

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: A CASE STUDY OF MALAYSIAN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Co-curriculum is a very important and essential part of an education system. It is the co-curriculum aspect of the education that prepares and moulds the student to be holistic. Nevertheless more emphasis has generally been given to the curriculum aspect resulting from the students' inability to link the excellence in performance academically to the active participation in co curriculum. This is a study carried out to analyze the teachers' perception of the correlation between the participation of students in co-curriculum and their competency skills. Four main competencies are identified namely communication skill, cognitive skill, self-management skill and academic excellence, and tests are carried out based on these four skills. A field survey by way of questionnaire is carried out in five schools whereby 392 teachers are given the questionnaire. A total of 252 teachers responded, comprising 64.2%. Analysis of the data is done using SPSS. The analysis showed that those students who actively participate in co-curricular activities are found to be more competent. The results of the study corroborate and support earlier studies on this subject. Correlation analysis is done to determine the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. Then regression analysis is carried out to analyze the equation model between these variables. Chi square tests are also carried out to examine whether students' efficiency is independent or dependent on some of the demographical variables.

Key words : Co-curricular Activities, Competency, Students, Teachers' Perception, Effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Primary schools basically follow a common curriculum that stresses on the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic as well as encouraging overall development of aesthetic and social values. This has been particularly emphasized in the Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Rendah (KBSR) system, and much more emphasis has been given to co-curriculum activities, which leads to the building of talented-disciplined characters.

In the secondary school a curriculum based on Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Menengah (KBSM) is enforced. This curriculum includes a wide range of subjects for arts and science as well as technical subjects. Together with this has been the emphasis on co-curriculum where every student has to ensure that he or she enrolls in at least two co-curricular activities.

Emphasis on co-curricular activities has been made because the ministry knows of the positive effect of students being all-rounder when they excel in academic and co-curricular activities. In the upper secondary, students are evaluated through Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination or the Malaysian Vocational Certificate of Education. Applications for the entrance to pre- university are judged on the above examination but great care is taken to ensure that the selected students are active in curriculum activities too.

The education providers are responsible to educate the students to the demands and the needs of the nation. The education in the high school level is the prime concern here. There are many divisions in education. Academic, skills and co curriculum activities are all part and parcel of education. Much emphasis is given to academic, as it is the deciding factor of a student's future. Parents, teachers, and all the other factors have made the academic factor in a students' education life in schools as the most important. In the process, co curriculum activities are not taken seriously although the ministry has put stress on the matter that every student has to take part in co curriculum activities for the betterment of the students. However, the participation in full force has yet to be accomplished. It is obvious that students gain knowledge and competency through academic, but can this also be said of students' involvement in the co curricular activities?

School is the platform for development, which includes mental and physical development. The concern here is whether students who participate in co-curricular activities are gaining any benefits or is it a mere waste of time and effort by all parties. The importance in education does not only lie in academic but also in all other fields which are required in educating students, which include skills and co curriculum. This empirical study brings out the fact that the students tend to demonstrate better communicative, cognitive, self managing and academic skills than those who do not participate in co curriculum, based on the teachers' perceptions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Competency building begins at school level. There is extensive literature on competency building and co-curricular activities. Green (1998) emphasized that the contents of competency building will finally ensure that the workforce produced will possess the proficiency and literacy that is required for a good performance. A study carried out by Russel, Peter, Donald and Robert (2000) found that extra curriculum involvement in high school produces honesty and fair play needed to prevent delinquency and crime. According to Rose (2000), repeated records of high school students across the United States have shown that those students who become heavily involved in extra curricular activities tend to be model students and seldom get involved in delinquency and crime.

Previous studies reveal that students' involvement in co-curricular activities make them stay in school and improve retention rates. A study done by Davalos, Shavez, and Guardiola (1999) showed the effect of extra curricular activities in students' dropout rates in school for Mexican-American youths. These results support the argument that extracurricular activity involvement may provide individuals with a sense of belonging that may contribute to higher retention rates for these individuals

(Oliver, 1995; Zill, 1995). The Education Digest (George, 2002) stated that research showed that student participation in co-curricular activities is reflected in improved academic achievement.

A report on The Condition of Education, United States Department of Education, National Centre for Education Statistics in 1995 found that participation in extracurricular activities may affect academic performance, attachment to school and social development. These activities provide opportunities for students to learn the values of teamwork, a channel for reinforcing skills and the opportunity to apply academic skills in other arenas as a part of a well-rounded education (Arkansas Activities Association, n.d.). According to Education Week, Washington (Anonymous, 2001), new data from the U.S.A shows that participating in curriculum activities link to better performance in school. Modi, Konstantopoulos and Hedges (1998) found that gifted students appear to spend their time out of school participating in constructive activities. John and Robert (1997) indicated that engagement in school co-curricular activity is linked to decrease rates in early dropout in both boys and girls. An article featured in the Cedar Rapids Gazette ("Activities Support," 2000) stated that school activity programs cost very little yet provide students with many important benefits.

Data from various case studies compiled from University Interscholastic League on Benefits of Co-curricular Activities (n.d.) document the following results and benefits: In a survey of 4,800 high school students in March 1995, the Minnesota State High School League found that 91 percent of them said students who participate in school activities tend to be school leaders and role models; 92 percent said that participation in school activities provides an opportunity not found in a regular classroom setting to develop self-discipline. Young (1997) states that quality physical education programs taught by well-trained physical education specialists are an integral part of the total education of a child. Jodi, Reed and David (2003) in their paper in the Journal of Youth and Adolescence wrote about tests conducted on youths. A test of ten groups of students with between 4-9 adolescents in each group was carried out. School counsellors selected participants for these groups who were active in extra curriculum activities and whom they thought would be articulate. The results were quite interesting. Firstly, the youth in the focus groups described of the process of self-exploration occurs in a range of youth activities. Opportunities to try new things allow youth to discover how these fit or do not fit into their developing identity. This leads to the second theme of gaining self-knowledge.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Much emphasis is given to academic, as it is the deciding factor of a student's future. Parents, teachers, and all the other factors have made the academic factor in a students' education life in schools as the most important. In the process, co curriculum activities are not taken seriously although the ministry has put stress on the matter that every student has to take part in co curriculum activities for the betterment of the students. However, the participation in full force has yet to be accomplished. It is obvious that students gain knowledge and competency through academic, but can this also be said of students' involvement in the co curricular activities? This empirical study compares the efficiency of students based on communicative, cognitive, self managing and academic skills of students who participate and do not participate in co curriculum, based on the teachers' perceptions. Further the direction of relationship of various factors on the efficiency is analysed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework as shown in Chart 1 which shows the independent and the dependent variables. There are eight independent variables which include communication competency, cognitive skills, managing self and academic competency. Demographic variables include types of school, respondents' gender, respondents' experience and types of activities participated by respondents. Efficiency of students is the dependent variable.

From teachers' perception, students who have communication competency, cognitive skills, managing self competency and academic competency are efficient students. These competencies are

tested on students who participate in co-curricular activities in school. Furthermore, the efficiency of these students is tested to observe their dependency on demographic variables.

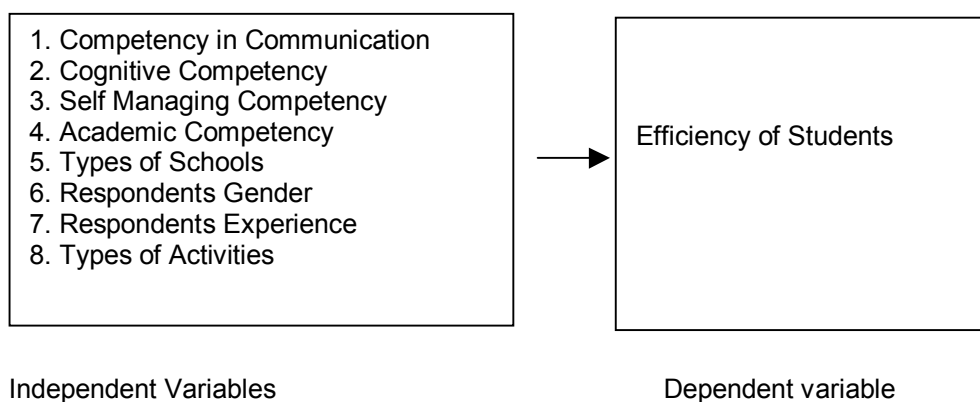


Chart 1: Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this study, the word '*competent*' will include general competency that ought to be possessed by the school children in relation to their involvement in the co-curricular activities. A total of four generic competencies will be included in the study.

Firstly, the competency of communication skills is looked into, as communication skill is the key to successful implementation of order and policies. Knowledge gained but not communicated to others is of no use to society. Communication is the main basic mode of interaction from the time of civilisation. Thus, the importance of communication skills is the most required element and undeniably, competency in language especially English would be of utmost importance in order to communicate particularly to the world outside.

The other element of competency considered in this study is cognitive competence, which includes the skills of thinking analytically of making decision and of acquiring knowledge. It would include communication with a diverse group of individuals and conducting group activities, which will retain interpersonal relationship.

Managing self would be accounted for wherein it would show the ability to take responsibility for one's own performance. On a broader base it would include the development and applications of one's own skills and competency. The skills set for this competency would include gaining knowledge from every day situation, identifying priorities and problems and solving them.

Finally, the element considered would be the skills of academic competency wherein a minimum level of competency in numeric skill is essential to build higher levels of academic and economic concern. Students should be competent in dealing with numerical operations. Last but not least the term 'co-curriculum' includes all activities inside and outside of classroom. Co-curriculum is also an activity that gives ample opportunity to teach new skills in depth (Hui, 1983).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Survey based methodology was used in this research to obtain data from the respondents. The data was collected through a self administered questionnaire by the researchers. The questionnaire for this study consists of two parts. The first part, which is section A of the questionnaire, comprises of four items that covers the background information of the respondents. In section A, nominal scale is used to gather information. This includes the numbering of the type of school, gender, experience and stating the name of societies, club and uniform bodies. The second part of the questionnaire, section

B, consists of twenty two items of competency statements. The competencies included are communication competency, cognitive competency, self managing competency, and academic competency. The above competencies are the independent variables in this study. It is then followed by the dependent variable which is the students' efficiency. All items in this section use a five point Likert scale.

Teachers are the sample units of this study. These teachers are all involved in academic and co-curricular activities. Furthermore, the sample is of teachers who interact with the students at all times. This study is confined to five schools in the Petaling District. Therefore, the findings or in other words the result of this study is restricted to 252 samples that are selected on random basis from these schools. A total of 252 questionnaires were returned, which represents 64.2 %. The data is gathered from the teachers who are given the questionnaire to answer only once. Therefore this study is in the line with the cross sectional method of collecting data.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were tested:

- H1: The efficiency of students who participate in co-curricular activities is significantly more than those who do not participate in co-curricular activities.
- H2: Students' participation in co-curricular activities has significant positive effect on their competency in communication.
- H3: Students' participation in co-curricular activities has significant positive effect on their competency in cognitive skills.
- H4: Students' participation in co-curricular activities has significant positive effect on their competency in managing self.
- H5: Students' participation in co-curricular activities has significant positive effect on their competency in academic.
- H6: The efficiency of students depends on the school.
- H7: The efficiency of students depends on the teachers' gender.
- H8: The efficiency of students depends on the teachers' experience.
- H9: The efficiency of students depends on the number of societies, clubs and uniform bodies.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected is analysed using SPSS. A total of 392 questionnaires were distributed to five selected schools, of these 252 responded. Based on the demographic characteristics provided in Table 1, we can observe that the majority of the respondents are from SMK Taman Medan (27%). Female respondents make up the higher percentage of 76.6%. The respondents with 5 to 9 years of experience comprise of 33.3% which is the highest. Participation in clubs shows the highest percentage which is (41.3%). The demographic analysis of the respondents is carried out by using the frequencies.

Table 1

Frequency Distributions of Sample (n=252)

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Name of School		
SMK Taman Medan	68	27.0
SMK Bt 8	55	21.8
SMK Section 1	33	13.1
SMK Section 4	42	16.7
SMK La Salle	54	21.4
Gender		
Male	59	23.4
Female	193	76.6
Experience		
< 5 years	52	20.6
5-9 years	84	33.3
10-15 years	62	24.6
> 15 years	54	21.4
Co-curricular Activities		
Societies	64	25.4
Clubs	104	41.3
Uniform bodies	84	33.3

Reliability Analysis

The Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for all the factors to test the reliability of all its item variables. This establishes the internal consistency of scale used. The values of Cronbach's alpha depicted below show that the values are more than 0.7. Therefore it establishes the internal consistency of scale.

Table 2

Cronbach's Alpha value for Communication, Cognitive, Self Managing, Academic and Efficiency in Co-curricular activities.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Communication competency	.834
Cognitive competency	.768
Self Managing competency	.817
Academic competency	.790
Efficiency of students	.765

Efficiency Analysis

Test of hypothesis has been carried out to see whether there is any significant difference in the efficiency of students between the two groups of those participating in co-curricular activities (sumeffp) and those who do not participate in co-curricular activities (sumeffnp).

The hypotheses for the test are:

- Ho: There is no significant difference between the efficiency of students who participate and do not participate in co-curricular activities.
- H1: The efficiency of students who participate in co-curricular activities is significantly more than those who do not participate in co-curricular activities.

Table 3

Paired sample statistic

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 SUMEFFP	12,46	252	1,644	,104
SUMEFFNP	6,36	252	2,370	,149

Table 4

Paired Sample Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	SUMEFFP & SUMEFFNP	252	-,284	,000

Table 5

Paired Sample Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower		Upper			
Pair 1	SUMEFFP – SUMEFFNP	6,10	3,246	,205	5,70	6,51	29,844	251	,000

From Table 4, it can be seen that there is significant correlation between the efficiency of students who participate and those who do not participate in co-curricular activities.

From the result of paired sample T-test, as in Table 5, we can conclude that the efficiency of students who participate in co-curricular activities is significantly higher. Table 3 shows the mean of efficiency of students who participate and who do not participate in co-curricular activities, which are 12.46 and 6.36 respectively. This shows there is a vast difference of efficiency between students who participate and those who do not participate with regard to co-curricular activities. The higher mean for students who participate simply implies the respondents' view that these students have better competencies with regard to communication, cognitive, self-management and academic competency.

Correlation Analysis

Table 6 shows the correlation between the four competencies which are communication competency (sumcomp), cognitive competency (sumcogp), self management competency (sumselfp) and academic competency (sumacap) and the efficiency of the students who participate in co-curricular activities (sumeftp).

Table 6

Correlation analysis between independent and dependent variables.

		SUMC OMP	SUMC OGP	SUMSE LFP	SUMA CAP	SUMEF FP
SUMCOMP	Pearson Correlation	1	,524(**)	,507(**)	,457(**)	,399(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000	,000	,000	,000
	N	252	252	252	252	252
SUMCOGP	Pearson Correlation	,524(**)	1	,543(**)	,465(**)	,441(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	.	,000	,000	,000
	N	252	252	252	252	252
SUMSELF	Pearson Correlation	,507(**)	,543(**)	1	,550(**)	,490(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	.	,000	,000
	N	252	252	252	252	252
SUMACAP	Pearson Correlation	,457(**)	,465(**)	,550(**)	1	,355(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	.	,000
	N	252	252	252	252	252
SUMEFFP	Pearson Correlation	,399(**)	,441(**)	,490(**)	,355(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	.
	N	252	252	252	252	252

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above correlations are tested at 99% confidence level. From the table above, it can be seen that the correlations of all the independent variables were found to be significantly positively correlated. The result indicates that the communication competency, cognitive competency, self managing competency and academic competencies will improve the efficiency of students with their participation in co-curriculum activities.

Regression Analysis

The correlation analysis shows that the four variables which include communication competency, cognitive competency, self managing competency and academic competency have significant correlation with efficiency of students. Hence, the regression of these four factors on efficiency of students is carried out for students who participate in co-curricular activities. The results of the SPSS analysis are as follows.

Table 7

Model Summary of students who participate

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,545(a)	,297	,286	1,390

Note: a Predictors: (Constant), SUMACAP, SUMCOMP, SUMCOGP, SUMSELF

In Table 7, R Square shows that 29.7% of the total efficiency of students' participation in co-curricular activities is explained by the four variables which are communication competency, cognitive competency, self managing competency and academic competency. It also suggests that there are other factors which need to be considered for further analysing the total efficiency of students.

Table 8

ANOVA of students who participate

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	201,574	4	50,393	26,089	,000(a)
	Residual	477,105	247	1,932		
	Total	678,679	251			

Note: a Predictors: (Constant), SUMACAP, SUMCOMP, SUMCOGP, SUMSELF
 b Dependent Variable: SUMEFFP

From Table 8, ANOVA, we can see that the regression model is significant. This can be seen as the p-value is 0 which is less than 0.05.

Table 9

Coefficients of students who participate

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2,322	1,039		2,234	,026
	SUMCOMP	,088	,046	,128	1,905	,058
	SUMCOGP	,159	,057	,192	2,803	,005
	SUMSELF	,192	,046	,297	4,170	,000
	SUMACAP	,046	,069	,044	,660	,510

Note: a Dependent Variable: SUMEFFP

Table 9 shows that there are four independent variables which are communication (sumcomp), cognitive sumcogp), self managing (sumselfp) and academic competency (sumacap) that are considered for regression analysis. From the table, self managing competency is the most significant factor as its p-value is 0 and the Beta value is highest at 0.297. The next significant factor is followed by cognitive competency which has a p-value of 0.005 and the Beta value is 0.192. Communication competency and academic competency have no significant effect on the efficiency. It shows a p-value of 0.058 and 0.510 respectively.

The regression equation for predicting the efficiency based on the four variables which are communication competency, cognitive competency, self managing competency and academic competency is given below:

$$\text{Efficiency} = 2.322 + 0.088 (\text{Communication}) + 0.159 (\text{Cognitive}) + 0.192 (\text{Managing Self}) + 0.046 (\text{Academic})$$

Testing for the Effect of Demographic Variables

The Pearson Chi-Square test were conducted to find out whether there was any relatedness between type of school, gender of respondents, experience of respondents and type of activities to efficiency of students.

Table 10

Results of Chi-square analysis

Variables	Pearson Chi-square	Significance(two-tailed)
Type of School	50.391	0.020
Gender	10.014	0.254
Experience	24.482	0.434
Type of activities	11.334	0.788

The results, as shown in Table 10, indicate that relatedness could only be established between efficiency of students and the type of school.

CONCLUSION

The statistical analysis have corroborated the evidence that students who participate in the co-curriculum activities have shown a significant positive correlation with the four competencies tested which includes communication, cognitive, managing self and academic competency as has been proven by many other researchers.

Henceforth, it can be safely concluded from the study that students' involvement in co-curricular activities enhances their competencies in the four areas tested, thus causing the objective of this study to be achieved. Hence, significant steps must be taken to assure that every student participates actively in co-curricular activities, which are headed by teachers who are knowledgeable on that particular activity. The Parents Teachers' Association (PTAs) could certainly help in this noble cause and provide undivided assistance.

The school plays a key role here as the heads are able to control and monitor both students' and teachers' participation. In this fast changing world our nation needs able citizens, dynamic and excellent leaders. The school bench is where the moulding should begin, and thus the importance of students' participation in co-curriculum activities, has proven to churn out better and successful students, as leaders and responsible citizens of tomorrow. As if to seal this, the government has now embarked on the National Service Programme which if viewed wholly would bring one to the conclusion that it is an extension of co-curricular activities in school.

However, in order for students to participate successfully in this newly imposed programme, it is now even more important for schools to emphasize and encourage students' participation in co-curricular activities, as it would be a sure way of ensuring better participation in the National Service Programme: a programme based on the aim of churning out responsible, good and capable citizens for our nation.

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