



“Projeto Rios” (Rivers Project) a methodology of classroom of the future (northern Portugal)

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The rivers and the surrounding land drained by them are very important wildlife habitats. The water itself provides the environment for plants and animals, while the banks and nearby land support creatures such as otters, water lizards, dragonflies and a variety of water-loving plants.

Using a different teaching strategy, on the latest three years, students of the eighth grade of the EB 2.3 Agrela school have been implementing the project "Nós e o Leça" (We and the river Leça). This initiative is part of a nationwide project in Portugal, the “Projeto Rios”, which is a tool that aims the adoption and monitoring of a 500 meter river section, promoting society’s awareness for the problems and the need of protection and recovery of the riparian systems.

These students adopted a section of the Leça River, which is the one that is passing nearby our school.

Throughout the mentioned school years, the children made field trips for characterization, knowledge and observation of some happenings on the section adopted, with the aid of a complete kit of materials (galoshes, loupes, tweezers, trays, fishnets, tape measure, tape of pH...). Token fields for identifications of plants and animals and specific data sheets/questionnaires, were also used and fulfilled. While in the river, it is done the collection of macro invertebrates to conclude about the water quality of the section under study. Youth also detect disturbances in the balance of the riverine ecosystem, either naturally occurring or of human origin.

Aiming the sustained development and the citizenship education, the students performed a final action for improvement, which consisted in the uprooting of an invasive plant, in this case “the herb-of-fortune” and also gathering the "trash" founded along the adopted stretch of the river.

Back to the classroom, we selected photographs and the collected data is treated and discussed to produce information (summaries, reports, tables, charts,...) which will be published in a placard at school, in the school website and in local parish council.

With this project we promote scientific curiosity and implements to the experimental scientific method, with the collection and recording of data and its discussion. Also, it appears that the happiness, the well-being, the interest, the spirit of cooperation and commitment shown by the students was a constant in all outputs and performed work. The young people were very receptive to all proposals and they were the first to saying "We want to go to the river".

They have the responsibility of the vigilance and protection of their selected river section and they will realize that the future will be so much better if we preserve our natural heritage, as rivers are.