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**THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS THROUGH
OUTDOOR CANOEING ACTIVITIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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Abstract

This work sets the frame for one of the most important transverse competencies: communication. Learning how to communicate is the earnest aspect of primary school teaching-learning activities. Teaching it through experiential learning is the fastest, more modern, handy and most pleasant way of all. (Chiş, 2007). Outdoor learning, puts children in various states, which impel them to form basic skills in communication. The research that have been done, shows that those children who engage in outdoor learning activities at least two times per month, have better results in communication even inside the classroom. Canoeing, represents an unprecedented learning method, which if it is used in primary school, can lead to great results in developing communicative competencies. The results show that after the participation into canoeing activities, a group of fourth graders have better results in focusing, team work, socialization, independence and responsibility. Planning the activities with the involvement of the whole group improves the quality of the communication per class, but working together in order to practice canoeing brings the greatest benefits regarding communication. Conclusions show that every primary school teacher should involve the group in a canoeing activity at least once a semester in order to achieve a better cohesion of the group, which leads to better results in the learning activity, developing inter human relationships.

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1. Introduction

I have chosen to discuss this topic because it is a modern, unprecedented one, interesting but unexploited among teachers. When we are talking about education, especially about formal education, it is necessary to relate to the notion of human communication and educational (pedagogical) communication in particular. People have to communicate at every moment of their activity in everyday life, all the more when they want to learn something. Since in our daily work we can't do anything without communication, the more important it is in the educational context. It is considered necessary to approach managerial communication separately from the other functions and areas of the pupil class management as it is a fundamental condition for achieving all the other functions and activities specific to the school context. Through communication we can plan, organize, coordinate and control, motivate children to get involved in their education and self-education. (Ezechil, 2002) I think it is also very important to try to develop communicational skills in children, at every age, but it is even more important to do it in a modern, appealing way, suitable for the century that we live in. Modern times require modern teaching-learning techniques. This is why I have chosen to go and explore a partially touched path, and test the method of outdoor learning, specifically a part of it, which is canoeing.

2. Problem Statement

The content of knowledge in the school context is often summarized in verbal material, which is why the language becomes the main form of communication. This verbal material is subject to a double processing action, namely: once the teacher adapts and moderates communication in order to make the material as accessible as it is possible to students, and then is processed by the students who decode it in order to gain the meanings, and on The other uses it in drafting the verbal answer. The verbal answer is an active aspect that involves the whole system of its personality. Activities or techniques that improve the child's communication skills must be present even when the child is at a very young age in order to enjoy a rich social life later.

Daily conversations with the child are necessary; dialogues can be on different topics:

The practice of communication is very important and necessary in the first years of school, but it is also as important that they last throughout the school life. It is supported by systematic language learning and is based on two main objectives: developing oral and written expression and developing the capacity to understand what is being told and what is being read. (Ilica, 2003)

We also need to take into account the fact that pupils have to learn grammatically correct expressions, to have a rich vocabulary, but also to learn how to correctly communicate in society. The main actor, the educator, is the one who has to maintain and control the educational communication through the quality of his interventions, demonstrating the communicative competence and this way inevitably will induce his students the ability to communicate.

We must not forget that school prepares students for further work, so it is very important to follow with great interest the formation and development of their competencies. Developing communication skills help them become able to have a proper orientation in life and its various situations, express their attitude towards ethical values, be prepared to acquire independently their knowledge and all the demanded skills,

and the quality of their lives, both professionally and personally, will be enhanced by effective communication, being able to adapt and manage the present requirements at a time. (Pânișoară, 2003)

Another aspect that should not be neglected is that effective, persuasive interpersonal communication produces beneficial influences on the whole process of assimilation of notions and the formation of cognitive operator structures. Communication represents the relationship between the subjects, mutual exchange of information and bilateral training. In practice, interactive methods consistently seek to optimize communication. Methods of developing communication skills should pursue the development of an interactive listening in group debates, which is used to increase it in quantitative terms and to the qualitative aspect in extending the motivation for activity (Dumitriu, 1998)

3. Research Questions

When talking about how to diversify the lessons and the teaching-learning activities, outdoor education as a method, comes as a great opportunity. It expands classes to the environment around the classroom or the school building. It moves the classroom for part of the lesson in the great outside to experience with all senses of the body.

Describing the outdoor education method, in one sentence is not possible due to the fact that it is multidimensional. Camille Bunting tried to combine ideas from different representatives of the outdoor education idea and came to the result that “Outdoor education is education in, for, about and through the outdoors” (Bunting, 2006). This is a first try to describe outdoor education as short as possible but as it was said, it is non-satisfying. In her next attempt she subdivided it into three dimensions – extension, content and teaching method. But in the end, all these dimensions play together somehow.

Since the mid 1990’s, outdoor education is known and used as an official teaching method. But before the 1990’s there already was the idea of an alternative pedagogical approach rather outside than in ex-cathedra. The methods were just called differently, for example adventures education, activity education, forest education. Although the main part of outdoor education is being outside with the pupils it is of course not apart from the ex-cathedra lessons. It is always connected with preliminary work in the class room and follow-up work also in the class room. Thus, outdoor education is only a method of teaching shifts moves the environment outside (Gilbertson, 2006). Through combining class inside the school building with using outdoor education, school becomes multi-purpose.

Using outdoor education does not only mean going into nature, what most people assume. It basically means moving inside to every outside you can imagine, for example besides nature also museums and the city room which have so much to offer.

One of the most unprecedented parts of outdoor education, and an interesting way of developing transversal skills is canoeing. Canoeing is an age old sport that has been used for transportation, fishing, hunting, sport, and recreation as long as it has been around. Not much has changed in the thousands of years of canoeing history. All over the world canoes are still used for all of those categories and their appeal continues to grow. Of course, in the end, all be all of canoeing is not to learn to canoe. It is to learn and to have fun doing it. Whether to race, to brave rapids, to enjoy nature, to fish or camp, or just to get away from it all, canoeing should be making learning fun. Canoeing is an outdoor sport that can be enjoyed by young and old and by people of various degrees of health. It is a lifelong skill that a person never forgets and can

be enjoyed and passed on between generations. So, even if people don't consider themselves avid canoeists, but they find themselves on the water from time to time, it is recommended to take the opportunity to work on the above skills so that they improve little by little. Canoeing is a sport that can be used as an outdoor education activity and pupils can get closer to nature through it and develop physical and mental skills.

What pupils can learn on a canoeing trip?

- To communicate with each other (every manoeuvre that you have to do is based on team work)
- To analyse the weather conditions (How is weather today in our city? What season are we in? Is the temperature normal for the season we are in?)
- To analyse surroundings (What happens with the trees in the spring time? What happens with the water during summer-winter?)
- What kind of fish are in the water?
- To make a bonfire or to use the outdoor kitchen
- To learn about the fjords and other things depending on the area it is used

For example, a 3-hour canoeing with teachers needs many hours of preparation. First, as in every project, teachers together with the class, and considering the curricular contents, have to set the aim of the canoeing trip. The main aim has to be learning, but every time there are hidden aims too. One of these, for example, can be team building, the development of better communication skills, self-reliance, and all transversal competencies that further on are brought into the classroom and make daily activities easier to handle. Then, as second step, comes the safety and rescue. There is no canoeing activity without first setting up all these techniques, as part of risk management. These steps are followed by learning the basic techniques, choosing the area, learning about boat and equipment needed, what to do in case of emergency, personal clothing, air temperature, water temperature, personal equipment, map and compass and so on. There are explanations needed in case of capsizing and also presentations of different techniques:

- Forwards
- Backwards
- Tandem paddling
- Forward stroke
- Reverse paddling and stopping
- Using rotation to push the water forwards, use rocks, paddle towards and stop before hitting them
- Rescues
- Swimming
- Throw lines from the shore
- Paddle techniques (J stroke, Bow/stern sweep, Draw stroke, Cross Bow rudder, Support strokes)
- Games (row the canoe in pairs facing each other, one holding the handle one near the blade, face each other and paddle, sit on the side and counter balance, come up with a syncope routine)
- Leadership (communication, line of sight, avoidance over cure, positioning)

4. Purpose of the Study

Learning how to communicate is the earnest aspect of primary school teaching-learning activities. Teaching it through experiential learning is the fastest, more modern, handy and most pleasant way of all.

Outdoor learning puts children in various states, which impel them to form basic skills in communication. The research that have been done, shows that those children who engage in outdoor learning activities at least two times per month, have better results in communication even inside the classroom. Canoeing represents an unprecedented learning method, which if it is used in primary school, can lead to great results in developing communicative competencies. The results show that after the participation into canoeing activities, a number of 15 fourth graders have better results in focusing, team work, socialization, independence and responsibility. Planning the activities with the involvement of the whole group improves the quality of the communication per class, but working together in order to practice canoeing brings the greatest benefits regarding communication.

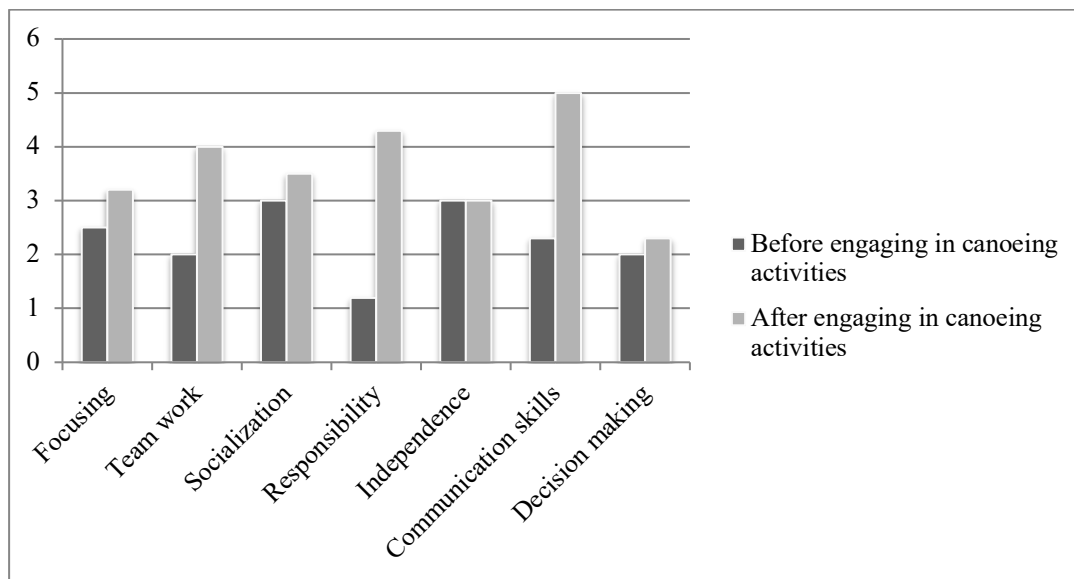


Figure 01. Changes in transversal competencies

5. Research Methods

The research methods that have been used are observation and questionnaires.

6. Findings

Recent perspectives show that the number of participants in outdoor education canoeing activities has grown significantly through the last few years. From the batch of participants, more than 50% claimed that they didn't know the importance of this kind of activities in the development of communicational skills in their lives; others claimed that they thought that canoeing activities are much more expensive. Some teachers and parents say that they don't have resources, but after a presentation, they have learnt that there is a lake if not a river in every city or little town, that they can use in order to create similar activities. There is also support from schools and the leadership for every activity of this kind and parents and teachers are encouraged to step forward and plan. These activities can be even more attractive if they last more than 3 days, end up in camping and orienteering actions.

7. Conclusion

Conclusions show that every primary school teacher should involve the group in a canoeing activity at least once a semester in order to achieve a better cohesion of the group, which leads to better results in the learning activity, developing inter human relationships. Those who tried once, have never stopped, but continued planning and organizing outdoor activities and even more, have enjoyed and made results fruitful. Another study proves that children who are emotionally well trained set positive relations with children of similar age have less behavioural problems and recover faster from a negative experience. A stimulating climate has developed in experimental classes, contributing to the improvement of school results. During such programs, children should be allowed to experiment games, exercises and techniques of emotion recognitions, control, self-control and emotional regulation (Roman, 2016).

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