



Raising awareness about soil diversity: The Education Programme of the Earth Sciences Museum Alexis Dorofeef, Minas Gerais, Brazil

C. Muggler

Departamento de Solos, Universidade Federal de Viçosa, 36570-000 Viçosa, Minas Gerais, Brazil (cmuggler@ufv.br) (support by FAPEMIG)

Soils are usually overlooked as part of geodiversity and geoheritage. Increasing the public awareness about soils is a key issue in our changing world. Furthering public awareness involves developing a better understanding of soils, their functions, importance for environment and society, as well as a personal and collective commitment in the stewardship and protection from degradation and loss. This presentation describes the Soil and Environmental Education and Outreach Programme of the Alexis Dorofeef Earth Sciences Museum of the Soil University Department in Viçosa, Brazil. The program has developed different activities linked to formal and non formal education and its main audience are basic education teachers, school children and the general public. The museum acts in different and diverse fronts, supported on a pedagogical background based on Paulo Freire's educational approach, the social-constructivism, which considers social inclusion, knowledge building, horizontal learning and collective action. In its early years, the museum was mainly focused on formal education and this changed with time as our action was reshaped into a broader outreach action stimulated by the new Brazilian government. The museum's indoor activities consist of accompanied thematic visits, hands on experiments, basic school teacher's courses, development of learning materials and methods and professional training. Beyond of the Museum space local interdisciplinary projects with basic education schools are run along with temporary expositions coupled with short courses and workshops with farmers and social movements. We present the results of the changes in awareness about soils among three main groups: school teachers, basic education children and general public. After 10 years of activities, the Soil Education action of the Museum is recognized and well spread among school communities in the town and its neighbourhood. Many school teachers approach the contents and methodologies they learned at the museum, as well as many of the students that did their practical's at the museum do. As a side result, the Soil Education Program triggered the broadening of the museum themes into three main conceptual lines: Earth's dynamics, Natural resources: use and environmental impacts and, Soils: know to conserve. Today the Museum is spreading its knowledge about soil throughout the region, by means of temporary expositions and educational activities. Despite its achievements, the Museum still faces the challenge to broaden its action, reaching different and wider publics, making both the idea of visiting a museum and the knowledge about soils more popular.