

Beyond Academics: Co-Curricular Activities’ as a Catalyst for Developing 21st Century Social Emotional Learning Skills among Learners in School Education

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Abstract

An overview of picture of education globe clearly indicates gradual expansion from academic excellence to encompass holistic development of student along with Social emotional learning skills (SEL) such as self awareness, emotional regulation, social skills etc. the need for development of these skills among school learners as the most important component of 21st century skills arises from demand of cultivation of learner who can sustain in multifaceted challenges. Moreover statistics indicates increased number of students facing behavioral problem as a result of which they are taking intolerable steps with themselves and playing with life of fellow mates. Researchers have indicated that by incorporating Co curricular activities miracles can be achieved in development of SEL Skills among school learners’ as they in the form of as sports, performing arts, debates, and community service, schools can create enriched environments that nurture emotional intelligence, collaboration, and resilience as a catalyst. With this view point action research was conducted by Teacher trainees of B.Ed. college affiliated to GGSIPU, Delhi in government and privates schools of East Delhi to analyze role of CCA activities to act as a catalyst for development of SEL skills among school learners’. Research tools such as observation schedule and FGD were used as a part of research. On the analysis of data it was revealed that by conduction of CCA activities in various forms we can developed SEL skills among students in school education which in turn enhanced their competencies for becoming self sustained individuals in their life.

Keywords: CCA, SEL Skills, Competencies.

Introduction

The fact cannot be denied that 21st century will pose many new challenges to the younger generation especially school age children In the face of these challenges, the latest WHO 2015 report on **mental health** states that the incidence of mental health problems with the younger generation is increasing rapidly. There are many factors behind this trend but the increasing pressure to “achieve competency” in academics to secure a stable job is definitely high on this list of such causes. Even in our country India reported in 2018 that about 75,000 students committed suicide in India between 2007 and 2016. In pursuance of such era researches are increasing day by day in the field of different interventions which are taking place at school level education which can play role in development of Social and Emotional Skills (SEL) among 21st century learners’.

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Understanding 21st Century Learning

A significant shift in the education field, is represented by 21st century learning representing evolving requirements of today's global and digital world which focused on students with critical skills that go beyond traditional reading, writing, and arithmetic, to include broader competencies such as problem-solving, digital literacy, and emotional intelligence which not only requires incorporation of the latest technologies but also emphasizes the importance of learning how to learn, ensuring students are equipped to adapt to an ever-changing global environment. And to in cultivate 21st century skills development of Social Emotional Learning Skills is utmost important.

The key 21st Century Learning skills are divided into 2 categories basically **Learning Skill is (The Four Cs)** i.e Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration and Communication **and Literacy Skills (IMT Skills)** i.e. Information Literacy, Media Literacy and Technology Literacy.

And for effective inculcation of 21st century skills among learners' educators require to adapt and incorporate innovative teaching methods. As the educational landscape shifts, incorporating a blend of technology, project-based learning, and a focus on **social-emotional aspects** can significantly enhance student learning outcomes.

Social-Emotional Learning Skills

Social and emotional learning (SEL) as an integral part of education and human development. The process through which all learners' acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy personality traits. SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. From the researches it is known fact that an education that promotes SEL has a positive impact on a wide range of outcomes, including academic performance, healthy relationships, mental wellness, and more. From the so many framework, **CASEL SEL framework** is the most significant at the center are the **five core social and emotional competencies**—broad, interrelated areas that support learning and development.



Figure 1: The CASEL SEL Model. Source: <https://www.etr.org/get-real/for-facilitators/sel-skills/>

Co-Curricular Activities as a Catalyst in the Development of Social Emotional Skills

Co-curricular activities which were earlier known as extracurricular are part of is education curriculum itself though through them, the students will be educated in the form of spiritual, leadership, teamwork as well as self-confidence. Participation in these activities will provide the essential skills which fostered a healthy lifestyle. According to *Wee Eng Hoe, 1994*, Co curricular activities can strengthen the interaction between the students and at the same time promoting integration between the races as well as nurturing decencies, independencies, hard work, disciplined and obedient to the law which develops the students into becoming a useful citizen Therefore, co-curricular activities are capable to improve social Emotional skill among students which will also help them in the future career prospects. It has been found that by providing opportunity to students in various forms of activities at school level lifelong development of personality is assured as School students are the root for the future generations. As being reflected from NEP 2020 curriculum learner need to develop skills not only in one aspect for sustaining self in this challenging world as stated by Howard Gardner in his theory of Multiple Intelligence much earlier.

It was also agreed by **Azmi and Hamsiah (2000)** which stated that the actual function of the co-curriculum is to enhance and strengthen interaction and communication among students. The learning environment provided by these activities outside of the classroom play an important role in influencing a person's behavior and also one of the important elements in the formation of students **social skills**, is one aspect of emotional intelligence which will define the excellence of students in any situation. Intellectual intelligence alone is not enough for a person to be excellent. Co-curricular activities can act as a catalyst to build social skills in everyday life by interacting individually or collectively as these serves as a key benchmark in fulfilling the national education policy which is unity among students of various races.

Hence, we can conclude that Co-curricular activities play essential role within arrive at presuming golden opportunities for students to be born necessary life skills, support academic growth, encourage personal growth, get ready for future careers, assemble group and increase all inclusive happiness (Marris, 2018).

Thus in the present action research titled **Beyond Academics: Co curricular Activities' as a Catalyst for developing 21st Century Social Emotional Learning Skills among learners in School Education** has been undertaken .

Literature Review

- **Rani, M. & Keshwal, H.S. (2016). Effect of Co-curricular Activities on Development of Social Skills of Children with Intellectual Disability. Journal of Disability Management and Rehabilitation,2 (1):18-21.** Conducted study on the title *Effect of Co-curricular Activities on Development of Social Skills of Children with Intellectual Disability* to find out the effect of co-curricular activities on development of social skills of children with intellectual disability. Sample. The subjects N=8, (Six boys and two girls, IQ ranging from 35-49) were selected from Govt. Rehabilitation Institute for Intellectual Disabilities (GRIID), Chandigarh based on set inclusion and exclusion criteria. Design: Using purposive sampling and utilizing single group, pre and post tests experimental method. Tool: The pre and post tests were conducted by making use of Social Skill Assessment Tool developed by the researcher. Results: The intervention

programme was conducted for 20 sessions to perform three co-curricular activities i.e. dance for 10 sessions, play (throwing the ball into the bucket) for 5 sessions and thumb painting for another 5 sessions. Based on the result of post test performance, the collected data was analyzed quantitatively by using t-test. In the analysis, it was found that the mean scores of pre-test and post-test were 27.12 and 50.75 respectively and the calculated t value was 10.88 whereas the table value of t was 3.49, which was less than the calculated value. Hence, null hypotheses was rejected at $p < 0.01$ level of significance. The statistical analysis shows that there is highly significant effect of co-curricular activities on development of social skills of children with intellectual disability.

- **Bansal K, Pal B, Kumar H. (2022):** Study the Role of Curricular and Co-curricular Activities in the Development of Academic and Social Skills of Elementary School Students. The main aim of the present study was identify the role of curricular and co-curricular activities in the development of academic and social skills of elementary school students. A descriptive Survey method was used in the study because the researcher's aim was to find out the role of a particular scenario. A number of 60 students studying in elementary classes of government and private schools. Investigators developed a five-point Likert scale to measure respondents' academic and social skills and was administered on the selected sample. The scale consisted of 20 items on five-point rating scale. Eleven items were on academic skills, whereas 9 statements were on social skills. The further scale had 18 positive statements and 2 negative statements. This study offered insight that how curricular and co-curricular activities have a remarkable contribution in the development of academic and social skills which is beneficial for elementary school students to gain success in life. After calculating the data, the results revealed that the majority of the students agreed that there is a role of curricular and co-curricular activities in the development of academic and social skills. More importantly, after applying the t-test it revealed that there is no significant difference among the skills development of both genders, students studying in private and government school and students belonging to nuclear or joint families.
- **Balls (2008):** Destine contribution of good schools is excellent teaching and learning, which help children to develop confidence. Learn about teamwork, leadership. Responsibility and successful relationships. As a vital community resource, schools could offer wider opportunity for children their families to take part in sports and cultural activities. Good schools have an understanding of the child. They are places that could identify and address emerging problems before they become serious.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the present status of co-curricular activities and their contribution to development of various SEL competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making among school students.
- To conduct different types of co-curricular activities for fostering Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills among school students.
- To investigate the role of CCA as catalyst in development of Social Emotional learning skills after conduction of such activities in schools.
- To suggest policy recommendations for integrating SEL-focused co-curricular activities within the school curriculum in alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Significance of the Study

The study on “**Beyond Academics: Co-curricular Activities as a Catalyst for Developing 21st-Century Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills among Learners in School Education**”, is of great significance as on the review of researches and content analysis on importance of CCA for holistic development of learners’ which accompanied inculcation of social emotional skills among learners’ clearly indicated the same. As school experiences and activities conducted are one of the most important resources in building up entire personality of learners’. The present study emphasizes how **co-curricular activities** serve as an essential platform for fostering **social-emotional learning (SEL) skills** such as self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and teamwork, which are crucial for holistic development by examining present status and execution of few CCA in school aspects. Thus, findings of the study would further provide handsome of potential strategies for enhancement of horizon of CCA activities for development of SEL Skills as per need of 21st century skills in the perspective of NEP 2020.

Operational Definition

Co-Curricular Activities; Activities which are conducted in school apart from academics such as debate competitions, arts and culture, sports and physical education activities. Leadership, communication activities, literary, technology etc.

Social Emotional Learning Activities refers to self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, teamwork and communication skills

21st-Century skills: The Four Cs) i.e., Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration and Communication **and Literacy Skills (IMT Skills) i.e.** Information Literacy, Media Literacy and Technology Literacy.

Methodology

- **Sample for the Study:** The sample for the study comprised of 10 Secondary and senior secondary level private schools of East Delhi including Students of VI-VIII Classes.
- **Sampling Technique:** For the present study Purposive sampling technique was used for selection of schools and classes VI-VIII only taken.

Tools Used

- **Observation schedule- (1):** To know about the different activities are being planned and conducted in schools related to CCA within classroom and outside at school level holistic development of students. **(2):** for observation of student’s behavior in classes with each other to understand their social emotional response.
- **Action plan: Phase I – Conduction of Peer Interaction and Social Skills Rating Scale (PISSRS)** designed by S.G. Priti in 2016, which is a standardized tool used to assess **children’s social skills and peer interactions**, particularly in educational and developmental research contexts was used to examine the present status of co-curricular activities and their contribution to development of various SEL competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making among school students.

- **Action plan: Phase II-** conduction of different types of co-curricular activities for fostering Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills and to investigate the role of CCA as catalyst in development of Social Emotional learning skills after conduction of such activities in schools.

Interpretation and Analysis

- **Section I Observation schedule: On the observation different activities which were being planned and conducted in schools related to CCA within classroom and outside at school level holistic development of students,** it was found that in almost all 10 sampled schools selected for study, Co –curricular activities were conducted in form of morning assembly session sensitizing learners' about significant relevance of that day like Earth Day on April 22, World Literacy Day 8th September every year etc and celebration of National day used to take in all schools. In very few schools house system was followed as a pattern of conducting CCA activities especially in private schools system was there as compared to govt schools. While participating in Inter-house Competitions more Social emotional learning skills were being developed like group work, team spirit, leadership quality, co-operation and coordination etc. and students get recognition by name of their houses which were mainly on the names of Indian Rivers, Mountains, positive affirmation etc. In majority of the schools activities were conducted within class such as poster competitions, creative writing, drawing competitions etc. only 4 school out of 10 used to celebrate activities at large scale in which maximum stakeholders like parents, school alumni, members of community also involved.

It was observed by teacher trainees that time when students used to involve in CCA tasks they used to remain stress free, cooperative, and more attentive apart from academic classes. They used to get break from monotonous routine of study periods only. They tend to become more independent and developed leadership quality. It has been analyzed that schools in which teachers tend to enthusiastic for CCA activities had been more successful and encouraging for learners'.

Section II- Analysis and Interpretation of Action plan: Phase I –During research study action plan was formulated and conducted in two phases as in first phase to investigate the role of CCA as catalyst in development of Social Emotional learning skills after conduction of such activities in schools. Conduction of CCA activities by teacher trainees to further boost up social emotional skills of learners and secondly Conduction of Peer Interaction and Social Skills Rating Scale (PISSRS) designed by S.G. Priti was done.

Conduction of CCA Activities

Teacher trainees in sampled school from one of the B.Ed. college affiliated to GGSIPU Delhi during internship phase conducting CCA activities within classroom teaching process and outside at school level. Activities such as celebration of sports day, republic day etc were conducted at school level and within classroom as per pedagogy subject such as quiz, poster making etc were conducted. It was observed by trainees that by conduction of such activities even isolated child of their class become part of the group, students who were otherwise not interested in class become more active and participating.

- **Conduction of Peer Interaction and Social Skills Rating Scale (PISSRS) designed by S.G. Priti**

The items of scale were conducted with students of different section of class VI-VIII in selected schools. The scale assesses students' social skills and peer interaction abilities in educational settings and covered items in 6 major domains such as:

- Communication Skills
- Cooperation and Collaboration
- Empathy and Emotional Regulation
- Conflict Resolution
- Social Confidence and Assertiveness
- Friendship and Peer Relations

Each domain includes items were self assessed by the students by rating different items of each domain by **Likert-type scale** (e.g., 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Always) total scores were obtained by summing up scores from all items. **Higher scores** → Indicate stronger social skills and positive peer interaction and **Lower scores** → Suggest areas of difficulty in peer relationships or social skills.

Table 1 Analysis of various components of Peer Interaction and Social Skills Rating Scale (PISSRS)		
S.No.	Statement Strongly Agree	(Responses) %
1	I have high level of Communication skills such as Verbal and non-verbal interaction, listening, and expressing opinions	98.8
2	I have high level of Cooperation skills such as Teamwork, sharing, and helping behaviors has been enhanced.	97.6
3.	I have high ability of Empathy and emotional regulation: Sensitivity to others' feelings and managing one's own emotions.	98.5
4	I have high Conflict resolution skills: Handling, disagreements constructively.	88.1
5	I have Assertiveness and confidence : Ability to express oneself confidently without aggression.	96.7

From the analysis and interpretation of responses made by sampled students it was revealed that conduction of CCA activities in different mode enhanced social emotional skills such as teamwork, empathy, solving conflicts, communication skills, self confidence has been increased by participation in different modes either individual or group activities.

Recommendations for integrating SEL-focused co-curricular activities within the school curriculum in alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

On the basis of researched data analyzed researcher would like to recommend few strategies for further **integrating SEL-focused co-curricular activities in school education such as:**

- Making SEL practices by a consistent part of the school culture from beginning of day from morning assembly time itself
- Encouraging students to maintain daily journals to reflect on their emotions, achievements, and challenges.
- Using interactive and play-based learning to enhance SEL skills such as **Team-building Games**, Role-Playing Games and board game etc.
- SEL Integration in Subject Lessons such as using Use narratives, poems, and role-plays to discuss **empathy, resilience, and ethical decision-making**. In literature subject, including collaborative problem-solving and experiments to promote teamwork and adaptability in mathematics and science.

Conclusion

The present study indicated that co-curricular activities serve as a vital extension of classroom learning, playing a pivotal role in fostering Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies among school learners. Findings indicate that structured, inclusive, and intentional co-curricular programs offer meaningful contexts in which learners can practice and internalize SEL in real-world scenarios. Activities like team sports, drama, debate, community service, and student leadership not only complement academic knowledge but actively cultivate interpersonal and intrapersonal skills crucial for holistic development.

Furthermore, beyond academics the integration of SEL through co-curricular avenues bridges the gap between cognitive and emotional growth, thereby enhancing holistic development of learner.

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