

DO WE EDUCATE FUTURE TEACHERS TO WORK IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES?

SMILJANA ZRILIĆ,¹ VESNICA MLINAREVIĆ,²

KARMEN MARČINA TRAVIRKA¹

¹University of Zadar, Department of Teachers and Preschool Teachers Education Zadar, Croatia

szrilic@unizd.hr, kmarcina@unizd.hr

²University in Osijek, Faculty of Kineziology, Osijek, Croatia
vesnica.mlinarevic@kifos.hr

Abstract Extracurricular activities are an integrated part of the elementary school curriculum. They offer students the possibility of well-spent leisure time, contribute to better social connections, and prevent the occurrence of various manifestations of unacceptable behaviour, therefore their organization is necessary. However, research conducted so far has shown that the real possibilities and creative potentials of students engaging in extracurricular activities have not been fully utilised, and the methods used by teachers are still not conducive to encouraging and developing creativity. The questions arise as to how much we prepare future teachers during their studies for organizing extracurricular activities, and how competent they are in recognizing interest, motivation, and the individual talents of students to be able to include them in extracurricular activities. It should be emphasized that the teacher has a difficult task in making extracurricular activities more interesting for students than leisure and play. Numerous dangers lurk in leisure time, and pedagogical activity must be directed to their prevention. This paper will analyse the integrated undergraduate and graduate study programs for teachers at six higher education institutions/teacher's colleges in the Republic of Croatia, as well as the courses that determine the development of competences for work in extracurricular activities.

Keywords:

extracurricular activities, leisure time, teacher training, college curricula, teacher competences

1 Introduction

One of the important functions of contemporary school is offering students the possibility to engage in extracurricular activities. Although extracurricular activities have been neglected in many schools for a variety of reasons, including a lack of materials and staff, it is important to emphasize that they are always useful for students not only as an incentive for meaningful organization and useful spending of leisure time, but also as a means of preventing numerous unacceptable behaviours, which are implied precisely in unorganized leisure time. By engaging in freely chosen extracurricular activities, children create social connections and relationships, which build their personality in every way. Extracurricular activities contribute to the students' social development, which is the task of the educational work of schools (Pejić Papak & Vidulin, 2016).

Extracurricular activities have previously been studied in the context of encouraging and developing creativity in students, and their realization in the field of physical competences and health, as well as musical competence. In the past two centuries, emphasis has been put on the connection between extracurricular activities, success at school, and various preventive aspects in the context of behavioural disorders (Darling et al., 2005).

The most well-known and widespread way of preparing children for active and meaningful leisure time is the organization and implementation of extracurricular activities in school. This, guided by individual interests and free choice, gives students the opportunity to develop their personal potentials through various activities. Unlike regular classes, the curricula of extracurricular activities are not strictly structured, so they enable students to introduce new themes and contents into their work, unforeseen by their teachers. Students are motivated during extracurricular activities, there is no summative evaluation, they are interest-oriented and more satisfied, and they work creatively in a stimulating atmosphere. The creative process itself takes place within individual groups that contribute to recognition within the school itself, at inter-school, and on the local and wider community level (Valjan Vukić, 2016).

The organization of extracurricular activities contributes to better social connections. Working in small, informal groups without school desks is always

better than the rigid rules that regular classes are subject to. By engaging in extracurricular activities, students decide on how to spend part of their leisure time in school, which the school should recognize as an opportunity for additional educational activities. Until recently, studies have shown that the real possibilities and students' creative potentials during extracurricular activities have not been fully used, and the methods used by teachers are still not conducive in encouraging and developing students' creativity. It should be further emphasized that in many schools, extracurricular activities are neglected and exist only in school documents without practical application.

Success in extracurricular activities can work as encouragement for successful integration into class, which can prevent failure in the social field and avoid emotional difficulties, as they are very often the reasons for academic failure.

1.1 Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are an indirect educational form of work with students, and their implementation is mentioned in the school curriculum, a document at school level. Extracurricular activities are pedagogically designed activities whose function is education and upbringing during and for leisure time (Mlinarević & Brust, 2009). They are educationally planned activities that enable the confirmation of the student's personality, and they provide the teacher with opportunities for expanded educational influence (Previšić, 1987, according to Zrilić & Košta, 2009). "Extracurricular leisure activities are not exempt from the obligation of schoolwork, requirements and necessity of execution, they prepare children in many elements for active and meaningful learning and are therefore in the function of leisure education but are also a part of the compulsory schoolwork" (Previšić, 1987, according to Pejić Papak & Vidulin, 2016, p. 73). "Extracurricular activities are the most effective way of preventing socially unacceptable behaviour and are exceptionally stimulating for the self-actualization of students and individual research learning" (Curriculum for primary school, 2006). In accordance with the National Framework Curriculum (2011), the school prescribes learning and teaching outcomes, methods of work, organization of learning and teaching, and the evaluation of the learning and teaching process for the current school year. The school curriculum is the work, mode of action, and the evaluation of the effects of the entire school life on students and teachers. Extracurricular activities are an inseparable part of the school curriculum,

according to which the school is recognizable and original in its environment. Their implementation has become an obligation in many countries with the aim to increase the quality of education (Acar & Gündüz, 2017). The document describes the activities, results, implementation, and evaluation of all extracurricular activities at a certain school and in the varied fields of education in the curriculum. In participating in extracurricular activities, students decide to spend their own leisure time at school, and this offers the possibility of additional educational activities. The school should offer students facilities/contents for quality leisure time and provide them with such facilities that will meet their specific interests and needs. The goals of extracurricular activities are: connection, expansion and deepening of knowledge, skills, the acquisition of habits during instruction and extracurricular activities, the adoption of new knowledge, the acquisition of skills and habits, the development of interest in socially useful, humanitarian and voluntary work, the identification of gifted students and students that show an increased interest in a single field, arousing curiosity, training for leisure activities that will aid in the development of education, the prevention of all types of addiction, protection and health improvement, training for active participation in social life and its civil and democratic development, the encouragement of children's creativity – communication, interaction and cooperation with others and training, enabling the recognition of others who are different, and, finally, enabling the learning of flexibility and tolerance (Mlinarević & Brust Nemet, 2012). Extracurricular activities offer students the freedom to choose the activity in which they will engage, depending on their interests and preferences. Extracurricular activities abound in many advantages, and the goals in programming leisure activities are as follows: introducing students to social life and decision-making, developing a sense of work and organization of work, awakening the child's affinity for an activity, engaging students in socially useful work, the successful development of specific capabilities, assistance in the realization of general school goals, and the massification of consumers of cultural goods (Mlinarević & Brust Nemet, 2012).

Students are highly motivated in participating and adopting new knowledge and skills because they are free to choose extracurricular activities and acquire new knowledge and develop abilities and skills, strengthen their self-confidence, and socialize with peers.

The curricular approach creates extracurricular activities where teachers and students have their freedom. Ivančić and Sabo (2012) state that engaging in extracurricular activities in students' leisure time has a positive effect on creating a close relationship between students and this activity, it positively affects students' affiliation and connection with school, and it improves their academic success and reduces the possibility of developing risky behaviours (Umeh et al., 2020).

As students are interest-oriented and more satisfied during extracurricular activities than in regular classes, they creatively work in a stimulating atmosphere and work as a team. By involving students in extracurricular activities, their educational and upbringing needs are met equally. Participation in extracurricular activities contributes to an active life for children as well as having a positive influence on their health (Acar & Gündüz, 2017). Goals that cannot be achieved in regular classes are realized here, and contents that follow modern events and knowledge are also offered. Extracurricular activities are very important in upbringing because with their contents, they come closer to the desires of the students and contribute to the development of their personality, create conditions for their cultural advancement, and protect and promote cultural differences. Extracurricular activities are the activities that best shape the development of these student characteristics through their form and action. Contemporary schools must enable children to develop all their abilities, enrich them with experiences and prepare them for active participation in society (Šiljković et al., 2007). Educational methods used in extracurricular activities are numerous, but the most common are the following: the method of conversation (individual, partner, group and collective), the method of persuasion, the method of habituation, the method of motivation and stimulation (encouragement), and the method of monitoring (Bognar & Matijević, 2002).

Schools offer students a variety of extracurricular activities, and students choose them freely and participate according to their interests, while such activities influence the student's biological, social, experiential, psychomotor and cognitive development and ensure their needs for self-actualization. The question is whether students, after choosing an extracurricular activity, have the opportunity to co-create a curriculum and propose new extracurricular activities, i.e., change the existing activities that are of little interest to the students. Children spend most of their leisure time doing physical activities, particularly doing certain sports in school or at an out of school organization or association (Pejić Papak & Vidulin, 2016). Research results

show that children spend most of their leisure time in activities that include music, media or socialization, and their mutual time is directed towards entertainment, while there is a low moderation towards cultural and artistic contents. Nowadays, the increasing presence of the media in modern society limits children and young people in engaging in better quality content in their leisure time (Miliša & Milačić, 2010). The content of leisure time should be enjoyable for children because various activities satisfy their individual needs (Dubovicki et al., 2014). A contemporary school that demands quality, productive and dynamic acquisition of knowledge is imbued with continuous activity. The use of creative thinking and behaviour is inevitable (Fudurić, 2012). Research indicates that the participation of students in extracurricular activities and the development of their capacities and potentials lead to the discovery and development of the student's talents (Antovska & Kostov, 2016). The content of extracurricular activities should be tailored to help develop students' abilities and work habits, and their ability to take care of their own health (Svalina et al., 2016).

Regular classes cannot fully satisfy the needs and potentials of every student, so the school curriculum is enriched with extracurricular activities and projects. Therefore, today, extracurricular activities are not given the necessary importance, children do not have access to a great variety of fields to be able to satisfy their needs and interests.

More contemporary ways of learning and teaching, as well as innovations to stimulate the development of children's creativity should be introduced in extracurricular activities, allowing them free expression and the expression of their creativity (Pejić Papak & Vidulin, 2016).

Activities in various fields of extracurricular activities are important for students to acquire experience, accept various roles, and create the possibility of getting to know one another and getting closer to science and culture. In participating in extracurricular activities, students organize themselves into educational groups and teams and make important decisions concerning their lives and their work in school by pointing out the talent they wish to build and empower. Quality-filled free time reduces the possibility of risky behaviour because the students meet their current needs and interests and develop their potential, and, in various extracurricular activities, they gain experience and competences that will make their future lives

easier. “Both in teaching and in extracurricular activities, basic values should be represented and promoted, as well as social, cultural, spiritual and moral values” (Mlinarević & Brust Nemet, 2012, p. 175).

“The teacher is a professionally competent person capable in the upbringing and education of students; an expert who organizes the upbringing and education process and with general knowledge of the basics of education, pedagogy, didactics and psychology achieves the aim and task of upbringing and education” (Strugar, 1993, according to Mlinarević & Brust Nemet, 2012, p. 201). The teacher needs to define goals, devise methods and forms of work, choose materials etc. in leading students in extracurricular activities, and they should be the initiator and organizer in performing extracurricular activities, as well as capable of noticing the student’s skills and counselling and developing their potentials. The teacher should likewise be creative, inclined to researching, experimenting, and improving the activities they manage, because the teacher is not only required to realize a determined program of extracurricular activities but also to improve it.

Leisure time activities that are most represented in schools can be divided into five categories: foreign languages, musical activities (choir, orchestra), sports activities (football, rhythmic gymnastics, tennis), outdoor activities (scouts, ecology), and other activities, which include those that cannot be classified in any of the above categories, for example, journalism, etc. (Šiljković et al., 2007). Every school is obliged to organize extracurricular activities respecting the interests and needs of its students. The Primary and Secondary School Education Act and the Curriculum for Primary School (2006) is the legal basis for executing extracurricular activities. Article 28 of the mentioned Act states that the school curriculum establishes the teaching plan and program for elective subjects and extracurricular activities, and these are adopted based on the national curriculum, teaching plan and program. The introductory part of the Curriculum for primary schools (2006) emphasizes the following: “Extracurricular activities are the most effective way of preventing unacceptable behaviour and they are exceptionally stimulating for the self-actualization of the student and their self-exploratory learning.” Extracurricular activities are also planned according to grade and the total weekly and annual number of hours. The introduction of the Croatian National Education Standard (HNOS) in 2006 factored in special attention to extracurricular activities as an essential factor in the entirety of a student’s upbringing and education and as a part of the obligatory

teaching plan. The mentioned documents emphasize the significance of extracurricular activities.

However, this raises the question of their implementation in daily practice. Teachers are responsible for this, and how competent they are in organizing extracurricular activities certainly depends on the higher education curricula at teacher training colleges, which educate teachers to work in the classroom and outside of the classroom.

In the following part the authors will, therefore, analyse integrated undergraduate and graduate university study programs for teachers at six faculties for teachers in the Republic of Croatia, with reference to elective courses and modules, i.e., intense courses that strengthen the competences of future teachers for the preparation and successful implementation of extracurricular activities.

3 Methodology

The aim of the study was to gain insight into the integrated undergraduate and graduate study programs for teachers at six higher education institutions/teacher training colleges in the Republic of Croatia and establish the contents that determine the development of competences for the successful preparation and implementation of extracurricular activities. The paper uses the method of working on documentation. The task was the content analysis of study courses in integrated undergraduate and graduate university study programs for school teachers in the Republic of Croatia. The authors analysed and compared the integrated undergraduate and graduate five-year university study programs in teacher training at Croatian faculties in Osijek, Zagreb, Rijeka, Split, Zadar, and Pula. The criteria for selecting integrated undergraduate and graduate five-year university study programs for school teachers were the contents of compulsory and elective courses that indicated the development of competences for the successful preparation and implementation of extracurricular activities.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 The *Syllabus* for Teacher Training Faculty Programs in the Republic of Croatia Determined by the Development of Competences for Work in Extracurricular Activities

The authors gained the information that follows by reviewing the Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate Teacher Training Programs at six (6) teacher training faculties in the Republic of Croatia.

At the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb, four modules are conducted in the Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate Teacher Training Program. The authors have singled out courses that are important for teachers' successful preparation and implementation of extracurricular activities.

Upon completion of their studies, the students acquire the competences necessary for the complete upbringing and education of younger children (1st – 4th grade of primary school). The acquired qualification enables successful involvement in the upbringing and education process, and it is based on general and specific competences and additional competences acquired within the framework of a single module (educational sciences, visual arts, computer science, and Croatian language) for work in primary school.

The Integrated University Undergraduate and Graduate Study Program for Teachers in Zagreb has the largest number (56) of elective courses aimed at creating and performing extracurricular activities in various fields. Two courses are called extracurricular activities and are focused on the organizational forms of specific activities and skills such as hiking and horseback riding.

At the Faculty of Education in Osijek, three modules are taught: Developmental studies, Computer Science, and English language. The Developmental studies module, with its chosen subjects from Pedagogy, Psychology and Methodology, broadly enables students to understand specific issues concerning upbringing, education, and child development. The Computer Science module enables students to use computer science technology in education and upbringing, and in the upbringing and education of children on the topic of computer science in the first four grades of primary school (Ministry of education and sports project of

September 1, 2003). The English language module additionally enables students for the early study of foreign languages for younger children.

Table 1: Courses in the Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate Teacher Training Program in Zagreb

Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb	
Croatian language module	Media culture, Stage culture, Drama upbringing, Music practicum 3, Puppetry, Speech, Interdisciplinary approach to media.
Visual arts and culture module	Drawing 1, Drawing 2, Spatial-plastic design 3, Spatial-plastic design 4, Painting 1, Painting 2, Letter 1, Letter 2, Graphics 1, Graphics 2, Visual communication 1, Visual communication 2, Music practicum 1, Music practicum 2
Computer science module	Programming, Programming of educational program packages, Spatial-plastic design 1, Spatial-plastic design 2, Information systems, Computer networks, Advanced use of the computer and internet, Stage culture
Educational science module	Spatial-plastic design 1, Spatial-plastic design 2, Music practicum 1, Music practicum 2, Media culture, Interdisciplinary approach to media.
Elective courses	Instrumental training – Piano 1 and 2, Musical motivation in the initial learning of reading and writing, Musical-scene processing of literary works 1 and 2, Public performances of musical-scenic works 1 and 2, Composing music 1, 2, 3 and 4, Group music-making 1, 2, 3 and 4, Creative approach to reading, Children’s literature and digital media, Kajkavian language treasure, Chess in primary school 1 and 2, Editing kindergarten and school newspapers 1 and 2, Croatian sign language 1, 2, 3 and 4, Homeland Heritage Research, Volunteering in Education 1 and 2, Educational robots and microcomputers in education, Extracurricular organizational forms of work – Mountain climbing 1 and 2, Boy scouts and schools, Winter 1, 2, 3 and 4, Human rights education, Women’s history – Public history – Cultural history, Water ecology, European national parks, Education for development, Religion and education – Philosophical approach, Bioethics in education, Sculpture and ceramic design, Visual design of puppet shows, Chamber vocal music, Musical animation, Bilingualism in education and society, Extracurricular organizational forms of work – horseback riding, Student cooperatives 1 and 2, Swimming 1 and 2, Contemporary children’s books, Sustainable development in early childhood.

Upon finishing their studies, students will have acquired competences used in the wholesome upbringing and education of younger school-age children (1st to 4th grade of primary school). The acquired qualification enables successful work in the upbringing and education process, and it is based on general and specific competences and additional ones acquired within the individual module for work in primary schools.

The authors have singled out the courses that are important for teachers in their work in extracurricular activities.

Table 2: Courses in the Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate Teacher Training Program in Osijek

Faculty of Education in Osijek	
Developmental studies module	World religions, Drama education, Visual communications and design.
Computer science module	Music playing 1 and 2, Art techniques and design in space, Mathematics and gifted students, Web programming, Computer for leisure time and entertainment, Musical computer tools, Graphics, animations, and movies.
English language module	Music playing 1 and 2, Media culture, Art techniques and design in space, Ecology, Natural-geographical features of Croatia, Children’s media culture in English.
Free elective courses	Drama education, Children’s stage creation, Drama workshop in English, Children’s musical creation, Native idiom, Information literacy, Rhythmic gymnastics and dance, Swimming, Children’s artistic creation, Protection and communication of art heritage in school and kindergarten, Mathematics in play and leisure, Interculturalism in upbringing and education, Extracurricular activities in the school curriculum, Bioethics, Nonviolent communication, Ecological upbringing, Scouts and schools, Knowledge of plants and animals, Local history, Technical sciences, Extracurricular sports activities, extracurricular computer science and technical activities.

The integrated undergraduate and graduate university study program for class teachers has a total of 21 elective courses directed towards competences (knowledge, abilities, skills and beliefs) for the preparation and management of extracurricular activities, while 3 elective courses have extracurricular activity in their title. One course refers to mountain climbing and creating extracurricular activities and the other two are specific fields of extracurricular activities, such as sports and IT.

At the Faculty of Teacher Education in Rijeka, classes are taught without a module, and the students (future teachers) acquire additional competences for the organization of extracurricular activities through elective courses.

The Faculty of Teacher Education in Rijeka, University Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate Study of Primary School Education has five elective courses aimed at creating and performing extracurricular activities.

Table 3: Courses in the Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate Teacher Training Program in Rijeka

Faculty of Teacher Education in Rijeka	
Extracurricular visual arts activities	One of the outcomes of learning is the development of a creative opinion and expression in the field of Drawing, Painting, Three-dimensional shaping, Graphics and design, Development of expert methodological competences for the performance of art activities inside and outside art culture teaching.
Folklore music	The mentioned learning outcomes refer to the development of cognitive skills: research, analysis, conclusion and interpretation of musical folklore facts, which are characteristic and appropriate in teaching extracurricular and out of school activities.
Extracurricular music activities	The mentioned outcomes refer to the capability of designing, organizing and creating differing music playing activities in classroom teaching. The development of skills that in organized forms of work encourage children to be creative and imaginative. Research teaching of science where planning of teaching and learning of educational content in school and out of school are emphasized.
Extracurricular science and mathematics activities	The ability to perform experiments in science and mathematics and their interpretation are emphasized.

In the introductory part, the teacher study program emphasizes how one of the outcomes at program level is that the student (future teacher) recognizes and knows how to apply the specific methodology in teaching all subjects in primary education in regular, elective, supplementary and additional classes, and in leisure activities. The students also, having passed their exams, will be capable of organising and managing upbringing and education activities in cultural and art societies, associations, museums, kindergarten institutions, primary schools – in particular extended stays and in other institutions and organizations in the field of culture, education and art. At the teaching program in Split, three modules are conducted: early learning of foreign languages, Information-communication-technology application in learning and teaching, and Sustainable development education.

Along with numerous elective courses, the authors singled out the courses shown in Table 4.

One of the learning outcomes at the program level is to organize and implement a variety of extracurricular and out of school activities. They are conducted in three modules: Module of Croatian language and literature; Module of Art culture and, in Gospić, the Module of Cultural and natural heritage.

Table 4: Courses in the Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate Teacher Training Program in Split

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split, Department of Teacher Education	
Visual arts group as a form of extracurricular activities	The learning outcome is to enable students to master various techniques and materials of artistic expression.
Activity in the development of ecological sensitivity in children and plant breeding	Developing the skill of creatively designing eco-activities with the aim of realizing upbringing values. These activities are especially attractive today, in times when we return to the outdoors and school gardens.
Stage culture	Students understand the importance of stage culture in the education program and the possibilities of introducing the child to theatre culture offered in education. Students will thus know how to apply the basic principles, teaching methods and forms of work in teaching the subject of Stage culture. They will be able to stimulate and develop the basic esthetical drives of the child and be able to organize activities related to drama and puppet workshops and lead them independently at the primary level.
Programming for school age children	Introduction to the basics of visual graphic programming language.

Table 5: Courses at the Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate Teacher Training Program in Zadar

Department of Teacher and Preschool Teacher Education, University of Zadar	
Module of Croatian language and literature	Literary, drama, and puppetry extracurricular activities.
Module of Art culture	Art extracurricular activities.
Module of Cultural and natural heritage (in Gospić).	Students acquire additional competences for the organization of literary, drama, puppetry, and art extracurricular activities.
Free elective courses	Glagolitic alphabet and Glagolitic monuments, Ecology, Drama workshop, Puppetry, Math games in school, Rhythmic gymnastics and dance structures in early and preschool education.

At the University of Zadar, students are offered a variety of elective courses, and those that organise and implement various extracurricular and out of school activities, as stated in their syllabuses as outcomes of learning the capacities, are: Glagolitic alphabet and Glagolitic monuments, Ecology, Drama workshop, Puppetry, Math games at school, and Rhythmic and dance structures in early and preschool education.

At the Faculty of Educational Sciences in Pula, English language and Computer science modules are taught in addition to compulsory courses.

Table 6: Courses at the Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate Teacher Training Program in Pula

Faculty of Educational Sciences in Pula	
Module of English language and Computer science	Literary, drama.
Free elective courses	Speech expression, Puppetry and stage culture, Working with gifted students, Active learning strategies.
Compulsory courses	Music letters and playing, Basics of ecology, Image design and desktop publishing, Music playing 1 and 2, Media culture, Basics of technical culture, Programming.

The Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate University Teacher Study Programme in Pula has a total of 4 elective courses focused on the preparation and implementation of extracurricular activities, which is the lowest in relation to the other 5 teacher training faculties and their study programs for initial teacher education.

All teacher training faculties in the Republic of Croatia have elective courses that expand student competences, as well as those of future teachers, to successfully create an extracurricular curriculum of activities. Likewise, in the study programs at teacher training faculties, there are modules that students may choose. Even though at the level of study programs, the results of learning are stated, and they emphasize the mentioned competences for work in extracurricular activities, the authors singled out courses and modules that, according to them, are important for the development of competences for working in extracurricular activities.

The results of the comparative analysis of the study programs within the Integrated Undergraduate and Graduate Teacher Programs show that the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb has the largest number of compulsory and elective courses – 56 courses, which are aimed at creating and conducting extracurricular activities in various fields, while the Faculty of Teacher Education in Osijek has 17 courses in 3 elective modules and 21 elective courses. One could state that in these study programs, future teachers receive the necessary competences to work in extracurricular activities in their future professional work.

The other analysed study programs have fewer courses, specifically the Department of Teacher and Preschool Teacher Education at the University of Zadar has 16, the Faculty of Educational Sciences in Pula has 12, while the study program in Rijeka has 6 elective courses.

A comparative analysis of study programs for primary school teachers (Zagreb, Osijek, Split, Rijeka, Zadar, Pula) showed that there is content for the preparation and implementation of extracurricular activities in the future professional work of teachers, but it differs in amount and type. The precondition for successful upbringing and education, especially a successful school curriculum and extracurricular activities within it, is quality initial teacher education.

4 Conclusion

Croatian faculties (6) that educate future teachers strengthen the future teachers' competences for the preparation and implementation of extracurricular activities in the names and contents of courses in their study programs and encourage sensibility and the strengthening of students' intercultural competences. The results of the analysis of study programs shows a different degree of need in dealing with content for the preparation and implementation of extracurricular activities. The results of the work on the documentation refer to the contents written and available in the analysed study programs for school teachers at Croatian faculties, but the practical and actual application of these contents in teaching is original and special because each professor is autonomous and creative in their course and can, more or less, include contents for conducting extracurricular activities in their teaching, regardless of the contents written in the study program.

One can conclude that, in Croatian integrated study programs for teachers, numerous courses are being conducted, both elective and compulsory, that empower teachers with competences for the organization and successful implementation of extracurricular activities. Presently, there are numerous activities organized in school that are interesting to children, and the great task of teachers is making children more interested in extracurricular activities than in entertainment and hedonism. Children are active participants in the learning process when a certain field is of interest to them. The teachers – the leaders in extracurricular activities – must consider all aspects of upbringing and education just as they would in regular teaching. Teachers

are expected to discover the students' strong sides and capabilities to focus on their development in an encouraging learning environment. Teachers also need to be counsellors and creators of the learning process that encourage independent research and experimenting, and the adoption of new knowledge and skills (Mlinarević & Brust Nemet, 2012). They must be at the disposal of their students, they need to listen to them, take their suggestions into account, respect their interests, and make decisions jointly with children on the contents to be represented in their work and the manner in which the work itself will be conducted in groups. One of the pre-conditions for the quality performance of extracurricular activities is an adequately equipped school space with appropriate means and aids. Various approaches to work, such as teaching in the field, projects, collaborative learning, and similar contribute to the improvement of the quality of extracurricular activities.

Many students have difficulty in establishing relationships with their peers. Usually, these students are aggressive by nature or too withdrawn or introverted. A child who is withdrawn needs daily support from their environment, to be praised, and be more frequently involved in group work at school. An extracurricular activity is an ideal place to involve a withdrawn child in school life. Open communication and an atmosphere that does not impose strictly framed work and learning just for better grades are the elements that have a distinctly positive effect on the involvement of every child. Hence, there is no fear of failure. The choice of activity is up to the student and to their abilities.

The purpose of extracurricular activities is not only to fulfil the teaching program but to become a continuous and stable culture for the students.

It must also be mentioned that some parents do make mistakes, as do teachers, so they do not include children with lower grades in extracurricular activities, believing that this will cause additional effort for them. A student must not be denied participation in extracurricular activities owing to poor academic performance, but a student must not be forced to participate in extracurricular activities for which they have no interest, and especially the desire for inter-school competition. Success in extracurricular activities can be an incentive for successful integration into the group, which can prevent failure in the social field and avoid emotional difficulties which are very often the cause of academic failure. The extracurricular activity programs in primary school offer students the possibility of spending quality time. Their aim is,

therefore, to include as many students as possible, regardless of their abilities, and the learning outcomes of courses in higher education institutions should follow the needs of school practice and the students' interests in extracurricular activities.

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