How Outdoor Learning can promote transformative skills and empowerment

Research summary of FOLM
(extended slide deck)

Presented at the
FOLMily 'Evening of Celebration'
23.02.2022 on Zoom

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Challenges of the 21ˢᵗ century

▶ Climate crisis

▶ Imbalances of power, wealth, access to resources,…

▶ Conflicts, wicked problems

▶ Living with uncertainty

▶ …

What competencies do we need?

▶ Transferable skills and competencies

- Wide range of contexts (e.g. work, private life, citizenship)

- All demographics

- Across full adult life span

Transferable Competencies

▶ Teamwork

▶ Reflective and critical thinking

▶ Taking on responsibility

▶ Flexibility and creativity, problem-solving

▶ Etc.

"For a successful life and a well-functioning society"

(Rychen & Salganik, 2003)

Learning objectives

Outcomes of Outdoor Education (in general)

▶ Socio-emotional skills, pro-social behaviour

▶ Team work

▶ Problem solving

▶ Frustration tolerance

▶ Positive self-concept

▶ Self-efficacy, locus of control, agency

▶ Various leadership skills

▶ and others

(cf. Ewert & Sipthorp, Fiennes et a;., 2015; 2014; Neill & Richards, 1998, Rickinson et al., 2004)

How does Outdoor Learning (OL) achieve this?

Let's look at the example

'From Outdoors to Labour Market' (FOLM)

www.folmweb.com/en/
www.facebook.com/FOLM2018/

The FOLM project

▶ 3,5 year project (Sept 2018 to Feb 2022)

▶ Funded by the EEA & Norway Grants for Youth Employment

▶ OL Model from Scotland, implemented in Poland, Spain, Ireland

▶ 990 participants, age 18-29 yrs

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The research in FOLM

▶ Evaluate effectiveness of the programme for employability and transferable skills

▶ Enablers and barriers to success (of FOLM and OL in general)

▶ Enhance processes in the project and Consortium

Purpose of the research in FOLM

▶ Evaluate effectiveness of the programme for employability and TCs

▶ Enablers and barriers to success (of FOLM and OL in general)

▶ Enhance processes in the project and Consortium

How did we gather insights?

▶ Questionnaire Self & Agency (t1 – t5)

▶ Interviews (participants, staff, leadership & admin)

▶ Online surveys

▶ Personal File

▶ Evaluation forms

▶ Gamification tool

Who did we gather insights from?

▶ Participants

▶ Field staff (TR, CO, ME, Recruiters)

▶ Leadership and administrative staff

▶ (Other stakeholders)

➔ Full picture, 360 degree perspective

Findings

NB: Data collection and analysis are in progress. The following are preliminary findings

▶ Data pool: More than…

- 2000 data points from Questionnaire Self & Agency

- thousands evaluation forms

- XX hours of interviews

- etc.

Findings

To what degree is the programme and OL model effective in bringing young people who are not in Employment, Education or Training into EET?

Where participants moved on to

990 FOLM participants from **3** countries

34%
Participants who went into employment

17%
Participants in active job search, training or travel

49%
Participants who went back to education

83% effectiveness

Main areas of learning and growth

▶ Learning about themselves

  ▪ Self-reflection

  ▪ Strength, talents, ambitions

  ▪ Practicing new aspects of themselves (e.g. daily roles an chores)

▶ Self worth, confidence

▶ Goals, motivation

▶ Specific skills (Communication, team work, CV writing, job interviews)

They get the answer to the question
'Who am I?'

(FOLM Partner leadership staff)

Questionnaire Self & Agency

▶ Based on standardised tools

▶ Completed at 5 points of time across the programme

▶ Statistically significant increase in

- Positive self-concept

- Sense of Agency

Main areas of learning and growth

▶ Positive self-concept, self worth, confidence

▶ Sense of Agency, goals, motivation

▶ Transferable skills & transformative competencies

▶ specific employability-related skills (e.g., CV writing)

▶ Nature connectedness and stewardship

➔ Employability, personal wellbeing, citizenship

Factors of impact for growth & empowerment

▶ Being outdoors

(nature, physical and socio-emotional experience, remoteness,   overcoming challenges)

▶ Staff-participant relationship

(trust-based, respect, person-centred, companions in the experience)

▶ Facilitation elements of the Edinburgh Model

(group work + one-to-ones, safe space, micro-learning)

▶ Combination & Integration of the Phases

(Coaching & Mentoring for consolidation, transfer & individualisation of learning, specific knowledge & skills training)

Challenges & barriers to success

▶ Recruitment

(access to participant pool, communication, branding)

▶ Setting up the programme delivery

(Recruitment & training of staff, equipment, logistics, creating procedures & documents, etc.)

▶ Covid-19 pandemic

(Moving Coaching online, day- & place-based OL in Ireland)

Regional adaptations

▶ Adaptations were most effective when

- Responsive to regional needs, infrastructure, resources

- Focus on individual growth (instead of formal success criteria)

- Public support & Cross-sector collaboration (Parola et al., 2022)

Long-term effects?

▶ Limited data
- Not enough Q-S&A completed at t5 for statistical analysis
- Anecdotal evidence, e.g., from interviews

▶ Participant growth evident during the programme continued

▶ Self-discovery from the OL experience was deep enough to be transformative and long lasting

▶ Coaching & Mentoring are crucial for consolidation

Who benefited most from the programme?

▶ Gender

▶ Age

▶ Additional support needs

Who benefited from the programme?

▶ Gender

- Different levels of awareness and underlying discourses

- Personal factors were more significant than gender

- (Young) male participants (fun, adventure) versus female (focussed, self-reflected)

- OL / FOLM programme offered a space to overcome societal expectations & roles

Who benefited from the programme?

▶ Age:

- Persons with more complex life experiences were more self-reflected and ready to change

- Younger participants were more interested in the Outdoor 'adventure' than the work on self (Coaching)

- Diversity was beneficial for all

Who benefited from the programme?

▶ Additional support needs

- Growth path before employment
- Irish day- and place-based courses more inclusive
- Outdoor vs. classroom-based learning

Who benefited most from the programme?

▶ Gender

▶ Age

▶ Additional support needs

➔ People who

- are ready & motivated to change

- whose needs are met

Key insights gained

▶ FOLM was very successful in promoting EET and transferable skills

▶ Regional adaptations are possible and even required for optimal benefits

▶ Public sector support and integration is a key booster for effect and impact

▶ The field staff (Trainers, Coaches and Mentors) were key to participants growth and project success!
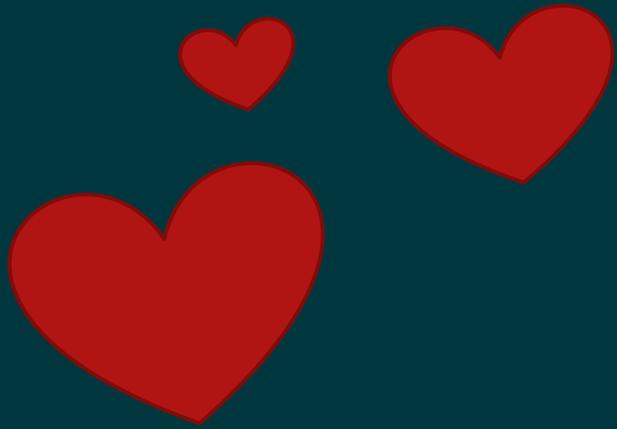
Thank you!

The FOLM Consortium

▶ Centre for Innovative Education, PL (Project Lead)

▶ Food Bank Olsztyn, PL

▶ Cantabria Regional Government, ES

▶ Femxa Group, ES

▶ Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest, IE

▶ The Venture Trust, UK

▶ The University of Edinburgh, UK
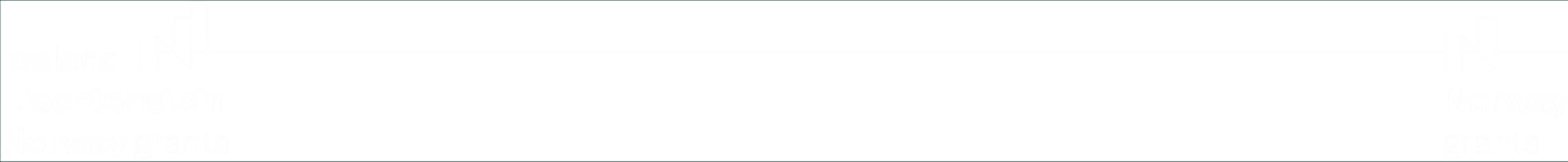
Funding

The project *From Outdoors to Labour Market* (FOLM) is funded by the EEA & Norway Grants for Youth Employment (Project number 2017-1-192, September 2018 – February 2022).

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Sources of images

▶ Photo of jule hildmann: jule hildmann

▶ All other photos: FOLM