BENEFITS OF CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: A STUDY AT PMAS ARID AGRICULTURE UNIVERSITY, RAWALPINDI

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Abstract: Co-curricular activities are an essential part of curriculum which provides educational activities to the students and thereby helps them widen their experiences. Co-Curricular activities play a pivotal role in growth and extension of the regular curriculum in the schools. The purpose of this study was to find out benefits of co-curricular activities. The study was conducted at PMAS Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi. Sample of 50 students of different department were selected through convenient sampling and data was collected through questionnaires. The study revealed that Co-curricular activities can enhance and enrich the regular curriculum building student’s character in a better way.

Key Words: Co-curricular Activities, Academic Achievements, Moral Development, Physical Development, Emotional Development, Social Development

INTRODUCTION
Co-curricular activities play pivotal role in curriculum; these activities broaden experiences and enrich intellectual domains of the students. “Co-curricular activities can be defined as the activities that enhance and enrich the regular curriculum during the normal school hours. All co-curricular activities are organized with specific purpose which vary according to the nature and form of such activities” (Madalli 2014). The modern education system emphasizes that child comes to school for holistic development and better adaptability. The development of the total personality of the child is the basic aim of the modern education system and for that, educational institutions facilitate their students.” In this era of globalization co-curricular activities play a vital role for the performance of students” (Habib 2012). Co-curricular activities provide passion, strength, optimistic thinking and cooperation which in turn, contribute to behavior development. Co-curricular activities can assist in the development of “various domains of personality and mind such as intellectual development, emotional development, social development and aesthetic development” (Khan and Iqbal 2014). Most educators felt that involvement in co-curricular activities helped to develop student’s confidence in a better way which is essential in their academic process. Confidence in academic studies is a necessary element in academic success. “It seems almost self-evident that student engagement, including co-curricular activities, has a positive impact on student academic performance (Wang and Shiveley 2009). Students who participated in co-curricular activities performed better academically than students who did not participate. Further showing that through participation in co-curricular activities, learners developed a positive perception of the school, a positive attitude towards school work and become more disciplined buttresses (Marsh and Kleitman 2002). Co-curricular activities have been found to promote School culture and promoting school spirit and have a relationship with student’s academic performance, “development of responsible behavior, uncover their aptitude and attitude, self-control and leadership skills” (Adeyemo 2010). The learners got motivated through participation in co-curricular activities. “Student’s participation in co-curricular activities in general is associated with an improved average results, higher education attitude, reduced absenteeism and increased attendance ”(Broh 2002). Co-curricular activities
motivate students towards attending school regularly and aiming for higher goals in general. “Participation in co-curricular activities reduces, to some extent, time for delinquent behavior such as drug abuse and drinking, and helps to reduce school drop-outs” (Darling, et al. 2005). Co-curricular activities are associated with positive adolescent developmental outcomes, “namely, inter alia, good academic performances reduced dropout rate; lower (to a degree) rates of substance use; and reduced antisocial behavior, including criminal attitude and rebellious behavior” (Feldman and Matjasko 2005).

Co-curricular activities should be an integral part of educational institutions, participation in co-curricular activities should be compulsory in educational institutions. School sport shall be integral, extramural and co-curricular component of the holistic education program. In most cases, positions held in co-curricular activities help to give learners specific self concepts and/or higher self-esteem. “Self-concept plays important role in the development of personality. Self-esteem has to do with social competency and person’s feelings are influenced by social competence, since it influences how person thinks, learns how he or she actualizes him or herself” (Clark, et al. 2002). Participation in sports leads to the physical development and fitness for a healthy lifestyle. It also plays pivotal role in development of character maturity. “Participation in sports helps students to promote physical fitness, train them to handle harsh conditions. Furthermore enforcing team work and sportsmanship” (Rasmussen 2000). The students engaged in co-curricular activities are more socially mobilized than the students limited to studies. Associations outside the classroom help to instill community spirit. “The students who participated in extracurricular activities in school, college and university remain more engaged civically than the ones who are not, even decades later” (Levine 2003). Learner’s involvement in co-curricular activities improves their social networking, which indirectly influences their academic achievement. “California survey of graduating seniors also suggested that there is a link between extra-curricular activities and civic skills like commitment to participation; intention to vote” (Levine 2003). The students highly engaged in social activities are active participant of co-curricular activities during their educational period as reported in one of the studies “students who are socially active reported more involvement in co-curricular activities in their educational institutions” (Eccles and Barber 1999). Another study also revealed the fact that “high school co-curricular activity participation was associated with higher internal locus of control, higher social and academic self-concepts and higher educational and occupational aspirations” (Marsh 1992; Marsh and Kleitman 2002). Once learners are involved in co-curricular activities then their academic attainment naturally improve.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The students of “PAMS Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi” were chosen as the study locale, from where a sample of 50 units was selected using convenience sampling. The research tool featured standardized closed ended questionnaire which explored the benefits of co-curricular activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Benefits of Co-curricular Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency/%</td>
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<td>Academics</td>
<td>26 (52%)</td>
<td>23 (46%)</td>
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<td>Knowledge of National and</td>
<td>14 (28%)</td>
<td>30 (60%)</td>
<td>06 (12%)</td>
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<td>International Issues</td>
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<td>Attendance and Annual Results</td>
<td>11 (22%)</td>
<td>5 (10%)</td>
<td>23 (46%)</td>
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</table>
In the above chart 52% respondents agree that the seminar, conferences and drama competitions helps in academics. These activities improve their results and performance. 46% respondents strongly agreed that these activities are helpful in academics. Only 2% disagree to this statement. Sports department also mentioned this fact that if university gives opportunity to the students, they not only excel in the games but also in studies.

The above chart shows 28% respondents agree that activities like seminars; Conferences increase the knowledge of students about national and international issues. 60% students strongly agree with this point of view. Only 12% respondents were disagreeing with this view. International seminar on Sameual Undong and Economic Development was held in university on 21-11-2013 which was informative for students on international trends of economic development.

According to this chart 56% of respondents strongly agree that participation in co-curricular activities like physical activities are beneficial for health of the students. 36% agree, 6% disagree and only 2% strongly disagreed. Spokesperson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree (52%)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (46%)</th>
<th>Disagree (2%)</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (10%)</th>
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<td>Academics</td>
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<td>Annual Results</td>
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<td>Health of Students</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
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<td>Leadership Qualities in Students, and Confidence in Students</td>
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<td>Socialization</td>
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<td>Sense of Responsibility</td>
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<td>Punctuality</td>
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<th>18 (36%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership Qualities in Students, and Confidence in Students</td>
<td>20 (40%)</td>
<td>27 (54%)</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
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<td>Socialization</td>
<td>29 (58%)</td>
<td>18 (36%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>1 (2%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of Responsibility</td>
<td>28 (56%)</td>
<td>17 (34%)</td>
<td>5 (10%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Punctuality</td>
<td>28 (56%)</td>
<td>16 (32%)</td>
<td>4 (8%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
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from sports office told that physical activities Improved motor skills and physical fitness and enhance of normal mental and emotional health. Physical activities help to maintain strong bones, muscles, and joints, control weight, build lean muscle, and reduce fat. High blood pressure and hypertension in adolescents can prevent with the help of these physical activities.

The fifth statement is addressing 3 issues Co-curricular activities stop students from anti-social activities, built leadership qualities in students, and confidence in students. This pie chart and above table and bar chart shows that 54% respondents strongly agree, 40% agree, only 6% disagree. Sports department of the university claimed that if we will have enough funds to organize the physical activities, 70% anti-social activities in the university can be overcome. Team games can play imperative role to provide opportunities for students to learn group membership and leadership skills, attitudes, and behaviors. Participation in physical activities vitalizes students to take on challenges. Physical activity also provides them opportunities to develop resilience, to communicate to cooperate with other people and in addition to enrich their life experience, which enhance their self-confidence.

The above diagram shows that 58% respondents agree that students learn to socialize and interact through these activities, 36% strongly agree, only 4% disagreed and only 2% strongly disagreed. Students from different social classes and ideas come together around a common theme. They uncover ways to work in collaboration and efficiently with others whose points of view may be different from their own. They begin to recognize that they contribute to part of a larger community. Their participation in these activities provides the opportunity to socialize and collaborate with other members of the society.

The above table and bar chart shows that 56% respondents think that students acquire a sense of responsibility due to taking part in co-curricular activities, 37% strongly agree, only 10% disagree. When students take part in co-curricular activities like conferences, debates, drama competition, where students are given responsibilities to organize these activities, students learn responsibility in these activities. They can play a vital role in practical life for themselves and society also.

56% respondents agree that Co-curricular activities develop a sense of competitive spirit, co-operation, punctuality, and team-spirit as well as to provide a backdrop for the development of their creative talents. 32% strongly agree; only 8% disagree the statement. Students, who participate in the co-curricular activities, can manage their time skillfully. Time management is basic need of these activities. This Time management adds fruits in their future life. These activities develop a sense of competitive spirit in students, they do not beat other students but they compete with them, that competition leads them to hard work.

DISCUSSION

Co-Curricular Activities are integral part of formal curriculum of an educational institution. Co-curricular activities are generated to involve students in activities other than studies. Co-curricular activities do not offer any credit but add to the spirit of the school, individual growth of the participant. A co-curricular activity originated outside the classroom for team, club or a group. Only formal education is not sufficient to bring about emotional, physical, moral and social development of student. In this era of globalization students with multiple talents are required to all walks of life. Co-Curricular activities are integral to the educational program though they do not carry academic and have formal links to regular courses. “They enhance teaching goals make students responsible and fulfill them as human being like character building, critical thinking, civic skills, and talents” (Dyer 1996).

Co-curricular activities also provide an opportunity to students to socialize with peers and adults of similar interests and talents. “Students who participate have the chance to excel independently, group work, and gain practical life training about the importance of cooperation, responsibility, dedication, and hard work”. Astin’s student involvement theory presented student participation in co-curricular activities, concepts of commitment and time is being highlighted in this theory. “Active Involvement required the student to invest time and energy. These Programs motivate students to make such a commitment and productive time consuming is most successful” (Leung, et al. 2011).
Participation in curricular activities help to avoid some risky situations avoiding “dropping out, becoming a teenage parent, engaging in delinquency, smoking, or abusing drugs or alcohol through three mechanisms” (Zill1995). Participant of co-curricular activities not only excel academically more than students who do not but also enrich other aspects of their personalities in the process. Co-curricular activities promote development of personality like emotional, physical, moral and social development. These activities help them to assume meaningful roles and responsibilities. Adolescents who participate in these activities have opportunities to development of interpersonal skills. “These activities provide students sense of effectiveness, they learn to cope with adverse circumstances in their practical life” (Wagner 1999).

Participation in sports prevent students from alcohol use, drinking and drug use, substance abuse, teenage sex, and other forms of delinquent behavior, both boys and girls can be negatively affected by sports participation (Fredericks and Eccles 2006).

Chickering’s psychosocial model is the well-known applied theory of student personal development suggested five major methods for promoting developmental growth:
1. Engage the student in decision making.
2. Encourage them for socialization.
3. Allow students to go through diverse experiences.
4. Involvement of students in solving complex intellectual and social problems.
5. Provide opportunities to students for receiving feedback and making objective self-assumptions (Leung, et al. 2011).

CONCLUSION
The study demonstrates that highly engaged students in co-curricular activities are successful. Researcher concludes, based on the evidence of our extensive sample, that co-curricular involvement is consistent with a full course credit load and a high GPA. Our conclusions apply to students of all departments participant in co-curricular activities. Students learn to socialize while working in groups. They gain confidence when they participate in conferences and seminars. Facilities for co-curricular activities in the University are not enough, Fund allocation is not appropriate, grounds are very few. Girls are hesitant to participate in co-curricular activities. This study provides some insights into the effects of engagement on other important student outcomes. We compare the academic performance of students who are heavily engaged in co-curricular activities with the general undergraduate student population of our University. The analysis shows that the academic attainment of the heavily engaged students compares favorably to that of students in general. The time they devote to activities outside of class does not cause observable diminution in academic attainment. To the contrary, heavily engaged students excel in academic outcomes.

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