

New Tools for the Integration of Transversal Skills in Modern Teaching Practice

INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION PROJECTS Programme „Scholarship Fund” – RO15

Funded through the EEA Financial Mechanism 2009-2014

Beneficiary: University of Craiova (RO)

Partners: Bifröst University (IS), Nesna University College (NO)

<http://proiecte.ucv.ro/transmod>

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INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

April 28th – 29th, 2015, Room 444 (Drăgan Amphitheatre)

Participants

As per the individually signed Attendance List.

April 28th

The presentations delivered during this first day can be structured into three parts:

1. An introductory session centred on the project objectives, activities and partnerships;
2. Theory oriented presentations;
3. Examples of good practice.

1. **Session centred on the project objectives, activities and results**

The opening presentations held by Monica Tilea and Oana-Adriana Duță were project-centred: Monica Tilea presented a description of the project, goals and present results, eventually highlighting the mission of the seminar: the joint publication of the *Good Practice Guide on transversal skills*. Oana-Adriana Duță synthesised the results of the TRANSMOD Questionnaire and showed both differences and similarities between the partner universities, which reflects a lesser use of new tools in the University of Craiova and upholds the necessity of the present project.

2. **Theory oriented presentations**

Anca Băndoi and Marian Siminică's presentation reconstructed the context that required the development of transversal skills in finance students while Anca Tănăsie focused on the identification of new tools that could contribute to the development of transversal skills in International Business and Economics students. Similarly, Cătălin Barbu and Liviu Crăciun showed the results of their interest in adjusting and implementing new tools for the development of management and marketing-related transversal skills. Mihaela Popescu proposed the method of “intercomprehension” as a new tool in foreign language teaching, focusing on the deployment of already existing linguistic skills. Melitta Szathmary delivered a paper showing the importance of the development of transversal skills in Romanian linguistics classes by mainly using project-based learning as a new tool. The last paper was a PhD student's opinion on students' awareness of what transversal skills are and was centred on identifying a set of basic transversal skills PhD students needed.

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3. Examples of good practice

John Freyr Johannsson provided the audience with information concerning the way in which theory and practice were interlaced, via collaborative activities and real-life situations, at Bifröst University. Patrick Murphy's presentation showed that a text could be understood by constructing or drawing its content. Anne Lise Wie's presentation showed how nature should be used as a learning arena giving the example of the pedagogy of Frikultskolen. Daniela Dinca's paper centred on the benefits of using project-based learning as a new tool for the training of future teachers of foreign languages and provided an example of good practice. Florentina Anghel presented an example of project-based learning, a new tool in teaching literature, applied to a class of literature, showing how this subject could be connected to the development of transversal skills. Patrick Murphy's paper on geocaching as a bridge between school subjects, location-based teaching and communicative competence contributed to the seminar with an innovative new tool. Sorin Cazacu's paper *The Importance of Transversal Competences in Teaching Interpreting* was oriented on transversal competences such as self-initiative, team work and technological literacy. These competences are a priority for the students who attend the programme in Translation and Interpreting. Cristiana Teodorescu and Mihaela Colhon's presentation *Creation of Electronic Linguistic Resources. The Acquisition of Transversal Skills by MA Students in Letters* was an example of good practice, that is, an assignment for the students to work on a dictionary of legal terms including a significant IT-based component. The variety of themes tackled during the seminar contributed to a fruitful exchange of experience, as both the participants and the audience stated during the discussions.

April 29th

1. **Teaching session with Romanian students from the Faculty of Letters of the University of Craiova**

The chair of this teaching session was Patrick Murphy, from Nesna University College, Norway, who based his teaching session on an exercise that allowed students to work in teams and realize that they all possess a set of transversal skills that they implement on a daily basis. The exercise consisted of a written copy of a Police Report describing the scene of a traffic incident that occurred someplace. The students were asked to draw by hand the scene of the accident, according to the information provided in the Police report they had been handed. At the end of the session, they were given the opportunity to present their drawings and to discuss on the topic of transversal skills they had to use (cultural knowledge, physics, geography, logical thinking, technology, foreign languages).

2. Workshop with students of the University of Craiova: “Student Perspectives on Transversal Skills” - chaired by Monica Tilea, Jon Freyr Johansson and Patrick Murphy

Objective: talking about transversal skills – helping students get a better and clearer opinion of the utility of transversal skills.

The students were asked to write down on a piece of paper the first three words that come to their minds when they hear the word “transversal”: *travel, crossing, interaction, intercurricular, communication, direction, continuous, horizontal* are just a few of the words that the students used in order to describe the concept.

Students defined transversal skills as a set of common skills, from different fields of activity, related to experience, that help people break cultural gaps and develop the communication process.

Transversal skills are acquired while working on different topics or subjects.

Students were divided into six groups and were asked to set up a school scenario and note down to what extent we use cross-curricular activities. They were also asked to draw up a list of cross-curricular activities that can be used in school and were encouraged to think outside the box.

One group presented their own experience related to an activity they were asked to do in school: creating their own idea of a TV show, which involved the use of practical knowledge, social skills, market research, graphic design, brainstorming, communication skills, theoretical knowledge, volunteering experience, research, information gathering. The students agreed that their school project was a combination between the theoretical knowledge acquired in the university and the skills they use on a daily basis. During this activity, the students had to find the suitable arguments in order to defend their opinions regarding the decisions to be made in order to finish the project: choosing the TV channel that would broadcast their TV show, the schedule for the show, etc.

Other ideas of extracurricular activities that could be used at school: listening to foreign music and discussing on the songs, volunteering experience, debates on different topics, etc.

3. Conclusions of the seminar

The following conclusions were drawn:

- The teaching methods used by Nesna University College and Bifröst University are based on clear strategies, and their ways of teaching are very different from Romanian strategies;
- The Romanian curriculum is very strict, compared to the foreign one, which is more flexible;
- Transversal skills can be developed at school by using innovative activities, aimed at developing the students’ motivation and creativity;

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- Romanian teachers were able to identify a certain flexibility of their curriculum, in terms of the final examination of the students, where they are allowed to grade students according to their activity during a certain period of time;
- The issue of plagiarism was also discussed and it was seen that the consequences of this practice in Iceland and Norway are much harsher than in Romania. An exercise that would demand students to do exactly what they are not supposed to do (which is copy-paste) would prove to be very helpful in this sense;
- The curricula of some schools in Romania includes activities that make use of integrated methods.

During the final part of the international seminar, all project team members gathered and discussed the final activity of the project, the publication of the good practice guide. The major conclusions were the following:

- All team members decided to use the structure of the guide that has been already proposed by the team from the University of Craiova;
- The contributions to the guide will be mixed and not grouped on countries; they will be included in the guide in the same order as the presentations of the international seminar (as per the seminar programme);
- The guide will be structured as follows: general knowledge regarding transversal skills, specific activities where transversal skills are used, usage examples (general-particular);
- In order to have a clear idea on the contents of the articles, the titles of the contributions might be shorter (e.g. Geocaching) and might be tagged with [M] – Methods and [D] – Developing;
- An index at the end of the guide would be useful;
- The deadline for submitting the contributions will be May 15th, so that the texts can be translated in due time.

Project coordinator,
Associate Professor Monica TILEA, PhD