

“EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY – A TOOL BEYOND CURRICULUM FOR STUDENT EMPOWERMENT”

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ABSTRACT

Current visions of preparing students for the 21st century advocate that students must be enabled and empowered in the present and for the future. Empowering students to take control to lead functional and fulfilling lives should help them meet their needs for power and belonging, and enable them to pursue and realise their social goals. This outcome should positively affect students' achievement motivation and hence learning.

In the present world, the life has become too complex to be led by the academic qualifications alone. There are other very important factors those which help in shaping the life of a pupil as a whole. In this regard, the extracurricular activities have an important role coupled with those of curricula as they re-enforce each other reciprocally. The students those who participate in the extracurricular activities are not only physically fit rather they are mentally sharp, responsive and participative regarding the various healthy activities.

Extracurricular activities are found in all levels of our colleges in many different forms. They can be sports, clubs, NSS, NCC, Rovers and Rangers, cultural clubs, debate, drama, school publications, student council, and other social events. A student's future can be determined in the things that they do in the hours after school and before their parents get home. This paper describes the role of extracurricular activities and the positive effects that they can have on students of all kinds ranging from the above average student to the student that is on the brink of dropping out of college.

Keywords: after-academic activities, athletics, extracurricular activities, goals of education, Beyond Curriculum, student empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Current visions of preparing students for the 21st century advocate that students must be enabled and empowered in the present and for the future. Empowering students to take control to lead functional and fulfilling lives should help them meet their needs for power and belonging, and enable them to pursue and realise their social goals. This outcome should positively affect students' achievement motivation and hence learning.

In the present world, the life has become too complex to be led by the academic qualifications alone. There are other very important factors those which help in shaping the life of a pupil as a whole. In this regard, the co-curricular activities have an important role coupled with those of curricula as they re-enforce each other reciprocally. The students those who participate in the extracurricular activities are not only physically fit rather they are mentally sharp, responsive and participative regarding the various healthy activities. Here, it is justified to say that extracurricular activities must be a part and parcel of a student's academic life as it enhances his/her self-esteem and prominence in the entire society.

If, indeed, Extracurricular activities provide a channel for reinforcing the lessons learned in the classroom, offering students the opportunity to apply academic skills in a real-world context, and are thus considered part of a well-rounded education. Recent research suggests that participation in extracurricular activities may increase students' sense of engagement or attachment to their school, and thereby decrease the likelihood of school failure and dropping out (Lamborn et al, 1992; Finn, 1993).

CONCEPT OF STUDENTS' EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment as a term has been used in educational literature since the early 1980s. Boomer called for the empowerment of students and investigated ways in which power and responsibility could be shared. Boomer stated that teachers can empower students by allowing them to "exercise their own powers and responsibilities" (Boomer, G. 1982). Boomer's conception of empowerment is about teachers sharing power so students are able to exercise their power-to.

Ashcroft described empowerment as personal power, which can exist in both personal and social spheres. Ashcroft believed that empowerment should be a philosophy of education. For schools to be successful at empowering students for their futures they need to examine "fundamental beliefs held about the purposes of education, the nature of knowledge, of learning, of development, and of teacher-learner relationships" (Ashcroft, L. 1987).

We believe that true empowerment is achieved through validation of student perceptions, feelings, reflections and conflicts in a supportive emotional climate and warm interpersonal relations. Indeed, expressions of emotion and sharing of personal experiences relevant to the contexts of learning are modelled and encouraged. Students are also encouraged to persevere in the challenges, to recognize and support for their affective states and to develop the sense of humour. A spirit of learners' community is built, in which students and teachers mutually contribute to the construction of knowledge in a safe environment.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Extracurricular activities are defined as those activities which are not the components of academic curriculum but an integral part of educational environment. Extracurricular activities comprise sports, NSS, NCC, Rovers and Rangers, cultural clubs, eco clubs, singing, music, debate, dance, drama, social services, etc. The main motto of extracurricular activities is personality development. These are the activities which promotes students to take up their study in a healthy manner. All-round development as well as intellectual development is not the domain of curriculum, these characteristics can be judiciously fulfilled by co-curricular activities. Schools can play a pivotal role by channelizing energy of both normal as well as physically challenged students into a fruitful direction of personality development through extra-curricular activities.

To develop the various facets of personality of kids, children and students; curricula must be supplemented with extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities help in the development of intellectual, emotional and moral development.

OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the concept of Student Empowerment and Extra-curricular activities.
2. To study the various extra-curricular activities existing in colleges.
3. To study the importance of extra-curricular activities.
4. To assess the role of extra-curricular activities in student empowerment.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive in nature. The data for this study were obtained from secondary sources based on various references which already existed in published form. Part of the paper is based on literature review the method comprising of collecting all the available papers relating to the theme and selecting relevant papers/books for the review purpose. Selection of the paper is done on the basis of its relevance and contribution to the body of knowledge. The author has made an attempt to do primary reading of the selected papers which will constitute the core of this review study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

When looking at the variety of out-of-college options students may choose, it is important to consider how connecting with an activity might benefit them. It has been suggested by Eccles (2003), that participation in voluntary, college-based, extracurricular activities increase college participation and achievement (cited in Mahoney et al., in press). This happens because it facilitates: a) the acquisition of interpersonal skills and positive social norms, b) membership in pro-social peer groups, and c) stronger emotional and social connections to one's college. It then stands to reason that participation may contribute to an increase of wellness in mental health, improved students' engagement in school and achievement, strengthen their long-term educational outcomes and find that participation may decrease problem behaviours.

Students have unique opportunities to develop their social skills and their social identities. According to Olson (2008), participation in a school's music program lessened students' feelings of alienation,

promoted individual growth, and provide a common bond between home and college. It can provide adolescents with a social network and a support system that is associated with their college (cited in Darling, Caldwell, & Smith et al., in Feldman & Matjasko, 2005).

According to Reeves (2008), students who took part in three or four extracurricular activities during the academic year had dramatically better grades than those who do not.

Overall, the development that occurs can contribute to an adolescents' identity and show the importance of contributing as a member of the school community.

VARIOUS EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN COLLEGES

With so many options out there, all students should be able to find an extracurricular that they are interested in and can develop a passion for!

Below there are many popular activities that you may not have thought of as extracurricular activities. Of course, this list isn't complete, because student can turn almost any interest into an extracurricular. If students are actively involved in something that you don't see here - meaning student spend a significant amount of time doing an activity that is allowing him to develop a talent or interest, be a leader, or help out student community - then he should definitely consider that an extracurricular activity, as well!

1. Literary clubs
2. Cultural associations
3. National Service Scheme (NSS)
4. Rovers and Rangers
5. National Cadet Corps (NCC)
6. Sports club
7. Fine arts and performing clubs
8. Hobby club
9. Eco-club
10. Redcross
11. Life science Club
12. Wall magazine Associations
13. Drama club.. etc.

IMPORTANCE OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Students who are involved in extra-curricular pursuits tend to improve their academic grades as well. This may be due to increased self-esteem, motivation and better time management. They become better organized in the classroom. They demonstrate a reduction of at-risk behaviour and a heightened sense of belonging, resulting in better behaviour.

They learn useful new skills from their chosen activity, and in integrating these activities into their everyday school lives, they learn time management, critical thinking, teamwork and social skills. They develop life-long relationships with their peers and learn how to lead others. These skills will be beneficial in later life and in the workplace.

Extra-curricular activities also foster a sense of commitment to a cause or purpose and they reduce selfish behaviour. Students become more marketable in the workplace.

The colleges alike emphasize the importance of extracurricular activities, but sometimes it can be difficult for students to see just how the extra time and dedication will benefit them. From strengthening the mind to promoting better time management skills, extracurricular activities can help students succeed in much more than just their academic endeavours.

- 1. A stronger mind:** Academic rigors such as in-depth reading and complex problem-solving go far to strengthen the mind, but extracurricular activities will take this mind strengthening even further. High-endurance sports, for example, will train students to maintain patience and resilience in the face of intense difficulty.
- 2. Training in professional skills:** These activities can also work to build professional skills that a classroom alone cannot always foster. A leadership-oriented club, for example, will help students to learn essential skills in management and delegation, while a debate or speech club will provide additional public speaking practice for students. Sports most often have the effect of fostering strong team-building skills and training students in holding long-term goals.
- 3. A wider social circle:** Extracurricular are not solely about imparting stronger professional skills and supplementing education. These programs are also fun and offer students the opportunity to spend time with others of similar interests. Students can meet friends from different social groups by joining a sports team, student government or debate.
- 4. Better time management:** Ironically enough, many students find that adding more commitments to their already coursework-filled schedules has the effect of improving time management. The student who is busy with coursework but also needs to balance two other extracurricular activities is more likely to plan out time dedicated to each activity and less likely to procrastinate during downtimes. An extracurricular activity might even have the effect of “recharging” the brain after a day of rigorous schoolwork, allowing students to return to homework assignments with a refreshed mind.
- 5. Exploration of interests:** Extracurricular allow students to pursue interests outside of a standardized academic context. A student with a flair for mathematics, for example, might become a member of the school’s math honour society program. This decision could help them decide if math will be something to pursue in higher education. Students can also use these activities to explore interests they’ve never encountered, exposing students to a more diverse range of interests in students.
- 6. Skill improvement:** Participation in extracurricular activities is linked to the improvement of communication and leadership skills in a management role. Leadership programs consistently improved all skills in the regression analysis while student government improved none. In a Graduate Management Admission Council Survey (2007) of more than 150 business schools and

5,641 respondents, researchers discovered that participation in extracurricular activities allowed students to learn life skills that benefit both their professional and academic careers.

- 7. Extracurricular activities help landing a job:** The biggest challenge is showing relevant experience, which employers say is one of the most important factors they look for in applications from recent college graduates. This isn't limited to professional work experience school activities and volunteering also qualify as relevant experience and can be included in student resume as well. In other words, extra-curricular activities help you gain the key skills and experiences to help you land that job.
- 8. Raises Self Esteem** – Many times, being involved in extracurricular activities helps to raise the self esteem of teens. There are many teens that feel worthless or that there is nothing they are good at. Teens struggle with self esteem, and these activities are a way that they can build self esteem. Everyone wants to find something that they are really good at, and extracurricular activities provide them with a way that they can get involved in something and really shine, giving their self esteem a boost.
- 9. Building Solid Relationship Skills** – student will have the benefit of building solid relationship skills as well when they get involved in extracurricular activities. Teens need to get involved in social activities and learn how to appropriate act in social situations and these activities give them a chance outside of school to do this, while they are still being supervised by adults.
- 10. Community Service and Volunteering:** No volunteer assignment is too small to mention. Community service and volunteering demonstrates that you care about the community, that you're selfless and that you aren't just motivated by money. It's important to describe the work you accomplished on your resume, whether it was volunteering at an orphanage in Africa, serving food at a homeless shelter or donating blood.

CONCLUSION

The colleges existing prior to independence have played a significant role in producing freedom fighters, educationists, industrialists and leaders in all walks of life. After independence India had the herculean task of development of not only the system of higher education but also ensuring access to quality education to all sections of people (students). Sufficient opportunities should be made available to students to choose their best suited career to their interest and capability whose aim is to empower them in all respect.

Extracurricular activities are a part of students' everyday life. They play important roles in student's lives. They have positive effects on student's lives by improving behaviour, academic performance, college completion, positive aspects to make successful adults, and social aspects. As teachers, we need to be aware of the effects that extracurricular activities have on education.

In conclusion, the benefits of extracurricular activities goes beyond the process of college, but rather enables the student to gain knowledge and develop skills that allow individuals to gain knowledge to specific arrears which inevitably shapes their mental development and self-esteem.

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