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**ABILITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH OUTDOOR EDUCATION**  
**ACTIVITIES IN THE SECOND GRADE**

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*Abstract*

Primary school represents the basic learning environment in the development of abilities of children. The second grade is the last level of the core procurement cycle, where the basic competencies required at this level may come to an end of development. Abilities are a main element in the structure of a competency, together with knowledge and attitudes. Thorough this work, we are going to present the result of a complex research about the abilities can be developed through outdoor learning activities at second grade pupils. The study was made on a number of 46 second graders from Arad county and the main method used was outdoor education and its belonging activities. The main instrument used was the observation sheet where every pupil got a number of scores based on the development of abilities in the two parts of the study. The results show that abilities, as parts of the curricular competencies can be developed through a number of three outdoor activities, at the level of second grade, on the group that the experiment was made.

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## 1. Introduction

The current debates on the aim of education and school in the modern society have generated developments and movements in the educational sciences, regarding theories (Păun & Potolea, 2002). Today's society, more than ever, asks for competencies, intelligence and ability of the individual. That is why, since ancient times, education has been a great concern for society.

### 1.1. Outdoor education, as a modern teaching learning method.

Education can take place in different educational settings through different types and forms of education. The most well-known forms of education are considered: formal education, non-formal education and informal education. An overriding way to these forms of education can be considered as permanent education. The three types of education, even if they have their own fields of action in the whole process of education, and different functionalities, function through interdependence.

The educational environment in Romania has lately been preoccupies in the understanding and delimitation of terms such as outdoor education, teaching and learning in nature, nature kindergarten, and forest school. The concept is so vast that a clear conceptual and semantic delimitation is required. In the Romanian educational system, for the description of the concept, the terms of outdoor education, outdoor education or outdoor learning are used. Outdoor education can be achieved during classes or during after-school programs, based on the national curriculum. The activities can be organised complementary to those in the classroom, or independently, subject to the pre-set content of each school age curriculum. It is important to note that outdoor play or recreational activities cannot be included in the field of outdoor education because they do not aim to achieve learning goals, since they are not organized for educational purposes.

Outdoor education is a concept that takes into account an entire education program based on the experience and practical activity that takes place outside the classroom in the natural environment. It is based on the theory, philosophy and practice of experiential education, environmental education and environmental education. It helps people to better understand themselves, to perceive more correctly the surrounding world and especially to gain a better knowledge of the people around them. It is considered a modern learning strategy with strong educational effects benefiting the development of innovative spirit, leadership, communication and other aspects of modern life.

## 2. Problem Statement

Outdoor education is based on the study of the contents of the curriculum, in an interdisciplinary way. Hammerman, Hammerman, and Hammerman (1985) has noted that outdoor education is a new approach to achieving the aims and objectives of the curriculum. Outdoor education puts the issue of multiple relationships. These connections are not based solely on natural resources, but rather on people and society.

According to some studies conducted in Romania, related to outdoor education and its place in the Romanian educational system (Moldovan, 2007), it has been proved that the closer examination of the whole concept requires an exact analysis of placement as a type of education or a learning strategy. The

learning framework is lean, using methods such as engagement and active participation, is geared toward the actors involved, is based on the participant's experience, and authority is not imposed but chosen by the group members. It is an efficient way of stimulating the growth regarding relationships between individuals, promoting teamwork and it can be structured as a type of interdisciplinary learning.

### **2.1. The importance of ability development as part of competencies in modern educational systems**

Throughout the history of pedagogy, fluctuations can be noticed in terms of the strategies used in the educational process, the objectives set, the contents addressed, but especially the targeted objectives. Each time, these features have been dealt with based on the individual needs of the educator, but also on social needs and expectations. Until recently, the emphasis was on the accumulation of theoretical knowledge and information, the pedagogy of the present starts from a preview of the future in what challenges and needs can arise. With socialization developing socially, education has had to move to a different level, namely to form individuals adaptable to new social requirements. The roles in the instructive-educational process were rethought. The teacher is no longer the sole source of information, nor is he solely responsible for the educational process. Parents and society have gained a significant role in shaping and developing children's personality by asking them for active involvement in learning. Students have become passive listeners, active participants, even proponents of learning situations and their assessors. So, a knowledge-based education has turned into a skill-based one. Knowing is no longer sufficient in a society that is constantly changing, but this science must be transposed into practice, adapted and adapted as often as necessary. It can therefore be said that pedagogy of the future is a pedagogy of competences (Chiş, 2002).

Transversal competences are value acquisitions and attitudes that go beyond a specific field or study program and are expressed through the following descriptors: autonomy and responsibility, social interaction, personal and professional development (Ilica, 2013). These are capacities that transcend the specialization of the evaluation of public policies and programs with a transdisciplinary nature: teamwork skills, oral and written communication skills, respect and development of professional values and ethics, IT use, problem solving and taking recognition and respect for diversity and multiculturalism, learning autonomy, entrepreneurship and initiative, openness to lifelong learning, and so on (Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2005).

New times call for new methods that are appropriate to these goals (Neacşu, 2015). You cannot reach a new result using the same steps. Modern pedagogy needs to adapt to new innovations in this regard by using new education and modern learning methods. A learning situation that facilitates the development of pupils' skills involves their sequential, gradual involvement in the following types of activities:

- Exploring the resources made available through learning
- Internal and external action
- Interaction for research, analysis and understanding
- Engaging in reflexive activities
- To deal with new, problematic situations

- Structuring new purchases
- Co-evaluative activities
- Integration into transdisciplinary contexts
- Creating meaning
- Preparing the transfer possibilities (Roman, 2014)

### **3. Research Questions**

The most important question that stands at the base of the following research is the problem of developing such activities that can be used by teachers all over the world and at every level, which can develop abilities of pupils in a fun and educative way. One of these activities can be outdoor education. Starting from this question, there are many directions in which we can go. Other questions that subside from the one mentioned above is the rate of using these activities and the proper age levels that can participate at outdoor learning activities in order to develop specific abilities. The following questions were asked before starting this research:

- Can there be educational activities within the formal educational systems that truly develop competencies of modern era pupils?
- How can teachers extract abilities from a competency from the National Curriculum?
- How can these abilities be developed through specific practical outdoor learning activities within the formal educational systems?
- How can teachers evaluate if the extracted abilities were developed and how can they score the rate of the development?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study is to identify the main types of outdoor learning activities at second grade, which have the higher rate of ability development and starting from that point to be able to develop similar activities, depending on the level and the age of pupils, and also depending on the curricular contents. Also, the second purpose of the following research is to develop methods and instruments of evaluation of these activities, and altogether to introduce these activities into the teaching learning routine of children. Through this study, we wanted to test if outdoor learning activities can develop abilities of second graders, on the sample tested, better than the regular classes that are held in the inside.

### **5. Research Methods**

The main method used was observation and the main instrument was the observation sheet of the competencies. The implemented program in the research was the one that contains outdoor learning activities, three as number, which were conceived in an integrated holistic way, in order to respect the curricular contents and using the competencies given in the syllabus of every educational level.

Each outdoor learning activity has its own objectives derived from the competencies given in the syllabus of every level, a brief description, instruments of evaluation and also the different school subjects involved.

There were three activities used at this level, all three of them integrated, using as many subjects as possible. The first one, called *30 posters*, was built on the following competencies:

**a) At the level of content purchases**

Reading messages from the known environment: poster

Describing information about yourself, about your family, colleagues, about your favourite activities, etc., using short statements

Exposing the features of an object

**b) At skill level**

Tracking signposted trails with conventional symbols  
or invented

Assemble the initial number with the following numbers indicated by the dice

Make the correspondence between the number indicated by the dice and the corresponding poster

**c) Attitudinal / affective level**

Initiative to resume task

Involvement

Fair play.

The second one, was a maths activity, and it was built on the following competencies:

**a) At the level of content purchases**

Assembly and multiplication properties

The connection between gathering and multiplication

Terms of gathering, decreasing, and multiplication

**b) At skill level**

Tracking signposted trails with conventional or invented symbols

Making decisions about poster selection with the right result, from a multitude of variants

**c) Attitudinal / affective level**

Interest in the activity.

The third one, was a complex orienteering activity, with map and compass, and it was built on the following competencies:

**a) At the level of content purchases**

Identifying cardinal points

Identifying the elements of a map

Recognizing the elements of a compass

**b) At skill level**

Laterality

Following a route on a proximal space map

**c) Attitudinal / affective level**

Involvement

**Autonomy.**

During these activities, pupils were observed and scores were given, depending on their route. The results were written on the observation sheet and then they were compared with the ones from a similar observation sheet that was completed in the classroom on a similar group. The model on which the evaluation sheet was built is presented as it follows and it can be used at any level or activity (Table 01):

**Table 01.** Model of the evaluation sheet used in the formative programme

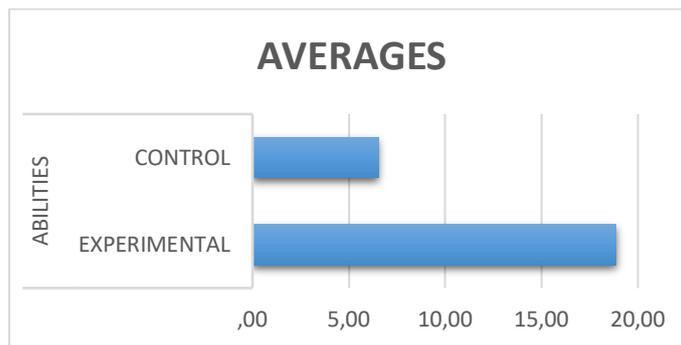
Criteria				
Competency				
Variable 1	Variable 2	Variable 3	Variable 4	Variable 5
				<b>Total score: _____</b>

**6. Findings**

After introducing the scores in the statistics program in order to get them analysed, we have got to the following findings.

**Table 02.** Table of differences between control and experimental group at second grade, on first activity

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
TOTALFO30PI2P OST	Equal variances assumed	1,257	,271	13,784	31	,000	5,989	,434	5,103	6,875
	Equal variances not assumed			13,933	30,835	,000	5,989	,430	5,112	6,866



**Figure 01.** Figure of differences between control and experimental group at second grade, on second activity

**Table 03.** Table of differences between control and experimental group at second grade, on THIRD activity

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
TOTALFONRNATI2POST	Equal variances assumed	5,982	,020	17,584	31	,000	5,333	,303	4,715	5,952
	Equal variances not assumed			18,060	30,675	,000	5,333	,295	4,731	5,936

As it can be seen in the tables and image above, (Table 02, Table 03, Figure 01), there were significant differences between post-test results in case of abilities, between the group control and experimental group. This can be interpreted by the fact that at the level of the attitudes criterion, the students who participated in the training program consisting of activities related to outdoor education present positive changes in the development of transversal competences that fall within the scope of the criterion pursued.

## 7. Conclusion

The results analysed and presented at the level of the 2nd grade can be taken as a reference for the development of transversal competences through integrated activities in the field of outdoor education. As we have seen in the studies conducted in this paper, we can observe the educational and formative

valences of outdoor education in the development of transversal skills in the fundamental procurement cycle. This may mean that outdoor education develops cross-cutting skills at each level of interest, bring value to the formal education system if it is used in compliance with each stage of its planning and implementation. We can observe the strong educational valences of outdoor education and its related activities, not only in the school results, but also in the development of some abilities life skills, transversal skills, or even improving the quality of life of practitioners. Therefore, even after a short-term use of outdoor education activities, significant improvements can be observed in the areas studied, and if the activities are correctly conducted from a methodological point of view, they can significantly contribute to the development of transversal skills in pupils in second grade.

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