

The Influence of Learners' Participation in School Co-curricular Activities on Academic Performance: Assessment of Educators' Perceptions

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ABSTRACT The study sought to establish educators' views on the influence of learners' participation in school co-curricular activities on their academic performance. The study adopted a case study design that utilized both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were solicited from educators in both private and public schools in one educational district in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. A convenient sample of forty teachers participated in the study. The study employed a semi-structured questionnaire to collect quantitative data and phenomenological interviewing to gather qualitative data. Quantitative data collected were coded and analysed through a blend of both descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data were analysed using content analysis method. The study found that educators held positive views about the participation of learners in co-curricular activities as they felt the participation was beneficial in numerous ways. Educators were also of the view that values imparted through participation in co-curricular were important in learners' academic performance. The study also established that learners' involvement in co-curricular activities did not always guarantee learners' success in academic studies. This study gives recommendations regarding learners' participation in co-curricular activities.

INTRODUCTION

Learners' academic achievement and progression is a great concern for all educational institutions, including schools. The primary role of schools everywhere is to act as places where future leaders are nurtured. Across the world, schools are usually expected to offer learners a core academic curriculum together with other co-curricular activities, where the former is the core reason whose survival is partly influenced by the latter. In this study, school co-curricular activities refer to other school activities that are offered together with the academic curriculum, particularly sport. Some refer to such activities as extra-curricular activities, suggesting that they are added on to the main or core curriculum. By suggesting that they are co-curricular, the aim is to elevate them to an equal status to academic work for curriculum has to be looked at holistically (Miller 2007). While it is mandatory for schools to afford learners access to this balanced education, it is natural that there is wide spatial and temporal variation in terms of the delivery of co-curricular activities in schools worldwide. In most cases, co-curricular activities are sacrificed for particularly classroom time

in efforts to improve academic success. This is largely because the foci of the school curricula and after-school programs are on achievement in academics (Castelli et al. 2007).

However, this is against the background that participation in co-curricular activities provides an important socialization experience for many youths (Hoffman 2006). Although a substantial portion of this leisure time is dedicated to unstructured pursuits, participation in co-curricular activities has been found to be a productive use of this time, providing diverse opportunities for development and growth (Larson 2000). For example, participating in these activities has been linked to greater school attachment and sense of belonging, better academic achievement, higher academic aspirations, and less risky behaviours such as alcohol and drug use, or dropping out of school (Darling et al. 2005).

Furthermore, contemporary literature argues that participation in co-curricular activities seems to have positive effects on several indicators of academic achievement, namely academic performance, self-concept and school perception (Peixoto 2004). In their study, Fredericks and Eccles (2006) found that participation in sports predicted lower levels of alcohol use. Yet, on the con-

trary, other literature suggest that in terms of risk behaviours like drinking and drug use, substance abuse, teenage sex, and other forms of delinquent behaviour, both boys and girls can be negatively affected by sports participation. Reasons given for these outcomes vary and range from peer pressure in athletic subcultures to a propensity for risk behaviours (Eccles et al. 2003; Hartmann and Massoglia 2007). However, the conclusions in this context are that these behaviours have potentially negative consequences for educational achievement and that young female athletes appear to be somewhat more likely to engage in them than male athletes, whereas males derive more benefits from other co-curricular activities (Crosnoe 2002). Nevertheless, another study suggests that participation in sports could either enhance or decrease student academic motivation (Van Etten et al. 2008). However, Troutman and Dufur (2007) established that females who engage in interscholastic high school sports have higher odds of completing college than their non-athletic counterparts.

Although most research focuses its attention on the outcomes and concerns regarding children's participation in co-curricular activities (Kremer-Sadlik et al. 2010), few studies have contextually explored some of the concerns of the critical stakeholders' accounts about views and reasons for which they engage themselves and/or their children in a multitude of activities and meanings that they attach to such activities. As Feldman and Matjasko (2005: 160) argue "*Extracurricular activities are not isolated from other developmental contexts; rather, they are embedded in schools and communities and influenced by families and peers.*"

In analyzing home and school perceptions of the role co-curricular activities play in children's lives, there is hope to further understand the relations between these activities and other developmental contexts within which children are raised and prepared for life after school. Moreso, the majority of these research studies have been carried out in Anglo-Saxon countries where co-curricular activities are socially valued (at least by academic population) (Peixoto 2004). This study analysed the perceived effects of participating in co-curricular activities in a school system where such activities exist but without being specially valued.

Everything in the universe has been recognised by its worth and value (Tachie and Chireshe

2010), and the same must be accorded to co-curricular activities in a normal school setting. Toriola et al.'s (2000) findings indicated that in both Botswana and Nigeria, youth sport programmes were mainly targeted at schools. In this regard it becomes more of a case of school-leader competency and effectiveness in ensuring that staff works towards implementing all activities that aim to improve learners' attainment, including partaking in co-curricular activities. In their study, Grobler et al. (2012) established that school leaders who base a vision of excellence on an ethical foundation of improving learner achievements will need to effectively communicate such a vision to all concerned. Research on participation in extracurricular activities shows that participation is associated with more positive attitudes towards school (Mahoney 2000), better academic achievement (Eccles and Barber 1999) and higher self-esteem and/or specific self-concepts (House 2000; Zhang 2001).

Schools serve as excellent venues to provide students with the opportunity for daily physical activity, to teach the importance of regular physical activity for health, and to build skills that support active lifestyles. Unfortunately, most children get little to no regular physical activity while in school (Robert 2007). Despite public concern for health issues among youth, physical activity opportunities are currently being reduced and childhood obesity rates are on the rise (McKenzie and Kahan 2004; Pellegrini and Bohn 2005).

In schools across the United States of America, physical education has been substantially reduced—and in some cases completely eliminated—in response to budget concerns and pressures to improve academic test scores (Robert 2007). However, several studies found that children who are physically active and fit tend to perform better in the classroom, and that daily physical education does not adversely affect academic performance (Sallis et al. 1999; RWJF 2007). Children's extracurricular activities have been linked to academic achievement and social adjustment (Eccles et al. 2003; Mahoney et al. 2005). Guicciardi et al. (2006) cited in Kremer-Sadlik et al. (2010) asserted that Italian studies have shown positive relations between children's participation in sports and a general perception of physical and psychological good health, as well as between adolescents' engagement in sports and higher levels of self-efficacy and motivational orientation.

According to studies conducted, male and female students who participate in co-curricular activities, including athletics, derive a host of benefits such as better grades, a higher likelihood of college attendance, a lower likelihood of dropout, higher educational aspirations, more satisfaction with schools and teachers, higher life satisfaction, broader conventional peer networks, less involvement in delinquent behaviour, and less drug and alcohol use (Crosnoe 2002; Eccles et al. 2003). Miller et al. (2005) highlights that the relationship between high school sports participation and scholastic achievement is a "fact well-established". In their study which established that play is a relevant tool to help achieve this connection if it can be linked to school mathematics, Nkopodi and Mosimege (2009) stressed that the teacher's role should also be to enable learners to relate concepts learned to their everyday life.

Of greater importance might be the indirect relationship of childhood activity behaviours tracking into adulthood (Janz et al. 2000), potentially limiting the prevalence of risk factors related to cardiovascular disease in later life. Despite consensus of the positive effects related to physical activity and fitness (Strong et al. 2005), the benefits to cognitive health and the educational experience remain unclear (Castelli et al. 2007). However, in a separate study, Castelli et al. (2007) concluded that physical fitness was related to academic performance in third- and fifth-grade children, providing general support for the notion that children who are physically fit are more likely to perform better on standardized academic achievement tests, thus corroborating the California Department of Education (CDE) (2001) study.

Budgetary constraints and increasing pressure to improve standardised test scores have caused school officials to question the value of physical education (PE) and other physical activity programs. This has led to a substantial reduction in the time available for PE, and in some cases, school-based physical activity programs have been completely eliminated (Robert 2007). Yet, one of the missions of the South African national curricula is to promote PE, as well as recreational and extramural school sport activities. This is based on the thrust that through sport participation, talented learners from all backgrounds are identified early; nurtured and have the opportunity to progress to the elite level (Department of Education (DoE) 2009).

However, in contrast, many school systems have downgraded or eliminated extracurricular activities under the pretext that they are a waste of classroom instructional time necessary to improve academic performance. In some cases, this might be triggered by the absence of an effective school financial policy or the ineffective implementation of the financial policy where it exists (Mestry 2006). According to Tower (2008), controlled experimental studies in the United States, Canada and Australia have evaluated the effects on academic performance of allocating additional instructional time for PE. All five studies clearly demonstrate that physical activity does not need to be sacrificed for academic excellence (Ahamed et al. 2007; Coe et al. 2006).

Statement of the Problem

Schools should aim for a holistic curriculum that develops a child mentally, physically, socially and morally so that they are able to fit in society and the world of work. However, there are times when the academic side of the curriculum is emphasised more than the other elements. Despite the inconsistency in findings, many of the studies conducted have to date pointed to the positive effects of co-curricular activities on academic success. Yet, many stakeholders in the school system seem to be of the belief that co-curricular activities consume academic time unnecessarily. This study intended to solicit information pertaining to educators' perceptions on learners' participation in co-curricular activities and its influence on learners' academic achievement. The study addressed this by explicitly answering the question "What are the educators' views on the influence of learners' participation in co-curricular activities on their academic performance?"

Goal of the Study

The study sought to establish the educators' views on the influence of learners' participation in co-curricular activities on their academic performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The study adopted a descriptive survey design that employed both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The study was a descriptive survey of schools in

one educational district. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Qualitative data was sought to complement quantitative data (Onwuegbuzi and Teddlie 2003). Mouton (2001) states that a descriptive survey is used to collect data to describe a population too large to observe directly. The design was chosen to meet the objective of the study of ascertaining teachers' perceptions on the influence of learners' participation in co-curricular activities on their academic performance.

The Sample: A convenient sample of forty educators participated in the study. Polit and Hungler (1993) state that a convenient sample consists of subject included in the study because they happen to be in the right place at the right time. In this study, the sample was of educators in schools who showed interest in students' participation in co-curricular activities.

Data Collection Instruments: The study employed a semi-structured questionnaire to collect quantitative data and phenomenological interviewing to gather qualitative data. The former provides detailed data while the latter affords quick collection of a rich layer of information.

Reliability and Validity: To ensure its validity, the questionnaire was pretested. Pretesting is a trial administration of an instrument in order to identify its usability and weaknesses (Polit and Hungler 1995). The questionnaire was pretested on five educators who were not part of the main sample for the main study. The main statistical measure to determine reliability of the questionnaire was the use of Cronbach's alpha coefficient. A Cronbach alpha coefficient value was calculated for all sections of the questionnaire and found to be 0.73 suggesting a high degree of reliability.

Ethical Issues: Permission to administer questionnaires and conduct interviews for research purposes were sought from the relevant authorities. Respondents were informed of privacy and confidentiality. Participating educators who could find time as requested were interviewed. Informed consent was sought from the participants who completed consent forms after the purpose of the study and conditions of participation were explained to them.

Data Analysis: Data collected was coded and analysed through a blend of both descriptive and inferential statistics. Quantitative data was analysed using partly the manifest content

of the text method. It was quantified by frequency percentages and ranking method was used where necessary. Presentation and analysis of qualitative data took the form of graphs, narrations and descriptions. Coding the manifest content of the text method was used. The ordinal scale was used for quantifying purposes. Only the data that scored at least two was considered in the final analysis.

RESULTS

Biographic Data for Educators

Table 1 shows biographic data for educators. The given data indicates that information was sought from largely a diverse and gender-balanced group of educators. 52.5% (n= 21) of the educators were males, and 45% (n=18) were the thirty to forty year-olds. 67.5% (n=27) of the educators had first degrees while 10% (n=4) were holders of masters degrees. 85% (n=34) were in high schools, whereas 97.5% (n=39) had previous experience of co-curricular activity participation.

Educators' Attitudes Towards Learners' Participation in Co-curricular Activities in Schools

Attitudes were determined in terms of their being a 'yes' or 'no' response to given opinions. In terms of their opinion on the need for learners to seriously participate in co-curricular activities in schools, 92.5% of the educators agreed that learners should seriously participate in co-curricular activities in schools.

Educators' attitudes were also determined in terms of whether or not they supported organized school-based learner participation in co-curricular activities and 97.5% of the educators acknowledged that they supported organized school-based learner participation in co-curricular activities.

Educators' Perceptions of the Impact of Learners' Participation in Co-curricular Activities in Schools

Information was sought on the views of these educators of the impact of learners' participation in school co-curricular activities using mainly two parameters categorised broadly into

Table 1: Biographical variables for educators

| <i>Biographical variables for educators (n=40)</i> | <i>Frequ-ency</i> | <i>Percen-tage</i> |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Gender</i> | | |
| Male | 21 | 52.5 |
| Female | 19 | 47.5 |
| <i>Age (years)</i> | | |
| 20-25 | 2 | 5.0 |
| 26-30 | 9 | 22.5 |
| 31-35 | 6 | 15.0 |
| 36-40 | 12 | 30.0 |
| Over 40 | 11 | 27.5 |
| <i>Teaching Experience (years)</i> | | |
| 1-5 | 10 | 25.0 |
| 6-10 | 8 | 20.0 |
| 11-15 | 8 | 20.0 |
| 16-20 | 9 | 22.5 |
| Over 20 | 5 | 12.5 |
| <i>Professional Qualification</i> | | |
| Certificate | 1 | 2.5 |
| Diploma | 4 | 10.0 |
| First Degree | 27 | 67.5 |
| Masters | 4 | 10.0 |
| Others | 4 | 10.0 |
| <i>Type of School</i> | | |
| Junior (Primary) School | 6 | 15.0 |
| High School | 34 | 85.0 |
| <i>Previous Participation in Co-curricular Activity(ies)</i> | | |
| Yes | 39 | 97.5 |
| No | 1 | 2.5 |

directly academic effects and indirectly academic effects. The information is thus presented. Table 2 shows educators' perceptions of the influence of learners' participation in co-curricular activities on academic achievement

It is clear from Table 2 that 62.5% (n=25) and 35% (n=14) of the educators respectively strongly agreed and agreed that participation in co-curricular activities motivates learners. 70% (n=28) strongly agreed that the activities occupy and/or reduce time for delinquent behaviour, while 7.5% (n=3) were uncertain. 45% strongly acknowledged that participation in co-curricular activities helps to build confidence, while 42.5% agreed to the same view. 82.5% (n=33) acknowledged that also associated with such participation is the learner's development of a positive attitude towards school work. 95% (n=38) indicated that in most cases, positions held in co-curricular activities help to give learners specific self-concepts and/or higher self-esteem. Educators agreeing and strongly agreeing that co-curricular participation instils discipline were respectively 47.5% (n=19) and 35% (n=14). While 62.5% strongly viewed the activities as helping learners to improve socialization,

92.5% (n=37) regarded that participation in the activities helps to instil community spirit among learners.

Educators' Suggestions Towards Co-curricular Activities

The following is a documentation of suggestions aired by the stakeholders who responded to the open-ended part of the questionnaire. The respondents' views are divided into two categories: Attitudes and Impacts as expressed by some educators.

Educators Attitudes

Teacher interviewee A

The school and parents must motivate and support the learners for co-curricular activities.

Teacher interviewee B

Learners should learn about balance and should be well-balanced on all levels namely emotionally, physically, spiritually and academically. Some learners are not strong academically and by participating in co-curricular activities they experience success in other levels. An over concentration on academics and an inadequate focus on the physical development of a learner could lead to an imbalance and a non-holistic person.

Impact

Teacher interviewee A

It builds the self-respect and respect for others.

Teacher interviewee B

They provide learners with good recreation and opportunities to develop talents holistically.

Teacher interviewee C

These activities help develop a sense of responsibility for themselves and their pals.

Table 2: Educators' perceptions of the influence learners' participation in co-curricular activities on their academic achievement (n=40)

| <i>Impact statement</i> | <i>SA</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>A</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>U</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>D</i> | <i>%</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>%</i> |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|
| Co-curricular activities help to motivate learners | 25 | 62.5 | 14 | 35 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2.5 |
| The activities occupy and/or reduce time for delinquent behavior such as drug abuse, drinking etc | 28 | 70 | 8 | 20 | 3 | 7.5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Help in confidence building | 18 | 45 | 17 | 42.5 | 4 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Learners develop a positive perception of the school | 18 | 45 | 17 | 42.5 | 4 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Help to build resilience | 15 | 37.5 | 18 | 45 | 6 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Assist to develop a positive attitude towards school work | 17 | 42.5 | 16 | 40 | 5 | 12.5 | 1 | 2.5 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Good for mental development | 28 | 70 | 10 | 25 | 1 | 2.5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Sports develop physical fitness | 33 | 82.5 | 7 | 17.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| In most cases, positions held in co-curricular activities help to give learners specific self-concepts and/or higher self esteem | 23 | 57.5 | 15 | 37.5 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Help to instill discipline | 19 | 47.5 | 14 | 35 | 6 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2.5 |
| They help to improve socialization (through coaches, peer groups, etc) | 25 | 62.5 | 13 | 32.5 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| They help to instill community spirit | 19 | 47.5 | 18 | 45 | 1 | 2.5 | 1 | 2.5 | 1 | 2.5 |
| The activities might lead to future income if talent is developed | 26 | 65 | 13 | 32.5 | 1 | 2.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Help to reduce school drop-outs | 12 | 30 | 12 | 30 | 13 | 32.5 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Co-curricular activities create conditions necessary to improve learners' academic performance | 11 | 27.5 | 16 | 40 | 11 | 27.5 | 1 | 2.5 | 1 | 2.5 |

Teacher interviewee D

Helps to generate positive ethos and camaraderie in learners. Improve unity and pride of schools.

Teacher interviewee E

It promotes teamwork and helps learners to utilize their spare time fruitfully. Also helps to horn leadership skills.

Teacher interviewee F

They symbolize love for one's country, create/ build patriotism and helps gain respect.

Teacher interviewee E

If extracurricular activities can be made to be compulsory at school, the level of obesity will be low if not eliminated by especially sports.

Teacher interviewee G

Learners develop organizational and leadership skills.

Teacher interviewee H

Learning from other people through outing and appreciating other races. It enables participants to realize that irrespective of country of origin, race, or language, we are one. We treat each other as equal because in participating there are rules which guide all.

Teacher interviewee I

Bring about unity and social cohesion making a school be a united family.

DISCUSSION

It emerged from the study that most educators felt that participation in co-curricular activities helped to improve students' confidence which is vital in their academic pursuit. Confidence in academic studies is a necessary ingredient in academic success. Such findings confirm Wang and Shiveley's (2009) observation that based upon a literature review and an analysis of best practices, it seems almost self-evident that student engagement, including co-curricu-

lar activities, has a positive impact on student academic performance. Marsh and Kleitman (2002) also established that students who participated in co-curricular activities performed better academically than students who did not participate.

The finding 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 Adeyemo's (2010) view that besides creating a school culture and promoting school spirit, co-curricular activities have been found to have a relationship with students' academic performance, development of responsibility, discovering their abilities and interest, self-discipline and leadership skills.

The study also established that learners got motivated through participation in co-curricular activities. Broh (2002) revealed that students' participation in co-curricular activities in general is associated with an improved grade point average, higher education aspiration, increased attendance and reduced absenteeism. Supporting the view that reported higher grades, Darling et al. (2005) reported more positive attitude towards school and higher academic aspiration.

It also emerged from the study that participation in co-curricular activities reduces, to some extent, time for delinquent behaviour such as drug abuse and drinking, and helps to reduce school drop-outs. This is consistent with findings by Feldman and Matjasko (2005) who established that despite the nuances, qualifications, and complexity of the research on co-curricular activity participation and adolescent development, we can draw several general conclusions. School-based, structured, co-curricular activity participation, in contrast to participation in unstructured activities (sometimes including school-based activities), is associated with positive adolescent developmental outcomes, namely, inter alia, higher academic performance and attainment; reduced rates of dropout; lower (to a degree) rates of substance use; and reduced rates of delinquent behaviour, including criminal arrests and antisocial behaviour.

The study also found that some educators strongly feel that education authorities should make participation in co-curricular activities compulsory in schools. This confirms the first principle underlying school sport policy framework by the South African Department of Education (2009) that school sport shall be integral, extra-

mural and co-curricular component of the holistic education programme. Each school shall allocate time for participation in school sport and physical activity during or after formal school hours. It further reiterated that competitive school sport shall take place within a school, involving interclass/ inter-house games, as well as inter-school and selected teams taking part at district, regional, provincial, national and international tournaments.

In most cases, positions held in co-curricular activities help to give learners specific self-concepts and/or higher self-esteem. This finding conforms to that of Clark et al. (2000) who reported that the importance of self-concept stems from its notable contribution to personality development. Self-esteem has to do with social competence, since it influences how the person feels, how he or she thinks, learns, values himself or herself, relates to others, and ultimately, how he or she behaves.

Indications by stakeholders that sports participation leads to the development of physical fitness for a healthy lifestyle and is useful in character development are in sync with observations by Rasmussen (2000) that supporters of high school sport programs argue that sport participation helps them appreciate health, exercise and fitness, helps them learn about themselves and learn to handle adversity, and helps them experience team work and sportsmanship.

The study also established that educators perceived that such associations outside the classroom help to instill community spirit. This corroborates findings by the Center for Information and Research in Civic Learning and Engagement (2003) (cited by Constitutional Rights Foundation 2007) that long-term studies of Americans show that those who participate in extra-curricular activities in high school remain more civically engaged than their contemporaries even decades later. The Center for Information and Research in Civic Learning and Engagement's (2003) California survey of graduating seniors also indicated a link between participation in extra-curricular activities and commitment to participation, intention to vote, and civic skills.

It also emerged that educators also viewed learners' involvement in co-curricular activities as assisting to improve their social networking, which indirectly influences their academic achievement. This is supported by the view of Eccles and Barber (1999) that students who par-

ticipated in social activities and school involvement reported liking school more over the years studied, which is consistent with Marsh's (1992) (in Marsh and Kleitman 2002) findings that high school co-curricular activity participation were associated with higher internal locus of control, higher social and academic self-concepts and higher educational and occupational aspirations in school and two years after completing high school.

The study also established educators' views that it is not given that once learners are involved in co-curricular activities then their academic attainment naturally improve. It emerged that some of the learners who had previous co-curricular participation experience had also repeated a grade. This finding is consistent with an observation by Hartmann (2008) that all of the empirical evidence that demonstrates a strong statistical correlation between sports participation and educational attainment does not mean that sports automatically and inevitably contributes to academic achievement at either an individual or school level. An understanding of the complexities and variations of sports' educational impact is crucial if sports programming and policy is able to take full advantage of the educational potential of sport (and avoid the potential pitfalls and shortcomings). Miller et al. (2005) asserts that it is increasingly apparent that the protective effects of sports with respect to academic outcomes are neither universal nor indisputably causal in nature.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that educators were very positive about learners' participation in school co-curricular activities. It is viewed that learners' participation in school-based co-curricular activities support the academic mission of schools. These activities should not be taken in isolation or as a diversion from the core school activity, but rather as an endeavour to create a "complete" educational program. Students who participated in such activities tend to be motivated, have a positive attitude towards school work, develop a positive perception of the school and are disciplined than students generally. Eventually, such students tend to attain better academic results.

The study also concludes that such activities are intrinsically educational. For instance,

the relevance of learners' participation in co-curricular activities indirectly support academic endeavours as it absorbs, to some extent, time that learners could misallocate to delinquent behaviour including substance abuse. Nevertheless, the promotion of a physically and mentally fit mind has indirect, positive impact on learners' academic attainment.

The understanding that not all children are academically-gifted should be given cognisance especially at school level. More so, schools are the best avenues where a child's talent may be detected early. To that end, educators felt that learner participation in these activities horns their talent development, which is a necessary condition to foster success in later life. Participants choose their careers and may become contributing members of society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The acknowledgement by the educators of the relevance of learners' participation in co-curricular activities to learner upbringing is the basis upon which the following holistic recommendations are made. The common objective for all stakeholders is a crucial component for the formation of a solid learner-school-parent relationship whose reinforcement is paramount in shaping the learners to become more responsible citizens.

As the only venues largely responsible for children's development, schools through their respective school authorities should revise their current policies regarding the budgets for co-curricular activities considering that these key stakeholders are positive and support learners' participation in these activities as necessary to their personal development. In addition to that, schools should create appropriate time for learners' involvement in these activities as well as provide reasonable choices of such co-curricular activities to give learners wide choice.

Educators ought to expose learners to a variety of opportunities that are associated with their participation in such activities, as well as encourage them to participate. It is also important that educators show their commitment in these co-curricular activities through, for instance, appropriately preparing learners for competitions considering the host of benefits attached to learners' participation especially in structured activities.

As the custodian of promoting a quality school system, the Department of Education in South Africa and related policy makers have the duty to further monitor schools pertaining the extent to which they are abiding by the sport policies or such policies regarding the conduct of co-curricular activities in schools. It is critical that both public and private schools be put under the same scrutiny by their relevant respective authorities so as to foster a balanced education system.

As the most vulnerable group whose life depends largely on the former stakeholders, learners ought to reconsider their perception of their co-curricular involvement. In light of a host of benefits that are attached to participation in co-curricular activities, including the fundamental need to improve their academic achievement, it becomes necessary that learners demonstrate their commitment in these activities. Inherently, they should put pressure on responsible authorities to avail them with a balanced education principled to afford them access to a complete curriculum.

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