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# Transdisciplinarity - the advantage of a holistic approach to life

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## Abstract

The transdisciplinary approach of holistic type, that overreaches the disciplinary fragmentation limits with its disadvantages, offers a vision of the world and life, as competent as possible, and has as starting point the human nature with all its complexity and diverse forms of manifestation.

This paper focuses on identifying the advantages integrated approach on the curriculum and provides clarifying examples for different school levels. The conclusion that emerges is the need for reform of thought in the area of training that will result in a reform that does not ignore the context, the situations diversity, the inter-conditioning and multiple approaches, prerequisite conditions for understanding and anchoring in the real life.

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## 1. Introduction

The term trans-disciplinarity lately receives attention in various fields and especially in education, that uses such an approach in order to streamline the education and training and to support the achievement of its fundamental purpose - preparing for integration in real social life. The ultimate goal of education is that students / children understand and learn how to live beautifully in a pluralistic, complex world, with many uncertainties, and through the trans-disciplinary approach of the curriculum we attempt to provide support to such expectations. In this context, creativity occupies or should occupy a central role in education and training, the trans-disciplinary approaches calling to the benefits of thinking's creativity and flexibility.

The term has evolved from a first step to overcome the inter-disciplinarity by the meaning given by Jean Piaget who proposes the expression across disciplines to explain the concept to "a holistic approach of the real world that is interactive" and extremely complex; therefore "trans-disciplinarity concerns - as indicated by the prefix "trans" - which is at the same time across disciplines, and inside different disciplines, and beyond all discipline. Its goal is the understanding of the present world, one of its imperatives is the unity of knowledge." (Niculescu, 2010, pp.181).

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Therefore, "the changes of social and individual attitude needs a new type of education, appropriate to the century in which we are living, fundamented on transdisciplinary principles" (Caciuc, 2002).

Because the universe is presented as a unit in itself, as an undivided whole, and education must describe and explain it as a whole and not as dispersed disciplines. Besides, life itself must be understood in its complexity and dynamics.

## **2. Trans-disciplinarity and learning experiences**

### *2.1. Holistic curriculum process - Holistic approach to life*

Holism, the theory supporting the relations of structural and functional elements of parts and whole, involves at the level of the curriculum the integrated vision of phenomena, objects and processes which are studied. The trans-disciplinary curriculum involves itself a fusion of ideas, knowledge, methods, values belonging to several disciplines or fields of study.

So, the trans-disciplinary, holistic approach, which overtakes the limits of disciplinary fragmentation with its disadvantages, provides a more complete vision of the world and life and has as starting point the human nature with all its complexity and diversity of its forms of manifestation. "Trans-disciplinary education is based on the reassessment of the role of intuition, imagination, sensitivity and body in imparting knowledge (Nicolescu, 1994). Therefore, in school, on the one hand, the student must be given the chance to present life and the world around in a harmonious and complex way, and on the other hand, the student himself must be regarded in its entirety, as a whole (Jeder, 2013).

Incidentally, this aspect is underlined by the Romanian author, Lucian Ciolan: "the holistic approach of the curriculum process involves two aspects: 1. The option for a "total", complete strategy of curriculum planning, which in turn implies: a maximum of coordination between the various stages of the process; the effective cooperation between the people involved, at different levels of decision 2. A certain understanding of the child, considered a whole, a unitary, complex human being and therefore the curriculum does not need to address separately one aspect or another of the child's development, but to look upon him as a whole." (Ciolan, 2008, pp.199-200) On the other hand, life cannot be understood in black and white.

### *2.2. Models of application of cross-disciplinarity in school*

At all school levels, trans-disciplinarity finds its valuable meanings and dimensions, and teachers use integrated activities aimed to its valuing, building/creating learning situations in which students can draw. In the preschool, for example, the Romanian educational system, is calling, for a while, to integrated curriculum projection, giving the children the opportunity to capture the essential aspects of life and the real world, the links with what is around, what they see and come into contact to. Thus, it is common knowledge that in an authentic learning the mind, the emotions and the body participate at the same time

For example, aspects of civic moral education, such as the issue of respect (respect for others, self respect, for nature, for the future etc.) can be addressed by calling to areas of language and communication, people and society, aesthetic and creative, science and even the psycho - propellent (when referring to the spirit of collegiality, team, fair play that develops in this space). This basically covers the entire spectrum of analysis by calling to the fields of study provided by the preschool curriculum. It is a fact that, "in education there must be an intern conditioning between knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour. In building up the preschool or the small school age children's moral-ecological conscience and behaviour, (for example, n. n.) it is necessary to pass through all these components that will reflect in an adequate behaviour shown by the children in their life and social activities, on what concerns their neighbours and also nature. They will show an attachment towards plants and animals, towards everything that nature represents (Caciuc, 2012).

Moreover, respect, civility or politeness etc. that are part of the fundamental axiological core and stand out to all those involved in the educational process can be addressed through integrated ways at all school levels: primary, for example, respect can be internalized as a value in so far as it refers to real life - knowledge, ideas, examples merge and form a construct based on understanding and affective dimension; Romanian language and literature offers texts that support this value - respect for language, for a proper communication, respect for self and others, for books and

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