



Contemporary Issues of
Education Quality

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Extracurricular Activities as Stimuli of the Leisure in Adulthood¹

Participation in extracurricular activities at school is one way in which child exercises his right to play which is later, in part, modified into the right of the adult to an adequate choice of leisure activities. The role and significance of extracurricular activities is irreplaceable in training young people to use their leisure time in a well thought-out and organised manner. Properly directed extracurricular activities, as part of the activities carried out during one's leisure time, could have a strong bearing on developing the use of leisure time in and out of school. The reflection of this influence is surely evident not only in youth, but also later in life.

The subject of our paper was the relationship between leisure time use in adulthood (factual and value) on the one hand, and extracurricular activities engaged in during the previous period of education. The aim is to establish whether, to what extent and how participation in the free activities organised at school interferes educational preparedness for leisure time use during adulthood.

The results we obtained imply some interesting conclusions. We found the confirmation of the complex role played by the school, teachers and the community at large in the interrelationship between extracurricular activities engaged in in youth and the adequate utilisation of leisure in adulthood.

Key words: extracurricular activities, leisure, leisure activities, leisure in adulthood, educational preparation for leisure.

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Introduction

Regardless of the presence of considerable terminological and conceptual diversity in defining the notion of “extracurricular activities in school” it is generally agreed that one of their main functions is their positive impact on the culture of leisure time use, not only in youth but also later in life. Participation in extracurricular activities at school is one way in which child exercises his right to play which is later, in part, modified into the right of the adult to an adequate choice of leisure activities.

Extracurricular activities under our conditions are based on the law and schools have obligation to organise them as a special form of educational work to meet the diverse needs of youth and adults engaging in culture, entertainment, practical engineering work, sports, humanitarian and other activities.

In this paper the term “extracurricular activities” is used to imply the totality of educational activities which the school is obliged to offer in an organised and planned fashion outside instruction itself, on its own or in collaboration with any other social institutions.

In contrast to some relativistic and even pessimistic authors, we would argue that leisure time has certain general characteristics that apply to all historical epochs, to all age groups and categories of people. Were it not so, there would be no point in conducting any theoretical debates, drawing any conclusions or making generalisations. Nonetheless, the in view of the relativity of the specification of its significance the view that leisure time is the time of a specific category of people has to be accepted as valid. Consequently, regardless of diverse theoretical determinations, when the notion of “leisure” is operationalised one should always have in mind the specific category of people covered by our inquiry and there is no better way of determining it *in concreto* than through the application of the principle of self-evaluation by the respondents themselves.

Two typologies were used for grouping data – those of M. Kaplan and J.F. Murphy. The order of preferences is as follows:

D_1 – the time left after all professional, family and social obligations have been fulfilled ($X=3.65$; $SD=1.52$)

D_2 – the time when one is free to choose what to do ($X=2.36$; $SD=1.14$)

D_3 – the time to express oneself and achieve inner satisfaction ($X=3$; $SD=1.15$)

D_4 – the time providing a chance to discover and learn something new ($X=2.68$; $SD=1.32$)

D_5 – the time that helps one in the struggle against loneliness ($X=2.03$; $SD=1.18$) (Kaplan, 1975; Murphy, 1974).

In this paper we observe leisure as a construct which consists of several elements rated according to the degree of their acceptance: freedom of choice (which implies the absence of obligation); self-assertion; pleasantness; discovering of learning something new; and social contact.

The subject of our paper was the relationship between leisure time use in adulthood (factual and value) on the one hand, and extracurricular activities engaged in during the previous period of education. The aim is to establish whether, to what extent and how participation in the leisure time activities organised at school impacts educational preparedness for leisure time use during adulthood. We also point out the results of relevant empirical researches which imply that there are important connections between engagement in extracurricular activities during schooling at young age and leisure time use in later life, with effort to relate them with the results we obtained in our inquiry. In our research, we used a non-proportional stratified sample model. We covered 760 adults of various levels of education, of various degrees of preparedness for the activities they engage in their leisure, of both sexes and fully employed but whose working hours are in the morning. The instrument consisted of a battery with several scales, an inventory of activities and queries.

Andragogic justification of investigating extracurricular activities in youth in relation to leisure in adulthood

The more one comes to realise necessity to treat leisure use in adulthood, especially the part of it which is dedicated to education in some way, the more one finds necessary, important and differentiated the need for empirical study, theoretical conception and practical diversification of prior educational activity of adults which occurred during schooling. There is here, therefore, a direct proportionality, but also a complex interactive relation. To be more specific, relying on previous researches, we are free to express the belief that, since being closely related to leisure of youth (Fredricks and Eccles, 2006), extracurricular activities during the schooling could be the factor with the strongest influence on leisure time use later in life (Feinstein, Bynner and Duckworth, 2005; Scott and Willits, 1998).

For the very reason of programmatic flexibility and versatile possibilities of organisational and programmatic diversification, extracurricular activities could closely be connected to different functions which education at young age has, but could also reflect on different functions that are

dominant in adulthood. Properly organized and executed extracurricular activities at young age should represent the form of shaping leisure time use in adulthood.

Extracurricular activities, as special form of educational activities of schools, enrich, expand and deepen the curriculum, school life and work in general and those attending it as well. They have a multifaceted role and great significance, primarily testing, expanding and deepening the acquired knowledge, skills and habits. As Fredricks and Eccles (2006) point out, participation in extracurricular activities have many beneficial effects. Active participation in these activities is positively linked to academic outcomes among which educational aspirations may be of greater interest having in focus the subject of our paper. There are also many psychological benefits of participation in extracurricular activities (higher self-esteem and lower rates of depression). Participation in extracurricular activities during schooling predicts a higher school attendance, more favourable mental health and increased civic engagement. By engaging in these activities the risk of drop out and substance use is decreased.

In comparison to attending classes, extracurricular activities offer much broader possibilities of testing and confirming the acquired knowledge, skills and practice. Also, they appear as a significant fact that has a bearing or forming and gaining new knowledge and skills. As highly organised and institutionalised form we meet the concept of *Community Schools* in USA which is, in some sense, a specific way of encountering different types and kinds of extracurricular activities. In these institutions various agents take their parts and contribute to intergenerational, multifunctional and holistic interrelation between different domains of communal activity. This link between schools and community partners is a critical element of community schools, offering students ways to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for success in adulthood (Melaville, Berg and Blank, 2006). Such concepts help in creating the familiarity with the real world, or as Braund and Reiss (2006) point out, to engage with *actual* world in scientific manner. However, it would be totally wrong, especially as regards adults, to treat extracurricular activities as supplement and addition to the curriculum. The educational aspect is present and very important, but it is unjustified from both the pedagogic and andragogic aspect to over-stress it.

Scientific literature and official documents as well, point out that extracurricular activities should meet certain specific needs, interests and inclinations. Although, no doubt, one should proceed from existing positive interests and inclinations in programming and realising extracurricu-

lar activities – the need to create new ones should be perceived and made for us.

Properly programmed, organized and executed extracurricular activities offer broad possibilities for linking the school with the immediate societal environment as well as with the wider social community. As Fredricks and Eccles (2006) state, participating in variety of structured contexts provides youth with opportunities to develop a range of competencies and interests and gives them exposure to different experiences and people. Through different extracurricular activities young people affirm their personality. These activities provide for broad opportunities to acquire and promote models of solid and proper personal relations. Similar to that, Feinstein, Bynner and Duckworth (2005) state that participation in extracurricular activities in youth determines family characteristics and different aspects of social exclusion in adulthood. Thus, this would surely have a positive effect on relations outside school, both in the present moment and in adulthood.

The role and significance of extracurricular activities is irreplaceable in training young people to use their leisure time in a well thought-out and organised manner. Properly directed extracurricular activities, as part of the activities carried out during one's leisure time, could have a strong bearing on developing the use of leisure time in and out of school. The reflection of this influence is surely evident not only in youth, but also later in life. Hancock, HyjerDyk and Jones (2012) conducted research which showed that extracurricular activities positively influence the perception and development of leadership skills. Although this inquiry does not focus explicitly on leisure time of youth and adults it implies that well organised and controlled extracurricular activities may lead to development of crucial managerial skills that contribute to better organisation and management of leisure activities during entire life.

Relying on argument that Kelly (2006) points out, according to which museums visits, for instance, are undoubtedly connected with the processes of learning, education and entertainment, we can say that extracurricular activities represent powerful means of meeting a compelling need for entertainment during leisure time. This can contribute to a more joyous and richer life during the entire lifespan.

From this point it can openly be set out that in the scientific sense the problem of extracurricular activities in youth and its relations toward leisure time use in adulthood has been much neglected. It is an unpleasant fact that andragogic-pedagogic debates and research in this area are almost totally lacking, despite the facts that extracurricular activities are legalized and have been carried out in schools more or less successfully for

a relatively long time ant that some researches of earlier date pointed out strong connection between extracurricular activities in youth and the use of leisure, both in youth and in adulthood (Scott and Willits, 1998).

So far, the rather scant pedagogic literature treating this problem has for the most part pointed out the significance and tasks of extracurricular activities without any arguments considering their influence on leisure time use in adulthood. One of the reasons of poor study of this problem is that subject of this research is put too broadly. Potential solution could be narrowing of the research focus and concentration on specific phenomena in the domains of extracurricular activities in youth and leisure time in adulthood. The examples of that are not numerous, but are present in literature:

- Kačavenda-Radić (2013) conducted the research which was focused on *school excursions* as a form of extracurricular activities, which were partially argued in relation to different aspects of leisure time of adults;
- Lutz et al. (2009) researched the influence of *athletic engagement* during schooling on early adult life experiences;
- Fredricks and Eccles (2006) investigated engagement in *school clubs, sports* and *pro-social activities* in relation to different domains of life in adulthood;
- Feinstein, Bynner and Duckworth (2005) tried to define the connection between engagement in *youth clubs, church activities, out-of-school lessons* and *volunteering* in one side and leisure engagement later in life, in other side.

Extracurricular activities in youth and leisure in adulthood – empirical view

The largest percentage of our respondents had no educational preparation at all (37.7%) for the activities they engage in their leisure. With respect to educational preparations, 22.2% of the respondents relied on the preparations acquired through extracurricular activities during their formal education in youth; 26.8% on self-education in youth or later, and 13.3% attended some form of organised adult education courses.

If we go step further in the quest for any links between so-called extracurricular activities of young people at school and leisure time activities in adults, we find that by far a larger percentage of respondents (64.3%) engage in leisure activities in adulthood that have nothing to do with the

activities that used to be organised at school. The number of respondents who engage in activities that are in any way related to the extracurricular activities that used to be organised in their school account for a far smaller share (35.7%).

Though the values of the statistical parameters indicate that the differences are statistically significant between various levels of education the distribution of responses is such to warrant the assertion that there is no connection between leisure activities of adults and extracurricular activities at school in the case of the two lowest educational categories (incomplete or complete elementary education – 36.1%), the two middle categories (three and four-year secondary school – 32.4%), and the two highest educational categories (higher and university level of education – 31.4%). The downward that accompanies the increase in the educational level is so small as to be negligible. There is a small though not convincing increase in the connection between leisure activities in youth and leisure activities in adulthood with the increase in the level of education (28.4% for the lowest, 35% for the medium and 36.5% for the highest educational category).

Similar results in our country were obtained by D. Savićević (1983) in an inquiry conducted among a heterogeneous sample population of 999 adults. The author found that a large percentage of the respondents (36.8%) felt that their regular education in youth had hardly or not at all prepared them for an active (creative) use of their leisure time. It should be noted those respondents with lower levels of education were more or less equally dissatisfied with the contribution of their regular schooling to their preparedness for proper leisure time use as those with higher levels of education.

Consequently the findings of mentioned inquiries point to the conclusion that there appears to be a need for regular educational institutions to revise this particular aspect of their activities. As an argument that corroborates this claim we would like to mention the results we obtained testing a sample of students and teachers attending a school for adult education. True, both samples gave a high priority to the usefulness and significance of the leisure activities organised by the schools but one cannot neglect the fact that 25% of the students did not consider them to be useful or significant. Apart from the fact that some of were not even aware of the fact that their school organised any extracurricular activities, others saw no purpose in such activities at school considering them to be superfluous. There was also some criticism of the quality and quantity of those activities (Kačavenda-Radić, 1985).

All mentioned arguments and the results of some inquiries of newer date which indicate the recognized importance and usefulness of extracurricular activities among participants in sense of both, formal schooling and their reflections on adulthood (Lutz et al., 2009), are not sufficient merely to make the organisation of extracurricular activities mandatory by law. The results obtained are indicative of the complex role of the school, teachers and the community at large in the organisation and actual conduct of this type of activity. We are even more convinced in our attitude having in mind that participation in less structured leisure settings, as Fredricks and Eccels (2006) point out, could lead to involvement with risky peer groups, demonstration of inappropriate behaviour, substances abuse and greater level of stress and anxiety.

The results of our inquiry show that former educational preparedness reflects in varying degrees on the kind of activities engaged in by adults in their leisure. The results are statistically significant with respect to physical-recreational activities as well as educational activities whereas the value of statistical parameters become insignificant when it comes to passive leisure activities, hedonistic-gambling and altruistic-pedagogic activities.

Percentagewise, physical-recreational activities are mostly enjoyed in leisure by those who had prepared themselves for them through some form of adult education (schools, courses seminars, etc. – 54.7%); then come those who had prepared themselves through extracurricular activities in school (52.2%) and those who had prepared themselves through self-instruction (40.6%). The respondents who had no educational preparation at all account the smallest share (36.7%).

Lutz et al. (2009) came to similar findings. They stress out that those adults who participated in sports as a part of extracurricular activities in youth engage more in vigorous physical activities later in life than those who did not practice this kind of activities during schooling. Besides that, they argue that athletic involvement during schooling is associated with different aspects of life in adulthood such as better physical and mental health, life satisfaction, greater civic engagement and lower amount of risky behaviours. The most interesting finding indicates that adults who expressed greater preference and satisfaction toward physical activities during schooling achieved greater level of education and adult education attainment compared to non-athletes.

The tendency is identical in the case of cultural-aesthetic activities. By far the largest group to engage in these activities attend some form of adult education (68.4%), followed by those who did not attend any adult education but who had engaged in such activities in their youth through extracurricular activities in school (64.8%), then those who had engaged

in self-education (56.3%) and lastly those who had not prepared themselves in any way for leisure activities (41.1%).

Fredricks and Eccles (2006) mention the similar results they obtained in their research. They point out that participation in extracurricular activities predicts involvement in socio-cultural causes in early adulthood.

When we look at the intensity of manual-aesthetic activities, organised educational preparedness appears to have even greater impact. Out of the total number of respondents who had some form of education, 68.4% engage in such activities intensively, which is a far higher percentage than for any other category of respondents. Out of the total number of respondents that engage in these activities intensively, 52.1% had prepared themselves through self-instruction and 46.5% had relied on the knowledge and skills they had acquired through extracurricular activities. The respondents who had no educational preparation for leisure time use devote the least of their leisure time to these activities (45.9%).

When it comes to religious activities however, we find that they are most popular among category of respondents who had no educational preparation at all. Out of the total number of respondents in this category, 39.3% engage in religious activities extensively. As for the other categories of respondents who had some kind of preparation for leisure time use, the percentage engaging extensively in religious activities is lower but more or less evenly spread among them (28.9%, 28.4% and 27.6%).

It is interesting to mention the results Feinstein, Bynner and Duckworth (2005) obtained in their research. Although they did not investigate religious engagement in adulthood, they tried to find the connection between church-based activities as a part of extracurricular involvement in youth and some aspects of life in adulthood. The results of their inquiry show that engagement in church-based activities positively influences the issues of social exclusion in adulthood.

A far larger number of respondents who had some kind of educational preparation for leisure time use engage in educational activities of cognitive sphere than those who had no preparation. We see that 56% of total number of those who underwent some kind of preparation in their youth, 55.8% of the total number of those who attended some form of adult education and 51.6% of all those who prepared themselves through self-instruction have a pronounced interest in these activities.

The situation is similar with respect to educational activities of predominantly psycho-motoric sphere. Out of the total number of respondents who prepared themselves by attending some form of adult education courses, 54.7% showed a pronounced interest in educational activities of the predominantly psycho-motoric sphere, 53.5% of those who were

prepared through their formal education in youth and finally 33.33% of those who prepared themselves through self-instruction. This percentage is significantly lower in the category of respondents who had no educational preparation and it amounts to 24.1%. Within this category of respondents, the share of those with little interest in educational activities of the psycho-motoric and cognitive sphere is far higher (75.9% and 61.5% respectively).

The results obtained therefore, indicate that engagement in educational activities in leisure varies depending on the educational preparedness for the leisure time use. The difference is conspicuous between respondents who had some form of educational preparation and those who had none. In numerical terms, educational activities both of the predominantly cognitive and predominantly psycho-motoric sphere are more or less equally popular among respondents who were educationally prepared for them in their youth as well as those who attended some form of adult education for that purpose.

Results obtained by Fredricks and Eccles (2006) indicate the similar though more specific tendency. They found out that participation in some extracurricular activities (school clubs, sports and pro-social activities) has positive influence on educational expectations later in life, which can be in some way taken as a factor that indicates educational participation in leisure time in adulthood. As they state, extracurricular educational preparation in youth offers opportunity to build interpersonal competence and formulate educational plans for the future and skills that are critical to adult education attainment.

If we relate the various kinds of leisure activities engaged in by adults to participation in extracurricular activities in school in youth, we obtained the following order of intensity:

- Cultural-aesthetic;
- Educational activities – predominantly cognitive sphere;
- Educational activities – predominantly psycho-motoric sphere;
- Physical activities;
- Manual-productive; and
- Religious.

Kelly (1982) gives the findings of a study carried out in America which point to the conclusion that the activities engaged in by adults in their leisure are only in a small percentage (6%) the same as those at school and that the highest percentage are cultural activities after all.

The results of our research have shown that educational preparedness is also a variable that hinges significantly on the position taken towards

education in leisure. The position on education in leisure varies, depending with statistical reliability, on educational preparedness for leisure time use.

The differences are most conspicuous in the case of extreme answers. A far smaller percentage of respondents who had some form of educational preparation for leisure time use of all categories have a negative attitude towards education in leisure than the respondents who had no participation. In the category of respondents who prepared themselves through extracurricular activities during their formal education in youth this percentage is only 5.7%, then come those who attended some form of adult education – 6.3% followed by those who prepared them through self-instruction – 7.8%. The highest percentage with a negative attitude is found among the category of respondents who had no educational preparation at all – 12.8%. The positive tendency is true of the extreme positive attitude but also in the case of a predominantly positive attitude. Thus, 90.6% of the respondents who were educationally prepared for the leisure time use at school had predominantly positive attitude towards education in leisure.

It is hard to tell whether the attitude preceded educational activity (in the sense of preparations for leisure time use) or educational activity came before the shaping of the attitude towards education in leisure. Our inquiry does confirm a significant link between these two variables and if there is any justification for generalisation, the findings corroborate the claim that the earlier educational activity the more positive the attitude towards education in leisure.

We avoided in this occasion the distinction between education in and education for leisure but it should be noted that statistically significant results have been obtained with respect to educational preparedness and the attitude towards education for leisure (readiness to engage in education, preferences with respect to the contents and forms of education). It can be noted that respondents with previous educational experience in preparations for leisure time use have a more positive attitude towards education for leisure and are ready to undergo further training with a view to improved utilization of leisure than those with no such experience. A very large percentage (90.5%) of adults who participated in extracurricular activities in their youth were eager to engage in education for leisure time use. The percentage of other categories with educational preparations was high but lower than the first group (81.1% and 80.2% respectively) and it was lowest for the category with no education preparation (70.2%).

Results that Lutz et al. (2009) obtained leads to similar impression. Their inquiry showed that those adults who participated in extracurricu-

lar activities in their youth (sports activities) engage more in adult education compared to those who did not express preference or actual engagement in these activities during schooling.

Conclusion

The empirical material collected as a result of our inquiry points to a number of interesting results.

First, all the categories of respondents with some training in leisure time use either in their youth or in adulthood engage in a higher percentage in physical-recreational, cultural-aesthetic and manual-productive activities than the categories of respondents with no educational preparation at all. The more coherent and organised those preparations were in the educational sense the stronger the urge to engage in such activities. The exception are religious activities which are engaged in most in their leisure by the category of respondents who had no specific or organised preparation for leisure time use whereas the emphasis on these activities changes in the category of respondents with some kind of educational preparation. This is probably linked to the fact that religious education in our country was separated from regular education at the time we conducted our research.

Second, participation in extracurricular activities at school appears to be a relevant factor for engagement in certain activities in leisure time in adulthood. To judge by the intensity and frequency of those activities, this connection is most pronounced in the case of aesthetic-cultural activities (64.8%) followed by educational activities of the predominantly cognitive sphere (56.7%), educational activities of the predominantly psychomotoric sphere (53.5%), physical-recreational activities (52.2%), manual-productive (46.5%) and finally, religious activities (28.9%).

Third, in the context of the other forms of educational preparation for leisure time use in adulthood covered by the study, participation in extracurricular activities has been proven to be a stronger factor than self-instruction but also as an equally significant factor (in the case of educational activities of both the cognitive and psycho-motoric sphere) or as a less significant factor (in the case of the other activities measured) than organised educational preparation in adulthood.

Fourth, the attitude towards education in leisure and readiness to engage in some educational effort in order to promote leisure time use is in direct proportion with previous educational preparations. For the respondents who participated in leisure activities that used to be organised

by their school in their youth in most cases take a positive or very positive attitude towards education in leisure. This category also shows the highest degree of readiness to engage in further training for leisure activities.

Finally, the fact that all types of activities are not significantly correlated to educational preparedness (passive rest activities, hedonistic activities, gambling, altruistic-pedagogic activities) points to the conclusion that educational preparedness for leisure time use affect in varying degrees of intensity the various types of leisure activities. In that sense, Brighthill and Mobley (1977) are right in saying that what we do in our leisure does not depend only on how well prepared we are for leisure time use but also on our attitudes, values, interests and abilities as well as on the natural and social conditions under which we live.

The results of our research also confirm the complex role played by the school, teachers and the community at large in the interrelationship between leisure activities engaged in in youth and the adequate utilisation of leisure in adulthood.

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