recently, places designed for adults’ training are also springing up, such as the Wood Farm in Veneto region (**Fattoria del Legno**) which was conceived as an educational place mainly for adults, but where educational courses and activities are also offered for children and families. Activities for adults relating to forest life and forest management are taught through direct experience. After the recent Covid 19 pandemic and the increase in smart working possibilities, the Wood Farm proposes itself as the right place to choose for those who want a quiet, green space to work from via the web.



“OUTDOOR SCHOOLS”

Ostia, a small coastal town close to Rome, is home to one of Italy's first outdoor schools.

With a kindergarten and a primary school, from 2018 they started secondary school classes students, probably the only example in the country.

The public school of Sassetta, a small Tuscan mountain village, was on the verge of be shut down due to low enrollments. Since 2017 they started a special outdoor program, taking children into the forest twice a week. Parents approved the change and more children have been enrolled this year. “Our grandparents used to make a living from wood products,” says Donella. “Now the forest has saved our school.”



“BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN ATTENDING FOREST SCHOOLS”

- Positive impacts on young children in terms of confidence, social skills, language and communication, motivation and concentration, physical skills and knowledge and understanding.
- children who had significant, direct contact with the natural world were better able to deal with stresses in daily life compared to those who hadn't.
- developing this relationship with nature early on (the earlier the better), might not only bring about positive results for children's mental health but also impact their future, and how they act in relation to the environment.
- *Creating conditions for inclusivity*
The key point is to be “part of the nature” and allow the “nature to educate” developing physical motor skills, self-confidence and an emotional awareness in the natural world, thus contributing to the students' well-being.

We wish the government will soon have a clear regulation (laws) to manage this kind of schools to become really “public” in any city in Italy.



Thank you very much for your attention!

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