

FINANCING OF EXTRA-CURRICULAR EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA THROUGH THE PRISM OF CONSOLIDATION OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

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Abstract

The development of social and economic relations in society, technological changes, the transformation of the needs of families and children lead to new challenges, stimulating the use of the competitive advantages of the national system of extra-curricular education and the search for new approaches and means. At the same time, the current mechanism for financing extra-curricular education institutions applied in the Republic of Moldova represents an obstacle not only to their upward evolution, but also to the continuous erosion of the teacher-staff potential and of the material and technical base of extra-curricular education institutions, with a strong negative impact on the quality of extra-curricular education. This article aims to analyse extra-curricular education institutions in the Republic of Moldova in terms of their funding and to make recommendations to improve the financial mechanism so as to respect the right of children and young people to education. The complexity of the social, economic and financial phenomena studied required the application of the research methods and techniques at both quantitative and qualitative levels. The complexity of the financial phenomenon related to the field of extra-curricular education is investigated by the use of statistical-mathematical methods. In particular, the analysis of the dynamics and structure of the budgets of extra-curricular education institutions was used. A special place is the factorial analysis and the comparative analysis associated with the budgetary process at the level of extra-curricular educational institutions. As sources of information that are based on the research, the following are to be mentioned: the legal and regulatory framework governing the activity of extra-curricular education institutions and their budgetary process; the budgets of institutions of extra-curricular education and other financial-accounting documents; interviews, discussions at the level of extra-curricular education institutions (representatives of the management of extra-curricular education institutions) and their local public administration and central government.

Keywords: *budgetary expenditures, budgetary revenues, extra-curricular education, financing, right to education*

INTRODUCTION

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Art. 13) recognises the right of every person to education. It must pursue the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity and strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Through education any person must become able to play a useful role in a free society. In order to ensure the full exercise of the right to education, it is necessary, inter alia, to actively pursue the development of a school network at all levels, to continuously improve the material conditions of the teaching staff [1].

These stipulations are also applicable to extra-curricular education. Extra-curricular activities are academic or non-academic activities that take place either under the auspices of the general school or in specialised institutions of extra-curricular education. Extra-curricular activities take place outside normal class hours and are not part of the formal curriculum, the participation of students being optional [2].

Thus, through extra-curricular education, the function of enlargement and complementarity in relation to formal education is achieved. This function is carried out in two directions, namely - activities organized outside the classroom: circles, competitions, Olympiads, competitions, cultural and artistic events, etc.; and - activities organized outside the general school: excursions, visits, camps,

exhibitions, creative centers; institutions of extra-curricular (non-formal) education of artistic profile, sports, etc.

Extra-curricular education offers a wide range of benefits. Thus, children heavily engaged in extra-curricular activities tend to have higher backgrounds, better attendance, higher graduation rates, higher education aspirations and a higher college attendance rate. In addition, they are characterized by a lower probability of leaving school prematurely than their other peers. In addition, the activities provide an opportunity to develop and enhance personal strengths and talents, contributing to the positive formation of self-esteem and identity.

Due to their many benefits and positive associations in relation, often, to extracurricular activity, children and young people should be encouraged to participate in appropriate structured activities and acquire social, physical and academic skills that will undoubtedly have an impact on many areas of their lives [3; 4].

The evolution of education and extra-curricular education in the Republic of Moldova goes back to the period of the 1950s when the first more or less formal structures to ensure the instructive activity of children's and youth organizations appeared. In the 1970s they were transformed into extra-curricular institutions with educational, methodical and organizational functions. These educational units were later established as an integral part of the current education system in the Republic of Moldova.

In recent decades, education and extra-curricular education in the Republic of Moldova has been carried out in public and private extra-curricular institutions.

The research objects of this article are public institutions of extra-curricular education. These, being set up by public authorities, whether central or local, and financed mainly from the National Public Budget, can be considered as forming a system.

The current way of financing extra-curricular education institutions in the Republic of Moldova determines, at the level of these educational establishments, the following problems:

- erosion of teacher-staff potential;
- unsatisfactory quality of the technical-material base;
- lack of incentives for effective financial management;
- a far too large number of children per 1 teacher, on the one hand, reducing the number of children and under-utilisation of the project capacity of the buildings in which these institutions are located,
- limiting children's access to the services of extra-curricular education institutions, in particular those involving tuition fees;
- neglect of heads of extra-curricular institutions in the process of drawing up the budgets of the institutions they lead.

Consequently, children's right to extra-curricular education in public educational institutions is limited. We will state that the right to education is respected, when there is equal opportunities, universal access and quality standards applicable and monitored.

In this respect, reconsideration of the mechanism for financing public extra-curricular education in the Republic of Moldova has become an obvious necessity.

1. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In theoretical-scientific terms, the current research has been carried out in the context of the complex and systemic approach to contemporary economic and social concepts.

The research is based on established approaches to economic, social and cultural rights, with a basic focus on the right to education.

The complexity of the social, economic and financial phenomena studied required the application of the research methods and techniques in both quantitative and qualitative methods. The complexity of the financial phenomenon related to the field of extra-curricular education is investigated by the use of statistical-mathematical methods. In particular, the analysis of the dynamics and structure of the budgets of extra-curricular education institutions was used.

A special place is the factorial analysis and the comparative analysis associated with the budgetary process at the level of extra-curricular educational institutions.

In the process of analysing the budgets of extra-curricular education institutions, the ratio of budgetary expenditure per child shall be assessed as efficiency indicators.

The methods of data collection used in research are the document analysis and interviews with representatives of the Central Public Administration (CPA) and Local Public Administration (LPA) authorities and extra-curricular educational institutions.

The sources of information that have been explored come from the Ministry of Finance, the National Bureau of Statistics and the extra-curricular educational institutions of the Republic of Moldova. The following are mentioned as sources of information that are the basis of the research activity:

- the legal and regulatory framework governing the activity of extra-curricular education institutions and their budgetary process;
- the budgets of institutions of extra-curricular education and other financial-accounting documents;
- interviews, discussions at the level of extra-curricular education institutions (representatives of the management of extra-curricular education institutions) and their founding LPA/CPA.

Table 1 systematizes the general information about extra-curricular education institutions that have been evaluated in this research. Thus, of the total number of extra-curricular educational institutions analysed (283), 25% represent extra-curricular education centres, 41% - music schools, art schools and fine arts schools and 34% - sports schools.

Table 1. Distribution of extra-curricular education institutions by budget levels

Category of extra-curricular education institutions	Number of institutions	including, by budgetary levels		
		Local budgets Level 1 (LB1)	Local budgets Level 2 (LB2)	State budget (SB)
Centres for extra-curricular education	72	23	48	1
Arts schools (music schools, art schools, fine art schools)	116	55	61	0
Sports schools	95	21	52	22
Total	283	99	161	23

Source: processed according to the information of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova.

Of the total institutions analysed, 99 or 35% are institutions financed from local level 1 budgets (budgets of villages, municipalities, towns and municipalities, without mun. Chisinau and mun. Balti), 161 or 57% are institutions financed from local budgets of level 2 (district budgets, Chisinau municipal budget, Balti municipal budget and Gagauzia Autonomous Territorial Unit), 22 or 8% are institutions financed from the state budget of the Republic of Moldova.

2. RESULTS

The analysis of the extra-curricular education institutions identified the following problems:

Although the *Standard Regulation of the extra-curricular institution* prepared by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) provides that extra-curricular educational institutions are legal persons, in reality, the vast majority of them are not legal persons and do not manage the budget independently. Extra-curricular educational institutions are institutions under the authority of the central public administration authorities (Ministry of Education, Culture and Research) and local public administration authorities (*Education Directorate* or *Culture Directorate* of district councils, or town halls). These authorities, being the founders of extra-curricular education institutions and having the status of legal person, draw up and implement the budgets of extra-curricular education institutions, contract goods and services for them.

The financing of extra-curricular education institutions is mainly from local budgets, but from the special purpose transfers received from the state budget. Exceptions are the extra-curricular education institutions whose founder is the MECR which are financed directly from the State Budget (SB).

Extra-curricular education institutions are financed on the historical principle. By 2014 for all areas of competence of the Local Public Administration (LPA) of level 1 (LPA at the level of villages, communes, cities, municipalities, with the exception of Chisinau and Balti) and APL of Level 2 (APL at the level of districts, Chisinau and Balti municipality, territorial unit with the special state Gagauzia) the expenditure on education was calculated on a normative basis. Since 2015 when another formula for calculating general purpose transfers was switched on, it has been decided that education should be financed from special purpose transfers (either directly from SB for institutions whose founder is the MECR or from local budgets. In the latter case, the Ministry of Finance transfers the amounts related to special purpose transfers to local budgets). For primary and secondary education has been developed and applies from 2015 the standard cost-based calculation formula per pupil. For pre-school and extra-curricular education when drawing up the 2015 budget, the sum of the transfers approved for 2014 for that level was taken as a basis, plus planned changes in wages, higher prices for goods and services, etc. From then until now, this method of financing applies to these two categories of institutions. If the amount of transfers does not cover the planned expenditure, an additional request for financial means shall be made.

Training fees are charged for art schools and music schools. This situation is, in one case, an obstacle to extending accessibility for children to learn in arts and music schools, and, on the other hand, a factor that limits the ability of arts schools to compete with extra-curricular education centres, the latter having circles of profiles similar to those of arts and music schools, but do not charge tuition fees.

When drawing up the budget, extra-curricular education institutions are usually not consulted by the founding authorities. Consequently, the actual needs of the institution are not identified and are practically not considered.

In the case of extra-curricular institutions, the need for expenditure on non-financial materials and assets is much higher compared to other educational institutions.

As a rule, special purpose transfers mainly cover payroll expenses. And in a small proportion, thermo-energy expenditure is covered. The infrastructure of extra-curricular education institutions is last on the funding list.

For the most part, the infrastructure and fixed funds of extra-curricular education institutions are outdated and/or insufficient. Capital repairs are an absolute rarity. As this problem is serious in the municipalities, it is even more critical in the district and rural towns.

The current mechanism for financing extra-curricular education institutions does not objectively and transparently address the needs of capital investments: it is not clear under what principles are some institutions capital-repaired and modernized, others still facing a deplorable quality of buildings, infrastructure and equipment facilities.

In order to somehow solve the problem of insufficient funding and lack of regulation, internal "mechanisms" at the institution level (solutions for the moment) are designed.

Children from several localities are trained in extra-curricular educational institutions, not just from the locality where the institution is based. This makes it difficult to design a funding formula per child for extra-curricular education institutions.

In general, the way in which extra-curricular education institutions currently applied (through special purpose transfers calculated on the basis of historical trend) are financed does not determine the efficiency of the use of public money, in particular, while reducing the number of children. The public administrations responsible for the financial management of these educational institutions are not interested in monitoring the presence of children in these institutions, on the grounds that 'money comes to the locality'.

Extra-curricular education institutions in rural and district communities frequently face the problem of under-utilising project capacities. This issue has a strong impact on financial expenditure and assets per child. At the same time, some institutions of extra-curricular education, especially in the mun. Chisinau, is experiencing the insufficiency of the space for teaching purposes.

In some extra-curricular educational institutions, insufficient funding leads to a high rate of the number of children per 1 teacher.

One problem that restricts the effectiveness of extra-curricular education institutions is the doubling of circles, especially in extra-curricular education centres.

The salary of teachers in extra-curricular education institutions, including arts schools, is made under the conditions of lower pay classes compared to the salary in high schools. This influences the attraction of teachers, especially young ones, to practice extra-curricular education.

Specialized professional training, usually abroad, is paid individually by teachers.

3. DISCUSSION

The fundamental right to education is proclaimed and regulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova. Thus, Article 35 provides that the right to education is ensured through compulsory general education, secondary education, vocational education, higher education, as well as through other forms of instruction and training. State education is free. High school, vocational and state higher education is equally accessible to all on the basis of merit [5].

The specificity of the funding of educational institutions depends on whether the category of education to which the institutions concerned belong is in compulsory or voluntary education. Thus, in the Republic of Moldova, according to the Education Code, compulsory education begins with the preparatory group in pre-school education and ends with high school education or secondary and postsecondary technical vocational education [6].

We note that extra-curricular educational institutions, in line with early education institutions, primary, and secondary education, are part of general education. At the same time, according to the Education Code, extra-curricular education is voluntary.

According to the Education Code, public institutions of local extra-curricular education are established, reorganized and liquidated by the APL authorities of the first level. Public institutions of extra-curricular education of district level are established, reorganized and liquidated by the APL authorities of the second level and of the Gagauzia Autonomous Territorial Unit. Thus, in the case of second-level LPAs, the founder of creative centres and sports schools is the Directorate-General for Education, Youth and Sport. The founder of music and arts schools is the Culture Directorate. The APL authorities have an obligation to ensure the proper functioning of these institutions in accordance with the regulations and standards approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research. At the same time, in the case of public institutions of extra-curricular education their founder is the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research [6].

Although public educational institutions may have the status of a legal person, however, the vast majority of extra-curricular education institutions do not have legal personality. In the case of educational institutions without legal personality, the budgetary process shall be carried out at the level of the founding authority with the involvement of the management of the extra-curricular institution concerned.

According to the Education Code (art. 37), extra-curricular education is organized, regarding the interests and options of children and young people, in general education institutions and in public and private extra-curricular educational institutions (centres, palaces and creative houses, arts schools, sports, etc.), in the form of specific educational activities, carried out in groups and/or individually, under the guidance of teachers with special training, in collaboration with family, sociocultural units, the media, children's and youth organisations.

This article addresses the functioning of public extra-curricular education institutions in the category of extra-curricular education centres, arts schools and sports schools.

According to the Education Code (Title XI, Art. 143, paragraph 5), the sources represented in Table 2 contribute to the financing of extra-curricular education. At the same time, the table indicates the proportion by which each source contributes to the financing of these educational institutions.

Table 2. Structure of budgetary revenues of extra-curricular education institutions by its categories, 2019, in % of total budgetary revenue

Income sources for extra-curricular education institutions under the Education Code	Centres for extra-curricular education (centres and creative houses, centres of young tourists, naturalists, etc.)	Art schools and music schools	Sports schools
Special purpose transfers from SB to BL (priority source)	97,9	88,6	97,2
Transfers from local budgets	0,0	0,0	0,1
Proceeds from the provision for payment of educational services (study fees)	1,1	10,6	1,3
Sponsorships	0,0	0,0	0,0
Donations	0,1	0,2	0,5
Proceeds from the marketing of articles made in the study process	0,0	0,0	0,0
Proceeds from the rental/lease of premises, equipment, land and other public property	0,9	0,1	0,9
Grants/ project sources	0,0	0,5	0,0
Total	100	100	100

Source: processed according to the information of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova.

As follows in Table 2 the public institutions of extra-curricular education in the Republic of Moldova are financed mainly by special purpose transfers. In the case of extra-curricular education centres and sports schools, the share of special purpose transfers is 98% and -97% respectively. According to *the*

Education Code of the Republic of Moldova, public extra-curricular education institutions can provide educational services for payment only in addition to those provided for in the curriculum, according to the legislation in force. In the case of extra-curricular education centres and sports schools, this provision means that these institutions, with small exceptions, do not provide services for payment.

Arts and music schools charge fees for training. Its fee size shall be determined by the school administration and approved by the local public administration authorities. The amount of the fee shall be fixed in the amount of 20 % of the current expenditure recorded by that institution in the previous year. As a result, in 2019 these institutions recorded an 11% share of the revenue from the training fee in total budgetary revenue.

Although the legislation allows, extra-curricular educational institutions do not have receipts in their budget from sponsorships and the marketing of articles made in the study process.

Grants and transfers from local budgets contribute inconsiderably to the formation of the budgetary revenues of extra-curricular education institutions.

The lease/lease of premises generated weights between 0.1 and 0.9% in total budget revenue.

Table 3. Structure of total expenditures of the consolidated budget for extra-curricular education institutions, 2019, in %

	Centres for extra-curricular education	Art schools	Sports schools
II. Expenditures and non-financial assets	94,6	99,2	96,2
III. Expenditures properly	87,2	94,4	85,1
Personnel expenses	79,2	90,2	68,7
Goods and services	7,4	3,9	15,3
Social benefits	0,2	0,2	0,1
Other expenses	0,3	0,1	1,0
IV. Non-financial assets	7,4	4,8	11,0
Fixed assets	4,8	3,7	7,2
Stocks of current materials	2,5	1,1	3,8
Capital investment projects	4,5	0,0	3,2
Cash compensation for teaching staff	0,9	0,8	0,6
Supporting gifted students	0,0	0,0	0,0
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source: processed according to the information of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova.

The structure of expenditure relating to the consolidated budget of extra-curricular education institutions is set out in Table 3. It follows from the information submitted that the share of expenditure itself in the structure of expenditure and financial assets varies, depending on the category of the extra-curricular education institution, between 85 and 94 %. Non-financial assets range from 5 to 11%.

In the structure of expenditure itself, staff expenditure has the dominant share (69-90%). Personnel expenses shall consist of expenditure on the remuneration of staff employed in arts schools (teachers, management staff, service and auxiliary staff) and compulsory insurance contributions and premiums.

The share of expenditure on goods and services in total non-financial expenditure and assets is 4-15%.

In the structure of non-financial assets, fixed assets account for 4-7%, with stocks of current materials accounting for 1-4% compared to the total.

Please note that non-financial assets signify the capital repair of buildings, special constructions, transmission facilities, the procurement and capital repair of machinery and machinery, means of transport, the procurement of tools, production inventory, capital investments, etc.

It should be noted that the expenditure related to the vocational training of teachers is 0.0% in the structure of the total expenditure. As a rule, training costs are borne by teachers themselves on their own means. The budget of extra-curricular education institutions does not have the financial capacity to bear these expenses.

Partly this structure is apparent from the provisions of the Law on Local Public Finances, according to which "the financing of expenditure is carried out as the money is paid to the budget accounts, respecting the following priorities: a) honouring commitments to serve the Debt of the Territorial-Administrative Units; (b) staff costs, payment of allowances, compensation, allowances and social benefits; (c) expenditure on thermal energy resources; (d) expenditure from the reserve fund of the LPA authority.

This provision limits the budget managers of extra-curricular education institutions to manage the financial means obtained from the budget in such a way as to increase the share of expenditure on other items (e.g. to improve the provision of institutions with tools, tools, inventory, teaching materials, etc.).

Table 3 suggests the conclusion that sports schools, compared to other categories of extra-curricular education institutions, have a more flexible structure of non-financial expenditure and assets.

Table 4. Distribution of extra-curricular education institutions by share of staff expenditure in total budgetary expenditure, number of institutions, 2019

	100-90%	90-80%	80-70%	70-60%	< 60%
Centres for extra-curricular education	20	31	14	2	5
Art schools and music schools	74	28	10	4	0
Sports schools	4	28	27	20	15

Source: processed according to the information of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova.

Table 4 shows the allocation of extra-curricular education institutions according to the share of staff expenditure in total expenditure. Thus, most institutions record a share of staff expenditure in total budgetary expenditure in the range of 90-100%, emphasising the conclusion about the rigidity of the structure of budgetary expenditure.

One of the peculiarities of extra-curricular education institutions compared to other educational institutions lies, inter alia, in the need to develop and maintain a specific technical-material base. This characteristic determines the objective specificity of the cost and expenditure structure of such an institution. At the same time, under the conditions of the Republic of Moldova, the small size of the national public budget determines insufficient funding, including extra-curricular education institutions. Consequently, expenditure on the maintenance and development of fixed funds and stocks of current materials is well below the level necessary for the proper functioning of these institutions.

One of the indicators that measure the efficiency of the use of budgetary means at the level of extra-curricular education institutions is the ratio of their total budgetary expenditure (measured by the sum of expenditure and non-financial assets) to the number of children attending these institutions.

Table 5. Expenditures and non-financial assets per child at the level of extra-curricular education institutions, 2019, MDL

Extra-curricular education institutions by category	The founder and budget from which the institution is financed	Number of institutions	Non-financial expenditure and assets			
			Min	Max	Media	Median
Centres for extra-curricular education	LPA1 (LB1 funding)	16	0,6	5,5	2,5	3,1
	LPA2 (LB2 funding)	47	0,7	44,9	2,8	3,1
	MECR (SB funding)	1	9,4	9,4	9,4	9,4
Art schools and music schools	LPA1 (LB1 funding)	47	1,6	36,3	14,3	12,9
	LPA2 (LB2 funding)	56	3,5	22,6	14,3	14,1
Sports schools	LPA1 (LB1 funding)	20	2,9	97,6	7,0	5,9
	LPA2 (LB2 funding)	49	2,1	128,9	8,8	6,9
	MECR (SB funding)	21	5,8	45,4	12,9	10,6

Source: processed according to the information of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova.

In this respect, Table 5 presents information on non-financial expenditure and assets per child at the level of the different categories of extra-curricular education institutions. The highest expenses and financial assets per child are recorded in art schools and music schools. It should be noted that art schools and music schools are attended by a smaller number of children. The reason for this is the existence of the training fee in these institutions. In extra-curricular education centres and sports schools, payment is not usually charged for attending these institutions.

In addition to the number of children, the *expenditure and financial assets indicator per child* is influenced by the number of staff working in extra-curricular educational institutions, the technical characteristics of the school's location, the management of the institution.

Table 6. Disaggregation of average expenditures and non-financial assets per child by categories of expenditure at the level of extra-curricular education institutions, 2019, MDL

	Average expenditures and non-financial assets per child	Including:				
		Personnel expenses per child	Expenditure on goods and services per child	Including:	Non-financial assets per child	Other expenses
				Expenditure on energy and communal services per child		
Extra-curricular education centres	3 189	2677	247	149	246	19
Art schools and music schools	14 278	12 990	551	335	707	30
Sports schools	10 472	7 490	1 669	668	1 187	126

Source: processed according to the information of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova.

Table 6 shows the disaggregation of average non-financial expenditure and assets per child by spending categories at the level of extra-curricular education institutions. The technical and material provision of children in extra-curricular education institutions remains an obvious problem.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of extra-curricular educational institutions determines the formulation of the following *recommendations*:

- The development of a distinct formula, on the basis of which to make special purpose transfers from the state budget, has also become a necessity for extra-curricular educational institutions in the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, in order to initiate the design of a specific funding formula, it is necessary to formulate clearly the concept of extra-curricular education in the Republic of Moldova: what is the role of extra-curricular education, which actors are involved, the type of institutions and educational services provided. In this respect, the primary role of the MECR is obvious.
- An important prerequisite for the implementation of a new funding formula (which may be, for example, per child) is the decision on the subordination of extra-curricular education institutions. As a rule, these institutions educate, teach and train children from other localities, not just from the locality where the institution is located. Therefore, this area of coverage, logically, would be, at the very least, the responsibility of the level 2 local public administration authorities. In this case, the rationality of designing and implementing a new funding formula would be much better outlined.
- The design of the new funding formula should be based on the assessment of the average number of hours (e.g. per week) that could be assimilated by a child related to extra-curricular activities, including its categories, and the trend recorded by the share of children participating in extra-curricular activities in the total number of children.

- At the same time, on the basis of the previous recommendation, it is necessary, in order to ensure access for children from more remote areas, either to ensure their transport or to extend the practice of setting up branches of extra-curricular education institutions. This solution could explore the potential of rural settlements if there were craftsmen in these localities, specialists who, through their own talent and craftsmanship, would attract children to various extracurricular activities.
- Examination of the possibility of granting legal status to those extra-curricular education institutions which have the potential to manage the funds and which apply for that status. This would provide the possibility for the more active involvement of heads of institutions in the financial management process, including the selection of economic operators to provide services to those institutions. At the same time, in order to make the work of extra-curricular education institutions with legal personality more efficient, some services could be outsourced (e.g. accounting).
- Reconsideration of the calculation of the fee for training in art schools in order to extend the accessibility of children to learning in these institutions.
- Amendment of the *Law on Philanthropy and Sponsorship* so as to be attractive to economic operators for the purpose of sponsoring extra-curricular education institutions.
- Reconsideration of the way teachers are paid in extra-curricular education institutions so that there is an equivalence between pay in extra-curricular education institutions and high schools.

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