EFFECTS OF STRUCTURED EXTRACURRICULAR FACILITIES ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT[*]

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ABSTRACT

Structured Extracurricular Activities (SEAs) are kinds of optional facilities designed and carried out inside or outside school within a plan after classes. Many students participate in them although they are not directly measured and related to their academic courses. Studies reveal that these activities are important positive contributors to formal programs, so in some countries they are integrated into formal programs. This qualitatively study purposed to discover if SEAs affect students' social and academic developments in Turkey. Results revealed that these facilities increased students' both social development and academic achievement. It is suggested that school administrators should organize them more.

Keywords: *Structured Extracurricular Activities, Academic Improvement, Social Improvement, Educational Management.*

ÖZET
Yapılandırılmış Ders Dışı Etkinliklerinin Öğrencilerin Akademik ve Sosyal Gelişimleri Üzerindeki Etkileri

Yapılandırılmış ders dışı etkinlikler, okul içinde ve dışında bir plan dâhilinde düzenlenen ve yürütülen seçmeli etkinliklerdir. Akademik olarak doğrudan ölçme ve değerlendirmeye katılmamalarına rağmen birçok öğrenci bu etkinliklere katılmaktadır. Araştırmalar bu etkinliklerin formal

programlara katkı sunduğunu bu yüzden bir çok ülkede formal programlara entegre edilmektedir. Bu yüzden, bu nitel çalışma Türkiye'de bu etkinliklerin öğrencilerin akademik ve sosyal gelişimlerine katkısının olup olmadığını ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma sonuçları, bu etkinliklerin öğrencilerin hem sosyal gelişimleri hem de akademik başarıları üzerinde katkıları bulunduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Bu anlamda okul yöneticileri bu tür etkinlikleri daha çok düzenlemelidirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Yapılandırılmış Ders Dışı Etkinlikler, Akademik Gelişme, Sosyal Gelişme, Eğitim Yönetimi.*

Introduction

Nowadays, behavior disorders among students have been reported recently at schools that cause negative results for both students and parents. This usually ends up in dropping out of school, failure, negligence, and drug addiction of students. It is clear that some new administrative approaches should be implemented to correct these negative behaviors instead of implementing disciplinary administrative methods. In this manner, Structured Extracurricular Activities (SEAs) can be evaluated as co-curriculum facilities in order to make them involve in some activities.

SEAs are kinds of optional facilities *(e.g.: excursion, competitions, physical education, scouting, music, folklore, newspaper/journal preparation, shows, theatre, fashion shows, exhibitions, chess, tennis, basketball, fair and creative drama etc.)* designed and carried out inside or outside school within a plan after classes. They are considered as strategic tools that help diminish effects of the negative behaviors mentioned before. Gilman, Meyers & Perez (2004) state that they represent one such strategy that potentially builds resilience in adolescents by supporting pro-social behaviors, engagement with school and related activities, constructive academic performance, and growth in subjective well-being.

The history of SEAs dates back to 1930s. Previous studies especially in the US focused on curricular activities and their effects on academic achievement. They revealed that SEAs were effective contributors to formal programs. Studies conducted on sociology, sport psychology and adult development reveal that SEAs have positive impacts on student development. Both scientists and experts stated that during school period these activities helped the development and improvement of the youth (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006;

Holland & Andre, 1987). Many students take part in these activities although they are not measured and directly related to their academic courses. Since they are considered as important positive contributors to formal programs, in some countries they have been integrated into formal programs to contribute students' development process.

Related Researches on SEAs

According to Powers, Conway, McKenzie, Sallis & Marshall (2002), typical activity programs attracted only 5.5 percent of the schools' daily attendance. In his study, Llyeras (2008) revealed that SEAs were as important as the outputs taken from school and work life, perhaps more significant than them. Mahoney & Cairns (1997) and Hirsch (2000) showed that they had positive contribution to academic success but some sports facilities did not have relationship with academic success but social ones. Some studies revealed SEAs had impacts on grades, exam results, and responsibility towards school, culture, socialization, motivation, positive attitudes towards school and educational eagerness (Cooper, Valentine, Nye & Lindsay, 1999; Darling, Caldwell & Smith, 2008; Dfes, 2005; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Gerber, 1996; Larson, 2000; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002). Moreover, Cooper et al., (1999) put that the students took part in these activities improved their academic successes. Logan & Scarborough (2008) showed that % 86, 7 of the students developed and learned some sort of skills in SEAs; % 90, 6 of them enjoyed them and they developed school-family relations as well. According to Llyeras (2008), academic success of the students was higher than those who did not attend. In was revealed in some studies that high school students' participation in SEAs raised their social and academic self-perceptions (Barber, Eccles & Stone, 2001; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Lewis, 2004; Mahoney, Schweder & Stattin, 2001; Mahoney, Stattin & Magnusson, 2001; Marsh, 1992).

In Wylie's (2005) research SEAs had positive relationship with students' cognitive developments and competencies. In another study conducted by New Zealand Education Office (*NZEO*), it was discovered that SEAs organized outside the school had more positive effects on minority and disadvantaged groups (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006; Shulruf, Tumen & Tolley, 2008). Tolley, Smith, Gasson, Tumen, Timperley & Shulruf (2005) found out that 87 % of the students participated in these activities.

Fujita (2006), Eccles & Barber (1999) discovered that SEAs produced higher academic outputs. Eccles & Barber (1999) stated that SEAs produced

positive results in social relations, and critical educational skills. Shulruf et al., (2008) revealed that participation in some sports activities had positive impact on reading skills of the students. Mahoney & Cairns (1997) found that SEAs had significant effects on leadership, academic excellence and popularity. Reeves (2008) showed similar results as the ones conducted by Mahoney & Cairns (1997), McNeal, (1995) and Youniss, Yates & Su (1997). Furthermore, Luthar, Shoum & Brown (2006) discovered that SEAs increased students' academic achievements approximately between 2 % and 11 %. Similarly, Guest & Schneider (2003) found that while participation in sports activities improved children of poor families, it did not make any change in children of rich families. Some negative effects were also reported about SEAs. For example; Eccles & Barber (1999) revealed that badly-organized athletics activities led upper level classes to alcohol use. Besides, Dishion, McCord & Poulin (1999) and Mahoney & Stattin (2000) found that they led students to risk groups. What is more, Mahoney, Stattin & Lord (2004) reported that badly-organized activities resulted behavior disorder among children and Hansen, Larson & Dworkin (2003) reported inappropriate behaviors, competitiveness, stress and anxiety disorders among adolescents as Smoll & Smith (1989) did. Gilman et al., (2004) reported negative physiological results in badly-organized activities. However, they discovered positive results in well-organized ones.

SEAs in the Turkish Educational System

Most researches reveal that SEAs have positive contributions in students' academic and social developments. As far as Turkish Educational System is concerned, SEAs are organized very few in number. They are organized with a regulation prepared by the Ministry of National Educational (MEB) in Turkey. According to that regulation, SEAs purpose to develop students' academic and social skills. In this respect, these facilities are excursion, competitions, physical education, scouting, music, folklore, newspaper/journal preparation, shows, theatre, fashion shows, exhibitions and fair (REGA, 2008, Number: 2607). Although enriching these programs depends on economic power, when cost of student failures, dropouts, absenteeism is analyzed financially, organizing these activities costs cheaper than the cost negative results cause. In this context, the function and current situation of SEAs should be reconsidered in the system. To provide students chances to develop them academically and socially. As a result, students' attitudes towards school can become more positive and school can be more attractive to all students However, it requires further research. For this reason, main concern of this study is to discover if these activities make any

change on students' academic and social development and if there is a change, in what way this occurs.

Research Methodology

This study was carried out qualitatively. These types of research studies are used to gain in-depth knowledge in a study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). More specifically, the study employed an ethnographic research design in collecting data. Ethnographic designs, as Creswell (2002) described them, "are qualitative research procedures for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a culture-sharing group's shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time" (p. 481). As such, by using this research design and utilizing in-depth interviews, the study explored "culture-sharing" behaviors, beliefs, and language among students in Turkey. Students' views were obtained through interviews with semi-structured questions, as recommended by Bogdan & Biklen (1998), to "get the subjects to freely express their thoughts around particular topics" (p. 3). The research has mainly sought answer to the following question: *"Does participating in SEAs affect you academically and socially?"* In this manner, *excursion, competitions, physical education, scouting, music, folklore, newspaper/journal preparation, shows, theatre, fashion shows, exhibitions, chess, tennis, basketball, fair and creative drama* classes were designed. In this process, the students who participated in these activities were followed for one year and they were interviewed with semi structured questions.

Population and Sample

The sampling was determined by purposive sampling method that was described as the best used with small numbers of individuals/groups which may well be sufficient for understanding human perceptions, problems, needs, behaviors and contexts, which are the main justification for a qualitative audience research. Purposive sampling is particularly relevant when you are concerned with exploring the universe and understanding the audience. This means, using your common sense and the best judgment in choosing the right habitations, and meeting the right number of right people for the purpose of your study. It targets a particular group of people. When the desired population for the study is rare or very difficult to locate and recruit for a study, purposive sampling may be the only option. The advantage of purpose sampling is that the researcher can use prior knowledge to choose respondents (Bailey, 1994, p. 96). The participants of this

study were 20 students at an Anatolian High School (Lycee) in Istanbul province in 2010/2011 academic year in Turkey. The sampling consisted of 10 male, 10 female students; 7 of them are 16 years old, 7 are 17, and 6 students are 18 years old.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the present study, the data were collected using the following procedure. First, in an e-mail the school principal was informed about the purpose of the study, and he was asked if he could provide students to participate in this research by sharing their ideas about activities voluntarily. The principal and volunteer students were invited to take part in the research consented after being assured of the confidentiality of the data to be gathered from them. It was promised that their identities would be kept in secret and their names would not be mentioned in any part of the study or shared with anyone else. Second, an interview was planned on an agreed-upon day with those who accepted the invitation, and the participants were visited on that date. The interviews were both recorded and noted with their permission and each took approximately 50-60 minutes. To analyze the gathered data, the "content analysis" technique was used. This type of analysis usually aims to gather similar data on a topic and comment on it (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün Karadeniz & Demirel, 2008; Mayring, 2000; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2000).

The first step taken in the analysis of the data was the data organization procedures recommended by Bogdan & Biklen (1998). In organizing the data, the researcher revisited each interviewer and listened to each audiotape while reviewing the transcripts to ensure the accuracy of the data. Each participant's interview transcript was later analyzed according to the data analysis procedures described by Bogdan & Biklen (1998), which call for development of coding categories, mechanical sorting of the data, and analysis of the data within each coding category. Each participant's interview was coded separately according to the participant's views on SEAs as well as on various emerging themes and, later, on repeated themes among the interviews was grouped into coding categories. It was done in three steps: category definition, exemplification, and codification regulation. First, the answers to each question were separated into meaningful categories, named, and coded. For example, the following questions were conceptualized and named with four separate statements as extracurricular activities, academic development, and social development: "*Does participating in SEAs affect you academically and socially? Is there a change in your success in courses and academic facilities after SEAs? If so how? Is there a change in your*

success in social relations after SEAs? If so how? Is there a change in your behaviors positively after SEAs? If so what way? Is there a change in your behaviors negatively after SEAs? If so what way? In the second step, the conceptualized statements were brought together. In the third step, it was intended to avoid repetition. In the last phase, the identified results were explained and related to each other. It was also intended to build a cause-and-effect relationship among the separate parts. The views of academics on SEAs were coded as *Interviewer I (INT 1), Interviewer 2 (INT 2), Interviewer 3 (INT 3)…* The constant comparative approach (Glaser, 1992) was used in the process of organizing and analyzing the data. The use of the constant comparative method results in the saturation of categories and the emergence of theory. Theory emerges through continual analysis and doubling back for more data collection and coding (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Glaser, 1992). In this method, each set of data collected (interview transcripts) were reviewed in search of key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that became categories of focus. The data for each participant were reviewed multiple times for confirmatory and contradictory statements until the data were organized into satisfactory categories and sub-codes to address the research question. The research was conducted mainly with the following semi-structured questions: *Does participating in SEAs affect you academically and socially? Is there a change in your success in your academic facilities after SEAs? If so how? Is there a change in your success in social relations after SEAs? If so how? Is there a change in your behaviors positively after SEAs? If so what way? Is there a change in your behaviors negatively after SEAs? If so what way?*

Trustworthiness and Rigor

Here, the interviewer played the role of facilitator and listener by asking questions and recording the answers without leading the participants. They were interviewed with semi-structured questions developed by the researcher himself. Interviews have been widely used lately as they provide in-depth answers. The questions were reviewed by six field experts to ensure content validity and the latest forms of the questions were developed with their suggestions. In addition, the students were content enough with the confidentiality of the research to get in-depth answers without any hesitation. The locations were chosen to avoid being affected by power relations. The results are limited to this group of students and caution should be exercised when attempting to make inferences about any of the results with regard to other populations. There are several limitations of this research. First, the sample was one of volunteers. These students are not necessarily representative of other students. Therefore, the results are limited to

this group of students and caution should be exercised when attempting to infer about any of the results with regard to other populations. Secondly, the researcher was the main instrument of data analysis. The analyses and results are a product of the researcher's interpretation of the data. The interpretation was based on the researcher's knowledge in the area and his social location. Therefore, the theory-laden nature of the investigation is a recognized limitation as well as its strength. Additionally, the detailed and generous use of quotations and associated discussions of the results expose the researcher's rationale. This information may help the reader assess the validity of the findings for themselves. An exploratory study is the product of the researcher's perspective, and it is recognized that a different researcher may identify different features of importance within the same data sets (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 2002).

Findings

Perceptions of students on SEAs in the Turkish Educational System were evaluated in this study, and a number of findings were obtained. According to the analyzed data, a student remarked,

"SEAs are beneficial for us. If we cannot have an alternative choice in that manner, it is impossible for us to develop ourselves cognitively, because these activities feed our brains. We need a creative and plentiful atmosphere to grow up better, but there are always boring lessons like math, literature, geography at school. I attend to the theatre club and I do not have fun except for theatre club. I have learned new things and I am feeling much better than before and more satisfied in the club (INT. 5)".

Another student commented,

"We have limited choices as students. However, I participated in the music club. Before joining that club, I was shy, and did not have much self-confidence. I have a lot of friends and I am more popular at school. Therefore, I feel better at school and I always want to go to school (INT. 2)."

A student revealed,

"I continue sports club. After joining that club, I am fitter, more relaxed and more popular. I have good relationships with my teachers and we get better results in my exams then. Before that my grades were poor but now my family and I are happier. This activity helps me a lot (INT. 11)."

Another student claimed,

> "I am at the chess club. I go to the club at weekends. Before that, we used to waste a lot of my time watching television or surfing on the net. Now, there are 20 other students here in my club. We play together, and then we go to the cinema. We share a lot of things together (INT. 15)."

A student indicated,

> "I am at the tennis club and I spend good time there. I have a lot more friends in the club. Before participating the club, I was reserved, later I became more sociable. There are a few activities at school. I hope they become more common. Of these activities, only sports and music clubs work well. For me but now it is more enjoyable (INT. 4)."

Another student conveyed,

> "We are not satisfied with these activities, because there are a lot of clubs and they waste my time. Socially, they are good. On the other hand, they distract me from my academic courses (INT. 13)."

A student agreed with this idea,

> "These activities are waste of time. Takes time but we have more serious exams to handle (INT. 10)."

Another student commented,

> "These activities affect my school attendance. I go to school more regularly. In addition, they make me more motivated and increase my grades. I am more popular among my teachers and friends and I am more confident. Shortly, I think I am a better student. I also have better relations with our teachers, friends and parents (INT. 11)."

Moreover, a student claimed,

> "At first I was completely opposed to these kinds of activities but my friends forced me to participate in the drama club. Now I am addicted to this club. Many students want to be there like me. I am happier there. Because of the club, school is more attractive place for me. We are all good and well-mannered students (INT. 3)".

Two students conveyed,

"These activities make us feel more relaxed. They affect our academic achievement positively. We have better grades at my lessons now. We are also more sociable and now have more friends. These activities convert students' negative attitudes into positive ones. We know a lot of students who have changed in a good way after the music club. The situation is better for us (INT. 1 / INT. 8)."

One student put it,

"Schools want us to obey rules. They do not think that we have social needs like these activities. SEAs help me a lot socially like me but in most schools students do not have this chance (INT. 6)."

A student alleged that,

"It is very good to have SEAs at school. I attend journal preparation club and it makes me feel better and more sociable. It changes me in a positive way both socially and academically. This activity affects my self confidence in a better way so I am more social and successful academically (INT. 18)."

According to another student,

"These activities serve school excellence. I can see how they improve me both socially and academically (INT. 8)."

Another student affirmed that,

"If I weren't in this club, I would be worse. I changed in a positive way. If I did not join this club I would be doing risky things to reveal my energy. I am affected socially more by SEAs (INT. 2)."

One student put it,

"Personally, they are important for me and most my friends. I can do something apart from silly exams. However, I am furious about the school system. I am under stress to have a place at universities. My family does not want me to attend these activities. But socially I feel better (INT. 5)."

Discussion

Students' views on SEAs were evaluated in this study, and a number of results were obtained. According to results, most students stated that SEAs were significant in developing their academic and social skills. They stated that after SEAs, their grades got better gradually. This is supported by Eccles & Barber (1999), Fujita (2006), Shulruf et al., (2008), Sheridan & Gutkin, (2000) and Luthar et al., (2006). This thought might stem from self-confidence and good feelings that they have after participating in these activities. A further result revealed that SEAs improved students' social skills more than their academic skills relatively. Such a result gave the impression that students valued these kinds of activities as they helped them to improve their social achievements which might mean that they helped their relations with their peers, teachers and parents. This may be because of the feelings that made them feel valuable personally with the participation of these activities. In other words, these activities were considered as a way of socializing among peers by the students. This result is also supported by the results obtained by Cooper et al., (1999), Logan & Scarborough (2008), Eccles & Barber (1999), Marsh & Kleitman (2002), Dfes (2005), Gerber (1996), Lewis (2004) and Darling et al., (2008). They remarked that SEAs led them socialization among them. This may stem from the relations built during these activities as their self-perceptions may have increased. It was also parallel to the results that Wylie (2005) discovered in New Zealand. He discovered that SEAs had positive relationship with students' cognitive developments and competencies. In that study, the author added that they improved the students' personalities.

According to another result, most students wanted their schools to organize these activities more professionally. This is probably because of observed positive results of the SEAs. A further result revealed that students had some concerns as well by commenting SEAs affected them negatively. They thought they wasted time by participating in badly-designed activities and they started to neglect their basic responsibilities. This is supported by the results obtained by Eccles & Barber (1999), Dishion et al., (1999), Mahoney et al., (2004; 2001), Hansen et al., (2003), Smoll & Smith (1989) and Gilman et al., (2004). This result may be because of pressure placed on both themselves and their families in getting a place at a university.

Conclusion

Results of this study revealed that SEAs increased students' both social and academic achievements. Many students participate in SEAs although they are not directly measured and related to their academic courses. Studies reveal that these activities are important positive contributors to formal programs, so in some countries they are integrated into formal programs. SEAs have the potential to promote mental health among all youths and particularly those placed at risk for negative academic and interpersonal outcomes (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). Another thing is that they can help administrators to make school a more attractive and peaceful. Involving students in SEAs may enhance their affiliation with school, which may lead to positive outcomes. Enriching these programs depends on economic power. However, when cost of student failures, dropouts, absenteeism is analyzed financially, organizing these activities costs cheaper than the cost negative results cause. In this context, the function and current situation of SEAs should be reconsidered in the system. The recommendations reached through the results obtained in this study are below:

- It was found out that a significant number of students are satisfied with SEAs in Turkey. For that reason, school administrators should organize them as parts of the formal curriculum.

- Students stated that these activities are a source of socialization. Therefore, school administrators should organize them to increase students' social development.

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