

FORMS AND PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIZING EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES TO PREPARE FOR THE UNIFIED STATE EXAM IN SOCIAL STUDIES

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Abstract: Today, highly relevant is the problem of preparing students for the Unified State Exam in social studies, which is taken by the 11th grade students and is among the most popular exam subjects of choice. As experience shows, it is possible to prepare for the exam only by consistently working on the learning content and regularly performing different exam exercises. However, it is impossible to cover everything in the classroom, because many schools have time constraints, with only 34 hours per year for classroom social studies. For this reason, for reaching this goal of ultimate importance are extracurricular activities. This paper provides methodological recommendations how to organize such activities.

Keywords: extracurricular activities, unified state exam, logic workshop, thematic disputes, essays, project activities, problem- and value-based discussion, ethical conversation

1 Introduction

The relevance of this research is high as an increasing number of graduates choose to take the Unified State Exam (USE) in social studies, at the same time the common misconception among graduates is that social studies is one of the easiest subjects, because, today having life experience and being in the space of modern media, one can navigate well enough in social problems. Nevertheless, this exam requires comprehensive knowledge in the field of economics, law, philosophy, sociology, and political science. Each of the indicated sciences has its own conceptual and categorial framework and approaches to the evaluation and analysis of phenomena, so students are expected to learn the key terminology and basic concepts of these branches of knowledge.

Various forms and methods of work, sometimes non-standard, different from traditional technologies, can be applied in order to qualitatively prepare high school students for the final certification (Grishkevich & Kosheleva, 2018). The extracurricular activity which forms a compulsory part of the general education program, has powerful potential for reaching these objectives. It is "an educational activity aimed at achieving the planned results of the basic education programs (personal, meta-disciplinary and subject), carried out in the forms other than classroom learning. The purpose of extracurricular activities is to ensure that children achieve the planned results of the basic education program expanding the information, subject, cultural environment where educational activities take place, increasing the flexibility of their organization. The programs of extracurricular activities developed based on the requirements of the Federal State Standard for Education assume mandatory engagement of students in such activities. According to the recommendations of the Ministry of Education and Science, such programs should embrace the individual characteristics of children, their learning needs, as well as the needs of their families and the national and cultural uniqueness of the region.

The Federal State Standard for Basic General Education recommends organizing students' extracurricular activities in five areas: sports and health, spiritual and moral, general intellectual, social, and general cultural development (Grigoriev & Stepanov, 2014). All of them should be organized properly: foster engagement and independence of students, combine

individual and group work, strengthen creative abilities and reasoning skills, shape a worldview (Chekushkina & Rodina, 2015).

Extracurricular activities in social studies can be organized in the form of a club as a structural school unit, focused on the implementation of social studies education and the genesis of students' social experience.

2 Literature Review

Many researchers studied the role of extracurricular activities, their basic principles, methods and forms, contributing to a better understanding of their importance and capacity to meet adolescents' needs and interests, facilitate development of their abilities, self-development, social adaptation, acquisition of complex cultural and subject competencies, the formation of value orientations.

E. N. Khudoteplova (2012) believes that extracurricular activities promote comprehensive development of student's personality by implementing through effective organization of the integral educational process the objectives of moral, legal, civil, intellectual, economic, labor, aesthetic and physical education.

I. L. Kamenchuk (2018) considers extracurricular activities as a platform that opens up more opportunities for using dialogic forms of learning compared to the lessons, for example social studies organized as a discussion club that provides an opportunity to critically reflect on relevant social information, going beyond the knowledge obtained during the lessons.

Today many works have been published on the forms and methods of preparation for the USE in social studies, especially the tasks which require a detailed answer. So, S. A. Elmanova (2018) offers her own approach to solving tasks 25 and 26, because, in her opinion, they most vividly reflect the knowledge of social science categories and the ability to apply knowledge in practice concretizing theory with the help of examples.

N. A. Tanshina (2017) in her paper describes the USE tasks specifying which skills a student should have in order to cope with them and analyzes the typical errors. The author pays special attention to the problem of preparation for writing an essay, because this task requires the developed ability to formulate a problem, to present arguments in a logical and consistent way, the experience of finding proper examples and facts to support the standpoint.

3 Research Methodological Framework

The purpose of this research is to determine the most effective forms and principles of organizing extracurricular activities as part of preparations for the USE in social studies at secondary school.

The research objectives are as follows:

1. develop recommendations regarding organization of extracurricular activities to prepare for the USE;
2. identify specific forms of work to get students prepared for the USE in social studies, such as consultations, intellectual games, project activities, problem- and value-based discussions, logic workshop and their analysis.

The research employed the range of methods: theoretical (study and analysis of the scientific literature, systematization of effective extracurricular methods that help to strengthen the students' research competence; empirical (pedagogical observation); comparative which helps to comprehend the essence of various forms of students' training in social science. The research was carried out on the basis of schools No. 8 and No. 22 in Saransk as part of the pedagogical internship of

master's students studying at the Philosophy Department in the Mordovian State Pedagogical University named after M. E. Evseev guided by the team of authors from 2018 to 2021.

4 Results and Discussion

According to the Federal Education and Science Supervision Agency (2020), 292 701 students took the USE in social studies in 2020, and their results show the positive dynamics. Thus, the average test score improved by 1.4 points compared to 2019, the share of high scorers who got 81-100 points increased by 2.1%. The number of students who failed to reach the minimum threshold score decreased by 0.5%.

Organizing various forms of extracurricular activities to prepare students for the USE in social studies, in our opinion, the following recommendations should be noted.

Training for children should be conducted at a high level of difficulty. This does not mean that the assignments should include questions that are not part of the school program or that complex abstract scientific terms should be used during study of the content. The principle of "learning at a high level of difficulty" was formulated by L. V. Zankov (1962), who believed that "the overcoming of obstacles sparks the motivation essential for successful performance, but only when such obstacles trigger interest and desire to overcome them". Thus, the teacher's questions should be problematic, should invoke the existing knowledge, but also stimulate the learning of more complex issues and topics.

For the exam to be passed successfully, it is very important to teach children to think. If a student develops the ability to reason, even a question about a little-known fact in the exam will not stump him/ her. The knowledge in possession through reflection will lead the student to a peculiar, unexpected, but logical answer to a new question. Therefore, it is important for a teacher to teach children to understand the causes and consequences of social phenomena, not just to memorize the facts. In connection therewith, it seems reasonable to introduce students to the elements of classical formal logic through an elective course or on the basis of the "Logical Thinking Lab" practical workshop, which will allow them to develop necessary skills for working with concepts and acquire not only theoretical knowledge about correct thinking, but also apply it in practice.

Another, not less important stage is systematic progress checks by topics, sections and modules (in case of targeted preparation for the USE). Such checks may include typical USE tasks, as well as individual theoretical consultations and questions, small colloquia, during which a teacher and students discuss topics of a certain module of social studies. This helps to systematize theoretical material and reveal the gaps. Since students directly participate in a dialogue on a certain topic, in case of revealing their incompetence, facilitating conditions are created for identifying further necessary work to cover the topics which cause problems. When students have their mind set on getting high exam score, this may be a powerful incentive for their further work (Yashkova & Kalimullin, 2015).

To cope with the tasks successfully, one should constantly train to perform exam tasks in the form as required by the USE. The main focus should be on the analysis of questions, topics and problems that cause the greatest difficulties. For identifying those, the teacher should analyze the papers written by students, expose the most difficult tasks and discuss them in class. Then find other tasks similar by subject and type and go through them with children to find the correct solution together.

Students should be advised not to disregard their intuition if they feel they lack knowledge when doing the tests. More often than not, an answer that comes intuitively, based on prior knowledge, may turn out to be the right one. Intuition sometimes prompts the correct answer immediately after reading the task, so a student should only change the answer if he/she has learned the material by heart and is absolutely confident that their original answer was incorrect (Bloom, 1956).

Based on the above recommendations, we suggest using the following organizational forms of extracurricular activities to prepare for the USE.

Organization of individual and group classes after lessons in the form of consultations based on questioning, colloquia. It is at this stage that the gaps in theory are identified and filled in, the training tasks are solved, the difficulties in completing the tasks are eliminated. Students should be divided into groups by their level of knowledge. Everyone can get into a group of the weakest students if they know mostly the problems of the first part, and into a group of the most "advanced" students who can already cope with the tasks of the second part. Students become familiar with the peculiarities of performing various tasks. First of all, these are test tasks of different types (choosing the right answer, choosing several right answers, finding a match, establishing the correct sequence). Teacher should mainly focus on what causes the major difficulties in the consulted group. Usually, these are the tasks of the exam's second part. For this purpose, everything that caused difficulties is analyzed, and then similar exercises are performed to solidify the knowledge and skills that are needed to cope with them (by content and form). To avoid mistakes in the answers, attention is also paid to the importance of reading the question carefully, understanding its wording and providing an accurate answer. It is also necessary to develop the skill of students to control how much time they spend to write down the answers.

Organization of thematic weeks on social studies in the form of a game. The necessary knowledge and skills develop during intellectual games, such as tournaments of connoisseurs "Constitution of the Russian Federation", games "Young Voter", "Young Lawyer", "Civil Society", business game "We are Entrepreneurs". The game as a form of interaction between teacher and student is one of the most effective ways to catalyze the cognitive activity of schoolchildren (Komarova et al., 2018). Game as a pedagogical technology of extracurricular work is multifunctional, brings learning closer to reality, and facilitates interaction, creativity and initiative (Buyanova, 2013). Participation of children in business games is an important part of their socialization, as it gives them the opportunity to get a glimpse into a vein of possibilities offered by certain activity or profession, helps them to get included in the system of social institutions (Butcher, 1993). We rely on the most important functions of the game - higher students' interest in the subject matter studied, unleashing of creative forces which were not activated in the classroom. Introduction of games as a way to support the learning process makes it possible to maintain a sustained interest in the content of the studied course, in the learning itself, to invigorate creativity, to develop and strengthen practical skills, to gain a better understanding of the relationship between theory and practice (Mikhalkina et al., 2018).

Here are examples of games that can be used for the thematic week "I have a right".

Game "Songs about Rights". Songs are played. Students are asked to guess what rights and obligations are implied.

"In every little child" (the right to all-round development);

"What is taught at school" (the right to education);

"I serve Russia" (the obligation to register for military service);

"May there always be sunshine" (the right to life and freedom);

"Antoshka" (the right to work and to rest);

"The Mammoth's Song" (the right to live and be brought up in a family).

The game "The Law Remains the Law in the Fairy Tale!"

Three teams are formed. The teacher reads out the "fairy tale" tasks. The team that solves the most tasks wins.

The tasks:

1. Which branches of law will those examining the Little Red Riding Hood case will refer to, provide explanation? (mother - care and custody, wolf - criminal responsibility, trespassing, deception);
2. Which branch of law unites such fairy tales as Three Little Piglets and Zayushka's Hut? (civil law - the right to housing);
3. What right would the Musicians of Bremen invoke if they lived in our country now? (constitutional - the freedom to move);
4. Which right was violated in the fairy tales "The Pope and His Employee Balda" and "Cinderella"? (labor law, Balda - employee's wages, Cinderella - irregular working hours);
5. What right may Pinocchio have if he lives in our country? (the right to education - constitutional);
6. What right was violated by Signor Tomato, who kicked out Cipolino and his family from their home if they lived in our country? (the civil right - the right to personal dwelling);
7. What right did the wolf in The Wolf and the Seven Little Goats violate? (the right to life - he broke into the house and ate the goats);
8. Under which law the goose-swans will be prosecuted? (criminal law - kidnapping).

Despite the apparent ease, these game tasks require knowledge of different branches of law and clarity of wording (Mikhailenko, 2011).

Project activities intended to consolidate the studied material and to build and develop the skills of goal-setting, planning, selection of adequate activities, material content, etc. (Kuznetsova et al, 2020). Such activities help to develop the key competencies of students. First of all, their unique abilities and interests should be taken into account. When the decision on the project is made by a student, its content is always emotionally colored, has personal value, and therefore the student approaches it proactively and creatively. This will predetermine the objectives and directions of the project implemented by the student (Ioffe, 2013).

The teacher may offer various topics for research projects to guide students in exploring the complex questions of the USE. Here are some examples.

1. "Me and the Society" (based on the topics "Society as a developing system", "Multivariate social development", "Threats of the 21st century (global problems)", "Social stratification and social mobility").
2. "How do we cognize the world?" (based on the topics "Scientific cognition" and "Truth").
3. "Me and the World of Culture" (based on the topics "Culture, Its Types and Forms").
4. "Who Are We?" (based on the topics "The Natural and the Social in a Human" and "Socialization of Personality and Social Norms").
5. "I am a Citizen" (based on the topic "Fundamentals of the Constitutional Law").
6. "Crime and Punishment" (based on the topic "Fundamentals of the Criminal Law").
7. "The President of the Russian Federation" (based on the topic "Fundamentals of the Constitutional Law").
8. "Contract is of Higher Value than Money" (based on the topic "Fundamentals of the Civil Law").
9. "I am a Minor" (based on the topics "Fundamentals of the Civil, Labor and Family Law", "Fundamentals of the Constitutional, Administrative and Criminal Law").

Problem- and value-based discussion is a group form of work through which students acquire social knowledge, an understanding of social reality and an attitude toward the basic values of society. It is the understanding and expression of individual attitude toward the subject that will be necessary for the student to write a final essay during the exam. It will require awareness of personal worldview position, clear expression of own original thoughts, orientation in the situation of diversity of views, the ability to respect other points of view, correlate them

with own point of view (Chekushkina et al., 2016). In the extracurricular activities, in our opinion, this method of teaching should receive special attention.

Preparation for writing an essay is an important part of work which is often not covered sufficiently in the classroom. This is a creative mini research on a specific topic from the perspective of one of the modules of social studies (philosophy, sociology, economics, politics, and law). A student should formulate and justify own point of view on the problem, cite relevant terms and concepts, theoretical viewpoints and conclusions, as well as facts from social or personal experience. One of the most difficult tasks for students is the need to provide convincing arguments in support of their point of view. For strengthening this skill, the problem- and value-based discussions and debates are held, which help students to gain a whole complex of diverse knowledge. Such methods help to develop independent thinking, skills of cooperation and communication (Habermas, 1995).

All presented topics are formulated as aphorisms. The statements should be selected, which cause an ambiguous reaction of a person, a debatable approach to the interpretation of a certain social phenomenon, process or fact. When choosing a topic for the essay, a student should proceed from the most familiar subject, material, their knowledge of the science terminology, should be theoretically prepared in the field of their statement argumentation, should know the logic of concepts, definitions and facts.

A teacher should explain to students how important it is not to forget about the emotions that arise when comprehending the author's aphorism, about their expression in a bright and interesting way. Sometimes even short, simple but capacious sentences have a much greater effect in conveying meaning than long and complex reflections (Super, 1957).

It is highly important that a student learns to understand and articulate the meaning of a quotation correctly, otherwise all the content created by the student will not be assessed positively. Only careful attention to the author's thought predetermines the fate of the essay. When expressing own point of view on the problem, the student should either start a dialogue or a dispute with the author. Regular practical drills and targeted development of these skills help students to overcome the fear of setting the goals and expressing own understanding of the statement (Super, 1985).

A form of problem- and value-based communication such as ethical conversation, for example, may be useful. Through studying various topics from the social studies course, the value-based attitude towards some of them may be formed, focusing on their moral aspects (Frankl, 1969). The teacher may organize students' work with educational information about healthy lifestyles, ecology and terrorism, moral and immoral acts in our life, heroism and crime. In communication with peers, students correlate their own values with generally accepted ones, building their own value scale (Zhuina, 2014).

In ethical conversation, the main subjects of communication are teacher and students. An important aspect of its organization is problematization of the topic of communication. "If a social situation is not constructed as problematic, it may become not so much an object of comprehension as an object of cognition and will be perceived by the student as a learning objective. Then there will be no engagement of comprehension as a universal way of human exploration of this world, in which, along with theoretical knowledge, an essential role is played by direct experience, various forms of practice and forms of aesthetic comprehension" (Grigoriev & Stepanov, 2014). When preparing for this kind of discussion, teacher decides on a social topic that would be relevant, interesting and personally meaningful for students. The following possible topics may be suggested:

1. Interests and needs of young people in the sphere of leisure and culture in Saransk.
2. Productive engagement and employment of young people in Saransk.

3. Social stratification in the city of Saransk.
4. Role of subcultures in the cultural and moral life of Saransk city.
5. Ecology of Saransk and viewpoint of the youth.

It is possible to view a fragment of social reality on the basis of a chosen text and its comprehensive reading. The discussion should be problematized from the very beginning by checking comprehension of the text, which may differ, or it may turn out that the text was not comprehended. In the course of discussion, students compare their opinions about what they have read by agreeing or disagreeing with others. The teacher opens a series of questions, encouraging clarification and deeper understanding of standpoints, expression of personal attitude toward the comprehended text. The problematization should be stimulated until a meaningful conflict arises between standpoints involving a large number of participants with opposed views. Then it becomes possible to support the discussion, the purpose of which for a teacher is to organize students' reflection and independent thinking over the problem (Polkovnikova, 2007).

Logic workshop as a way of developing skills of work with concepts and gaining experience in the right way of thinking. Social studies is a discipline with a developed conceptual framework, which graduates must demonstrate at the exam: here it is the mastery of the conceptual framework that matters, not the ability to find good synonyms. Here it should be noted that we are not talking about those cases when different names are used in social studies to denote this or that object, phenomenon, or process of social reality, for example: "traditional/ patriarchal family," "ideal/ spiritual needs," etc. The workshop will help students to learn how to express the theoretical content of the course with the help of scientific terminology instead of replacing it with ideas or specific examples taken from everyday life.

5 Conclusion

Extracurricular activities may be organized in the following forms: consultations with students of 11th grades, which help to develop the skills necessary for successful passing of the Unified State Exam; activities in the form of intellectual games with students of 9th-11th grades as part of the thematic week; project activities developing independence of students; problem- and value-based discussion as a key to good essay writing skills; logic workshop providing experience of the right way of thinking and work with categorical framework.

Thus, when preparing for the USE in social studies through extracurricular activities highly effective is to combine different forms of work. The most important part is to organize the preparatory process as an independent creative search where student plays an active part in partnership with a teacher. Properly organized extracurricular activities bolster not only theoretical but also psychological readiness of students for the exam, relieving them of stress and allowing them to get high exam scores.

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