

What can be learnt and generalized from a narrative study of

Mahnala Environmental School?

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"In every school there is mathematics. We learn how to conserve nature. We recycle and take care of our garden. From garden we get food and we cook by ourselves"

– Anna, eight years old pupil, Mahnala Environmental School, Finland



1. Mahnala Environmental School is a rural school and has its own garden with apple trees.
2. Exploring snow and its organisms with a magnifying glass.
3. Ice fishing, which involves dangling a line through a hole in the ice.
4. Ice fishing with nets.



5. Worm farming in winter time.
6. Pupils are painting self-built storage house by self-made traditional red ochre paint.
7. Studying nature on the lake shore.
8. Ringing young jackdaws is a tradition of the second grade pupils.



9. Harvesting organic potatoes by hand.
10. Picking cranberries by hand on the bog.
11. Our GLOBE Program weather station.
12. Identifying a wild flower by NatureGate Online Service.

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The school has created an innovative adaptation of the official guidelines of Finnish curriculum for 6 to 13 years old children. Over ten years time (1997 – 2008) it has developed a distinct profile, way of acting as an innovating EE School that has activated other schools and communities.

In Mahnala, pupils, teachers and parents are learning how to promote sustainability in everyday life. In school garden they grow part of their own food. They buy and use as much as possible food from local farmers. They recycle, save energy, use services of local companies, when possible etc.

The school and its active teacher are cases of strengthening relationships between schools, communities, and society, educational policies and reforms, reflective practice, professional development of teachers and other educators involved in the school community, ecologizing curricula, ecopedagogy, and the quality and relevance of learning processes, the greening of schools, their grounds and other infrastructures.

The success of Mahnala Environmental school is explained by

- (1) its partnership in international and national networks like ENSI and
- (2) an innovating teacher who has taking part in-service teacher education and in doctoral program. That is how the innovating teacher, the school and the whole community have been involved in latest educational R&D on Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development.

Active testing and adapting many ideas to own school and community, probably explains much of the success. This is the learning that can be generalized into other contexts.

One of the modern tools Mahnala Environmental school is using in teaching is the species identifying tool provided by the NatureGate: www.naturegate.net

Information about the school:

www.hameenkyro.fi/sivistyspalvelut/koulut/mahnalan_ymparistokoulu/mahnala_environmental_school/

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