



Importance of Co-curricular Activities in Education:A Study

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Introduction

Co-curricular activities generally refer to the activities, programs, and learning experiences that complement what students are learning in school. Essentially, such activities are experiences that are connected to, reinforce, or mirror the main academic curriculum or syllabi activities. In addition, co-curricular activities are usually, but not always, defined as being distinct from academic courses. For instance, they are typically ungraded and do not allow students to earn academic credit, they can take place outside of school grounds, they can occur outside regular school hours, and they may even be operated by outside private organizations or with partnerships in the broader community. Nevertheless, the traditional distinctions between academic and co-curricular programs are gradually being eroded as many innovative schools are increasingly integrating various programs, activities, and experiences into the regular educational curriculum. *Interestingly, co-curricular and extracurricular activities were traditionally seen as being distinct from one another although both types of programs were offered by most schools. Co-curricular programs and activities were seen as being explicitly connected to academic learning, while extracurricular activities were not. More recently, this distinction has become extremely ambiguous in practice; and the terms are increasingly being used interchangeably, which implies that all these activities are integral parts of the academic school curriculum. Examples of typical educational opportunities that are generally considered as being co-curricular include: student newspapers, musical performances, drama productions, art shows, chess clubs, spelling bees, mock trials, debate competitions, and participating in various sports, mathematics, science, robotics, and/or engineering teams and contests. Every activity in school life plays a significant **role in development** of students. Co-curricular activities are an **essential part of school life** and helps **in enhancing learning process** of students at school. Co-Curricular activities are compulsory activities which is important for every student to participate. Co-curricular are designed and balanced with academic curriculum so that every student gets to **learn beyond subjects**. Co-curricular activities are meant to bring **social skills**, intellectual skills, **moral values**, personality progress and **character appeal** in students. It includes **athletics, cultural events, Library activities, science lab activities, classroom activities, creative arts** and meditation etc.*

The Significance of Co-curricular Activities

Co-curricular activities are significant for enriching students on an emotional, cognitive, physical, and social level. The enrichment of the curriculum can come in the shape of the hidden curriculum (i.e., unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values, and perspectives that students learn in school) or be structured as additional activities that are aimed at enriching the existing curriculum in alignment with learning outcomes and pedagogic activities. Co-curricular activities have also acted as a catalyst for the promotion of national integration, coexistence, cultural values, and general health and well-being in many countries. Whether they focus upon sports, arts, music, science or other areas, co-curricular activities play a significant role in students' overall holistic development, as well as screening talents and giftedness among children and young learners, which highlights their significance within government school systems.

For example, when sport talents are discovered, developed, and nurtured, they can serve to enhance social, physical and emotional wellness, bridge social gaps, promote team-building, self-discipline, and interactive learning, bring cohesion to the nation, and ultimately promote national recognition and pride on a global level. This also highlights the importance of sports science and the fact that it that needs to be included in schools on curricular and co-curricular levels as a key element in achieving sustainable national sport development. This will, in turn, capture the intrinsic human values, talents and abilities that have not yet been exploited on both personal and national levels.

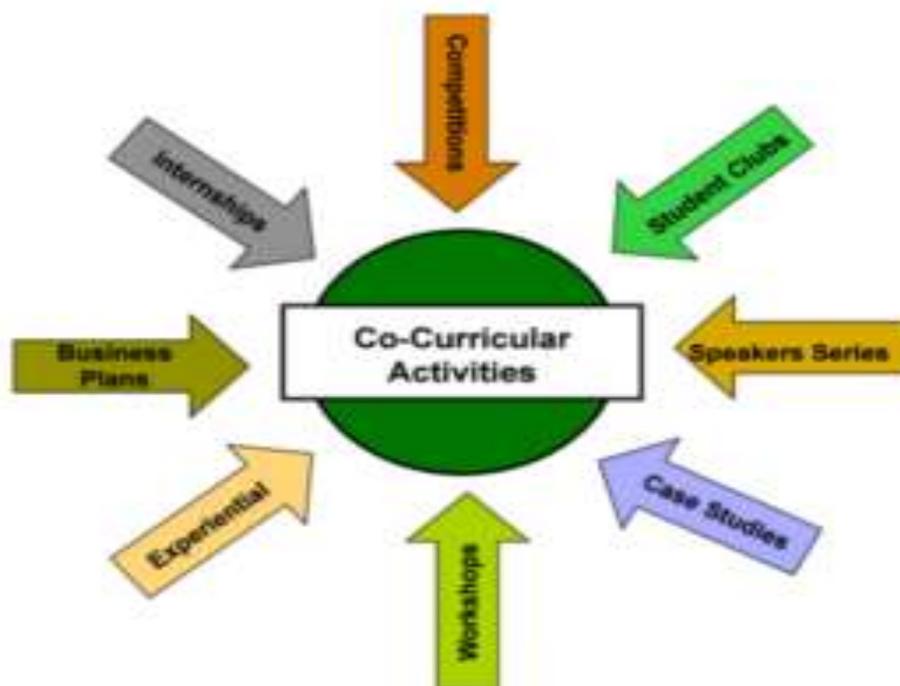
At the same time, activities incorporating art and music can play a vital role in nation-building, psychomotor development and dexterity. Consequently, the role of art and music needs to be articulated and understood in terms of its role in the provision of well-rounded learning, and in terms of their social and emotional significance. This is because music and the arts play an instrumental part in promoting peace and dialogue and spreading socially-conscious messages.

Nevertheless, emphasizing the significance of sports, arts, and music does not necessarily negate the important role of other types of co-curricular activities such as science, mathematics, debate, chess, drama clubs and other programs. All co-curricular activities enhance education and have a tremendous impact on the holistic development of children in several ways. First and foremost, skills learned through co-curricular activities can often be applied to academic studies, and vice versa. Thus, co-curricular activities can provide the clarity required for an academic concept to make sense and improve learning capabilities. They can also assist in the development of leadership and communication skills, creativity, decision-making and co-operation, service to the community, learning time management, organization skills and commitment, stress relief, developing social skills and self-esteem, discovering new talents, and enhancing students' overall personality. Likewise, learning through co-curricular experiences during internships or other programs can assist with future careers as students pursuing co-curricular activities at school are often given preference over those who are not involved in activities outside of the core curriculum when applying for courses or jobs.

In sum, while co-curricular activities are sometimes overlooked in education systems with greater emphasis often placed on the formal academic curriculum, pedagogic practices, day-to-day school operations, etc., these types of programs are gaining in popularity and significance as policy-makers, educationalists, parents, and students are increasingly becoming aware that every activity in school life plays a significant role in students' overall development. Thus, if co-curricular activities are properly designed, organized, managed, and balanced with the academic curriculum, every student will have the opportunity to learn beyond subjects and the mere confines of a classroom.

Co-curricular activities refers to activities, programs, and learning experiences that complement, in some way, what students are learning in school—i.e., the experiences that are connected to or *mirror the academic curriculum*. Co-curricular activities facilitate in the development of various domains of mind and personality such as intellectual development, emotional development, social development, moral development and aesthetic development. These are the very important part and parcel of educational institutions to develop the students' personality as well as to strengthen the classroom learning. To a greater extent, theoretical knowledge is strengthened when a relevant co-curricular activity is organized related to the content taught in the classroom. Intellectual aspects of personality are solely accomplished by classroom, while aesthetic development, character building, spiritual growth, physical growth, moral values, creativity, etc. are supported by co-curricular activities. So co-curricular activities add value to the already existing academic curriculum.

Some examples of co-curricular activities are:



Students are advised to indulge in a healthy mix of these activities so that when they fill out their college applications, they have a healthy resume. The unpleasant truth is that in India, as a child nears high school, the parents actually *stop* all such activities of the child, and ask them to concentrate only on academics. This is a totally wrong approach as the student must also have co-curricular and extracurricular activities to show on their college applications, and these cannot be produced overnight once you suddenly realize these are required. Plus, and more importantly, it must be understood that these activities are very important for the all-round development of the student. Thus, parents should be open to their wards taking up such activities, and with good time management, it can definitely be achieved to the satisfaction of all!

Role and Importance of Co-Curricular Activities at School –

- **Proper Education** – Since, co-curricular activities are merged with academics therefore, it ensures that students get to learn effectively. Science or Computer Lab practical, experiments and projects are part of co-curricular activities.
- **Cultural Values** - Students get to learn by cultural events including national events and traditional events from different faiths including Gandhi Jayanti, Independence Day, Republic Day, as well as Diwali, Eid, Baisaki, Onam, RakshaBandhan, and many other cultural events. Students get to learn about these events through books as well as co-curricular activities based on different cultures organised by Schools.
- **Personality Development** – Students perform co-curricular activities in schools, which help them sharpen their communication skills, expression skills, public speaking, participation and sense of belongingness through different activities like debates, recitation. Art and craft, creative art competitions, classroom activities like reading, group discussions etc.

Extracurricular is Important with Academics

- **Physical and Mental Health** – Co-curricular activities require students to stay active at school by participation since, students have no option to skip these activities as it's a part of their curriculum. Students have to be a part of co-curricular activities like athletics, gymnastics, yoga, indoor games, and meditation etc. These activities are beneficial for students' physical fitness as well as mental health and they are relieved from academic stress.
- **Learning Experience** – Co-curricular activities are good for improving students learning experience at school which improves their attendance at school and increases participation rate by students in co-curricular activities. Of course, students get a really good excuse for a break from academics.
- **Team Leadership Skills** – Co-curricular activities at school are designed in groups so that students can participate along with their classmates. This helps students develop leadership skills, team integrity and coordination skills.
- **Moral Values** – The students through co-curricular activities learn essential ethical values about different cultures, religions, events of national and international importance as well as discipline and school life ethics. They learn to understand

different religions, values, social ethics, patience, empathy, motivational skills, compatibility and contentment.

Conclusion

Diversity in clubs and extracurricular activities plays an important role in adolescent lives and futures. Exposure to diverse groups can help promote adolescents to become socially intelligent and responsible adults. However, being immersed in diverse populations is not enough, as it is only beneficial if members engage with each other. More meaningful interactions with a diverse range of peers allows people to acquire traits such as more socially responsible leadership skills. Furthermore, participating in ethnic clubs allowed minority groups to feel more connected to their cultures and allowed others to gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures. This has two key benefits: first, minority groups have a safe place to feel a sense of belonging to their cultural roots and background, and second, people of differing ethnic backgrounds have an opportunity to learn more about other cultures, thus becoming more culturally competent. Correlational studies showed positive relationships with involvement in ethnic/cultural clubs and intellectual and psychosocial development, multicultural competence, interpersonal skills, and leadership. Additionally, in school settings, interracial friendships positively impacted the individuals involved and the school culture as a whole. This demonstrates the importance of implementing multiculturalism into school environments, both academically and in extracurricular activities. It is important to continue research on incorporating multiculturalism and ethnic/cultural clubs into schools. Creating a multicultural competent environment for diverse student populations allows them to engage with others, openly discuss possible biases and stereotypes, and form meaningful intergroup relationships. If this is implemented at a young age, it is more likely to carry into adulthood, thus molding a more socially and culturally competent adult.

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