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Preserve and spread of traditional plant varieties

Class of 4th Grade of the 2nd Minority Primary School of Komotini[1], M., Molla[2]

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Abstract

The seeds of the traditional varieties which we have inherited from our ancestors thousands of years ago are vanishing in our days and with them we are losing our connection with them and the biodiversity. In this eTwinning project teachers and students aimed at becoming an ark with the mission to protect and save these seeds. We started our quest by making our questionnaire which was simple since it consisted of three questions but would ultimately tell the story of how the traditional seeds were inherited to us. Students researched within their family and neighborhood context. The findings of their research showed that only about 10% of the students found seeds of traditional vegetable varieties. Subsequently we tried to multiply these seeds by cultivating them and spreading them to our school and our community.

Keywords

Traditional seeds of vegetable varieties; students' research; Minority Primary School; eTwinning;

Introduction

Over the past three decades, 75% of the genetic diversity of agricultural crops has been lost (What is Agrobiodiversity?, 2020) with a 100 to 1000-fold decrease overtime (Corvalan, Hales, & McMichael, 2005). This phenomenon results in the decrease of ecosystem abilities to provide food for people and decrease the function of other ecosystem services (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, 2008). International concerns about the loss of plant diversity were discussed in the Commission for Plant Genetic Resources at FAO in 1985 (Louwaars, 2014) and more recently in the Conference of the Parties for the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2002 (The Convention on Biological Diversity Plant Conservation Report, 2009). Thus it is important for future generations to learn about the importance of the role of traditional varieties of seeds for the function of ecosystems services and the provision of food for people in order to preserve and spread traditional varieties of seeds.

Introduction

In 2016 the 4th grade of the 2nd Minority Primary School of Komotini participated in an eTwinning project called “Preserve and Spread of traditional vegetable varieties” founded by Nikolaos Dompazis a teacher at the 9th Primary School. Since 2000 he had created a network of schools in the region of Rodopi that sowed and cultivated seeds of traditional vegetable varieties which he provided in the context of the PELITI network with the support of the Munipalicity of Komotini. Students of the participating schools cultivated these seeds in their schools and would later on share the grown plants within their school and provide a portion of it for the annual local festival for traditional vegetable plant varieties for the interested farmers of our community. Hence, this project was transformed in that year also in an eTwinning project in which 10 teachers and 62 students participated from four countries, Greece, Italy, Poland and Turkey.

School Context

The 2nd Minority Primary School of Komotini is one of the Minority Primary School of Thrace. These Schools are bilingual and have a Greek and Turkish language program while their students are entirely Muslims. The curriculum of these Schools follows the Program of the Education of the Muslim Minority Children in Thrace.

Method

This project was implemented in the context of the Greek language program and integrated in the subjects of Language and Environmental Sciences. The teaching approaches which were used were learning through experience and constructivism combined with inquiry based learning. After discussing about the importance of the seeds of traditional vegetable varieties in the plenary of the classroom and with our partners via the eTwinning platform we decided the procedure that the students would follow in the inquiry and made a simple questionnaire that consisted of three questions which would ultimately tell the story of the seeds of the traditional vegetable varieties. Here is the procedure that they would follow:

I ask my relatives and friends if they have any seeds of traditional varieties of vegetables.

I ask them to give me a few to sow them in our school.

I'm writing a short story for the seeds I find.

1. What kind of seeds they are (tomato, pepper, cabbage, etc.....)
2. The name of the variety (if it has one)
3. The size, the color, the shape, the taste of the fruit.
4. The productivity (though it gives a lot or a few fruits)
5. Its path (from where it came, how many years it is cultivated)

<u>If I do not find any seeds.</u>

The questionnaire that consisted of three questions they would have to answer was the following:

I write:

Where did I seek for seeds?

Who did I ask?

What did they tell me?

The students began inquiring about seeds of the traditional vegetable varieties within their families and their neighborhood.

Conclusion

From the 16 students of the 4th grade only around 10% of the students came back with actual seeds of traditional vegetable varieties which they grandparents had obtained from the traditional vegetable plant varieties that had been sowed and cultivated in our School due to our participation in the previous years in the School Network that Nikolaos Dompazis had created. These seeds come in envelops with their story accompanied by drawings. Most of the students that had not found seeds did not fill out the questionnaire but would give orally answers. This could be explained due to their disappointment that they hadn't found any in combination with their enthusiasm for this research. The findings of our research confirmed that seeds of the traditional vegetable varieties are vanishing in our days. Thus it is crucial as it was aforementioned for future generations to learn about the importance of the role of traditional varieties of seeds for the function of ecosystems services and the provision of food for people in order to preserve and spread traditional varieties of seeds.

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