



Risk Communication via Environmental Education

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Creating awareness, understanding and responsibility for hazard and risk related issues is fundamental for a sustainable future of the Alps, as mountain regions are especially susceptible to all aspects of global change and experience its effects at first hand. Due to the high altitudinal gradients of these regions, meteorological, hydrological and ecological phenomena are diverse and very sensitive, and therefore, changes can be detected at an early stage. Moreover, land use possibilities are often extremely limited in space and type, which renders the population more vulnerable to these changes. Since the human impact itself increases often more rapidly than in lowland areas, mountain regions are at higher risk of being affected by natural hazards.

Environmental education is an ideal tool for communicating risk effectively due to its integrative and interdisciplinary character. The environmental education concept for the community of Galtür, Tyrol, acknowledges the importance of risk communication and concentrates therefore on this issue of highest concern for the population of the Alps. Thus, the main goal of the concept is to empower people and create a sense of stewardship by developing action- and decision-making competencies in the field of natural hazards and their associated risk.

The approach, which incorporates geographical, sociological as well as pedagogic and didactic methods, is split into three integral parts. These comprise analysing the educational potential of the Alpine environment, recording the educational interest in the Alpine environment, and, finally, developing implementation strategies for environmental education programmes. Three studies are conducted to examine the aspects of each part of the environmental education concept. This paper will give insight into the approach of the concept, discuss the results obtained by the studies and report on first

test-runs made. Furthermore, possibilities of transferring the concept to other Alpine regions will be given.

Environmental education-based risk communication needs to be regarded as an essential part of innovative risk management, as it disseminates state-of-the-art knowledge on risk and natural hazards research. Above all, it enables people to act on their behalf, take action for the environment and contribute to a sustainable development.

An oral presentation is preferred.