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Teachers' attitudes towards co-curricular activities in selected schools

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This study investigated the teachers' attitudes towards co-curricular activities in schools. The aim of the paper was to highlight the teachers' readiness, knowledge and commitment towards their involvement in co-curricular activities in schools. A total of 116 respondents participated in the survey. The findings showed that the teachers' readiness of being involved in the activities of co-curricular was high (mean=4.00); their knowledge was found to be at high levels (mean=3.86) and their commitment was also at high levels (mean=3.86). The results of the study implied that the teachers' attitudes towards the co-curricular activities influenced significantly the students' performance at co-curricular activities. The students' active participation in co-curricular activities served as the catalyst for students' holistic development. Therefore, the teachers' attitudes in terms of readiness, knowledge and commitment should be emphasized in curriculum planning and co-curriculum planning, implementation and evaluation.

Key words: Co-curricular activities; students' performance; teachers' readiness, knowledge, commitment.

Introduction

The national philosophy of education states that "Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God". In order to achieve this aspiration, co-curricular programs have been designed to be integrated in the curriculum at education from the primary level to tertiary level. This ensures that all students at schools have the opportunity to be knowledgeable and competent, possess high moral standards, and are responsible and capable of achieving a high level of personal well-being as well as to contribute to the betterment of the family, society and nation at large.

The co-curricular activities are integrated into the curriculum at education to enhance the holistic development amongst students. It is believed: student excellences are not only measured in fields of academic, but also in acquisitions of soft-skill or generic-skill competencies. These combined factors nevertheless, may contribute to students' intellectual capabilities and personality attributes. In the contemporary job market today, value-added attributes are prime factors for students or graduates to face challenges and needs in their working environment. Some of the skills needed are leadership skills, team-working skills,

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communication and social skills, critical thinking and problem solving skills, and development of moral. In co-curricular programs, these skills are embedded and integrated in the teaching and learning process for co-curriculum activities.

The co-curricular activity is now part of the teaching and learning process. The co-curricular program is regarded as equally important as the academic curriculum. The co-curricular program is aimed to enhance the learning in the classrooms. Obviously, it is clear that the role of co-curricular programs significantly contribute into shaping and developing the wholesomeness of an individual. The new concept of co-curricular component is shown in Figure 1.

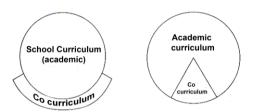


Figure 1. The new concept of co-curricular program Source: Jumali et al, 2010 Students' Advancement Center UKM

Schools at all levels are responsible to monitor and oversee the implementation of co-curriculum program, teaching and learning process. Activities or courses offered under co-curricular programs should be of relevance to the needs and aspiration for students' personality development and excellence, and its practice through structured pedagogy, the integrative learning system that is, acquisitions of professional/technical skill as well as the soft-skill. The integrated learning system aims to produce holistic graduates thus, would ensure schools in producing well-balanced individuals to face the current career challenges.

In this study, teachers at ten selected schools were identified and their attitudes in terms of readiness, knowledge and commitment towards co-curricular programs were examined. Reports showed that teachers' readiness at being involved in co-curricular activities at schools were low as many teachers were not giving their commitment in the activities of co-curricular programs (Yasmin Haji Othman, 2009). In addition, research also revealed that the teachers' knowledge in managing the activities of co-curricular programs was low as many of them were not equipped with the knowledge and skills in managing the co-curricular activities (Tung, 2008). Thus, the study provides valuable information to the planning of co-curricular programs as it is now a key component in the education for schools.

The study aims to examine the teachers' readiness in their involvement with cocurricular activities in schools. Their knowledge and commitment level are also being assessed as these factors contribute significantly towards the performances of students in the co-curricular activities. There is the assumption that the teachers' attitudes correlated significantly in supporting the development of a wholesome individual in schools. Importantly, it provides guidelines for stakeholders in designing, implementing and evaluating co-curricular programs for education.

Curriculum

The Malaysian education system encompasses education beginning from pre-school to university. Pre-tertiary education (pre-school to secondary education) is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (MOE) while tertiary or higher education, prior to mid-2013, is the responsibility of the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE).

In Malaysian schools, the programs or components that are related can be divided into two parts which are curriculum and co-curriculum. Curriculum can be defined as all the courses of study or subjects offered by an educational institution. It may include any educational experience. Malaysia has a 6-3-2-2 system of education, comprising six years of primary education, three and two years of lower and upper secondary education, followed by two years of post-secondary education.

The co-curriculum refers to all activities outside the classroom offered to students in form of clubs or societies, sports and games, and uniformed units. As a result of their experiences and learning which occurs both in and out of the classroom they would develop into responsible individuals with a more defined identity and global view of the world.

Co-curriculum

Co-curricular activities are compulsory at upper primary and secondary levels, where all students must participate in at least two activities, of which one must be sports-related. Co-curricular activities are often categorised under the following: uniformed groups, performing arts, clubs & societies, and sports & games. These activities provide opportunities for students to develop their interest, talent and aptitude outside the classroom. Students may also participate in more than two co-curricular activities. Competitions, special projects, and programmes are organised by schools such as Sports Day, Co-curriculum Day, Quran Reading Competition, Career Day, and Anti-Smoking Campaigns.

The role of co-curricular activities in education

Education in Malaysia includes the three levels, namely, primary, secondary and tertiary. In general, education in Malaysia functions to maximize individual potentials and to fulfil the country's aspirations. The educational ministry's mission is to provide an education system which helps everyone achieve their maximum potential through the development of a healthy spirit, body and mind, in addition to having high social skills, morality, aesthetics and cognitive skills. Besides developing the student to become future citizens, it has now become a criterion to enter higher education institutions. This follows the Government's decision to assess applicants based on their academic achievement (90%) and co-curriculum involvement (10%) for public university intake starting from the year 2006.

In schools, co-curricular course can be used as a platform to develop students' generic skills, interest and talent especially to those who do not have much opportunity to excel in academic courses. Activities or projects carried out by students through co-curricular courses will help them to understand the challenges in the real world as well as to improve or build up their problem solving skills, management skills and other generic skills.

In line with the objectives of the co-curricular programs, there is a need to examine the teachers' attitude in general towards their management and involvement in co-curricular programs to provide feedback to all stakeholders in the educational area since co-curricular programs have been made an important component in schools. Therefore, it is timely and apt for this investigation to take place by looking into the teachers' readiness, knowledge and commitment in the field of co-curricular programs or activities.

The research

This study was carried out by a Master candidate at Sultan Idris Education University in Malaysia. The study examined the teachers' attitudes towards co- curricular activities in selected schools. Specifically, the study aimed at examining the teachers' attitudes in terms of their readiness, knowledge and commitment. This paper presented the results based on the main objectives of the study, which were: To what extent were the:

- 1. readiness among teachers in handling the co-curricular programs?
- 2. knowledge embedded in teachers in managing co-curricular activities?
- 3. level of the commitment among teachers in co-curricular activities?
- 4. influence of teachers' attitude towards students' performance in co-curricular activities?

Methods and sample

The study employed a quantitative method. A total of 116 teachers in ten primary schools took part in the survey. There were 89 female and 27 male teachers. All of the teachers were given responsibilities to help to manage one type of activities in the co-curricular program. Majority of the teachers had at least three years teaching experience and had been involved in the co-curricular activities at schools. Table 1 showed the profiles of the participating teachers according to their post and gender.

Table 1. The number of the respondents according to post and gender

	Head Teachers	Senior Assistants	Afternoon Supervisors	Teachers	Total
Male	2	6	3	16	27
Female	6	18	9	56	89

In total, 116 respondents participated in the survey. A self-developed questionnaire was distributed to the participants at the selected schools. Four different categories of teachers responded to the survey. They were the head teachers, senior assistants, afternoon supervisors and teachers. There were eight head teachers who gave their views, 24 senior assistants, 12 of the participants from the afternoon supervisors group and 72 teachers. The findings are presented in the following sections.

Findings

The findings are described from the questionnaire administered to the participants in the survey. The first section describes the teachers' readiness in co curricular activities. It is followed by their knowledge level and the degree of their commitment towards activities of co curricular at schools

The level of teachers' readiness

The results on the level of the teachers' readiness are measured in three aspects which are the teachers' readiness in preparation, implementing and monitoring the co-curricular activities which have been assigned to them by the schools' authority. The results of teachers' readiness are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers' readiness in the co-curricular activities at schools

No	Statements	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Agree	Stronly Afree	Mean	S.D
			1	2	3	4	5		
A	Readiness								
1	I do adequate preparetory work for an activity in the co- curricular at school.	116	0 (0)	6.9 (8)	27.6 (32)	58.6 (68)	6.9 (8)	3.66	0.721
2	I am ready to be th eadvisor of the activities in Co-co.	116	0 (0)	0 (0)	10.3 (12)	82.8 (96)	6.9 (8)	3.97	0.421
3	I am ready to carry out the co-co activities as planned.	116	0 (0)	0 (0)	10.3 (12)	79.3 (92)	10.3 (12)	4.00	0.463
4	I am ready to achieve the mission of the co-co activities.	116	0 (0)	0 (0)	13.8 (16)	82.8 (96)	3.4 (4)	3.90	0.409
5	I am ready to be the Senior assistant of Co-co.	116	0 (0)	0 (0)	17.2 (20)	72.4 (84)	10.3 (12)	3.93	0.530
6	I plan the strategy to enhance the excellence in co activities.	116	0 (0)	0 (0)	34.5 (40)	65.5 (76)	0 (0)	3.66	0.484
7	I am ready to master the the field of Co-co which had been assigned to me.	116	0 (0)	0 (0)	10.3 (12)	82.8 (96)	6.9 (8)	3.97	0.421
8	I am ready to take up chilenges as the advisor of an activity.	116	0 (0)	0 (0)	20.7 (24)	79.3 (92)	0 (0)	3.79	0.412

Note: Number in brackets indicates frequency.

Table 2 shows that majority of the teachers' readiness is at the high levels. The teachers show high level of readiness to carry out activities in the co-curricular programs. They show great readiness in terms of carrying out the activities as planned (mean=4.0). Indirectly, it reflects that they are also ready to take up the responsibilities towards the achievement of the mission of the co-curricular programs (mean=3.90). Most importantly, teachers indicate that they are ready to be assigned the tasks as the advisor of an activity (mean=3.97) in the co-curricular programs and they are also ready to master the handling procedures and management of an activity in the co-curricular programs.

In addition, the teachers also revealed that they are ready to work with the senior assistants in the co-curricular department (mean=3.93). It is interesting to note that most of the teachers indicated that they are ready to do preparatory work and also ready to plan strategy to enhance the achievement of students' performance in the co-curricular activities (mean=3.66).

Teachers' knowledge in co-curricular activities at schools

The teachers were asked to indicate their knowledge in handling and managing the cocurricular activities based on their experiences in schools and the results obtained are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. The knowledge level of teachers towards co-curricular activities in schools

No	Statements	N	Srongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Agree	Stronlg Agree	Mean	S.D
			1	2	3	4	5	_	
В	Knowledge								
1	I believe the relevance knowledge in Co-co would help me in manging the activity.	116	0 (0)	6.9 (8)	17.2 (20)	58.6 (68)	17.2 (20)	3.86	0.789
2	I have the knowledge in managing the co-co activity.	116	0 (0)	3.4 (4)	48.3 (56)	48.3 (56)	0 (0)	3.45	0.572
3	I have the general knowledge in theory to manage the co-co activity.	116	0 (0)	10.3 (12)	34.5 (40)	55.2 (64)	0 (0)	3.45	0.686
4	I have adequate knowkedge in terms of carry out co-co activties.	116	0 (0)	3.4 (4)	48.3 (56)	48.3 (56)	0 (0)	3.45	0.572
5	I have the skills to plan the co-co activity.	116	0 (0)	0 (0)	51.7 (56)	41.4 (48)	6.9 (2)	3.55	0.632
6	I have to skills to use the materisla or aids in co-co.	116	0 (0)	0 (0)	48.3 (56)	44.8 (52)	6.9 (8)	3.59	0.628
7	I need training to upgrade my skills and in carrying out co-co activity.	116	0 (0)	10.3 (12)	27.6 (32)	58.6 (68)	3.4 (4)	3.55	0.736
8	I obatined my knowledge in the tecahers' training in college or IPG.	116	0 (0)	6.9 (8)	37.9 (44)	48.3 (56)	6.9 (8)	3.55	0.736

Note: Number in brackets indicates frequency

The teachers agree that the relevant knowledge in co-curricular activities is important to help them in managing the activities (mean=3.86). The results also show that the teachers have the knowledge in managing the co-curricular activities (mean=3.45). Specifically, teachers reveal that they have the general knowledge in theory to manage co-curricular activities (mean=3.45). The results also reveal that teachers have the relevant and adequate knowledge in managing co-curricular activities (mean=3.45). The skills of handling the co-curricular activities amongst the teachers are at the mean values of 3.59. Nevertheless, the teachers express their needs towards training and also show interest in upgrading their skills and knowledge in the co-curricular activities (mean=3.55). In addition,

the teachers also show that they have the knowledge to plan the activities ahead for the students (mean=3.55).

Teachers' commitment in the management of co-curricular activities

Related to the commitment in the management of co-curricular activities, ideas were gathered from the respondents about the time spent for co-curricular programs, teachers' determination and their willingness to learn within the co-curricular programs. The teachers' level of commitment is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Teachers' commitment in the management of co-curricular activities

No	Statements	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	S.D
			1	2	3	4	5	•	
С	Commitment								
1	I am willing to sacrify my time to enhance the achivement in co-co activity that I am in charge off.	116	0 (0)	13.8 (16)	34.5 (40)	51.7 (60)	0 (0)	3.38	0.728
2	I am willing to do anything to ensure the successness of the co-co activity.	116	0 (0)	10.3 (12)	62.1 (72)	27.6 (32)	0 (0)	3.17	0.602
3	I am interested in the co-co activity that have been assigned to me.	116	0 (0)	24.1 (28)	31.0 (36)	44.8 (52)	0 (0)	3.21	0.819
4	I have positive attitude when carrying out the activity of co-co.	116	0 (0)	17.2 (20)	79.3 (92)	3.4 (4)	0 (0)	3.86	0.441
5	I am determined to train students in the co-co activity.	116	0 (0)	0 (0)	17.2 (20)	82.8 (96)	0 (0)	3.83	0.384
6	I am always responsible towards the co-co activity that I am in charged off.	116	0 (0)	0 (0)	20.7 (24)	79.3 (92)	0 (0)	3.79	0.412
7	I am willing to accept training from time to time in co-co activity that I serve as the advisor.	116	0 (0)	3.4 (4)	31.0 (36)	62.1 (72)	3.4 (4)	3.66	0.614
8	I feel the managing of co- co activity is burdensome to me.	116	20.7 (6)	13.8 (12)	37.9 (44)	24.1 (28)	3.4 (4)	2.76	1.154
9 Note:	I always learn to upgrade my skills to carry out co-co activity.	116	0 (0)	0 (0)	37.9 (44)	55.2 (64)	6.9 (8)	3.69	0.604

Note: Number in brackets indicates frequency

The most agreeable statement in terms of their commitment is that the teachers have positive attitudes towards their commitment at co-curricular activities. The mean value is 3.86. This is followed by their sense of responsibility (mean=3.79), their determination (mean=3.83) and they always seek opportunity to upgrade the skills to carry out the activities under supervision (mean=3.69). On the other hand, the results indicate that there is a small group of teachers who feel that being involved is an extra burden to them, as the mean value is as low as 2.76.

Students' performance in Co curicular activities at schools

In order to examine the influence of the teachers' attitudes towards the students' performance at co-curricular activities, the teachers' observation of the students' performance was investigated. The students' performances in the co-curricular activities are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Students' performance in co curicular activities at schools

No	Statements	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	S.D
		•	1	2	3	4	5		
D	Students' Performance								
1	The students in my school								
	are very active in	11	0	17.2	51.7	31.0	0	3.14	0.693
	participating in the co-co activities.	6	(0)	(20)	(60)	(36)	(0)		*****
2	Students can be trained to be	11	0	10.3	20.7	69.0	0		
	the co-facilitator in the co-	6	(0)	(12)	(24)	(80)	(0)	3.59	0.682
	co activity.	Ü	(0)	(12)	(2.)	(00)	(0)		
3	Only students who are	11	13.8	13.8	55.2	17.2	0	2.54	0.010
	assigned apost in the co-co	6	(16)	(16)	(64)	(20)	(0)	2.76	0.912
4	activity is considered active.		, ,	` '	. ,	` ′			
4	Students of low performance	11	6.9	17.2	41.4	34.5	0	2.02	0.006
	will be suggested to do extra training.	6	(8)	(20)	(48)	(40)	(0)	3.03	0.906
_	Rewards enhance the	1.1	0	12.0	24.5	44.0	6.0		
5	students involvement.	11 6	0 (0)	13.8 (16)	34.5 (40)	44.8 (52)	6.9 (8)	3.45	0.827
6	Rewards ensure motivation	11	0	6.9	34.5	48.3	10.3		
U	amongst students.	6	(0)	(8)	(40)	(56)	(12)	3.62	0.775
7	More attention is given to a	-	` ′	` ′	` '				
,	uniformgroup/club/games	11	10.3	3.4	65.5	20.7	0	2.97	0.823
	which is outstanding	6	(12)	(4)	(76)	(24)	(0)	2.77	0.023
8	Students skills can be								
	enhanced through co-co	11	0	3.4	20.7	62.1	13.8	3.86	0.693
	activity.	6	(0)	(4)	(24)	(72)	(16)	5.00	0.075
9	Students who excel in								
,	academic also excel in co-co	11	10.3	20.7	44.8	24.1	0	2.83	0.928
	activity.	6	(12)	(24)	(52)	(28)	(0)	2.03	0.720
10	Students who excel in an								
	activity should be given	11	0	3.4	10.3	75.9	10.3		
	training to better	6	(0)	(4)	(12)	(88)	(12)	3.93	0.593
	performance.		\-/	` '	` /	` -/	` /		
11	The achievement in co-co	11	0	0	6.0	02.0	10.2		
	activity gives confidence to	11	0	0	6.9	82.8	10.3	4.03	0.421
	students.	6	(0)	(0)	(8)	(96)	(12)		

Note: Number in brackets indicates frequency.

Almost all the teachers agree that the achievement in co-curricular activities give tremendous confidence to students (mean=4.03). The teachers believe that students who excel in an activity at co-curricular activities should be given further training to help the students to develop their potential. The mean value is 3.93. The teachers are of the opinion that rewards serve as one of the motivations factors (mean=3.62) and also rewards can be used as an enhancement of students' participation in co-curricular activities (3.45). The teachers' attitudes towards the high performing students in the co-curricular activities are fair as the feel they need not pay extra attention to the outstanding groups as the mean value is (2.76). Nonetheless, the teachers feel they should give more training to the students who are not performing at high levels (2.97).

Discussion of the findings

Based on the findings, we continue with a discussion of the three main aspects of teachers' attitudes demonstrating how these aspects influence the performance of the students in co-curricular programs.

The findings show that the teachers' attitudes in terms of readiness, knowledge and commitment towards co-curricular activities are at high levels. It reflects that the teachers support the co-curricular programs at schools. Basically, this finding is in line with William's (2002) view that participating in co-curricular activities enrich students' campus life and their involvement enhanced the holistic development amongst the students in the campus.

Indirectly, the teachers in the study have the awareness that they need to carry out the co-curricular activities with dedication and commitment. Besides that, they also have demonstrated the interest towards the activity to inspire students' participation. Even though the job of a teacher is challenging, but teachers are the main motivator to ensure the program of co curricular at schools. It supported the statements of Leonard & Irving (2008) that 'the job of the sponsor or coach is to guide or direct the pupils as they conduct the activity. Delegation of responsibilities is an important key in the guidance of any extra curricular activity. Guidance implies helping pupils over the hard parts by advising them on what to do and showing them how to do it.'

As it was stipulated in the aims of the co-curricular programs, the findings also revealed that student participation in the activities was not only to educate them to be responsible and fulfilled human beings, but also to develop character, critical thinking, social skills and talents (Siti Hajar Ismail, 2007). In addition, the education stakeholders demanded that co-curricular programs should be made as part of the qualifying criteria as entry requirements into public universities (Education in Malaysia, 2013). Thus, the emphasis for co-curricular activities should be encouraged as parents and stakeholders see the benefits of co-curricular activities for the students. Many agreed that students should not be evaluated based on academic achievement alone but also on activities which would help build well-rounded individuals (Chi et al, 2011).

In line with that, in 2009 the Higher Education Ministry confirmed and clarified that co-curricular activities would make up 10% of entry requirement to public universities. It indicates that co-curricular activities play an important part in a student's development.

With the acceptance of co-curricular activities as part of the academic program, the education stakeholders revealed that they intended to improve the structure and the content of the co-curricular in the following areas: co-curricular programs and learning system, students' involvement and their respective interest. The students' interests, their choice of activities within their environment were some of the conditions which should be given

emphasis if higher education authorities wanted to improve the co-curricular activities (Yasmin Haji Othman, 2009).

The results also showed that the teachers' attitudes influenced the students' performance in the co-curricular programs. The more committed of the teachers would inspire the students' active participation in the co-curricular activities. During the study, it was found that these students conducted interesting and creative activities or projects as part of informal learning during co-curricular activities. These activities supported students' learning in the future. The special activities were found to be aligned with the aims of the co-curricular program and it was motivated by teachers who have shown positive attitudes towards the students' involvement in the co-curricular activities. These co-curricular activities had, in more ways than one, increased the sense of responsibility of the students (Edward & Nofri, 2005). The co-curricular activities also have positive implications on the improvement of co-curricular activities in institutions of higher education through active involvement of the different stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the co-curricular programs as found by Tung (2008) in her study.

In short, the study shows evidence that the teachers' attitudes is positive towards co-curricular activities in schools. Furthermore, it also reveal that teachers' attitudes significantly influence the students' performance in co-curricular activities at schools. Hence, the planning, implementation and evaluation of the co-curricular programs should be a priority in the education curriculum.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is apparent that teachers' attitudes towards co-curricular activities are positive in general. They show high level of readiness to carry out tasks in co-curricular activities. They demonstrated an adequate level of skills and knowledge in managing the co-curricular activities. Most importantly, the high level of commitment they reflect had significant contribution towards the students' performance in co-curricular programs. The findings add to the growing body of research on co-curricular programs' implementation and development specifically around the theme of its relation towards developing a more holistic individual. Future research is needed to investigate how co-curricular programs secure a better development for an individual especially at the schools level. The ways the students perform is influenced by the teachers' attitudes towards the co-curricular activities. This is found to be an important aspect of the existing co-curricular program development. Thus, it can be concluded that students' co-curricular programs should be emphasized in the planning, implementing and evaluation of curriculum development.

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