

Socialization through Informal Education: Extracurricular Activities of Russian Students

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Abstract. The paper presents results of a large-scale research on the scope of services in extracurricular and extra-school education and on assessment of the potential role of education beyond the classroom and informal education in solving children socialization issues. The research was carried out through questioning students as consumers of education services. A new instrument was developed and tested to allow for a detailed description of various aspects of extracurricular activities and their correlation with studies and social and psychologi-

cal characteristics of students. An extensive statistic material (over 6,000 questionnaires filled out by students from several regions of Russia) was used to analyze the degree of engagement in out-of-class activities among children of different age; the activities that are more popular for specific age groups; the age range when children are most engaged in such activities; the reasons for non-participation in extracurricular activities; the infrastructure of education beyond the classroom; the relative frequency of structured and non-structured classes; the correlation between out-of-class activities and development of self-esteem, feeling of community, and satisfaction. Age- and gender-related profiles of various classes are described. It appears that structured extracurricular activities, unlike unstructured ones, correlate with higher self-esteem (both overall and academic), stronger sense of belonging, and better satisfaction with school.

Keywords: education beyond the classroom, extra-school education, socialization of school students, accessibility of services, extra-school education market.

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Extracurricular activities, or supplementary education, are a powerful resource for development of personality and social competencies in children and adolescents. The state program “Education Development” adopted in 2012 dedicates a special section to supplementary education. The program aims to increase coverage of children with extracurricular activities in order to get them positively socialized, to



provide equal opportunities for all children regardless of their family income, and to build a contemporary infrastructure of informal education.

There is public access to data on supplementary education institutions for children (SEIC) obtained in the course of Monitoring of education markets and organizations based on a survey of 400 SEIC leaders [Supplementary education institutions for children...]. However, no large-scale specific research of extracurricular activities of children and adolescents in Russia has been conducted so far. Our study is centered around an extensive survey of consumers of this service, i. e. schoolchildren, on their participation in extracurricular activities.

Relevance of the study is explained by the need to obtain reliable and quite extensive empirical data that could be used to develop recommendations on improving and enhancing the system of extracurricular activities. Such recommendations are required to project modernization of the Russian education system.

Our research has the following objectives: 1) evaluate coverage of students with supplementary education with regard to their age, sex and place of residence; 2) identify the most popular and demanded types of extracurricular activities; 3) analyze the correlation between students' demand for extra-academic activities and accessibility of such activities, i. e. offer of various types of extracurricular activities in different cities of Russia; 4) determine the reasons for students nonparticipation in extracurricular activities; 5) evaluate the correlation between the structured and unstructured extracurricular activities; 6) find out how extracurricular activities are related to a number of social and psychological characteristics (sense of belonging at school, school satisfaction, overall self-assessment, physical and academic self-assessment).

The effects extracurricular activities have on development of children and adolescents is confirmed by numerous studies conducted mainly by foreign researchers, such as Jacquelynne Eccles, Bonnie Barber, Reed Larson, and Joseph L. Mahoney. A significant contribution in development of the theory was made by Annette Lareau, American sociologist of childhood. Researchers differentiate between structured and unstructured extracurricular activities. Structured extracurricular activities include all types of scheduled activities supervised by experienced grown-ups; as a rule, such activities are designed to develop specific skills or competencies in children. Unstructured activities have no schedule, nor supervisor, nor a well-defined group of participants: teenagers may play football in the yard, ride bicycles, or just hang out together in street clubs.

Extracurricular activities are extremely widespread in a lot of countries. Thus, Mahoney [Mahoney, Schweder, Stattin 2002] points out that about 75 percent of 14-year-old students in Sweden are involved in structured extracurricular activities, while the rate of involve-



ment among Australian students aged between 12 and 16 amounts to 91 percent [Blomfield, Barber].

Extra-academic activities, especially structured ones, provide a unique environment for socialization creating conditions for acquiring various social skills that cannot always be developed while learning at school [Feldman, Matjasko 2005]. Hansen and his co-authors identify the most important skills that are developed, in particular, through extracurricular activities, such as time management skills, constancy of purpose, autonomy, ability to get along and cooperate with grown-ups, or team-working skills [Hansen, Larson, Dworkin 2003; Hansen, Skorupski, Arrington 2010].

The Soviet Union had a developed system of supplementary education, its infrastructure including sport, art and music schools, pioneer houses and palaces, clubs and palaces of culture. Most activities and classes were free. Participation of school students in various hobby groups and classes has evolved into a cultural tradition in Russia, still remaining a common practice. However, when it comes to the contemporary situation in Russia, there is no information on the coverage of children with extracurricular activities, nor on the types of institutions providing such activities, nor on the correlation between free and fee-based classes, nor on the accessibility of specific activities to population with different social status or place of residence.

This study compensates for this shortcoming in part. Empirical data was collected through a questionnaire survey of ninth-grade school students living in populated localities of different types (including megacities, medium-sized cities, towns, and rural localities), studying in different schools (large or small, with good or poor performance) and growing in different types of families.

The survey involved school students in four regions of the Russian Federation (Saint Petersburg, Leningrad oblast, Pskov oblast, and Tomsk oblast), in populated localities of different types: megacity (Saint Petersburg), medium-sized cities (Tomsk and Pskov), towns and villages. Schools in megacities and medium-sized cities were selected by stratified random sampling with uniform sampling fractions of advanced-level and general education schools. Thus, the proportion of advanced-level schools in the sample was equivalent to the one in total population. Census surveys were conducted in towns and villages. Total number of surveyed schools and students is specified in Table 1.

All ninth-grade students were surveyed in the sampled schools. The specifically designed questionnaire included several modules of questions. The best part of it covered various aspects of extracurricular activities. Students were given a list of 45 possible activities including sports, arts (music, dancing, visual art), science and technology classes, and other courses (textile handicraft, etc.). The

Design of study

**Table 1. Sample of schools and number of respondents by populated localities**

Populated locality	Schools, total	Schools in the sample	Respondents
Saint Petersburg	700	100	3,932
Tomsk	90	25	1,275
Pskov	25	15	772
Town 1 (Leningrad oblast)	8	8	352
Town 2 (Leningrad oblast)	6	6	378
Town 3 (Tomsk oblast)	4	4	140
Village 1 (Tomsk oblast)	1	1	33
Village 2 (Leningrad oblast)	1	1	55
Village 3 (Leningrad oblast)	1	1	17
Village 4 (Leningrad oblast)	1	1	38
TOTAL		162	6,992

respondents were asked to mark the grade(s) when they were engaged in this or that extracurricular activity, as well as hours per week spent on the activity, and location: school, club, palace of culture, palace of arts, etc. A number of questions asked students what else they would like to do if they had had an opportunity, and why they did not participate in extracurricular activities. The questionnaire also included modules to assess social and psychological characteristics: overall self-assessment, academic self-assessment, sports self-assessment, school satisfaction, and the sense of belonging at school. The YES (Youth Experience Studies) questionnaire developed by American sociologists [Hansen, Larson 2002], in Russian translation, was made part of the questionnaire to assess social skills developed through specific extra-academic activities. Besides, the students were interviewed on their academic performance, education and career plans. The socio-demographic module contained questions on education and employment of parents, their native language, and migration record.

The survey was conducted during the classes; it took students from 25 to 45 minutes to fill the questionnaire out completely. The questionnaire survey provided quantitative data sufficient for statistical analysis operations.

The initial data analysis was performed for each populated locality individually, assessing the scope and intensity of extracurricular activities, the coverage of students with different types of activities, and the comparative frequency of participation in a specific activity.



The results came out to be very close in all the parameters mentioned above. For this reason, the next phase of analysis broke the populated localities into four categories: megacity, large city, medium-sized cities and towns, and villages. Specific forms of analysis were applied to either each category individually or the whole database.

The data collected embraced a long period of a student's life (from preschool to ninth grade with detailed information for each year) and an extensive array of extracurricular activities (45 activities). Such a meticulous data collection method enabled us to analyze extracurricular activities in groups based on various factors: type of activity, school years when students were involved in the activities, intensity of classes, institutions holding the classes, etc. A set of indexes was developed for analytical purposes and will be used below: average weekly hours spent on activities per person; average annual number of activities per person; average years of participation in a specific activity. Binary data was used for some types of analysis ('participated/didn't participate').

Types of extracurricular activities were grouped into the following categories:

- 1) sports activities (20 types)—'sports' category;
- 2) music, dancing and visual art activities (9 types)—'arts' category;
- 3) science and technology classes and clubs, subject-matter clubs (10 types)—'subject-matter clubs' category;
- 4) foreign language courses;
- 5) other activities.

Categories 1, 2, 3 and 5 included several types of classes or interest groups; foreign language courses were analyzed as a separate category due to their significance.

Children rarely limit themselves to only one extracurricular activity and can attend up to five different interest groups, clubs or classes. The scope of student's extracurricular activities often changes quite a lot over time, as children try different paths. The average annual number of activities per person is 1.5–2, although very few exceed this rate essentially.

Table 2 presents data on the frequency of participation in different extracurricular activities by different types of populated localities. We considered all types of extra-academic activities students had participated since their preschool years up to the ninth grade. The comparison of data for megacity, large and medium-sized cities, towns and villages revealed an extremely stable correlation of frequency between different types of activities within the four categories. Figure 1 shows how frequency of participation in different types of extracurricular activities is distributed across the overall sample.

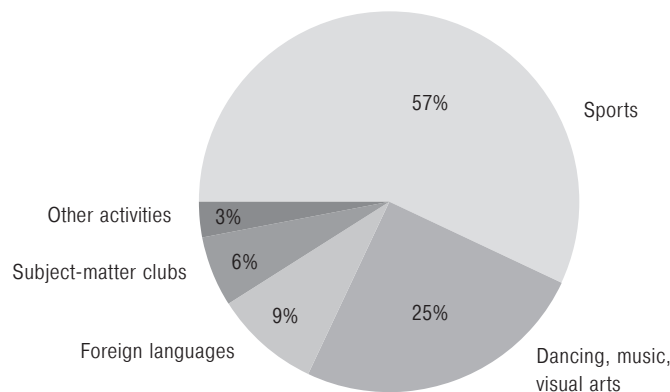
Categories and popularity of extracurricular activities



Table 2. **Frequency of participation in different types of extracurricular activities** (by the types of populated localities), %

	Megacity (N = 3,932)	Large and medium-sized cities (N = 2,133)	Towns and villages (N = 867)
Sports	55.5	57.0	57.3
Foreign languages	9.7	6.1	7.9
Dancing, music, visual arts	25.2	27.3	25.7
Subject-matter clubs	6.5	4.9	5.3
Other activities	3.1	4.8	3.8

Figure 1. **Frequency of participation in different types of extracurricular activities.**



Sports activities were found to be the most popular among children of all ages, accounting for almost 60 percent of all extracurricular activities. Next came art-related activities (25 percent): playing musical instruments, singing, fine arts, theater, etc. The Australian sample had demonstrated pretty much the same results: 62 percent of school students attended sports clubs or classes, and 29 percent attended art-related courses (dancing, theater, etc.) [Blomfield, Barber 2009].

At the same time, our data obtained by surveying students, consumers of supplementary education services, is in a sharp contrast with the results of a survey conducted among leaders of SEICs that provide those services. SEICs report artistic activities to be most demanded, with 33 percent of children engaged. Only 27 percent of students attend sports classes [Supplementary education institutions



for children...]. This can probably be explained by the fact that most extracurricular activities take place in schools which were not included in the cited research of the Monitoring of education markets and organizations.

Foreign languages (9 percent) are among the most popular activities, along with football, swimming and dancing. Science and technology classes and subject-matter courses are the least demanded, only accounting for 6 percent.

Proportional distribution of different extracurricular activities is virtually the same for megacities, medium-sized cities, towns and even villages, despite the expectation that different types of populated localities provide unequal opportunities for supplementary education.

As long as the questionnaire asked which classes or courses exactly were attended, a detailed analysis could be applied to relative popularity of specific activities within the “sports”, “arts”, “subject-matter” or any other categories. Analysis of this type was first conducted for each locality individually and revealed consistent results regardless of the type of populated locality, so we merged the results.

Since many classes and interest groups are gender-specific, frequency of participation in specific activities was analyzed for boys and girls individually. The results are shown in Figures 2 and 3. Only the 20 most popular activities were used for better readability.

Swimming and foreign languages are largely widespread among both boys and girls. Besides, girls often choose dancing, singing, playing musical instruments and various sorts of fine arts. Boys give preference to football, diverse combat sports, cycling, roller skating, and skateboarding.

Next phase of analysis compared frequency of participation in extracurricular activities within each of the four categories. The “sports” category is topped by swimming, which is equally popular among boys and girls. The second most popular activity is cycling, along with roller skating and skateboarding, and the third is football. Rowing and fencing are the least demanded.

In the “arts” category, playing musical instruments and dancing are equally frequent, while singing/choir and fine arts are slightly less popular. Design and photography are at the bottom of the list.

Most students attending the “science, technology and subject-matter clubs” classes prefer mathematics, programming and other computer-related courses (computer literacy lessons, etc.). All other subject matters were mentioned nearly five times less often than those related to maths and computer science.

Among activities classified as “other”, children most often opted for handicraft, sewing, macramé, bead weaving, etc. A very small proportion of children participated in military and patriotic or religion-related interest groups, and an even smaller proportion was involved in cosplayer and reconstructing communities.



Figure 2. **The most popular classes among girls** (X-direction: average years of participation throughout ten years)

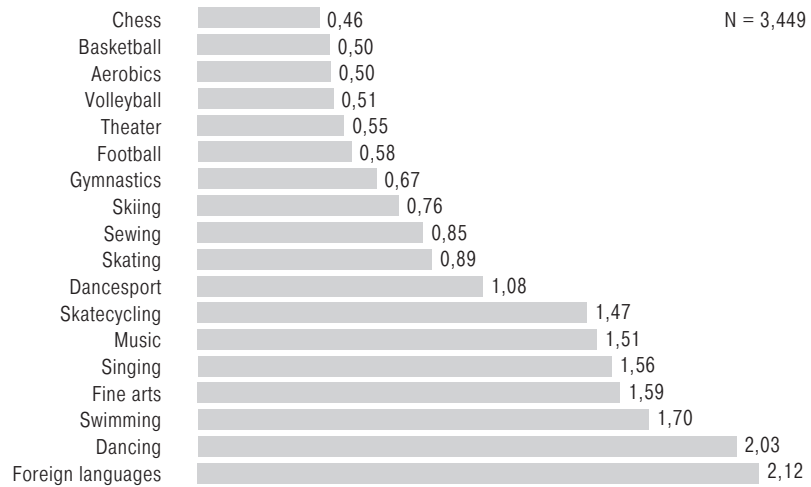
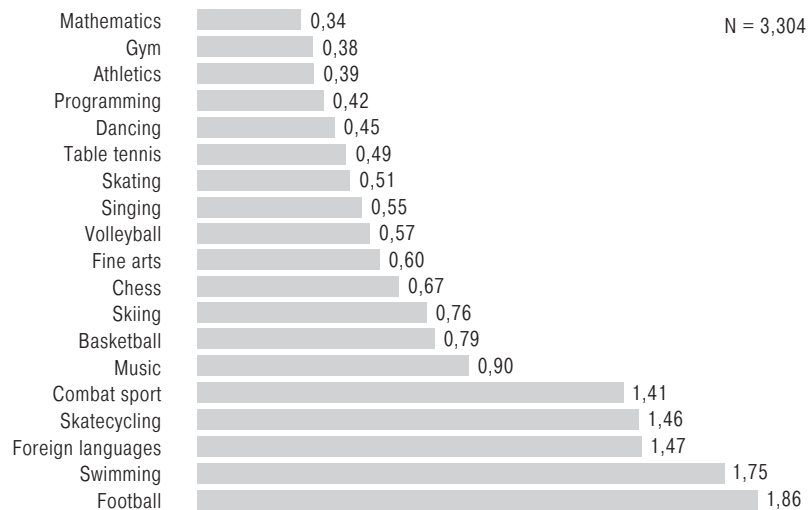


Figure 3. **The most popular classes among boys** (X-direction: average years of participation throughout ten years).



Age dynamics of extracurricular activities

Different types of extracurricular activities differ significantly in age dynamics. We identified several typical “profiles” of activities.

Younger schoolchildren most often choose singing, dancing, fine arts, gymnastics, swimming, and chess as their extracurricular activities (Figure 4). The rate of participation in these activities peaks at primary school and gradually decreases over time.

Frequency of participation in team sports (football, basketball,



Figure 4. **Age dynamics of extracurricular activities. “Primary school” profile** (Y-direction: proportion of students engaged).

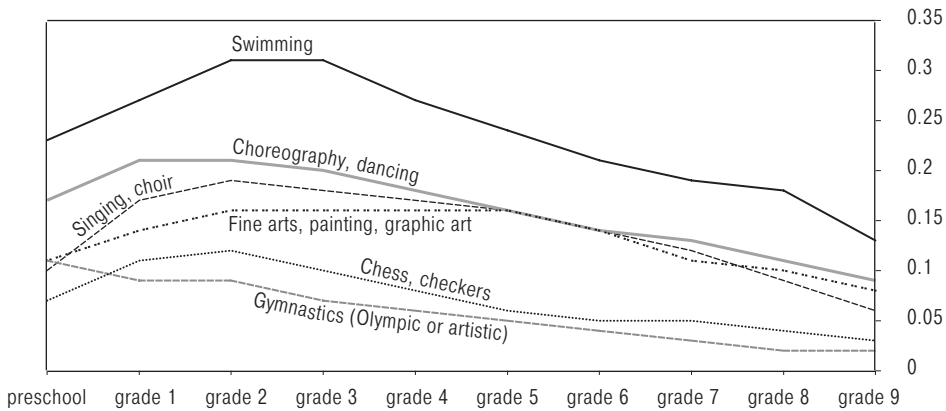
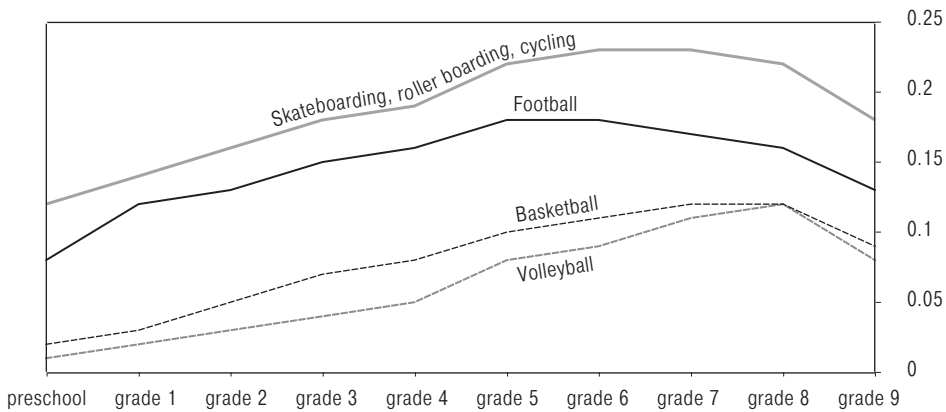


Figure 5. **Age dynamics of extracurricular activities. “Secondary school” profile** (Y-direction: proportion of students engaged).



volleyball), cycling, roller skating and skateboarding gradually grows to peak at secondary school (grades 5–7) and fade down by grade 8 and especially 9 (Figure 5).

A special group of activities is formed by fitness and aerobics with girls and bodybuilding and gym with boys. These activities reflect development of a “grown-up” attitude towards body culture, health-care, and keeping fit. The rate of involvement plummets by grade 9 (Figure 6).

Playing musical instruments and foreign languages stand apart from the other activities. These two are the most wanted, with 20–30 percent of students involved at some point. Music is probably the most stable type of activity, as its popularity is almost unaffected by age. Frequency of attending foreign language courses increases throughout primary school, levels off in grade 5 and remains almost unchanged later on (Figure 7).



Figure 6. **Age dynamics of extracurricular activities. “High school” profile** (Y-direction: proportion of students engaged).

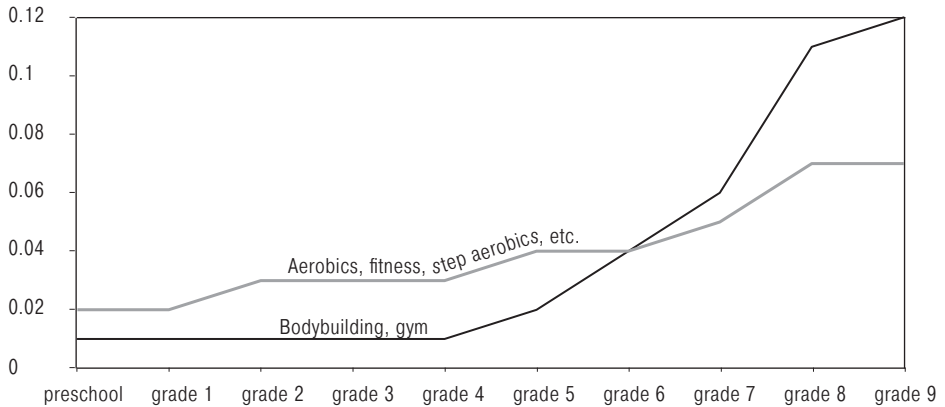
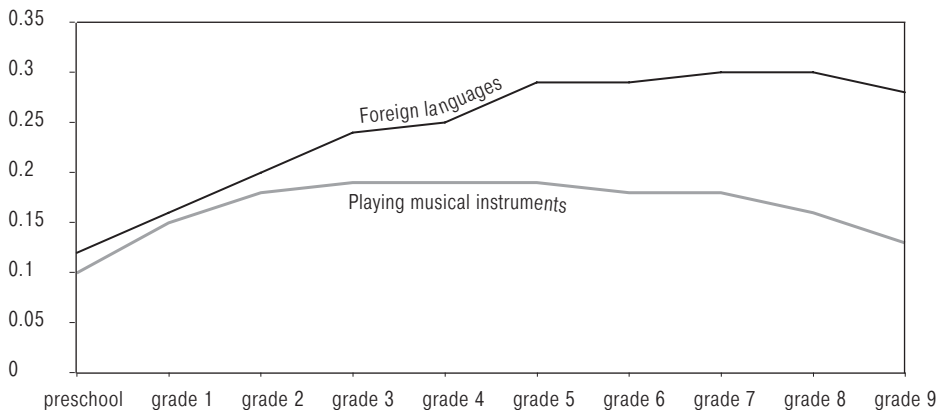


Figure 7. **Age dynamics of extracurricular activities. Music and foreign languages** (Y-direction: proportion of students engaged).



In order to find out at what age children attend interest groups most actively, we made frequency bar charts by grades, separate ones for boys and girls, and for each populated locality. Below is the chart for Saint Petersburg (Figure 8).

At primary and secondary school, girls are much more involved in interest groups and classes than boys: there are almost 2.5 interest groups per girl and less than 2 per boy in grades 3 and 4. However, frequency of participation levels off by grade 7 to become higher among boys at high school. The most active participation is characteristic of grades 5–8, while grade 9 sees an essential loss of interest among both boys and girls. These regularities are typical for all types of populated localities.

Figure 9 shows cumulative (boys and girls) frequency of participation in extracurricular activities by grades for all populated locali-



Figure 8. Frequency of participation in extracurricular activities in different school grades through the example of Saint Petersburg (Y-direction: interest groups per person).

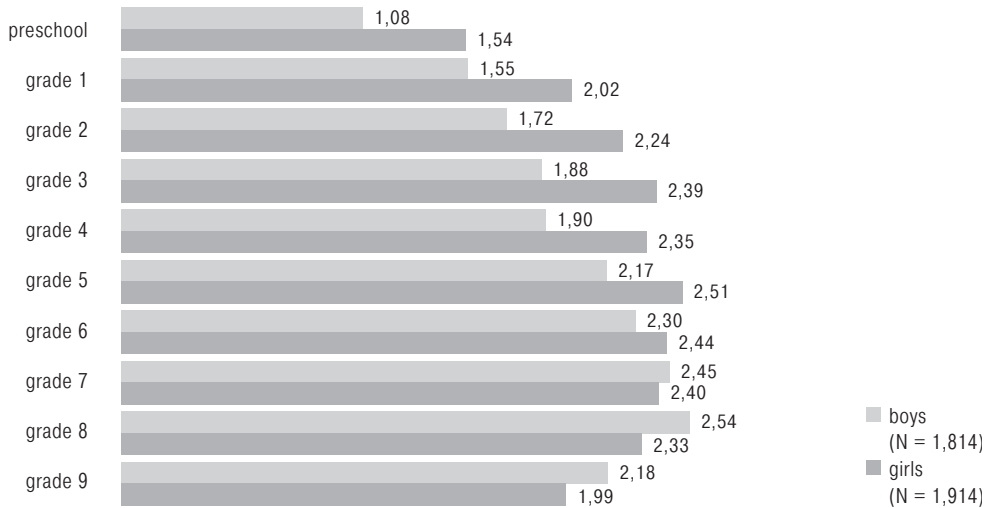
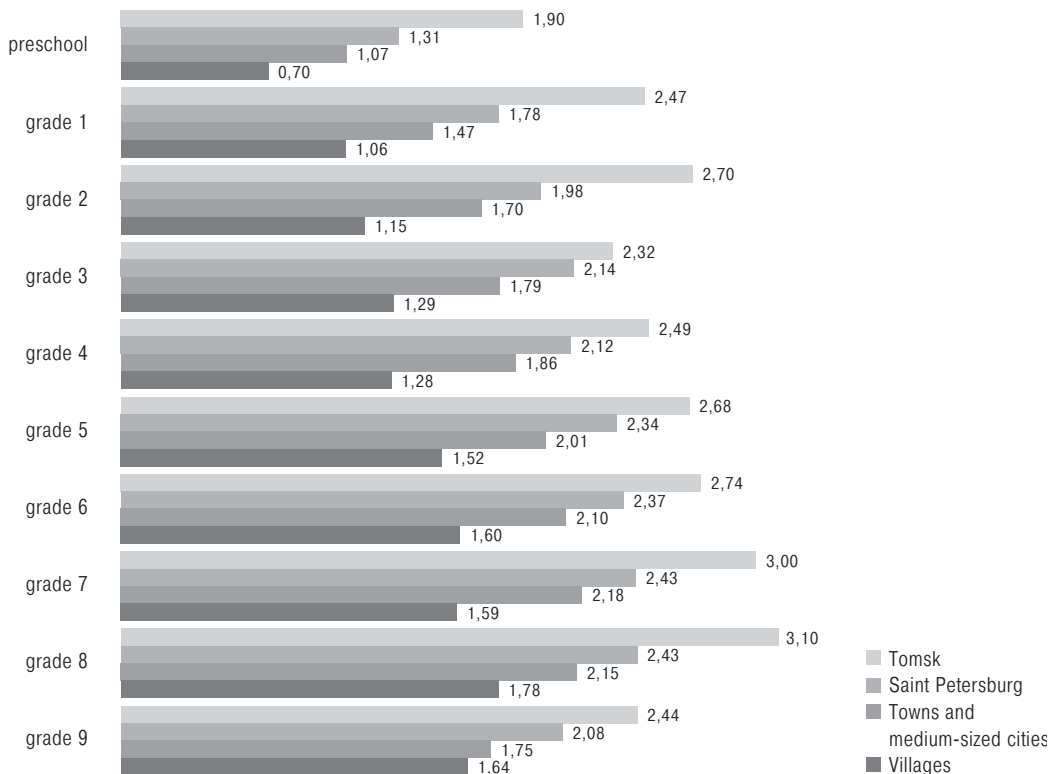


Figure 9. Frequency of participation in extracurricular activities by grades in different populated localities (Y-direction: interest groups per person).





ties covered by the survey. Megacities (Saint Petersburg and Tomsk) demonstrated a clearly higher rate of involvement throughout the school years than medium-sized cities, towns, or villages. However, the dynamics remained the same: intensity of participation rose from primary to secondary school and fell in grade 9. Such loss of enthusiasm about extracurricular activities is obviously associated with a greater study load at high school. As we will show below, many ninth-graders indicated the lack of time as the reason for their non-participation in courses or interest groups.

Coverage of students with extracurricular activities

An overwhelming majority of school students engage in some courses or interest groups. Only 4 percent of children never participated in any extracurricular activities in megacities providing the most ample opportunities for this. The proportion is 7 percent for towns and medium-sized cities and 15 percent for rural localities. The considerable difference between cities and villages points to underdevelopment of supplementary education and possibly unsatisfied demand for it in rural areas.

Nonparticipation in extracurricular activities is the highest at primary school—from 10 percent in megacities to 29 percent in villages—being much lower at secondary school (Figure 10).

The next phase was about analyzing the amount of students non-covered by extracurricular activities by the type of activity. Minor differences were discovered between cities and towns, but those between types of activities appeared to be much more tangible: students that never participated in extra-academic foreign language courses or subject-matter clubs (in scientific clubs) are several times more numerous than those who never was engaged in sports activities (Figure 11).

Therefore, involvement of students in extracurricular activities of all categories is lower in towns and medium-sized cities than in megacities, and lower in villages than in towns and medium-sized cities. Differences between the types of populated localities are true for all categories of extra-academic activities, whether it be sports, arts, scientific and technology clubs, or foreign languages.

For all types of populated localities, the biggest proportion of nonparticipating students is typical for scientific and subject-matter clubs, as well as for foreign languages. An essentially smaller number of students never engaged in sports activities, with only 9 percent in megacities and 27 percent in rural localities.

With a view to explore the reasons for nonparticipation, the questionnaire asked students: “Are there any courses you don’t attend but would like to? Please specify which ones (three activities maximum). For each, name the major reason for nonparticipation.” The following answer options were offered: for medical reasons; my parents don’t allow me; these courses are too expensive; there are no such



Figure 10. **Proportion of students non-covered by extracurricular activities** (by age).

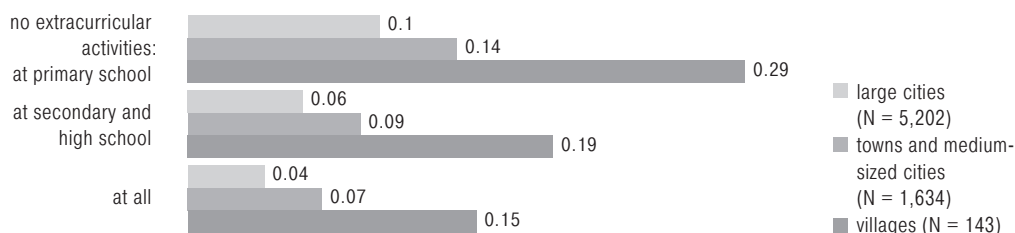


Figure 11. **Proportion of students non-covered by extracurricular activities** (by category of activity).

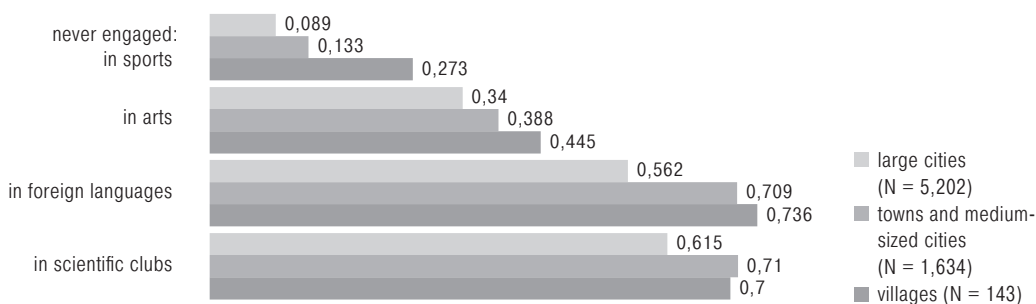
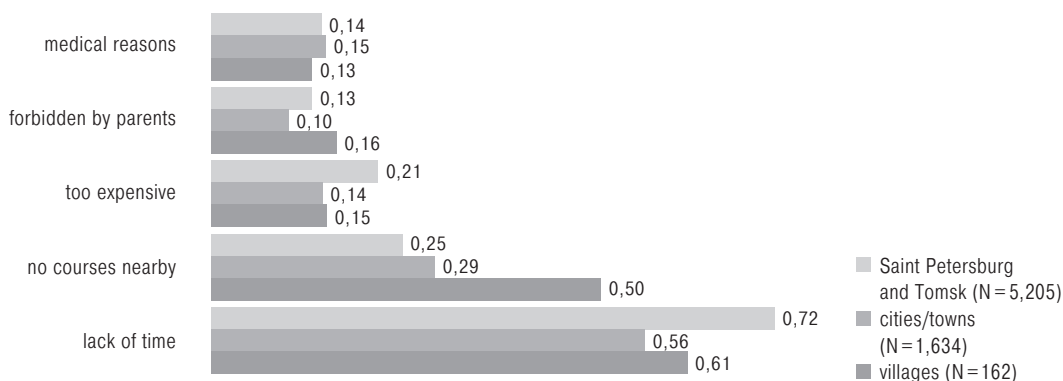


Figure 12. **Reasons for nonparticipation in extracurricular activities.**



courses nearby; no time because of studies. 70 percent of students answered this question, which means school children have profound interest in extracurricular activities: even those who were already attending some classes, courses or interest groups were willing to engage in something else.

Originally, we analyzed different populated localities separately as we presumed the results would differ for cities, towns and villages. Since the results turned out to be almost identical for Saint Pe-



tersburg and Tomsk, we merged the data. The results are shown in Figure 12.

Lack of time was named most among the reasons for nonparticipation, by 70 percent of respondents in cities and 55–60 percent in towns and villages. Indeed, the rate of involvement drops for virtually all types of activities in the ninth grade, which is obviously due to increased workload.

The second most widespread reason for nonparticipation was unavailability of relevant supplementary education infrastructure in certain villages. This is where the difference between cities and villages was the most conspicuous: 25–28 percent of students in cities vs. 50 percent in villages.

The “too expensive” reason was more popular with children from megacities (22 percent) than with those from medium-sized cities, towns and villages (15 percent), which is quite natural as there are more fee-based classes in cities than in rural areas.

The “medical reasons” and “forbidden by parents” answers were rather uncommon, accounting for 10–16 percent of cases, with no differences across the types of populated localities.

Infrastructure of extracurricular activities

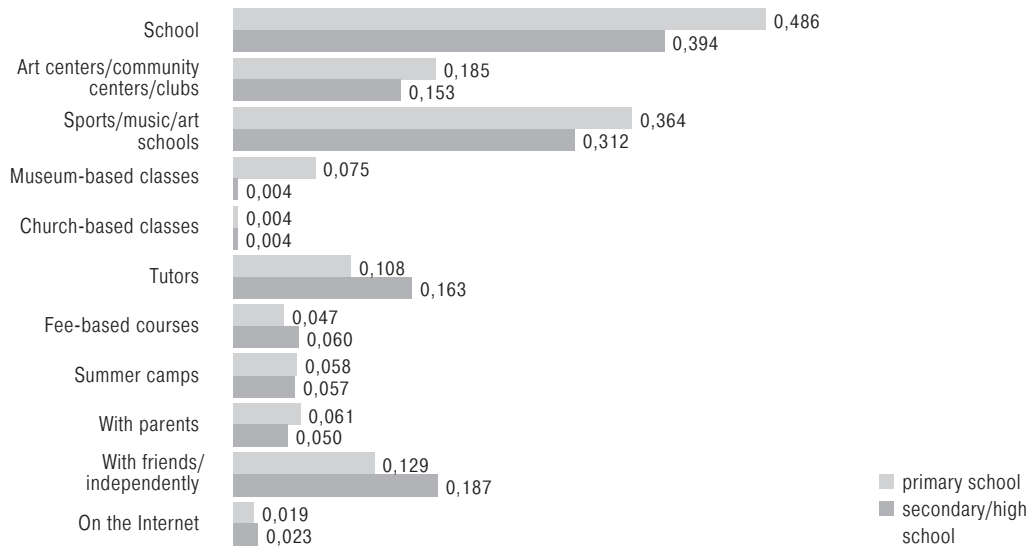
For the purpose of describing the infrastructure of supplementary education, the questionnaire asked school students where exactly it was that they engaged in specific activities. We didn’t restrict the options to academic institutions only, in order to get as comprehensive picture as possible. Figure 13 shows cumulative distribution of extracurricular activities across institutions. These are predominantly general education schools and specialized institutions: sports, music or art schools. Students also quite often attend art centers, clubs, community centers, or engage in activities with their teachers, friends, or independently. Fee-based courses, summer camp classes and learning with parents only form a small part of extracurricular activities. As for classes provided by churches or religious communities, museums or theaters, or available on the Internet, their proportion is negligible.

The profiles of distribution of extracurricular activities among different types of institutions are pretty much the same at primary and secondary/high school. The differences mainly have to do with relative significance of specific institutions: younger students attend more classes at general education, art, music and sports schools, while high school students tend more to engage in activities with tutors, friends, or independently.

Among institutions providing extracurricular activities, the most important role is played by general education schools, involving 40–50 percent of children, and specialized music, sports and art schools (around 30 percent). A notably lower proportion of students attend art centers, community centers, and clubs. This information has to



Figure 13. **Frequency of participation in extracurricular activities by types of institutions** (proportion of students engaged).



be considered when gathering statistics on supplementary education for school students.

Team sports (football, volleyball, basketball) are most often played at general-school-based classes, much less often at specialized schools or with friends, and even less often at summer camps. Fine arts are most often mastered at art schools and also quite often in interest groups at general schools, art centers, or museums. Foreign languages are the only extracurricular activity practiced mostly with tutors, the second most popular option being school-based classes (in addition to the syllabus). Fee-based courses are attended, too, significantly less often though.

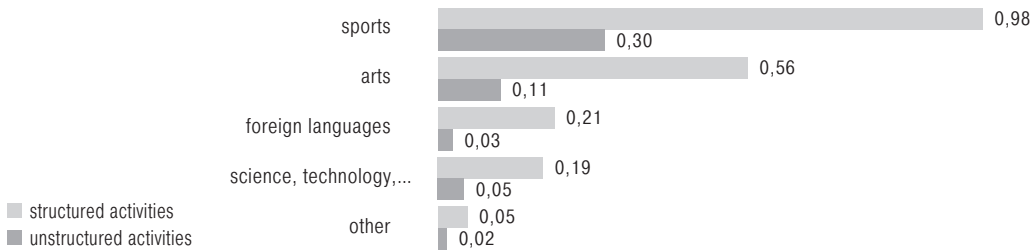
Structured extracurricular activities imply attending classes or courses at specific institutions, with specific trainers. This is what is normally understood when talking about extracurricular activities. However, children development is also greatly affected by unstructured extracurricular activities, i. e. activities students engage in independently, sometimes organizing in groups, teams or communities: playing football in the yard, skiing for one's own amusement, playing chess on the Internet, etc. Unstructured activities in our research included all types of activities students were engaged in on their own, with their friends or family, or on the Internet.

Figure 14 shows frequency of participation in structured and unstructured extracurricular activities by different categories.

Structured and unstructured extracurricular activities



Figure 14. **Relative frequency of participation in structured and unstructured extracurricular activities by different categories.**



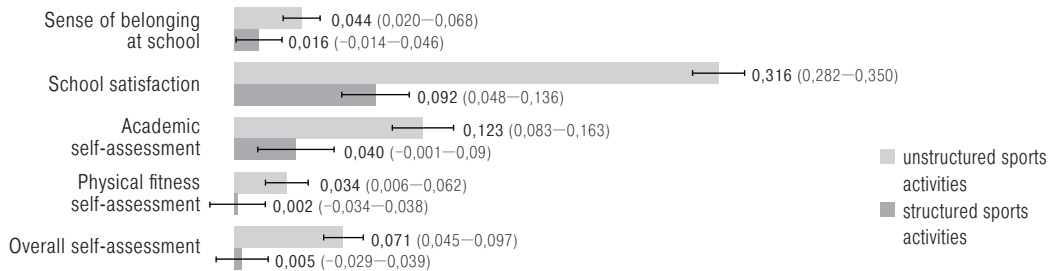
Sports activities are the most popular type of unstructured extracurricular activities, with the top three being cycling, roller skating, and skateboarding. Students were engaged in unstructured sports activities only three times less often than in structured ones. The second most widespread unstructured activity was arts, most often playing musical instruments at home. Involvement in unstructured activities of other types was extremely low, accounting for 2–5 percent only.

Effects of structured and unstructured activities were analyzed through the example of sports, as this category had a rather high proportion of unstructured activity. Multiple linear regression method was used to evaluate the relationship between extracurricular activities and a set of social and psychological characteristics. A series of regression models was built, each of them having one of social and psychological characteristics as the dependent variable: overall self-assessment, academic self-assessment, sports self-assessment, the sense of belonging at school, and school satisfaction. The models used frequency of participation in structured or unstructured activities as independent variable, while family characteristics (mother's education) and type of school served as control variables.

Results of the regression analysis are displayed in Figure 15. As judged by regression coefficients, the strongest correlation is observed between sports activities and physical fitness self-assessment, which is quite expected. Effect of structured activities is much more pronounced, although it is also statistically significant for unstructured ones. Besides, sports activities are significantly related to academic self-assessment, the effect being stronger with structured activities. As for overall self-assessment, it is positively associated with structured sports activities, the effect being rather weak though; no relation at all was found for unstructured activities. Similar correlations were revealed for school satisfaction and the sense of belonging at school. One can suggest that this correlation is stronger when students engage in sports activities at their school, instead of other institutions; further data analysis is required to test the hypothesis.



Figure 15. **Regression coefficients of correlation between structured and unstructured sports activities and social and psychological characteristics of a child, mother’s education and type of school serving as control variables. A 95 percent confidence interval was constructed for each coefficient.**



Popularity of extracurricular activities. A survey conducted in several regions of Russia showed that extracurricular classes are very popular among school students. Almost all school-age children attend some courses or interest groups; only a small proportion of adolescents have never been engaged in any extra-academic activities.

Conclusion

Sports activities tend to be the most widespread, accounting for almost 60 percent of all extracurricular activities; they are followed by various arts (singing, dancing, fine arts) (25 percent). Science and technology clubs make only 6 percent of extracurricular activities. Apparently, this area of supplementary education needs additional efforts to be developed, especially given the particular focus the state program “Education Development” for 2013–2020 places on promotion of research and engineering activities among children and adolescents.

Discrepancies between different types of populated localities. Irrespective of the size of populated locality, whether it be a small village with only one school and one community center, a large city (Tomsk), or even a megacity (Saint Petersburg), popularity of extracurricular activities is distributed invariably, with 60 percent of all classes falling on sports, 25–30 percent on arts, and only 5–6 percent on subject-matter interest groups. Such distribution probably reflects real needs of children and adolescents.

Differences between the types of populated localities were only discovered in frequency of participation in extracurricular activities: the smaller the locality, the less often students attended classes. While there were 2–3 interest groups per student in megacities, the respective rate in villages was only 0.5–1.5. Rural localities demonstrated a tangible unsatisfied demand for supplementary education:



it was only in villages that unavailability of desired classes was named among the reasons for nonparticipation in extracurricular activities.

Reasons for nonparticipation in extracurricular activities.

Ninth-graders in cities name the lack of time as the primary reason for their nonparticipation in extracurricular activities. 35 percent of students in villages blame first of all the unavailability of desired classes or interest groups nearby, this index being much lower in cities. The “too expensive” reason is more relevant for cities (15–22 percent of respondents) and virtually ignored in villages (5 percent).

The proportion of students who have never participated in any extracurricular activity depends on the size of populated locality: only 4 percent of ninth-graders in megacities as compared to 7 percent in medium-sized cities and towns, and 15 percent in villages. This reveals the underdevelopment of supplementary education infrastructure in rural areas and the need to apply additional efforts to boost it.

Age dynamics and gender specifics of extracurricular activities.

The proportion of students attending extra-academic classes is slightly higher at secondary school than at primary one. Besides, the rate of involvement increases at secondary school: most students combine 2 or 3 types of extracurricular activities, some of them attending 5 or 6 interest groups at the same time. Notably, girls are commonly more engaged in extracurricular classes than boys.

Some types of extracurricular activities have clearly defines “age profiles”. Thus, singing, choreography, and fine arts are more favored at primary school, while secondary- and high-school students prefer team sports. Frequency of participation drops by the ninth grade for almost all activities, apart from the gym, fitness and sport dancing which only get more popular by grade 9. We assume that 15-year-olds start developing a “grown-up” attitude towards their health and thus regard consistent training as part of a healthy living. Age-specific profiles of different types of activities are to be considered while designing the infrastructure of supplementary education.

Infrastructure of extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities are most often provided by general education schools. The second most frequent option includes sports, music and art schools, art centers, community centers, etc. Classes with tutors and fee-based courses are relatively infrequent, being typical of specific activities only, such as foreign languages. The Internet is not treated by students as a source of extracurricular activity; only few specified it as such.

School students almost never mentioned summer camps in the survey. This is probably due to the poor coverage of children with organized summer programs. Summer camps are indeed a powerful instrument of children socialization and development, being most



useful for students from low-income families. The state program “Education Development” for 2013–2020 envisages a set of measures to ensure effective use of vacation time for informal student education.

Structured and unstructured extracurricular activities. An overwhelming majority of extracurricular activities are structured: students attend interest groups, courses, clubs, their activity being organized and supervised by teachers or coaches.

Children who engage in sports as structured activities have a much higher sports and academic self-assessment, as well as, more importantly, a higher feeling of belonging at school and school satisfaction. Unstructured sports activities are also associated with high sports and academic self-assessment, but the effect is much less pronounced here. Unstructured sports activities do not affect school-related attitudes. Therefore, not only structured sports activities have a positive effect on child’s health and physical fitness, but they also promote development of positive attitudes towards learning and school.

We see the prospects of further research in comparative analysis of access to extracurricular activities for students from different types of populated localities (especially villages), schools and families, which requires additional empirical data to be collected. A detailed analysis is required to explore how different types of structured and unstructured activities influence academic performance, development of social skills, as well as social and psychological attitudes in students with due regard for their personal qualities, family status, and school characteristics. Such data will allow us to elaborate a justified strategy of education infrastructure enhancement and to create financial and economic mechanisms to provide equal access to high-quality supplementary education for children from different populated localities and families with different incomes.

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