THE INFLUENCE OF CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN ECONOMICS

Article *in* International Journal of Educational Management · January 2014

CITATION
1

READS
12,046

2 authors:

Bernard Yaw Sekyi Acquah
University of Cape Coast
10 PUBLICATIONS **14** CITATIONS
SEE PROFILE

Peter Anti Partey
University of Cape Coast
12 PUBLICATIONS **6** CITATIONS
SEE PROFILE

Acquah, B. Y. S. & **Anti Partey, P**. (2014). The influence of co-curricular activities on students' performance in economics. *Journal of Educational Management, 6,* 147 – 160.

THE INFLUENCE OF CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN ECONOMICS

Bernard Y. S. Acquah
Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education
University of Cape Coast
bsacquah@gmail.com

Peter Anti Partey
Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education
University of Cape Coast
peterparteyanti@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In the 21st century, the pure academic type of education students are introduced to is gradually giving way to the type of education that seek to incorporate the three taxonomies of education; cognitive, psychomotor and affective. Co-curricular activities have been linked to intellectual, emotional, social and moral development of the child. It is based on this that this study sought to establish a functional relationship between students' involvement in co-curricular activities and their performance in economics. The study employed the causal comparative design and used a total of 920 economics students from the Ashanti region of Ghana. Two instruments were used for the study; a Test of Economics Understanding (TEU) and a questionnaire. The results of the logistic regression indicated that involvement in co-curricular activities impacts positively on students' performance. It is recommended that school authorities identify specific co-curricular activities and assign teachers as co-ordinators so that some level of seriousness would be attached to such activities by the students.

***Keywords**: Co-curricular activities, Students' performance, Economics, Logistic regression.*

Introduction

Education is a broad concept which transcends the four walls of a classroom. Total education is the type of education that focuses on the overall development of the child. Such education comprises curricular and co-curricular activities. In the United States of America, co-curricular refers to activities conducted on or off school premises by clubs, associations, and organizations sponsored by the Board of Education (National Federation of State High School Associations [NFHS], 1999). Thus, co-curricular activities are voluntary activities, which are not part of the regular school curriculum, are usually not graded and do not earn credits. In the context of this study, a co-curricular activity is conceptualised as an out-of-class activity, supervised and/or financed by the school, which provides curriculum-related learning and character building experiences. In Ghanaian Senior High Schools, various co-curricular activities are carried out by students. Some of these are social clubbing, sporting activities and religious activities. These activities are meant to add to the total development of the student during his/her three years education in the senior high school.

Arguments for and against Co-curricular activities

There are two divergent viewpoints regarding co-curricular activities: some in favour and some opposed (Nesan, 2009). One of the arguments in favour is that these activities prepare learners practically for the future because they get used to working in teams, exercising leadership and taking initiative. Nesan (2009) explains that the normal curriculum has limitations, with the result that learners who only experienced rigidly academic study may not be able to apply theoretical knowledge in practical situations. He adds that another benefit is that quite a number of activities have a strong physical (as opposed to mental) bias. Learners have to abandon their desks and face new challenges. Nesan (2009) further explains that giving equal weights to co-curricular and formal academic activities within the school

system can turn out more versatile and well balanced individuals who are more competent all round.

Furthermore, it is clearly worthwhile to expose learners to a wide range of experiences that display at least a reasonable resemblance to the reality of conditions in the outside world where they will have to study, live and work once they leave school. It seems justifiable to assume that a judiciously balanced combination of academic and co-curricular learning experiences is likely to enable learners to cope better with life in a society where people have to change career several times in the course of their working lives. Learners must, therefore, have a working acquaintance with a balanced range of skills (Nesan, 2009). Another argument in favour of co-curricular activities is that every learner has a basic human right to demand and receive a broad education. Learners have different aptitudes and should be given ample opportunities for development before specialising in a specific field of interest. They need skills that will equip them for family and leisure life too. The learner who prefers science should not have to give up music if that is also part of his/her interest range, and a learner who majors in social studies should not be deprived of physical sports activities for that reason.

Moreover, co-curricular activities offered after school hours can be an excellent opportunity to discover new meaning in life rather than waste time lazing around or maybe even making trouble out of boredom. The success of co-curricular activities often depends on building links between the school and the wider community. This means in practice that local enthusiasts help learners to gain specific skills, and schools send learners out to work on community projects.

With respect to arguments against co-curricular activities in schools, Nesan (2009) identifies the following arguments against co-curricular activities in schools: Academic curriculum is much more important and must continue to be given more status in schools than

the co-curriculum. Obtaining recognised qualifications is more essential than co-curricular activities. Higher education institutions place a greater importance on the curriculum than on the co-curriculum when selecting students, and so do employers when recruiting workers. Society does not require masters of many skills, but specialists in selected fields. If a lawyer's legal services are required his ability to tango or play soccer is irrelevant. The main thrust to prepare for gainful employment should therefore go into specialisation for that purpose.

Most specialist professions still provide a range of career opportunities without any need to compromise academic education by overemphasis on non-academic activities. Making co-curricular activities compulsory will take the fun out of them and strip them of their benefits. If learners are forced to take part, they will be less enthusiastic and may therefore spoil the activity with their recalcitrance. These arguments are not convincing and are reasonably well answered by the arguments in favour of co-curriculum activities.

Many co-curricular activities have proven to be beneficial in building and strengthening academic achievement, even if the activities are not obviously related to academic subjects (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002 and Guest & Schneider, 2003). One study on adolescents and co-curricular activities found that adolescents who participated in co-curricular activities reported higher grades, more positive attitudes toward school, and higher academic aspirations (Darling, Caldwell & Smith, 2005). Total co-curricular activity participation (TCAP), or participation in co-curricular activities in general, is associated with an improved grade point average, higher educational aspirations, increased college attendance, and reduced absenteeism (Broh, 2002). There are so many positive aspects on students can be seen from their involvement in co-curricular activities. Advocates of co-curricular activities, Fozzard (1967) and Galiher (2006), claim that this informal aspect of education has a good deal to contribute to developing good citizens. They claim that such activities enable pupils to communicate adequately, prepare them for economic

independence, developing healthy minds in healthy bodies, prepare them for family life and direct their use of leisure time. They add that such activities also help students develop a set of moral and ethical values, develop social competency, discover special interest and capacities and develop creative expression. Co-curricular participation was positively associated with the success indicators like consistent attendance, academic achievement, and aspirations for continuing education among public high school seniors in 1992 (NCES Education Policy Issues, 1995).

Darling et al (2005) conducted a longitudinal study involving high schools in America concerning co-curricular activities and their results which showed that the students who participated in school-based co-curricular activities had higher grades, higher academic aspirations, and better academic attitudes. Students involved in athletics are said to build character, instill a respect for the rules, encourage team-work and sportsmanship, promote healthy competition and perseverance, and provide a sense of achievement (Smoll & Smith, 2002).

Organized sports also provide an opportunity for initiative, emotional regulation, goal setting, persistence, problem solving and time management (Larson, Hansen & Moneta, 2006), which may help to explain association found between sports participation and academic achievement (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002). Although researchers agree that co-curricular activities do, in fact, influence academic performance, Borde (1998) shows that engagements in co-curricular activities are unrelated to students' performance. Also Broh (2002) found that "participation in some activities improves achievement, while participation in others diminishes achievement". This is supported by Kimiko (2005), who found that participation in athletics, television viewing and community service has a positive effect on academic performance while participation in musical performance does not improve academic performance.

Involvement in sport activities also has been proved to have adversely affected students' performance (Shernoff & Vandell, 2007). Some findings on sports participation and its relationship to development and emotional adjustment have not been definitive. For example, on the negative side, sports have been linked to developmental hazards such as delayed identity development (Larson & Kleiber, 1993), increased level of school deviance (Lamborn et. al. 1992), higher rate of alcohol consumption (Eccles & Barber, 1999), competition anxiety and self-centeredness (Smoll & Smith, 2002). However, on the positive side, sports have been defended as helping students get mental rest and also help them to stay physically fit and healthy.

Problem Statement

The function of education is to bring changes in child behaviour and personality in a more desirable form. The development of a child's body and mind demands proper nurturing of his/her physical and intellectual qualities as few of the major determinants of his/her personality. This broad aim of education falls in line with the purpose of introducing economics in senior high schools. Thus, economics training makes a significant contribution to the overall development of students and is congruent with the major goals for elementary and secondary education (Buckles, 1991; Huang, 1997). Buckles (1991) noted that economic education promotes careful thinking and logical reasoning. The analytical skills and rational thinking gained through economic education could be used to solve various life problems over a broad range of situations. Greenspan (2003) also noted that economic education enhances students' fundamental mathematics and problem-solving skills that will benefit them as lifetime decision makers. Therefore, modern approaches of education, especially in economics, must emphasize all round development of the child. One way of achieving this is to allow economics students to get involved in co-curricular activities.

Co-curricular activities are recognized as a source of enrichment and vitalization of the school curriculum, mainly through the cultivation of hobbies, interests, etc. These activities are no longer looked upon as extras but as an integral part of the school programme (Klesse & D'Onofrio, 1994). Participation in co-curricular activities provides many important outlets for students in today's world. It provides them with challenges, alternative resources, and life-long learning experiences. Co-curricular activities, as the name implies, are those, not directly related with the prescribed curriculum and may include; sports, athletics, scouting, clubbing, excursions debates and various hobbies to bring social and physical adjustments in the child. The basic idea behind such activities in educational institutions is to build up students' character and personality as well as to train their minds in order to facilitate academic achievements of the child.

However, in most Ghanaian senior high schools, co-curricular activities are seen as a preserve of students in Visual Arts and Home Economics. Thus, students offering courses in the Sciences, General Arts and Business hardly take part in such activities. This they do because, such activities seem to be taking much of their academic time and students offering Economics are no exception. Moreover, there seems to be conflicting reports on the actual effect of co-curricular activities on the performance of students in the literature. Researchers (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002 and Guest & Schneider, 2003 and Darling, Caldwell & Smith, 2005) are in favour of students' involvement of co-curricular activities because it affects their performance positively while others (Larson & Kleiber, 1993; Eccles & Barber, 1999 and Smoll & Smith, 2002) reported the opposite. This paper therefore seeks to establish the effect of economics students' involvement in co-curricular activities on their performance in Ghanaian senior high schools. Thus, the question is 'To what extent do students of economics undertake co-curricular activities and how does this affect their performance?'

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. ascertain the involvement of senior high school economics students in co-curricular activities.
2. identify the kinds of co-curricular activities that senior high school economics students are engaged in.
3. Find out the effect of senior high school students' involvement in co-curricular activities on their performance in economics.

Research Questions

1. What is the involvement of senior high school economics students in co-curricular activities?
2. What kinds of co-curricular activities are senior high school economics students engaged in?
3. What is the effect of senior high school students' involvement in co-curricular activities on their performance in economics?

Justification of the Study

In an era where there is tremendous emphasis on curricular activities as against co-curricular activities, this study brings to the fore the essence of incorporating co-curricular activities in the school system by school administrators and educational policy makers. It also makes it clear to the students the effect co-curricular students have on their personality make-up and development.

The Design

The design for the study was the causal comparative design. The casual comparative design is a method of teasing out possible antecedents of events that have happened and cannot, therefore, be controlled, engineered or manipulated by the investigator (Cooper & Schindler 2001). This design was used because there was no manipulation of variables as the phenomenon under investigation had already taken place. That is, the study sought to identify students who were already engaged in co-curricular activities and the effect of their involvement in such activities on their performance in economics.

Population

The target population was all Economics students in their third and fourth year of study in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. At the time of the study, there were both students pursuing the three-year and four-year senior high curriculum. There were a total of 88 schools in the Ashanti region reading Economics with an estimated total student population of 4,870. This comprised third and fourth year students reading economics in these schools.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

Multistage sampling was employed in sampling the schools and the students in the region. Firstly, a total of 30 schools (34%) were selected from the 88 schools using the stratified sampling procedure. This reflected the demography of the study area with part being urban, sub-urban and rural. Then with the use of the simple random sampling techniques, 30% of Economics students each were selected for the study from each school (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). This is based on the fact that, the average number of students in a class according to GES regulation should be not more than 45 (GES, 2002). In all, a total of 920 students were selected for the study. This comprised both third and fourth year students in the SHS.

Instruments

Two major instruments were used for the study, a questionnaire and a Test of Economic Understanding. In the first place, a Test of Economic Understanding (TEU) was used to measure students' performance in Economics. To enable the researcher measure performance of students in Economics, a standardized objective test was administered to the students. The test comprised 30 multiple choice items with 15 each from Microeconomics and Macroeconomics. The questionnaire sought information on co-curricular issues from the student.

The Variable: Co-curricular Activities

Involvement in co-curricular activities is a binary variable indicating whether or not a student is involved in a co-curricular activity or not. This is measured by the question, "are you involved in any other school activity apart from academic work?" Researchers such as Broh (2002), Marsh and Kleitman (2002) and Darling, Caldwell and Smith (2005) all found a positive relationship between involvement in co-curricular activities and students performance. In this study, therefore, co-curriculum activity was expected to be positively related to students' performance

Data Collection Procedure

To be able to cover the wide range of schools across the length and breadth of the region and obtain a sample and information that would reflect the general views and characteristics of the population, a considerable plan was needed for the data collection. Before the data collection, copies of an introductory letter from the head of Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education (DASSE), University of Cape Coast, were obtained and distributed to the heads of the senior high schools where the study was conducted. The

introductory letter sought to request for cooperation and create rapport between the teachers whose students served as respondents for the study and us.

We met with the teachers in the various schools to agree on the time to administer the instruments. We covered 10 schools each week and three weeks were used to cover all the sampled schools. We guided the respondents to complete the instruments. The response rate was 100%.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data was analysed using the Stata econometric package (SE 11). Objectives 1 and 2 were analysed using frequencies and percentages while with objective 3, we employed logistic regression to establish the relationship between co-curricular activities and students performance in economics.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: Do economics students undertake co-curricular activities?

Table 1: Involvement in Co-curricular Activities

Response	Number (N)	Percent (%)
Yes	472	51.3
No	448	48.7
Total	**920**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

From Table 1, it can be observed that 472 (51.3%) of the students are involved various co-curricular while 448 (48.7%) indicated that they did not part take in any co-curricular activity. This means that, majority of the students (51.3 %) do other things apart from pure academic work. This finding is in sync with the views of Marsh and Kleitman

(2002), Broh, 2002, Guest and Schneider (2003) and Darling, Caldwell and Smith, (2005) who all found that majority of students engaged in co-curricular activities. This indicates that economics students do undertake co-curricular activities, however, the 48.7% who responded in the negative can be attributed to the fact that, most of the students might not be aware that the various activities that they do can be classified as being co-curricular activities. This finding also implies that, unlike the usual notion that co-curricular activities are the preserve for the students offering the so-called "less important courses" in senior high schools, economics students who cut across business and general arts programmes all undertake these activities.

Research Question 2: What are the types of co-curricular activities that economics students are engaged in?

Table 2: Type of Co-curricular Activity

Type	Number (N)	Percent (%)
Sporting Activities	290	61.4
Social Clubs	179	37.9
Religious Clubs	3	0.6
Total	**472**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

From Table 2, out of the 472 students who indicated that they are involved in co-curricular activities, 290 (61.4%) were into various sporting activities. These include athletics, football, volley ball, basket ball among the rest. Students involved in social club activities such as debating clubs, drama groups, young entrepreneurship societies, writers' clubs, Red Cross, cadet among others were 179 (37.9%). Religious clubs recorded only 3

(0.6%) out of the 472 students. This means that most of the students in senior high school are into sporting activities, followed by social clubs and then religious societies.

This finding corroborates the findings of Marsh & Kleitman (2002), who observed that more time is spent on sports than other structured activities by students. Stephens and Schaben (2002) also observed in their study that students actively participate in one of the sports activities and Broh (2002) reported that most students engage in sports activities which can have good impact on the studies of the students.

It can be inferred from the above that, sporting activities which involve football, handball, basket ball, and athletics among others are the co-curricular activities that economics students are more interested in. This stems from the fact that, these activities are usually given much prominence in the senior high schools, that is, students who engage in these activities are given special treatment in terms of their feeding and accommodation. Also, they are exempted from activities like weeding, scrubbing and sweeping the campus. It is therefore not unusual that most of the students are involved in sporting activities.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between involvement in co-curricular activities and students' performance in economics?

Table 3: Logistic Regression result for co-curricular as a determinant of students' performance in economics

Variable	Categories	Odds Ratio	Logit	t statistics	Marginal Effect
Co-curricular (No)		0.837	0.191	1.31	0.042*
Constant			-5.917	-3.92	

*Significant at 0.1

Students' involvement in co-curricular activities determines the performance of students in economics. Involvement in co-curriculum activities as a variable has a positive relationship with performance with a coefficient of 0.191 which is significant. The positive relationship indicates that the odds of a student passing in economics increases as he/she engages in co-curricular activities. Thus, a student who does not get involve in co-curricular activities is likely to perform 16.3% (OR = 0.837) less than a student who takes part in co-curricular activities. Thus, in terms of margins, a student who engages in co-curricular activities is likely to perform 4.2% better than the student who does not engage in co-curricular activities.

This finding corroborates the findings of Broh (2002) and Smoll and Smith (2002). Also, one study on adolescents and co-curricular activities found that adolescents who participated in co-curricular activities reported higher grades, more positive attitudes toward school, and higher academic aspirations (Darling, Caldwell & Smith, 2005). Again, to Larson, Hansen and Moneta (2006) organized sports also provide an opportunity for initiative, emotional regulation, goal setting, persistence, problem solving and time management, which may help to explain association found between sports participation and academic achievement (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002).

The implications of this is that, economics students who engage in co-curricular activities have the opportunity to improve their academic, social, physical, and cognitive development. This is because these activities are directed toward improving their mental and/or physical ability. Such students also acquire a fundamental grasp of multiple skills and broaden their experiences which make them multi-talented rather than lopsided individuals. Again, they have the opportunity to try new things, and discover themselves. It is these skills that they transfer into the classroom during instructional periods. For example, students involved in writing, debating and entrepreneurial clubs are exposed to the skills of critical

thinking and business activities which are related to their study in economics. It is therefore not surprising that such students would perform relatively well in their academics.

Conclusion

The factors that determine students' performance in economics are enormous. However, in the Ghanaian society, co-curricular activities have a strong base in determining students' performance in economics. The logit analysis employed reveals that the probability of a student performing well in economics can be explained by the students' involvement in co-curricular activities. This means that, for an effective teaching and learning process and better performance to be exhibited by economics students, this variable must play a key role to enable students benefit fully from the instructional session and exhibit his/her full potential.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are made:

1. Students should be encouraged to engage in various co-curricular activities such as joining social clubs, religious clubs and sporting groups to develop their total personality for the outside world. This can be done by incorporating such activities into the school time table by the senior high school authorities (that is, the headmaster and teaching staff). Today there are so many negative paths for children to take. If we don't provide more positive alternative activities, there won't be much choice for them. Being involved in sports and other programs allows students to show effort and learn teamwork skills. These abilities may be some of the keys to being successful as a student or in everyday life.

2. Again, teachers should be assigned to each of these co-curricular activities to serve as co-ordinators for each activity. This will make students attach importance to the activities and at the same time the teachers can report to the school authorities about the progress being made by the students in their respective co-curricular activities.
3. Parents should not enforce their children to take part in co-curricular activities to improve their grades. Different students have different likings and intentions. Parents should search out those activities in which their children can participate well according to his or her capabilities. On the other hand, parents should also not forbid their children to take part in sports and other co-curricular activities. The involvement in such activities helps them in number of ways. These activities develop social skills, sportsman spirit, ethics and discipline.
4. Co-curricular activities serve at a large for the development in the academic, social, mental, and character of students, and every students should be provided with the chance to take part in at least one healthy and positive activity. However the purpose of such activities should be to improve their mental and physical health. Watching television too much cannot be regarded as healthy activity. Parents should allow their children to choose their co-curricular activity and they should have check on their activities. These are the parents who have the essential role in the development of the character and health of their children. They should provide their children with the best available facilities so that they become able to perform well in both academics and in ground.

Reference

National Federation of State High School Associations (1999). *The case for high school activities*. Indianapolis, Ind.: NFHS.

Nesan, D. (2009). *Co-curricular activities in schools*. Retrieved on 15th November, 2012 from http://www.idebate.org/debatabase/topicdetails.php?topicID=839

Marsh, H. W. & Kleitman, S. (2002). Co-curricular school activities. The good, the bad, and the nonlinear. *Harvard Educational Review 5,* 72.

Guest, A. & Schneider, B. (2003). Adolescents' extracurricular participation in context: The mediating effects of schools, communities, and identity. *Sociology of Education, 76,* 89-109.

Darling, N., Caldwell, L. L., & Smith, R. (2005). Participation in school-based co-curricular activities and adolescent adjustment. *Journal of Leisure Research, 37,* 51-76.

Broh, B. A. (2002). Linking Extracurricular programming to academic achievement: Who benefits and why? *Sociology of Education, 75,* 69-96.

Fozzard, P. R. (1967). *Out-of-class activities and civic education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Galiher, S. (2006). *Understanding the effect of extracurricular involvement*. A Research Project Report Presented to the School of Education Indiana University South Bend In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Education. Indiana: University South Bend

NCES Education Policy Issues (1995). *Extracurricular participation and student engagement*. New York: McGraw Hill

Smoll, F. L. & Smith R.E. (Eds.) (2002). *Children and youth in sport: A biopsychological perspective.* Dubuque. IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Larson, R. W., Hansen, D. M. & Moneta, G. (2006). Differing profiles of developmental experiences across types of organized youth activities. *Development Psychology. 42.*

Mahoney, J. L. & Cairns, R. B. (1997). Do co-curricular activities protect against early school dropout. *Developmental Psychology. 33*

Borde, S. F. (1998). Predictors of student academic performance in the Introductory Marketing course. *Journal of Education for Business, 73*. (5), 16 - 30.

Kimiko, F. (2005). The effects of extracurricular activities on the academic performance of junior high schools. *The Master's College*, *5* (7), 10 - 21Shernoff & Vandell, 2007)

Larson, R., & Kleiber, D. (1993). Free time activities as factors in adolescent adjustment. In P. Tolan & B. Cohler (Eds.), Handbook of clinical research and practice with adolescents (pp. 125-145). New York: John Wiley

Lamborn, S. D., Brown, B. B., Mounts, N. S., & Steinberg, L. (1992). Putting school in perspective: The influence of family, peers, extracurricular participation, and part-time work on academic engagement. In F. M. Newmann (Ed.), Student engagement and achievement in American secondary schools(pp. 153-181). New York: Teachers College Press.

Eccles, J. S., & Barber, B. L. (1999). Student council, volunteering, basketball, or marching band: What kind of extracurricular involvement matters? *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 14, 10-43.

Klesse, E., & D'Onofrio, J. (1994). *Student activities for students at risk*. Reston, Va.: NASSP.

Cooper, D. R. & Schindler, P. S. (2001). *Business research methods*. New York: McGrew-Hill Companies.

Ghana Education Service (2002). *Circuit supervisors handbook*: Accra: GES Press

Stephens, L. J., & Schaben, L. A. (2002). The effect of interscholastic sports participation on academic achievement of middle school students. NASSP Bulletin, 86(630), 35-41.

Huang, F. M. (1997). *Population and the Asian* economic *miracle: Education and. earning in Taiwan*. IEAS Discussion Paper no. 9716. 6.

Buckles, S. (1991). Guidelines for economic content in school programs. In W. B. Walstad & J. C. Soper (Eds.). *Effective Economic Education in the Schools*. Washington, D.C.: The National Education Association.

Greenspan, A. (2003). The Importance of Financial and Economic Education and Literacy. *Social Education, 76,* 2, 70-71.