

Disaster Education and Children with Visual Impairment

Authors : Vassilis Argyropoulos, Magda Nikolarazi, Maria Papazafiri

Abstract : This study describes a series of learning workshops, which took place within CUIDAR project. The workshops aimed to empower children to share their experiences and views in relation to natural hazards and disasters. The participants in the workshops were ten primary school students who had severe visual impairments or multiple disabilities and visual impairments (MDVI). The main objectives of the workshops were: a) to promote access of the children through the use of appropriate educational material such as texts in braille, enlarged text, tactile maps and the implementation of differentiated instruction, b) to make children aware regarding their rights to have access to information and to participate in planning and decision-making especially in relation to disaster education programs, and c) to encourage children to have an active role during the workshops through child-led and experiential learning activities. The children expressed their views regarding the meaning of hazards and disasters. Following, they discussed their experiences and emotions regarding natural hazards and disasters, and they chose to place the emphasis on a hazard, which was more pertinent to them, their community and their region, namely fires. Therefore, they recalled fires that have caused major disasters, and they discussed about the impact that these fires had on their community or on their country. Furthermore, they were encouraged to become aware regarding their own role and responsibility to prevent a fire or get prepared and know how to behave if a fire occurs. They realized that prevention and preparation are a matter of personal responsibility. They also felt the responsibility to inform their own families. Finally, they met important people involved in fire protection such as rescuers and firefighters and had the opportunity to carry dialogues. In conclusion, through child led workshops, experiential and accessible activities, the students had the opportunity to share their own experiences, to express their views and their questions, to broaden their knowledge and to realize their personal responsibility in disaster risk reduction, specifically in relation to fires.

Keywords : accessibility, children, disasters, visual impairment

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