



Reconnecting the students and their environment with geological field work

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For a solid scientific literacy, Geosciences teaching and learning require a specific skill-set. It includes a genuine curiosity for the natural environment; a problem solving oriented sense of observation and the ability to think in a spatio-temporal frame of reference apart from the common sense. When the rocks are easily seen, in good outcropping conditions, trained earth sciences students can analyze complex geological formations. But, too often, when analyzing a landscape or an outcrop, the students are facing difficulties to grasp the resources from the field and comprehend the non-obvious. We argue that these difficulties reveal a poor connection between the students and their environment. They may perceive it only in its common, everyday, utility and get a limited experience of it. The risk is then for Geology to be perceived as a science that is bound to some specific places (i.e. spectacular outcrops). While the most educational outcrops have long proved useful for teaching geology, we believe that they should not be the only ones used for fieldwork education. Specific training for skills development could be achieved in familiar places (in city or on campus sites, outdoor activities areas. . .). Teaching in unusual places could help the students to think differently. Although less pedagogical as they may appear, these geological sites could lead the students to develop problem based approaches and, in turn, be very efficient for connecting the students to the world around them, enabling easier learning of field geology.