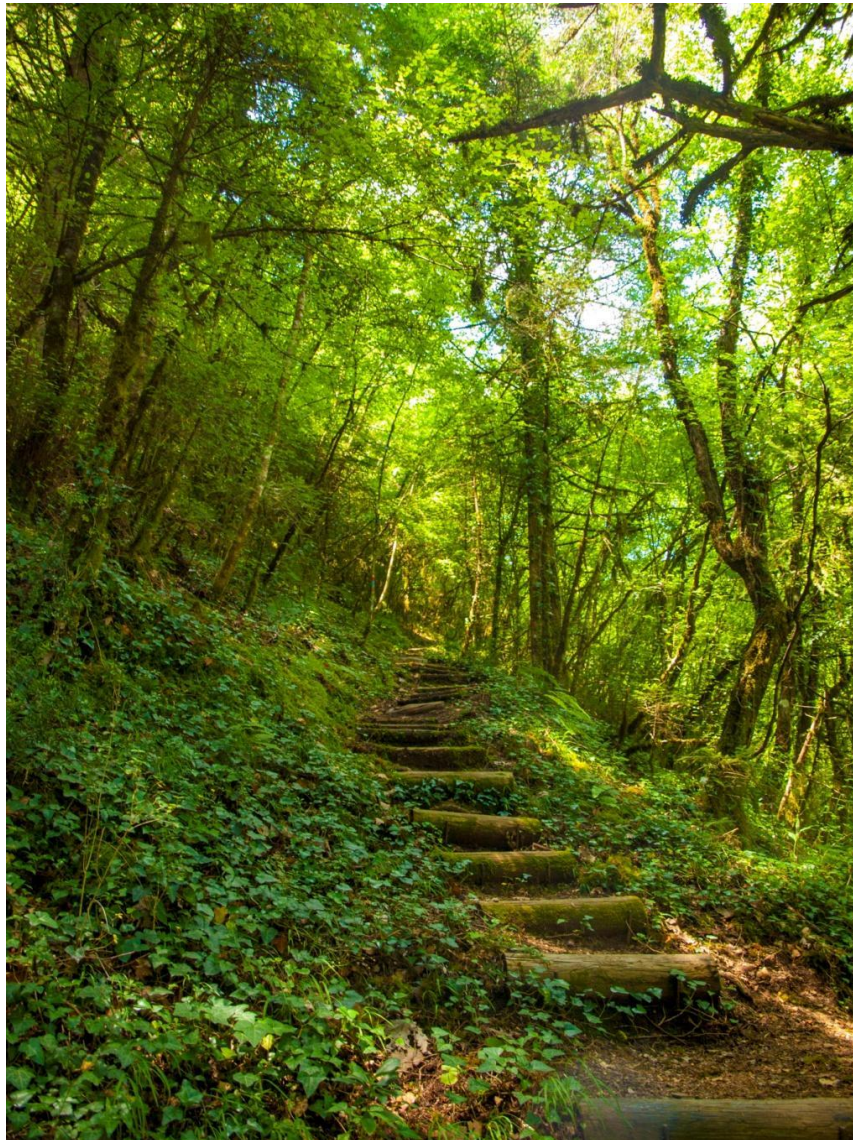


Environmental Education should be in Action

One way of Environmental Education is experiential, means teaching directly in Nature, sometimes in the forest, near water sources, under tall trees. To let the participants take their time and move in their own pace in direct contact with Nature for most of the way.

You are not a lecturer, but more of a fellow traveler. You don't teach a lesson to the participants, you just make it easier for them to gain an experience. Directly, experiencing the forest themselves during the route and indirectly, making stops with observations / exercises / activities / games, and/or stories / riddles with the common goal that the group discovers something that you would like to share.



So, let's share a story below, it's called "the Maritime Academy":

The Ship owners had financed the establishment and operation of a maritime academy on the island. In its first year, its Headmaster laid the foundations of its operation. He wanted a school that would give real qualifications to its students, so that they could one day travel to the four corners of the earth.

An old captain also lived on the island, one of those who had come and returned from the ends of the world, his skin was red and rough from the work and salt, his hair and beard all white, full of the experience of a whole life spent at the sea, in the ports and stations of the world.

He had started from scratch, knowing nothing. He had once been a deck hand since he was a boy, and had risen to first captain on those great ocean-going ships. The Headmaster sought contact with the old Captain. He was fascinated by this man who learned everything by experience, while he, being much younger, learned most of the things he knew at desks, in schools and universities.

The old Captain was just waiting for his time to come and his greatest amusement was to sit in the tavern silent and gazing out to sea, so he welcomed any company while sitting there.

The Headmaster, much more talkative, was talking to the old Captain about the details of the Academy, the lessons, the activities, the sports. He also told him about the strictness and discipline of the maritime academy. The students were forbidden to go outside the school, and to come into contact with the city and the port, they all lived together in the boarding school. If they had to make an educational visit somewhere, it was organized. The Headmaster had his purpose. He wanted the children to get the best preparation with their lessons, with activities and sports to practice, to be constantly busy, so that in time they also acquire a good character. That's why he also spent his afternoons there, giving them additional lessons, teaching them geography, and showing them photos of the ports, the customs of the people, and photos of the locals, which they would definitely see one day, so that they would be prepared from then on.

In the first year, the Headmaster spoke to the old Captain enthusiastically. The children were all excellent, he had the best student body at his disposal, and he was sure they would make excellent graduates, cadets. The old Captain said nothing to him.

In the second year, the Headmaster was having problems at the Academy. There was a lot of indiscipline, vandalism, inconsistencies, delinquent behavior on the one hand and on the other, some students found it difficult to pay attention, they were melancholic, abstract, lost in their world, completely passive beings. The Headmaster dealt with the former with punishments, with interrogations, with severity. For the latter, he tried to motivate them by yelling at them, making them repeat the lessons, to become more energetic. The old captain said nothing to him.

Now in its third year, the problems at the academy worsened. All the Headmaster's efforts were in vain. The children had become either violent or passive. The interest in learning had disappeared and only the routine, the obligation, the schedule remained. The whole magical world that the Headmaster had dreamed up had come crashing down. There were scandals, conflicts, confrontations. The Headmaster was already thinking of resigning.

- "It is obvious that I am the one who made a mistake. I had the best students at my disposal and they became the worst. Since I am the Headmaster of the Maritime Academy, I bear the responsibility. But please tell me honestly, I need your opinion more than anything else. You have a lifetime of naval experience. What did I do wrong and how can I fix it? Tell me!"

The old Captain took a few breaths in silence, gazing at the sea.

- "From my point of view, there is no question of right or wrong, as this is a passing image, you just got a life experience.

In the first year, your protective and educational nature seemed to pay off. In the second year, however, you already saw that having the children enclosed within the four walls, turned them into violent or passive people. You tried to deal with it by continuing to keep the kids locked away. But this is unnatural. Children have to go out in life at some point."

- "But my captain, if I took the children out, they could go to the port, fall into any dock, go to some brothel, some tavern, meet some really very dangerous people who frequent the ports."

- "For sure. But on the other hand, my Headmaster, how do you expect to prepare sailors ready to go to the ends of the earth, if you do not allow them to go to the port of their island?"

Life is a great school, and experience is its lesson. We want to live the experience, and we need it more than anything else. It's natural. No one, not even we, have the power to stop experiencing through experience. It would be the same as death.

We always do the best we can, and we feel we are doing the right thing. At some point we realize that we were wrong. At that very moment, we just got the experience, we got wiser.

In Life we do not consciously make mistakes, we live experiences, and we constantly become better. We are not bad or good. We're good and we get better every time we realize we've made a mistake, and that's how we move forward."

- "But why didn't you tell me anything about this mistake of mine, keeping the children confined, during these three years?"

- "Because there would be no point in telling you. You weren't ready to hear it. You hadn't gotten the experience yet, you hadn't realized you were wrong."

- "So what should I do?"

- "You and only you, have to find it yourself. With experience."

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