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## THE ROLE OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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**Abstract:** *EXTRACURRICULAR EDUCATION IS CARRIED OUT BEYOND THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS AND HAS ITS ROLE AND WELL-ESTABLISHED PLACE IN THE FORMATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERSONALITY. EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE TEACHING APPROACH, DEFINING THE EDUCATIONAL SPHERE THROUGH PROJECTS, TARGET GROUPS, PARTNERSHIPS, CLEARLY DEFINED OBJECTIVES, EVALUATIONS AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION, DESIGNED TO SHAPE THE CULTURAL PROFILES OF PRESCHOOLERS, TO OPEN DOORS TO LIFELONG LEARNING.*

**Keywords:** *EXTRACURRICULAR EDUCATION, KINDERGARTEN, EDUCATIONAL PROCESS, OPEN DOORS*

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*"Education means learning to learn, learning to live, learning to think freely and critically, learning to love the world and make it more human, learning to perfect oneself in and through creative work."*  
(Edgar Faure)

Education begins in the family and continues in kindergarten and later in school, being a fundamental social phenomenon that appeared with human society, fulfilling the functions of information and training of people from an intellectual, moral, artistic, physical point of view. The educational process also involves forms of didactic work complementary to the compulsory activities. No matter how important is the curricular education achieved through the educational process, it does not exhaust the sphere of formative influences exerted on the child. In contemporary society, education goes beyond the limits of national requirements and values and tends towards universality, towards the common value heritage of humanity. For this reason, a unitary curriculum can no longer respond to human diversity alone, and the desire for lifelong learning tends to become an undisputed reality. The focus is now on practical application, whose role is to strengthen information, to form skills, to develop motivation for learning and productive activities. The complexity of the educational process requires the combination of curricular and extracurricular activities.



Extracurricular education is carried out beyond the educational process and has its role and well-established place in the formation of young people's personality. Extracurricular activity is an integral part of the teaching approach, defining the educational sphere through projects, target groups, partnerships, clearly defined objectives, evaluations and dissemination of information, designed to shape the cultural profiles of preschoolers, to open doors to lifelong learning. It has a less formal character, but with the same formative result. The educational actions placed within this type of education are flexible, fulfilling a series of objectives:

- ✓ capitalize and develop children's interests and skills;
- ✓ organize in a pleasant and relaxing way the children's free time, contributing to the optimization of the educational process;
- ✓ develop the spirit of initiative;
- ✓ create a sense of security and trust for all participants;
- ✓ develop communication skills;
- ✓ promote self-paced learning;
- ✓ raise awareness and empowers the child at the local community level through direct involvement;
- ✓ form an ecologically responsible behavior through direct participation in various activities of environmental protection, waste recycling, maintenance of green spaces, etc .;
- ✓ guide to the acquisition of an independent thinking, tolerant towards new ideas;
- ✓ help to educate the child's emotional intelligence;
- ✓ develop competitive spirit and teamwork;
- ✓ aware the role of a balanced diet in the harmonious development of people;
- ✓ form the competence to "learn how to learn" by learning to solve some work tasks individually and creatively, but also by teamwork that develops children's interest in establishing contacts with colleagues, causing them to interact in a effective, to focus on the team's goals, to understand the role of each person in the group, to actively participate in carrying out an action;
- ✓ make partnerships: school-children-family-community-other factors of education;
- ✓ contribute to the harmonious development of the child.

Extracurricular activities include:

- **Celebrations and festivities:** this type of extracurricular activities marks important events in preschool life. The importance of these activities consists in cultivating the child's artistic inclinations, as well as in the festive atmosphere created on this occasion. The staging of the celebrations brings satisfaction to both "artists" and "spectators", preschoolers and parents, contributing to the socialization of children from an early age.
- **School competitions:** stimulates the spirit of competitiveness, giving the child the opportunity to integrate into different groups to complete the work, as well as the opportunity to assimilate knowledge more easily.
- **Excursions and hikes:** these are attractive and mobilizing activities, allowing an interdisciplinary approach to knowledge and allowing the acquisition of an important social experience, but also the enrichment of the cultural-scientific horizon. Children have the opportunity to feel like little researchers of reality, they feel responsible, they understand the meaning of some norms, they learn how to love and respect nature as a whole.
- **Visits:** scheduled visits to museums, monuments and historical sites, memorial houses, economic units are a means to appreciate the cultural, folkloric, historical and economic values of the country. Library visits play an important role. In the current educational context, most students do not read enough because of the information they obtain more easily through the



media or computer. Reading is what helps him develop his vocabulary, enrich his knowledge and form a basic literary and communicative culture.

- **Views:** group watching movies, theater shows or circus specific to their age, can be a source of information, but at the same time a starting point in the realization of interesting activities by preschoolers.
- **Other activities:** can be chosen by children, participating in them in their free time. These activities complement some educational aspects and orient the children towards some fields of activity: sports, music, poetry, painting, etc.

Extracurricular activities complement the educational process and contribute to the discovery and development of students' skills in various artistic fields. Ioan Nicola considers that "Extracurricular activity offers greater independence to students and provides a possibility of variety for disciplinary events, they involve compliance with a wide range of disciplinary rules" (I. Nicola, 2000, p. 288). Extracurricular activities can become an effective way of initiating knowledge, cultural training of children, highlighting those skills that they demonstrate, channeling them to professions that suit them. Focused on preschoolers, the developed projects become effective means of achieving educational goals, character modeling and civic spirit. "Their content differs from the didactic ones. Organized at the class or school level, with voluntary participation, they aim to broaden the horizon of knowledge, etc." (I. Nicola, 2000, p. 454).

The European dimension of Romanian education implies an increased availability and mobility of the teacher, a realistic anchoring in the current economic context, in the center of his entire activity on today's child. At preschool age, children are very receptive to what is shown to them with the help of images or substitutes (the presence of concrete in any type of activity is absolutely indispensable). The role of the educator, but also of the family is to provide gradually and in accordance with the particularities of age, the necessary knowledge that motivates the eco-civic behaviors and norms, to create and organize stimulating educational activities. Having an attractive character, children participate in a relaxing atmosphere, with enthusiasm and dedication, in such activities.

In conclusion, we can say that extracurricular activity is a valuable and effective educational component to which any teacher must pay attention, adopting a creative attitude both in the way of carrying out the activity and in relationships with students, thus ensuring a relaxing atmosphere, to allow the creative stimulation of children.



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