

MIND THE GAPS: FROM FORMAL TO INFORMAL EDUCATION; FROM UNIVERSITY TO SOCIETY

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Education is an inalienable right of human beings and a fundamental requirement for individuals to have access to goods and services available in society. A formal education hierarchically structured with a chronologically graded “education system” runs from primary school through the university. In turn, informal education is a truly lifelong process and enables individuals to acquire attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience.

This work shows how a group of university students enrolled in the graduation program of Biology and Geology (BG) at University of Minho, Braga, Portugal can learn some biochemical subjects by creating 3D pieces. These are both relevant for students’ learning of the particular scientific topic under study but also for promoting and disseminate some informal knowledge about the same topic to different publics. The created objects were exhibited under the name “Water: why do we need it?” in a public library during 15 days, on behalf of the celebration of The World Water Day, promoted by the United Nations. Simultaneously, a set of hands-on activities designed for children between 6 and 10 years old and having as theme “Water – Value the Drop!” was promoted during a Saturday morning, in collaboration with an association of undergraduate students enrolled in the degree of Applied Biology, at the same University. The children also visited and explored the exhibition having the BG students as monitors.

The different pieces presented have an interactive and itinerant character and can be shown at several places (with more or less pedagogical character) where they can be the motto for the exploration of different themes conveyed in the exhibition.

Keywords: formal and informal education, students from different age levels, science for society.