

ERD 2022
Education, Reflection, Development**WAYS OF USING TIME BY PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Popescu (Turc) Lăcrămioara (a), Cristian Stan (b)*

*Corresponding author

(a) Doctoral School "Education, Reflection, Development", Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, 7 Sindicatelor Street, 400029, Romania, altmanagement2008@yahoo.com

(b) Babes-Bolyai University, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, 7 Sindicatelor Street, 400029, Romania, cristiss2004@yahoo.com

Abstract

School performance is determined by many factors. The majority of the studies on these factors that can influence its level have mainly focused on the quality of the teaching action or the internal conditions of the learning. As far as we are concerned, we consider that one of the aspects that fundamentally condition the school performance is represented by the time factor, more precisely the manner the primary school student can manage the time at his disposal in the best way possible. Thus, our article aims for capturing and x-raying the manner primary school students choose to make the most of their time. To achieve this goal, we used a questionnaire as our main research method and our cross-section consisted of the students' parents from grades 0 to 4. Therefore, we pursued elements such as the ratio between the time spent on learning activities and the time spent on recreational activities, the amount of time spent on activities such as computer games and watching TV related to the time spent on outdoors socializing activities, the existence of a leisure programme suggested by the parents, the structure of this programme and the extent to which it is followed by the child etc. When we processed and interpreted the results we aimed at the best way the primary school child student can make the most of their time and also at the existence of some correlations between the students' background or their gender and the pattern they spend their time.

2672-815X © 2023 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Recreational/leisure time, school time, the programme of the activities, the efficiency of using/spending the time

1. Introduction

The roman philosopher Seneca, concerning the issue of temporality, stated that nothing is ours except time, a part of our time is stolen from us, another part is taken away from us and the other one is drained. But the worst waste of time is due to our carelessness and we lose most of our lives doing the things we are not supposed to do or doing nothing or our entire life doing something else (Seneca, 2020). This statement made in antiquity is still relevant nowadays after more than 2000 years. Contemporary people have always had the feeling that time is running out or it is too short, too busy with tasks and deadlines.

This is a well-known fact, but it is largely due to the unwise and sometimes even irresponsible use of the time at our disposal. However, those who are responsible for this state of facts are not only the multitude of daily responsibilities and deadlines but also the very many distractions („time thieves”) such as films and TV series on certain platforms, games and gaming, generally speaking, social networks etc. Thus, the more activities and actions there are to be done, the more important and necessary there is to have a programme to follow and respect, despite the distressing factors that may appear. While this goal seems apparently to be achieved easier by adults for they can simply use an agenda when rereferring to children nowadays, the real need to have some basic time management skills.

The level of performance in any field of activity, students' school performance included, is determined by a large variety of factors. The great majority of the studies on the factors that can influence the level of school performance are mainly focused on the quality of teaching and the cognitive conditions of learning (intelligence, memory, speech etc) or non-cognitive conditions of learning (health status, motivation, level of aspiration etc).

Without disputing the importance of the internal and external conditions mentioned above, as far as we are concerned, we tend to consider that, at present, one of the most fundamental aspects of school performance is represented by the time factor.

In other words, bearing in mind that time is a limited resource and the only thing that can be given back to us, we consider that the performance and efficiency of the learning activity are greatly influenced by the manner the student can make the best of the time at his/her disposal.

2. Problem Statement

The time issue and the manner of its definition and concept are representing the central theme of some famous writers in the history of humanity, if we only mention Plato, Kant, Heidegger or Einstein regarding the importance of time in the educational phenomenon some authors such as Comenius and Jean Jacques Rousseau, stated that the most useful rule in any kind of education is to know how to waste (spend) time, to spend it wisely so that one could see its visible, concrete and lasting traces upon our way of being and doing things because ultimately, the activities and the time are two closely liked landmarks, and any type of phenomena and process, learning included, can occur on a certain time and has a certain periodicity. Time, too, in its turn, becomes a producer (facilitator, catalyst) of the processes at a certain point (Cucuş, 2002). In other words, time management abilities/skills are those that can significantly determine the level of academic performance, as well (Mehnaz Kaushar, 2013).

Teaching and learning in schools are defined by the space and time in which they occur. Drawing on the work of Niklas Luhmann, a prominent thinker in systems theory, (Bautz, 2018) argues that successful educational communication depends more strongly on when and where it happens than other types of communication (Billmeyer, 2019). Increasing instruction time in school is a central element in the attempts of many governments to improve student learning, but prior research—mainly based on observational data—disputes the effect of this approach - the lost time in-school instruction was mainly compensated for by assigning additional homework (Cygan-Rehm, 2022) and points out the potential negative effects on student behavior (Andersen et al., 2016). Hence, there may be complementarities between the quality and quantity of instruction: more instruction time will probably be of even larger benefit if teachers use the additional time efficiently, e.g. by covering new or revising old content instead of using the time for classroom management or administrative tasks. Thus, more instruction time leads to better performance if teachers actively use the time for teaching (Wedel, 2021). If time is managed properly according to the requirements of the educational matters, it is inevitable that successful results will appear. Thus, the management of time includes planning, prioritisation, preparation and coordination of the activities done by students under the direct supervision and guidance of the teacher (Çelik, 2021). Policymakers raise two main arguments for increasing school instruction time: First, more instruction time could improve overall student performance by providing more learning opportunities. Second, it could help narrow performance gaps between low- and high-performing students by compensating for lacking resources or supervision outside school (Huebener et al., 2017). On the other hand, some authors wonder if it is possible to compress instruction time into fewer school years without lowering education levels? (Huebener & Marcus, 2017) and some studies explores the impact of four-day school weeks on early elementary achievement (Thompson et al., 2023) or examines the effect of learning time on graduating students' test scores (Zhang et al., 2021).

Voiculescu et al. (2004) and Voiculescu (2011) in their turn consider that the most simple and known scheme of compositional analysis of time could probably be “the scheme of the three 8”, in which the 24 hours of the day in a contemporary person’s life is divided: 8 hours for work, 8 hours for spare time and 8 hours for rest. The role of this scheme is to emphasize the three major components of time in our modern society: working time which represents the institutionalized and necessary work as a means of subsistence and social inclusion of the individual, spare time that is spent by the individual’s free choice, the person is not constrained by any social or professional pressure, and the resting time, meant as the amount of time when the person sleeps to regain his work capacity.

Although the evolution of the contemporary society brings important changes within the scheme of the three 8 mentioned above (the increasing leisure time, the blending of the physical presence with online activity, increasing the frequency of procrastination, etc), the issue of making the best our time remains one of the most important and actual issues, especially when referring to children who are most probable to give in the temptation of reducing the learning time in the advantage of the time spent for other activities with greater potential of attractiveness (film watching, computer games, activities on the social networks, etc).

As we all know, school time is not only represented by the time spent by the child inside the school building but also the time spent at home, learning, doing homework or other activities linked to

studying. From this point of view, time management, which represents a sum of specific behaviour and skills that are aimed at increasing efficiency and reducing the stress involved in accomplishing a task, has increasing importance because effective time management can bring along some major benefits such as task accomplishment in due time with minimal effort, better activity organizing, increasing satisfaction and motivation, reducing stress, reducing errors and faster achievement of the goals (Seiwert, 2000).

3. Research Questions

Our research sought answers to the following questions: what is the ratio between the time allocated by primary school students to school activities and that dedicated to relaxation, how do they choose to spend their free time and what is the opinion of parents in this regard.

4. Purpose of the Study

The article aims at capturing and X-raying how primary school students choose to spend their time. For this purpose, we have pursued elements such as the ratio between the time spent on learning activities and that spent on recreational activities, the amount of spare time spent on activities such as computer games and watching films compared with the time spent outdoors socializing activities, the existence of a leisure programme suggested by the parents, the structure of this programme and the extent to which it is followed by the child, the degree in which the time is made the best of itself and also the potential correlations between the students' background or their gender and the pattern they use their time.

5. Research Methods

The research was an ascertaining one and it took place in April and May 2022. The questionnaire was the main method used for this research. We have developed and applied the questionnaire to 135 primary school students grades 0 to 4, in the area of Dej, county of Cluj and the cross-section was a representative/convenient one. The questionnaire is made out of 19 closed questions with multiple choice answers and it is structured in two parts: the first part refers to the student's general data (grade, gender, number of children in the family, the background (rural/urban), the level of the student's performance and the level of the parents' satisfaction related to that performance and the second part referring to the student's time management: the number of hours the student spends on studying and doing homework, the number of hours spent on leisure activities, student's favourite type of leisure activity, the existence of a suggested schedule by the parents and the ratio the student is willing to follow that schedule. The collected data were centralized and statistically processed by using the SPSS programme, the analysis that was done is considered to be a verifiable and partially correlational one. We also want to specify that all the ethical requests, as well as the rules of personal data protection, have been strictly followed.

6. Findings

With concern on the level of general identification data, we specify that the cross-section (children's parents to whom we gave the questionnaire) was made out of 135 students: 29 out of that number were students in the preparatory grade (21.5 per cent), 27 students were in the first grade (20 per cent), 25 students were in the second grade (18.5 per cent), 28 students were in the third grade (20.7 per cent) and 26 students were in the fourth grade (19.3 per cent). Out of that number 62 (45.9 per cent) were boys and 73 (54.1 per cent) were girls.

Out of the 135 students, 110 (81 per cent) take part in after-school activities, while 25 (18.5 per cent) students are not part of this type of activity.

From the background point of view, 39 out of these students live in rural areas (28.9 per cent) and 96 students live in urban areas (71.1 per cent) and from the living space point of view, 98 students (72.6 per cent) live in a house with their yard, while 37 students (27.4 per cent) live in a block of flats.

39 students of the cross-section have only "very well" grades (28.9 per cent), 91 have "very well" and sometimes "well" (67.4 per cent), 4 have "well" grades and sometimes "satisfactory" and 1 student (0.7 per cent) has only "satisfactory" grades and sometimes "sufficient".

Referring to the level of parental satisfaction with the children's grades, 124 parents (91.9 per cent) consider that their results are in accordance with the amount of effort the child has made, while 4 parents (3 per cent) have a negative answer and 7 parents (5.1 per cent) answer that they cannot find a correlation between the effort made by the child and the grades he/she got.

Concerning time management, the first aspect that we targeted was the time spent by the children at home on learning activities and doing homework. We found that 31 students (23 per cent) spend less than an hour on such activities, 68 students (50.3 per cent) spend one to 2 hours, 31 students (23 per cent) 2 to 3 hours, 4 students (3 per cent) spend between 3 and 4 hours and 1 student (0.7 per cent) more than 4 hours. We noticed that 118 students (87.4 per cent) alternate their learning activity with 15 to 30 minute-breaks, while 17 students (12.6 per cent) prefer to study and do homework without breaks.

Concerning the existence of a learning schedule made or suggested or imposed upon their children by parents, we found that 73 students (54.1 per cent) do not have such a schedule and only 62 students (45.9 per cent) have a determined schedule for learning and doing homework.

Moreover, the data we have obtained can show that even for those children who have a suggested schedule by their parents, this schedule is strictly followed only by 25 students (18.5 per cent), while 82 students (60.7 per cent) follow the schedule most of the time and 28 students (20.3 per cent) rarely or never follow the schedule, in accordance to their parents' statements.

The data we have obtained above are in correlation with the answers we got when we asked the parents to what extent they are willingly giving in to their child's request to expand the amount of time established in the schedule for games and leisure, 27 out of these (20 per cent) admit that they always give in, 75 parents (55.8 per cent) often give in to their children's requests, 28 parents (20.8 per cent) rarely give in and only 5 parents (3.7 per cent) do not give in changing the schedule.

Regarding the amount of time spent by children on games and leisure, most of the children, 48 children (35.6 per cent) use for this precise purpose about 3 to 4 hours a day, 38 students (28.1 per cent)

more than 4 hours a day, 36 students (26.7 per cent) 2 to 3 hours a day, while only 13 students (9.6 per cent) spend less than 2 hours a day on games and leisure.

These answers given at the above-mentioned item correlate both the parents' opinions who in a proportion of 94.1 (127 parents) consider that primary school students have sufficient spare time, while only 8 out of the questioned parents (5.9 per cent) state the opposite.

Regarding the time spent on games and leisure, in accordance with the parent's opinion, the vast majority of the students, 91 children representing 64.7 per cent of the cross-section spend their time playing with their friends, 27 students (20 per cent) play games on computer/phone/tablet, and 17 students (12.6 per cent) watch TV.

The answers to the above-mentioned item correlate both with the parents' answers to the question regarding the need of reducing the amount of time spent by the child in front of the computer/TV screen, 109 parents (80.7 per cent) consider this reduction as useful, compared with only 26 parents (19.3 per cent) who state that this type of reduction is useless, and the answers at the item referring to the existence of a schedule that would limit the number of hours a child spends in front of the computer/TV screen, 83 parents (61.5 per cent) state that they have set a clear and firm limit of time for this type of activity, only 52 parents (38.5 per cent) admit that they have not limited the time on their schedule.

7. Conclusions

There were not found significant differences from the statistical point of view, between the children's gender or grade as far as time management is concerned. This finding also applies to the children's background and in our opinion, this is due to the fact that most of the children from the urban areas also live in a house having their yard, an element that could be an advantage for their playing outdoors with friends rather than playing computer games or watching TV.

Regarding the gap between the number of hours spent by the children on learning activities and doing homework compared with the time spent on games and leisure activities (only 36 out of the students of our cross-section (26.7 per cent) study and do homework more than 2 hours a day while 122 students (90.4 per cent) spend more than 2 hours a day on games and leisure), this fact can only be explained by the fact that 110 students (81.5 per cent) take part in after-school activities, so that they arrive at having all their homework done and most of the lessons studied.

Concerning the opinions stated by the parents with reference to the ratio between the time spent on doing homework and studying versus the time spent on games and leisure, we found specific inconsistencies. Thus, on one hand even if 109 parents (80.7 per cent) state that a schedule that limits the amount of time spent by the child in front of the TV, computer, tablet or phone, only 83 out of these (61.5 per cent) admit that they have developed and implemented such a schedule. Moreover, on the other hand, 102 parents (75.6 per cent) admit that they almost always or often give in to their children's requests on extending the amount of time spent on mass media.

We consider that optimizing the time management of primary school children requires joined actions on at least two levels: on one hand, the students must be familiar with the techniques and strategies on time management that could be accessible to them, and on the other hand, we advise on organizing lectures with the parents where they could learn the principles and how to organize work

schedules which could combine correctly and functionally the activities designed for learning and doing homework with those for playing and leisure, in such a manner that they could advantage outdoors activities and social interacting rather than gaming, watching TV or activities on social networks.

Learning time management skills since early childhood will help the child to transform them into future abilities and later on into habits. This fact will help significantly the adult-to-be to adapt himself/herself to the continuous dynamics of contemporary society and cope with the multiple tasks and challenges that he/she has to face.

References

- Andersen, S. C., Humlum, M. K., & Nandrup, A. B. (2016). Increasing instruction time in school does increase learning. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(27), 7481-7484. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1516686113>
- Bautz, T. (2018). *Verstehen ohne Verständigung - Lernen mit mobilen Endgeräten und das Verstummen der Interaktion* [Understanding without understanding - learning with mobile devices and the silence of interaction]. Weinheim & Basel: Beltz Juventa.
- Billmeyer, J. (2019). Time and space in the classroom - lessons from Germany and Sweden. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 5(1), 8-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2019.1574516>
- Çelik, G. (2021). Time management in the classroom. *Eurasian Journal of Language Teaching and Linguistic Studies*, 1(1).
- Cucoş, C. (2002). *Timp și temporalitate în educație: elemente pentru un management al timpului școlar* [Time and temporality in education: elements for a school time management]. Polirom Publishing House.
- Cygan-Rehm, K. (2022). *Lifetime Consequences of Lost Instructional Time in the Classroom: Evidence from Shortened School Years*. CESifo Working Paper, No. 9892, Munich.
- Huebener, M., Kuger, S., & Marcus, J. (2017). Increased instruction hours and the widening gap in student performance. *Labour Economics*, 47, 15-34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2017.04.007>
- Huebener, M., & Marcus, J. (2017). Compressing instruction time into fewer years of schooling and the impact on student performance. *Economics of Education Review*, 58, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2017.03.003>
- Mehnaz Kaushar, P. M. K. (2013). Study of Impact of Time Management on Academic Performance of College Students. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 9(6), 59-60. <https://doi.org/10.9790/487x-0965960>
- Seiwert, L. (2000). *Managementul timpului* [Time management]. Didactica Publishing House.
- Seneca, L. A. (2020). *Scrisori către Lucilius* [Letters to Lucilius], Humanitas Publishing House.
- Thompson, P. N., Tomayko, E. J., Gunter, K. B., Schuna, J., Jr., & McClelland, M. (2023). Impacts of the four-day school week on early elementary achievement. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 63, 264-277. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2022.12.009>
- Voiculescu, E. (2011). *Timpul ca resursă în educație* [Time as educational resource]. Aeternitas Publishing House.
- Voiculescu, F., Todor, I., & Voiculescu, E. (2004). *Managementul Timpului* [Time Management]. Risoprint Publishing House.
- Wedel, K. (2021). Instruction time and student achievement: The moderating role of teacher qualifications. *Economics of Education Review*, 85, 102183. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2021.102183>
- Zhang, Y., Zhao, G., & Zhou, B. (2021). Does learning longer improve student achievement? Evidence from online education of graduating students in a high school during COVID-19 period. *China Economic Review*, 70, 101691. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chieco.2021.101691>