MODERN APPROACHES TO PLANNING EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

This article analyzes modern approaches to planning and organizing extracurricular activities in general secondary schools. It highlights the importance of moving away from traditional methods and promoting the integration of students' interests, modern information technologies, STEAM education, and Project-Based Learning (PBL) technologies. Furthermore, the article scientifically and practically substantiates ways of developing students' 21st-century skills, including creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, and communication, through extracurricular activities.

Keywords: extracurricular activities, modern approach, STEAM, project-based learning, 21st-century skills, pedagogical technologies, digital education.

Introduction

The primary goal of the education system is not only to provide students with academic knowledge but also to prepare them for independent life and foster their development into well-rounded individuals. In this complex and responsible process, extracurricular activities play a significant role. Extracurricular activities are purposeful educational endeavors organized by schools or other educational institutions outside regular classroom hours to satisfy students' interests, abilities, and needs.

In today's rapidly developing era of globalization and information technology, traditional teaching methods are gradually losing their effectiveness. Students are no longer expected to be passive listeners; instead, they are encouraged to become active participants, researchers, and creators. Therefore, the planning of extracurricular activities also requires fundamentally new, modern approaches.

A modern approach views extracurricular activities not merely as a means of spending free time but as a platform for developing social-emotional competencies, commonly referred to as "soft skills." These skills include communication, collaboration, adaptability, leadership, and emotional intelligence, all of which are essential for success in the twenty-first century.

The main purpose of this article is to comprehensively examine the mechanisms for transitioning from traditional models of extracurricular activity planning to modern, student-centered, and technology-based models.

Main Body

In today's rapidly changing era of globalization, the educational system is undergoing significant transformation, and these changes directly influence the organization of extracurricular activities in schools. According to the World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs Report*, nearly 44% of existing professional skills are expected to change within the next five years. Employers increasingly demand not only knowledge retention but also analytical

thinking, problem-solving abilities, creativity, and adaptability. Consequently, modern education must extend beyond traditional classroom instruction.

Within the limitations of standardized curricula and restricted classroom hours, it is difficult to fully develop students' soft skills. Therefore, contemporary educational models no longer regard extracurricular activities as supplementary or recreational components of education. Instead, they are viewed as essential experimental platforms that prepare learners for real-life challenges.

Recent educational reforms and official statistics in Uzbekistan further support this perspective. The Development Strategy of Uzbekistan for 2022–2026 outlines specific goals, including the creation of an additional 1.2 million student places and the modernization and digitalization of 217 "Barkamol Avlod" children's schools throughout the country. These initiatives represent not merely infrastructural improvements but also efforts to align educational content with the demands of the digital age.

Considering that more than 60 percent of Uzbekistan's population consists of young people, it has become increasingly evident that traditional extracurricular activities such as poetry evenings and ceremonial events are no longer sufficient. National initiatives such as *One Million Uzbek Coders* have enabled hundreds of thousands of students to acquire skills in information technology, data analysis, and programming while gaining opportunities for future employment and entrepreneurship. Therefore, extracurricular planning should serve as a foundation for students' future economic independence and professional success.

One of the most influential contemporary educational approaches is Project-Based Learning (PBL), which has become central to extracurricular activities. The difference between traditional and modern approaches can be illustrated through an environmental education example.

Under a traditional approach, a teacher prepares a script, assigns memorized speeches to students, and organizes a presentation for parents. In this process, students merely perform predetermined roles. In contrast, the modern approach presents students with a real-world problem, such as: "How much electricity and water are wasted in our school each month, and how can this waste be reduced?"

Students work collaboratively in small groups, conduct investigations within the school environment, collect and analyze data, examine utility consumption records, and evaluate the economic consequences of resource waste. They then develop practical solutions, such as installing motion-sensitive lighting systems, implementing drip-irrigation technologies, or calculating the feasibility of solar panel installation. Finally, they present their findings and proposals to school administrators. Such authentic learning experiences prepare students for real-life situations by fostering research, teamwork, communication, and presentation skills.

Another major innovation in contemporary education is the integration of STEAM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) into extracurricular programs. Whereas traditional schools often organized separate clubs for different subjects, modern educational institutions increasingly establish interdisciplinary platforms that integrate multiple fields of study.

For example, robotics and mechatronics clubs do not simply teach students how to assemble robots. Participants study scientific principles, calculate movement trajectories using mathematics, design components through engineering software, produce prototypes using 3D

printers, and enhance products through artistic and creative design. Such integrated learning experiences contribute to the development of both technical and creative competencies.

Uzbekistan's growing participation in international educational assessment programs such as PISA and TIMSS further highlights the importance of practical, application-oriented learning. Findings from recent PISA studies indicate that students who primarily receive theoretical instruction often encounter difficulties when solving real-life problems. Extracurricular clubs and activities bridge this gap by transforming theoretical knowledge acquired in classrooms into practical competencies.

The planning of modern extracurricular activities is inconceivable without information technologies and digital learning environments. Today's students belong to Generation Z and Generation Alpha, having grown up in a technology-rich environment. Consequently, conventional lecture-based activities often fail to maintain their engagement.

Innovative educators increasingly employ interactive platforms such as Kahoot, Quizizz, and Padlet, utilizing gamification techniques to enhance student motivation and participation. Moreover, online extracurricular programs have gained considerable popularity. Through digital platforms, students from remote regions can participate in international youth debates, e-sports competitions, and collaborative projects with peers from around the world. They can also engage in virtual tours of world-renowned institutions such as the Louvre Museum and NASA Space Centers through immersive technologies.

Such innovative planning eliminates geographical and social barriers while providing all students with access to high-quality educational opportunities that meet international standards.

Thus, modern extracurricular activities should not be viewed as formal institutional requirements but rather as powerful educational laboratories that unlock students' potential and prepare them to become competitive, socially responsible, and active members of society. Educational institutions that effectively align extracurricular planning with contemporary realities and societal needs establish a strong foundation for future development.

Conclusion

The application of modern approaches to planning extracurricular activities serves as a powerful factor in transforming the quality of the educational process. Today's students are no longer passive recipients of information; rather, they are independent individuals capable of navigating vast amounts of information and generating their own ideas. Therefore, organizing extracurricular events, clubs, and educational communities requires teachers to demonstrate creativity, innovation, and proficiency in modern technologies.

The transition from traditional planning models to Project-Based Learning (PBL) and STEAM-based educational approaches, combined with the extensive use of digital tools, contributes significantly to the development of essential twenty-first-century competencies, commonly known as the "4C Skills": Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, and Communication. Through such activities, educators not only provide meaningful use of students' free time but also cultivate competitive, responsible, creative, and socially active citizens capable of contributing effectively to society.

In conclusion, extracurricular activities should no longer be regarded as secondary supplements to classroom instruction. Instead, they must function as one of the most influential educational environments for comprehensive personality development. Achieving this goal

requires close cooperation among school administrators, teachers, parents, and the wider community, all working together toward a shared educational vision and common objectives.

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