EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AS AN INCENTIVE FOR STUDENT CREATIVITY

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ABSTRACT

Creative teaching and learning as a prospective and innovative approach represents a challenge for both teachers and students. The school should provide support for the development of students' interests, abilities, and talents as well as incite participation in extracurricular activities. The subject of this study is the role of extracurricular activities as an incentive for student creativity. The main focus of this paper will be the extent to which extracurricular activities influence student creativity. The research relies upon polling and the descriptive analytical method and uses a survey sheet for students as the main instrument. The data is then processed through quantitative analysis. The data is first gathered and sorted then represented in a chart and evaluated. Extracurricular activities have a great impact on the development of children's interests, abilities and creativity which in turn help to overcome the limitations of the obligatory curriculum. Therefore, teachers should strengthen their competence and carry out focused extracurricular activities, especially when it comes to activities that are not in the scope of their formal education.

Key words: extracurricular activities, creativity, incentive, students etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

"It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation"

Herman Melville

Creativity and creative thinking are an important part of our lives that we need at school, at work or in our free time. Creativity is not hereditary or a talent that only a few possess, but rather a natural predisposition that all children have and therefore we should enable students to express their creative potential. (Mitrovik, 1963, pg.171) Every child can be creative if his/her parents make an effort to create an environment where the child can use his/her imagination. [1] In order to promote creativity, we should implement special methods which will enable the thought process, the imagination and the activities to develop the ability for creativity. In terms of extracurricular activities in schools there are special groups for each subject and they function according to their operational programs. Depending on students' interests in each subject, children attend different groups where, with the help of their teachers, they expand their knowledge and take part in school, municipality and state competitions.

Of all the extra-curricular groups in modern schools, the most popular is the IT one. During those activities students acquire the basic skills and knowledge of computer technology, work on projects, develop information technology skills as part of the student support teams, and start programming, which is more popular among the eighth and ninth graders. A large number of projects stem from the students' dedication and work. The development of creativity deserves particular attention since it entails a wide pedagogical action in terms of meeting individual needs in search of creative individuals and generations, professional education of parents, caretakers and teachers in order to help them release their own creative potential and thus help students' creativity. Therefore, the development of creativity can become prominent during extracurricular activities which are, in essence, a way in which the school enables early detection and development of students' interests, predispositions and abilities in certain areas of life and work. Extra-curricular activities are an important part of the educational structure in primary schools and are closely related to all other areas of work and influence the entire educational process.

2. EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AS AN IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL FORM FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CREATIVITY

Extra-curricular activities are an important educational form for developing creativity of all students, for expanding their knowledge and interests and for providing them an opportunity for individual creative growth at an optimal level. The importance of student participation in the school's extracurricular activities rests in the fact that students choose the activities freely and are driven by their own predispositions and interests. Students also take part in the choice and execution of the activities and subsequently in the evaluation of the activities' outcomes. Those extra-curricular activities enable students to research, examine, make mistakes and discover something new which is the base for creative skills development.

[1] https://www.ringeraja.mk/statija/decata-denes-se-pointelegentni-no-po-ne-kreativni_5256.html

The school has a special way of structuring, planning and implementation of extra-curricular activities. Almost all extra-curricular activities are related to the corresponding subjects and are ledby suitable teachers. Certain subjects can lead to a number of extra-curricular activities. For example, in terms of the students' native language, the most common groups are: drama club, literature club, orators club, journalism and linguistics club. In terms of Mathematics and Physics, there are clubs for "Young mathematicians" and "Young physicists". The extra-curricular activities are regulated by the school's yearly program. Even though, as previously stated, all students choose the extra-curricular activities of their own free will, after they make a decision, they are obliged to attend the club's meetings. Each club usually has up to ten members. The club pedagogical documentation usually consists of:

- A list of members;

- A schedule and designated place for the club's meetings; and

- An operational program.

According to Petrova (2001) extra-curricular activities are an integral part of subjects such as Art, Music etc. The author criticizes the traditional organization of extra-curricular activities which highly resembles regular classes, and therefore those activities do not get the recognition they deserve even though they are extremely valuable. The emotional and creative experience that students taste during their extra-curricular activities is unforgettable and rich, regardless of whether they delve deeper into the secrets of art, oration, theatre or cinematic art, or whether they take their first steps into the literary world with their poetic or prose attempts. Once kindled, the spark in every child's heart, nurtured and strengthened by motivation, curiosity, an urge for creation and the feeling of value, can forever turn into a burning fire for professional orientation and personal fulfilment. A contribution to that is, undoubtedly, the strong support, encouragement and watchful eye of the creative teacher. (Petkovska, 2008, pgs. 171-172). The school should meet the needs and requirements of its subject (the student) for self-expression during the education process and extra-curricular activities in order to ensure self-realization and a creative outlet for his interests, needs, wishes and requirements. The students' overall creative abilities should be met through the curriculum and the extra-curricular activities and the teacher plays a very important part in that process. The teacher assumes the role and functions as an organizer, programmer, planner, analyst, methodologist, educator, performer and evaluator of the whole educational process and activities in the school, and outside of it as well, i.e. the teacher should be the students' biggest inspiration. For all the extra-curricular activities that are not closely related to the subject that the teachers teach, they should have affinities and additional knowledge and use modern approaches based on student-oriented activities.

3. EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AS INSTIGATORS FOR STUDENT CREATIVITY

Extra-curricular activities usually attract students to spend their free time actively. In creative teaching and learning, the extra-curricular activities are viewed as the base for the development of creativity – therefore, this paper focuses on a number of variables as incentives for creativity: computer technology, sports activities, project work, literature, ecology, problem solving, music, research, art etc. Findings are presented below.

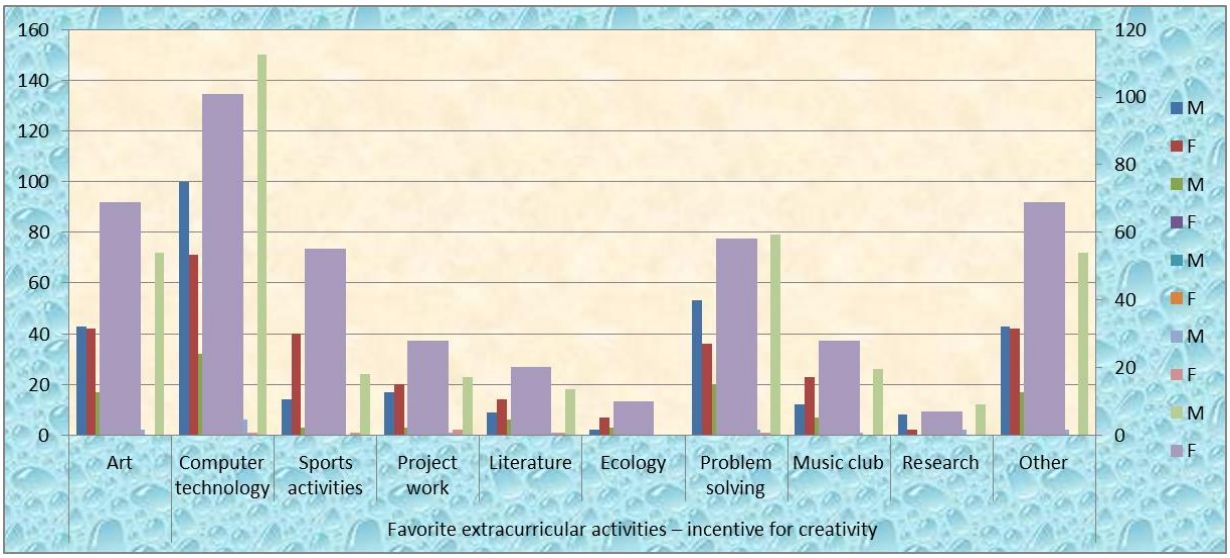
Chart 1: Extra-curricular activities as an incentive for student creativity in correlation with students' sex and academic achievement

Sex and academic achievment		Favorite extracurricular activities – incentive for creativity																					
		Computer technology		Sports activities		Project work		Literature		Ecology		Problem solving		Music club		Research		Other		Art		Total	
5	M	51	5,42	100	16,06	14	1,48	17	1,80	9	0,95	2	0,21	53	5,63	12	1,27	8	0,85	43	4,57	309	32,87
	F	60	6,38	71	7,55	40	4,25	20	2,12	14	1,48	7	0,74	36	3,82	23	2,44	2	0,21	42	4,68	315	33,51
4	M	16	1,70	32	3,40	3	0,31	3	0,31	6	0,63	3	0,31	20	2,12	7	0,74	/	/	17	1,80	107	11,38
	F	4	0,42	25	2,65	2	0,21	2	0,21	1	0,10	1	0,10	15	1,59	2	0,21	3	0,31	12	1,27	67	7,12
3	M	15	1,59	12	1,27	7	0,74	2	0,21	2	0,21	2	0,21	4	0,42	6	0,63	2	0,21	10	1,06	62	6,59
	F	4	0,42	4	0,42	12	1,27	4	0,42	4	0,42	2	0,21	6	0,63	3	0,31	2	0,21	15	1,59	56	5,95
2	M	2	0,21	6	0,63	/	/	1	0,10	1	0,10	/	/	2	0,21	1	0,10	2	0,21	2	0,21	17	1,80
	F	1	0,10	1	0,10	1	0,10	2	0,21	1		/		1	0,10	/		/		/		7	0,74
	M	84	8,94	150	15,96	24	2,55	23	2,45	18	1,91	7	0,74	79	8,40	26	2,77	12	1,26	72	7,66	4,95	52,66
	F	69	7,34	101	10,74	55	5,85	28	2,98	20	2,13	10	1,06	58	6,17	28	2,98	7	0,74	69	7,34	445	47,34
Total		153	16,28	251	26,70	79	82,87	51	5,43	38	4,04	17	1,80	137	14,58	54	5,75	19	2,02	141	15	940	100

By analyzing the data presented in the chart, we can easily detect the significant role of extra-curricular activities in the development of creativity. The largest number of surveyed students, i.e. 26,7% chose *sports activities*, whereas 16,27% chose *Computer technology* as well as *Art and Music clubs*. A total of 153 students (16,28%) chose *Computer technology*. 111 of them have excellent academic achievement – 51 of them (5,42%) are male, whereas 60 of them (6,38%) are female. 20 students have a very good academic achievement – 16 (1,70%) males and 4 (0,42%) females. 19 students have good academic achievement – 15 (1,59%) males and 4 (0,42%) females. The smallest group of students are the ones with satisfactory academic achievement – 3 students, 2 males (0,21%) and 1 female (0,10%). *Sports activities* have been chosen by 251 students – 100 males (16.06%) and 71 females (7,55%) with excellent academic achievement. 57 students have a very good academic achievement – 32 males (3,40%) and 25 females (2,65%). 16 students have good academic achievement – 12 males (1,27%) and 4 females (0,42%). The

smallest group of students are the ones with satisfactory academic achievement – 7 students, 6 males (0,63%) and 1 female (0,10%).

A total of 79 students (82,87%), both male and female, chose *Project work*. 54 of them have excellent academic achievement – 14 males (1,48%) and 40 females (4,25%). 5 students have a very good academic achievement – 3 males (0,31%) and 2 females (0,21%). 19 students have good academic achievement – 7 males (0,74%) and 12 females (1,27%). Only one female student that has a satisfactory academic achievement choose this particular activity.



Graph 1: Favorite extracurricular activities in correlation with the sex and academic achievement

Literature has been chosen by a total of 51 students or 5,43%. 37 of them have excellent academic achievement – 17 males (1,80%) and 20 females (2,12%). 5 students have a very good academic achievement – 3 males (0,31%) and 2 females (0,21%). 6 students have good academic achievement – 2 males (0,21%) and 4 females (0,42%). 3 students have a satisfactory academic achievement – 1 male (0,10%) and 2 (0,21%) females. *Ecology* has been chosen by a total of 38 students or 4,04%. 23 of them have excellent academic achievement – 9 males (0,95%) and 14 females (1,48%). 7 students have a very good academic achievement – 6 males (0,63%) and 1 female (0,10%). 6 students have good academic achievement – 2 males (0,21%) and 4 females (0,42%). 2 students have a satisfactory academic achievement – 1 male (0,10%) and 1 (0,10%) female. *Problem solving* has been chosen by a total of 17 students (1,80%). 9 of them have excellent academic achievement – 2 males (0,21%) and 7 females (0,74%). 4 students have a very good academic achievement – 3 males (0,31%) and 1 female (0,10%). 4 students have good academic achievement – 2 males (0,21%) and 2 females (0,21%).

A total of 137 students or 14,58% have chosen *Music*. 89 of them have excellent academic achievement – 53 males (5,63%) and 36 females (3,82%). 35 students have a very good academic achievement – 20 males (2,12%) and 15 females (1,59%). 10 students have good academic achievement – 4 males (0,42%) and 6 females (0,63%). 3 students have a satisfactory academic achievement – 2 males (0,21%) and 1 (0,10%) female. Research has been conducted with a total of 54 students or 5,75%. 35 of them have excellent academic achievement – 12 males (1,27%) and 23 females (2,44%). 9 students have a very good academic achievement – 7 males (0,74%) and 2 females (0,21%). 9 students have good academic achievement – 6 males (0,63%) and 3 females (0,31%). A large number of students have chosen *Art* as well – a total of 141 students. 85 of them have excellent academic achievement – 43 males (4,57%) and

42 females (4,68%). 29 students have a very good academic achievement – 17 males (1,80%) and 12 females (1,27%). 25 students have good academic achievement – 10 males (1,06%) and 15 females (1,59%). 2 students have a satisfactory academic achievement – 2 males (0,21%).

From the analysis of the obtained results of all the indicated categories the highest percentage refers to the *project task* category with an average of 82.87% which indicates the fact that students in the realization of their free activities are mostly engaged in the realization of project tasks (for the realization of which these projects it is necessary for the students to research, to search, to observe, to solve a problematic situation, to think actively and to be actively involved in the realization of the appropriate free activity through which they encourage and develop their creative abilities and skills). The category of computer activities is represented by 16.28%, given that the access to computer activities in these schools is not at a high level.(under other circumstances, maybe these results would have been higher) A number of respondents emphasized sports activities 26.70%, as well as art and music activity, not neglecting the results from other categories, although in a smaller percentage we still consider them to be of great importance for encouraging and developing students' creative abilities through the corresponding free activities of the indicated subjects.

4.CONCLUSIONS

From the obtained results, it is evident that extracurricular activities have a significant role in encouraging creativity. Bearing in mind that the access to computer technology in these schools is limited, the interest for this extracurricular activity in the future will be much greater. In terms of this research, it should also be noted that there should be many more different extracurricular activities and suitable conditions for their implementation. Free activities allow students to express themselves as freely as possible without any restriction in highlighting their abilities and skills that they have acquired and are able to present. There is a need for teachers to strengthen their competencies for implementation and successful realization of free activities in the field of formal education that are of interest to students. The essence and significance of free activities primarily in encouraging creative abilities consists primarily in the process of training and involvement of students in solving a problem situation, the ability to seek, explore, create independently, to come up with something new i.e. to express themselves creatively and to develop their creative abilities in certain subjects that are led by the respective subject teachers. All this points us to the fact that free activities affect the creative abilities of students and thus enable and contribute to greater success and better results than the appropriate subjects. Creative teaching, as a relatively new and modern teaching method, which puts students in a responsible place in the teaching process, requires patience from both students and teachers. Motives for creative work do not reach their power immediately, but are the result of long-term teaching and extracurricular activities aimed at raising not only interest in what is being learned, but also in perceiving perspectives for advancing the educational process.

Encouragement in creative teaching is one of the driving forces and accordingly, is a basic factor in creative teaching.

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