PECULIARITIES OF CHILDREN’S EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN LITHUANIA FROM 1940 TO 1990

Jautakytė R.
Klaipėda University, Lithuania

Abstract
Location of extracurricular education, objectives thereof and organization of teaching in Lithuania in 1940-1990 are analyzed in the article on the basis of periodicals and other publications of the Soviet era. Informal education of children is a component of the educational system and is an integral part of formal education. Educational values are being developed especially effectively by these activities. The student participates in these activities voluntarily, one’s mental and physical work is combined and it is aimed to match one’s activities, needs and interests. By being more open to this environment, the student takes over easier and quicker the values which are being. Extracurricular activities were well developed and actively promoted during soviet period. Although these activities were very politicized, strictly regulated by the Communist party and local goverment authorities, it was available to all pupils and helped them to spend their leisure time in a meaningful way.
KEYWORDS: extracurricular activities, Soviet period.

Introduction
The current society encounters a great deal of challenges which are related to education and wellbeing of young people as well as with the future of the state in one way or another. The ratio of the competences and knowledge obtained by a young person and one’s living needs acquire a special significance in modern society. Strategic educational documents emphasize theory-based informal education systems which help the school achieve its principal objective: the necessity to develop a person who is able to solve one’s own as well as the society’s life-related problems both independently and together with others, positively change the reality of Lithuania, creatively respond to the challenges of modern world as well as is able to give meaning to one’s life in the present contradictory reality (Bendrosios programos, 2008, p. 7). Thus an important part of the modern educational system is informal education of children, i.e. special educational activities which are not mandatory and freely elective to students. In the opinion of J. Vaitkevičius, education does not develop the intellect, culture and cognition in general. The purpose of a person’s intellect, sophistication and culture is to be an active participant of social life (Vaitkevičius, 1982). He emphasized that students are in urgent need of extracurricular activities through which they could satisfy their interests, improve their skills as well as use and express their natural abilities. Involvement of students into the activities significant and interesting to them is an important precondition for the formation of personal transformation because a personality is developed by such activities only which one undertakes very seriously, to which one devotes all one’s efforts and energy and with which one relates one’s goals. The student participates in these activities voluntarily, one’s mental and physical work is combined and it is aimed to match one’s activities, needs and interests. By being more open to this environment, the student takes over easier and quicker the values which are being instilled (Barkauskaite, 2004). Formal education gives the package of principal competences necessary for further career to young people, whereas informal education, due to its experiential and social nature, gives them the competences which enable a young person to become a conscious personality able to solve one’s problems responsibly and creatively and to act energetically in the society, to adapt to the changing environment as well as to satisfy the needs for cognition, development and self-expression. Therefore, it is obvious that the child’s education must cover and combine the physical, mental and socio-cultural aspect of individual development in a harmonious manner.

Although modern pedagogy prefers the present and the future, being well-aware of the history of one’s nation, development, gaps and achievements of its school and pedagogy as well as to learn from the past experience in this field is a must when reorganizing the educational system. The period f Soviet dictatorship in Lithuania is very complicated and contradictory. But it is necessary not to expunge from our memory and to analyze this period in order to understand the developments in education in a qualitatively new period, following the regaining of independence.

The object of the research: childrens’ extracurricular activities in Lithuania during the Soviet era.

The purpose of the research: to reveal the peculiarities of children’s extracurricular activities in Lithuania during the Soviet era.
The main objective of the Socialistic concept of education was to create a perfect educational system which would ensure development of highly-qualified versatile builders of the Communist society. The lessons at school were not enough in order to achieve this objective. The curriculum had to be supplemented by extracurricular and out-of-school activities. It was determined that, in order to satisfy all student’s social, political and cultural needs, a constant system of various activities which was later named “extracurricular activities” must be created. Extracurricular activities were also highly related to work-related and occupational activities in order to introduce various occupational opportunities in the fields of culture, technologies, industry and agriculture to students.

Organization of extracurricular activities, began during the first months of 1940 Soviet occupation already as reorganization of the school started when the life of the school was linked to the whole social-political life of the republic. The first children’s non-school institutions were established then: Kaunas Pioneers’ Palace was opened in December of 1940, whereas Vilnius Pioneers’ Palace was opened in the spring of 1941.

As schools were reopened during the post-war years, extracurricular activities were organized as a part of the whole activities of the school. The entire Soviet period is characterized by the use of more and more diverse forms and methods of extracurricular activities. Organization of various circles began in the schools.

Extracurricular activities did not gain momentum right away in the difficult conditions of the restoration period as the material base of the schools was poor, there was a lack of teachers and the teachers were extremely busy not only in the schools but also in the whole social-political work, especially in the villages (Bendžius, 1973). However, school-students’ circles were established and their activities expanded. We find the most information about the circles of that time which were less dependent on the material-technical base such as literary, art amateurs’, sports as well as young naturalists’ (who were called “mičiūrininkai” (the followers of Michurin) at that time) circles. Young technicians’, physicists’ and aeromodellers’ circles spread as the material-technical base of the schools improved. There were approximately 3,500 circles in the schools of the republic in 1950 (Knyva, Žiugžda, 1950).

Holding Olympiads became an important measure of demonstrating the activities of school students’ circles as well as an incentive thereof. It was a unique activities where pupils competed in knowledge and skills in nearly every subject. Holding young mathematicians’ Olympiads began the earliest, from the beginning of the 50s, holding young physicists’, chemists’, biologists’ Olympiads began slightly later. Young naturalists actively took part in exhibitions of harvest and flowers grown by school students (Bendžius, 1973).

More attention was paid at developing children’s practical skills and participation in the work useful to the society in an effort to make schools more polytechnic in nature. Production circles such as joiners, metalworkers, motorists, tractor-drivers’, etc. were established in the districts. Technical circles in the town schools included young craftsmen, young drivers, young mechanics, young modelers-constructors, as well as artistic-technical and scientific-technical activities. They encouraged pupils to acquire technical occupations. Regional and national exhibitions demonstrated the learning tools, complicated devices, working models, prototypes, radio works and various creations made by young technicians, machine operators, radio fans – this became an important means for developing school students’ creativity and sharing experience (Jasaitis, 1969). Do-it-yourself circles in which children developed practical abilities and skills, such as model building, design, knitting, wood- and metal-processing, were widespread in primary schools.

One of the most popular circles to start acting actively since the post-war years were young authors’ circles, which were greatly significant in educating young talents as well as developing their artistic taste and love for books. These circles held meetings with writers as well as competitions for young authors and reciters.

School students participated in artistic amateur talents’ groups especially actively. School choirs, dance circles, drama circles, instrumental ensembles, orchestras, photography, art and other circles
attracted school students by diverse activities. Choir singing became a priority form of musical extracurricular activities at schools. In accordance with the order of the Ministry of Education, schools had to have choirs of all age groups: juniors, children and seniors. School choirs were counted by thousands and singers – by tens of thousands (approx. 1 500 choirs and over 70 000 singers). They played an active role in festivals and concerts in districts and towns. School choir movement in Lithuania is especially revealed in the traditional national song festivals. National students’ song festivals have been organized since 1964. Joint choirs used to include 13 000 singers. Stringed instrument ensembles as well as orchestras of wind instruments and accordions used to perform as well (Jareckaitė, Rimkutė-Jankuviienė, 2010). For instance, 24 000 young people took part in the first national school students’ song festival, which was organized in 1964. There were over 3 000 choirs of young Octobrists, Pioneers and higher-grade school students, approximately 500 musical ensembles, 1 800 dance circles and over 800 orchestras, drama circles and studies in Lithuanian schools at the end of the 60s (Morkūnas, 1968). Their number rose during following years.

Tourism and local studies circles had a huge influence to the ideological educational work of school students in the schools as well as were as a tool for interesting and meaningful leisure, strengthening health and physical training as well as developing school students’ love for the motherland, initiative, team spirit and friendliness. School-level local studies helping to apply theoretical knowledge of most educational subjects in school students’ practical activities was an important school for knowing the history, culture and reality of the native land. These activities were highlighted at schools as one of the important links connecting and strengthening the relations between the school and the life. School students used to participate in expeditions during which they collected various historical material. Material related to historical-revolutionary events, participants of the revolutionary movement in Lithuania, the fights and victories of the Soviet Army and the partisans during the World War II, the history of the Komsoomol and pioneer organizations, etc. was collected most frequently. The most valuable material supplemented the history museums of the town. This movement began expanding in the beginning of the 50s: the first national young travelers’ rally took place in 1951 (Bendžius, 1973).

A very important field of extracurricular activities was development of school students’ physical training and sports. All-union physical training complex “Ready for Labor and Defense of the USSR” (GTO) was introduced as the national school was reorganized. It played a significant part in physical training of school students and helped develop a mass physical training movement. The base of physical training activities constantly improved as schools were built and equipped better as well as the society and school students themselves helped equip gyms, sports grounds and gymnastics facilities (LTSR Mokyoju III suvažiavimo medžiaga, 1964).

According to the data of 1976, approximately 70 percent of lower-grade school students (5th-8th grade) and 80 percent of higher-grade school students participated in extracurricular activities (Vaitkevičius, 1982).

Certain extracurricular educational activities used to take place in schools as well: various mass events, identical festivals mandatory for almost everyone, individual, group, collective activities, which were different from educational sessions both in their content and the methodology of organization as well as usually had elements of politics, were organized (Zaleskienė, 1994). Extracurricular recital evenings and competitions were held, various exhibitions, conferences and meetings were prepared, Leninist lessons and other forms of education following V. Lenin’s example (V. Lenin’s corners, museums, Leninist recitals, meetings with the revolutionaries, etc.) were organized for the purpose of educating school students. School students’ activities useful for the society (patronage, cleaning the surroundings, collective assistance, collecting used paper and scrap metal, etc.) were organized (Jovaiša, Vaitkevičius, 1987).

Extensive educational activities were performed by various pupil clubs at schools such as international friendship, meetings with person of interest, sports, discussions, the merry and the resourceful, young atheists’ circles. School students got involved in these activities via actively operating Pioneers’ and Komsoomol organizations. These activities were mostly based on superior initiatives beginning from the organizers of extracurricular activities in schools and finishing with the directives of the Ministry of Education and of the Government (Zaleskienė, 1994).

Also extracurricular activity institutions were very active in developing school children activities. The main task of extracurricular institutions was to provide comprehensive help to the school as well as Komsoomol and Pioneers’ organizations in educating children in the Soviet spirit. However, extracurricular institutions also sought to help the school consolidate and deepen school students’
knowledge, which they had acquired during the lessons, broaden children’s outlook, develop their creative skills and interests while implementing polytechnic training as well as develop children’s physical and social work skills. These activities were organized by special development and education institutions and public institutions, which operated independently from the school but coordinated their activities with it. Those institutions were Pioneers’ Palaces, Young Technician’s, Young naturalists’ and Tourists’ stations, children's music and art schools, children’s and juniors’ sports schools, children’s libraries, young spectator’s theatres, collective farms, industrial companies, which were constantly in touch with the school and continued the teaching and educational work begun by the school. The school used to recommend the school students, who were distinguished by certain abilities and were inclined towards particular activities, to these institutions.

The network of children’s extracurricular activity institutions expanded greatly as school students’ activities developed. There were a total of 11 extracurricular institutions in 1950 and 192 in 1970 (including 54 pioneers’ and school students’ houses, 11 young technicians’ stations, 5 young naturalists’ stations, 1 excursion-tourism station and 4 bases, 53 sports schools, 59 music schools, 5 art schools) (Bendžius A. (1973). 61 school students’ chambers, 23 young technicians’ stations, 15 young naturalists’ stations, 91 young tourists’ stations, 85 children’s music, art and fine arts schools) operated in Lithuania in 1988 (Zaleskienė, 1994).

The centre of all extracurricular activities was Pioneers’ Palaces and Houses in the town or the district. The National Pioneers’ Palaces and Pioneers’ Houses of the towns and districts developed school students’ technical, artistic and other skills as well as organized their vocational orientation and leisure in the circles, which operated there. There were 51 Pioneers’ and school students’ Houses in Lithuania (in each district centre and in the big cities) in 1967. 9 town and 51 district Pioneers’ Houses already operated in 1985. The first Pioneers’ Palace was established in Kaunas in 1940, whereas it was established in Vilnius in 1941(Tarybų Lietuvos enciklopedija, 1987). Pioneer Palaces and Houses were restored after the war.

The Pioneers’ Places performed a significant political-ideological work among school students by introducing the history and activities of the Communist Party, current political events and countries’ of the world fight for peace to pioneers and school students. School students’ political outlook was broadened in Pioneers’ Palaces and Houses by organizing various mass measures: festivals, rallies, bonfires, mornings, evenings, meetings with famous people of the country, exhibitions, competitions, excursions, expeditions, hikes, etc. Some mass measures became traditional: harvest festivals, birds’ days, New Year shows and carnivals, first-graders’ mornings in the beginning of the school year, etc. (Jovaiša, Vaitkevičius, 1987). Also technical, artistic and other skills of school children and youth were developed there. Several directions of activities were proposed: arts and crafts, folk and modern dance, painting, sculpture, theatre, literature, choirs and ensembles, studies in nature and history, young tourists groups, gardeners, sport and technology.

Institutions closely related with Pioneer Palaces and Houses were Stations, where all activities were related with nature, technology and tourism. Young technicians’ stations helped schools broaden school students’ technical creativity, develop technical thinking and abilities as well as love for technology. Various technical creativity circles operated in the station, mass events were organized as well. The first young technicians’ station was established in Kaunas in 1953, in Vilnius and various towns – in 1954. There were 1 800 young technicians’ circles in schools in 1964 (Tarybų Lietuvos enciklopedija, 1986).

Young Naturalists’ Stations helped schools develop school students’ interest in nature, biological and agricultural sciences, broaden their knowledge in this field as well as form experimental and practical work skills. The stations aimed for school students to take part in environmental protection activities, perform activities useful to the society as much as they can, helped schools organize extracurricular activities, held exhibitions of young naturalists’ works, competitions, camps, birds and forest days, garden weeks, harvest festivals and other mass events. The first Young Naturalists’ Station was established in Pavilnys in 1953. Such a station was established in Kaunas in 1955, in Šiauliai and Panevėžys – in 1966. There were five town and six district Young Naturalists’ Stations operating in Lithuania already in 1986 (Tarybų Lietuvos enciklopedija, 1986).

The National Young Tourists’ Station presented hiking and travel routes, tasks for searches and investigative work, plans and topics for the sessions of tourists’ local studies circles and units as well as presented them to schools and pioneer camps. The station organized mass events: hikes, trips, rallies and inspections as well as helped schools organize the activities of tourists’ circles, etc.
Sport school pupils attended training sessions in addition to the regular curriculum. Children’s and juniors’ sports schools were complex (2–5 branches of sports) or specialized – one branch of sports. Children or teenagers exercised there until they were 17–18 years old. Schools organized their work in line with special training programs. The first sports schools were established in Kaunas in 1945, in Vilnius – in 1949, in Klaipėda – in 1951. Sports schools were established in Biržai, Marijampolė, Ukmergė and Utena in 1953. There were 13 sports schools in 1954, there were 63 children’s and juniors’ sports schools in Lithuania in 1969, 21 700 sportsmen learned in them. 4 higher sportsmanship schools, 51 specialized Olympic reserve children’s and juniors’ schools (with 21 440 school students in them), 90 complex children’s and juniors’ schools (74 900 school students), 2 boarding schools in Vilnius and Panevėžys as well as 12 SDAALR (the Voluntary Union for Support of Army and Aviation) children’s and juniors’ technical sports schools with 3 300 school students in 1986. 41 branches of sports were practiced (Tarybų Lietuvos enciklopedija, 1988).

During the Soviet period a lot of attention was given to development of artistical skills of children. Children learned drawing, painting, composition, sculpture art history and other subjects in children’s art schools. Education was organized in line with special educational plans and programs in these schools. The first children’s art schools were established in Vilnius in 1958, in Kaunas – in 1960, in Šiauliai and Panevėžys – in 1967, in Klaipėda – in 1969. There were 9 children’s art schools in Lithuania in 1986 (Tarybų Lietuvos enciklopedija, 1988).

The number of music schools increased greatly in Lithuania during the Soviet times. The first music schools, which were established in Vilnius in 1940, in Panevėžys – in 1944, in Kaunas and Klaipėda – in 1945, complied with the level of technical schools. Seven-year children’s music schools were established in all big cities of Lithuania in 1965. Establishment thereof in district centres and other towns began later. Piano, string instruments, wind instruments and other departments operated in children’s music schools. There were 34 seven-year children’s music schools with over 5,000 school students in Lithuania in 1965. There were 78 children’s music schools with 16,976 school students and 3 special secondary schools in Lithuania already in 1990. Ten-year music schools were established in Kaunas in 1945 and in Vilnius – in 1948; mostly the future students of the conservatoire were prepared in them. The choreography department was established under Vilnius ten-year music school in 1952. The first boarding art school in the Soviet Union – Vilnius M. Ėčiulionis’ boarding art school with music, art and choreography departments – was established on the basis of this school in Lithuania in 1960. Boys’ and youth’s choir “Ažuoliukas” was established in 1959. It was a unique mixture of several choirs – from boys to men – and music school. This choir became one of the best choirs both in Lithuania and Europe. Another famous choir combining choir activities and music school was girls’ choir “Liepaitės” which was established in 1964 (Tarybų Lietuvos Enciklopedija, 1988).

Conclusions

After the establishment of Soviet rule in Lithuania, reorganization of education based on the Soviet example commenced. One of the first steps taken by the Soviet government was the introduction of the Soviet centralized system of education. The main goal of education was to facilitate the development of a highly educated and versatile builder of communist society. The lessons at school were not enough in order to achieve this objective. It was determined that, in order to satisfy all student’s social, political and cultural needs, a constant system of various activities which was later named “extracurricular activities” must be created. Extracurricular activities were also highly related to work-related activities in order to introduce various occupational opportunities in the fields of culture, technologies, industry and agriculture to students. During the Soviet period, extracurricular and after-school activities were well developed and actively promoted. By participating in this activity students could not only diversify their school activities, depending on their aptitudes, interests and talents, but also take part and contribute in their daily life and community activities. The most popular extracurricular activity institutions were Young Pioneer Palaces and Houses, Young Technician, Naturalist and Tourist Stations, music and art schools, children and youth sport schools. Extensive educational activities were performed by various pupil clubs at schools. School students got involved in these activities via actively operating Pioneers’ and Komsomol organizations. Certain extracurricular educational activities used to take place in schools as well: various mass events, identical festivals mandatory for almost everyone, various collective activities, which were different from educational sessions both in their content and the methodology of
organization as well as usually had elements of politics, were organized. Students very actively participated in artistic and sport activities. School choirs, dance circles, drama circles, instrumental ensembles, orchestras, photography, art and other circles attracted school students by diverse activities. Although these activities were very politicized, strictly regulated by government authorities, it was available to all pupils and helped them to spend their leisure time in a meaningful way.

References

MOKINIŲ UŽKLASINĖS VEIKLOS YPATUMAI LIETUVOJE 1940–1990 METAIS
Rasa Jautakytė
Santrauka


RAKTĄŽODŽIAI: užklašinė veikla, sovietinis laikotarpis.