

The importance and benefits of bees and other insects

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MALTA

Insects are very important organisms and indispensable for the whole ecosystem to function correctly and for the survival of the human species on earth. Sometimes these animals are ignored and most often the insects closest to us are considered to be pests. The aim of the project is to show the importance of insects through the honeybee. Being one of the most important creatures for pollination, it was deemed perfect as the project's ambassador. The project also highlights their importance in the food chain.

As part of the promotion of VET organised by the Maltese Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, the office responsible for Agribusiness education decided to take the promotion a step further by extending an outreach programme that is targeted for potential VET students at least 10 years from now. The idea behind this is to accomplish the greening of VET by instilling the relevant soft skills and attitudes in the upcoming generation

Geographical area

Malta

Period of implementation

The initiative was piloted in September 2022 and is planned to continue indefinitely.

The piloting phase was concluded in June 2023 and is currently operating on request from state and non-state primary schools targeting mainly early years.

Scope of the practice

This project focuses mainly on the appreciation of insects as an essential part of the whole planet's ecosystem whilst keeping a simplistic, yet well informed presentation fit for early years students. In turn, students participating in this project will be provided with a perspective on nature that is holistic and promotes the appreciation of all life forms.

Educational level

Primary school early years: Kindergarten 2, Year1, Year2 and Year 3 (ages 4-8).

Introduction and context

In a context of ever-increasing urbanisation and detachment from the natural world, fostering skills required for the green transition is a challenge. This project was introduced to allow students to have an interactive encounter with honeybees and other insects to appreciate their role in nature that ultimately established the possibility to have human civilisations.

Key activities and outcomes

- A beekeeper visits the school wearing apicultural personal protective equipment (PPEs) and holding an observation hive containing live bees. Each session starts off through a brief talk about insect and their life cycle. This inspires curiosity and introduces the topic;
- Students are invited to wear the PPEs and use basic beekeeping tools such as the smoker, hive tool, and beekeeper's bee brush. This increases excitement leading to the next part where this project contributes to achieving the national learning outcome in early years concerning the use of senses;
- Use of senses are explored through feeling honeycomb, smelling the bee smoker, listening to bees buzzing, watching bees in the observation hive. Taste is not included due to risk of allergies; however, this is referred to by describing honey as being sweet;
- Depending on the location of the activity the smoker (the one used in beekeeping) will be fired up and students are invited to utilise it;
- Teachers are then encouraged to include activities where students can draw different insects to link the project to the emergent curriculum;
- The overarching aims of the project include the nurturing of all life forms to restore natural habitats where such insects can thrive and ultimately contribute to a sense of thinking that fosters the key elements of a green transition.



SOURCES

<https://youths.gov.mt/contact/>