

Environmental Education in North Western Europe: the Case of the North Sea

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This paper introduces the North Sea as a fast evolving coastal ecosystem. The variability of natural conditions relates to the global climatic change and to human disturbances, which originate regionally. Considering contemporary challenges for educating the wider public about the main issues of environmental concern, attention is paid to various strategies, which are being developed in North Western Europe from Primary schools to Universities. “Learning for life” relies on an opening of the vocation of traditional universities and on the creation of a true European University. Sharing resources in a competitive environment is one response given by British Universities in the framework of a Discipline Network in Coastal Sciences and Management in 1996-2000. Networking is truly the key to a fast evolving teaching and learning context, notably in relation to ever developing Information and Communication Technologies. The dissemination of scientific information is primordial in this context; a case study relating to the European project “Marine biodiversity in Europe” (BIOMARE) demonstrates the need for an elaborated strategy leading to socio-economic considerations. Empowering communities and governance are the main possible outcomes of such an enlarged approach to education, involving teachers, students, researchers, professionals and volunteers through non-governmental organisations. Proposals are made for amplifying the involvement of non-scientists into scientific research and its applications to management. Finally, a case is made for facilitating the mobility of all concerned, with a view to annihilate language and cultural barriers.