



SciCamp: Science Holiday Camps in Europe (Comenius project)

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Abstract

The lack of scientists and technicians is an EU-wide problem. As one solution for this in many countries summer camps were established, having two main objectives: recruiting more young people for a career as scientist or technician and increasing the scientific literacy. The impact of summer camps on career decisions are not yet researched, but evaluations show a broad acceptance of these events. Facilitating positive experience for young people in science and technology is one (of the best) ways to increase interest in these careers [1].

Most summer camps are designed to provide positive learning experiences for the participants, strengthen the intrinsic value that youth put into science, and increase the awareness of the diverse opportunities available in science, technology and health. It has been stated that cook-book activities have a small or even a negative effect [2, 3]. As summer-camps allow a much more open approach they offer a much more constructivistic learning of science and technology. It might be interesting to discover an effect on gender according to this fact.

The SciCamp project lasts from December 2012 til December 2015. We would like to research on the long-term effect of summer camps through interviews, questionnaires and follow-up data collection. As our project group conducts summer camps since years, we are able to follow the participants from former years, who in some cases made their career decision and already started the vocational training or university studies.

Also we collect and analyse the specific characteristics of science camps such as location, staff, time, programme, entertainment, target group, collaboration with local organisations and funding.

The SciCamp project has the following four core areas. (1) Exchange for organisers about planning, experiences and best practice. (2) Evaluation and research of the impact of the activities on the participants. (3) Discussion on economic aspects of science camps such as fundraising, staff costs and reduction of costs through collaboration. (4) Sustainability , suggestions for classroom activities, links to local SMEs and industry and contact between school and higher education. Our partners are the "ELHUYAR Foundation" (Basque country), "Centre for the Promotion of Science" (Serbia), "South Denmark University", "ScienceTalenter" (Denmark), "Fundação da Juventude" (Portugal) and the "Young Scientists of Slovakia".

References

- [1] Crombie et al, 2003: Positive effects of science and technology summer camps on confidence, values and future intentions (Europe needs more scientists, 2004).
- [2] Hofstein, A. & Lunetta, V. N. (2004). The Laboratory in Science Education: Foundations.
- [3] Hodson, D. (1993). Re-thinking Old Ways: Towards a more critical approach to practical work in school science.