

# LINKING CURRICULA, CO-CURRICULA AND EXTRA-CURRICULA ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: IMPLICATIONS FOR A BALANCED INDIVIDUAL

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## Abstract

*This paper discusses the concept of a sound body and a sound mind from the perspective of current practices within the school system. It clarifies the meaning of curricula, co-curricula and extra-curricula activities and discusses the existing congruence among them. The paper identifies the inter-link among these concepts and how they integrate the physical, mental, psychological and social components to form a balanced individual.*

## Introduction

In any education system, three components are vital for the proper development of an individual. These are the curricula, co-curricula and extra-curricula activities. Observations have shown that teachers are ignorant of the meanings and congruity of these concepts. Worst still, most school administrators and parents hold a parochial view of the relationship and differences among these concepts. These have brought doubt on the role of the school in developing a balanced individual. It appears that the objective of the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) of integrating an individual into a sound and effective citizen may not be realized unless there is a clear conception of the meaning and existing congruence among curricula, co-curricula and extra-curricula activities of the schools. Most school staff are involved in curricula activities but not obligated to participate in co-curricula and extra-curricula activities. They often display no interest in sports or games and normally do not join clubs and societies. This is because the stakeholders (teachers and school administrators) do not place high premium on these components of learning due to ignorance or levity.

In this paper, an attempt was made to

- a) clarify the meaning of curricula activities, co-curricula activities, extra-curricula activities and balanced individual.
- b) discuss the current practice in the school with reference to curricula activities, co-curricula activities and extra-curricula activities.
- c) identify the interlink among the curricula, co-curricula and extra-curricular activities.
- d) Discuss the implications for a balanced individual.

## Clarification of Concepts

Curricula is referred to in this paper as a purposeful experience provided and directed by educational institutions to achieve pre-determined goals (Onwuka, 1980).

The term also refers to the programme of study in various academic subjects e.g. English, Mathematics, Science, Commerce, Psychology, History, and others. It embraces the content of the school subjects, instructional materials, organization of instructional materials and evaluation which students at various levels of education are engaged in.

**Co-curricula** activities refer to those activities within the school timetable that promote acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities, competences and that are both mental and physical. Such include physical activities and games. These are often funded.

**Extra-curricula** activities refer to those activities within the school that promote social interaction among students. Such are performed through clubs and societies, community/ social work. These activities are seldom funded and are usually outside school timetable.

**Balanced Individual** refers to a person who is intellectually sound, physically and emotionally stable with high mental state of health.

### **The Current Practice in the School with Reference to Curricula, Co-Curricula and Extra-Curricula Activities.**

Curricula, co-curricula and extra-curricula activities co-exist and are inseparable in the school system. However, the attention and emphasis on each of the concepts differ considerably in various schools and institutions. The degree of interpretations among stakeholders also varies very significantly. Common observations showed that the concepts were most often misconstrued or used inter-changeably. A searchlight on the current practice revealed the following:

#### **Primary School Level**

Most primary schools are saddled with curricula activities between the hours of 8 a.m and 2 p.m. These include the normal teaching period as specified on the timetable. Teaching is usually rigorous and takes at least twelve weeks in a term. Evaluation of Students' learning outcome is obtained at the end of the term to determine pupils' scholastic achievement. Standard of the school is measured mostly by the outcome of this component of learning. This possibly explains the reason why all stakeholders (teachers, parents and administrators) place much emphasis and adequate attention on this vital component of learning.

There is a wide disparity in the attention given to the co-curricula activities. In some schools, co-curricula activities reflect on the school timetable as Physical and Health Education (PHE). In some other schools, students are involved in light juggling once every week and usually at morning time. Yet in several other schools, pupils advertently or inadvertently engage in co-curricula activities during recess time (short break) and long break. It is interesting seeing pupils competing in athletics, soccer, skipping, basketball and table tennis among others. Another avenue for involving students in co-curricula activities sometimes is the school annual inter-house sports.

Extra-curricula activities are carried out through involvement of students in clubs and societies activities. Such clubs include Brownies, Girls' guide and others. Pupils usually converge at different classrooms in accordance with their clubs or societies within and outside the school normal official hours to perform such functions of their clubs or societies.

#### **Secondary School Level**

Secondary schools engage students in curricula activities between the hours of 8 a.m and 2 p.m. Most periods on the timetable span forty minutes. Teaching is usually rigorous and of twelve weeks duration. Evaluation of learning outcomes is carried out at the end of

the term. Secondary schools place much emphasis and attention on this important component of learning. Co-curricula activities are integrated into the school programme of activities in various forms. Some schools integrate it into the school's timetable as Physical and Health Education (PHE). Many other schools engage students in co-curricula activities only when needs arise (i.e. on invitational sporting activities or inter house sports). Co-curricula activities common at the secondary school level include: soccer, table tennis, athletics and basketball.

Extra-curricula activities at the secondary school level are usually organized once every week within the normal school period. Clubs and societies at this level include: Junior Engineers, Technicians and Scientists (JETS) Club, Farmers Club, Literary and Debating Society, Red Cross, Girls' Guide and Boy Scout to mention but a few. Clubs and societies engage in inter-school competition more often at this level.

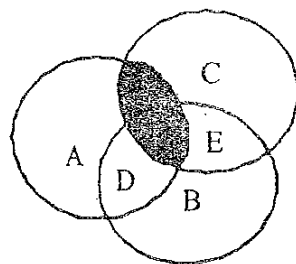
### **Tertiary Level**

Curricula activities at this level involve the normal classroom teaching. Teaching is usually carried out for twelve weeks in a semester. Evaluation of learning outcome comes up at the end of every semester. Co-curricula activities are usually planned once a week as determined by each institution. For example in Lagos State University lectures are concluded by 2p.m. every Wednesday to give every student the opportunity to participate in all forms of sporting activities. However strict adherence to this time cannot be ascertained as many students misuse this time to engage in academic activities. Some recalcitrant lecturers also hold lectures during this time. Inter-collegiate, inter-hall, inter-departmental, inter-faculty competitions are the hallmark of co-curricula activities at the tertiary level.

Extra-curricula activities abound in our tertiary institutions. There exists clubs and societies such as Kegite Clubs, Scripture Union, Muslim Students Association and Students Union body. Students Unionism is planned and executed by the students usually with a staff adviser. The level of participation of lecturers is usually not encouraging because of the *laissez-faire* attitudes and excesses of students. In most cases students employ unionism as a weapon to trade tackles with the school management or bargain for better welfare services.

### **Linking Curricula, Co-curricula and Extra-Curricula Activities for a Balanced Individual**

It can be argued that there exists a congruence among the curricula, co-curricula and extra-curricula activities. Suffice to say that wholesomeness of an individual is a function of his innate academic endowment (cognitive), his emotional stability (affective) and sound state of physical and mental alertness (psychomotor). According to Severs (2008), tracking students to participate in clubs and organizations, leadership, resident hall activities and other co-curricula programmes constitute a key element of developing holistic learning processes. The curriculum can only be used to teach and educate students about academic subject content and theories while co-curricula and extra-curricula activities develop students socially, mentally, morally and emotionally. This is demonstrated through the venn diagram below:



- A represents the curricula activities
- B represents the co-curricula activities
- C represents the extra-curricula activities
- D represents the interlink between A&B
- E represents the interlink between B & E
- Shaded zone shows the interlink among A,B and C.

The venn diagram shows the inter-relatedness of the elements; Curricula (A), Co-curricula (B) and Extra-curricula (C). It is an indication of how an ideal school organizational structure should look like. Regions A, B and C implies that curricula, co-curricula and extracurricula activities should be accommodated on the school timetable. That is, teaching subjects, sporting activities and clubs / Societies should be well represented within the official school hours.

Regions D, E, F show the inter- connectedness between these elements [curricula overlaps with co-curricula in B, co-curricula overlaps with extra-curricula in E and Extra-curricula overlaps with curricula in F). These simply imply that the school teaching subjects should be taught such as to integrate the co-curricula and extra - curricula activities with the subject matter.

Zone F represents the region of interception of the three elements. This implies that teaching of subjects in schools should reflect the relationship among curricula, co-curricula and extra curricula activities in teaching. Also, evaluation of students' record of participation in specific out of the classroom experience or programmes should be incorporated into verifiable co-curricula and extra curricula grading. These together with academic records would provide a complete package or portfolio of each student's achievement.

### **IMPLICATION FOR A BALANCED INDIVIDUAL**

Implication of the interlink among the cognitive, affective and psychomotor components of learning are discussed with reference to a balanced individual under the following headings: Holistic learning, healthy living and recreation.

#### **Holistic Learning**

The basic function of a school is to provide avenue for pupils/students to learn. Learning is achieved when students are exposed to teaching with the teacher as the arbiter of knowledge. The teacher explains the content of a subject or course of study. Plethora of studies (Adeyoju, 1996; Onocha, 1996 and Asagba, 1996) showed that very good academic performance may not be enough to produce a fulfilled student. As the popular adage goes 'all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy'. Play in this context refers to activities within the co-curricula and extra-curricula components of learning. For instance, Onifade (2002) opined that physical activity (co-curricula) enhances mental health and academic performance.

Co curricula activities are an integral part of general education which allows for all round development of a child(physically, mentally, morally and emotionally). They expose children to situation that demand fast thinking and good decision making even under pressure.

Extra-curricula activities such as involvement in societies and clubs promote social interaction among students and reduce factors such as anxiety, boredom and tension which according to Obemeata (1996) affect student's performance. Besides extra- curricula activities such as clubs, societies, community/social work and entrepreneurship experiences provide opportunities for the acquisition of communication, cooperative, time management, leadership and social skills. Hence, students from secondary and tertiary institutions with additional social skills would be more attractive to Universities and potential employers.

Nesan (2009) observed that acquisition of a wide range of experiences prepares students better for the future. Most extra-curricula activities are physically demanding exposing students to tasks different from the usual academic study carried out behind their desks. Many pupils and students are endowed with different talents in diverse areas of endeavours. These potential skills must be allowed to grow and develop. This is especially applicable to Nigeria of today. Students must therefore have a fundamental grasp of multiple skills to function maximally. Adequate exposure to physical activities and social involvement in clubs and societies within the school will not only enhance scholastic achievements but also bring about all round development of students. Observations have shown that people who have carved a niche for themselves in various areas of sports were discovered while at school. There is increasing demand to allow erstwhile sportsmen to manage sports in Nigeria. This opportunity can be reaped only by those who combine academic with sports effectively. There must be a blend of curricula, co curricula and extra curricula activities.

### **HEALTHY LIVING**

Students should be exposed to learning in the three domains of knowledge for healthy living. The great philosopher, Aristotle stated that youths should spend less time in the classroom but return to the gymnasium to maintain good health of the body and mind (Onifade, 2002). This implies that it is desirable to engage students in sporting activities more than the current practice in the schools at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of the Nigerian Educational System. Games and sports relax the muscles, improve blood circulation, reduce stress and consequently prevent high blood pressure. These invariably promote the state of mental alertness and assimilation of knowledge. Extra-curricula activities represent unparallel social phenomena which ensure pupils' and students' interaction with their peers, provide a sense of belonging, self confidence and psychological well-being which are prerequisites for concentration and better academic achievement.

### **Recreation**

Games, drama, music and cultural dance are prominent activities at any school level. Although a form of recreation, games and drama belong to curricula, co-curricula and extra-curricula activities. Institutions differ in the attention given to these activities. For instance, at the secondary school level, drama, cultural dance and music are more prominent while pupils engage more in games at the primary school level. As curricula activities, games and drama have emerged as new trajectories in teaching. They are found to promote academic achievement (Akindoju and Ogunwomoju, 2007). Furthermore, they are known to strengthen muscles, nerves and bones (Ajala, 1996) despite being performed under relaxed mood. These consequently result in reduced tension, anxiety and boredom. They should therefore not over looked in the attainment of complete education for students in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

Students have a right to broad education although many students do not take advantage of the opportunities offered them in co curricula and extra-curricula activities (Nesan, 2009). Rather, they engage in undesirable behaviours such as roaming around the school compound or chatting away with their colleagues. The sensation of well-being according to Ajala (1996) is a phenomenon in which physical, biological, psychological and social components are integrated to form a functional unit. The existing practice in the school must take cognizance of the congruence of the curricula, co-curricula and extra-curricula activities and integrate

these components of learning properly to produce balanced individuals. At this time there is need for increasing the level of awareness of the relationship among the curricula, co- curricula and extra-curricula activities. The existing practice in the school system must take cognizance of the congruence of the curricula, co-curricula and extra-curricula activities and integrate these components of learning properly to produce balanced individuals.

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