

## PBL

An old proverb says: "Give man a fish and feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime." As teachers, we want our students to trust themselves. We want them to seek knowledge and discover the truth on their own. We have found that the best lessons contain open discussions and careful criticism. These are the two ways that lead students to a discovery path.

Problem-based lessons are an excellent way to encourage students to build valid arguments and critique other people's reasoning. For example, I can guide a lesson based on problems in everyday life. Once their interest is captured, they immediately have questions and start trying to solve this problem. Of course, as a teacher, I have a goal in my mind to develop my competent communication and relationship students, to shape their critical thinking and to find solutions to solve the problem. As a practitioner who practices visible learning, I always want my students to become more competent in building valid arguments. My students need guidance to acquire this ability, so I become a mentor, a facilitator of their discovery.

A good argument is based on well-known definitions and concepts. Students apply their previous knowledge, but they can use this knowledge to build a new rule to find other forms of knowledge. Here is the real magic. When building a new concept in this way, you will most likely have to give some guidance questions and remind students that all assumptions need to be proven. I want my students to see a pattern in what they do, but again they may need help. They often see a pattern, but then they have trouble expressing themselves. Helping them work through their reasoning can find the optimal way of expression. I guide them using a worksheet or asking questions. Because students process information at a different rate, they ask everyone to think about a few minutes before answering. Then I ask them to talk about their thoughts

with a colleague of theirs / pairing. This provides them with a safe environment to explore their hypotheses and to test validity before undergoing the pressure to respond to the entire class. When most students built an argument, I ask volunteers to share their ideas. At this stage, it is essential to provide guidance.

Think about the "old but good" socratic questions like: "Why is it so?" or "How do you know that?" Let the students criticize the reasoning of others. If you do not understand a point, offer a counter-example, but you always have to let the students explain and ask.

In problem-based learning, I act as facilitator through a lesson and give the students the tools to build their own knowledge and skills. Good teachers facilitate and guide, but let the students discover the truth themselves.

In Department of Teacher's Training at the West University of Timisoara, we practice in the process learning Project Based Learning -PBL, good practices which inspire the students to identify the problems in real life. Once the problem is identified in the transversal courses and seminars, the students initiate a project through which they can solve problems. They work in teams of 3 or four members and suggest activities which lead to the formation of competencies of communication, leadership, negotiation, decision taking. In work groups they get these skills, present their projects, and implement them.

These projects are frequently implemented in collaboration with the schools and high schools in our city, because our students are prepared to become teachers. Together with partners schools we organize activities in which both didactic abilities and lifelong learning are developed.

### **Competences for the 21st century**

Competences for the 21st century are the ones that guide us to communicate, to cooperate in order to achieve results in our professional life. We start shaping ourselves in school based on modern activities> collaborative

learning, project-based learning, experiential learning, and then we are perfecting them in the University and throughout our adult life through lifelong learning.

We base our activities on the four pillars of learning, defined by Jacques Delors in Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education in the 21st Century

- Learning to be
- Learning to know
- Learning to do
- Learning to live together

These principles are the basis of competencies and abilities and in this way we develop capacities and abilities which prove the development of our personality by applying these abilities in everyday life.

The term "**21st-century skills**" is generally used to refer to certain:

- core competencies such as collaboration
- digital literacy
- critical thinking
- problem-solving that advocates believe schools need to teach to help students thrive in today's world.

Thus, in the West University of Timisoara, we practice and implement these fields of key competencies, and continue what pupils learn in school, basing our activities on the following approaches:

**CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS** refers to students being able to analyze complex problems, investigate questions for which there are no clear-cut answers, evaluate different points of view or sources of information, and draw appropriate conclusions based on evidence and reasoning.

- **COLLABORATION SKILLS** refers to students being able to work together to solve problems or answer questions, to work effectively and respectfully in teams to accomplish a common goal and to assume shared responsibility for completing a task.
- **COMMUNICATION SKILLS** refers to students being able to organize their thoughts, data, and findings; and share these effectively through a variety of media, as well as orally and in writing.
- **CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION SKILLS** refers to students being able to generate and refine solutions to complex problems or tasks based on synthesis, analysis, and then combining or presenting what they have learned in new and original ways.
- **SELF-DIRECTION SKILLS** refers to students being able to take responsibility for their learning by identifying topics to pursue and processes for their own learning, and being able to review their own work and respond to feedback.
- **GLOBAL CONNECTIONS** refers to students being able to understand global, geopolitical issues including awareness of geography, culture, language, history, and literature from other countries.
- **LOCAL CONNECTIONS** refers to students being able to apply what they have learned to local contexts and community issues.
- **USING TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL FOR LEARNING** refers to students being able to manage their learning and produce products using appropriate information and communication technologies.

Our pilot schools - *Banatean National College Timisoara* and "*Carmen Sylva*" *National Pedagogical College from Timisoara* - collaborate with us in the activity of teaching practice. Our students are trained to teach and communicate with pupils in the partner schools. The students are also involved in voluntary activities as well as in activities related to the implementation of some European projects based on cultural and educational approaches.

We always promote the competence of learning to learn, which belongs to the domain of the eight key competencies and we communicate both in Romanian and in other international languages such as English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. In our schools these languages are studied and in Timisoara there are schools with specific teaching of foreign languages.

Project-based learning encourages students to discover diversity and become flexible in communication, both in Romanian and in other international languages, to foster a social inclusion atmosphere and more inclusive schools.

An added value for our schools, including the pilot schools we have worked with in the WISH Project, are SCOALA ALTFEL week activities (Different School week activities). In each school in Romania we have 1 week per semester dedicated to extraschooling activities where pupils, accompanied by teachers, visit the city, various institutions, countryside trips, or visit Europe through Erasmus for Schools projects. For example, pupils come to the University to meet their faculties and get informed directly from university students. Students are waiting for them with stand-ups prepared with educational films and discuss subjects of interest of the faculty profile they would like to choose. In cultural and intercultural activities pupils and students produce materials illustrating traditions and customs from different parts of the country, tourist attractions, historical monuments, stories, traditional culinary recipes, popular costume, remarkable discoveries and discoveries in their area of our

country, etc. These activities include all children, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or school situation. Children work together under the guidance of a mentor teacher and are interested in doing activities as interesting as possible and presenting them to the community. We exemplify several types of activities from such projects with the following objectives:

- developing interest in identifying, presenting and transmitting traditional values in Romania and Europe;
- promoting interdisciplinarity as a means of developing and stimulating students' creativity;
- developing digital skills / competences for digital materials production: posters, fleyers, PPT, movies
- developing communication skills between participants from different localities, different countries.

We propose to create a brochure titled CARTA PRIETENIEI WISH, in which both Romanian school students and Turkish school pupils can find information about their colleagues from Slovakia, Spain and Italy through projects with images and a summary of the objectives and project products.

Also, in most urban schools in Romania, post-school activities are organized, where pupils after school classes stay together to do homework or carry out reading, recreation, sports, etc. We believe that teamwork is the success of our activities. The involvement of the local community, parents, non-governmental associations is very important in these activities.

### **Social Inclusion**

Regarding social inclusion activities, schools in Romania have made progress, even in the implementation of special programs for pupils with special needs (depending on the needs of each student). We have to rethink education from the perspective of inclusive education: the number of pupils in the class,



program variants, teacher training, psychologists in each school, etc. In planning the lessons, we have all pupils in mind. Lessons develop understanding and sense of respect for differences. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, and teachers' explanations help students to understand and learn better. During lessons, students are encouraged to work together and to talk about how they learn. Teachers adapt their lessons according to the students' ability. School staff respond positively to the difficulties faced by students. Students gain success in the learning process. Difficulties in learning are considered as opportunities to develop better practices. All school teachers participate in the planning and implementation of training activities, helped by the County Centers of Psycho-pedagogical Assistance with specialized staff.

An inclusive school in the true sense of the word must meet some primary conditions:- have adequate facilities for students with physical disabilities;- wheelchair ramp;- auxiliary staff (carers) to transport the students concerned to certain places, the gym, the computer room, etc. In our pilot schools, there are access ramps, but there is not between the floors of the school, the transportation of students to the chair is done by parents or attendants together with the school staff. Within UVT there are also concerns for social inclusion through the care we give to students with special problems. There are access ramps and lift for easy to reach between floors. Students are required to the capacities and we have specialized staff through the Psycho-pedagogical Counseling Center and the Social Assistance Section of the Faculty of Sociology and Psychology or the Physical Therapy Department within the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports.

We are also concerned about the elimination of school dropout, the inclusion of all children regardless of ethnicity, gender, economic situation, learning opportunities in the education system. Thus, in our education system,

we have proposed several priorities for the implementation of inclusive practices that also define learner-centered learning::

- a real understanding of what inclusion is, defining the process and finding creative solutions, not just a simple placement of the children together
- to foster a flexible support climate and creative responses to individual needs / requirements;
- recognizing inclusion as part of equal opportunities policies with clear arrangements for implementation, substantiation and monitoring;
- take into account the principles of inclusion;
- Ensure the admission of children with special educational needs in educational structures and offer a positive and sensitive orientation;
- work in partnership with local authorities and agencies to identify possible barriers and consider how best to overcome them;
- involve all school and local community staff in educational practices related to inclusive school development;
- enable staff to have access to professional development opportunities that support the development of inclusive practices;
- offer pupils / students extracurricular activities in which to work not only with the rational-intellectual dimension of the pupil, but also with affective, motivational, attitude. The success of inclusive education is also ensured by communication between family and school. These activities are successful and are an added value.

In December we organized cultural activities with our school partners, which had a social inclusion dimension. The pupils in high school together with the students of our university participated in projects of social inclusion. We organized visits at orphanages and we offered presents to children in need and shared the happiness of storytelling and Christmas carols we organized.





*We want you to have a happy Christmas with peace and light in  
your home!*

*May the Lord Jesus Christ give you health, well-being and  
love!*

*HAPPY NEW YEAR*

*2019*

**WITH FRIENDS AND CONSIDERATIONS  
WISH TEAM OF THE WEST UNIVERSITY OF  
TIMISOARA  
TEACHER TRAINING DEPARTMENT**