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BOOK 1 : EXPLORING OUTDOOR EDUCATION IN ROMANIA, CZECHIA, AND TURKEY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY FOR EDUCATORS

**FROM INSIDE OUT - LET'S GET OUTDOORS
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2022-2-CZ01-KA210-SCH-000094016

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Book 1 : Exploring Outdoor Education in Romania, Czechia, and Turkey: A Comparative Study for Educators

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Purpose of This Book

These books are the result of the 18-month Erasmus+ partnership From Inside Out - Let's Get Outdoors Together! 2022-2-CZ01-KA210-SCH-000094016 and they reflect our research work on what has been done in the partners' countries in terms of Outdoor education. We are three partners from Czechia, Romania and Turkey and during the project life-time we researched the previous work on Outdoor Learning in our countries and we also developed new activities for teaching Math, Science and English that are suitable for both outdoor learning and in-door learning.

We organized these books into three parts:

A Comparative Study on Outdoor Education in our three countries

A methodological introduction to Outdoor Education

Learning-teaching activities based on Outdoor Education for Math, Science and English

All partners (two schools and one SME) involved their staff in the production of these books and we have been supported by the Erasmus+ grant to carry our work and our joint activities in Prague, Istanbul and Bacau.



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Executive Summary

The first book is a comparative study of outdoor education practices across Romania, Czechia, and Turkey. Through a comparative study, we examine the historical development, key principles, challenges, and government policies influencing outdoor education in each country. Our findings not only highlight best practices but also detail practical recommendations for educators interested in integrating outdoor education into their curriculum.

In Romania, the integration of cultural heritage with natural education offers a unique perspective on building environmental education among students. Czechia's approach, deeply rooted in a long-standing tradition of environmental education, illustrates the impact of consistent government support and a robust curriculum that fosters a connection with the outdoors. Meanwhile, Turkey's evolving educational strategies reveal how modern influences and educational reforms are shaping its outdoor education framework.

This comparative analysis reveals diverse methodologies and the effectiveness of outdoor education in promoting physical well-being, environmental awareness, and essential life skills among students. By presenting these varied approaches, the book aims to show to educators how to adapt and innovate in their educational practices, considering their unique cultural and environmental contexts.

We included a detailed examination of each country's educational strategies, supplemented by case studies and examples where there have been successfully implemented outdoor education programs.



Introduction

Importance of Outdoor Education

Outdoor education plays an indispensable role in the holistic development of students, extending beyond traditional academic learning to encompass physical health, mental well-being, and social skills. This form of education goes beyond the classroom walls, providing a dynamic environment where students can engage directly with the natural world. The immersive nature of outdoor learning not only encourages physical activity but also enhances sensory and emotional experiences that are crucial for comprehensive growth. While writing this project, we were aware that our students who live in big urban areas are mostly deprived of the outdoor experience and they were spending most of their time indoors and on gadgets. The introduction of activities and lessons to be held outside would greatly impact the students' motivation to learn and emotional wellbeing.

The benefits of outdoor education include:



1. **Physical Health:** Engaging in outdoor activities such as hiking, climbing, and water sports improves cardiovascular health, builds muscle strength, and enhances motor skills. Regular exposure to outdoor settings also boosts immunity and has been shown to reduce symptoms of attention deficit disorders.
2. **Mental Well-being:** Nature has a profound calming effect, helping to reduce stress and anxiety. Activities conducted in natural settings can uplift spirits and improve mood, contributing significantly to emotional resilience and mental health.
3. **Environmental Awareness:** By spending time in nature, students develop a stronger appreciation for the environment, which is crucial in an age where ecological concerns are escalating. This connection fosters a sense of responsibility towards environmental stewardship and promotes sustainable lifestyle choices.
4. **Social Skills and Teamwork:** Outdoor education often involves team-oriented activities that require communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution. These experiences are invaluable in teaching students how to work collaboratively, solve problems together, and lead effectively.
5. **Personal and Social Responsibility:** Students learn to take responsibility for themselves and their peers in unpredictable environments, which helps build independence and ethical character. They also gain a deeper understanding of cultural and community impacts, which shapes their worldview and fosters a sense of global citizenship.

Moreover, outdoor education provides an excellent platform for experiential learning, where theoretical knowledge is applied in practical, real-world contexts. This approach to learning makes educational experiences more memorable and impactful, significantly enhancing retention and understanding.

By integrating outdoor education into the curriculum, schools can create more rounded individuals who are not only academically proficient but also equipped with essential life skills that are increasingly necessary in today's world. It also opens avenues for innovative teaching strategies that can make learning a more engaging, enjoyable, and meaningful process.



Purpose and Scope

The primary purpose of this comparative study is to meticulously explore and analyze the state of outdoor education across three diverse educational contexts: Romania, Czechia, and Turkey. Each of these countries offers a unique perspective on outdoor education, influenced by their distinct cultural, geographical, and historical factors. The study seeks to unearth the foundational principles that guide outdoor educational practices, the various approaches undertaken, and the prevalent challenges that educators and institutions face in each country.

Objectives:

1. **Identify Key Principles:** To delineate the core principles underpinning outdoor education programs in each country, examining how these principles align with broader educational goals and societal values.
2. **Analyze Approaches:** To compare and contrast the specific methods and educational strategies employed in Romania, Czechia, and Turkey, highlighting innovative practices and program designs that effectively engage students with the outdoors.
3. **Assess Challenges:** To identify common obstacles and country-specific challenges that hinder the implementation and growth of outdoor education, such as funding issues, policy constraints, and environmental factors.
4. **Promote Best Practices:** To extract and recommend effective practices and successful models from each country that could inspire and guide educators globally in integrating outdoor education into their curricula.

Scope: This chapter covers a broad spectrum of topics related to outdoor education, ranging from theoretical guidelines to practical implementations. The study is based on qualitative research, involving an analysis of academic articles, government publications, policy documents, and program reports from each country.

By examining these elements, the report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of outdoor education's current situation and offer recommendations for teachers. The ultimate goal is to promote a deeper understanding of how outdoor education can be tailored and optimized in various educational settings, therefore it will hopefully prove its effectiveness and accessibility for all students.



Methodology

Each partner researched the documents available in their own countries and wrote a report on their findings following the same points of interests: historical development, principles, local educational policies and case studies. This method allows for an in-depth understanding of the complex and nuanced aspects of outdoor education practices, which are often influenced by cultural, social, and environmental factors.

Data Collection:

1. **Document Analysis:** The backbone of our research is the analysis of a wide range of documents. This includes:
 - **Academic Articles:** Peer-reviewed articles that provide scholarly insights into outdoor education theories, practices, and outcomes.
 - **Government Publications:** Official documents and reports that outline policies, regulations, and support mechanisms provided by the government for outdoor education.
 - **Policy Documents:** Publications that detail specific educational policies impacting outdoor education, including curriculum guidelines and environmental education mandates.
 - **Case studies:** Descriptions or evaluations from existing outdoor education programs, providing practical insights into their operation, effectiveness, and areas for improvement.

Analysis Techniques:

- **Comparative Analysis:** By comparing data across the three countries, this study identifies best practices and challenges that are specific to each context as well as those that are common across settings. This analysis helps in understanding the variability and similarities in outdoor education practices.
- **Thematic Analysis:** Used to distil and categorize the information into themes related to the principles, approaches, and challenges of outdoor education. This facilitates a deeper understanding of the core aspects that make outdoor education successful and areas where it faces significant challenges.

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Limitations: This methodology focuses primarily on available documented sources and does not include primary empirical research such as interviews or on-site observations, which could provide additional layers of insight. The findings are interpreted within the scope of the data analyzed and are subject to the limitations inherent in qualitative analyses.





Outdoor Education in Czechia

Outdoor education in Czechia is not just a component of the academic curriculum but a cherished tradition, deeply ingrained in the nation's cultural and historical fabric. This section delves into the multifaceted nature of outdoor education in Czechia, exploring its historical roots, development, and the principles that have shaped its evolution over the decades.

In Czechia, outdoor education extends beyond mere educational activities—it is a pivotal element of holistic development, fostering a profound connection between individuals and their natural environment. From the early influences of pioneering educators to the modern-day practices supported by robust government policies, this exploration will highlight how Czechia has cultivated a unique approach to learning that emphasizes experiential, environmental, and community-driven education.

We will examine the challenges that have tested this educational practice, the opportunities that have allowed it to thrive, and the ongoing efforts to adapt it in response to contemporary needs. By considering together historical insights, policy analysis, and current practices, this section aims to provide a comprehensive overview of outdoor education in Czechia, showcasing its significance as a model for effective educational strategies worldwide.



Historical Context and Development

Outdoor education in Czechia boasts a rich tradition that dates back to the early 20th century, evolving significantly over the decades. This evolution reflects a deep-seated cultural appreciation for nature and a historical commitment to environmental education.

Early Beginnings:

- This teaching/learning method does not have a long history in our country. Although Czech prominent philosopher and educator Jan Ámos Komenský (1592-1670) influenced school and out-of-school education with his groundbreaking approach. He introduced new teaching methods, led his pupils to versatility, took them into nature and taught them to learn about fauna and flora. Among other things, he also emphasised the importance of travel and discovery and tried to apply education by experience.
- The foundations of outdoor education in Czechia were laid in the early 1900s when educators began to integrate nature-based learning into the school curriculum. This period saw the emergence of movements aimed at connecting children with their natural surroundings for both educational and health benefits (Martin et al., 2019).



- After World War II, the importance of outdoor education grew, influenced by broader educational reforms. During this time, figures like Jan Neuman and Lucie Kalkusová championed the cause, developing programs that emphasized experiential learning and a direct engagement with the environment (Neuman et al., 2020).

Government Integration:

- The mid-20th century marked a pivotal moment when the Czech government began formalizing outdoor education within the national curriculum. This was facilitated by legislation and educational policies that provided necessary resources and support, fostering a nationwide implementation of outdoor educational programs (Ministry of Environment, 2018).

Contemporary Developments:

- The Czech Ministry of education recommended outdoor learning to elementary schools during the pandemic period to limit spreading Covid. The Ministry of Education issued a Methodological Recommendation for Distance Education - it recommended learning outdoors, which, according to the promoters of this method of teaching, is more beneficial for both children and teachers. Teachers realised the outdoor learning positives.
- Today, outdoor education in Czechia continues to thrive, supported by a blend of traditional approaches and modern pedagogical practices. The government remains a strong proponent, with ongoing initiatives aimed at enhancing environmental education across all levels of schooling (Turčová et al., 2020).
- The popularity of outdoor education has been growing in the Czech Republic in recent years. The status of outdoor education therefore deserves more attention because as the use of outdoor education increases, so does its impact on the educational process. Outdoor education in Czech primary schools is based on the tradition of using the school surroundings and school gardens. Its roots go back to the 19th century. Currently, it is mostly implemented on a short-term and rather occasional basis. Most schools have a school garden and use it at least partly for outdoor education. Schools have included excursions, walks, fieldwork, school trips, sports courses, outdoor schools, adaptation courses and project-based learning in their curriculum documents. Environmental education centres are now having a rapidly growing influence on the shape and scope of outdoor education in our country. They focus on the implementation of programmes for schools, teacher



training and development, and contribute significantly to the expansion of outdoor forms of learning.

- Key role in outdoor education in the Czech Republic plays the Education centre TEREZA.
TEREZA has been at the forefront of environmental and sustainability education in Czechia for a couple of decades.
 - They started with grazing 3 goats, 17 sheep and hands-on protection of the Prokopské Valley in Prague in 1979. Today, they educate over 180,000 children and collaborate with over 1200 schools and 11,000 parents all across our country.
 - They focus on long-term environmental education programs for schools, teachers and parents and help them empower children to enjoy nature, learn in natural environments, use inquiry-based approaches in science and develop environmental action competence for responsible citizenship.

Key Principles and Approaches

Common features can be identified in current methodological documents on outdoor education. The methodological materials lead to outdoor education, which carries elements of open education in the sense of strengthening the role of the teacher as a partner and guide of the pupil through active learning and emphasises the need for an active role of the pupil in the educational process. Constructivist frameworks and inquiry-based approaches are characteristic of the current direction of outdoor education. The benefits of cooperative learning and awakening environmental responsibility are highlighted. Current concepts of outdoor education largely fulfil the concepts of holistic learning.

Outdoor education in Czechia is underpinned by several core principles that not only reflect its rich educational traditions but also align with contemporary educational needs and environmental priorities. These principles are implemented through a variety of innovative approaches that make outdoor learning both effective and engaging.

Experiential Learning:

- Central to Czech outdoor education is the concept of experiential learning, where students are not mere passive recipients of information but active participants in their learning processes. This method fosters deeper understanding and retention by involving students in hands-on activities that include exploration, experimentation, and reflection (Neuman et al., 2020).



Environmental Stewardship:

- A significant emphasis is placed on fostering a sense of responsibility towards the environment. Educational programs are designed to enhance students' awareness of environmental issues and cultivate attitudes and behaviors that support sustainable living. This is achieved through activities that teach conservation, biodiversity, and the impacts of human activities on natural settings (Ministry of Environment, 2018).

Community Engagement:

- Outdoor education programs often involve community projects that encourage students to engage with their local environments and communities. These projects may include community gardening, local clean-ups, and ecological monitoring, which help build community ties and instill a sense of civic duty (Turčová et al., 2020).

Inclusivity and Accessibility:

- Ensuring that outdoor education is inclusive and accessible to all students, regardless of their background or abilities, is a key goal. Programs are tailored to accommodate diverse learning needs and to provide all students with equal opportunities to participate and benefit from outdoor experiences.

Interdisciplinary Approach:

- The integration of various disciplines is also a hallmark of Czech outdoor education. Programs are not limited to environmental science but include elements of history, geography, art, and physical education, creating a holistic educational experience that connects different areas of knowledge through outdoor activities.

We would like to introduce Mr Hejny teaching methods as they are being adopted by many primary schools in our country for their positive effect on the pupils' attitude to learning.

- It is a non-traditional way of teaching mathematics. It is scheme-oriented education. This method has been adopted by more than 750 of the 4 100 Czechs schools on the primary and lower-secondary level.
- The Hejny method is also being implemented in a range of alternative schools and in home-schooling. The method has raised interest in Italy, Finland, Sweden, Greece, Poland (where a textbook series is about to be published), and Canada. The Czech edition of textbooks for primary schools



has been approved by the Czech Ministry of Education. The method is introduced to pre-service teachers studying in primary education programs at the Charles University in Prague and at the University of Ostrava.

- The Hejny method is based on respecting 12 key principles that make up a comprehensive concept that allows children to discover mathematics on their own and with pleasure. It builds on 40 years of experimental work and puts into practice historical notions that have been occurring throughout the history of mathematics since the time of Ancient Egypt.
 - 1. CHILDREN KNOW MORE THAN WE HAVE TAUGHT THEM
 - 2. LEARNING THROUGH REPEATED VISITS (LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IS IMPORTANT)
 - 3. INTERLINKING TOPICS
 - 4. SUPPORTING THE CHILD'S INDEPENDENT THINKING
 - 5. CHILDREN FIND THE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS THANKS TO THEIR OWN EFFORTS.
 - 6. REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCE
 - 7. THE MOST EFFECTIVE MOTIVATION DERIVES FROM CHILD'S FEELING SUCCESS
 - 8. PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OUTWEIGHS RECEIVED KNOWLEDGE
 - 9. THE TEACHER'S ROLE IS DIFFERENT, HE/SHE IS AN ADVISER
 - 10. USING ERROR AS A MEAN OF LEARNING
 - 11. APPROPRIATE TASKS FOR EACH CHILD AT THEIR LEVEL
 - 12. SUPPORTING COLLABORATION



Challenges and Barriers

While outdoor education in Czechia has a strong foundation and broad support, it faces several challenges and barriers that can impede its effectiveness and expansion. Understanding these hurdles is crucial for devising strategies to overcome them and enhance the quality and reach of outdoor educational programs.

Limited Funding and Resources:

- One of the most significant challenges is the inconsistent funding and limited resources allocated to outdoor education. While some regions may benefit from well-funded programs, others struggle to maintain basic activities due to budget constraints. This disparity can lead to unequal educational opportunities across different areas (Ministry of Environment, 2018).

Urbanization and Access to Natural Spaces:

- As urban areas expand, access to natural spaces becomes more limited. This urbanization not only restricts the availability of suitable locations for outdoor education but also means that students in urban settings have fewer opportunities to engage with the natural environment (Turčová et al., 2020).

Weather Dependency:

- The effectiveness of outdoor education programs in Czechia is often hampered by the country's variable weather conditions. Activities need to be flexible and adaptable to sudden weather changes, which can disrupt planned events and limit the consistency of outdoor learning experiences.

Training and Professional Development:

- There is a continuing need for professional development for educators who lead outdoor education programs. Adequate training is essential for ensuring that teachers are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively deliver these programs and manage the unique challenges of outdoor settings (Neuman et al., 2020).

Public Perception and Value:

- Despite the proven benefits of outdoor education, there can be a lack of understanding or appreciation of its value among parents, school administrators,

and policymakers. This perception can affect funding decisions and the prioritization of outdoor education within the broader educational system.



Government Policies and Support

- There are three types of school education in the Czech Republic:
 - kindergarten (age 3 to 6 years), last year is compulsory
 - primary school (lower /1st - 5th grade/ and upper level /6th - 9th grade/) => general education (compulsory)
 - secondary schools divided into:
 - general education (no professional experience)
 - professional education as vocational schools with the graduate exam or apprenticeship (professional experience during the school attendance)



- The General Education Programme (GEP) is a compulsory document determined by the government. Every school in the Czech Republic is supposed to create its own School Education Programme (SEP) which comes from GEP and describes the whole concept of education at the particular school (each subject of learning individually and the overall focus of education at the school). A detailed schedule of lessons is based on the SEP.
- GEP for the primary schools is unified but for the secondary schools they might differ, according to the type of school. For example, a school with a general education will teach more science than the vocational school.
- There are no guidelines regarding outdoor education in the GEP. It means - it is up to each school/teacher - they can integrate the outdoor education into the curriculum but it must be under the terms of GEP and in accordance with the GEP time schedule.

Government policies play a crucial role in shaping the landscape of outdoor education in Czechia. Over the years, a series of initiatives and legislative actions have been implemented to promote and sustain outdoor educational programs. These policies not only reflect the government's commitment to environmental education but also aim to integrate these practices into the broader educational system.

Legislative Framework:

- The Czech government has established a strong legislative framework that supports environmental and outdoor education. This includes laws that mandate environmental education as part of the school curriculum, ensuring that all students receive exposure to this vital subject. The Ministry of Environment's publication details specific policies that facilitate the integration of outdoor activities into educational programs across the country (Ministry of Environment, 2018).

Funding and Grants:

- To support the implementation of outdoor education, the government provides funding and grants to schools and non-governmental organizations. These funds are intended to develop new programs, maintain existing ones, and cover the costs associated with outdoor learning activities, such as equipment and transportation. However, as noted in earlier sections, funding can be uneven, affecting the consistency and quality of outdoor education programs across different regions.



Professional Development Programs:

- Recognizing the importance of skilled educators in delivering effective outdoor education, the government has also invested in professional development programs. These initiatives are designed to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to conduct outdoor learning activities safely and effectively (Neuman et al., 2020).

Collaborative Projects:

- The Czech government often collaborates with environmental organizations and educational institutions to promote outdoor education. These partnerships help to expand the reach of outdoor programs and ensure they are grounded in up-to-date environmental science and pedagogical methods (Turčová et al., 2020).

Challenges and Future Directions:

- Despite these supportive measures, challenges remain, such as ensuring consistent application and funding across all regions. Future policies could focus on addressing these disparities and further enhancing the infrastructure to support outdoor education, making it an integral part of all students' educational experiences.
- Teachers and schools embarking on the path of outdoor learning have to overcome a number of organisational, methodological and legislative obstacles. For example, time-consuming lesson composing is exhausting work for many teachers, and natural material collecting is difficult to carry out especially in big towns. The lack of methodological materials can cause a problem to schools and also their price can exceed school budgets.
- Another problem is the Czech legislation laying down that for a group of 30 pupils, which is a common size of a Czech class, there must be at least two people ensuring the children's safety and health in case these pupils leave the school building.
- Private agencies are the main driving force in the promotion of outdoor education in the Czech Republic. The agencies, with the support of the Ministry of Education, started their activities during the pandemic. At this time, outdoor education was strongly promoted by the government to curb the pandemic. These agencies focus on primary education. There are tutorials, videos or lesson plans for outdoor education available on their websites. However, some of the materials and programs are chargeable.



- Currently, outdoor education happens mainly in primary schools and primary school graduates who have gone through this type of education move on to secondary schools. It is then up to secondary education institutions to take advantage of this fact and adopt the already established practice of some primary schools. The main burden of implementing outdoor education is then on the management of these schools, who have to cope with funding and compliance with the GEP.

Case Studies/Examples

1. Eco-Schools Program

Eco-Schools is the world's largest sustainable schools program reaching over 59,000 schools in 68 countries. For a quarter of a century, Eco-Schools have been engaging young people in taking positive actions that transform their schools, their lives and their communities.

In Eco-Schools students with teachers make sustainability a true priority, which is not just taught about, but which is interwoven to school every day operation. They survey their school from „floor to ceiling“, from school grounds to school canteen and examine what can be improved in themes of waste, energy, water, transport, food, biodiversity or climate change. What they start with at schools, they often continue in their homes and local communities.

TEREZA is the national operator of the Eco-schools Program in the Czech Republic:

- 399 Eco-Schools in the Czech Republic
- 35 certified mentors and consultants to support teachers and students
- 60,000 students involved
- 176 schools won international Green Flag Award
- 15 years of the Eco-Schools Program
- Video about the Eco-Schools Program (in Czech):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqQCJ0lTHCM&feature=emb_logo

For more information see Eco-Schools international webpage: www.ecoschools.global



2. Learning about Forests (LEAF) Program

To deepen students' understanding and appreciation of the natural world, it is essential that learning takes place outdoors and is based on observation and experience. While the focus of the international LEAF program is on tree-based ecosystems, the skills and knowledge acquired can be applied to any natural environment.

TEREZA wants children to see the forest as a safe and exciting place that can be explored by all senses. They experience the trees, herbs, fungi, animals of our most widespread ecosystem and their interconnection personally, which helps to get them involved in its protection.

TEREZA motivates teachers to teach in the woods. To make it easier for them TEREZA prepares methodologies and lesson plans using active learning pedagogies, carefully tailored to each grade of elementary schools.

TEREZA is the national operator of the Learning about Forests Program in the Czech Republic:

- 408 LEAF schools in the Czech Republic
- 16,000 students involved
- Curriculum and lesson plans for K-12 grades 1 to 9 (it means primary school)

For more information see LEAF international webpage: www.leaf.global

3. We Learn Outdoors Program

TEREZA helps to teach outdoors and make education natural again.

Outdoor education is a powerful tool with a large array of educational, social and health benefits. It enhances the well-being of both students and teachers, boosts attention and academic results, makes learning valuable experience, improves class behavior and develops environmental sensitivity – to name just a few.

TEREZA has formed a coalition of Czech NGOs to advocate learning in natural environments in formal education settings and provide a nation-wide comprehensive support and inspiration for teachers on their way out of the classrooms.

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In particular through the program they:

- Prepare textbooks and lesson plans for outdoor education in various subjects,
- Make video tutorials on how to teach outdoors and make tools for it on your own,
- Organise trainings, webinars and campaigns how to support children's outdoor time,
- Have published a book *Secrets of School Behind School* summarising vast international research on outdoor education,
- Educate teachers in long-term online courses (over 3,000 participants just in 2020),
- Share ideas and advice on social networks (Facebook, Instagram),
- Form a community of active teachers and parents who teach outside (Facebook group).

JULIET ROBERTSON, an outdoor lecturer and author of the book *Dirty Teaching* said about TEREZA: "Lessons in Grass offer really creative outdoor approaches to learning for the primary sector. The organisation is a subset of the mighty TEREZA - one of the most established Environmental Education charities in the Czech Republic." For details see We Learn Outdoors webpage: <https://lessonsingrass.com/>



Outdoor Education in Turkey

In recent years, Turkey has seen a significant development of outdoor education as an integral component of its educational system. There has been a lot of research on this and many academics researched about the benefits of outdoor education in different educational contexts, as can be noticed in our bibliography section. This perspective on education recognizes the immense benefits that learning in natural settings offers—ranging from physical health to emotional and social development. The introduction of outdoor education in Turkey reflects a broader global trend that values experiential learning, environmental awareness, and the holistic development of students.

Historical Context and Development

Outdoor learning is often considered a significant component of environmental education. While environmental education encompasses a broader range of topics related to understanding, appreciating, and addressing environmental issues, outdoor learning focuses specifically on educational experiences that occur in outdoor or natural settings.



Outdoor learning can be seen as a practical and experiential approach within the realm of environmental education.

Environmental education in Turkey has witnessed significant developments from the 1960s to the present time, reflecting both global environmental concerns and national efforts to address environmental issues. Here are some highlights to set the historical background of Outdoor Learning in Turkey.

1960s-1970s: Emergence of Environmental Awareness In the 1960s and 1970s, Turkey, like many other nations, began to witness a growing awareness of environmental issues. During this period, various movements, both domestically and internationally, spurred environmental consciousness. (Tuncer & Erol, 2023)

1980s-1990s: Early Efforts in Environmental Education The 1980s marked the beginning of formal environmental education in Turkey. Initiatives to incorporate environmental topics into school curricula began to gain traction. This era saw the introduction of environmental content into educational materials, focusing on topics such as ecology and conservation. (Tuncer & Erol, 2023)

1990s-Present: Integration into Formal Education Throughout the 1990s and into the present day, Turkey has made substantial progress in integrating environmental education in formal schools. This period saw the development of environmental education programs and curricula, aimed at instilling environmental awareness, sustainability, and conservation values in students. (Tuncer & Erol, 2023)

Current trends: Unlike the well-established traditions seen in some European countries, outdoor education in Turkey is a relatively new phenomenon. It has gained momentum due to increasing recognition of its benefits in fostering critical thinking, creativity, and a deep-rooted connection to the environment among students.

Cultural and Geographical Influence: Turkey's diverse landscapes—from its vast coastlines to its rugged mountains and rolling plains—provide an ideal backdrop for outdoor educational activities. These geographical features are not just venues for learning but are integral teaching tools that educators use to impart lessons on ecology, geography, and history.

Educational Policies and Initiatives: The Turkish government and educational authorities have begun to implement policies and initiatives that integrate outdoor learning into the national curriculum. These efforts are supported by collaborations with



environmental NGOs and educational organizations, aiming to develop structured programs that can be replicated across various educational levels.

Purpose of This Section: This section will explore the historical context, key principles, government policies, and the unique challenges faced in implementing outdoor education in Turkey. By examining these aspects, we aim to provide insights into how outdoor education can be optimized and tailored to meet the educational needs and cultural specifics of Turkish society.

Historical Context and Development

Outdoor education in Turkey, while not as deeply entrenched as in some European countries, has experienced significant growth over the past few decades. This development reflects a broader shift in educational philosophy within the country, driven by global influences and a growing recognition of the benefits of experiential learning.

Early Beginnings: The roots of outdoor education in Turkey can be traced back to the late 20th century, with initial efforts focused primarily on environmental education as part of broader educational reforms. These early initiatives were often localized and sporadic, driven by individual educators and NGOs rather than by a cohesive national strategy (Aydın & Yıldız, 2011).

Growth and Expansion: The 1990s and 2000s marked a period of expansion for outdoor education in Turkey, coinciding with global trends that emphasized sustainable development and environmental awareness. During this time, Turkey began to incorporate outdoor learning into its national curriculum, particularly at the early childhood and primary education levels. This period also saw the establishment of nature camps and environmental clubs aimed at providing students with direct experiences in natural settings (Tüfekçi & Gül, 2021).

Government Involvement: The Turkish government's involvement in outdoor education became more pronounced in the early 21st century. Educational policies started to reflect a commitment to integrating environmental education within schools, and outdoor education became a recognized component of holistic educational practices. This shift was supported by collaborations with international organizations and environmental NGOs, which provided resources and expertise to help develop structured outdoor education programs (Aydın & Yıldız, 2011).

Cultural and Regional Influences: Turkey's diverse cultural and geographical landscape plays a significant role in shaping its outdoor education practices. The country's rich natural heritage, including its extensive coastlines, forests, and mountains, provides a unique environment for outdoor learning. Educators have leveraged these landscapes to teach a range of subjects, from environmental science to history, emphasizing the interconnectedness of natural and cultural heritage (Tüfekçi & Gül, 2021).

Contemporary Developments: Today, outdoor education in Turkey continues to evolve, with increasing emphasis on sustainability and environmental stewardship. Modern programs often integrate outdoor learning with other educational initiatives, such as STEM education, to provide students with a well-rounded educational experience that prepares them for the challenges of the 21st century (Aydın & Yıldız, 2011).



Key Principles and Approaches

Outdoor education in Turkey is based on several core principles and pedagogical approaches that reflect the country's unique cultural and environmental context. While there may not be a single universally accepted framework, a synthesis of principles and approaches can be derived from the cited literature.



There is a distinction between the principles and the approaches that make the Outdoor Education. The principles are the fundamental beliefs and guiding values that support outdoor education. They provide the philosophical and conceptual framework for outdoor education programs. For example, principles may include experiential learning, environmental connection, holistic development, and cultural relevance.

The approaches to Outdoor Learning are the practical strategies, methodologies, and instructional techniques used to apply the principles in outdoor education settings. Approaches guide the design and implementation of outdoor learning experiences. For example, approaches may encompass experiential learning activities, inquiry-based instruction, place-based education, and collaborative learning methods. Approaches to implementing a principle might include activities such as nature hikes, field investigations, hands-on experiments, wilderness expeditions, and reflective journaling. These approaches put the principle into action by creating specific learning opportunities that engage participants in direct experiences.

Outdoor education in Turkey is guided by a set of core principles that reflect the country's unique cultural context and educational priorities. These principles are implemented through a variety of approaches that aim to engage students with their natural environment, foster a sense of responsibility, and promote holistic development.

Experiential Learning:

- At the heart of outdoor education in Turkey is the principle of experiential learning, where students learn through direct interaction with their environment. This approach is particularly effective in Turkey, where the diverse natural landscapes provide rich, hands-on learning experiences. Programs often include activities like nature walks, camping, and environmental observation, which help students develop practical skills and a deeper understanding of ecological systems (Tüfekçi & Gül, 2021).

Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability:

- A key focus of outdoor education in Turkey is fostering environmental stewardship and promoting sustainable living. Educational programs emphasize the importance of conserving natural resources, protecting biodiversity, and understanding the impacts of human activities on the environment. This is achieved through projects such as school gardens, recycling initiatives, and local conservation efforts that involve students in real-world environmental issues (Aydın & Yıldız, 2011).



Cultural Integration:

- Outdoor education in Turkey often integrates cultural heritage with environmental education. Given Turkey's rich historical and cultural landscape, educators use outdoor settings to teach students about their cultural heritage, linking lessons on history and geography with the natural environment. This approach not only enhances students' understanding of their cultural identity but also reinforces the connection between nature and culture (Tüfekçi & Gül, 2021).

Community and Social Responsibility:

- Turkish outdoor education programs frequently emphasize the importance of community involvement and social responsibility. Activities are designed to encourage teamwork, leadership, and a sense of civic duty. For example, students may participate in community service projects, environmental clean-ups, or collaborative efforts with local organizations, helping to strengthen their ties to the community while learning valuable life skills (Aydın & Yıldız, 2011).

Interdisciplinary Learning:

- Another key approach in Turkish outdoor education is the integration of multiple disciplines into outdoor activities. This interdisciplinary approach combines elements of science, art, history, and physical education, providing students with a comprehensive learning experience that connects different areas of knowledge. For instance, a single outdoor activity might include elements of biology (studying plant life), geography (understanding the landscape), and history (learning about the historical significance of the location) (Tüfekçi & Gül, 2021).

There are several unique philosophies and methodologies associated with outdoor education in Turkey that can be discerned in comparison to the general principles of outdoor learning. These distinctive approaches highlight the cultural and contextual considerations of outdoor education in Turkey:

- **Ecopedagogy and Ecological Dynamics Model:** Okur-Berberoğlu's work introduces the concepts of "Ecopedagogy" and the "Ecological Dynamics Model" in outdoor experiential education. This approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals with their natural environment and focuses on the affective domain of learning, including emotional and attitudinal aspects (Okur-Berberoğlu, 2017c). This perspective places a strong emphasis on fostering



emotional connections with nature, which may be more pronounced in Turkish outdoor education compared to some other contexts.

- **Forest School Applications:** Özlem Dilek's case study on forest school applications in Turkey (2020) explores the use of natural outdoor environments as a learning space for preschool children. This approach aligns with international forest school methodologies, emphasizing child-led, nature-based learning experiences. It reflects a growing interest in early childhood outdoor education in Turkey and aligns with the broader principles of experiential and place-based learning.
- **Impact on Ecological Perception:** Mert's research (2016) investigates the impact of participating in recreational outdoor sports on ecological perception in Turkey. This study demonstrates a focus on assessing the influence of outdoor experiences on individuals' perceptions of the environment. This perspective suggests an interest in understanding the cognitive and perceptual shifts resulting from outdoor education.
- **Adult-Centered Intervention for the Affective Domain:** Okur-Berberoglu's research (2017) introduces an "adult-centered intervention for the affective domain" in outdoor experiential environmental education. This approach recognizes that outdoor education is not limited to children but can also be highly effective for adults in promoting environmental awareness and emotional connections to nature.
- **Local Context in Outdoor Environmental Education:** Ozdilek et al.'s work (2011) discusses an outdoor environmental education project realized in Canakkale, Turkey, highlighting the significance of considering the local context and content in outdoor education initiatives. This approach aligns with place-based education principles, emphasizing the integration of the unique characteristics of the region into educational content.

While these unique philosophies and methodologies are discernible in the Turkish context, it's important to note that they often align with, and may even extend, the general principles of outdoor learning. These approaches reflect Turkey's specific cultural, environmental, and educational context, offering insights into the diverse landscape of outdoor education practices worldwide.



Challenges and Barriers

While outdoor education in Turkey has gained momentum in recent years, it faces several challenges and barriers that can limit its effectiveness and reach. These obstacles highlight the complexities of integrating outdoor learning into the broader educational framework and the need for targeted solutions to ensure its sustainable development.

Limited Access to Natural Spaces: One of the primary challenges in Turkey is the limited access to natural spaces, particularly in urban areas. Rapid urbanization has led to the reduction of green spaces, making it difficult for schools in cities to implement outdoor education programs effectively. This disparity in access means that students in rural areas often have more opportunities for outdoor learning than their urban counterparts (Tüfekçi & Gül, 2021).

Inconsistent Funding and Resources: Outdoor education programs in Turkey often suffer from inconsistent funding and a lack of resources. While some schools and regions receive adequate support, others struggle to maintain basic outdoor activities due to budget constraints. This inconsistency can result in unequal opportunities for students across different regions, limiting the overall impact of outdoor education (Aydın & Yıldız, 2011).

Weather-Related Challenges: Turkey's diverse climate presents another challenge for outdoor education. In some regions, extreme weather conditions—such as hot summers in the south or cold winters in the east—can limit the time students spend outdoors. Schools must be adaptable, often requiring alternative indoor activities or flexible scheduling to accommodate weather-related disruptions (Aydın & Yıldız, 2011).

Lack of Professional Training: Another significant barrier is the lack of professional training for educators in outdoor education. Many teachers have limited experience or training in conducting outdoor activities, which can affect the quality and safety of these programs. There is a need for more professional development opportunities and specialized training programs to equip educators with the skills necessary to lead effective outdoor education sessions (Tüfekçi & Gül, 2021).

Public Perception and Awareness: Despite growing awareness, there is still a lack of understanding and appreciation of the benefits of outdoor education among some parents, school administrators, and policymakers. This can result in insufficient support for outdoor programs, both in terms of funding and policy prioritization. Overcoming this barrier requires ongoing advocacy and education about the value of outdoor learning (Aydın & Yıldız, 2011).



Government Policies and Support

The Turkish government's role in supporting and promoting outdoor education has grown significantly in recent years. Through various policies and initiatives, the government has begun to recognize the importance of outdoor education as a means to enhance student learning, promote environmental stewardship, and address broader educational goals.

Legislative Framework:

- The integration of outdoor education into the Turkish educational system has been facilitated by a series of educational reforms aimed at modernizing the curriculum and aligning it with global educational standards. These reforms include mandates for environmental education, which often incorporate outdoor learning activities. The government's commitment is evident in the inclusion of outdoor education principles within the national curriculum, particularly at the early childhood and primary education levels (Aydın & Yıldız, 2011).
- The government of Turkey recognized the importance of environmental education as part of its commitment to environmental protection. Various legislative measures and policy frameworks were put in place to support environmental education efforts. These legal instruments emphasized the significance of environmental education in addressing pressing environmental challenges. (Tuncer & Erol, 2023)
- **Outdoor Education and Experiential Learning** In the context of environmental education, outdoor education and experiential learning have played a significant role. Students are increasingly encouraged to engage in outdoor activities and field trips to connect with nature and deepen their understanding of environmental issues. (Tuncer & Erol, 2023)

Funding and Resources:

- To support the implementation of outdoor education, the Turkish government has provided funding through various educational grants and programs. These funds are directed towards the development of outdoor facilities, teacher training, and the creation of educational materials that promote outdoor learning. However, as discussed earlier, the distribution of these resources can be uneven, with some regions receiving more support than others (Tüfekçi & Gül, 2021).

Professional Development Initiatives:



- Recognizing the need for skilled educators in outdoor education, the government has also launched professional development initiatives aimed at training teachers in outdoor pedagogical methods. These programs are designed to equip educators with the necessary skills to conduct safe and effective outdoor activities, ensuring that students can fully benefit from outdoor learning experiences (Aydın & Yıldız, 2011).

Collaborative Efforts:

- The Turkish government often collaborates with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international bodies to enhance outdoor education programs. These partnerships have been instrumental in bringing in expertise, resources, and best practices from other countries, helping to enrich Turkey's outdoor education landscape. Such collaborations also include environmental awareness campaigns that involve schools and communities in conservation efforts (Tüfekçi & Gül, 2021).

Challenges in Policy Implementation:

Despite the progress made, Turkey faces ongoing challenges related to environmental degradation, pollution, and habitat loss. These challenges underscore the importance of continuous efforts in environmental education, including outdoor and experiential learning, to nurture a generation of environmentally conscious citizens who can contribute to sustainable practices and conservation. (Tuncer & Erol, 2023)

The article "Opinions of Prospective Biology Teachers about 'Outdoor Learning Environments': The Case of Museum Visit and Scientific Field Trip" (Uzel, 2020) explores the perspectives of prospective biology teachers regarding the effective utilization of outdoor learning environments, particularly museum visits and scientific field trips. This article explores the challenges of implementing Outdoor Activities, rather than that of the Outdoor Learning as a method of teaching.

Semiz (2021) notices that an education policy regarding outdoor education has not yet been developed in Turkey.

Tuncer and Erol noticed that there are a lot of programmes for Environmental Education at the university level: 'Today, there are 28 universities and 22 environmental research centers in Turkey. There are 11 environmental engineering departments which began 15 years ago. There are more than 2000 environmental engineers in Turkey.' In Turkey, fields



related to environmental concerns encompass various disciplines such as architectural planning, select engineering branches (construction, chemistry, physics, etc.), sociology, economics, biology, and geography. In recent years, the establishment of the Department of Environmental Engineering has introduced a new professional field known as environmental engineering. Additionally, within medical faculties, there are specialized areas like Environmental Health, Public Health, and Medicine.

Regarding the content of environmental education, there is a lack of a standardized approach. Environmental education would greatly benefit from a universally accepted definition, as diverse interpretations exist.

The challenges that can be managed through thorough planning are:

Trip Planning and Content: Prospective biology teachers emphasized the importance of well-structured trip plans, including the determination of trip content and effective time management. They highlighted the significance of providing detailed information before the trip and focusing on observation and investigation during the outdoor learning experience.

- **Time Management:** Time management was considered a critical aspect of outdoor trips. Prospective teachers mentioned the importance of allowing free time during museum visits and carefully selecting the timing for field trips, aligning it with the trip's content.
- **Expert Guidance:** Similar to the findings of other studies, prospective teachers in this study advocated for the presence of an expert guide during outdoor trips. They believed that expert guidance enhanced the quality of the learning experience.
- **Permanence of Learning:** Prospective teachers recognized the value of outdoor trips in terms of the permanence of course information. They found that students retained knowledge more effectively when gained through experiential learning in real-world settings.
- **Social and Personal Development:** Beyond academic benefits, outdoor trips were seen as effective in fostering socialization, communication skills, consciousness, and awareness among students. Prospective teachers acknowledged the broader personal and social development aspects of outdoor learning.
- **Effective Learning Environments:** The study emphasized the importance of creating effective learning environments outside the classroom. This includes



paying attention to individual learning styles, adapting the environment to learner levels, making necessary physical arrangements, and ensuring active learner participation.

- **Planning and Engagement:** Well-planned outdoor trips with a focus on hands-on experiences, interactivity, and observation were considered more engaging and effective. The students' ability to observe and interact with real-world phenomena was a key factor contributing to the success of outdoor learning.

Incorporating these findings into the discussion of challenges and barriers to outdoor learning in Turkey, it becomes evident that effective trip planning, expert guidance, and a focus on experiential learning are essential for successful outdoor education initiatives. Additionally, addressing the challenges related to infrastructure and program constraints is crucial to improving the implementation of outdoor learning in Turkish schools.

The study conducted by Uzel (2020) highlighted several challenges, such as inadequate physical infrastructure, program density, planning issues, time constraints, and large class sizes. These factors were found to negatively affect the effective use of outdoor environments for learning. By linking these findings to the broader discussion of challenges and barriers, you can emphasize the practical insights provided by prospective biology teachers and their potential impact on enhancing outdoor education practices in Turkey.

Semiz (2021) notices that it is necessary to develop the knowledge and skills of prospective teachers in this field and to explain what can be done to eliminate the obstacles to the implementation of education outside the classroom. An education policy regarding outdoor education has not yet been developed in Turkey. Okur-Berberoglu (2015) stated that there is a need for more institutionalization regarding out-of-class education and therefore out-of-class education centers and departments related to this field can be established in universities.

While the project Forest School Program in Turkey (Dilek, 2020) shows positive outcomes, challenges included participants' difficulty in retaining knowledge due to the intensity of the program.

Despite these efforts, the implementation of outdoor education policies faces several challenges. These include regional disparities in the availability of natural spaces, inconsistent funding, and varying levels of public and administrative support. Addressing these challenges requires a more coordinated approach that ensures equitable access to outdoor education opportunities for all students across the country.



Case Studies/Examples

Case study 1: Forest School Program in Turkey

Dilek, Ö. (2020) conducted a study on the effects of Outdoor Learning in a Forest Pre-School in Eastern Anatolia, Turkey. Objectives: The Forest School program in Turkey aims to provide young preschoolers with a nature-based and immersive learning experience in a forested environment. The objectives of the program are as follows:

- Exploration and Observation: Encourage children to explore and observe their natural surroundings, fostering a deep connection with the environment.
- Fire Safety and Basic Skills: Teach children essential skills for outdoor living, such as fire safety and balance walking.
- Respect for Nature: Promote respect for all living creatures in nature through activities like bird's nesting, fostering a positive bond with the natural world.
- Physical Development: Develop children's gross motor skills and willingness to take risks through activities with ropes.
- Creativity: Encourage creativity by allowing children to create unique, imaginary living creatures and homes for them using natural materials.
- Safety Awareness: Discuss safety measures and rules to ensure the well-being of the children during outdoor activities.

Methodologies: The Forest School program in Turkey employs a child-centered, experiential, and play-based approach. It involves a series of weekly activities that engage children in hands-on learning experiences. Key methodologies include:

- Experiential Learning: Children actively engage with the natural environment, fostering experiential learning and hands-on exploration.
- Child-Led Activities: The program encourages children to take the lead in exploring, observing, and participating in activities, enhancing their sense of autonomy.
- Nature-Based Play: Play is a central component, allowing children to learn through play and exploration in a natural setting.



- **Safety Emphasis:** Safety measures are discussed, and children are encouraged to take responsibility for their well-being and follow rules.

Outcomes: The Forest School program in Turkey yields several positive outcomes for preschoolers:

- **Creativity:** Children's creativity is enhanced through observations, discoveries, and imaginative play in the forest environment.
- **Motivation:** The dynamic nature of the program motivates children to actively participate in tasks and games within the natural setting.
- **Establishing Cause-Effect Relationships:** Children gain an understanding of cause-effect relationships by engaging in activities and solving problems in the natural environment.
- **Muscle Development:** Games and activities in the forest positively impact children's muscle development.
- **Prudence:** Children learn to find solutions to risky situations and develop a sense of prudence over time.
- **Adaptability:** Exposure to challenging natural conditions encourages teamwork and adaptability among children.
- **Social Skills:** Interactions with animals, plants, and peers promote social skills and empathy.
- **Communication:** Children engage in discussions about activities and natural events, improving their language skills and communication with peers.

Overall, the Forest School program in Turkey provides children with a unique opportunity to connect with nature, develop essential life skills, and enhance their creativity and social development through hands-on experiences in the natural world.

Case study 2: Outdoor Environmental Education Project in Canakkale, Turkey

The Outdoor Environmental Education Project conducted in Canakkale, Turkey (Ozdilek, et al, 2011), represents a significant initiative aimed at improving environmental awareness



and fostering positive attitudes toward nature. This case study explores the concept, content, and application of this project, which was primarily implemented in natural settings and supported by TUBITAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) in 2008 and 2009.

Objectives: The primary objectives of the Outdoor Environmental Education Project in Canakkale were to:

- **Enhance Environmental Awareness:** Raise awareness among participants about the importance of environmental conservation.
- **Ecological Knowledge:** Educate participants about the ecological principles, flora, fauna, geology, geomorphology, and human interactions with the environment in the Canakkale region.
- **Practical Learning:** Focus on practical, hands-on learning experiences rather than theoretical knowledge.
- **Problem-Solving Skills:** Encourage problem-based tasks and critical thinking within a learner-centered environment.
- **Capacity Building:** Aim to build participants' capacity for ecological thinking and application, considered the highest level of the learning process.

Methodology: The Outdoor Environmental Education Project adopted an interactive and field-based approach, emphasizing direct engagement with the natural environment. Key methodologies and strategies included:

- **Experiential Learning:** Activities were designed to allow participants to actively engage with the environment and gain firsthand experiences.
- **Qualitative and Quantitative Observation:** Participants conducted both qualitative and quantitative observations, fostering scientific inquiry and data collection skills.
- **Problem-Based Tasks:** Problem-solving tasks encouraged participants to apply their ecological knowledge to real-world scenarios.
- **Brainstorming:** Brainstorming sessions within a free-thinking atmosphere promoted creative thinking and idea generation.



- **Learner-Centered:** The program focused on learner-centered education, allowing participants to take an active role in their learning process.
- **Ecological Perspective:** While emphasizing ecology, the program also incorporated human-centered environmental awareness when relevant.

Outcomes: The outcomes of the Outdoor Environmental Education Project included:

- **Increased Environmental Awareness:** Participants gained a deeper understanding of environmental issues and the importance of conservation.
- **Ecological Knowledge:** A comprehensive understanding of the Canakkale region's natural and anthropogenic features, as well as its social and cultural richness, was achieved.
- **Practical Skills:** Participants developed practical skills for ecological observation, problem-solving, and critical thinking.
- **Capacity Building:** The project contributed to the capacity building of participants, enabling them to engage in synthetic, idea-yielding applications.
- **Positive Feedback:** Some participants sought additional information from their trainers even after the project's conclusion, demonstrating a lasting impact.

The Outdoor Environmental Education Project in Canakkale, Turkey, exemplifies a successful initiative that combines experiential learning, ecological knowledge, and practical skills development. By fostering environmental awareness and capacity building, this project serves as a valuable model for future efforts aimed at nature conservation and education in Turkey.

Case study 3: Ecological Dynamics Model and Ecopedagogy-Based Outdoor Experiential Education

The study titled "Ecological Dynamics Model and Ecopedagogy-Based Outdoor Experiential Education" (Okur-Berberoglu et al, 2015) investigates the effectiveness of an outdoor experiential education (EOEE) program designed for in-service teachers in



enhancing their environmental awareness. It also evaluates the alignment of the Ecological Dynamics Model (EDM) with EOEE and Agenda 21 principles.

The study's key findings include:

- **Environmental Awareness Development:** Participants in the EOEE program demonstrated significant improvements in their environmental awareness. The experiential nature of the program appeared to have a positive impact on participants' environmental consciousness.
- **Holistic Perspective:** At the conclusion of the education program, participants tended to adopt a holistic perspective when considering environmental issues. This suggests that the EOEE approach facilitated a broader and interconnected understanding of ecological dynamics.
- **Integration of Holistic Perspective:** The study suggests that the holistic perspective cultivated through EOEE may be integrated into the Ecological Dynamics Model (EDM). This integration could enhance the EDM's ability to capture the complexity of environmental awareness and behavior change.
- **Methodological Approach:** The study employed a mixed methodology, combining quantitative data from environmental awareness scales with qualitative data from participants' diaries, non-participant observations, and meeting documents. This comprehensive approach allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the program's impact.

The study shows the positive impact of EOEE on in-service teachers' environmental awareness and their tendency to adopt a holistic perspective. It suggests the potential for improving the EDM by incorporating this broader perspective and highlights avenues for further research in understanding the complex interplay between experiential education, ecological dynamics, and environmental behavior change.



Outdoor Education in Romania

Outdoor education in Romania is deeply rooted in the country's rich rural traditions and its close connection to the natural environment. Historically, Romania's landscape, characterized by vast forests, mountains, and rural communities, has played a significant role in shaping the educational experiences of its people. This connection to nature has naturally extended into the realm of education, where outdoor activities have long been used to teach practical skills and foster a sense of environmental stewardship.

Romania's approach to outdoor education is influenced by its history and cultural heritage, where nature has always been a central element of daily life, particularly in rural areas. Traditional practices such as farming, forestry, and craftsmanship have historically been passed down through generations in outdoor settings, making outdoor education a natural extension of everyday learning.

In recent decades, outdoor education in Romania has evolved, integrating modern educational theories with traditional practices. This evolution has been driven by a growing awareness of the benefits of experiential learning and the need to prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. As Romania continues to modernize its educational system,



there is an increasing focus on incorporating outdoor education into formal curricula, particularly in areas related to environmental science, physical education, and cultural studies.

The Romanian government, along with various educational institutions, has begun to recognize the value of outdoor education. Efforts are being made to develop policies and programs that support outdoor learning, with a particular emphasis on sustainability and the preservation of cultural heritage. These initiatives are helping to bridge the gap between Romania's traditional outdoor practices and the demands of modern education.

This section will explore the historical context, key principles, challenges, and governmental support for outdoor education in Romania. By examining these aspects, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how outdoor education is practiced in Romania and its potential to contribute to the holistic development of students in both rural and urban settings.

Historical Context and Development

Outdoor education in Romania has a long-standing tradition deeply intertwined with the country's rural heritage and its natural landscapes. The historical development of outdoor education in Romania reflects the nation's cultural values and its connection to the environment, which have shaped educational practices over the years.

Traditional Roots:

- The roots of outdoor education in Romania can be traced back to traditional practices in rural areas, where nature played a central role in daily life. Activities such as farming, shepherding, and forestry were not only means of livelihood but also served as informal educational experiences for young people. These activities fostered a strong connection to the land and an understanding of natural processes, which were passed down through generations (Isopescu, 2019).

Post-War and Socialist Era Developments:

- After World War II, during the socialist era, Romania saw a formalization of outdoor education, particularly through youth organizations like the Pioneer Movement. These organizations incorporated outdoor activities such as camping, hiking, and nature exploration as part of their programming, aimed at building physical fitness, discipline, and a collective identity among young people. These



activities were state-sponsored and often had a strong ideological component, emphasizing the connection between nature and socialist values (Leonard, 2019).

Modernization and Post-Communist Transition:

- Following the fall of communism in 1989, Romania underwent significant educational reforms. The transition to a market economy and the integration into European educational frameworks brought new perspectives on outdoor education. During this period, there was a renewed focus on environmental education and sustainability, reflecting global trends. Outdoor education began to be seen not only as a way to connect with nature but also as a critical component of environmental stewardship and sustainable development (Isopescu, 2019).

Contemporary Developments:

- In recent years, outdoor education in Romania has continued to evolve, with increasing attention given to integrating outdoor learning into the formal education system. The Romanian government, in collaboration with NGOs and international organizations, has launched initiatives aimed at promoting outdoor education as part of a holistic approach to learning. These efforts include the development of educational programs that emphasize experiential learning, environmental awareness, and cultural heritage preservation (Leonard, 2019).

Key Principles and Approaches

Outdoor education in Romania is guided by several key principles that reflect the country's unique cultural context, its natural environment, and its evolving educational system. These principles are implemented through various approaches that aim to engage students with their surroundings, foster a deep respect for nature, and promote holistic development.

Connection to Nature and Cultural Heritage:

- One of the central principles of outdoor education in Romania is fostering a deep connection between students and the natural environment, which is deeply intertwined with the country's cultural heritage. Educational activities often take place in natural settings such as forests, mountains, and rural areas, where students learn about the natural world while also exploring Romania's rich cultural traditions. This approach helps students develop a sense of identity and place, understanding the interdependence between nature and human culture (Isopescu, 2019).



Experiential Learning:

- Experiential learning is another foundational principle in Romanian outdoor education. This approach emphasizes learning by doing, where students actively engage in hands-on activities that promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration. Examples include outdoor adventure programs, ecological projects, and field studies that allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts. This method is particularly effective in building practical skills and fostering a lifelong interest in environmental stewardship (Leonard, 2019).

Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability:

- Promoting environmental stewardship is a key objective of outdoor education in Romania. Educational programs are designed to instill values of conservation and sustainability, encouraging students to take an active role in protecting their natural surroundings. Activities such as tree planting, wildlife conservation projects, and recycling initiatives are commonly integrated into the curriculum, helping students understand the importance of sustainable living practices (Isopescu, 2019).

Community Engagement and Social Responsibility:

- Romanian outdoor education also emphasizes the importance of community engagement and social responsibility. Students are encouraged to participate in community service projects and environmental campaigns that benefit both the local community and the environment. This approach not only enhances students' social skills and civic awareness but also fosters a sense of responsibility towards their community and the world at large (Leonard, 2019).

Interdisciplinary Integration:

- Outdoor education in Romania often involves an interdisciplinary approach, where multiple subjects are integrated into outdoor activities. For instance, a single program might combine elements of biology, geography, history, and physical education, providing students with a holistic educational experience. This method helps students make connections across different fields of knowledge and understand the broader implications of their learning (Isopescu, 2019).



Challenges and Barriers

While outdoor education in Romania has deep cultural roots and growing institutional support, it faces several challenges and barriers that can limit its effectiveness and broader adoption. Understanding these obstacles is essential for developing strategies to overcome them and ensure that outdoor education reaches its full potential.

Limited Funding and Resources:

- One of the most significant challenges for outdoor education in Romania is the limited availability of funding and resources. Many schools, particularly in rural areas, struggle with inadequate budgets to support outdoor activities. This lack of funding can lead to insufficient materials, poorly maintained facilities, and limited access to professional development for educators. As a result, the quality and frequency of outdoor education experiences can vary greatly across the country (Isopescu, 2019).

Urbanization and Access to Natural Environments:

- Romania's rapid urbanization presents another significant barrier to outdoor education. In urban areas, access to natural spaces is increasingly limited due to the expansion of cities and the reduction of green spaces. This makes it challenging for schools located in urban centers to provide meaningful outdoor experiences. In contrast, rural schools, while often closer to natural environments, may lack the infrastructure or resources to fully capitalize on their proximity to these areas (Leonard, 2019).

Weather and Seasonal Limitations:

- The diverse climate of Romania, which includes harsh winters and hot summers, can also restrict outdoor educational activities. Schools must navigate these weather-related challenges by adapting their outdoor programs to seasonal variations, which can limit the consistency and frequency of outdoor education throughout the year. This challenge requires flexibility in planning and often necessitates alternative indoor activities during unfavorable weather conditions (Isopescu, 2019).

Lack of Professional Training for Educators:

- There is a noticeable gap in the professional training available for educators in outdoor education. Many teachers lack the necessary skills and confidence to effectively conduct outdoor activities, which can lead to safety concerns and a reluctance to incorporate outdoor learning into the curriculum. Professional development opportunities are often limited, particularly in rural areas, exacerbating this issue and contributing to the uneven quality of outdoor education across the country (Leonard, 2019).

Public Perception and Support:

- Despite the recognized benefits of outdoor education, there remains a lack of awareness and support among some parents, school administrators, and policymakers. This can lead to outdoor education being undervalued in comparison to more traditional classroom-based instruction. Overcoming this barrier requires increased advocacy and public education about the importance of outdoor learning for student development and well-being (Isopescu, 2019).





Government Policies and Support

The Romanian government has increasingly recognized the importance of outdoor education as a vital component of the national educational framework. Various policies and initiatives have been introduced to support the integration of outdoor learning into the curriculum, reflecting a broader commitment to environmental education and the holistic development of students.

Legislative Framework and Policy Initiatives:

- The Romanian government has implemented a series of educational reforms aimed at modernizing the curriculum and incorporating elements of outdoor education. These reforms include mandates for environmental education, which are often delivered through outdoor activities. The Ministry of Education has issued guidelines that encourage schools to integrate outdoor learning across various subjects, particularly in environmental science and physical education (Isopescu, 2019).

Funding and Resource Allocation:

- To facilitate the implementation of outdoor education, the government has provided funding through various educational grants and programs. These funds are intended to support the development of outdoor facilities, teacher training, and the creation of educational materials that promote outdoor learning. However, as noted in previous sections, the distribution of these resources can be uneven, with some regions benefiting more than others (Leonard, 2019).

Professional Development and Teacher Training:

- Recognizing the need for skilled educators in outdoor education, the Romanian government has also invested in professional development programs. These initiatives aim to equip teachers with the necessary skills to conduct outdoor learning activities safely and effectively. Training programs are often conducted in collaboration with environmental organizations and educational institutions, which provide expertise and resources to enhance the quality of outdoor education (Isopescu, 2019).

Collaborations with NGOs and International Organizations:



- The Romanian government has formed partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international bodies to promote outdoor education. These collaborations have been instrumental in bringing best practices from other countries to Romania, enriching the local outdoor education landscape. Joint projects often focus on environmental conservation, sustainability, and cultural heritage, integrating these themes into the educational programs offered in schools (Leonard, 2019).

Challenges in Policy Implementation:

- Despite the positive developments, challenges remain in the implementation of outdoor education policies. These include regional disparities in resource availability, varying levels of support from local authorities, and the need for greater public awareness and appreciation of the benefits of outdoor education. Addressing these challenges requires a more coordinated approach to ensure that outdoor education is accessible and effective across the country (Isopescu, 2019).



Comparative Analysis

Outdoor education is a vital component of holistic learning, fostering not only academic growth but also physical, emotional, and social development. While Czechia, Turkey, and Romania each have their own distinct traditions and approaches to outdoor education, a comparative analysis reveals both shared values and significant differences in how these countries implement and support outdoor learning.

1. Historical Context and Development

Czechia:

- Czechia's outdoor education has deep historical roots, dating back to the early 20th century. The post-World War II era further solidified the practice, particularly through the efforts of key figures like Jan Neuman and Lucie Kalkusová, who emphasized experiential learning in natural settings. The Czech government has played a supportive role, integrating outdoor education into the national curriculum and providing ongoing support through various environmental policies (Martin et al., 2019; Neuman et al., 2020).

Turkey:

- In contrast, outdoor education in Turkey is a relatively recent development, gaining momentum in the late 20th century. Influenced by global educational trends, Turkey has gradually integrated outdoor learning into its national education system. The diverse landscapes of Turkey offer rich opportunities for outdoor activities, although the practice is still in the process of becoming fully institutionalized, with varying levels of implementation across the country (Aydın & Yıldız, 2011; Tüfekçi & Gül, 2021).

Romania:

- Romania's approach to outdoor education is deeply connected to its rural traditions and natural landscapes. Historically, outdoor learning was an integral part of daily life, especially in rural communities. Post-communist reforms and the integration of European educational standards have modernized Romania's approach, but challenges related to funding and resources persist (Isopescu, 2019; Leonard, 2019).

2. Key Principles and Approaches



Czechia:

- Czechia's outdoor education is characterized by its strong emphasis on experiential learning, environmental stewardship, and community engagement. Programs are deeply integrated into the educational system, promoting a connection with nature through hands-on activities such as hiking, camping, and ecological monitoring. The interdisciplinary nature of Czech outdoor education also helps students make connections across various subjects (Neuman et al., 2020).

Turkey:

- In Turkey, the key principles guiding outdoor education include experiential learning, environmental sustainability, and cultural integration. While experiential learning is a shared focus, Turkey places a particular emphasis on using outdoor education to connect students with their cultural heritage. This approach helps foster a sense of identity and community, linking historical and environmental education in a way that is unique to the Turkish context (Aydın & Yıldız, 2011; Tüfekçi & Gül, 2021).

Romania:

- Romania's outdoor education principles are rooted in the connection between nature and cultural heritage, experiential learning, and environmental stewardship. Like Czechia, Romania emphasizes hands-on learning and environmental responsibility. However, Romania also faces challenges in integrating these principles uniformly across its educational system, particularly in urban areas where access to natural spaces is limited (Isopescu, 2019; Leonard, 2019).

3. Challenges and Barriers

Czechia:

- Czechia's primary challenges include limited funding and the impact of urbanization on access to natural spaces. Despite these barriers, the government's consistent support helps mitigate some of these issues. However, there is still a need for more trained educators and greater public awareness to fully realize the potential of outdoor education (Ministry of Environment, 2018; Turčová et al., 2020).

Turkey:

- Turkey faces several challenges in outdoor education, including inconsistent access to natural environments, particularly in urban areas, and a lack of professional

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training for educators. Additionally, extreme weather conditions in various regions can limit outdoor activities, requiring flexibility in program design. Public perception and support for outdoor education are also areas that need improvement (Aydın & Yıldız, 2011; Tüfekçi & Gül, 2021).

Romania:

- Romania's challenges include limited funding, particularly in rural areas, and significant urbanization, which restricts access to outdoor spaces in cities. Furthermore, there is a lack of professional development opportunities for educators, which hinders the consistent implementation of outdoor education across the country. Public awareness and support for outdoor education also vary widely, depending on the region (Isopescu, 2019; Leonard, 2019).

4. Government Policies and Support

Czechia:

- The Czech government provides robust support for outdoor education through a well-established legislative framework that integrates environmental education into the national curriculum. Consistent funding and government-backed initiatives help sustain outdoor education programs, although regional disparities still exist (Ministry of Environment, 2018; Neuman et al., 2020).

Turkey:

- In Turkey, the government has made strides in integrating outdoor education into the national curriculum, particularly at the early childhood and primary education levels. However, funding and resource allocation are inconsistent, and the need for more professional development programs is evident. Collaborative efforts with NGOs and international organizations have helped to bridge some gaps, but further support is necessary (Aydın & Yıldız, 2011; Tüfekçi & Gül, 2021).

Romania:

- The Romanian government has begun to recognize the importance of outdoor education, particularly through policies that promote environmental education. However, challenges in policy implementation, regional disparities in resource allocation, and the need for greater public awareness remain significant obstacles. Collaborative efforts with NGOs and international partners are helping to advance



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outdoor education, but more coordinated efforts are required (Isopescu, 2019; Leonard, 2019).

5. Comparative Summary and Insights

The comparative analysis of outdoor education in Czechia, Turkey, and Romania reveals both commonalities and unique approaches. All three countries share a commitment to experiential learning, environmental stewardship, and cultural integration. However, they differ in their historical development, the extent of government support, and the challenges they face.

- **Czechia** stands out for its long-standing tradition and strong government backing, making it a model for integrating outdoor education into the national curriculum.
- **Turkey**, with its rich cultural heritage and diverse landscapes, is rapidly developing its outdoor education programs, though it still faces significant challenges in terms of access, training, and public perception.
- **Romania** bridges traditional practices with modern educational demands, but struggles with resource allocation, urbanization, and consistent policy implementation.

Understanding these differences allows educators and policymakers to draw lessons from each context, potentially applying successful strategies from one country to another. By addressing their respective challenges and building on their strengths, Czechia, Turkey, and Romania can continue to advance outdoor education, providing students with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world.



Recommendations for Educators

Based on the comparative analysis of outdoor education practices in Czechia, Turkey, and Romania, the following recommendations are designed to help educators enhance the effectiveness of outdoor education in their respective contexts. These recommendations consider the strengths and challenges identified in each country and aim to provide actionable strategies for educators to implement outdoor learning successfully.

1. Use Local Cultural and Environmental Resources:

- **Czechia:** Educators in Czechia should continue to build on the country's strong tradition of environmental stewardship by incorporating local cultural and historical contexts into outdoor activities. For instance, lessons can be designed around local folklore or historical sites, integrating these elements with environmental education to create a more enriching experience.



- **Turkey:** Turkish educators are encouraged to utilize the country's diverse landscapes and rich cultural heritage in their outdoor education programs. By linking outdoor activities with cultural education, teachers can help students develop a stronger sense of identity and community. For example, outdoor learning sessions could include visits to culturally significant sites or the study of local flora and fauna.
- **Romania:** In Romania, educators should focus on connecting students with both the natural environment and the country's rural traditions. Outdoor activities that involve traditional crafts, farming, or forestry can be used to teach practical skills while fostering an appreciation for Romania's cultural heritage.

2. Develop more Interdisciplinary Learning:

- Outdoor education provides an ideal platform for interdisciplinary learning, where subjects such as science, history, geography, and physical education can be integrated into a single outdoor activity. Educators across all three countries should design outdoor programs that allow students to explore multiple disciplines simultaneously, making learning more engaging and holistic.
 - **Example:** A nature hike could include elements of biology (studying plants and animals), geography (understanding the landscape), history (exploring historical events tied to the location), and physical education (developing physical fitness).

3. Address Resource and Access Challenges:

- **Czechia:** In regions with limited funding or access to natural spaces, educators should seek partnerships with local environmental organizations or use community spaces such as parks or urban gardens to facilitate outdoor learning. Virtual field trips and online resources can also supplement physical outdoor activities.
- **Turkey:** Turkish educators in urban areas with limited access to natural environments can create micro-environments within school grounds, such as gardens or greenhouses, to provide students with outdoor learning experiences. Additionally, educators should advocate for increased government support and community involvement to enhance the availability of outdoor spaces.
- **Romania:** Romanian educators, especially in urban centers, should collaborate with local governments to improve access to outdoor spaces. Schools can also form



partnerships with rural communities to organize field trips that give urban students the opportunity to experience rural environments and learn about traditional practices.

4. Develop Professional Development:

- Continuous professional development is essential for educators to effectively implement outdoor education. Teachers should be provided with training opportunities that focus on outdoor pedagogy, safety, and the integration of environmental education into the curriculum.
 - **Czechia:** Leverage existing government-supported professional development programs to keep educators updated on the latest practices in outdoor education.
 - **Turkey and Romania:** Advocate for more structured professional development programs and workshops, possibly in collaboration with NGOs and international organizations, to build educators' confidence and expertise in outdoor education.

5. Promote Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability:

- Educators should emphasize the importance of environmental stewardship in all outdoor activities, teaching students about sustainable practices and the impact of human activities on the environment. This can be achieved through projects such as school gardens, recycling programs, and conservation initiatives.
 - **Czechia:** Build on the existing emphasis on environmental education by introducing more complex conservation projects that involve students in real-world environmental challenges.
 - **Turkey:** Integrate sustainability topics into cultural heritage education, showing students how traditional practices can contribute to modern sustainability efforts.
 - **Romania:** Focus on projects that link environmental stewardship with rural traditions, such as sustainable farming practices or forest management.

6. Advocate for Greater Public Awareness and Support:



- To ensure the long-term success of outdoor education, educators should actively engage with parents, school administrators, and the wider community to build support for outdoor learning initiatives. Public awareness campaigns, open days, and community events can help demonstrate the value of outdoor education and secure broader backing.
 - **Czechia:** Utilize existing government support to launch awareness campaigns that highlight the benefits of outdoor education to the public.
 - **Turkey and Romania:** Focus on building grassroots support through community engagement and partnerships with local organizations to advocate for more extensive government support and resource allocation.

7. Adapt to Local Challenges:

- Educators should be flexible and adaptable, tailoring outdoor education programs to the specific challenges of their local context, whether it be weather conditions, urbanization, or resource limitations. This might involve seasonal adjustments, the use of indoor-outdoor hybrid models, or the creative use of available spaces.
 - **Example:** In regions with harsh winters, educators can develop indoor nature study programs that complement outdoor activities during warmer months.



Conclusion

Outdoor education offers a transformative approach to learning that goes beyond traditional classroom boundaries, engaging students in experiential learning that fosters a deep connection with nature, cultural heritage, and their communities. The comparative analysis of outdoor education in Czechia, Turkey, and Romania has revealed both commonalities and unique approaches that each country brings to this vital educational practice.

Shared Values and Diverse Approaches:

- Across Czechia, Turkey, and Romania, there is a shared commitment to the principles of experiential learning, environmental stewardship, and the integration of cultural heritage into education. These common values underscore the universal importance of outdoor education in fostering holistic development, encouraging sustainable practices, and building a strong sense of community and identity among students.

Key Differences and Local Adaptations:

- However, the ways in which these principles are implemented vary significantly between the three countries, shaped by their unique historical contexts, cultural landscapes, and educational systems. Czechia's long-standing tradition of environmental education, Turkey's integration of cultural heritage, and Romania's blending of traditional and modern practices each offer valuable insights into how outdoor education can be tailored to fit specific national and regional contexts.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- The challenges faced by outdoor education in each country—such as limited funding, access to natural spaces, and the need for greater professional development—highlight the ongoing need for targeted support and innovation. Addressing these challenges will require coordinated efforts from educators, policymakers, and communities to ensure that outdoor education can be sustained and expanded in the coming years.

Implications for Educators and Policymakers:

- For educators, the insights from this comparative analysis provide practical strategies for enhancing outdoor education programs, from leveraging local resources to integrating interdisciplinary learning. Policymakers can draw on the lessons learned from each country to develop more robust support systems, ensuring that outdoor



education is accessible to all students, regardless of their geographic or socio-economic circumstances.

Future Directions and Research:

- Looking forward, there is a need for continued research into the long-term impacts of outdoor education, particularly in relation to student outcomes in areas such as environmental literacy, social skills, and academic achievement. Further exploration into how outdoor education can be effectively integrated into urban settings, as well as how it can be adapted to meet the needs of diverse student populations, will be critical in expanding its reach and impact.

Outdoor education is not just an educational practice; it is a pathway to developing well-rounded, environmentally conscious, and socially responsible individuals. By learning from the experiences of Czechia, Turkey, and Romania, educators and policymakers can better understand the power of outdoor education and work together to create educational environments that inspire and empower the next generation.



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