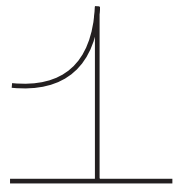




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Obsah

Contents

Úvodník	5	— Jan Šimek
Editorial		
Studie	13	The Role of Nature in (Latin) Education in the Bohemian Lands in the 16th and Early 17th Centuries — Martin Holý
Studies	33	Johann Christoph Döll (1808–1885), „Der Erzähler, ein belehrendes Lesebuch für Jedermann“ (1850). Zu Entstehung, Konzept und Gebrauch eines Lehrmittels für den Unterricht im Männerzuchthaus Bruchsal <i>Johann Christoph Döll (1808–1885), „Der Erzähler, ein belehrendes Lesebuch für Jedermann“ (1850). On the Origin, Concept, and Use of a Teaching Aid for Instruction in the Bruchsal Men's Prison</i> — Daniel Oelbauer
	57	Vzdelávanie v službách plánovaného hospodárstva: Priemyselné školstvo na Slovensku (1948–1953) <i>Education in the service of a planned Economy: Industrial Education in Slovakia (1948–1953)</i> — Soňa Gabzdilová & Mária Ďurkovská
	87	The Mediterranean University Cruise of 1933: A Symbol of Pedagogical Renewal in the Second Spanish Republic — Andra Santiesteban & Jaime del Rey Tapia
	113	Die Grauzonen der „Volksgemeinschaft“ – Ein erzwungener Gang ins Unbestimmte <i>The Grey Areas of the „Volksgemeinschaft“ – A Forced Descent into Indeterminacy</i> — Jakob Benecke

**Studie
Studies**

- 139 Carl Friedrich Riemanns (1756–1812) Studienaufenthalt (1780) an der Rochowschen Musterschule in Reckahn und seine Publikation in vier Auflagen (1781/1792/1798/1809). Beobachtungen – Beschreibungen – Folgerungen
Carl Friedrich Riemann's (1756–1812) study visit (1780) to Rochow's model school in Reckahn and his publication in four editions (1781/1792/1798/1809). Observations – Descriptions – Conclusions
— Frank Tosch
- 165 Nature and Art – The Role of Nature in Hungarian Visual Culture Education since the 1990s, with a Focus on Post-2010 Curricular Reforms
— Erika Anna Turzai & Beatrix Vincze
- 193 Dětské útulky jako možnost a specifická forma institucionální péče o děti předškolního věku v českých zemích a v Československu
Children's shelters as an option and a specific form of institutional care for preschool-aged children in the Czech lands and in Czechoslovakia
— Eva Maria Hrdinová & Karel Konečný

Editorial

The current issue of the journal presents eight studies from the field of the history of education (*Historische Bildungsforschung*). The published articles exhibit considerable chronological, geographical, and thematic diversity. The thematic scope of the contributions spans from the early modern period (the sixteenth century) to reflections on curricular reforms in **the first quarter** of the twenty-first century. Geographically, the authors focus primarily on Central Europe – specifically the Bohemian lands, Slovakia, Germany, and Hungary – with a comparative extension provided by a study on the history of education in Spain. Despite the absence of a single overarching theme, several natural thematic clusters emerge. These concern the role of nature and aesthetics in education, the instrumentalization of schooling by authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, and, finally, the phenomena of educational reform and emancipation.

The first thematic group consists of studies reflecting on nature and its educational, ethical, and aesthetic functions across centuries. An early modern perspective is introduced by **Martin Holý**, who analyzes the role of nature in Latin education in the Bohemian lands during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Avoiding a one-sided theological or philosophical interpretation, the author draws on a broad range of source material (school regulations, university disputations, and Comenius's *Informatorium maternum*) to demonstrate how the contemporary theocentric worldview was intertwined with the moral formation of the individual through botanical metaphors and the systematic observation of the natural order. This research is chronologically followed by **Frank Tosch**, who focuses on the turn of the nineteenth century in Prussia. Examining four editions of a text by C. F. Riemann (1781–1809), Tosch documents the reception and dissemination of the enlightenment reforms implemented at the Rochow model school in Reckahn and their influence on the Potsdam Military Orphanage. Tosch demonstrates that the reform consisted both in

transforming material conditions (emphasizing light and fresh air) and in the gradual professionalization of teachers, moving philanthropic ideas toward Pestalozzian methods. A counterpoint to these historical analyses is provided by **Erika Anna Turzai and Beatrix Vincze**, who shift the focus to the present day. They examine the role of nature and the Nature Art movement in Hungarian visual culture education and museum pedagogy from the 1990s through the curricular reforms after 2010. Based on a qualitative analysis of curricula and manuals, the authors capture a shift from an earlier experiential approach to outdoor activities toward a contemporary conceptual framework that links art education with environmental awareness.

The second distinct line of this issue is formed by contributions analyzing education and school institutions as tools of state control, rehabilitation, or ideological indoctrination. Situated in the mid-nineteenth century, the study by **Daniel Oelbauer** examines specific teaching aids in penal institutions, focusing on Döll's 1850 reading book designed for the men's prison in Bruchsal, Baden. Through the licensing processes of this textbook, the author uncovers the institutional aims of contemporary prison pedagogy and the Ministry of Justice, while also touching upon period writing practices and the issue of plagiarism in textbook compilation. The challenges of the twentieth-century totalitarian state are addressed by **Jakob Benecke**, who examines the National Socialist dictatorship. Using the structures of the Hitler Youth (*Hitlerjugend*) and its special units (*Sonderbanne*), he analyzes the ideological "grey areas" (*Grauzonen*) arising between the totalitarian pressure for inclusion into the racially defined community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) on the one hand and the threat of exclusion on the other, tracing their biographical impact on growing youth.

Two subsequent texts address the apparatus of control and social engineering under the post-war communist regime in Czechoslovakia. **Eva Maria Hrdinová and Karel Konečný** explore the history of day nurseries (*dětské útulky*) as a specific form of institutional pre-school care. Utilizing the methodology of conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*), the authors first analyze the terminological development

(nursery, day-care center, asylum) in Austria-Hungary and interwar Czechoslovakia, subsequently illuminating the rapid expansion of agricultural and industrial nurseries in the 1950s. Based on extensive archival research, the text demonstrates how these specific facilities, which supplemented the existing network of kindergartens, served as an economic tool of the state to release labor during the collectivization of agriculture. Parallel developments in Slovakia between 1948 and 1953 are reflected by **Soňa Gabzdilová and Mária Ďurková**, who analyze Slovak vocational and technical secondary education during the first five-year plan. The authors demonstrate how industrial schools were subordinated to the goals of a centrally planned economy, resulting in the ideological instrumentalization of the teaching profession, where institutional autonomy was suppressed in favor of producing politically loyal cadres.

The final contribution to this issue departs from the preceding analyses of power and directs attention to the emancipatory and innovative potential of pedagogy. **Andra Santiesteban and Jaime del Rey Tapia** present the Mediterranean University Cruise of 1933 as a key educational initiative of the Second Spanish Republic. The article analyzes this 45-day study voyage as a practical implementation of the active pedagogy principles promoted by the reformist movement *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, which was built on experiential learning, interdisciplinarity, and the dismantling of traditional hierarchies between professors and students. Furthermore, the authors combine historical analysis with museum pedagogy, reflecting on the role of physical objects (a ship model in the university museum) in preserving this educational heritage.

Taken as a whole, the presented collection of eight studies offers a rich insight into the methodological diversity of the contemporary history of education. In this issue, readers will find papers drawing on classical heuristics in national and institutional archives, analyses of the contemporary press, textbooks, and curricular documents, as well as contributions applying the methods of conceptual history or material culture. The journal thus provides stimulating material for further

scholarly discussion on how political, social, material, and ideological factors shaped educational reality in the European context.

Úvodník

Aktuální číslo časopisu předkládá odborné veřejnosti celkem osm studií z oboru dějin pedagogiky a historického výzkumu vzdělávání (*Historische Bildungsforschung*). Publikované texty vykazují značnou chronologickou, geografickou i tematickou pluralitu. Tematický rozsah předkládaných příspěvků sahá od raného novověku (16. století) až po reflexi kurikulárních reforem v první čtvrtině 21. století. Geograficky se autoři zaměřují primárně na prostor střední Evropy – konkrétně na české země, Slovensko, Německo a Maďarsko –, přičemž komparativní přesah zajišťuje studie věnovaná dějinám školství ve Španělsku. I přes absenci jednotného zastřešujícího tématu lze mezi jednotlivými texty vysledovat přirozené tematické okruhy, jež se dotýkají role přírody a estetiky ve vzdělávání, instrumentalizace školství v rukou autoritářských či totalitních režimů a v neposlední řadě také fenoménu pedagogické reformy a emancipace.

První tematickou skupinu tvoří studie reflektující reflexi přírody a její edukační, etické či estetické funkce v proměnách staletí. Raně novověkou perspektivu otevírá **Martin Holý**, který analyzuje roli přírody v latinském vzdělávání v českých zemích v 16. a na počátku 17. století. Autor se vyhýbá jednostrannému teologickému či filozofickému výkladu a na základě široké pramenné základny (školní řády, univerzitní disputace, Komenského *Informatorium školy mateřské*) dokládá, jak byl tehdejší teocentrický pohled na svět provázán s morální formací jedince skrze botanické metafory a systematické pozorování přírodního řádu. Na tento výzkum chronologicky navazuje **Frank Tosch**, jenž se zaměřuje na přelom 18. a 19. století v Prusku. Na příkladu čtyř vydání spisu C. F. Riemanna (1781–1809) dokumentuje recepci a šíření osvícenských reforem Rochowovy vzorné školy v Reckahnu a jejich

vliv na Postupimský vojenský sirotčinec. Tosch ukazuje, že tehdejší reforma spočívala jak v proměně materiálních podmínek (důraz na světlo a vzduch), tak v postupné profesionalizaci učitelů a postupné transformaci filantropických myšlenek směrem k Pestalozziho metodám. Kontrapunkt k těmto historickým analýzám představuje text **Eriky Anny Turzai a Beatrix Vincze**, který se přesouvá do současnosti a zkoumá roli přírody a uměleckého směru *Nature Art* v maďarském výtvarném vzdělávání a muzejní pedagogice od 90. let 20. století po kurikulární reformy po roce 2010. Autorky na základě kvalitativní analýzy osnov a příruček zachycují posun od ranějšího zážitkového pojetí outdoorových aktivit k současnému konceptuálnímu pojetí, jež propojuje estetickou výchovu s environmentálním vědomím.

Druhou výraznou linii čísla představují příspěvky analyzující vzdělávání a školské instituce jako nástroje státní kontroly, nápravy či ideologické indoktrinace. Do poloviny 19. století je situována studie **Daniela Oelbauera**, která zkoumá specifické edukační pomůcky v nápravných zařízeních, konkrétně Döllovu čítanku z roku 1850 určenou pro věznicí pro muže v bádenském Bruchsalu. Autor skrze schvalovací procesy této pomůcky odkrývá institucionální záměry tehdejší nápravné pedagogiky a ministerstva spravedlnosti, přičemž se dotýká i dobové literární praxe a otázky plagiátorství při sestavování učebnic. Problematiku totalitního státu 20. století otevírá **Jakob Benecke**, který se věnuje nacionálněsocialistické diktatuře. Na příkladu struktur Hitlerjugend a jejich specifických oddílů (*Sonderbanne*) analyzuje ideologické „šedé zóny“ (*Grauzonen*) vznikající mezi totalitním tlakem na inkluzi do rasově definované komunity (*Volksgemeinschaft*) na straně jedné a hrozbou exkluze na straně druhé, a sleduje jejich biografický dopad na dospívající mládež.

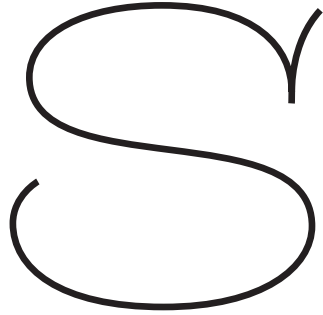
Na aparát kontroly a sociálního inženýrství, tentokrát v podmínkách poválečného komunistického režimu v Československu, navazují další dva texty. **Eva Maria Hrdinová a Karel Konečný** se zabývají historií tzv. dětských útulků jako specifické formy předškolní péče. Autoři metodou dějin pojmů (*Begriffsgeschichte*) nejprve analyzují terminologický vývoj (útulek, opatrovna, azyl) v Rakousku-Uhersku a meziválečném Československu, aby následně osvětlili prudký rozvoj zejména

zemědělských a závodních útulků v 50. letech 20. století. Text na základě rozsáhlého archivního výzkumu ukazuje, jak tato specifická zařízení doplňující tehdejší síť mateřských škol sloužila jako ekonomický nástroj státu pro uvolnění pracovních sil během kolektivizace. Souběžný vývoj na Slovensku v letech 1948–1953 reflektují **Soňa Gabzdilová a Mária Ďurkovská**, které analyzují slovenské průmyslové školství v první pětiletce. Autorky demonstrují, jak bylo odborné školství podřízeno cílům plánovaného hospodářství a jak došlo k ideologické instrumentalizaci učitelské profese, kdy byla autonomie škol potlačena ve prospěch produkce politicky loajálních kádrů.

Poslední příspěvek aktuálního čísla se vymyká předchozím mocenským analýzám a obrací pozornost k emancipačnímu a inovativnímu potenciálu pedagogiky. **Andra Santiesteban a Jaime del Rey Tapia** představují Středomořskou univerzitní plavbu z roku 1933 jako klíčovou edukační iniciativu Druhé španělské republiky. Text analyzuje tuto 45denní studijní cestu jako praktickou realizaci principů aktivní pedagogiky reformního hnutí *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, jež stavělo na zážitkovém učení, interdisciplinaritě a stírání tradičních hierarchií mezi profesory a studenty. Autoři navíc kombinují historickou analýzu s muzejní pedagogikou, když reflektují roli fyzických objektů (modelu lodi v univerzitním muzeu) při uchovávání tohoto pedagogického dědictví.

Předkládaný soubor osmi studií jako celek nabízí bohatý vhled do metodologické rozmanitosti současných dějin pedagogiky. Čtenáři v tomto čísle naleznou práce těžící z klasické heuristiky v národních i institucionálních archivech, analýzy dobového tisku, učebnic a kurikulárních dokumentů, stejně jako příspěvky aplikující metodu dějin pojmů či materiální kultury. Časopis tak přináší podnětné podklady pro další odbornou diskuzi o tom, jakým způsobem politické, sociální, materiální a ideologické faktory formovaly edukační realitu v evropském kontextu.

Jan Šimek
šéfredaktor
Editor-in-Chief



Studie *Studies*

- 13 Martin Holý
- 33 Daniel Oelbauer
- 57 Soňa Gabzdilová
& Mária Ďurková
- 87 Andra Santiesteban
& Jaime del Rey Tapia
- 113 Jakob Benecke
- 139 Frank Tosch
- 165 Erika Anna Turzai
& Beatrix Vincze
- 193 Eva Maria Hrdinová
& Karel Konečný

Nature and Art – The Role of Nature in Hungarian Visual Culture Education since the 1990s, with a Focus on Post-2010 Curricular Reforms



Erika Anna Turzai^a
Beatrix Vincze^b

^a Eötvös Loránd University, Doctoral School of Education, Hungary
teafilter@student.elte.hu

^b Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Institute of Education, Hungary
vincze.beatrix@ppk.elte.hu

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Abstract The natural environment is closely connected to the visual arts: it may function not only as the subject of an artwork, but also as its medium, context, raw material, and even as a means of artistic creation (Brady, 2006; Egervári, 2022). Nature also possesses a performative quality that influences artistic processes, affecting the creator and shaping the conditions of creation; in this sense, it can become both the object of observation and the site of artistic practice (Căbuz, 2021). Within this framework, Nature Art offers a pedagogical approach that is particularly relevant to visual culture education, as it integrates aesthetic experience, experiential learning, and environmental awareness.

This study examines the role of nature and nature-based artistic practices in Hungarian

visual culture education and museum pedagogy since the 1990s. The research is based on a qualitative analysis of visual culture curricula, framework curricula, and teacher's manuals, as well as museum education publications and relevant scholarly literature. It explores how Nature Art and related practices appear in formal and informal educational contexts, and how curricular changes following the political transition have shaped the pedagogical use of outdoor and nature-based activities.

The analysis focuses on the pedagogical functions attributed to nature, including its role as a source of inspiration, as material and medium, as a site of artistic creation, and as a means of developing aesthetic perception and environmental awareness. At the same time, an increasing number of school and museum programmes demonstrate the pedagogical potential of Nature Art, which is applied from early childhood onwards and occupies an increasingly visible position within Hungarian educational discourse.

Keywords art education, Nature Art, outdoor education, nature-based pedagogy, museum education

Introduction

The integration of outdoor and nature-based activities into visual culture education has gained increasing attention in recent decades, as such approaches offer distinct pedagogical advantages. They support environmental awareness, interdisciplinary learning, and holistic skill development, while fostering direct, sensory engagement with the surrounding world (Whitehead, 1919; Egervári & Mészáros, 2023). These considerations have become particularly pressing in the context of the climate crisis and the growing emphasis on sustainability within education. Contemporary research highlights that nature-based artistic practices encourage learners to observe, manipulate, and interpret natural phenomena, while simultaneously developing artistic competencies and reflective awareness (Waters & Maynard, 2010; Rönkkö, Aeriala & Sintonen, 2023). The attentive and protective attitude towards nature that characterises Nature Art practices thus offers not only an artistic model but also a broader ethical example for education.

The relationship between nature and visual art has long occupied a central place in both artistic thought and pedagogical practice. Nature has functioned not only as a represented motif, but also as a source of inspiration, material, and site of artistic creation, particularly within contemporary art practices informed by ecological perspectives (Tatai, 2018). Parallel to this development, pedagogical approaches that emphasise learning through direct experience, embodied engagement, and environment-based situations have become increasingly prominent in both international and Hungarian discourse (Dewey, 1916/1997; Priest, 1986; Quay & Seaman, 2013). These approaches frame learning as an active process rooted in lived experience, in which perception, action, and reflection are closely interconnected.

The temporal focus of the present study begins in the early 1990s. Following the political transition, Hungarian public education and curriculum development underwent significant structural and conceptual transformations that fundamentally reshaped the aims, content, and methodological frameworks of art education. The introduction of the National Core Curriculum in 1995 marked not only a new regulatory structure, but also a shift towards interdisciplinary connections,

experiential pedagogy, and environmental education (Chrappán, 2022). During this period, pedagogical initiatives emerged that interpreted nature not merely as curricular content, but as an active learning environment and experiential space.

Visual culture education occupies a distinctive position within these processes. On the one hand, the subject is inherently linked to sensory perception, material engagement, and the observation of the environment. On the other hand, successive curricular reforms—most notably the gradual reduction of lesson hours and the withdrawal of visual culture from upper secondary education—have increasingly constrained its pedagogical scope (Bodóczy, 2002; Chrappán, 2022). This tension renders the examination of nature-based and Nature Art-related pedagogical practices particularly relevant, both within official curricular documents and in their translation into school and museum practice.

Within international scholarship, concepts such as outdoor education, place-based education, and nature-based learning provide a theoretical framework in which learning is understood as an active and reflective relationship with place and environment (Donaldson & Donaldson, 1958; Sobel, 2004; Rönkkö et al., 2023). In the Hungarian pedagogical context, these approaches appear primarily at the intersection of environmental education, experiential pedagogy, and art education (Pataky, 2019; Kárpáti, 2015; Egervári, 2022). Nevertheless, relatively few studies have examined the changing pedagogical role of nature specifically through the lens of visual culture curricula and official teaching materials.

The aim of this study is therefore to explore how nature—and more specifically the pedagogical approach of Nature Art—has been represented within Hungarian visual culture education between 1995 and 2020, and how these curricular frameworks relate to nature-based practices in school and museum education. The central research question concerns the ways in which nature can function as a “teacher” in visual culture education: in what roles it appears (as subject, material, site, or experiential environment), and what pedagogical opportunities and limitations emerge in formal and informal learning contexts.

Theoretical framework

The integration of outdoor and nature-based activities into visual culture education has gained increasing attention in recent decades, as such approaches offer distinct pedagogical advantages. They promote environmental awareness, interdisciplinary learning, and holistic skill development, while fostering direct, sensory engagement with the surrounding world (Whitehead, 1919; Egervári & Mészáros, 2023). These considerations have become particularly pressing in the context of the climate crisis and the growing emphasis on sustainability within education. Contemporary research emphasises that nature-based artistic practices encourage learners to observe, manipulate, and interpret natural phenomena while simultaneously developing artistic competencies and reflective awareness (Waters & Maynard, 2010; Rönkkö, Aeriala & Sintonen, 2023). The attentive and protective attitude towards nature that characterises Nature Art practices thus offers not only an artistic model, but also a broader ethical orientation for education.

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experiential pedagogy, and the integration of environmental education (Chrappán, 2022). During this period, pedagogical initiatives emerged more prominently that interpreted nature not merely as curricular content, but as an active learning environment and experiential space.

Visual culture education occupies a distinctive position within these processes. On the one hand, the subject is inherently linked to sensory perception, material engagement, and the observation of the environment. On the other hand, successive curricular reforms—most notably the gradual reduction of lesson hours and the withdrawal of visual culture from upper secondary education—have increasingly constrained its pedagogical scope (Bodóczy, 2003; Chrappán, 2022). This tension renders the examination of nature-based and Nature Art-related pedagogical practices particularly relevant, both within official curricular documents and in their translation into school and museum practice.

Within international scholarship, concepts such as outdoor education, place-based education, and nature-based learning provide a theoretical framework in which learning is understood as an active and reflective relationship with place and environment (Donaldson & Donaldson, 1958; Sobel, 2004; Rönkkö et al., 2023). In the Hungarian pedagogical context, these approaches appear primarily at the intersection of environmental education, experiential pedagogy, and art education (Pataky, 2019; Kárpáti, 2015; Egervári, 2022). Nevertheless, relatively few studies have examined the changing pedagogical role of nature specifically through the lens of visual culture curricula and official teacher support materials.

The aim of this study is therefore to explore how nature—and more specifically the pedagogical approach of Nature Art—has been represented within Hungarian visual culture education between 1995 and 2020, and how these curricular frameworks relate to nature-based practices emerging in school and museum education. The central research question concerns the ways in which nature can function as a „teacher” in visual culture education: the roles it assumes (as subject, material, site, or experiential environment), and the pedagogical opportunities and limitations that arise in formal and informal learning contexts.

Terminological clarification and scope of the study

In order to ensure conceptual clarity, this study employs a consistent and carefully delimited use of key terms, aligned with both Hungarian and international scholarly discourse.

In this paper, *visual culture education* refers to the subject area regulated within Hungarian public education that encompasses visual expression, visual communication, art historical awareness, and the interpretation of the visual environment (Bodóczy, 2003; Kárpáti, 2015). The scope of the analysis is limited to general public education, specifically primary and lower secondary levels, as defined by the National Core Curriculum and its related framework curricula.

The term *art education* (or *arts pedagogy*) is used in a broader sense to describe pedagogical approaches that employ artistic practices as modes of learning, expression, and reflection. Within this framework, visual culture education represents a specific institutional and curricular manifestation of art education.

Nature-based learning refers to pedagogical approaches that situate learning processes in direct relation to the natural environment, emphasising experiential, sensory, and embodied forms of engagement (Donaldson & Donaldson, 1958; Priest, 1986; Pataky, 2019). In the present study, nature-based learning is considered relevant insofar as it intersects with visual culture education and art-related practices.

The term *Nature Art* is used consistently throughout the paper to denote site-specific, often ephemeral artistic practices created with natural materials in direct interaction with the natural environment. This usage aligns with dominant terminology in both Hungarian and international literature (Erőss, 2011; Egervári, 2022; Căbuz, 2021). The alternative expression „*Natural Art*” is deliberately avoided due to its conceptual ambiguity and limited presence in scholarly discourse.

Within the analytical framework of the study, *nature* is conceptualised not as a homogeneous category, but as a multifaceted pedagogical and artistic phenomenon. It may function as:

- the subject or motif of representation,
- the material or medium of artistic creation,
- the site of creative activity, or

– a complex experiential learning environment that shapes perception, reflection, and meaning-making.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and *outdoor learning* complement each other well, as both support flexible, child-centered approaches to education. UDL builds on learners’ diversity, individual needs, and strengths, and is guided by three core principles: it offers multiple ways to engage learners and make learning motivating and personally relevant; it presents information in various formats to ensure understanding for all; and it allows learners to express their knowledge in different ways, such as through creative and hands-on activities.

This approach aligns closely with outdoor learning, which promotes inclusive, experience-based learning in natural settings (see Table 1). The natural environment is inspiring and stimulating, fostering acceptance, understanding, and deep learning through a wide range of sensory experiences, including visual, auditory, and tactile stimuli.

Table 1. Applying UDL to Outdoor Learning (Harte, 2013, p. 21)

Components of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	Outdoor Learning
Multiple means of engagement – It is important to make learning relevant to students and help them to be motivated to learn (CAST, 2011).	Children are interested in being outside and the natural environment provides many opportunities to capture children’s interests while adults follow their lead, responding to those interests and facilitating learning (Waters & Maynard, 2010).
Multiple means of representation – Information needs to be presented in a way that it can be recognized and so that children can truly grasp it (CAST, 2011).	The natural environment provides visual, auditory and tactile materials. Teachers can build on this, including additional supports such as picture cues and audio descriptions, home languages and use of technology.
Multiple means of expression – The way children can successfully express themselves varies from one child to another and multiple options need to be provided (CAST, 2011).	Outdoor learning provides opportunities to use a range of approaches. Using the outdoor environment as a catalyst, teachers can engage in projects. The project approach allows children to express themselves in a variety of ways and is consistent with UDL (Harte, 2010).

This categorisation provides the conceptual basis for the empirical analysis presented in the following sections.

Research design and methodology

Research design and analytical framework

This study applies qualitative document analysis to explore how nature and nature-based artistic practices appear in Hungarian visual culture education after 1990. The research focuses on the ways in which the natural environment is conceptualised as a pedagogical resource—whether as subject matter, material, medium, site of artistic creation, or experiential learning environment—within formal curricula and related teaching materials.

The temporal scope of the analysis spans from 1995 to 2020, covering the five post-socialist versions of the Hungarian National Core Curriculum (NAT). This period represents a fundamental transformation in Hungarian public education, characterised by decentralisation, curricular reform, and the increasing integration of environmental education, interdisciplinary approaches, and experiential learning principles. The selection of this timeframe is therefore methodologically justified by both historical and pedagogical considerations, as it allows for the examination of long-term changes in the educational role attributed to nature within visual culture.

The research addresses concepts such as nature, nature-based art pedagogy, outdoor education, site-specific art practices, temporary and ephemeral artworks, and the use of natural materials. Through the analysis of curricular and pedagogical documents, the study seeks to trace how nature-based approaches have evolved over time and how they have been integrated into both formal and informal learning environments.

Data corpus

The empirical corpus consists of three main groups of documents.

National Core Curricula (NAT)

Five versions of the Hungarian National Core Curriculum were analysed:

- NAT 1995 (130/1995. X.26. Government Decree)
- NAT 2003 (243/2003. XII.17. Government Decree)
- NAT 2007 (202/2007. VII.31. Government Decree)

- NAT 2012 (110/2012. VI.4. Government Decree)
- NAT 2020 (5/2020. I.31. Government Decree)

The analysis focused specifically on the Arts educational domain, with particular attention to the subject of visual culture, its stated aims, content areas, suggested activities, and references to nature, the environment, materials, and outdoor learning contexts. Through this examination, the study analyses how the role and significance of nature have changed across successive curriculum versions.

Framework curricula and teacher's manuals

To complement the analysis of the core curricula, the study examined visual culture framework curricula and official teacher's manuals published by the Hungarian Education Office, primarily in connection with the 2012 and 2020 NAT. The analysed manuals include:

- OH-VIZ01K (Grade 1)
- OH-VIZ02K (Grade 2)
- OH-VIZ03K (Grade 3)
- OH-VIZ04K (Grade 4)
- OH-VIZ05K (Grade 5)
- OH-VIZ06K (Grade 6)
- OH-VIZ07K (Grade 7)
- OH-VIZ08K (Grade 8)

In addition to the National Core Curricula, the framework curricula specify subject-specific content, learning objectives, instructional time, and suggested pedagogical activities, thereby mediating between the core curriculum and classroom practice. These documents were examined in parallel with the NAT texts, with particular attention to references to nature, material use, outdoor activities, and experiential learning situations.

The inclusion of teacher's manuals is methodologically justified by their function in translating curricular intentions into concrete pedagogical practices, tasks, and project-based learning situations. As such,

they offer insight into how nature-related concepts are operationalised in everyday teaching practice.

Supplementary sources

The document analysis was contextualised through relevant Hungarian and international scholarly literature on art education, outdoor education, nature-based pedagogy, and Nature Art, as well as selected museum education programme descriptions referenced in the study. These sources support the interpretation of curricular trends and pedagogical orientations identified in the primary document corpus.

Analytical procedure

The analysis followed the principles of qualitative content analysis. The documents were examined through iterative reading and thematic coding, combining deductive and inductive approaches.

Based on the theoretical framework, the following analytical categories were defined:

- nature as subject or motif (e.g. landscape, seasons, natural phenomena),
- nature as material or medium (use of natural or found materials),
- nature as site of artistic creation (outdoor, site-specific, land art-related practices),
- nature as experiential learning environment (observation, exploration, embodied learning),
- nature as a means of developing environmental awareness and sustainability-related attitudes.

During the coding process, particular attention was paid to the frequency and prominence of nature-related references, the pedagogical functions assigned to nature, and shifts from experiential to more conceptual approaches across different curriculum versions.

Examples of concrete tasks—such as „Mini Land Art” activities, outdoor observation projects, or long-term documentation exercises (e.g. fixed-camera projects)—were identified and interpreted as indicators of pedagogical orientation. As Egervári (2022) notes, Nature

Art „views nature not only as the backdrop for artistic activity, but as a co-author” (p. 23), reflecting a pedagogical principle in which the environment actively participates in the learning process. The analysis also made it possible to trace broader political and educational changes that influenced the integration of environmental and nature-based elements into the curricular framework.

Methodological limitations

The study is subject to certain limitations. While curricula and teacher’s manuals provide valuable insight into official educational intentions, they do not fully capture classroom implementation or teachers’ individual pedagogical practices. Furthermore, museum education materials are unevenly documented and vary in terms of public accessibility, which limits the systematic comparability of institutional programmes.

Despite these constraints, the selected document corpus offers a coherent and representative basis for identifying long-term curricular and pedagogical trends in the integration of nature and Nature Art within Hungarian visual culture education.

Results

While the National Core Curriculum (NAT) documents define general educational goals and content frameworks, the framework curricula and related teaching materials reveal how these intentions are translated into concrete pedagogical practices. At this level, the contrast between the experience-oriented emphasis of the 2012 framework curriculum and the more conceptually structured approach of the 2020 version becomes particularly visible.

The National Core Curriculum is organised into ten areas of education, one of which is the Arts. This domain includes subjects such as visual culture, music and singing, drama and theatre, moving image culture, and media literacy. The analysed legislative documents regulate Hungarian public education following the political transition. Government Decrees 130/1995 and 243/2003 established the general framework of public education, while Government Decrees 110/2012 and 5/2020 define the curricular requirements of general education

and their subsequent amendments. Together, these legal frameworks have shaped the structure and content of Hungarian education over the past three decades. The legislative genealogy of the National Core Curricula is summarised in Table 2 (Chrappán, 2022, p. 36).

Table 2. The legislative genealogy of the National Core Curricula (Chrappán, 2022, p. 36)

	Original legislation	Amended legislation
NAT 1995	130/1995. (X. 26.) Government decree	–
NAT 2003	243/2003 (XII. 17.) Government decree	–
NAT 2007	243/2003 (XII. 17.) Amendment of a government decree	202/2007 (VII. 31.) Government decree
NAT 2012	110/2012. (VI. 4.) Government decree	–
NAT 2020	110/2012. (VI. 4.) Amendment of a government decree	5/2020. (I. 31.) Government decree

The National Core Curricula introduced after the change of regime specify subject frameworks, instructional time, and educational requirements. Within these documents, the natural environment appears explicitly in several subject areas—most notably in the natural sciences and biology, but also within the subject of visual culture. The analysis indicates that the pedagogical role and representation of nature, Nature Art, and related concepts have changed considerably across successive curriculum versions.

In the 1995 curriculum, landscape drawing played a prominent role, encouraging students to observe their surroundings and depict natural environments through aesthetic representation. The 2003 curriculum expanded the communicative function of drawing, enabling students to address environmental issues and visualise social and ecological concerns. In the 2012 curriculum, nature and the environment gained increased prominence within learning experiences, supported by modelling and object-making tasks that allowed students to engage with environmental topics through hands-on artistic processes. By contrast, in the 2020 curriculum, drawing remains an important tool, but the direct depiction of nature is no longer foregrounded. Although

the general content structure of the NAT largely follows the framework introduced in 2012, the emphasis on experiential engagement with the natural environment has been significantly reduced.

A further structural change affecting visual culture education is the steady reduction in the number of instructional hours allocated to the subject. Visual culture has been removed from Grades 11 and 12, art history is no longer taught as a separate subject in upper secondary education, and the art history matriculation examination has been discontinued. As a consequence, the Hungarian University of Fine Arts recognises visual culture as an entrance examination subject, thereby partially compensating for its diminished presence within secondary education.

Analysing the framework curricula

The framework curricula were analysed from multiple perspectives, with particular attention to whether the term *Nature Art* appears in the documents and, if so, the pedagogical functions it fulfils. The analysis also examined how nature is represented in practical terms and the extent to which environmental considerations are integrated into teaching objectives and activities. The comparative findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison the framework curricula in context of visual art

COMPARISON THE FRAMEWORK CURRICULA		
ASPECTS	FRAMEWORK CURRICULA 2012	FRAMEWORK CURRICULA 2020
The role of nature in visual arts	It is strongly present at all stages: sensory experience, observation, environmental shaping, touch and more	It is also pronounced, however more structured, often as a dichotomy of 'natural and artificial environment'
Mention of Nature Art or related expressions	Explicitly named concept in grades 11-12: 'installation, environment, land-art'	Neither 'land art', nor 'nature art' is used throughout this document
Outdoor activities, or recommendations of outdoor practices	At task level, there are references to e.g. found object installations, observation of weather effects	No specific reference to outdoor art activities (no suggested method or example)
Representation of environmental awareness	Developmental objective: interpretation and critique of the natural and built environment	Also aiming at "presenting environmental issues through contemporary art" (e.g. grades 9-10)

At the level of the framework curricula, the shift identified in the core curricula becomes especially apparent in the changing role of outdoor activities, material-based creation, and process-oriented tasks. A comparison of the 2012 and 2020 visual culture framework curricula clearly demonstrates how the pedagogical role attributed to nature has been transformed.

In the 2012 curriculum, nature is present across multiple content areas. The framework encourages observation, experimentation with natural materials, plein air drawing, and provides space for art forms such as land art. This approach is based on the assumption that learning is most effective when it takes place through direct experience and personal engagement with the environment.

By contrast, the 2020 curriculum offers a more theoretically oriented framework. Nature no longer functions primarily as a site of direct experience, but instead appears within the conceptual dichotomy of the “natural and artificial environment”. Outdoor activities, artistic creation in nature, and embodied experiences are relegated to a secondary position. Contemporary art practices addressing environmental issues are emphasised instead, predominantly through conceptual and interpretative approaches.

Overall, the 2012 framework curriculum can be characterised as experience-based and practice-oriented, whereas the 2020 version reflects a more conceptual and theory-driven orientation. While the former enables students to engage with nature through direct artistic encounters, the latter primarily encourages reflection on environmental issues through the discursive language of contemporary art.

Examining the visual culture teacher's manuals (Nat2020)

While the National Core Curriculum and the framework curricula outline educational intentions at a structural level, the teacher's manuals reveal how these intentions are translated into concrete pedagogical practice. Across the examined volumes, nature appears as a recurring, though variably emphasised, component of visual culture education, functioning as a source of inspiration, a material resource, a site of activity, and a means of fostering environmental awareness.

The analysis of the teacher's manuals was conducted along similar lines to that of the framework curricula, focusing on how references to nature and the natural environment are embedded in learning objectives, tasks, and suggested activities. Within the manuals, nature-related content is present across nearly all grade levels, though its pedagogical role and visibility vary considerably.

In the lower grades, nature is most strongly associated with experiential and process-oriented activities. In Grade 1, pupils are encouraged to create patterns and compositions derived from natural forms, and to experiment with simple land art-like structures, terrain models, or spiral arrangements made from natural materials. The concept of *Nature Art* and *land art* is explicitly introduced at this level through so-called "mini land art" activities, which familiarise pupils with site-specific and ephemeral artistic practices. Iconic historical references, such as the Nazca Lines or Stonehenge, are used to contextualise these activities and situate them within a broader visual culture framework.

In Grade 4, nature-related learning is further developed through thematic units such as *Wonders of Nature*, where seasonal change, light, and shadow become focal points of visual observation and artistic interpretation. Outdoor-oriented practices also appear at this stage, most notably in the form of a „site-specific longitudinal observation projects”, in which pupils document a selected natural site over time and transform the collected images into a stop-motion film. In the manuals for Grades 5–6, study walks are recommended as a means of examining both the built and natural environment, for example through the exploration of school grounds and their immediate surroundings.

In higher grades, explicit references to *Nature Art* and *land art* largely disappear, even though related practices remain implicitly present. Nature increasingly serves as a thematic and conceptual point of reference rather than a direct site of artistic creation. At the same time, its role in fostering social and environmental awareness becomes more pronounced, with sustainability and ecological responsibility emerging as key pedagogical concerns.

A comparative synthesis of the teacher's manuals reveals a clear shift in pedagogical orientation over time. In manuals associated with

the 2012 framework curriculum, nature-based activities are predominantly experiential, open-ended, and process-oriented. Tasks such as Mini Land Art projects encourage direct engagement with outdoor environments, material experimentation, and reflection on temporality and transformation. Nature functions simultaneously as material, site, and experiential context, closely aligning with the principles of experiential learning and outdoor education.

By contrast, the teacher's manuals linked to the 2020 framework curriculum demonstrate a move towards more conceptually structured and classroom-based tasks. Nature-related themes are increasingly embedded in visual analysis exercises, discussions of contemporary art practices, or theoretically framed projects. While references to environmental awareness and sustainability remain present, direct outdoor engagement and hands-on experimentation with natural materials occur less frequently.

Overall, the comparison indicates a gradual transition from open-ended, experience-based pedagogical approaches towards more tightly framed, concept-driven models of visual culture education. This shift reflects broader curricular constraints, including reduced instructional time and an increased emphasis on predefined learning outcomes, and it significantly reshapes the ways in which nature can function as a pedagogical agent within visual culture education.

Research design and methodology

Research design

The study employs a qualitative document analysis to examine how nature and nature-based artistic practices are conceptualised within Hungarian visual culture education. Qualitative content analysis was selected because it allows for the systematic interpretation of curricular and pedagogical texts, with a focus on meanings, emphases, and pedagogical intentions rather than on quantitative frequency alone.

The research follows a comparative longitudinal design, analysing changes and continuities across successive curricular periods following the political and educational transition of the early 1990s. This

approach makes it possible to identify long-term pedagogical trends related to the representation of nature within visual culture education.

Data corpus

The primary sources of the analysis are the Hungarian National Core Curricula (NAT) published in 1995, 2003, 2012, and 2020. These documents define the overarching educational goals, values, and content frameworks of public education, and thus provide the macro-level context for visual culture education.

In addition to the National Core Curricula, the study examines the visual culture framework curricula associated with the 2012 and 2020 NAT. These documents specify subject-specific content, learning objectives, instructional time, and recommended pedagogical practices, thereby mediating between the core curriculum and classroom-level implementation. The framework curricula were analysed in parallel with the NAT documents, with particular attention to references to nature, material use, outdoor activities, and experiential learning.

A third layer of the data corpus consists of official visual culture teacher's manuals published in connection with the framework curricula. The analysed volumes include:

- *Visual Culture Teacher's Manual 1–2*
- *Visual Culture Teacher's Manual 3–4*
- *Visual Culture Teacher's Manual 5–6*
- *Visual Culture Teacher's Manual 7–8*

The teacher's manuals were treated as implementation documents, as they translate curricular intentions into concrete pedagogical tasks, project descriptions, and classroom or outdoor activities. Their analysis provides insight into how curricular ideas related to nature and Nature Art appear in educational practice.

Analytical procedure

The documents were analysed using thematic qualitative content analysis. An initial set of analytical categories was developed deductively

on the basis of the theoretical framework and relevant literature on art education and nature-based learning. These categories included:

- nature as subject or motif,
- nature as material or medium,
- nature as site of artistic activity,
- nature as an experiential learning environment.

During the analytical process, these categories were further refined inductively as recurring patterns, shifts in terminology, and pedagogical emphases emerged from the texts. Particular attention was paid to changes in suggested teaching methods and to the degree of experiential and outdoor engagement across different curriculum versions.

The comparative analysis of the National Core Curricula and the framework curricula made it possible to distinguish between general educational intentions and their pedagogical operationalisation, while the teacher's manuals offered insight into classroom-level and project-based practices.

Scope and focus of the analysis

Although five versions of the Hungarian National Core Curriculum (1995–2020) were reviewed for broader contextual orientation, the in-depth qualitative analysis focuses on three key curriculum versions: 1995, 2012, and 2020. These documents represent major pedagogical turning points in the post-socialist development of Hungarian public education.

The 1995 curriculum marks the foundational phase following the political transition; the 2012 version reflects the peak of experiential and nature-based pedagogical approaches; and the 2020 curriculum signals a shift toward more centralised and conceptually structured educational regulation. Concentrating on these milestones allows for a clearer interpretation of long-term pedagogical trends without compromising historical continuity.

Given the depth-oriented nature of qualitative content analysis, the study deliberately limits detailed examination to those curriculum versions for which complete and coherent sets of related documents—core

curriculum, framework curricula, and teacher's manuals—are available and pedagogically comparable. This approach enables a nuanced analysis of how curricular intentions are translated into pedagogical practice, particularly in relation to nature-based and experiential learning.

Limitations of the study

The study is limited to official curricular documents and teacher's manuals and does not include empirical classroom observations or interviews with teachers. In addition, museum education programs and extracurricular initiatives are discussed only insofar as they are documented in publicly available professional sources. Despite these limitations, the selected corpus provides a comprehensive overview of institutionalized approaches to nature within Hungarian visual culture education.

Nature art as a new outdoor „method”

Nature Art in education and museum pedagogy: institutional and practical contexts

Nature Art has been playing an increasingly important role in education and museum pedagogy. Beyond formal school curricula, it has gained particular significance in higher education and museum-based learning environments, where institutional frameworks allow greater flexibility for experiential, outdoor, and site-specific approaches.

A key initiative in Hungarian higher education is the specialisation in Natural Art for future artists offered by Eszterházy Károly Catholic University in Eger, which is unique in Europe. For nearly 15 years, this programme has enabled students to engage with the genre through direct artistic work in nature. Nature Art education and a course on spatial design have also been integrated into the university's secondary school visual culture teacher training programme, extending its pedagogical impact.

In the museum context, several notable Nature Art–related exhibitions have been held since the 1990s, including *Naturally* at the Ernst Museum (1994), Alan Sonfist's exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts (2014), and *Branches – Nature Art Variations* at the Kunsthalle (2016),

alongside exhibitions at MODEM, Godot Gallery, and the Ludwig Museum. These exhibitions contributed to the visibility and cultural legitimisation of Nature Art within the Hungarian art scene.

Museum-based educational initiatives and projects

Museum pedagogy has increasingly incorporated Nature Art-based programmes that emphasise experiential learning, sustainability, and mental well-being. At the Janus Pannonius Museum, the TERMűhely (TERmészet–Művészeti Műhely, means Nature Art Workshop) programme engages with the macro- and micro-world through materials such as pebbles, stones, fossils, wood, trees, and water, complemented by excursions and outdoor artistic practices (Vadvári, 2022).

At the Ferenczy Museum in Szentendre, high school students participated in Sustainability Week programmes integrating mental health renewal through Nature Art activities. In 2023, these initiatives were extended through a collaborative experiential education project involving secondary schools in Szentendre and Dunaszerdahely, consisting of weekly museum-based sessions and summer camp programmes aimed at fostering environmental awareness through creative, nature-based learning.

Further examples include programmes at the Dornyai Béla Museum (2021) and the *NATURE ART* workshops organised by the Flóris Rómer Museum of Art and History in Győr in 2022 and 2023 (Turzai, 2024). These full-day workshops combined museum spaces with nearby natural environments, emphasising outdoor, ephemeral artistic experiences. Taken together, these initiatives highlight the educational and cultural significance of Nature Art in fostering creativity, environmental awareness, and mental well-being.

Interpretive synthesis within the analytical framework

Interpreted through the study's analytical framework, these examples illustrate how Nature Art shifts the focus from representational outcomes toward process-oriented learning. Short-term land-based workshops, site-specific interventions using natural materials, and long-term observation-based projects (e.g. fixed-camera documentation)

demonstrate how learning is structured by the affordances and constraints of the natural environment rather than by predefined artistic results.

From an experiential learning perspective, these practices exemplify Dewey's (1916/1997) notion of education as reflective engagement with lived experience, where meaning emerges through interaction with the environment. Hungarian interpretations of outdoor and experiential learning similarly stress their developmental value, particularly in fostering sensitivity, autonomy, and creative problem-solving (Pataky, 2019). Museum-based initiatives thus function as compensatory pedagogical spaces beyond formal curricula, offering extended timeframes, embodied engagement, and collective experimentation—characteristics central to Nature Art as described by Erőss (2011) and Egervári (2022).

Discussion

The study examined how nature and nature-based artistic practices are represented in Hungarian visual culture education after 1990, and how nature can function as a „teacher” within formal and informal educational contexts. The findings reveal both continuity and transformation in curricular regulation and pedagogical practice.

Nature appears in Hungarian visual culture education in multiple pedagogical roles: as subject or motif, as material and medium, as site of artistic creation, and as an experiential learning environment. This multifunctional presence aligns with theories of experiential and place-based learning that emphasise embodied perception and reflective interaction with the environment (Dewey, 1916/1997; Donaldson & Donaldson, 1958; Quay & Seaman, 2013). At the same time, curricular analysis reveals a gradual reconfiguration of these roles across successive versions of the National Core Curriculum.

Addressing the first research question, the findings indicate a shift from experience-based, material-oriented approaches toward more conceptually framed interpretations. The 1995 and 2003 curricula foreground direct observation, landscape depiction, and material experimentation, reflecting pedagogies rooted in sensory experience and skill

development (Bodóczy, 2003; Kárpáti, 2015). The 2012 curriculum marks a peak in experiential and nature-based learning, encouraging outdoor observation and site-specific practices (Pataky, 2019; Egervári, 2022). By contrast, the 2020 curriculum increasingly frames nature within the „natural and artificial environment” dichotomy and addresses it primarily through contemporary art concepts, reflecting broader constraints such as reduced instructional time and standardisation (Chrappán, 2022).

The second research question—how nature functions as a pedagogical “teacher”—is most evident in framework curricula and teacher’s manuals. Especially at lower grade levels, nature shapes perception, creativity, and reflection through tasks such as Mini Land Art projects and long-term observation exercises. These practices align with Egervári’s (2022) notion of nature as a „co-author” and Erőss’s (2011) understanding of Nature Art as shaped by temporality and natural processes.

However, the analysis also reveals tensions between curricular intentions and pedagogical implementation. Nature-based practices become less explicit in higher grades, largely due to the marginalisation of visual culture within the education system and the reduction of instructional hours. Consequently, opportunities for sustained, process-oriented outdoor work are increasingly limited.

The third research question highlights the compensatory role of museum education and other non-formal learning environments. Museum-based programmes and higher education initiatives demonstrate that Nature Art integrates artistic creation, sustainability, and mental well-being while fostering interdisciplinary learning and social and environmental competences (Kagan, 2014; Egervári, 2022; Turzai, 2024; Egervári & Mészáros, 2023). These practices also promote material awareness through the use of natural, recycled, and ephemeral media, supporting holistic development and ecological literacy.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that nature remains a persistent, though increasingly transformed, element of Hungarian visual culture

education. While nature continues to appear in curricula and teacher's guides, contemporary Nature Art is underrepresented in official curricular documents, particularly in their most recent versions. This contrasts with educational practice, where an increasing number of outdoor, museum-based, and interdisciplinary programmes engage directly with nature.

Framework curricula, teacher's manuals, museum education, and higher education initiatives play a compensatory role by sustaining experiential, process-oriented, and interdisciplinary approaches that formal curricula increasingly struggle to accommodate. From an educational policy perspective, the reduction of instructional time and the marginalisation of visual culture—especially at upper secondary level—have clear pedagogical consequences, limiting opportunities for outdoor and material-based learning. At the same time, developments such as project weeks, thematic days, and the growing presence of Nature Art in teacher education offer potential pathways for reintegration.

Pedagogically, reconceptualising nature as an active participant in learning foregrounds experiential knowledge, material engagement, and ethical reflection, aligning visual culture education with contemporary sustainability challenges (Egervári, 2022; Căbuz, 2021; Balázs, 2008). Historically, the post-1990 period reveals a shift from practice-oriented pedagogy toward more conceptual approaches, highlighting the risk of losing direct sensory engagement with the natural environment.

In conclusion, Nature Art represents a pedagogically rich approach that bridges formal and informal learning environments, connects Hungarian pedagogical traditions with international discourse, and offers meaningful responses to current ecological and educational challenges. Future research may further explore how nature-based art education can be sustainably integrated into evolving educational systems through empirical and comparative approaches.

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