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THE TRANSDISCIPLINARITY – A MODEL OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

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Abstract

Starting from a basic dimension of current educational policies, education centered on child/ student, the present paper proposes the approach of the two key themes in the organization of the teaching: organization of integrated learning (transdisciplinary teaching) and development of authentic learning contexts (experiential learning).

The purpose of this paper is to clarify the interrelation between the two concepts, starting from the following premises: the pupil is unique, has individual training needs, and the school must offer him adequate learning contexts; students educational global approach by almost all areas of human development; formal learning should approach everyday life, schools role is to build authentic learning contexts, starting from students personal experiences.

Another aim of this paper is to develop an experiential learning model through teaching contexts transdisciplinary organization. The created model starts from the formation of the competence to talk in student native language, aiming the oral expression ability, respectively the written expression ability. Transdisciplinarity analysis as a dimension of the experiential learning contexts organization, is done by presenting a thematic project in the extracurricular activities program The Different School. The thematic project shows formal and non-formal educational activities organized over a week starting from a central theme (literary trip, real life trip).

This paper conclusions show the formative value of the formal and non-formal learning activities organization by extrapolating a trip.

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1. Introduction

Success in personal, professional and social life is given by the ability to exit the pattern of a discipline and to make connections and rapid transfer between disciplines. Concrete problems of life have



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an integrated character and can only be solved by appealing to knowledge, skills; these skills are not strictly within the context of a discipline of study.

The integrated approach to teaching suggests the transdisciplinary project, considered to be a flexible approach to adapt to situations and new needs appeared in socio-economic and cultural field.

2. Paper Theoretical Foundation and Related Literature

Transdisciplinary approach to teaching approaches focuses on skills training since the early levels of schooling. The evolution of the concept of curriculum tends to extend its significance in relation to the complex variables of the educational context by including the aims, content, teaching strategies, way of assessing or managing the learning process. Integrated approach is an alternative in organizing the learning situations, being in the last decade one of the constant dimensions of educational policies. (Taușan, 2014)

The development of learning paradigms focuses attention on student particularities, needs and interests. Teaching-learning-evaluating situations are simulations of certain life circumstances, through integrated activity the pupil is in the situation of concrete learning-by his own activity, his own feelings, as a result of personal decisions. The transdisciplinary dimension of the didactic activity has as premises distinct forms to integrate teaching contents- structured, organized and made accessible at the level of child knowledge and understanding. (D'Hainaut, 1981)

The cross-disciplinary approach is centred on the learning efforts (cognitive, emotional and psycho-motor) of the student and not on the contents of the disciplines. In transdisciplinary approach, the central element is the student, student's skills training. Forming skills requires to facilitate the student means to develop his basic acquisitions. In this way, the student becomes the central point in his own learning process. (Taușan, 2014) Transdisciplinary approach is a fundamental dimension in skills training and development of any student learning model. This concept can be argued from several perspectives:

- from the pedagogical point of view is emphasized its openness to inter-, trans- content;
- psychologically, manifesting competence means adequate domestic resource mobilization and acquired in fundamental knowledge cognitive and psychomotor skills, attitudes and behavior that students apply them to solving problematic situations;
- teaching - learning approaches focus on acquisitions acquired gradually and permanently in concrete contexts. It will use problem-solving strategies, discovery, investigation, working on projects etc., and learning becomes a clear process through action-oriented motivations;
- evaluation - becomes formative, emphasizing the role of the student in self-evaluation;
- social skills, as macro- and micro aims determined in response to the needs of current practice and valid at the whole process of training, it is also the social dimension of education so that graduates can easily adapt to the problems of everyday life and employability.

Experiential learning is an authentic learning that contextualizes the paradigm of learning through action, through dealing with real-life situations. In the developing of real learning contexts, the following coordinates are going to be established: what are the purchases that each student needs; what is each student's level of knowledge (as prerequisites of learning); developing a positive and applicable educational context, because a good teaching involves interferences between theory and practice; using

certain formative evaluation methods to identify gaps, to overcome learning difficulties and to guarantee academic progress; empowering students in the act of learning, because students need to feel that what they do is useful and changes something. (Ramsden, 1992).

The challenge brought by the experiential learning paradigm lies in the arrangement of educational activities. Both organized in school and out of school, their performance depends mainly in how are the contents integrated in relation to the acquisition that we want to form to the students. (Lowman, 1995)

Transdisciplinary organization of learning has authentic effects regarding the student's school motivation development, particularly through the effects built at interactional level, at student-student and student-teacher level. On the other hand, the formative bonds are determined by the student- teaching content interaction; by cognitive, individual and group efforts, students will build their own experience, authentic learning situations, they will reflect on the given content and give personal argued decisions.

Moreover, we believe that a child should be educated according to curricular areas and forms delineated as reality itself does not support this approach. In other words, we can study geography, history, mathematics, music and any other discipline in the whole educational context. From this point of view, the teacher will create learning situations starting from each student's personal learning needs, each student will be addressed in terms of its uniqueness. (Popescu, 2014) Teacher's role is to overcome each discipline/content restrictive points of view and to make a global approach to each learning situation, to make the educational context closer to the student/ classroom individual learning needs.

Communication in the classroom through questions and answers has fully demonstrated its efficiency and specificity. It stimulates the intellectual activity of students, causes them positive feelings, involves them more in achieving school tasks and creates a suitable environment for the development of the teaching-learning process. (Bloju & Stan, 2012)

There is a growing concern in the pedagogical literature for the concept of authentic learning and some related concepts - disposition for learning, learning innovation etc. (Ciolan, & Ciolan, 2014)

Most teachers from our country consider that a successful adaptation/re-adaptation of the pupils to a learning system is firstly due to the learning procurement background from the Mathematics and Communication subject matters (conversation and written message), unlike the teachers from other European countries who consider that school success depends mainly on the social skills development – responsibility, cooperation, independence – and on the emotional skills development – acknowledging the importance of emotional intelligence for shaping small children personality. (Langa, & Dumitru, 2016)

3. Author's Contribution on the Existing Theory and Practice in Educational Field

The aim of this study is to develop a transdisciplinary model to develop student skills through extracurricular approaches in Different School Program. It assumes that extracurricular activities organized under this program represent a framework for authentic learning by engaging students in meaningful activities, of life.

The aim of the study is to design a program to develop communicative competence in Romanian through cross-curricular (transdisciplinary) activities within the *Different School Program*. *The Different School Program* is a compulsory extracurricular activities program for pre-university education, at all stages of education that lasts for one week during the school semester.

I started from the analysis of communicative competence in mother language from the perspective of the following components (Mândruț, & Ardelean, 2012):

- Students' ability to express themselves orally;
- Students' ability to express themselves in writing;
- All in all, students' ability to use the language as a tool of knowledge and communication in real life situations (during a school trip, a visit, a trip by means of transport)

Under this approach, the formation of the oral expression and written capacity is analyzed (arguing the answers, presenting essential data, presenting some details, coherent expression). The hypothesis of the study assumes that achieving cross-approaches by formal, non-formal and informal actions favors student formation of the oral and written capacity.

The activities have been organized with primary students, fourth grade, the teaching contents have been in accordance with the Romanian Language and Literature curriculum, students work has been evaluated related to the level of schooling descriptors of competence.

Data expressed are the result of empirical investigations carried out during students teaching practice activities and mentoring in modules of education and preschool pedagogy. For this study quantitative and qualitative methods for gathering information and processing and interpreting the data will be used: Fieldwork, in which they will complete observation forms, photographs, collections of materials, synthesis of personal impressions (log reflexive).

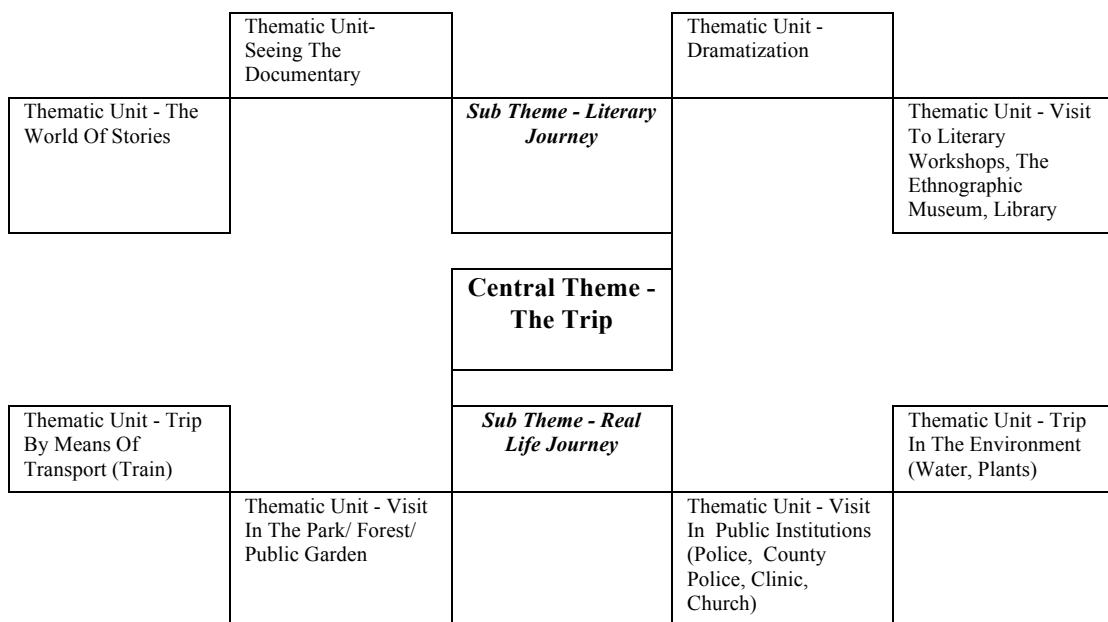


Fig. 1. Thematic projects map - THE TRIP

The transdisciplinary approach involves designing a central theme (THE TRIP) with two segments: JOURNEY IN REAL LIFE (thematic units: journey with a means of transport, visit the park/ forest/ public garden, visit the public institutions such as police, gendarmerie, dispensary, church etc., natural phenomena, environment, water, plants) and LITERARY JOURNEY (thematic unit: the world of the stories, visit the literary workshops, ethnographic museum, library, viewing the documentary,

dramatization). Integrated activities organization is conditioned by the central theme (TRIP) for which thematic units activities have been planned (one week) for the two sub themes: JOURNEY IN REAL LIFE and LITERARY JOURNEY. (Fig. 1)

The aims in conducting transdisciplinary approach are developing the components of communication skills: the story of a visit (at one location); presenting the rules of behavior in means of transport and in a public space; the description of the social space, achieving a paper with the class rules of behavior (in means of transport, public spaces, institutions), achieving a debate (protecting nature, plants, creatures, forest etc.).

To assess students communicative competence an assessment portfolio is designed with assessment tools to measure self-expression: a class paper containing the rules of behavior in means of transport, in public spaces, in nature, in the street; presenting the favorite job -What I want to be; Why?; bunch - How to protect nature (plants, creatures, forest, etc.); anecdotal notes, narrative (of a visit, specific traditions); reflective journal; photos, posters, a collection of objects from nature, corner of nature (group activity).

Making transdisciplinary approach in forming the communicative competence shows that students' ability to tell stories in extracurricular contexts is effectively developed, especially when there are enjoyable activities chosen by them, and also that can be effectively used the transdisciplinary approach to develop capabilities such as telling a spent action, describe specific elements of nature, gendarmerie and other visited places, find detailed information on watched movies. In terms of organizing authentic learning activities (travel by means of transport, public space visit etc.) it can be effectively used the transdisciplinary approach to form the proper behavior (respecting rules), but also for the development of entrepreneurial behavior (purchase specific products as tickets, sold items) behavior skills in society (forms to address, respect each other, civilized conduct in institutional spaces, giving the place in the means of transport).

Designing authentic scenarios and learning events is one of the key challenges of the effective education specialist.

4. Conclusion

Creating experiential learning situations is favored by the development of cross-curricular approaches, centered on topics of interest to students' academic and social life. In this regard, following the implementation of educational approach presented, we afford some conclusions as recommendations for the development of integrated learning situations. We consider both thematic integration and combining formal statements with the non-formal and informal ones.

SWOT analysis of the organization of transdisciplinary approaches in experiential learning situations:

Strong points: the ability to browse various and current topics also depending on students' interests; positive networking through communication between students, between students and teacher; stimulate students' creativity in achieving various learning products; transfer of knowledge from theoretical knowledge to practical; information from various sources - movies, visits, trips debate, developing practical products.

Weak points: insufficient time for detailing topics; sporadic involvement of the family in activities; additional costs which must be supported by family.

Threats: irrational dosing time determines superficiality that blocks learning activities (outdoor activities in terms of precipitation, etc.).

Opportunities: output of "curricular pattern", students can express their grievances, and desires towards the organization of activities, the possibility of flexible training and evaluation of student skills.

We believe that teacher of new generation can change beliefs, life perspective and can create new possibilities for learning and teaching. Maybe it is not enough just learn how to use new technology in the class or how created new educational situation in this perspective.

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