

## THE EFFECT OF EXTRACURRICULAR CLASSES ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract:** For some years now, the failure of formal education to provide adequate training to students is paving the way to new alternatives (Brenton, 2012:3). This situation has opened the door to 'classes' after classes better known here as extracurricular classes, henceforth ECCs. Nowadays, extracurricular classes seem to play a significant role in students' performances particularly at the secondary level of education in Cameroon. "Up to secondary level, there are many Cameroonian pupils who are unable to count, read properly, or write intelligible sentences" (Safotso: 2022: 49). Therefore, this study investigates the effect of extracurricular classes on the academic performance of some secondary school students of the examination classes. The purpose is to analyze students' motivations when engaging into those classes, and their effect on their performances. The population of study was made up of 57 Terminale<sup>1</sup> students from various centres/groups offering extracurricular classes in the city of Dschang (West-Cameroon). Data were collected mainly through questionnaires. Findings revealed that students' enrollment in extracurricular classes is motivated by factors including overcrowded formal classes, regular strikes by teachers' unions, poor teachers' training and the desire to achieve the best performances by learners. The study also revealed that extracurricular classes dedicate more hours and more tutorials to specialty courses according to the student's field of study. Given that not all students have enough means and time for extracurricular classes, the study suggests that particular attention should be given to students in examination classes through the quantity and quality of teaching workloads and classes, the limitation of striking periods and the improvement of teachers' working conditions in the formal school system.

**Keywords:** academic performance, extracurricular classes, effect, students.

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<sup>1</sup>This refers to the ending class of the high school in the Francophone sub-system of education. The Anglo-Saxon system will refer the equivalent class as Upper Sixth.



## Introduction

Cameroonian secondary school students in general, and those in examination classes in particular both in urban and rural areas are generally under pressure all through the school year. In fact, “the current curricula in primary and secondary schools are inadequate and too demanding from the learner” (Safotso: 2022: 49). This is due to heavy workload, insufficient time to learn thoroughly every subject (06 to 07 subjects in the curriculum) and teachers’ absenteeism for most of time, mostly because of constant teachers’ strike<sup>2</sup>. In the meantime, it is worth observing or it is noteworthy that with Safotso (2022: 49) that “Many primary and secondary schools across the country do not have any trained teacher at all”. This context of strikes has also increased the use of untrained and unprepared teachers by school managers in trying to avoid a blank school year. Another major problem is the overcrowding of classrooms (generally far more beyond UNESCO’S standard of 40 students per primary class and 25 students per secondary class<sup>3</sup>) which does not allow easy follow-up of each student by teachers for effective application of the Competence Based Approach (CBA), which has been advocated by the Minister of Secondary Education (MINESEC) since 2010. Brenton (2012:3) for instance remarked that “the cause of students’ failure is now seen as deficient or inadequate provision of education by schools, and by extension, school systems. It is the failure of school to provide education which is appropriate to different needs that leads students to fail”. Because of these reasons and many others to be developed, some parents pay additional fees for their children to be enrolled in extracurricular classes where working and teaching conditions are different (small class size, learner-centered approach...). The problem thus lies in the fact that formal/regular classes seem insufficient and inadequate for improving some students’ academic performances or to satisfy students’ needs. Hence, the rise of extracurricular classes. The rush for ECCs is becoming systemic in Cameroon from primary to the tertiary level of education. Therefore, two questions pave the way to this research and will be answered in turn: (1) what are the motivations of students who follow extracurricular classes? (2) What is the effect of these classes on their academic performances?

## 1. Literature Review

Morphologically, the lexical item extracurricular derives from prefixation of the word curricular. There is an abundant literature that defines and applies the expressions curricular and extracurricular in the domain of education worldwide. If the meaning of curricular is commonly accepted in the academia as a set of programs taught and learnt in the school within regular school time and more often in the classroom (Abacioglu et al., 2023:953), the meaning of extracurricular is subject to ongoing debate among scholars. It refers to any activity that occurs “in a time that is free from school work...” (Belikova, 2002:74). In this light, extracurricular means beyond or out of school regular periods. Such activities in the literature are referred to as

extracurricular activities henceforth ECAs. ECAs according to Eccles et al. (2003) can be pro-social activities, performance activities, team sports, school environment and academic clubs. These activities are “non-academic endeavours” (Chia, 2005:76), “activities outside the classroom” (Christensen, 2002), or simply “Outside-of-the class” (Nelson et al., 2002:278) or even “structured, challenging, and voluntary” (Mahoney, Cairns and Farmer, 2003:410) non-academic exercises or also “Extra-scholastic activities”, “after-school activities”, “support activities” (Moriana et al., 2006:38) and “extracurricular work” (Pirmanova et al., 2021:1367). In general, Bartkus and Gardner (2012: 698) suggested some characteristics of extracurricular activities. According to them, ECAs are outside the classroom or regular curriculum, are conducted under the auspices of the school, do not provide a grade or academic credit, are academic as well as non-academic and are voluntary or optional. These characteristics align with the definitions proposed and used in the study by Mishra and Aithal (2023:84), Zakhir (2019:122), Sari and Esa (2017:46960), Mtika (2019:2), Feraco, Resnati et al. (2023:110), Carmona and Jazmin (2020:2217) and Rahayu and Dong (2023:459) to name just a few. Rubin, Bommer and Baldwin (2002:693) agree that “One intuitive notion is that extracurricular activities are a place where students look to utilize, and perhaps refine and develop, their interpersonal skills”. ECAs help students discover their non-academic skills or abilities to achieve better results in other domains. Bartkus and Gardner (2012: 699) came out with direct and indirect extracurricular activities. In fact, “Extracurricular activities can be considered from the perspective of a continuum that ranges from direct to indirect. A direct extracurricular activity is one that is more closely associated with the student’s major or curriculum. An indirect extracurricular activity is on that is relatively unrelated to the students major or curriculum” Bartkus and Gardner (2012: 699). Their definition of ECAs is worth applying in this study as its covers and captures aspects of definitions suggested by other authors as mentioned above. In this regard, they succinctly view ECAs “as academic or non-academic activities that are conducted under the auspices of the school but occur outside of normal classroom time and are not part of the curriculum. Additionally, extracurricular activities do not involve a grade or academic credit and participation is optional on the part of the student.” In other words, ECAs are not compulsory as they do not primarily determine success or failure for students or progression from one class to the next. However, ECAs by all evidence, “can support young people by providing them with necessary opportunities for academic and interpersonal development in preparation for post-secondary schooling and the world of work” (Mtika, 2019:1). This view is equally shared by Skowroński et al. (2019:141) who concluded that regular extracurricular physical education classes have a positive effect on gross motor skills in children”

Several studies on the effects of ECAs on students’ academic achievements have been conducted by scholars with satisfactory results. Moriana et al. (2006:36) investigated the relationship between ECAs and academic performance among secondary school students in in Spain and found that activities outside school hours yielded better academic performance particularly with students that participate in study-related activities, tutoring support or private classes as well as those that participated in mixed activities. On the other side, Sari and Esa (2017:46961) focused on factors affecting participation in ECAs and observed that there are structural, intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints

<sup>2</sup> In September 2022 till 2024 for example, a nation-wide teacher’s strike nicknamed “OTS” (In French On a trop Supporté) also known as “Operation Dead Chalk” has disturbed the course of classes during the whole school year. The main issues addressed by teachers were poor working conditions and pay. The situation has relatively affected both the students and end of year examinations.

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016.

that influence students' participation in non-academic activities. Mtika (2019:1) focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) related ECAs in six secondary schools in Scotland and discovered that these subjects provide students with significant knowledge, wider learning opportunities and confidence in their abilities to think and work for social development. In another study, Zakhir (2019) used a self-centered approach to analyze the effect of ECAs in TEFL<sup>4</sup> based on both students and teachers' attitudes. Using a mixed method approach, she found that "extracurricular activities facilitate teaching English, motivate students to learn and make them more sociable and ready for long-life learning" (p.119). These results corroborate with those of Gibbons (2006) and Hunt (2005). Furthermore, Rahayu and Dong (2023:459) found that ECAs positively affect the development of student character education associated with several determinant factors such as friends, teachers and school time. Additionally, Feraco et al. (2023:113) also discovered that students who participated in ECAs have better soft skills including thinking, memorizing and processing information from study materials. Their study centered on the joint influence of soft skills in terms of adaptability, curiosity, leadership, initiative perseverance and social awareness and ECAs, achievement emotions, self-regulated learning, motivation and cognitive abilities on academic performance and life satisfaction. Similar study has been carried out by Mishra and Aithal (2023:84) who demonstrated that "both extracurricular and co-curricular activities contribute towards confidence building, along with the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes".

From quite another perspective, other studies rather show that too much ECAs can interfere with regular classes and affect the overall well-being of the learners. In this light, Carmona and Jazmín (2020:3) found that "Students also find difficult to balance their time between academic tasks and extracurricular activities" even though ECAs play an important role in helping them attain their learning objectives. They also added that "an overload of extracurricular activities will negatively impact their achievements and knowledge acquisition" Carmona and Jazmín (2020:1).

Besides ECAs, an emerging phenomenon in the school environment that emerged in the 2000s, referred to here as extracurricular classes (ECCs). Some authors used other expressions to name the phenomenon. ECCs are also referred to as "Extracurricular training classes", "Extracurricular courses" "remedial classes" or shadow education" (Cheng, Dai and Liu: 2023:153-154). Some other authors referred to the phenomenon as "After-school remedial teaching", "private instructions" and "additional classes" (Palic and Bazdalic, 2021:46-48). This situation has become "an inevitable trend in modern education" or "extracurricular tuition" (Cheng, Dai and Liu: 2023:158) particularly in some Third World countries in Africa like in Cameroon. In some schools (public and private), the same teachers offer to the same students at the end of regular school time ECCs in the same classroom. Is only part of instruction provided during regular school hours, with the remainder reserved for ECCs? What would happen if the same causes produce the same effects? In most cases anyway, it is observed that school premises, private houses (often those of teachers) or more or less appropriate buildings in the city/town/village regardless of the tranquility of the environment are the places where ECCs take place in Cameroon precisely. The phenomenon is widespread in the city where there

seem to be more facilities for studies to take place in the formal school setting. But it happens that it has become common practice for parents to have students attend both ECCs and formal ones to increase the students' chances to achieve great performance in schools. Some studies have already investigated the issue.

In their survey of 2021, Pirmanova et al. noticed that the contents of new technologies, non-traditional and original, innovative methods, modern information tools that are effectively used in ECCs participate in the development of intellectual and creative activities of teenagers (p.1366). Cheng, Dai and Liu (2023:152) found that "parents' education level affects children's participation in extracurricular classes, that parents have different degrees of influence on children's participation in extracurricular classes, and that high parental education level and children's participation in extracurricular classes are not common". This shows that some parents are motivated to send children in ECCs because of their inability to follow up the children at home. This situation is common to most Francophone households where parents unanimously decide to get registered their kids in Anglo-Saxon school system they did not attend. Their inability to assist the child when academic help is needed paves the way ECCs to fulfill the gap. ECC teachers become parental substitutes. The other reason for this rush to ECCs is the unavailability of parents who are constantly absent in the households because of survival conditions challenges. None of them is there to revise with the kids after classes and sometimes even during the weekend or holidays. Palic and Bazdalic (2021:46) argued that "Mathematics as a school subject in primary and secondary school is a significant problem for quite a number of students". Their study focused on how extracurricular supplementary Mathematics in high school quickly and effectively tackles the problem, help students preparing for the test, corrects negative grades and help filling out the gaps in knowledge (Palic and Bazdalic, 2021:54).

These works attest to the fact both ECAs and ECCs are boosters of children cognitive, social and professional development beyond the formal school setting. Such studies are almost inexistent in the Cameroonian context where the phenomenon of ECCs is mushrooming. To date, the issue has not yet gained the attention of researchers. There are studies on formal teaching and learning settings including curricula, teachers and students in both primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Hence the present study that focuses on students' motivations and the effects in attending ECCs in and out the formal school setting.

## 2. Methodology

This study was carried out in the Menoua Division (West-Cameroon) and mainly in the city of Dschang commonly known as the 'City of Knowledge' in reference to the multiple and diverse nature of school institutions present in the locality. The city hosts one state university (University of Dschang), between 6 and 9 private higher institutions, many vocational training institutes, several secondary schools (public and private), and a good number of nursery and primary schools (public and private). Both the Anglo-Saxon and Francophone subsystems of education are represented in accordance with the official bilingual nature of the country.

57 informants (28% males and 71% females) voluntarily participated in the survey; 80.70% were between 15 and 20 years old. Only one student was under 15 years old. 8.77% of students were between 20 and 25 years old and one was above 30

<sup>4</sup> TEFL: Teaching of English as Foreign Language

(occasionally, such older students register just for the end of year examinations, given that they may have been dismissed from the regular school system because of age). The two latter age groups were composed of students from technical high school. The population of study basically contained more students registered in public schools (78.94%), than those in confessional schools (10.52%) and private schools (5.26%); 5.26% respondents did not indicate their school.

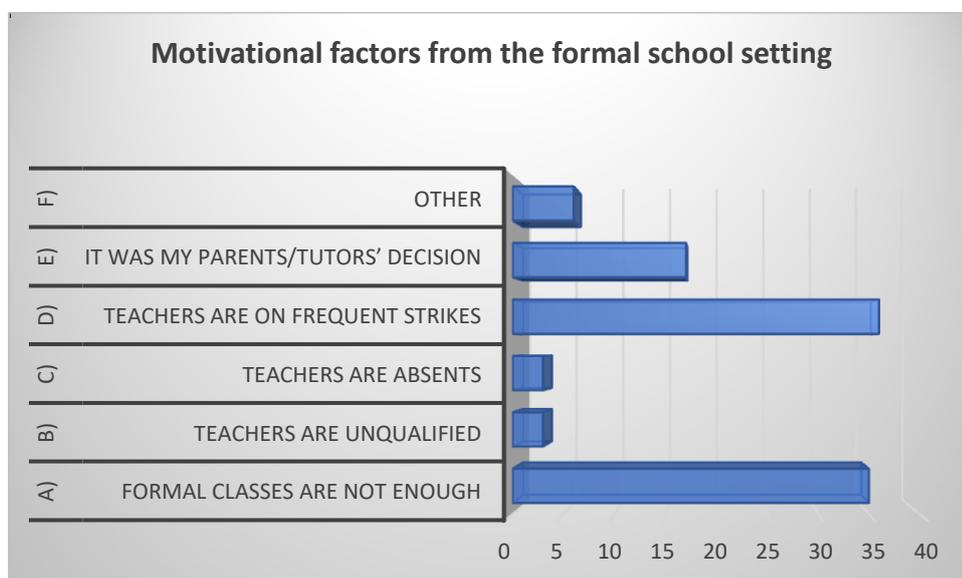
Apart from observation and informal discussions with some parents, teachers and students in the neighborhood, data were collected primarily through questionnaires to enable many participants as possible to share their experience of the ECCs with the researchers. The questionnaire had 3 pages and was made up of four sections. Section A (General information on the respondents) was containing 15 questions (1-15); Section B (Motivations to follow up extracurricular classes) had 6 questions (16-21) and the ultimate Section C (The effect of extracurricular classes on academic performances) was made up of 6 questions (22-27). By so doing and in order to collect valuable and relevant data, Terminale students were chosen because they were 15 and above and were considered mature enough to provide accurate information on the motivation and effects of ECCs on their academic performance. To facilitate understanding of the questionnaires and elicit well-considered and relevant answers, questionnaires were designed in English and translated into French. With time constraints and the willingness to reach as many respondents as possible, some questionnaires were sent online to informants that the researchers could not meet directly. Other respondents were met on the field during their school day mainly on Wednesdays’ afternoon, Saturdays and Sundays’ morning. Then, collected data were processed and arranged in the tabulated form through Microsoft Excel package, version 2.1. for questions (close ended) that required statistics, so as to enable quantitative analyses. Open ended questionnaires were simply subjected to qualitative analyses where only the most relevant information was taken into consideration. A total of 57 questionnaires were filled: with 31.57% online and 68.42% filled on the field. Data gathered are presented and discussed in the following sections.

### 3. Findings and discussions

This section provides an overview of the data collected and subsequent analyses. It focuses mainly on ECCs’ students’ profile and motivations, ECCs’ settings and fees, ECCs’ school periods/days and workload, subjects taught/learned and the effect of extra-curricular classes on students’ performances. The discussion here is based on the assumption that “the longer students attend school, the higher their academic achievement” (Carmona and Jazmin, 2020:2216).

#### 3.1 Students’ profile and motivations

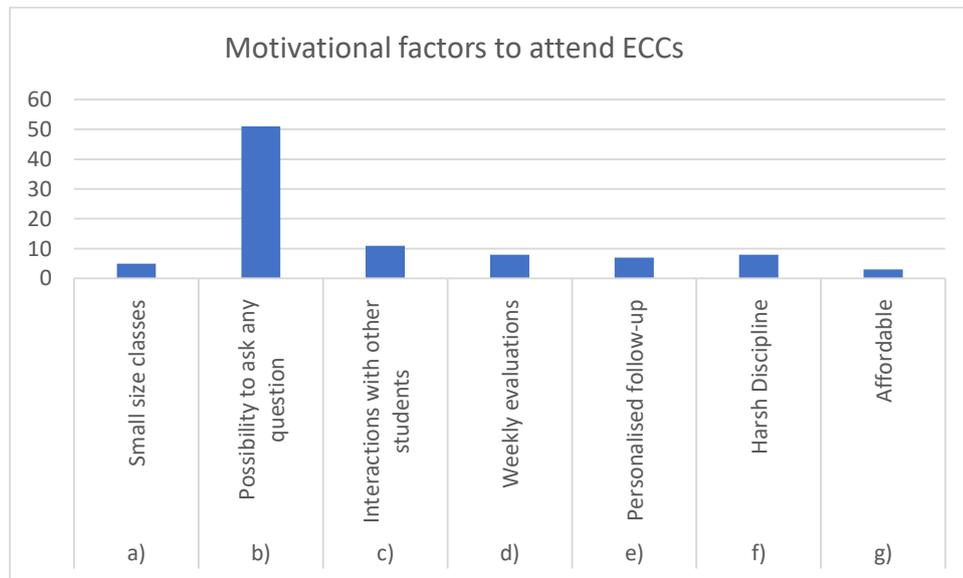
In general, ECCs give students a chance to experience challenging situations, widen their social networks, express and explore their identity, learn new skills, and develop personal qualities, such as soft skills (Feraco et al., 2023:113). Students find the ECC environment less hostile, lively and appropriate for free expression. It promotes cognitive abilities as more attention is paid to individual students. According to Cheng, Dai and Liu (2023:153), “participation in extracurricular courses is an additional product of the family’s capital advantage.” As earlier mentioned, ECCs are a melting pot of students coming from schools of diverse nature of the academic landscape of Cameroon: public and private (secular and religious school). 78.94% of students come from public schools and 21.05% are from the private sector. Some began attending ECCs in primary schools (14.57%), others in the middle school (14.03%) and the majority (68.42%) just in the high school as it is more demanding. This indicates that formal schools which are supposed to be best educational environment is rather where learners have more challenges and obstacles. From the data obtained, many reasons varying from one student to another justify why students get registered for ECCs. Some (35.08%) indicate that their motivation derives from constant teachers’ strikes that result into absenteeism and therefore affect the smooth running of the school program and subsequently their performance. To fill in this gap, students look for alternative means as they want to be graduate (82.45%), obtain the best marks in main courses (31.57%) and be the best in their class (14.03%) or run away from home distraction (1.75%). Other motivational factors are summarized in the below chart:



Source: From field data

The chart above shows that frequent teacher strikes and insufficient instruction are the major factors in formal school settings that lead students to ECCs added to parental influence. According to Rahayu and Dong (2023:467), “Parents have a significant influence on a child’s life”. Cheng, Dai and Liu (2023:152) also underlined that “parents’ education level affects children’s participation in extracurricular classes, that parents have different degrees of influence on children’s participation in extracurricular classes, and that high parental education level and

children’s participation in extracurricular classes are not common”. Apart from parental influence on the choice of ECCs, students also influence one another to the extent that “the influence of classmates or close friends is enormous” (Rahayu and Dong, 2023:466). Their success is supported by additional classes where certain contextual problems can be easily addressed. These motivations stemming from the formal school system are complemented by extrinsic or external motivations (ECC facilities) as summarized in the below chart:



Source: From field data

The illustration shows that ECCs are characterized by an internal organization that quickly convinces students to be the best alternative where they can catch up if academic success is their primary objective. The possibility to ask any question appears to be the greatest advantage students have in attending ECCs as there are small size classes. In short, students have both intrinsic/internal and extrinsic/external motivations for ECCs. Motivation is an individual’s internal drive to achieve a certain goal (Feraco et al., 2023:111). Subsequently, students view ECCs as solutions to problems (large class size, teachers’ strikes, absenteeism...) that constantly arises in the formal school setting. In the same vein, Mishra and Aithal (2023:88) demonstrated that students participating in ECCs have better experiential learning. They added that “Apart from developing communication skills and team spirit, students learn task-oriented roles and relationship-oriented roles” Mishra and Aithal (2023:88).

**3.2 ECCs’ settings and fees**

As previously mentioned, ECCs alternate with formal classes to many regards. More often, they share the same schools, the same classes and the same teachers for some times at different moments within the week, the week-end, during holidays and public days. In these cases, the formal school environment is just reshaped to meet the conditions of the ECCs. In some cases, ECCs hold in private houses or around the school/church premises and even in some households. Whatever the case, the common denominator is that they are generally referred to as “repetition groups”. Wherever they take place, each group uses specific marketing names to attract as many students as possible before, during and after school resumption from holidays, Christmas

holidays, Easter holidays. From field observations, and given that the survey took place in a predominantly French-speaking environment, the following appellations were captured here and there: “Cedis”; “Le Succès Plus”; “Groupe le Succès”; “Lumière vers l’OBC”; “Rattrapage Plus”; “Réussite 100%”; “Cogito”; “NTG Succès Plus”; “Le chemin du Succès”; “La Réussite”; “Les Chevronnés”; “Groupe d’Etude La Méthode”; “Futur Bachelier”; “Le Succès”; “L’Excellence”; “La Réussite Se Prépare”; “Le Chemin de la Réussite”. Altogether, these names (mostly nouns and noun phrases) reflect and denote success and excellence which are the ultimate goals of students attending ECCs. These names also reflect the reputation of groups based on their annual graduation rates. The denominations also act as forces that drive students to join up.

ECCs’ fees fluctuate from one group to another, from one class to another and from on one subject to another. They are set or determined by the owner according to the reputation the group has already established. Fees vary between examination classes (CM2 [Class 6], Troisième [Class 4], Première [Lower Sixth], Terminale [Upper Sixth] and non-examination classes (Intermediate classes). They also vary from whether students register for scientific subjects or arts subjects. Additionally, fees also depend on classes frequency per week and the number of students. The class size varies between 10 and 15 learners. There are classes of 1 to 5 students, 5 to 10 students, 10 to 15 students and above 15 students depending on the levels and subjects. In other words, the number of days per week and the number of students determine the amount to pay either for the whole school year or per month and/or per week. In any case, the fees generally range between 5000FCFA

(7.62€) and 20000FCFA (30.48€). Students can even pay more also depending on whether they are in the rural or urban area. From fieldwork, 26.31% of students pay 1000 to 5000CFA, 59.64% pay 5000 (7.62€) to 10000 FCA (15.24€), 10.52% pay more than 20000FCFA (30.48€) and only 1.75 pay between 10000 to 20000FCFA. The payment of these fees constitutes additional expenses that most parents concerned about their children's success now bear in Cameroon. Both low-income and high-income parents are involved in this ECCs' matter. It would be difficult to find an adult Cameroonian unaware of this issue which even influences their own schedules depending on when children need to attend ECCs. In past decades, many women stayed home and assisted children in revision. They used to be students' second teachers in many households. Nowadays, "As women become more educated and advanced, mothers may have higher jobs titles and less time to spend with and care for their children" (Cheng, Dai and Liu, 2023:157). Consequently, they will pay others to play their roles. Some ECC teachers spend more time with students than their parents who are constantly absent for their duties towards their offspring.

### 3.3 ECCs' school periods/days and workload

During holidays, including Christmas, Easter and public holidays, ECCs take place from Monday to Sunday in most groups, ECCs hold more often on Wednesdays (afternoon) and Saturdays (morning and/till evening). 68.42 %, 77.19% and 43.85% of students, respectively, attend ECCs on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. These are the three days of the week in which ECCs regularly take place in the Cameroonian context of education whether we are in nursery, primary, secondary or tertiary level of education. Saturday is the most common day. Formal classes are not held on Wednesday afternoons and more generally on Saturday and Sunday except there are some catch up classes duly authorized by the school administration. ECC promoters use these periods to schedule classes when students are free from official academic constraints. Some students may attend only one day per week, focusing on subjects with which they struggle.

The workload depends on the day within the week and the period of the school year. When ECCs are scheduled in the afternoon, they do not exceed 4 hours as students need to reach home in time. During weekends and holidays, they may exceed 6 hours with short breaks in the course of the day. These hours may be adjusted depending on whether students are preparing for end-of-year examinations, mock exams, or monthly and weekly tests. In this respect, students also find it difficult to balance their time between academic tasks and ECCs (Carmona and Jazmin, 2020:2216). Students who live far from EEC centers also need significant time to reach their houses in time to feed themselves, rest and revise again before bedtime. Duration may also be adjusted based on individual student learning needs especially when it comes to 'hard courses' or STEM<sup>5</sup>. In this context, ECCs' teachers will be forced to exceed their teaching hours until the students' needs are met. However, "Teachers on occasion complain that some students are over-involved in after-school activities and that these are chosen by the parents or are not well planned, thus failing to coordinate with or complement the activities carried out at school" Moriana, Alós, Alcalá, Pino, Herruzo and Ruiz, 2006:39).

<sup>5</sup> STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (Mtika, 2019:8)

### 3.4 Subjects taught/learnt

Coulangeon (2018) attests that teaching and particularly learning are not restricted to formal curriculum settings alone, but also, through other arrangements. As mentioned above, STEM are the subjects that are mostly taught/learnt in ECCs context. For instance, Palic and Bazdalic (2021:48) highlighted that "Mathematics as a school subject in primary and secondary school is a significant problem for quite a number of students". It has been established that Mathematics is the most commonly taught subject in the course of ECCs. ECCs are organized and conducted to reduce this problem as mechanisms that quickly and effectively help in preparing for the test and correct negative grades to fill gaps in knowledge, Palic and Bazdalic (2021:46-48). Here, ECCs aim "at supporting students in developing knowledge of STEM subjects and confidence in their preparation for high school examinations, post-secondary schooling, and the world of work" (Mtika, 2019:1). English and French have been added to these subjects (STEMEF), especially given the value placed on them in Cameroon' school system and the international demand for language knowledge and because of Cameroon's official language policy. English language, for instance, is required globally as it is undoubtedly the international language of aviation, academia, diplomacy, trade, transportation, sports, justice, communication, etc. Swales (1997 :373). Due to the widespread use of English, it became an imperialistic language (Phillipson, 1992) worth to be learnt worldwide. Results show that 82.45%, 63.15%, 54.38%, 24.56%, 22.80% and 15.78% of students in ECCs register respectively for Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry, Earth and Life Science, English, French and Philosophy. Other subjects (Computer Science, Finance, Economy, Controlled Electrical Installation, Business Accounting, Financial Accounting, Corporate Finance, Applied Mathematics, General Economy, Business Economics, Management) have also been mentioned by respondents with insignificant percentages to be learned/taught during ECCs. This is, as mentioned earlier, due the fact students of this study come from both general and technical (vocational) oriented education. In other words, they are from both Arts and Science backgrounds.

### 3.5 Extra-curricular classes and students' performances

Moriana et al. (2006:38) found that extra-scholastic activities are associated with an improved educational level, more interpersonal competencies, higher aspirations and a better attention level, increased critical thinking and personal and social maturity, higher motivation, and generally speaking, with great benefits that serve to bridge school activities with those performed outside the academic setting.

Cheng, Dai and Liu (2023:153) highlighted that "the contribution of extracurricular classes to the child's achievement is seen as an element worthy of consideration and tracing". First and foremost, the ultimate objective in attending ECCs for students is to score good marks and achieve good results in class and during official exams. If 95% of students would support inviting their classmates to attend ECCs, it shows that this educational alternative is valuable in this context to exist nowadays. 59% are satisfied with balancing these two learning environments. Expansive learning through ECCs can therefore complement formal learning (Coulangeon, 2018). ECCs affect both performances and students' behavior as the below chart illustrates:

## Effects of ECCs



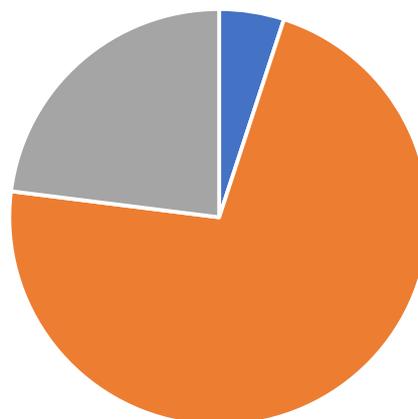
- a) I have better grades
- b) Obtain best marks in main courses
- c) I am ahead of my classmates
- d) To be graduated
- e) I am more disciplined and organized in my personal academic work
- f) Be the best of my class

**Source:** From field data

The above chart underlines some aspects in which students benefit from attending ECCs. Being more disciplined and graduating remain their paramount objectives. Hussain and Ahmad (2023: 287) highlight that “low entry grades, family support, accommodation, student gender, previous assessment grade, GPA and Students' e-learning activity are the most significant factors influencing student's academic performance.” Although ECCs help students improve, they also impact students' mental health, as some claim, “My weekends are not free” (54.38%); and the fact that they go back home lately coupled with the absence of entertainment. Carmona and Jazmín (2020:2220) remarked that an excess of ECCs will eventually overload students with additional work and may be detrimental instead of beneficial. In any case, the

general tendency is that the majority of students here are comfortable with those additional classes and likely cannot succeed without them. Mtika (2018:2) quoting George (2012) and Fujita (2006) emphasised that there are numerous benefits of participating in ECCs. They noted that taking part in ECCs can influence students' success in their school subjects and subsequent career prospects. In the same light, Eshach (2006) quoted by (Mtika (2019:3) reported that any opportunities available to students to engage in various forms of wider learning, out-of-school hours, such as field trips, and linking students to external providers of specific training can support students in developing appropriate skills, values, and attitudes. The following chart shows their degree of satisfaction:

## Students' level of satisfaction in ECCs



- Unsatisfied
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

**Source:** From field data

Very few students who attend ECCs appear unsatisfied with the results achieved. They may be those that registered because of parental pressure, and therefore view them as punishment as they do not have much time for entertainment and leisure and other deviant activities. In most households in Cameroon today, particularly in rural areas populated predominantly by grandparents, elders or parents are neither available nor possess the intellectual capacity for extra classes or revision with children. To fill this gap, students are sent to ECCs. Zakhir (2019:133) reported that students prefer ECCs to break the routine of lectures and ordinary courses and to be autonomous in learning. ECCs are therefore “a complement to the school curriculum [...] a complementary to the requirement and interest in the academic development” (Sari and Esa, 2017:46960). In urban areas, both parents work in most cases and do not have time to be devoted to revision activities with children. Even those who are teachers often lack time for extra classes once home. In some cases, parents who are teachers bring their children to the ECCs where they teach. In this sense, researchers claim that “participation in extracurricular courses is an additional product of the family’s capital advantage” (Cheng, Dai and Liu, 2023:153). In other words, some parents’ duties are assumed by ECCs. They substitute for parents in their absence. They rather look for money to sponsor ECCs for their children than to be taking care of them by themselves. Cheng, Dai and Liu (2023:158) noted that “the more educated the parents are, the more concerned they are about their children’s participation in extracurricular classes, affirming the importance of knowledge and the inevitable reason for education as a development industry”. Venkarataman and Dheivamani (2021) found that there is a positive relationship between involvement in extracurricular activities and academic success. “Benefits include: improved academic performance, increased social skills, better time management skills, improved self-esteem.” (p.43) “Factors such as school scores and faculty subjects or program curriculum are the primary causes of poor student academic performance and drop out.” Hussain and Ahmad (2023:287). If nothing is done to limit the widespread of ECCs in decades ahead, they may progressively be trusted more than formal academic system.

## Conclusion

This study analyses the impact of extracurricular classes on academic performance of students, particularly those in Terminale. Results show that students are mainly motivated by the high desire not just to succeed in their end of year examinations but to achieve good grades as well as to avoid overcrowded classrooms and regular teachers’ strikes. Those students also present a high level of satisfaction after following extracurricular classes, although they point to a lack of discipline during those classes. It has also been shown that not everyone has sufficient opportunity or time to follow additional classes. Mtika underlined that ECCs facilitate active learning, outdoor learning, cooperative and collaborative learning and peer learning (2019:2). It has also been underlined that ECCs apart from providing best results equally overloads students and they do not have much time for entertainment and leisure given that almost all their weekends are busy with classes and more particularly during holidays. These results constitute a warning for the formal school system, whose standards are declining dramatically as mentioned above. This is a call to action for the leadership of government schools characterized by incessant strikes and teachers’ absenteeisms. Therefore, the government should pay particular attention to

students in examination classes through improving the quantity and quality of teaching workloads and classes, and improving teachers’ working conditions so that strikes are reduced to the bare minimum. It has been noted that some teachers who are civil servants willingly devote more time in ECCs than in formal classes for which they receive a monthly salary. This situation is corroborated by Ofsted (2008:7) who found that learning outside the formal classroom can help to make subjects more vivid and interesting for pupils and enhance their understanding. Consequently, their best students in formal schools are often those they teach in ECCs. It is often claimed that some of their test papers are formerly written and/or revised during ECCs before they are proposed during official evaluations or examinations in their classes in formal schools. This questionable practice enhances the marketing strategy of ECC group that they promote for more adherence. In this respect, their groups are collectively viewed as producing the best results and paves the way for mass recruitment of students. The success rate of students in end-of-year examinations is automatically attributed to the performance of their group in case some of the graduate students studied in their ECCs. However, at times, “the same teachers teach in the same way that did not give satisfactory results...” (Palic and Bazdalic, 2021:46). Additionally, most of them are promoters, owners and trainers of/in ECCs study groups.

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