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LEARN4HEALTH, A EUROPEAN PROJECT CREATING HEALTH AND FOOD LITERACY THROUGH INNOVATIVE INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

Abstract:

Research documents what educators know: Healthy pupils and students are better prepared to learn (Kristjánsson et al., 2010; KL, 2015). This paper focuses on the thesis that innovative practical methods for learnings related to health and food issues create a rewarding educational experience for pupils and students while meeting academic standards in math, reading, science, social studies, art, music and more. For this reason and many more, we created Learn4Health, a project with interdisciplinary roots.

Every day, in Universities across the globe, courses are being created to embrace blended learning approaches. Classes are now being developed with focus on more effective learning and better student outcomes (Jones, 2016). However, the concept of blended learning between higher educational institutions and public schools is relatively new. This paper outlines an exploratory study of blended learning initiated by Learn4Health, an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership including twelve partners in total, representing 6 European countries (DK, ES, SI, NL, UK and LT). Each country is represented by one higher educational institution and one primary and/or secondary school.

With point of departure in the globalized food systems consumers, especially children, being increasingly disconnected from understanding how and where their food is produced, the paper provides an overview of the development and expected implementation process of a new blended learning programme. The practical methods discussed are problem based learning, an experimental approach to learning involving hands on/learning by doing approach, and an “open school” approach reaching out to local community enterprises and farms.

Another Learn4Health key tool to be addressed in this paper is foodscapes, a multi-valenced concept centered around food environments.

Finally, Learn4Health is about having fun and developing lifelong food literacy skills to understand the nature of food and our own impact as consumers and citizens on health status, environment, social and economic factors. Literacy is the cornerstone of the project, and we will thus discuss the concept’s relevance and impact on health in relation to Learn4Health.

Keywords:

Learning for health, food literacy, school gardening, interdisciplinary teaching and learning methods, innovative school foodscapes

JEL Classification: I00, I29, P36