

THE PLACE OF OUTDOOR LEARNING ACTIVITIES IN THE ROMANIAN CORE PROCUREMENT CURRICULUM

**Henrietta, TORKOS, University Assistant, PhD,
Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad
torkos_henriette@yahoo.com**

Abstract: *The educational systems are in search of teaching learning strategies that can make every day learning more efficient. Outdoor education is one of the modern strategies that was introduced in the daily routines of pupils, leading to behavioral changes and competency acquirements. In the Romanian educational systems, outdoor education can be found in the official educational documents and some teachers have introduced it in their daily routines. Still there are some questions about the theoretical and the practical place that it takes in the learning process. This research, is a brief analysis on the elements that can be found in the scholar curriculum, and belong to the outdoor educational field, at the core procurement level. The results are important because of the impact that it has on the educational practices at the level of the classroom. Teachers interested in this area can observe that the curriculum that is used in the Romanian schools supports outdoor education as a practice at all levels, especially at the core procurement level.*

Key words: *curriculum; outdoor learning; education; practice; content;*

Introduction

Teachers are constantly concerned about the criteria of choosing the perfect strategies to use in the instructional-educational process. Education is constantly developing and changing, and teachers need to keep up with social and educational updates. Trends are imposed both by the students, by their needs and interests, as well as by the society, by the demands they launch daily. These directions are also established by the management of the educational systems, local, national or international ones, through the policies with which they operate and the novelties they introduce into the curricula. These are translated by the concrete learning activities that are offered directly to the educators, by the contents and practices with which they operate.

Educators and teachers are the bridge between pupils and society, and they must streamline the educational process by getting to know the class of students, the traditional and modern educational strategies, adapting them to the needs of the group and by constantly updating their knowledge, training policies and styles. (Ciolan, 2008)

Theoretical foundation

The educator must be one step ahead, in terms of visualizing the components of the instructional-educational process, and to provide efficient and modern learning situations. This involves documentation, learning, adaptability, knowledge, but above all direct work with the class or group of students through permanent observation and analysis of the direction in which its development is required. A complete picture of the profile of the group of students must be made in order to provide a correct approach to learning. (Roman & Balaş)

The modern teacher will always be caught between the two major types of educational approach: the traditional one, well-organized and well-founded, stable and deeply researched that has been the basis of the educational systems for decades, and the modern, flexible one, based on interactive learning methods, on communication and development through the use of teamwork techniques. New results cannot be achieved using the same methods, and this is especially true when it comes to education. (Crețu, 1997)

In order to be able to make the most of the knowledge regarding the curriculum and its components, we propose for analysis the curriculum of core procurement cycle. This is necessary because we need to have a clear picture of the expectations, so that we can integrate outdoor activities, following closely the curricular principles.

Recent perspectives

Specificity of the preparatory class curriculum

Primary education is the first stage of compulsory education and its main objective is to create equal opportunities for all children, in order to achieve a balanced cognitive, emotional and psychomotor development, adapted to individual needs. The primary education comprises the preparatory class and classes I - IV, and the preparatory class is the first stage of the primary education. (M.E.N., 2017)

The preparatory class represents a period destined to accommodate the school life, a time that allows the students a good adaptation to the program, the community and the specific requirements of this diversified environment, in order to develop socio-emotional, intellectual and physical. From a socio-emotional point of view, the preparatory class supports the child to receive confidence in his own strengths, to increase his self-esteem, initiative and desire to succeed. The preparatory class is part of the general compulsory education having the role of preparing the student for the specific learning, first of all, of the first class, but also for the following years of school. The accommodation with the school environment is done in the friendliest way, the main method of learning being the game, as a predominant activity for the age of six years.

In the same register, it can be stated according to the Ministry of National Education that by going through the preparatory class, the intellect of each child develops, being prepared to be able to communicate better, to realize a constant intellectual effort, benefiting from different learning experiences. Also, this level prepares the conditions of a program according to the specific age of the students,

in a stimulating environment, which leads to both physical and cognitive development of the children.

The relaxing environment is obtained by the fact that there is no notion of repetition neither after the preparatory class nor after 1st grade. It is the period in which measures are identified regarding prevention, compensation for inequalities manifested in students from disadvantaged environments at the beginning of schooling, early identification of learning difficulties and individualized intervention.

The evaluation is carried out continuously and, depending on the results recorded, it is immediately intervened throughout the school year, with the possibility of participating in the School after school program. In the preparatory class are enrolled the children who have reached the age of 6 until the beginning of the school year. At the written request of the parents, guardians or legal supporters, children from the age of 6 to the end of the calendar year, if their psychosomatic development is appropriate, can be enrolled in the preparatory class. (***) M.E.N., 2017)

The main directions of modernization of the Romanian curriculum are based on the analysis of the current curriculum and the education system, but also some European benchmarks, such as the qualifications framework and key competences. The OECD promotes the flexibility of the curriculum by personalizing the education and focusing on the student. These directions imply a good knowledge of the developmental needs of the student, depending on which educational approach is being built, as well as the use of teaching strategies that engage all the students in activity and that allow them to move on to the different needs and learning styles of each one. individually and independently.

The law of education in Romania no. 1/2011, art. 6, shows how the hours allocated to the school disciplines can be used, namely the program covering 75% of the teaching-evaluation hours, the other 25% being left at the teacher's disposal. The remaining time can be used for remedial learning, for children with special problems, for consolidating knowledge or for stimulating students capable of higher performance, according to individual learning plans elaborated for each student.

In 2013, the new programs appeared, which have a reformed structure, allowing the introduction in a single format of the three preparatory classes, class 1st and 2nd grades, for a better visualization and tracking of continuity and progress. at the level of skills and content. This presentation helps in a permanent connection with the previous and next classes, ensuring the coherence of the curriculum. Another element of novelty is the structuring of the content on specific fields of each discipline, which also show the continuity and progress from one year of study to another. The specific competences and the contents contained in the programs are closely correlated. The new program contains a more detailed presentation of the contents, in order to emphasize the elements on which the specific competences must be emphasized. (Egerău, 2005)

The curricular areas around which the contents are developed are: language and communication, mathematics and natural sciences, human and society, physical education, sports and health, arts, technologies and counseling and guidance. They are designated on the basis of principles and criteria of epistemological and psycho-pedagogical type. In each of the curricular areas presented, the contents will be realized with the most varied resources and in different types of activities, as attractive to children. For example, activity can be organized in simultaneous workshops, so that there is variety, so that those with a higher degree of difficulty can be better monitored and supervised. Outdoor education finds its place in organizing preparatory activities, the school curriculum encourages educational practices beneficial to educators, individually, but also as a group.

Analyzing the competencies described at this level, it can be observed that cooperation, socialization, exit and participation in activities in many and varied contexts is desirable at this level. In the document presented by specialists from the Ministry of National Education, it is found that in each of the areas, the emphasis is placed on the use of natural materials, the most familiar and open environments, the discovery of self and belonging to various social groups, the discovery of national identity and belonging to the environment of the city or village, manifestation of curiosity for phenomena, relationships, regularities in the immediate environment, manifestation of concern for a clean and friendly environment, etc. Problem solving, critical thinking, making observations or comparisons, are required to be carried out in a most natural and friendly environment, which offers countless natural resources. The discovery of sensations or emotions can be realized in the natural environment near the group room. Noticing the beauty of everyday life, participating in different racing games, identifying simple ways to maintain health status, in the familiar environment, are skills that are required to be developed at this age, using activities within outdoor education, and adapting the contents presented. in the natural environment, so that familiarizing students with this educational level will be easier and more efficient. (***)Progresia competențelor în Ciclul achizițiilor fundamentale)

The elements presented above indicate the openness and motivation of the use of outdoor education with all its components, in order to form key competences and transversal competences at the level of the preparatory class. The basic idea of interdisciplinarity is that, on the one hand, the conceptual and methodological apparatus of several disciplines are used in interconnection, to examine a theme or a problem but, in particular, to develop integrated, transversal, key competences. and interdisciplinary. (Universitatea din București, 2013)

The teaching material suggested to be used in the proposed learning activities, is not mandatory. Learning activities are suggestions for skills training. They can be adapted to the specific of each class, depending on the resources available to each teacher. It should aim to make connections between disciplines, by offering learning contexts relevant to the everyday reality of the preparatory class student, which will keep him located in the familiar environment and which will be attractive, instructive and useful. (Dumitrescu, 2013)

At the end of the preparatory class, an evaluation report is made, in the form of a standard document, which records the level of achievement of the general competences, respectively of the specific competences associated with each discipline. The document is an integral part of the student's educational portfolio, and the purpose of its preparation is to guide and optimize the educational process,

in order to prepare the students to respond to the school requests. The report is used to optimize the educational process and to substantiate the decisions of educational guidance and counseling, helping to create and update the individualized student learning plan.

The curriculum for the preparatory class marks the beginning of an unprecedented curricular modernization in Romania, with the elaboration of numerous curricular documents of a high quality and the continuation with the training of the teachers in this regard, by attending courses and seminars that offer them specializations in order to accumulate the competences of training at this level.

Level	Competencies and activities extracted from the curriculum that are connected to outdoor education
PREPARATORY CLASS	cooperation
	socialization
	use of natural materials
	discovery of self
	belonging to various social groups
	the discovery of national identity
	manifestation of curiosity for phenomena, relationships, regularities in the immediate environment
	manifestation of concern for a clean and friendly environment
	Problem solving
	critical thinking
	making observations or comparisons
	the discovery of sensations or emotions
	noticing the beauty of everyday life
identifying simple ways to maintain health status	

Table 1. Competencies and activities extracted from the curriculum that are connected to outdoor education in the preparatory class
Study of the curricular characteristics 1st grade

The second level of the fundamental acquisition cycle is 1st grade. At this level the students take part in school programs that make use of the learning experience accumulated up to the age of seven, including that of the preparatory class. For the children who did not graduate the preparatory class, there is no obstacle in the accumulation of knowledge, and then the development of skills. This is due to the fact that the evaluation is performed concentric and the contents are always repeated. It has been mentioned above that the first level of the cycle of fundamental acquisitions is intended for accommodation and socialization, in first grade, it can be observed according to the curricular analysis that it is the year of effective integration in the educational environment. As a novelty, the introduction of qualifiers as scoring conventions is observed.

There are elements of novelty brought also regarding the contents, in the sense that some content elements belonging to the curricular areas are already studied in the preparatory class, so they are given less time in the curriculum of 1st grade. At the same time, in the core procurement cycle, the focus is on communication, the students being able to communicate in various contexts. The open and friendly working atmosphere can also be created at this level through the use of modern teaching strategies, and the activities can be organized in a varied and fun way, in open spaces, using as much of the natural environment and its appealing elements. Also, the game and toys will be used as much, the students being asked to make their own resources used in the game and learning. Thus, it is possible to see the encouragement of the use of the elements of outdoor learning as well as the use of the elements of the natural environment.

The contents are introduced gradually, as in the preparatory class, using intuitive counting and support, in contexts of exploration of the environment close to and known to the student. The teaching game predominates, ensuring the active participation of the students. It is encouraged to explore the immediate environment, to ask questions, to verbal interventions, to express their ideas and experiences in relation to what they are learning and to propose solutions for solving problems.

It is preferable, whenever possible, to organize teaching sequences for observation, experimentation, measurement, data collection on various plants and animals, in the natural environment. Such holistic learning, close to the child's knowledge universe, has the advantage of being more interesting, in order to ensure a deeper understanding of the concepts. (***)Anexa 7 la OMEN nr. 3371/12.03.2013, Metodologia privind aplicarea planurilor-cadru de învățământ pentru învățământul primar)

The current school programs promote experiential learning, by directly involving the student in the studied reality. The emphasis is placed on the

realization of the knowledge, skills and values learned in real contexts, by increasing the weight of the activities of practical-applicative character within each school discipline. Skills training depends to a large extent on the way in which the teacher designs and organizes the learning and on the degree to which he emphasizes the applicative dimension of knowledge. (Dumitrescu, 2013)

Level	Competencies and activities extracted from the curriculum that are connected to outdoor education
1 st grade	integration
	communication
	natural environment
	open spaces
	making own resources
	to verbal interventions
	exploration of the immediate environment
	expressing ideas and experiences in relation to what they are learning
	proposing solutions for solving problems
	observation, experimentation, measurement, data collection on various plants and animals in the natural environment
holistic learning	

Table 1. Competencies and activities extracted from the curriculum that are connected to outdoor education in 1st grade

The particularities of the curriculum at 2nd grade

2nd grade is the last level of the three belonging to the fundamental procurement cycle. Specifically, by the end of 2nd grade, the student's training profile is realized, and it is intended to be able to:

- to use various ways of communicating in real situations (by receiving and producing short and simple verbal and non-verbal messages in family contexts, using elementary components of the terminological conventions specific to the different school disciplines, interacting in familiar communication contexts in the mother tongue).

- to demonstrate creative thinking and the ability to adapt to various situations by showing curiosity for change, showing curiosity for engaging in focused and structured activities, for the type of projects proposed by the educator, showing curiosity for different forms of artistic expressivity, expressing artistic sensitivity by simple means.

- to enhance their own experiences in the investigation of the natural and social environment (by observing some elements from the near environment, by showing curiosity for phenomena in the near environment, by reporting some observed relationships in the near environment, by using simple procedures in solving problems, formulating explanations simple questions such as: When ?, How ?, Why ?, Formulation of simple opinions about objects / facts / phenomena in the environment).

By analyzing the skills needed for a student who has completed the 2nd grade, completing the cycle of fundamental acquisitions, one can observe the requirement of a dynamic, natural, open education, an education that is in permanent connection with the society and its members, but especially an education that is permanently concerned with the environment, natural areas, harmonious physical and cognitive development in the natural environment. We also observe the encouragement of self-discovery and relationships that are based on communication, sharing, discovery, experience, learning being holistic and especially interdisciplinary. The purpose of this level of education is to provide the conceptual, mental and behavioral bases that allow the child to adapt effectively to the next stage of schooling, but especially the social integration as quickly as possible. The skills can be accumulated more easily and faster if each teacher prepares the necessary space and resources for a modern learning, starting from the needs and interests of each child. This can be done mainly through the use of outdoor education activities.

At the end of this cycle of studies, an evaluation of the fundamental competences at national level is carried out, with subjects elaborated by the National Center for Evaluation and Examination, starting with an integrated test that is based on reading in Language and Communication, and then a test on Mathematics and Natural Sciences. The duration allocated to solving the subjects is 30 minutes for each test administered, and the place of the support is the classroom where the students normally carry out their daily activities. The obtained results are not recorded in the class catalog and they are used at the level of the educational unit by elaborating the individualized learning plans and by informing the parents about the stage of training and development of the competences that have been evaluated.

Level	Competencies and activities extracted from the curriculum that are connected to outdoor education
2 nd grade	communication
	creative thinking
	experience
	self-discovery
	cognitive development
	sharing

Table 1. Competencies and activities extracted from the curriculum that are connected to outdoor education in 2nd grade

Conclusions

There are many questions that may arise from the desire to implement outdoor education or its activities in any educational system. It is necessary to thoroughly analyze the curriculum together with all its components for the three levels of the fundamental procurement cycle. It is important to know what we are working on and then we can make a correct intervention plan in order to adapt and transform the different activities pertaining to outdoor education, so that they are in line with the curricular requirements of the current period and the Romanian educational system.

Recent studies in the field of primary education have attracted the attention of specialists on the improvement of teaching methods and strategies, as well as of the activities carried out in the class of students. In the last period it is desired to renew the pedagogical methods, so that the learning becomes one that aims at the

development of new skills. Thus, the teachers must organize their educational approach taking into account: curricular provisions, organizational strategies and teaching methodology.

Following the analysis of the curriculum for primary education, it is noted that it also includes the detail on curricular areas. Each area shows the internal structure of the discipline, orienting itself on certain competences, which include capacities and attitudes specific to the subject pursued. The contents are means by which the educational aims can be reached and are organized thematically, in units. The examples of learning activities start from the concrete experiences of the student and seek to integrate learning strategies appropriate to the learning situations. (Kelemen, 2014)

Modern education no longer distinguishes between the importance of some methods and the placement of others in inferior positions. Currently, education follows the way in which these methods are used to achieve the objectives. (Cerghit, 2006)

Outdoor education, whether used as a unique form of learning or as a learning strategy in traditional education, brings positive changes both in addressing learning styles and in how to adapt existing methods in various situations. The most common form of use of the outdoor approach is by using the methods already established and known in outdoor contexts. In this way, outdoor education becomes efficient and easy to use by every teacher, regardless of the age of the group they work with.

In outdoor education, both traditional learning methods and interactive methods that develop the level of group cohesion can be used. Depending on the objectives set, the number of participants, the aims and the chosen framework, it is possible to determine the methods that will be used, but also how they will be adapted, so that they correspond to the needs of the group and for the entire activity to lead to learning. (Torkos, 2017)

References

- Cerghit, I., (2006), Metode de învățământ, E.D.P., București
- Ciolan, L., (2008), Învățarea integrată, Editura Polirom, Iași
- Crețu, C., (1997), Pedagogia succesului, Editura Polirom, Iași
- Egerău, A., (2005), Fundamente pedagogice și curriculare, Editura Universității Aurel Vlaicu
- Kelemen, G., (2014), Metodica activităților cultural, civice și recreative, Editura Universității Aurel Vlaicu, Arad
- Roman, A. F., Balaș, E., (2015), Transversal competences and interactive Teaching strategies, Agora Psycho-Pragmatica 9 (1), 26-41
- Torkos, H., (2017), Working on transversal competencies out of doors, Journal Plus Education, Vol 18, No. 2, pp 242-249
- Universitatea București, - Facultatea de Psihologie și Științele Educației. Departamentul pentru formarea profesorilor , (2013), Organizarea interdisciplinară

a ofertelor de învățare pentru formarea competențelor cheie la școlarii mici. Program de formare continuă de tip “blended learning” pentru cadrele didactice din învățământul primar, Softwin SRL, București

***Anexa 7 la OMEN nr. 3371/12.03.2013, Metodologia privind aplicarea planurilor-cadru de învățământ pentru învățământul primar

***Dumitrescu, I., (2013), Elemente de noutate în curriculumul pentru clasa pregătitoare și clasa I, <http://www.tribunainvatamantului.ro/elemente-de-noutate-in-curriculumul-pentru-clasa-pregatitoare-si-clasa-i/>, (accesat 03.01.2018, 12:50)

***MEN, (2017), București, <https://www.edu.ro/invatamant-primar>, accesat 29.12.2017, 13:20

***Progresia competențelor în Ciclul achizițiilor fundamentale