Forest of Happy Children

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Slovenia and Slovenian Forest

Forest is a common element of the Slovene landscape. 60% of Slovenia is covered by forests.
Slovenia and Slovenian educational system

Today the most important task in school is sitting in a chair.

Gustav Igler (1842-1908), Left to their own devices - 1881
What is the relationship between forest and children?

Forest <-> Children (Class)

Unique, Creative World on Its Own

Forest Is Not an Agricultural Area!

School Is Not Conveyor Belt!

Creative Approach!
Research on outdoor play in the Kindergarten A. Medveda Kamnik

- parents, children and kindergarten teachers
Parents about playing in the natural environment!

😊 All parents confirmed that as children they had played in natural environments (N= 157),

😊 94% of parents would prefer that their children attended kindergarten in the countryside, near forest (N= 157),

😊 97% of parents had prepared the kids better fitted for the forest excursions (waterproof footwear and clothing) (N= 157),

😊 all parents wished, that the forest activities would continue in next school year (N=103).

HURRAY FOR PARENTS!
Which problems did parents identify?

- Ticks: 29%
- Bad weather: 29%
- Distance from kindergarten: 12%
- No obstacles: 12%
- Children's clothes: 4%
- Too few educators: 5%
- Terrain: 4%
- The possibility of injuries: 3%
- Big animals: 3%
- Heavy control of children: 3%
- Condition of forest: 2%
- Regulations: 2%
- Poisonous things: 2%

N = 157
Children about playing in the natural environment?

- sand: 22.3%
- branches: 12.9%
- leaves: 12.6%
- water: 12.4%
- stones: 10.0%
- toys: 6.1%
- cones: 3.9%
- other answers: 5.6%
- grass: 2.4%
- bushes: 2.2%
- trees: 1.2%
- flowers: 1.0%
- walnuts: 1.0%

N = 275
What did we ask children?

Children about playing in the natural environment?

And after a one year of spending a lot of time in the forest?

- **N= 275**
  - 34% inside kindergarten
  - 29% playground
  - 36% home

- **N= 142**
  - 57% forest
  - 33% playground
  - 10% inside kindergarten
Kindergarten teachers about playing in the natural environment?

At the beginning there was fear and insecurity.

It the end there was only enthusiasm and today kindergarten teachers have the courage to lead the children into the forest.
What was between?

😊 Lectures were organized for educators about forest pedagogy and the methodology of teaching outdoors,

😊 we carried out many trips to the forest together with the children,

😊 we included parents, who were all well informed,

😊 we built trust between educators, principle and forest pedagogue.
Recommendations for the Forest pedagogue and Teachers

😄 Innovative approaches and be creative,
😄 you must be patient an calm teachers,
😄 you must correctly assess the child's actions.
A forest in which there is a group of children should be seen as part of life and not just as an ecosystem which can be integrated into different school subjects.

This is the end!