

Edu World 2016
7th International Conference

**“THE ELSE SCHOOL”, CONTRIBUTIONS TO APPLICATION OF
THE CURRICULUM AT SCHOOL LEVEL**

Carmen – Gabriela Bostan (a)*

* Corresponding author

(a) Institute of Educational Sciences, Bucharest, Romania, carmenbostan@ise.ro

Abstract

The National Program "Week Else School" is dedicated to non-formal educational activities. The purpose of this program is involvement of all educational actors - students, teachers, parents, community - in activities non-formal, to encourage the participation of children, that to meet the interests and concerns them, to find and to highlight them in the talents and capabilities . Schools involved in the research answered a set of 7 questions on the organization of activities during " The Week Else School". After analyzing the results, the following can be observed. Organizational culture can influence the conduct of school activities throughout "The Week Else School". Particularly important is the specifics of school unit, geography and culture. Involving parents in school life during " The Week Else School" is imperative. Regarding collaboration with other institutions, it is considered to be one of good quality, being listed unit of culture, universities, police, church, health centre, town hall, library, fire, entrepreneurs, centres for the disabled and elderly, diverse associations or NGOs. Activities in this period took into account the Learning opportunities and capitalizing classroom learning. A positive factor is that, in this time improving the relationship between teacher-pupil is made more active, through collaboration, involvement, responsibility, relationships are free and have the opportunity to know in other contexts. The added value of this program is developing civic skills, learning in a relaxed setting, non-formal, inter- and transdisciplinary.

© 2017 Published by Future Academy www.FutureAcademy.org.uk

Keywords: Non-formal education, "The Week Else School", students, teachers, parents



1. Introduction

This research is part of a larger study conducted in 2015 at the Institute of Educational Sciences, "Opportunities and challenges in the implementation of the curriculum at school level - primary and secondary education" (Căpiță et al., 2015).

The National Program "Week Else School" is dedicated to non-formal educational activities. The purpose of this program is involvement of all educational actors - students, teachers, parents, community - in activities non-formal, to encourage the participation of children, that to meet the interests and concerns them, to find and to highlight them in the talents and capabilities. The research tools have allowed correlations between concepts learned through non-formal activities, like the program "Else School" and issues learned into school subjects, the reflection of these in the curriculum field. (Bostan, 2015, p.495)

Schools involved in the research answered a set of 7 questions on the organization of activities during "The Week Else School".

1.1. Theoretical Background

The national program "The Else School" is dedicated to non-formal educational activities. The purpose of this program is involvement of all educational actors - students, teachers, parents, community - in activities non-formal, to encourage the participation of children, to answer those interests and concerns, in order to discover and to highlight them talents and capabilities. The program "Else School: To know more, to be better!" is dedicated to the educational activities extracurricular and extra-scholastic (Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, 2014).

For the planning and approving the program, teachers require students and parents proposals for activities. The manner of selection of activities will be carried out in debate, so that they correspond to specific educational goals of the community. The activities organized this week, duration, their organizational arrangements; responsibilities are established in the Teaching Council and are approved in the Board. The Educational Counselor in each school centralizes the proposals for include them in Education Activities Calendar.

The content and organization of program track to achieve the educational goals that cannot be performed in formal education. The activities can be organized in partnership with other institutions, NGOs, businesses or economic operators.

Students will choose from the list of suggested, the activities to which they want to participate, each activity being coordinated by an adequate number of teachers, based on the number of participants. The types of activities suppose cultural manifestations technical and scientific, sports, volunteering, active involvement in society, civic responsibility, health education and healthy lifestyle, environmental education, traffic education, the promotion of human values, citizenship, education for emergencies. These events are organized in different forms: competitions, workshops, study tours, themed camps or trips, various workshops, volunteer community projects.

After approval by Administration Board of the program, it becomes compulsory and absences are recorded in the catalog.

Also, the activities are mentioned in the book of presences of teachers, and monitoring and evaluation are made by the school principal along with the education counselor and the head of the CEAC

(Commission for Evaluation and Quality Assurance) at school level and by representatives of the school inspectorates.

The first Teachers Council after the end of spring vacation, together with representatives of students and parents, it is analyzed results and ways to improve its planning and organization, and the director shall report quality monitoring of activities planned. At the end of the school year, school inspectorates include in report on Condition of Education a chapter on the formative value of activities during "The Week Else School".

National Council of Students is a partner of the Ministry of Education in planning and organizing activities under the Programme "The Week Else School: To know more, to be better." (National Council of Students, 2015)

2. Methodology

Schools participating in the research answered a set of 7 questions regarding organization and conduct of activities during the "Week Else School".

1. Describe briefly how is elaborated and approved at school level, the program of activities during "Week Else School".
2. Given the methodological framework text, exemplify how to involve parents in school life during Week School Else.
3. Give some examples of collaborative projects with other institutions for the smooth running of activities in "Week School Else "
4. Present synthetically 3-5 learning opportunities that can capitalize on classroom the activities in "Week School Else"
5. Give some examples of practical solutions that you have used to overcome any difficulties in "Week School Else"
6. How do you think can be stimulated the partnership school - family - community to the proper performance of the activities in "Week School Else"?
7. "Else School Week" bridge between formal and non-formal education, helping the diversification of learning, adds novelty through a learning attractive and enjoyable, with a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. Appreciate the added value of School Otherwise, with a score of 1-5 and record any observations / comments in the table below.

3. Results and Discussions

After analyzing the results, the following can be observed.

The organizational culture can influence conducting of school activities during the "Week School Else". Some schools have considered that are influenced largely manner because the school grant a primary role for human, his issues and experiences. The defining aspects of the school are: the focus on student and his activity; the focus on global observation; the orientation through interest that directs the conduct of student; the interest in the social life of students; experimental explorations of human-environment report. Particularly important is the specifics of school unit, geography area and culture. The school board give due consideration to these non formal activities meant to capture the interest of children

depending on the possibilities limited, which it has a rural school. Other schools have considered that in moderately manner because "predominate individual interests (lack of weeks of vacation between "The Week Else School" and Easter brings an excitement among teachers because they do not have time to organize activities in the family, leading to lack of involvement)". Regarding development and approval of the map of activities at school level during this week, it appears that they are carried out according to the methodology, so teachers, parents and students come with proposals for activities to which would like to participate. There is an analysis of the materials needed to implement them and those eligible are put to a vote. Ones that receive the most number of votes are approved and performed. Some activities achieved in school are so desirable by students such that they want to repeat in every "Week School Else". The Educational advisor organizes meetings with teachers and together they make a plan for the gymnasium classes. Teachers and educators decide at level of Methodical Commission the activities which will be planned.

Involving parents in school life during "Week Else" is imperative. Because children want to go on trips to see new things (houses memorials, museums, monasteries, nature walks, plays, etc.) to attend spectacles (made by themselves or someone else) or various kinds of competitions - sports, general knowledge, etc., these cannot be achieved without the support of parents. The trips are sponsored by parents, but there are cases in which for the children with a precarious financial situation, parents of others to bear their costs. Activities proposed for Week Else are discussed in class and afterwards are briefed the parents in the first meeting organized, where they express their views. Parents generally agree with a trip or at most two outside of the village, with one or two shows for children because they are the ones who bear the costs and a substantial part experiencing financial problems. Therefore in rural areas the possibilities to pursue activities outside of school are limited because they include travel costs. In urban areas a visit to a museum, a zoo, an economic unit or other institution etc. can be organized with affordable costs for every family. Also the parents are the ones who help children to manufacture objects or products to sell at the fair which is held to Feast School Days, participate to manufacturing of costumes they need actors and dancers who play in show in honour of this event. Grandparents and parents are their children's loyal viewers.

Regarding collaboration with other institutions, it is considered to be one of good quality, being listed units of culture, universities, police, church, health centre, town hall, library, firelighters, entrepreneurs, centres for the disabled and elderly, diverse associations or NGOs. The fact that this week is before the feast of Easter, makes the partnership with the church to result in children's participation in Holy Week at religious services or to paint eggs in the organized workshops. For example, the Faculty of Letters, Ethnology section, children learned ancient techniques to paint of eggs or other specific habits of Romanians. Creative activities such as "Dexterous hands" or "Story Time" took place at the Royal Court in Targoviste. Municipalities have contributed seedlings of trees or roses which were planted in the school yard by the children. Also they sponsored with diesel the school bus, so the price was borne easier by parents. The Health education activities or hours of first aid were carried out with the support of the medical staff from dispensary.

Activities carried out in this period were taken into account and making the learning opportunities in classroom. Thus, excursions and hikes are an opportunity for knowledge of the beauties of the country,

observation of nature, flora, fauna and landforms; knowledge which can be assimilated are used successfully in during of geography or biology class.

The visits to museums are sources of information ranging from art, history, science, engineering and technology (Museum of Natural Sciences, Astronomical Observatory, Museum of History, ...). Memories of these activities can inspire the hours of writing, design, physics or technology. The notions that they have acquired by listening to the words of the guides at the Tower of Chindia about princes who passed through the city of Targoviste and ones about the appearance printing and old documents that exist here do nothing but to bring more hours of history, literature and religion. They are taught to protect the nature through volunteering activities - planting trees, roses, gardening and arranging the schoolyard, doings which can help them during class of civic culture or biology. Humanitarian activities undertaken at the homes of elderly or disabled centres cultivate the spiritedness, make them more responsible and teach them to appreciate what they have. During this week both students and teachers are known better, are welded friendships; interact more easily with each other. Also are appreciated the theatre shows, music auditions - classical music composers studying in Class VIII, the educational role of their, developing of cultural sense. Discovery programs, workshops of Applied Mathematics or Experimental Physics awakens curiosity, open the appetite for science and research. All this contributes to broadening the horizon of knowledge of students. During School Else were involved NGOs in ecology activities or volunteering on various topics of civic education or entrepreneurship ("A green school in a village green", "To eat healthy", "All children are the same").

Practical solutions to remedy the difficulties that appeared during Else School Week are generally the same. Where the institution is not equipped with the necessary equipment for viewing of movies in good conditions, plays or music, teachers come with their devices or call to the students and parents who can do. The costumes and scenery needed for the staging of theater plays are done by teachers or are borrowed. In the case of sports competitions, students bring sometimes balls, sacs in which to jump or other sport objects. In unfavorable meteorological conditions, outdoor activities are canceled and are using the reserve planning. For travel towards certain objectives, it seeks for help to local community, who ensures the free transport. However, there are plenty of financial difficulties which were unable to find practical solutions. Usually Mayors and Municipal Councils are receptive.

The partnership school - family - community can be enhanced by involving parents in school life; realization of extracurricular activities which imply the community members such as: planting trees, cleaning up the river, solutions for the way of leisure, promoting the school in community, community involvement in school life, the achievement of common activities like "The little ones with those big" achievement of debates on specific topics, roundtables etc. As an observation, activities funded / sponsored have a greater impact and are appreciated by both students and parents.

It is promoted to attracting partners in sponsorship of educative activities, highlighting the advantages of direct beneficiaries and their direct involvement in specific projects for the benefit of the school.

Analyzing the responses of teachers appears that this type of activity is assessed as positive, highs consisting in climate friendly, relaxed, emotional and secure collaboration between pupils. By moderate appreciation are enjoyed "Diversification of activities and sources of information"; "Stimulating creativity", "Collaboration between teachers" and "Stimulating children's interest in learning and self-

expression". Be noticed minimum assessments regarding to stimulating school-family-community partnership, improving teacher-student relationship and the overall assessment of the contribution program.

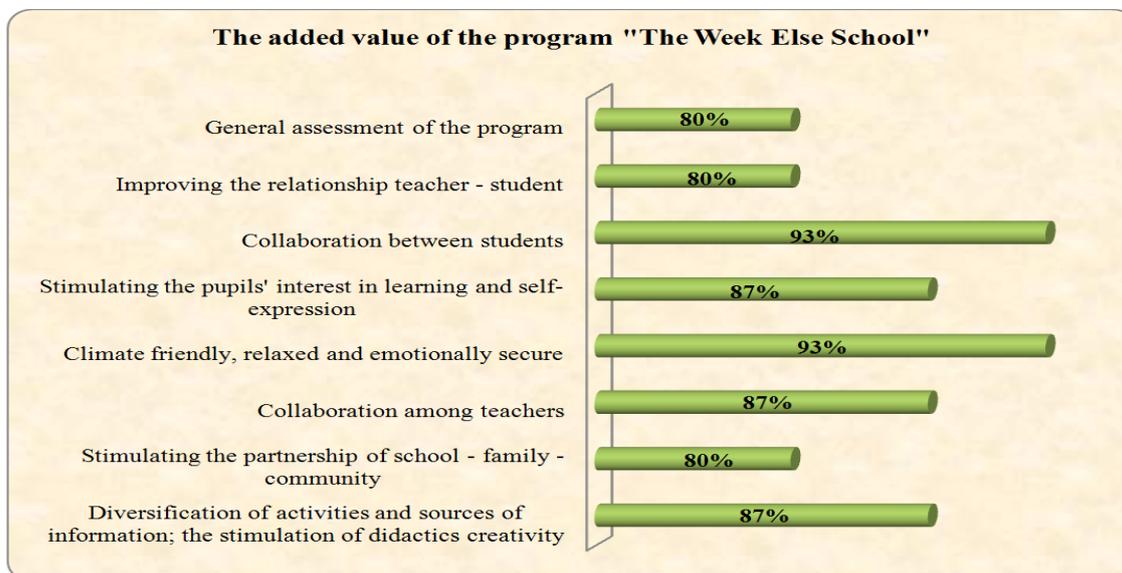


Fig. 1. The added value of the program "The Week Else School"

Analyzing the responses of teachers appears that this type of activity is assessed as positive, the maximum consisting in climate friendly, relaxed, emotionally secure and collaboration between pupils. From the graph (fig.1) we see that minimum appreciations have been the stimulating the partnership of school-family-community, improving teacher-student relationship and the overall assessment of the program

As observations, the participating schools have pointed out that, especially in disadvantaged environments, is difficult to plan activities outside of the village due to the financial situation of parents and because is difficult for teachers to draw up that folder for each travel. Also during time of the "Else School" activities, rural parents are busy with farming household activities and their level of involvement is lower.

The positive factors are that, during this time, are improved the relationships between teachers - pupils, is made more active, collaborative involvement, responsibility, relationships are free, have the opportunity to know in other contexts. "Else School" is period most awaited by children. It is the period where they learn things more than useful in a nonformal and informal setting. It considers that it would be preferable for the school year to have more periods like this, but without so many documents that give teachers headache and disturbs the learning process regardless of how it is held. It imposes optimization of bureaucratic aspects of this period, so that teachers to have time to prepare teaching activities.

Recording and success of activities in this period can be highlighted through a blog or a Facebook page. In vision of participating schools, the program "Else School" is a bridge between formal and non-formal education, contributing to the diversification of learning activities, bringing a touch of novelty by learning attractive and pleasant, with a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

The added value of this program is the development of civic skills, of learning in a relaxed setting, nonformal, inter- and transdisciplinary. The experiences gained during this week can be harnessed on

class to subjects like biology, history, civics, physics, chemistry, language and communication, geography, mathematics; each subject of framework plan can capitalize the manifestations of this program. Children can post of the school blog the impressions or photographs from this period, thus developing competences as digital literacy, social and civic, cultural awareness and expression and not least communication in mother tongue and in foreign languages.

For the proper performance of activities during the program "The Week Else School", teachers suggests approval and allocation of a special budget respectively financial support from the ministry.

3.1. The Week Else School - Indicators and Descriptors

As a result of research conducted we can suggest a few performance indicators, that to represent the observable results anticipated of proposed activities, defined as acceptable levels of meeting the targets projected. The levels of performance can be ranked in 'unacceptable', 'acceptable', 'good', 'very good' and possibly 'excellent'. Establishing the performance indicators, can be done in linking design and assessment.

Characteristics of performance indicators are defined by: visibility - opportunity to identify and direct observation; adequacy - track link with objective assessment; measurability; relevance.

Table 1. Indicators and descriptors proposed for "The Week Else School" activities assessment

Indicator (Detailing of indicator)	Quality Descriptors
Organizational culture (organizational coordination for planning, development, improving and deployment of activities under the program improvement "Else School")	Organizational involvement through: - Achievement of the goals and targets - Efficient system of internal formal communication with staff and pupils - Participation of actors școalari and community (teachers, parents, pupils, ONG, Mayor etc.) in the decision-making process conducted at the school level. - large dissemination of all information necessary for the proper conduct of activities Drafting and approving of activities program to school level through: - Defining strategic goals / objectives which shall be achieved during the project The existence, structure and content of projectiv documents by: - The existence of development project of activities - The estimated budget needed for the project - The internal rules of participation in project The rate for improving the difficulties arising in carrying out activities
The valorisation of acquisitions achieved in the curriculum taught (the added value from the viewpoint of the formal curriculum)	Harnessing on the class level of the activities carried out in "The Week Else School ": - Dissemination, at level of school / class of activities results Increasing the diversification of learning activities as a bridge between formal and non-formal education through: - Informing stakeholders on activities - Promoting school offer - Efficient functioning of system of institutional communication with other institutions and organizations involved in the design, supplying and evaluating of educational services
Connections with the community (collaboration with partners outside school for the smooth running of activities in "The Week Else School")	The rate of involvement of parents in school life during "The Week Else School" by: - The efficient communication with parents using classical and / or electronic tools - Participation of educational actors (teachers, parents, pupils) in the decision-making process developed at the school level. - Promoting school offer The existence and functionality of partnerships with community representatives through: - Efficient system operating of external formal communication with parents, and other partner

	institutions - Presenting the results of the organization's participation in educational projects developed at the school and local community level <i>Stimulation of the partnership school - family -community through:</i> - Dissemination, at the school and community level of partnerships results - Using marketing methods to promote at the community level of activities undertaken
--	--

4. Conclusions

Based on research tools used in the 4 pilot schools, the resulting data allow us to identify the common elements that we take into account Romanian schools when are implementing the program "The Else School". These common elements structured as form of indicators, are represented not only by the formal system as well as similar practices that incorporate schools' ethos.

We can formulate the following conclusions:

- developing, approving of activities program for "week school else" and their organizing respects the methodology developed by the Ministry;
- under the program are generally involved all stakeholders - students, teachers, parents, community;
- the content and organization of the program allows to achieve educational goals which cannot be achieved in formal education;
- the organizational culture of the school, the specificity of unit school, geographic area, weather condition can affect activities during the "Week else School";
- parents are involved mainly financial, such in rural areas the opportunities to pursue activities outside of school are limited;
- there is collaboration between the school, local community, local government (mayor, police), cultural institutions (museums, theaters, churches, universities) and various NGOs interested in education;
- the added value of the program is to valorize in classroom of the experiences / activities, dissemination of results, developing key skills in a non-formal setting, socializing and raising awareness among students and teachers;
- difficulties which may arise are mainly financial or bureaucratic;
- the program is appreciated as positive, highlighting the climate friendly, relaxed, emotional and secure collaboration between pupils.

After analyzing the results, the following can be observed. Organizational culture can influence the conduct of school activities through out "The Week Else School". Particularly important is the specifics of school unit, geography and culture. Involving parents in school life during "The Week Else School" is imperative. Regarding collaboration with other institutions, it is considered to be one of good quality, being listed unit of culture, universities, police, church, health centre, town hall, library, fire, entrepreneurs, centres for the disabled and elderly, diverse associations or NGOs. Activities in this period took into account the Learning opportunities and capitalizing classroom learning. As observations, has been pointed out that for participating schools, especially in disadvantaged environments, is difficult to plan activities outside of the village due to the financial situation of parents and for that teachers refuse to draw up that folder for each travel. A positive factor is that, in this time improving the relationship

between teachers - pupil is made more active, through collaboration, involvement, responsibility, relationships are free, have the opportunity to know in other contexts. It requires an optimization of bureaucratic aspects of this period, so that teachers to find time to prepare the didactically activities. In the opinion of participating schools, the "Different School" program is a bridge between formal and non-formal education, contributing to the diversification of learning activities, bringing a touch of novelty by learning attractive and pleasant, with a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. The added value of this program is developing civic skills, learning in a relaxed setting, non-formal, inter- and transdisciplinary. Experiences during this week can be recovered from the classroom to all disciplines. "The Week Else School" is a time awaited by children. It is the period where they learn things more than useful in a non-formal and informal way. The content and organization of the program allows achievement of some educational goals that cannot be achieved in formal education.

References

- Bostan, Carmen-Gabriela, (2012). *Education and European integration in the transdisciplinary vision*, Publishing Sigma, Bucharest
- Bostan, Carmen-Gabriela, (2015). Inter-and Transdisciplinary Issues Present in the School Curriculum, *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 180, p. 489-496
- Căpiță, Laura Elena (coord.) Bercu, Nicoleta, Bostan, Carmen Gabriela, Mândruț, O. Teșileanu, Angela (2015). Oportunități și provocări în aplicarea curriculumului la nivelul școlii – învățământ primar și gimnazial, *Raport de Cercetare*, Institute of Educational Sciences, Bucharest
- Legea Educației Naționale nr.1/ 2011, Retrieved from: <http://lege5.ro/Gratuit/geztsobvgi/legea-educatiei-nationale-nr-1-2011>, accessed 2016
- Mântăluță, O, (coord.), (2013). Școala Altfel: Să știi mai multe, să fii mai bun! evaluarea programului național de activități extracurriculare și extrașcolare 2012-2013, *Institute of Educational Sciences*, Bucharest, Retrieved from: http://www.ise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Evaluare_Scoala_Altfel.pdf
- Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, (2014). *The Annex to the Order MECSA no. 4496 / 13.07.2014 regarding the structure of the school year*, Retrieved from: https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/_fi%C8%99iere/Invatamant-Preuniversitar/2016/management/ORDIN%204496_2015_Anexa.pdf, accessed 2016
- National Council of Students, (2015). *Despre programul săptămânii activităților extrașcolare - ediția 2015*, *Programul "Să știi mai multe, să fii mai bun!"* ediția 2015, Retrieved from <http://sae.edu.ro/2015/despre.php>, accessed 2016
- National Council of Students, (2015). *Rezoluție privind viziunea reprezentanților elevilor asupra sistemului de învățământ*, Retrieved from: <http://wedu.ro/pg/file/cne/read/65009446/rezolutie-privind-viziunea-reprezentantilor-elevilor-asupra-sistemului-de-invatamant>, accessed 2016