



Role of extra-curricular activities in enhancing emotional intelligence

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Abstract

Academics play a significant role in shaping one's life. It has a direct influence on one's future career, health, and standard of living. Recognizing this, a majority of the parents send their children to school. Considering the importance of academics, they lay enormous emphasis on marks and grades, ignoring extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities being non-academic, the widespread tendency is to regard them as not important. Therefore, until recently, encouragement and participation in organized or structured extracurricular activity has largely been voluntary and restricted to a few schools and/or children belonging to upper social strata. Though almost all schools have at least one period in a week devoted to physical education/training, on many occasions, due to the lack of resources, children are left on their own to play or do whatever they want. Sometimes, if the syllabus is not completed, even this one period is taken up for academics. Not knowing the value of extracurricular activities, several schools use extracurricular activities period as a privilege, which is taken away every time a child shows undesirable behaviour. Though extracurricular activities have several indirect and direct benefits in academics as well as in non-academics, not many are aware of it. Research over several decades has shown that participating in one or more structured extracurricular activities has physical, emotional, psychological, academic, and social benefits. These benefits range from improvement in general health, emotional regulation, study skills, subject grade points, and aptitude test scores to increase in self-esteem. In addition, it also teaches respect for social values, customs, rules, and individual differences. On the other hand, participation in structured extracurricular activities has been shown to reduce negative and delinquent behaviours. Given the extent of benefits, it becomes imperative to advocate incorporating extracurricular activities into the regular schedule of all schools throughout the country.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, angklung, students participating in an angklung extracurricular activity

Introduction

Extracurricular activities enhance a child's learning experience as well as her overall development. Child development advances when kids are challenged and given opportunities to acquire and practice new skills, according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Extracurricular activities range from sports and the arts to interest clubs and community work, so there are plenty of options that suit an array of interests. Encourage your child to explore and try different extracurricular activities to promote important developmental skills through enriching and enjoyable experience. Emotional development is important to a child's ability to develop relationships, be self-confident, be trusting and empathetic toward others and manage adversity and stress in a healthy way. The camaraderie that develops among teams and clubs promotes bonding and meaningful relationships with others, while activities that encourage hard work and collaboration with peers foster a sense of pride and accomplishment for children to share with each other.

Positive social and emotional development is important. This development influences a child's self-confidence, empathy, the ability to develop meaningful and lasting friendships and partnerships, and a sense of importance and value to those around him/her. Children's social and emotional development also influences all other areas of development.

Parents and caregivers play the biggest role in social/emotional development because they offer the most consistent relationships

for their child. Consistent experiences with family members, teachers and other Adults help children learn about relationships and explore emotions in predictable interactions.

To nurture your child's social and emotional development, it is important that you engage in quality interactions like these on a daily basis, depending on the age of your child:

Be affectionate and nurturing: hold, comfort, talk and sing with your baby, toddler and child.

- Help your baby experience joy in "give-and-take" relationships by playing games like "peek-a-boo."
- Provide your toddler with responsive care, letting them practice new skills while still providing hands-on help.
- Support your child's developing skills; help him/her, but don't do everything for your child, even if it takes longer or is messy.

Teach social and emotional skills, such as taking turns, listening and resolving conflict.

Extracurricular Activities

The term 'extracurricular activities' usually refers to activities that fall outside the scope of the regular academic institutional curriculum, or course. It ranges from completely or partially organized activities connected with school, to activities that are not connected with school. If performed on a regular basis, unstructured activities such as painting, playing a musical

instrument, or other similar activities can also be considered extracurricular activities (Burr 2012).

Extracurricular activities usually do not offer any direct academic credit; however, it can provide additional value to the person's academic achievement, especially when applying for higher education or employment.

Some of the following criteria are important to be considered as an extracurricular activity:

- The activity where a child or adolescent is required to spend sufficient amount of time to practice a skill set to develop a talent.
- An activity that is usually acknowledged and/or practiced by other people. Playing football is easily considered as an extracurricular activity, compared to, say, collecting different footballs.
- An activity that has some importance and/or contributes value to the common good. For example, moderating a blog on teenage problems would be such an activity, in contrast to just surfing the internet.

Types of Extracurricular Activities

The common perception of extracurricular activities is usually restricted to activities related to sports, music, and performing arts. There is no consensus on how to classify extracurricular activities. Feldman and Matjasko (2005) described extracurricular activities in terms of sports, clubs, organizations, and student-managed work programmes. Guest and Schneider (2003) classified them as sports versus non-sports. Eccles *et al.* (2003) and Fredricks and Eccles (2005) categorized them as team sports activities involving school, performing arts, and academic clubs. However, there are a wide variety of activities that can come under the umbrella term of extracurricular activities. Most extracurricular activities are usually carried out as part of a team or group or clubs. These activities can be grouped into activities related to

- Sports and athletics (such as, football, hockey, basketball, and cricket)
- Music (such as, singing, playing instruments, choir groups)
- Performing arts (such as, drama, puppetry, and dancing)
- Academics (such as, Maths club, Science club and Computer club)
- Art (such as, photography, painting and sculpting)
- Outdoor/adventure (such as, mountaineering, hiking and biking)
- Health and fitness (such as, Yoga, martial arts and Tai chi)
- Language (such as, English club, French club and Chinese club)
- Community/social (such as, Environmental, animal rights and gender equality clubs)
- Volunteering (such as, Red Cross and tutoring underprivileged children)
- Technology (such as, Blogging and movie making club)
- Media (such as, University radio station, college newspaper and creating videos for YouTube channel)
- Political (such as, Youth United Nations and Youth Parliament)
- Religious (such as, Church, *Madrassa*, and Temple)
- Other organized groups (Such as, Scouts, Guides and Chess)

Though extracurricular activities range from sports and performing arts to literary clubs, activities like popular sports and performing arts often endure for a long time in a person's life, even after the completion of school or college. Other activities, such as environmental club or English club, usually last for shorter duration, or only for as long as the person is associated with that particular school or college.

There are different theories (Astin 1999; Chickering 1969) about how extracurricular activities help in the overall development of a child or an adolescent. Chickering's psychosocial development theory (Chickering 1969) proposes seven vectors known as tasks, which students have to go through to develop identity. They are: developing intellectual, manual skills and interpersonal competence; ability to manage emotions; moving through autonomy towards independence; developing mature interpersonal relationships; establishing identity; developing purpose; and developing integrity. Astin's Involvement Theory (Astin 1999) describes the child's involvement in terms of the quality and quantity of the physical, as well as psychological, energy that s/he invests in school/college experience. The involvement usually consists of immersion in academics, involvement in extracurricular activities, and interaction with school staff. The greater the student's involvement in school, the greater will be the learning and personal development. His theory stresses the significance of holistic experience and believes that success is the sum total of experiences which can occur inside and outside of the school.

Adolescents generally spend about 80% of their waking hours outside the school (Zaff *et al.* 2003). Extracurricular activities facilitate students to excel in different aspects which the school environment does not provide. Due to the non-academic nature, there is a general tendency to regard extracurricular activities as unimportant, and until a few years back, participation in extracurricular activities has been more a matter of choice, and restricted mainly to a few elite schools. On the other hand, modern households generally do not provide much training in initiative and responsibility. Given this, the importance of participating in extracurricular activities becomes even more significant

Conclusion

As a parent, it is important that we acknowledge our child's feelings and perspectives. This allows a child to express their feelings without the fear of judgement or admonishment, which in turn helps them familiarise themselves with different kinds of emotions. Encouraging them through active listening and by engaging with them actively in conversations around their behaviour can really help them increase their self-awareness and over a period of time, children learn to introspect and arrive at thought out decisions independently.

Emotionally intelligent kids are known to foster more meaningful relationships, have better mental health and are more likely to succeed as adults. It is about time we started treating emotional intelligence as a mainstream skill.

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