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Original article

Leisure Subject Activities and Their Influence on Students' Motivation in Learning

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Abstract

Based on the fact that students' leisure activities enrich the forms of knowledge in school, we can say that their implementation by teachers has an effect on students' internal motivation and social needs. Leisure subject activities are part of teaching techniques that teachers use to motivate students for learning, which is why they should be seen as a component part of the teaching process. In North Macedonia, there are limited data regarding leisure activities outside the teaching process; however, very little has been researched on subject's leisure activities. For this reason, we carried out a research where the objective of our research was oriented towards the level of implementation of leisure classroom activities during the learning process, and its correlation with students' motivation in the learning progress, aged 6-11 years old. So, the main hypothesis of this research was: *The inclusion of leisure subject activities in specific learning situations affects the motivation of students for learning.* In accordance with defined objectives, survey and interview techniques were applied in the research with N=100 teachers and =100 students. Results showed a confirmation of the hypothesis, respectively

that there is a strong correlation of implementation of leisure classroom activities and increase in students' motivation for learning. The results obtained should serve to identify and overcome shortcomings in the implementation of leisure classroom activities that simultaneously have a great impact in motivation learning development of students in primary education.

Keywords: Leisure classroom activities, students, teachers, primary education, motivation, learning development,

Introduction

Knowing the fact that teachers are the main subjects in the learning process, and at the same time the planners and leaders of the learning process, who have direct contact with the students, it is necessary for them to organize and implement a learning process based on the fulfillment of the conditions and criteria required by the contemporary teaching. The essential point lies in the realization of this learning process in compliance with the students' interests, in order for the students not to perceive education as an unnecessary and monotonous obligation, but to perceive it as their positive transformation, as something that grows them, changes them and fulfills them in every possible dimension. Most likely, the students will achieve the second part if the teachers abandon once and for all the realization of the lesson in traditional conditions and circumstances, and refer to the part of the realization of the lesson "dressed in contemporary clothes". One of the most important segments of achieving contemporary learning is its realization by including leisure subject activities in learning. After all, students learn more easily and better when they are free to act (Bergin, 1992). Leisure activities have a multidimensional character of student development, because they stimulate the development of students in all possible aspects, such as social, moral, aesthetic, working, emotional, cognitive, and many others (Astleitner, 2018).

Intrigued by the above statement, the research problem of this paper was to investigate the relevance of leisure activities on student

motivation, respectively we rose several questions, such as the following: what are the most common leisure activities used in Macedonian classrooms, specifically leisure subject activities; what importance is given to the implementation of leisure subject activities in primary schools; how much teachers motivate their students through leisure subject activities, how much students are free to act in learning in circumstances when it is developed through leisure subject activities, thus making a comparison between how students experience learning when it takes place in traditional conditions, and how it develops through leisure activities for development, expansion and deepening of knowledge, called leisure subject activities-FSA. The focus of the research will be oriented towards how much the implementation of leisure subject activities is expressed during the development of the learning process, and how much leisure subject activities specifically affect the motivation for learning in students aged 6-11 years.

1. Definition of leisure activities

Leisure is defined as a freely chosen activity, which involves meaningful, internally motivated, and enjoyable experiences outside of obligatory work, such as school or a job (Godbey, 1994; Rahim, Kadir, Mahmud, Mohamed, & Kee, 2011). Active leisure is referred to as an activity which involves some form of physical exertion during free time, such as physical activity and sports, whereas passive leisure is characterized as a restful, static and quiet time-out activity in which one does not engage in physical exertion during free time (Joudrey & Wallace, 2009). In contrast with passive recreation, active recreation has been shown to positively impact working memory, attention, and mood, although both types of recreation are conducive to enhancing attention after the recreation phase (Hey et al., 2012). Also, in a study carried out on the importance of physical activities and changes in teaching methodology, they concluded that moving from traditional classroom teaching methodologies to an outdoor-learning environment decreases students' sedentary time and increases their light- and moderate-intensity physical

activity during the school day. In addition, no difference was observed in the students' leisure-time physical activity on outdoor-learning and traditional school days, supporting the social and ecological validity of this approach. The implication from this study is that outdoor learning is an effective complement to traditional classroom teaching in promoting physically active children. The results provide guidance for researchers, practitioners, parents, school communities and policymakers on opportunities to increase children's physical activity and reduce their sedentary behaviour. Our findings about physical activity and sedentary behaviour support pedagogical approaches that highlight the educational value of outdoor learning and integrate it into the curriculum, an approach that similarly confirms students' physical activity promotion, as Gray et al. (2015) also concluded. The results stress the importance of how the school and the teachers pedagogically view the instructional strategies and the environment that young children encounter in primary school. Teachers, therefore, have a central role in implementing educational change and need to receive all the support they can from their surrounding communities. (Jan-Erik Romar, Ida Enqvist, Janne Kulmala, Jouni Kallio & Tuija Tammelin, 23 jun 2018). Other authors also talk about the importance of the phenomenon of using leisure time and the right organization of it by the residents. They have proven that organized and positive activities affect the liberation of the children from many deviations that can appear in adolescence.

Following the transition out of high school, emerging adults who attend college are at risk of increased substance use. One of the many new tasks required of college students is to learn how to utilize their leisure time wisely and effectively. The present study tested longitudinal associations between participation in leisure activities and substance use in college students during their first 2 years at school. Latent profile analysis identified six distinct groups of students based on their

involvement with two categories of leisure activities during their freshmen year: non-structured activities (socializing with friends and spending time with family) and campus structured activities (participation in sports and non-sports activities). (Wing Yi Chan, Anthony Rodriguez, Regina A. Shih, Joan S. Tucker, Eric R., 2020).

If organized leisure time appears to us as an important factor in the emancipation of the personality of young people, it creates conditions for recreation, active resting, socialization and opportunities for humanism, it raises self-confidence, then we should emphasize the leisure time activities that, in fact, represent the content of leisure time. The notion of "leisure activity" in pedagogical terminology begins to be used in the second half of the 20th century and in the first decades of the 21st century. The term "leisure activity" itself includes clearly, without any dilemma, any activity that is carried out leisurely, regardless of the type of activity (Stebbins, 2017). The fundamental purpose of leisure time activities lies precisely in the tendency of the school to function in harmony with the students' demands and needs, in order for this initiative to contribute strongly to the formation of students' complete and creative personality. Full personality means the requirement that the leisure activities possess their polyfunctionality in the service of forming the student as a complete personality, polyfunctionality which extends to the following areas: the field of social, psychic, motoric, moral, aesthetic, emotional, etc. development and progress (Buckley & Lee, 2021). And this is achieved precisely by the realization of leisure subject activities which lead to the motivation of students for concrete learning (Pomohaci & Catana, 2015).

The students' subject (course) activities are organized so that students satisfy their special interests and at the same time create wider opportunities in the process of acquiring

knowledge, develop greater self-initiative in completing tasks, study more deeply into specific areas that they have interest in. These activities can be a source of additional, valuable education, as well as the acquisition of new knowledge from the mainstream of culture or from the scientific disciplines of natural and technical sciences. The main advantage of these activities lies in the fact that their implementation enables the expansion and deepening of the students' existing knowledge, develops their intellectual curiosity and talent. Another very important advantage is that students who participate in leisure subject activities are enabled to move away from mechanical learning and replace it with creative and logical learning. (Havziu-Ismaili, 2019) If we need justification from the previous sentence, we would have said that the leisure subject activities that take place in the classroom by the teacher with the students undoubtedly promote creative learning, because students show greater interest in participating in situations when the lesson is carried out actively and creatively, as when the realization of the learning process is characterized by a pronounced monotony. The implementation of leisure subject activities in the classroom by the teacher is required to a great extent especially when it comes to fulfilling the requirements of creative, innovative and contemporary learning (Ferrari, Cachia, & Punie, 2009). The same should not be neglected, but taken very seriously by the teachers, in order that the obtained results are positive in continuity.

In addition, we can conclude that leisure subject activities should not be minimized in any way, but contemporary teachers need to identify themselves as "miniature scientists" for the frequent implementation of these leisure activities during lessons, considering them the same as the path which will absolutely promote the development of students as complete personalities, and not only that, but also the path to achieve

efficient and effective teaching and learning, which will seal the success of students, the success of teachers, the success of the school as an educational institution, but above all the advancement and progress of new generations and the entire human society.

2. Leisure subject activities as means of motivation and encouragement

Motivation is a very important segment in the work of the school and in the efficient implementation of the learning and teaching process. Students learn better when they are motivated (Steinmayr, Weidinger, Schwinger, & Spinath, 2019). By motivation we mean the approach and measures taken in order to stimulate or encourage students to work and learn. By motivation we mean simply the stimulation of students' individual differences through different learning engagements (Ceka & Murati, 2017). Students' motivation for learning also has a popular philosophical significance. The popular proverb says: "Anyone can lead a horse to a water spring, but not even a thousand people can make him drink from it." If we were to apply this by analogy to the learning process, we can conclude that it is easy to bring the child to the source of knowledge by comparing it to the source of water, but it is difficult to force the child to learn from that source if there is no motivation (Murati, Fëmijët, nxënësit dhe fuqia e edukatës, 2022). Indeed, what should be put in the center is the part of motivating and encouraging students through different forms, methods, and especially motivating students to learn using and implementing leisure activities as means of encouragement and motivation.

There is not even a single point of skepticism in whether leisure subject activities are considered as means of students' motivation in learning (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017). This is proven by the students' work and success, which is presented as a reflection of students' strong will to be involved in the leisure subject activities in the lesson. In order for leisure subject

activities to be considered as means of motivation and encouragement, they must, first of all, have a creative nature, be interesting for students, and stimulate the development of all-round students. Thus, the synchronization of leisure subject activities with encouraging tools in learning is highlighted in the sense that leisure activities can without any problem be identified with the term motivational and encouraging means in learning, due to the very fact that they add liveliness to learning and completely avoid monotony as the enemy of learning.

3. Leisure activities and activation of positive learning experience

What is meant by experiencing the learning? By this we understand the expression of the intellectual and emotional satisfaction of the student, which is created by its content and form, processes of creating and experiencing values during the process of their transfer (Hansen, 2000). This manifestation of experience in learning can be individual and collective, external and internal, intellectual and emotional, deeply experienced and superficial. The learning experience is expressed as joy, satisfaction, enthusiasm, relaxation, good behavior, active, careful, focused, etc. Does every lesson create an experience? Or, what makes learning being experienced? The emotional experience of learning by the student is a specific and subjective matter (Tan, Mao, Jiang, & Gao, 2021). It depends on several factors, such as:

1. a student' emotional features,
2. the willingness to convey the lesson with feelings,
3. a student's attitude towards the learning content, and the values that the learning content offers,
4. the teacher who makes learning possible for students to experience it deeply or superficially (descriptive, indicative, narrative skills of the event). (Murati, 2002)

A necessary condition for students to experience learning positively, to arouse their emotions, feelings and of course positive thoughts and desire to be attentive and active, surely is the implementation of leisure subject activities. Often leisure subject activities implemented by the teacher not only make it possible to have a positive learning experience, but also enable the students to experience everything as a form of a game.

4. Leisure activities in stimulating students' satisfaction and leisuredom of action in learning

Undoubtedly, the implementation of leisure subject activities in the classroom has a positive effect on conveying satisfaction and leisuredom of action to students, as two very important segments when it comes to achieving qualitative learning. Pleasure in learning has to do with stimulating students' emotional state, satisfying their spiritual needs, creating positive conditions and atmosphere in the classroom, all these activities which are expressed in classes where learning is realized through leisure subject activities (Li, 2022). In addition to the fact that leisure subject activities promote students' satisfaction in learning, they also play a role in the formation of leisure students in action, who will be interested in participating in activities all the time.

What exactly does it mean to give your students leisuredom in the classroom? (Finkin, Post, & Nelson, september-october 2007) The main aim should be to encourage students to use their creativity and develop their natural curiosity, rather than wait passively to be 'imposed' on what they should think, do and say. So, based on the development of learning through leisure subject activities, there is no chance that the students' thinking and acting would be limited; it's the opposite, their leisuredom of action is convincingly highlighted,

which automatically encourages students' satisfaction in learning.

Methodological aspect

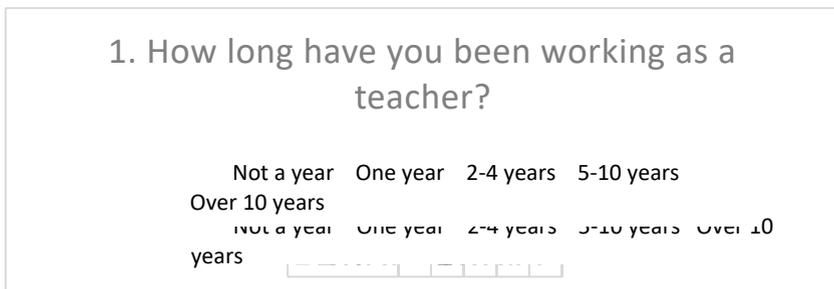
The purpose of this paper and our views are oriented towards solving issues and dilemmas on one hypothesis, "*Leisure subject activities in concrete learning situations affect the motivation of students in learning*", and to do so, we ought to answer two research questions:

- ▶ How much do teachers in primary education carry out leisure subject activities and what are their attitudes on this matter?
- ▶ Are students motivated for learning during the realization of leisure subject activities?

Methods: The following methods were applied in the research: inductive methods, deductive methods, comparative and descriptive methods, through which the following were fulfilled: description, explanation, comparison and generalization of the phenomena of the research subject, as well as the statistical method realized through the SPSS package. Techniques and instruments: In accordance with the defined objectives, the survey and the interviewing technique were applied in the research, and as an instrument were applied the questionnaire and the interview protocol. The sample selected for this research included 100 teachers of primary schools in the city of Tetovo and its surroundings, as well as one school located in Kicevo, while the second sample of this research comprised 100 first cycle students aged 6-11 from abovementioned schools.

Analysis and interpretation of results

So, it is clearly seen that the vast majority of respondents have long working experience in education, while the rest have less working experience, a fact that has helped us compare how teachers have changed attitudes regarding the realization of leisure subject activities in the educational process. In order to prove the results and the hypothesis, below we will present the statistical processing of the data from the coded database based on the data that teachers have completed. The table below shows the statistical data for the Pearson correlation for the relationship between the variable of the implementation of leisure subject activities and the development of students' motivation for learning.



Graph no. 2- Teachers experience of expressed in years.

Correlation			
	Is every student ready to participate in leisure subject activities?	The implementation of leisure subject activities promotes students' satisfaction and leisuoredom of action, compared to cases when the learning process is carried out in traditional conditions and circumstances.	
Is every student ready to participate in leisure subject activities?	Pearson correlation	1	.751**
The implementation of leisure subject activities promotes students' satisfaction and leisuoredom of action, compared to cases when the learning process is carried out in traditional conditions and circumstances	Sig. (2-way)		.000
	N	100	100
	Pearson correlation	.751**	
	1		
	Sig. (2-way)	.000	
	N	100	100

Table 1. Statistical data of Pearson's correlation between the variable of students' involvement in leisure subject activities, and the implementation of leisure subject activities promotes students' satisfaction and leisuredom of action, compared to cases when the learning process is carried out in traditional conditions and circumstances.

Table 1 (see above) presents the statistical data for the Pearson correlation for the relationship between the variable of students' involvement in leisure subject activities, and the implementation of leisure subject activities promotes students' satisfaction and leisuredom of action, compared to cases where the learning process is carried out in traditional conditions and circumstances. From the data in the table we can see that the value of Sig. (2-way) is $p=0.00$ ($p<0.05$), which means that there is a statistically significant correlation between students' involvement in leisure subject activities and students' motivation for learning.

2. The results of the interview questions presented in table

5. Which situation arouses the most interest in participation? In which of them are you more leisure to act? Why?

Situation 1: The teacher writes on the table $6 \cdot 5 =$. He asks for a volunteer from the students who will solve the task on the board.

Situation 2: The teacher has two large colorful cotton dices in his hands. Asks the students to each roll both dices. Then asks you to multiply the number that falls on the first dice with the number that falls on the second dice.

TABLE OF

Ser.nr	Student's initials	Primary school	Quotes from interviewees
1.	A.H	“SabedinBajrami”- Kamjan	Situation 1, because I solve it immediately. I feel happier, fulfilled
2.	E.A	“Istikball”- Tetovë	Situation 2, because I find it fun. Yes, because we play, that's why 2
3.	T.XH	“Përparimi”- Reçicë e Madhe	Situation 2, because it is more interesting and I learn more this way.
4.	A.I	“SabedinBajrami”- Kamjan	Situation 2, because it is more interesting.
5.	K.N	“Përparimi”- Reçicë e Madhe	Situation 2, because I like tasks that require more commitment and I like them when they are in the form of a game.

6.	B.S	“Përparimi”- Reçicë e Madhe	Situation 2, because it is more attractive and it makes me more involved.
7.	L.I	“Përparimi”- Reçicë e Madhe	Situation 2, because it has more motion.
8.	A.S	“Përparimi”- Reçicë e Madhe	Situation 2, because it is different and more interesting.
9.	F.F	“Liria”- Zherovjan	Situation 2, because it is more interesting.
10.	A.A	“NaimFrashëri”- Tetovë	Situation 1, because it is easier.
11.	A.Z	“Përparimi”- Reçicë e Madhe	Situation 1, because this way I can be a volunteer for the problem at the table.
12.	E.I	“Përparimi”- Reçicë e Madhe	I have more interest for the situation 2 because it's like a challenge.
13.	F.M	“BratstvoMigjeni”- Drenovec	Situation 2, because I can challenge myself.
14.	R.T	“Përparimi”- Reçicë e Madhe	Situation 1, because it seems easier to me to solve it.
15.	A.K	“SabedinBajrami”- Kamjan	Situation 1, because I have already formulated the task.

Comments on the interview results

In the table above we have presented some of the student interviewees' statements for each interview question. In addition, the tables will be commented one by one, to show the students' dominant response and the different or distinctive one related to each interview question. *Table of:* Table number four includes the interviewees' statements regarding how much the leisure subject activities contribute in fostering satisfaction and interest in learning more.

All 95% of the interviewed students declare that leisure subject activities stimulate interest in learning, thanks to their funny character which on the students manifests with pleasure and joy. Based on the students' quotes regarding the question of how much their teachers implement leisure activities in the classroom, most of the students answered that their teachers carry out leisure activities in the classroom, some of them also defining the intensity of their implementation through the expressions *sometimes, often, rarely...*, while only 10 out of 100 interviewees declared that no specific activity has ever been carried out in their class. Based on the dominance of the students' answers, we come to the conclusion that teachers implement leisure subject activities in the classroom, an answer which coincides with the dominance of the answers to the survey question with the same topic.

Conclusion and recommendations

The teacher is the key factor in the organization and implementation of the teaching process, and therefore the teacher must also see himself as a genuine planner and organizer of leisure subject activities. However, planning, organizing and implementing leisure subject activities should by no means be considered an easy job! The teacher needs to have maximum

commitment so that the leisure subject activities in the classroom are compatible with the psycho-physical needs of the students.

The essence is that students see the teacher as a member equal to everyone in the classroom and not as a dominant subject, a member who will fulfill his pedagogical function only when he is ready to help the students in concrete situations. Also, other very relevant elements within the implementation of leisure subject activities include the teacher's tendencies for cooperation, help, mutual understanding and tolerance, flow of thoughtful activities and also monitoring of every student's work in order for every student to achieve individual development.

Within the planning and implementation of leisure subject activities, the role of the teacher is very important, a role which passes through three main phases:

1. The phase of students' orientation in the selection of leisure activities for expanding knowledge,
2. The phase of organizing and carrying out leisure activities for expanding knowledge, and
3. The phase of realization of the activities in the default order.

This paper aimed to explore how much our teachers are committed to giving importance to the implementation of contemporary learning, creative and attractive learning for students, respectively how much our teachers' work is oriented and directed in terms of the inclusion of leisure subject activities in the classroom, activities with multidimensional benefits for students. From the analysis and interpretation of the above-mentioned results, we come to the conclusion that our hypothesis presented as: "*Leisure subject activities in concrete learning situations affect the motivation of students in learning*" is confirmed.

The idea was to first prove how much the teachers include these types of activities in their professional activity, and how these activities are expected by the students, putting the emphasis on how teachers' leisure subject activities affect students' motivation for learning (Milanovic, 2020). In order to clarify these uncertainties, the data collected in the form of results were analyzed, and brought us to the conclusion that teachers generally show interest in including leisure subject activities during the development of lessons in different subjects, considering them as a bridge between students and success, having as a determinant students' all-round development and motivation for learning. Teachers have clearly shown us that these activities are included in their teaching plan, they are given a significant importance, and that the students' interest in participating in them is relatively high. We say relatively high because even though most students are interested in participating in FSA, the data collected directly from teachers, and indirectly from students, tell us that not every student has the readiness to participate in concrete learning situations realized in leisure subject activities, for various factors or causes which lead to the appearance of inferiority and resistance to participation in FSA among students, factors which are most likely related to the lack of students' capability, respectively escape from complicated and dynamic learning situations.

This is considered quite natural considering the diversity and different personalities of students, who do not necessarily show the same attitudes and interests towards situations, in this case towards different subject activities and participation in them. Generally speaking, it has been proven that leisure subject activities are the key to success for students, teachers and the school, because they make it possible to avoid monotony in the classroom, turning the classroom into an environment where students find what they lack: the need to be participants, the

need to be heard, to express themselves, and above all the need to fill in the class today, as well as tomorrow in life (Pomohaci & Catana, 2015) The obtained results should serve to identify and overcome the shortcomings in the implementation of leisure subject activities which at the same time have a great impact on students' motivation for learning in primary education.

Recommendations for teachers

Some of the recommendations that we consider reasonable for teachers are:

- Leisure subject activities should be present in the classroom with the students, and should be implemented so that each student has the opportunity to participate by demonstrating them in the form of a game.
- Leisure subject activities in the classroom must be planned and implemented so that each student is free to take action, has his/her own enthusiasm and willingness to participate.
- Teachers should form mutual and stable cooperative relations with students' parents, in order to exchange ideas aimed at strengthening the flow of leisure subject activities in the classroom.
- It is important to instill deeply in the students' consciousness that participation in leisure subject activities will strongly influence their formation as complete personalities, capable of themselves and for the society, which provide them with the formation of skills and the habits necessary for dealing with different situations in and out of the school.

Considering introverted students, asocial students and inferior students, teachers should allocate time for individual communication with these students and with their parents, making them aware of the fact that these activities will make the

students in the classroom stronger and more united, and that participation in these activities will make it possible for each of them to bring out the magic and strength that is within each one, so that this strength is fed with positivity, and enable each of them to find orientation in every dimension of life!

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