In September 2014, Ocean Park, Hong Kong, held the biennial conference of the International Zoo and Aquarium Educators Association. This event’s objective is to gather the educator’s community to share experiences and strengthen the cooperation and links on conservation education.

This time the conference had a pre-conference workshop on September 1st and 2nd with the Community Based Social Marketing Workshop taught by Dr. Doug McKenzie-Mohr where he proposed the use of this tool to promote environment friendly behavioral changes. Dr. Mckenzie has a publication entitled Fostering Sustainable Behavior, available free online at the website: http://www.cbsm.com

Tom Mehrmann Chief Executive of Ocean Park, offered the welcome message, followed by the president of IZE, Rachel Lowry who explained the ultimate goal of zoo based education. The theme for the conference was: Education in zoos and aquaria, what does success look like and how do you measure it?.

The keynote presentations were given to all participants while presentations by members were delivered simultaneously, divided into ten sessions. These presentations are available in the website: http://www.oceanpark.com.hk/ize2014/en/call-for-papers.html

The work was performed in poster, open work and two workshop sessions. These activities addressed the importance of evaluation to measure the performance of the education programs. The approach was multidisciplinary since there were projects for educators, teachers, students, keepers and exhibit designers.

One of the workshops dealt with the game in nature, highlighting the importance of unstructured play and the value of the zoo as an ideal place to promote it. This workshop offered free tools available online, on the sites:

www.naturecircles.org and
http://www.childrenandnature.org/movement/naturalfamilies/

with the manuals translated into English, French, Chinese and Spanish

Another of the workshops promoted tools to evaluate educational programs both qualitatively and quantitatively. This workshop was very dynamic and showed a wide range of techniques from very simple and traditional to some that apply new technologies such as Plickers (www.plickers.com). A tool that allow teachers to obtain formative assessments in real time and involve students in a critical thinking scheme using a mobile device that generates graphs of the results simultaneously on a computer.

This application works by reading a QR code
that the students place in different positions depending on their response and it sends the information to the computer to deliver the results as a graph. Formative assessment is achieved when students can see their answers and compare it with that of their peers.

Finally, Dr. Markus Gusset, Executive officer from WAZA, presented the results of its evaluation exercise of the educational impact of zoos and aquariums: http://www.waza.org/files/webcontent/1.public_site/5.conervation/un_decade_biodiversity/WAZA%20Visitor%20Survey%20Report.pdf

Similarly, Tiago Pinto-Pereira presented the materials that are available on the website of the Decade of Biodiversity, with a strategic plan available in several languages: http://www.waza.org/en/site/conservation/un-decade-on-biodiversity and three informative videos, addressed to zoo visitors about the value of these institutions in biodiversity conservation. They are available in several languages at: https://www.youtube.com/user/BioDiversityIsUsWAZA

Bioparque Temaikén www.temaiken.org from Buenos Aires, Argentina, will hold the 23rd biennial conference in 2016. The education website for Temaiken is: www.edufundaciontemaiken.org
Join the International Zoo and Aquarium Education Community

Membership in The International Zoo Educators’ Association (IZE) facilitates communication and professional development among educators in zoos, aquariums, wildlife centres and nature reserves.

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