CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN UYO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF AKWA IBOM STATE

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Abstract
This study titled “Co-curricular activities and academic performance of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area” was conducted with a population of 5325 public secondary school students in the area. 17% of the population amounting to 910 students was randomly sampled for the study. To guide the study, two research hypotheses were formulated and tested with Independent t-test statistics. The findings showed that students’ involvement in both leadership positions, and participation in school sports and games have no adverse effects on the students’ academic performance. On the basis of the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that school administrators and stakeholders in education should propagate these research findings to disillusion students’ belief that holding leadership positions and participation in school games and sports are unnecessary distractions to academic pursuit with the ultimate result of poor academic performance. The study concluded that students should participate functionally in school leadership activities and games/sport for the benefits that accrue from these performances.

In the past, influential parents and guardians took it upon themselves to lobby their children’s/wards’ schools for their children’s/wards’ selections as school prefects, class monitors and schools sports flag-bearers because of the attraction and popularity that these roles attracted both within and outside the schools. Unfortunately, in recent times, apart from students’ seemingly general apathy to co-curricular activities in schools, parents/guardians frown at their involvements due to the perceived distractions from academic pursuits which in turn will affect their academic performance adversely. The concern of this paper is to study the effect of co-curriculum activities on the academic performance of secondary students.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study was to determine if there is any significant effect of co-curricular activities on the academic performance of secondary school students in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Specifically, this study sought to find out the effect of:
(a) students’ involvement in schools as school prefects, class monitors or class representatives on their academic performance; and
(b) students’ involvement in school games and sports on their academic performance.

Hypotheses
To find solutions to the study problems, two research hypotheses were formulated to guide the study, namely:
1. Students’ involvement in leadership positions has significant adverse effect on their academic performance.
2. Students’ participation in games and sports has significant adverse effect on their academic performance.

Research Design and Study Area
The research design employed in this study was causal comparative. The study covered Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State consisting of four (4) clans, namely, Ikono, Etoi, Oku and Offot.
Population for the Study

The population for the study was all the senior secondary school three (SSIII) students of 2013/2014 session in public secondary schools in Uyo Local Government Area which stood at 5325.

The Sampling Procedure and Sample

By simple random sampling technique, 910 number of students were drawn for use in the study being 17% of the population.

Instrument

The researcher obtained a list of school prefects, monitors and sportsmen/women among the 2013/2014 SSS III students from the Vice Principal (Administration) and proceeded to the Vice-Principal (Academic) and school Guidance Counsellors and studied the West African Examination Council results of the identified students vis-à-vis those students that neither held offices as prefects/monitors nor participated in games and sports.

Results of the Study

Hypothesis I

Hypothesis I stated that students’ involvement in leadership positions has significant adverse effect on their academic performance. The result of the independent t-test analysis of this hypothesis is presented in Table I below:

Table 1: Independent t-test analysis of the effect of students’ involvement in leadership positions on their academic performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. of students (n)</th>
<th>Mean Score (x̄)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-cal.</th>
<th>t-crit.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students involved in leadership positions</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>2.07*</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students not involved in leadership positions</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>910</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant at .05, df = 908, critical t = +1.96.

The results on Table 1 reveals that the calculated t-value is 8.07 with 908 degrees of freedom and 0.05 alpha level of significance and this is higher than the critical t-value of 1.96. This means that students’ involvement in school leadership positions has no adverse effects on their academic performance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis II

Hypothesis II stated that students’ participation in games and sports has significant adverse effect on their academic performance.
Table 2: Independent t-test analysis of the effect of students’ involvement in school games and sports on their academic performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. of students (n)</th>
<th>Mean Score (x)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-cal.</th>
<th>t-crit.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students involved in school games/sports</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>5.6*</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students not involved in school games/sports</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>910</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant at .05, df = 908, critical t = +1.96.

From the result on Table 2, students involved in school games and sports have a higher mean score regarding their academic performance (x = 65, SD = 3.9) than their counterparts that were not involved in school games and sports (x = 47, SD = 2.3). The calculated t-value is 5.6 with 908 degrees of freedom and 0.05 alpha level of significance and this is higher than the t-critical of 1.96. This means that students’ participation in games and sports has no adverse effect on their academic performance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Discussion of the Results

At a casual level of thought, one would simply conclude that students’ involvement in school leadership activities such as appointment or election as school prefects, class monitors, class representatives/coordinators, etc. leads to poor academic performance because it leads to diversion of attention from academic pursuit, but on the contrary the finding of this research study reveals that participation in these activities has no adverse effect on students’ academic performance. This finding agrees with Moriana, Alos, Akala, Pino, Herruzo and Ruiz (2006) who observed that students’ participation in different school activities, both inside and outside the school constitute the multiple situations or agents having rewarding effects on their mental horizon. To them, co-curricular activities can be grouped into two well-differentiated types, namely: extra-scholastic and extra-curricular. Extra-scholastic activities comprise activities outside the school programme, while extra-curricular activities consist of complementary activities carried on within the school setting, and generally under school auspices. Mahoney, Cairos and Farwer (2003) added that extra-scholastic activities have been associated with an improved educational level, more interpersonal competencies, higher aspirations and better attention level. Other identified advantages of extra-scholastic activities to students include increased critical thinking and personal and social maturity, higher motivation, and other “great benefits that serve to bridge school activities with those performed outside the academic setting” (Noam, Biancarosa and Dechausay, 2003).

It can be observed that students that occupy such positions in schools as prefects, class monitors/class representatives or coordinators, etc. find themselves in regular contact with school teachers because of their official assignments. This contact affords them the rare opportunity of association with teachers who correct them in spoken languages, counsel them for higher academic aspirations, introduce them to good study habits, enlighten them on career opportunities, and can also render study materials to them on personal note, among others. This may have been the reason why Astin (1985) stated that the more students are involved in student activities, including leadership activities, the greater their success in learning and personal development will be.

In addition to immediate academic performance, students undoubtedly are very important when we talk about stakeholders in education. As stakeholders, students need to be actively involved...
in the administration and smooth management of education programmes. Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster and Burkhardt (2001) agreed that all students have leadership potential, and educational institutions can uncover and develop this potential with targeted programmes that will also increase the students’ educational success. They added further that educational institutions will be successful in developing tomorrow’s leaders when they provide connections between academic programmes and community activities and express a strong desire, through their stated mission, to create a legacy of leaders in businesses, organizations, governments, schools, and neighbourhoods. Without any doubt, these activities get the students properly focused for better academic achievement.

Wielkiewicz (2000) noted that student leaders are looked upon as model students. Accordingly, these student leaders exemplify a balance between academics and leadership. He observed further that as citizens that will be community leaders, they strive to distinguish themselves academically, especially as a certain grade of pass is required in some institutions as a condition for seeking and maintaining school leadership positions. Finally, Beaudoin (2002) observed that participation in student organizations and other co-curricular activities in schools significantly help students stay engaged with school, get good grades and motivate them to graduate from school to bigger challenges outside the school.

On students’ involvement in games and sports, this research finding fails to agree with the generally held notion that taking part in sports activities has a negative influence on students’ academic performance. It rather agrees with Hills (1998) who asserted that sports and physical activities raise the level of mental and physical alertness and improve the intellectual functioning of the participants. This may be hinged on the age-old assertion of “sound mind in a sound body” referring to the potential quality of sports in the intellectual development of participants (Khan, Jamil, Khan and Kareem, 2012).

In their study on longitudinal research of children which attempted to use methodologically sound co-relational data, Young, Helton and Whitley (1997) found out that extra-curricular activity participation was positively related to Grade Point Average, educational aspirations, educational/occupational attainment, and standardized achievement test scores. Research studies (Shephard, 1997; Sallis, McKenzie, Kolody, Lewis, Marshall and Rosengard (1999); and Miller, Melnick, Barnes, Farrell and Sabo, 2005) agreed that absorption and better academic outcomes are always in proportion with time spent in sports activities. According to them, sports activities ameliorate the working capacity of crucial body systems and improve the degree of alertness among participants. They noted further that sports activities not only leave a positive impact on mood, but also increase mental alertness. Studies by Hills (1998), Taras (2005), Broh (2002) and Nelson & Gorden-Larsen (2006) revealed that physically and mentally alert students always perform better, achieve more, like to remain present in their classes, and show better results in Mathematics, English and science subjects particularly.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research that students that are involved in leadership positions such as prefects, class monitors/class representatives, and related offices in schools perform academically better than their non-involved student counterparts, and that students that participate in school games and sports also perform academically better than their docile counterparts, this study hereby makes the following recommendations:

1. Adequate sporting activities should be provided in schools with corresponding teacher-guided programmes to prevent abuses.
2. Students should be encouraged to vie for and accept leadership positions in schools to derive the benefit of better academic performance.
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Conclusion

This research study concludes that students that hold leadership positions such as school prefects, student leaders, class monitors/class representatives, etc. perform academically better than their counterparts that hold no leadership positions, and that students that participate in school games and sports perform better in academics than their sedentary counterparts as noticed in the Senior Secondary Three (SSS III) students’ West African Senior Secondary School Examination results of 2013/2014 in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

References


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