

## Evaluating the Essence of Co-curricular Activities in English Language on the Academic Performance of Senior Secondary School Students in Ogun State

By

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### **Abstract**

*The study evaluating the essence of co-curricular activities in English language on the academic performance of senior secondary school students in Ogun State. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises of all student of senior secondary school students in Ogun State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select one hundred (100) respondents are student in five selected senior secondary schools in Ogun State as sample for study. Instrument for data collection was an 6 item questionnaire on four point scale. Data analysis was done using simple percentage. The study revealed that students who are engaged in co-curricular activities achieve a better understanding of acquired knowledge and gain preferable communication skills, than the students who were not involved in any co-curricular activities. Students who actively engaged in co-curricular activities have greater levels of academic achievement, character development by inculcating in them skills required for personal success, such as leadership skills, time-management skills, and the ability to accept constructive criticism. It is therefore recommended that rewarding co-curricular activities that will enhance students' academic performance should be incorporated into school programmes by the school authority. This can be done by incorporating such activities into the school time table by the senior high school authorities.*

**Keyword:** *Co-Curricular, Activities, English Language, Academic Performance, Senior Secondary School Student*

### **Introduction**

Low academic attainment in English language has persisted in secondary schools. A credit pass in English language is a necessity for admission into Nigerian tertiary institutions. It has been pointed out that there is deficiency in the English

language performance of secondary school students and graduates (Adesanoye, 1994; cited in Aina & Olanipekun, 2014). Simultaneously, low English proficiency has been observed in the country and attributed to the low achievements of secondary and university students and it has been categorically stated that entrants into universities and Colleges of Education in the country are deficient in English language usage.

A curriculum is one aspect in the educational system that cannot be overemphasized. The word 'curriculum' has been defined from various perspectives. It has been viewed as the contents of disciplines and as learning experience (Gattawa, 2000). Curriculum is the total experience involving the school in the process of educating young people. It includes the teachers, subjects, content, method of teaching and evaluation as well as the physical and psychological dimension of the experience (Offorma, 2002). It could also be taken to mean the instrument by means of which schools seek to translate the hope of the society in which they function into concrete reality (Offorma, 2006). It is planned and sequence: it is a vehicle through which education is attained. In the opinion of Okebukola (1998), 'the curriculum is the traditional platform for translating the expectations of the society into knowledge, attitudes and skills that are expected to be developed or acquired by learners in formal and non- formal settings within the school system'. In addition, he noted that the curriculum (in Nigeria) 'was overloaded with theories' and irrelevant to the future needs of students. This view was corroborated by Uma, Obidike and Ogwuru (2013, p. 332) when they mentioned that 'the prevailing pattern of education after independence was criticized on the grounds of irrelevant curriculum'. The necessity for relevance of a curriculum to the needs of students and values of a society cannot be over-emphasized as they form the basis of a curriculum.

Curriculum as content is tantamount to subjects or disciplines that students must learn to achieve a particular certificate. The teaching and learning of English language as a subject or course in schools may be the greatest endeavour in the world, when considered in terms of the population of the students and teachers, the hours expended and the geographical dispersion (Commonwealth Conference 1961, cited in Ogunsiji, 2012). English language is a major language that cuts across all levels of education in Nigeria. It is the first official language and its significance cannot be over emphasized as the transition from one level of education to the other demands a possession of the knowledge of the language. Moreover, the poor mastery of English language will affect performance in other subjects.

### **English Language in Nigeria**

The origin of English in Nigeria is traceable to colonialism in the mid-nineteenth century. Its use as a medium of education is the consequence of the 1882 Education Code. The language was taught at the first elementary school established

by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in Badagry (Tomori, 1981, cited in Alobo, 2010). It possesses the status of being the language of commerce, the judiciary, education, government, medium of instruction and a lingua franca 'by default'. It is the foundation of the schooling system in Nigeria. According to Obadare (2011) English is used for the following purposes in Nigeria: (i.) a stepping stone for the acquisition of higher education in Nigeria (Jegede, 1990), (ii.) an intermediary in Nigeria's multilingual setting and, (iii.) a passport for educational attainment and employment. At the primary level, Akere (1995) noted that students are deficient in the possession of the four language skills. The same situation exists at the secondary level as Mohammed (1995) asserts that most entrants into the secondary schools have little or lack the knowledge of the language.

The teaching and learning of English is plagued with many challenges at the secondary level. An evidence of the challenges confronting the teaching of the language at secondary school level is the rate of failure in external English examinations, which is high as well as the students' inability to communicate effectively in the language. Also, it has been pointed out by Babatunde (2012) that the deficiency of Nigerian students in English language is a reflection of the high failure rate of students in West African Examination Council and National Examination Council (WAEC/NECO) examinations in English. This also inadvertently affects the achievement rate of students in other subjects, where English is used as a medium of instruction. He further asserts that the teaching and learning of the language is deficient because it has not been able to satisfy the communicative and developmental needs of Nigerian students. This corroborates the point of Akere (1993, cited in Awonusi 2004; Obadare 2011) that 'there is evidence everywhere that the standard of English expression is very poor and students lack the proper knowledge of the communicative tasks at the various levels of education'. Research has shown that academics such as Mvungi (1982) and Osbiston (1980; cited in Wilson, et al 2012) have contended that a corollary of the lack of mastery of English would be underachievement in academic subjects.

### **Extracurricular Activities**

Extracurricular activities are defined as those activities that enhance and enrich the regular curriculum during normal school days. They are also referred to as co-curricular, extra-class, non-class, school-life, and student activities (Tan & Pope, 2007). In co-curricular activities, students assume responsible positions of leadership; students' spontaneous interests and immediate needs determine affiliations and experiences; and the teacher-supervisor is often a mentor or guide rather than an instructor.

Extracurricular and co-curricular activities contribute to one's academic career in ways that cannot be experienced solely in the language classroom. Extracurricular activities are offered alongside the regular traditional curriculum at

all levels of the education system, mostly in western countries. Emmer (2010) explains “the terms extracurricular activities, co-curricular activities, and non-classroom activities have all been used interchangeably to mean experiences and activities such as debate, athletics, music, drama, school publications, student council, school clubs, contests, and various social events”. The co-curricular activities also include activities such as community, religious and volunteering activities. According to Tan & Pope (2007), co-curricular activities are those activities that enhance and enrich the regular curriculum during normal school days. They are also referred to as extracurricular, extra-class, non-class, school-life, and student activities. Despite the lack of a precise term, co-curricular activities seem more student-centered than the regular classes. In co-curricular activities, students assume responsible positions of leadership; students' spontaneous interests and immediate needs determine affiliations and experiences; and the teacher-supervisor is often a mentor or guide rather than an instructor. Participation in co-curricular activities is widely thought to play a key role in students' academic success (Huang & Chang, 2004), and contribute to students' educational attainment (Tan & Pope, 2007). Students also realize the importance of developing overall competences, by joining co-curricular activities and working collaboratively with their student peers on academic work in order to gain hands-on experience (Fung, Lee, & Chow, 2007). Numerous researches were conducted to investigate this relationship and found that co-curricular activities were positively correlated to academic performance.

Extracurricular activities are defined as activities that are not part of an academic curriculum, but are offered by an academic institution. At most schools, students can expect the availability of many extracurricular activities in order to escape the hardships of academic work. Some examples of extracurricular activities include Greek life, sports, and student government and leadership. Although similar and often used interchangeably, co-curricular activities are defined as activities that are part of a classroom/program curriculum, such as science fairs, student newspapers, service learning, and mock debates. These activities act as a way for students to experience what they are learning in class in a real-world context (Klesse & D'Onofrio, 2000). Extracurricular and co-curricular activities fall under the category of student involvement. Student involvement has been positively linked to many aspects of academic success, such as high grade, retention, and confidence-building (Astin, 2006).

Many educators believe that student development cannot be achieved only in the classroom. Astin (2006) states “a particular curriculum, to achieve the effects intended, must elicit sufficient student effort and investment of energy to bring about the desired learning and development” (p. 522). Researchers note that student responsibility, initiative, and self-directedness in academic achievement are important to improve the quality of a student's undergraduate experience. Xiao

& Luo (2009) discovered that the students in their study found English co-curricular activities are not only helpful in their English practice, but they also help create autonomous learning. Therefore, being involved in extracurricular and co-curricular activities allows students to hold agency over their academic trajectory. Student involvement in co-curricular activities has implications for improvement in academic success and language proficiency of English language learners (ELLs). That is, research in second language acquisition (SLA) shows that interaction is an important component for language learning. Furthermore, Xiao & Luo (2009) argue convincingly that interaction can be used to facilitate language learning. Engagement in co-curricular activities, presents students with both interaction and involvement opportunity which together may be highly beneficial for students who are enrolled in an intensive English language program, and therefore, suggest that English language learners who participate in these activities will be more successful than their peers who do not participate in such activities. In a study conducted by Bergen-Cico and Viscomi (2013), they found that there is a positive association between attendance at campus co-curricular events and GPA. Their quantitative study shows two cohorts that were split into three groups each based on their level of co-curricular involvement. The study showed that students who have attended a mid-level range of events (5-14 over the span of 8 semesters) had the highest GPAs out of the three groups.

Research has consistently supported that students need to practice the target language in order to achieve proficiency (Xiao & Luo, 2009). The theory of student involvement can have implications for ELLs. Astin (2006) states that students gain knowledge by devoting their time to academic activities: According to the theory, the extent to which students can achieve particular developmental goals is a direct function of the time and effort they devote to activities designed to produce these gains. This type of involvement for English Language Learners (ELLs) leads directly into improving communicative competence, which is defined as the competence or ability to communicate. There are four main components of communicative competence: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. Linguistic competence refers to knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to say the most appropriate phrase or word in a certain situation. Discourse competence refers to the ability to start, contribute to, and end a conversation in a consistent and coherent manner. Strategic competence refers to the ability to communicate effectively and repair communication when problems arise (Canale & Swain, 1980).

### **Co-curricular Activities and Academic Performance**

Student participation in co-curricular activities leads to better student learning and development (Astin, 2006). English language learners who participate in co-curricular activities have greater confidence. Evidence has shown that ELLs

generally find that student activities can help enhance their language abilities, although there are exceptions (Xiao & Luo, 2009). Achieving confidence is a language learning strategy that leads to better self-directedness, and therefore, can lead to better communicative competence. For all students, student responsibility, initiative, and self-directedness in academic achievement are important to improve the quality of a student's schooling experience. Moreover, according to Bergen-Cico & Viscomi (2013), there seems to be a positive relationship between students academic performance and student participation in co-curricular activities in the school. Hence, English language students need to be exposed to meaningful, contextualized language exercise outside of the classroom (Oxford, 1990). Devoting time to co-curricular activities helps the student acquire more knowledge of the subject that they are learning (Xiao & Luo, 2009).

Several authors conducted studies in which they suggested positive connections between participation in extracurricular activities, academic achievement, and reduced dropouts, especially for urban youths. Co-curricular activities, also referred to as extracurricular activities, play an important role in the educational process to support the success of learning (Kuhar & Sabljic, 2016; Kumar & Arockiasamy, 2012) indicated that involvement in extracurricular activities, which extends beyond the realm of the normal school curriculum, allows students to engage in additional learning experiences that support student achievement. Kumar and Arockiasamy (2012) noted that having an imbalance between curricular and co-curricular activities does not permit the educational purpose to be realized. Co-curricular activities, such as those that enhance and enrich the regular curriculum by providing students an opportunity to deepen their knowledge and develop various skills, are not developed through the regular curriculum (Kuhar & Sabljic, 2016; Kumar & Arockiasamy, 2012). Kuhar and Sabljic (2016) indicated that students' decisions to participate in extracurricular activities are voluntary which allows the student the opportunity of deciding to become actively involved with enhancing the educational process. Students who participate in activity programs develop character traits as self-discipline, self-confidence, and competition skills (Yeung, 2015). Kumar and Arockiasamy (2012) characterized co-curricular activities as being student-centered activities that are infused as part of the main curriculum in schools because of the many benefits resulting from being involved in such activities.

Involvement in extracurricular activities has varying impacts on the academic success and attitude of students (Yeung, 2015). Students should be allowed time in school to be involved in extracurricular activities that increase student centered learning and engagement. Students engaged in extracurricular activities have higher levels of confidence, interpersonal skills, community awareness, and contributors to the workforce. Extracurricular participation is a key factor for student development and increased academic achievement with participation

becoming more important to students as they advance in school (Abruzzo, Lenis, Romero, Maser, & Morote, 2016). Likewise, Fioriello (2009) averred that when participating in extracurricular activities, students get the chance of learning group and individual responsibilities, having relationship abilities, and applying academic skills in actual world context.

Students who participate in extracurricular activities experience higher levels of academic achievement. These effects have been researched since the early 1930s. Students who participate frequently in extracurricular activities tend to have higher grades, better test scores, and more positive educational experiences in general. For example, participation in extracurricular activities is associated with a 2% increase in math and science test scores. Furthermore, students involved in activities have a 10% increase in their expectations of attaining a college degree, as compared to non-participants. Therefore, students should be encouraged to participate in such activities throughout their school years. Adolescents practise skills while participating in the extracurricular activities that contribute to their academic success. First, through organized games, students learn to follow instructions. They learn to listen to instructions and apply them to achieve a desired outcome. Second, also through organized activities, students learn the importance of persistence and motivation. They understand that accomplishing goals often requires focus and hard work. Third, students learn goal setting and problem solving. Following instructions, persistence, motivation, goal setting, and problem solving are all skills that are acquired during extracurricular activity participation and that transfer to students' academic success.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study is to evaluate the essence of co-curricular activities in English language on the academic performance of senior secondary school students in Ogun State

### **Research Questions**

In order to fulfill the objectives of the study, the following questions were raised for the study:

1. Does the impact of co-curricular activities in English language on students' academic performance yield significance proportion of evaluation among senior secondary school students in Ogun State?
2. To what extent can co-curricular activities enhance the learning effectiveness of selected students in Ogun State?

## Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Population comprises of all student of senior secondary school students in Ogun State. Simple random sampling technique was used to select one hundred (100) respondents are student in five selected senior secondary schools in Ogun State as sample for study. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, A and B. Section contained information on demographic data of the respondents while section B contained items on the main title of study. The instrument was given to experts in primary education for construct and content validation. . Reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Cronbach's alphavalues ranges of 0.71 and 0.80 thereby, it can be concluded that the items are good and reliable. Data collected were analyzed using simple percentage statistical tool.

## Presentation of Data Analysis and Results

**Research Question One:** Does the impact of co-curricular activities in English language on students' academic performance yield significance proportion of evaluation among senior secondary school students in Ogun State?

**Table 1:** The impact of co-curricular activities in English language on the academic performance of senior secondary school students in Ogun State.

S/N	ITEMS	N		O		YE		S		TOTAL			
		Freq (N)	Percent %	Freq (N)	Percent %	Freq (N)	Percent %	Freq (N)	Percent %	Freq (N)	Percent %		
1.	Extracurricular and co-curricular activities contribute to one's academic career	7	0	70	%	3	0	30	%	10	0	100	%
2.	Student participation in co-curricular activities leads to better student learning and development	8	5	85	%	1	5	15	%	10	0	100	%
3.	English language learners who participate in co-curricular activities have greater confidence	9	0	90	%	1	0	10	%	10	0	100	%
	<b>T O T A L</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0</b>

The table above shows the percentage of respondents. In item 1, 70 respondents representing (70%) disagreed with the statement while 30 respondents representing (30%) agreed with the statement. In item 2, 85 respondents representing (85%) disagreed with the statement while 15 respondents representing (15%) agreed with the statement and in item 3, 90 respondents

representing (90%) disagreed with the statement while only 10 respondents representing (10%) agreed with the statement. 235 respondents representing 78% disconcerted while only 55 respondents representing 28% concur with the statement. This shows that 78% of secondary school students in Ogun State perceive the impact co-curricular activities in English language on their academic performance in Ogun State. This statement was in line with Astin (2006) that student participation in co-curricular activities leads to better student learning and development. English language learners who participate in co-curricular activities have greater confidence. Evidence has shown that ELLs generally find that student activities can help enhance their language abilities, although there are exceptions. Similarly, Kuh et. al, (1991) that achieving confidence is a language learning strategy that leads to better self-directedness, and therefore, can lead to better communicative competence. For all students, student responsibility, initiative, and self-directedness in academic achievement are important to improve the quality of a student's schooling experience.

**Research Question two:** To what extent can co-curricular activities enhance the learning effectiveness of selected students in Ogun State?

**Table 2:** Co-curricular activities enhance the learning effectiveness of students in senior secondary school students in Ogun State.

S/N	ITEMS	YES		NO		TOTAL	
		Frequency (N)	Percent %	Frequency (N)	Percent %	Frequency (N)	Percent %
1.	Co-curricular activities play a key role in students' academic success	50	50 %	50	50 %	100	100 %
2.	Co-curricular activities were positively correlated to academic performance	64	64 %	36	36 %	100	100 %
3.	Co-curricular enrich students' practical exposures, hands-on experiences, and other soft skills like problem-solving	59	59 %	41	41 %	100	100 %
	<b>T O T A L</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>57.7 %</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>42.3 %</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>

From the table above. In item 1, 50 respondents representing (50%) agreed with the statement while 50 respondents representing (50%) disagreed with the statement. In item 2, 64 respondents representing (64%) agreed with the statement while 36 respondents representing (36%) disagreed with the statement and in item 3, 59 respondents representing (59%) agreed with the statement while 41 respondents representing (41%) disagreed with the statement. 173 respondents representing 57.7% concur while only 127 respondents representing 42.3% disconcerted with the statement. This shows that 57.7% of secondary school students in Ogun State perceive co-curricular activities enhance the learning effectiveness of selected students in Ogun State. This statement was in line with Bergen-Cico & Viscomi (2013), there seems to be a positive relationship between students academic performance and student participation in co-curricular activities in the school. Co-curricular and experiential learning activities are widely thought to enrich students' practical exposures, hands-on experiences, and other soft skills like problem-solving, presentation and interpersonal communication, and self-discipline and management skills, etc.

### **Conclusions**

Students' performance remains one of the main outcomes of education in any education system and depicts the valid achievement of education goals by teachers, students' and the schools guided by values of accountability. Various studies have proven that participating in extracurricular activities benefits students' personal and academic success. Hence, students who are engaged in co-curricular activities achieve a better understanding of acquired knowledge and gain preferable communication skills, than the students who were not involved in any co-curricular activities. Students who actively engaged in co-curricular activities have greater levels of academic achievement, character development by inculcating in them skills required for personal success, such as leadership skills, time-management skills, and the ability to accept constructive criticism. Also, extracurricular participation raises students' self-esteem and resiliency; help them cultivates social development and as well provides opportunities for students to experience the importance of community involvement. Therefore, the paper conveniently concluded that co-curricular activities enhance students' academic performance, thus by integrating co-curricular activities with the school help achieve overall development of students.

### **Recommendations**

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

1. Rewarding co-curricular activities that will enhance students' academic performance should be incorporated into school programmes by the school

authority. This can be done by incorporating such activities into the school time table by the senior high school authorities.

2. Students should be encouraged to engage in various co-curricular activities such as joining literary and debate group, social clubs, religious clubs and sporting groups to develop their total personality for the outside world.
3. Teachers should be assigned to each of these co-curricular activities to serve as coordinators for each activity. This will make students attach importance to the activities.
4. Parents should as well encourage their children to take part in co-curricular activities to improve their grades; as involvement in such activities helps students develop social skills, sportsman spirit, ethics and discipline.
5. 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.
6. Students' engagement in co-curricular activities should be not made mandatory and students should be allowed to choose activities of their choice.
7. Provision of a more stimulating language environment from primary through secondary schools to develop students intellectual and verbal skills, is vital.
8. The government should continue to provide extra funding, on a competitive basis perhaps, to support such teaching and learning quality enhancement projects.

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