

Workshop on Programme: Investigation of Disaster in Jizera Mountains (Czech Republic), 2 hours

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About the programme

School and residential environmental education programme, in which students learn about the destruction of forests in the Jizera Mountains in the last third of the 20th century. The programme aims to develop pupils' investigative skills, attitudes towards nature, understanding of the forest ecosystems and the way they can be destroyed by peoples' wrong decisions. The programme is conducted in two versions: one is for 9 to 12-year old and the other is for 12 to 15 year olds.

Jan's PowerPoint Presentation

Firstly, Jan introduced the programme itself and the educational strategies which are used. The programme applies a mixture of strategies. The first part is based on the principles of constructivists', teacher-facilitated learning (critical reading and interpretation of newspaper articles) and a traditional, instrumental strategy (presentation). The second part is mainly based on emancipatory learning and applies the principles of inquiry-based learning (IBL). The programme as a whole was influenced by the extended case study model, invented by H. R. Hungerford. However, it was also inspired by other sources: The Field Studies Council approach to IBL, and from The Institute of Earth Education (Earth Walks).

What is the story behind?

The programme starts with 5-7 lessons conducted by teachers in schools. At the beginning, pupils are introduced to a fictional Facebook communication between American girl Susan and Dave, who works in the eco-centre in the Jizera Mountains. Susan wants to know what has happened with the Jizera Mountains that – according to her granny who emigrated from the Czechoslovakia – used to be wild and green. Dave asks the children to investigate it.

Group work with worksheets on the reasons for deforestation – led by David

Workshops participants were using worksheets about the reasons for deforestation in the 70's and 80's of the 20th century. They read historical texts and old newspaper articles to understand that there were number of reasons for this disaster: bad forest management that changed the original forests into spur monoculture, a coal industry that caused acid rains in the area, and others. They also investigated how the issue was presented to the public in the totalitarian regime and nowadays.

Group work on scientific approach (outdoors) – led by David

Workshop participants suggested indicators for investigation in the natural area. Once decided what to measure, a little research was undertaken, the results presented and a discussions was held.

Discussion

Participants liked the programme as a whole, appreciated the story behind (investigation...), in respect of the hand model – they suggested to support the transferability area – how can learners apply what they have learned in their everyday life and what will be done next – on their part.

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