

LIFE SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT MODELS THROUGH OUTDOOR EDUCATION ACTIVITIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Henrietta TORKOS¹

Tabitha Bernadett PASINSZKY²

¹University Assitant PhD, University of Aurel Vlaicu from Arad

²Preschool teacher, Mamaruta Kindergarden, Arad

Abstract

Outdoor learning has gained lots of interest on both theoretical and practical basis among teachers from Romania. It is used more and more in all areas of education, especially in the formal educational institutions. Also, it has been proven in several research areas that outdoor education with its belonging activities can develop several competencies, in a more efficient way than any other educational strategies or methods. Also, the 21st Century education, has a wide preoccupation towards the development of more than only key competencies that are given by the European Union, such as transversal competencies and life skills. There have been introduced in the national school curricula, school subjects within the area of new education types, and there has been a stronger emphasis on counselling and personal development subjects in

primary schools, elementary schools and also high schools, during which pupils can develop certain skills and competencies that can help them further on, in becoming useful adults and involved members of the society.

The present article sets the theoretical frames for the main concepts, such as outdoor education, life skills, transversal competencies, personal development etc. and also the practical methodology that sets the frame for some template models of outdoor educational activities in primary schools, that can be used as tools for all interested teachers regarding this topic. In the last part of the article, there are going to be presented practical models, that are based on outdoor learning activities, that are fundamental in the primary school curricula and it contains. Also, it is important to be mentioned that all approaches presented are made in an interdisciplinary way.

Keywords: *outdoor education, life skills, personal development.*

Introduction

In the instructive climate in Romania, terms, for example, open air training, educating and learning in nature, nature kindergarten and woodland school have showed up as of late. The idea is expansive to such an extent that an unmistakable calculated and semantic delimitation is required. In the Romanian instructive framework, to depict the idea, the terms are utilized principally: open air schooling, outside training or outside learning. (Păun, 2017) Being acquired words, generally neologisms, expressed disarrays can be made. In the writing there are a great deal of terms used to depict the outside space for learning: outside, park, open air study hall, outside zone, play area, school yard.

Outdoor education can be accomplished during classes or during after-school programs, regarding the school educational plan. The exercises inside it

tends to be proceeded as an enhancement to the class hours, or can be done freely of them, given that the substance set up in the school educational programs identified with each age level are noticed. It is essential to make reference to that outside play or recreational exercises can't be remembered for the circle of open-air training, since they don't seek after the destinations that lead to the obtaining of learning, they are not coordinated for instructive purposes.

Recent perspectives

Life skills are capacities for versatile and positive conduct that empower people to manage the requests and difficulties of life. This idea is additionally named as psychosocial competency. (Braz, 2020) The subject fluctuates extraordinarily relying upon accepted practices and network desires however aptitudes that work for prosperity and help people to form into dynamic and gainful individuals from their networks are considered as fundamental abilities. The UNICEF Evaluation Office proposes that "there is no authoritative rundown" of psychosocial skills; by the by UNICEF counts psychosocial and relational abilities that are commonly prosperity arranged, and fundamental close by education and numeracy aptitudes. Since it changes its significance from culture to culture and life positions, it is viewed as an idea that is flexible in nature. Be that as it may, UNICEF recognizes social and passionate fundamental abilities distinguished by Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Life aptitudes are a result of amalgamation: numerous abilities are grown all the while through training, similar to go along with, which permits an individual to feel in charge of a circumstance and make it more reasonable in context. It permits the individual to deliver fears, outrage, and stress and accomplish a subjective life. (UNICEF, 2015)

Classification:

- Communication and interpersonal skills. This extensively depicts the aptitudes expected to jump on and work with others, and especially to move and get messages either recorded as a hard copy or verbally.
- Decision-making and problem-solving. This portrays the abilities needed to get issues, discover answers for, only them or with others, and afterward make a move to address them.
- Creative thinking and critical thinking. This portrays the capacity to think in various and strange manners about issues, and find new arrangements, or produce ground-breaking thoughts, combined with the capacity to evaluate data cautiously and comprehend its importance.
- Self-awareness and empathy, which are two key parts of emotional intelligence. They portray getting yourself and having the option to feel for others as though their encounters were going on to you.
- Assertiveness and equanimity, or self-control. These portray the aptitudes expected to defend yourself and others, and resist the urge to panic even notwithstanding impressive incitement.
- Resilience and ability to cope with problems, which portrays the capacity to recuperate from difficulties, and treat them as occasions to learn, or basically encounters.(Prinz, 2009)

Personal development is the school subject that deals with real-life issues affecting our children, families and communities. It's concerned with the social, health and economic realities of their lives, experiences and attitudes including relationships. Fundamental abilities are one of the defensive variables. Showing fundamental abilities in the homeroom has been appeared to considerably lessen tobacco, liquor, and illegal medication use. Fundamental abilities work is suggested for all understudies. When focused all in all school populace, general projects will likewise draw in students with distinguished dangers. Encouraging

self-improvement in the updated educational plan achieves this. (Pânișoară, 2017)

In some instruction frameworks, the National Curriculum incorporates headings for the investment of understudies of any age in a progression of open air, arranged, reformist and innovative learning encounters. These are testing openings that happen all through and outside of school. In Romania, following the examination of the National Curriculum, we notice the support of this kind of exercises and learning encounters regardless of whether they are not referenced in archives as exercises having a place with open air training.

In the event that there are countless inspirations and positive bearings in such manner, all that remains is to confront the difficulties of guaranteeing that open air training is firmly secured in the educational plan, so it turns into a reality for understudies in Romania. This methodology turns into an obligation of every instructor, who should design and incorporate outside training exercises in the instructional-instructive cycle, as interdisciplinary tasks and as cross-curricular exercises. Each curricular region is formed to open air instruction, on the grounds that each control has explicit advantages in such manner. When arranging open air exercises, associations with instructive exercises attempted in the homeroom ought to be considered with regards to utilizing the educational plan all in all. Rather than offering seven days of open-air learning or an uncommon day of outside workshops, it is more attractive that the proper exercises that occur in the outside climate be essential for an all-encompassing educating learning approach that is connected to a cycle. (Potter & Dymment, 2016)

Practical teaching-learning models and methodology

The Personal development subject belongs to the latter curricular area present in the National Curriculum of the level of the fundamental acquisitions cycle. It is a comprehensive discipline that deserves the attention of teachers, in order to be developed for the benefit of students. In Norway, these classes have a special place in the students' daily schedule, because they are intended for getting to know each other, socializing, solving problems, discussing, getting closer to group members. In countries like Germany and Scotland, take advantage of these hours to spend time outside, to communicate and get involved in team-building games. In Romania, these classes are gaining ground lately, and this shows a positive development of education in our country.

Regardless of the activities that are used, be they relaxation, energization, reflection or even mutual knowledge, it is advisable to start planning these hours from the needs, interests and desires of the little ones. Thus, the educational climate will be much improved, and the instructive-educational process will achieve its ultimate goal: to provide quality education.

The use of visual arts, handicrafts, painting and drawing allows students to experience the world in different ways. Unfortunately, this area of study has lost a lot of ground due to lack of time and especially due to too rich content that needs to be addressed in other curricular areas or disciplines. This can have a negative impact on the holistic development of students, because creativity, relaxation, meditation, inspiration cannot be missing from the life of any child. The arts and practical skills must regain their place in the education of children. There are many ways in which outdoor activities can be carried out whose main theme is the arts in general, and which take place in the natural environment using natural materials.

An example of this would be shadow-drawing, or drawing after shadows. Observing the passage of time and the movement of the sun can be done by sticking a straight branch in the ground, noting the shadow and then placing it in a safe place to observe how far the shadow has moved. If a white paper or thicker white cardboard is attached to this branch, the shadow of any plant can be outlined, which can then be coloured when the shadow has moved away from the paper. Charcoal or chalk can be used to give the design a shadow effect. (West Lothian Primary School, 2017)

Wild art is another example that can be put into practice in outdoor education during activities based on this curricular area. It is a versatile form of exploring various things in nature. It is usually used in personal expression, but it can also be used in much more concentrated forms. This art form identifies various patterns or patterns in nature, and highlights identified colours or shapes. Frames in various sizes can be made from pieces of wood, which will then be placed in front of elements considered special in nature. (Martin et al, 2018)

Also, another group activity would be the creation of collages made of natural materials, on different themes, or even collecting fruits of different colours, passing them and making paintings. Instead of brushes you can use branches, grass or leaves, stones, pieces of bricks, clay, coal, etc. In terms of practical skills, the list of suggested activities can be endless. You can weave hats, rugs, you can make different ornaments using natural materials, you can make masks, dolls, decorative objects, which can then be displayed in the classroom or even outdoors. Usually, children's paintings hang on a string in order to tour the gallery. (Ontario Public Health Association, 2007)

Among the technologies, the most widespread in outdoor education is ICT. Technological and social development has led to the appearance in schools of

tablets, smartphones, video projectors, the Internet in general. There is a newer issue of excessive use of these computer tools, especially in unwanted and inappropriate ways, during breaks or even classes. Outdoor education provides an answer in this regard, as it encourages the positive use of tablets, smartphones and tools. Students will discover multiple educational uses of these tools. For example, experiences can be shared on different channels, social networks, as well as photos, sent to friends or uploaded to different groups or class blogs, where parents can enter and view snippets of their children's activity. It is important to encourage students to create quality photos, not just any pictures. They should clearly capture the beauty, emotions and feelings of the experienced. Also, photos can be thematic, for example by photographing clouds that have shapes of different beings, or a group can photograph a building from several perspectives, and when returning to class, a three-dimensional photographic construction of that building can be created. (Robertson, 2012)

In the planning section, technology is also a real help, because teachers can write letters to parents, can issue various invitations, can take photos, lists of necessary equipment. Technology also helps to download maps, useful in orientation activities, and with the existence of a printer in each class, the work of educators and teachers is much easier. Students are also helped by satellite maps, or navigation systems, both in the preparation and in carrying out extracurricular activities. Recorders can also be used to record specific sounds in nature, then you can listen to the recordings, and finally perform exercises to correlate the sounds with their sources. Video cameras can be used in outdoor activities, as they can be left overnight to observe the behaviour of small wild animals. The result can be viewed, and students' questions will not be long in

coming. These are just a few practical ways to make good use of the many technological tools currently available in society and schools. (Barrable, 2019)

Technologies may be present in forms other than information or digital in this curricular area. There are many machines and equipment used in industries but also in the daily routine of people, which can be studied and observed, and which clearly help the individual and group development of people. Through visits by manufacturers and consumers, and the machinery they operate, students can have a clearer picture of what it means to be innovative and make life easier. They can be present on animal farms, vegetable farms, in the fields, in markets, in factories, in the clothing and footwear industry, in gardening, etc. Students can see exactly how to get from production to a finished product. It can also be seen that due to different processing technologies, certain plants can be used for several purposes: medicinal, dyeing textiles, food, feed.

In this sense, field trips are extremely valuable, and are all the more educational as their character is repetitive. An example in this field can be the observation of some simple constructions, and the attempt to imitate some of their replicas in the school yard. They can be made of wood or thin metal pipes, and students can thus experience various ways to set up a construction that can test durability over time. At the same time, children can operate with different types of materials, test them and compare them in order to extract lessons that will serve them in the future.

It can be said that even in the area of music and dancing there is not enough attention is paid, also due to lack of time or even due to lack of imagination or creativity in this regard, and students fail to develop properly in this area. The study disciplines are made up in such a way that each major area or learning topic is covered, and the individual manages to develop holistically. From the compulsory educational path of each student, sports, arts, music, dance cannot

be missing. On the one hand, they are important due to the multiple educational benefits they offer, and on the other hand, they are those classes that seem to detach students from those difficult or problematic areas of learning, and to transpose them, to relax them, to develop their creativity, give them opportunities to experience beauty and art.

The use of drama, art, music and dance offers students unique experiences. Creating performance in the external environment connects the school to society, and gives students the satisfaction of realizing that they belong to a place. These disciplines are also called in the literature, ways of expressive art. By engaging in such activities, students can express themselves, they can capitalize on certain talents they have. Even those children who feel that in other disciplines do not understand the contents so well, in the latter they manage to get involved, to create, to express the personal way in which they conceive the world and life. There are certain practical skills associated with these disciplines, namely the creation of pieces of art that combine the use of tools in the external environment.

In this context, visits can be made to the philharmonic, to various rehearsals of some musical groups, you can visit instrument factories, children can buy instruments or they can make the simplest ones themselves. They can invite famous musicians to give them live performances, they can go to different concerts, and they can listen to different types of music.

In urban or natural environments, small recording devices can be used and when returning to the classroom, educational software can be used to edit the recordings of all members of the group to create an entire story of their journey.

Dance is part of the second part of the name of the discipline we are talking about, and has a strong formative value. Through dance, or movement performed to the sound of music, students automatically move into a new

world, their own. They can learn from others or simply express themselves in the way they want. In the outdoor environment you can organize dance-based events, in which you can present dances specific to different countries, or created by each student individually through their own choreography, you can interpret certain poems on a musical background, you can also involve the community and members them by organizing events that include traditional dances from different areas of the country. Interculturality can be practiced, because students from different countries can expose their traditions in this regard. Short cultural and virtual trips can be made to discover how people belonging to other nationalities, etc. express themselves through music and dance. Famous choreographers can be invited and together with their parents, students can learn different dance styles.

Design and structure of activities

Steps	Description
Title	
Subjects involved	
Objectives	
Description	
Resources	
Time	
Evaluation	

Table 1. The structure of outdoor learning activity preparation

Practical model

Activity title: "Music around me"

Preparatory class

Rural zone

Competency selection criteria: level of knowledge, level of skills, level of attitude

Areas / disciplines: Arts and technologies-Music and movement

Arts and technologies-Visual arts and handicrafts

Counselling and guidance-Personal development

How to achieve: Outdoor education

Tools: writing instruments, worksheet, nature objects, string, bells, branches of different lengths and thicknesses, containers of different sizes and materials, water, sand

Competences pursued:

a) At the level of knowledge

Identifying and naming musical sounds (Do-Mi)

b) At the level of skills

Accompanying use of natural sound materials (pebbles, chestnuts, wood, etc.)

c) The attitudinal level

Involvement

Autonomy

Interest given to the activity

Free and casual expression

Activity description:

Students will leave the classroom with the teacher, preferably in a quiet area with low artificial noise pollution. There, they are asked to sit with their eyes

closed and for a few moments to listen to all the sounds that are heard around them, without being asked to distinguish the sounds between them. The activity can continue with the following questions asked by the teacher:

- What did you hear?
- How many sounds did you manage to recognize from the ones you heard?
- Can you name any of them?

The activity will continue with the third step of realization, namely, the students will keep their eyes closed again, but this time they will receive a sheet of paper on which they will make a map of the sounds heard, which will contain the marking of the area in which they heard the sound and a representative symbol of the sound heard (for example, a bird, a stream, a wind chart, leaves, other animals, etc.). Each student will exchange maps with a classmate, and he will go to the place indicated by the map and will listen if the sound indicated by the colleague whose map he has is heard in that place. (Guldberg, 2009)

The next step of this activity will be the conducting of the nature orchestra. Students are encouraged to lead nature's music by moving their hands, focusing especially on the sounds that go up or down. They can create your own orchestral scene by producing sounds. They can also use their bodies, various objects found in nature or some brought from the classroom environment, to produce their music (string, bells, branches of different lengths and thicknesses, containers of different sizes and materials, water, sand). Students will start with a regular and repeated beat, and gradually more and more sounds will be added, until everyone is involved and the song reaches a crescendo. Also, in this section, students can fill the containers brought from the classroom or home with water to test the propagation of sounds and the differences between them, based on the amount of water that fills the vessel. They can also hang the bell on the branches of trees, and when the wind blows, they will create different

sounds. Students can create creeks adorned with buttons fastened with strings and use them as music sticks. When moving through the air, different sounds will be made, depending on the thickness of the branches used or the number and texture of materials used to decorate them. It depends on the teacher how simple or difficult this activity can be. (McCoy, 2010)

The following adaptations will be considered:

- students can be grouped into sections: rhythm, animal sounds, leaf squeaks, bird chirping, grass rustling, wind, etc.
- the sections can work at the same time or separately, according to the teacher's instructions
- the final musical product can be recorded by the teacher, so that it can be played at any time to monitor the students' performance.

The integrated activity related to outdoor education ends with a hunt for sounds in nature, in which students receive a list of images representing different natural or artificial sounds, that they will have to find and check. The activity will be done in groups of two people. At the end of this section there will be a moment of discussion, during which the natural sounds will be selected from the artificial ones on the list and the conclusions related to the activity will be made.

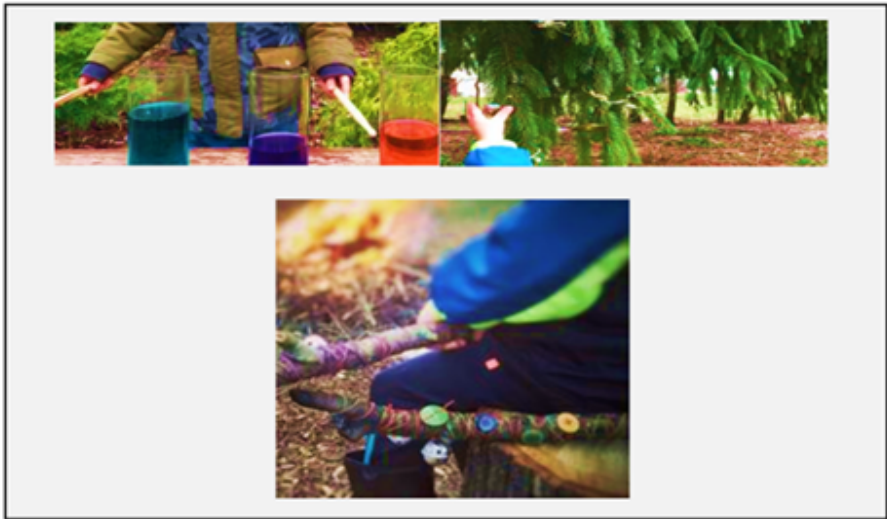


Image 1. Musical instruments from the presented outdoor activity

Listen carefully. What kind of sounds do you hear?










 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>
 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>
 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/>

Image 2. Sound hunting workshop

Rationale

We chose this integrated activity because it develops many skills present in the curriculum, which can only be developed through practical applications. The activity presented above encompasses three different curricular areas, with three related disciplines, developing students in a complex way. The activities in the children's class have become boring, and the teachers do not find interesting ways to transpose their knowledge in fields such as music or the arts. Students have entered a routine that stops them from moving forward and developing in this regard. Outdoor education activities can help teachers because they are based on integrated learning and are enjoyable to do. The psycho-social characteristics of learners must be taken into account, especially at this age, and after a close knowledge of the class, to carry out really engaging, interesting activities that motivate students to get involved and develop much needed transversal skills. a complex development.

At the level of content acquisitions, we chose a single competency, even if through this activity we could have selected a larger number of competencies from the curriculum, because according to this criterion, some competencies cannot be considered as content acquisitions. (Callaghan, 2018)

At the level of skills, we also chose a single competence, because most of those present in the curriculum cannot be developed, but rather they are innate or depend on the hearing aid. For example, among the competencies present in the curriculum, most are part of the "skills" criterion, which are related to talent, and we do not want to measure this in this activity. We did not want to measure in any form whether any of the participating students are talented or not, but we wanted to develop measurable skills in the short and long term. Also, some competencies cannot be included in the scope of the "skills" criterion, because their sub-sections are functions of the recipient organ

called the "ear". They cannot be developed through exercise, because they come naturally for every healthy developed individual from this point of view, disregarding situations where there are hearing problems or even deafness. (Roman, 2016)

At the attitudinal / affective level, we wanted to propose through this activity, the development of four transversal competences, already used in other contexts, with reference to free and casual expression through music and movement, but also art in general. We also wanted to test the level of development of autonomy, involvement in the activity or the interest given to the activity. (Torkos, 2020)

REFERENCES

Barrable, A. (2019). Refocusing environmental education in the early years: a brief introduction to a pedagogy for connection. *Education Sciences* , 9(1), 61.

Breaz, A. M. (2020). The Role of the Social Worker in Socializing Preschool Children. *Social Work Review/Revista de Asistentă Socială*, (3).

Callaghan, A. (2018). Lhakpa Sherpa breaks her own Everest record. Outside Online. Retrieved from: <https://www.outsideonline.com/2306961/lhakpa-sherpa-breaks-own-everest-record>.

Guldborg, H. (2009). *Reclaiming Childhood: Freedom and Play in an Age of Fear*. Routledge.

Martin, S., Maney, S., Mitten, D. (2018). Messages about women through representation in adventure education texts and journals. In Gray, T., Mitten, D. (Eds.), *The Palgrave MacMillan international handbook of women and outdoor learning* (pp. 293-306). London, England: Palgrave Macmillan.

McCoy, (2010), Nature Study With The Outdoor Hour Challenges, Handbook for nature study, <http://handbookofnaturestudy.com>, accesat 05.07.2020, 16:54

Ontario Public Health Association, 2007, Busy bodies, Ontario

Păun, E. (2017). *Pedagogie: provocări și dileme privind școala și profesia didactică*. Elefant Online.

Pânișoară, I. O. (2017). Ghidul profesorului. Iași: Polirom.

Potter, T. G., & Dymont, J. E. (2016). Is outdoor education a discipline? Insights, gaps and future directions. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, 16(2), 146-159.

Prinz, R., (2009). "Behavioural parent training". Encyclopedia of Human Relationships. doi:10.4135/9781412958479.n53. ISBN 9781412958462.

Robertson, J. (2012). Creative and critical thinking outdoors in the early years. *Ideas, Suggestions and Activities, Creative star learning company, UK*.

Roman, A. F. (2016). The development of prosocial behaviour in educational environment. *Educația Plus*, 16(2), 7-14.

Torkos, H. H. (2020). Practical teaching models through outdoor education in the core procurement cycle. *Educația Plus*, 27(2), 7-20.

UNICEF – Search Results, unicef.org. Retrieved 2020-10-20.

West Lothian Primary School, (2017), Outdoor Learning Pack for Primary School Teachers, Woodland Trust Scotland, Forestry Commission Scotland.