

Promoting Moral Education Among Senior High Students Through Co-Curricular Activities: Are There Challenges In Senior High Schools In Sunyani Municipality?

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Abstract: *The main purpose of this study was to find out the views of students on the challenges of promoting Moral Education through co-curricular activities in Senior High Schools in Sunyani Municipality. Methodologically, the study employed Case study as the main research design. A simple random sampling technique was employed to select a sample size of 316 students out of 1800. The data of the study was collected through the use of a questionnaire and observation guide. The research instruments were administered personally by the researcher. After the collection and coding of quantitative data, an analysis was done using the Statistical Package for Service Solutions (SPSS version 27.0). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages as well as mean, and standard deviation were used to analyse the data. Narrative reporting was conducted for the observation qualitative data. The results found that notwithstanding the numerous lessons students obtained from taking part in the activities of social clubs, the clubs lacked vibrancy which is due to numerous challenges. The challenges mar the smooth running of the clubs' activities. It was recommended that special levies should be charged to the students to fund co-curricular activities. It was also recommended that corporate bodies and Non-governmental organisations should come in to sponsor co-curricular activities in Senior High Schools within the Municipality.*

Keywords: *moral, education, co-curricular, activities.*

I. Introduction

The implementation stage of the curriculum may encounter some challenges. When stakeholders fail to deal appropriately with the challenges, the curriculum will not be able to achieve the aims for which it was designed. Better still; challenges can impede the impact of curriculum on its products. The implementation of co-curricular activities in Senior High School also has its fair share of challenges.

Research on the issues of co-curricular activities was undertaken by Goswami and Stillman (1987). Although physical activity provision is vitally pertinent for teenagers, only 60% of resources were discovered in the sample schools, according to the study. The survey also found that many schools lack a school field where co-curricular activities can be conducted. It was also discovered that many schools had yet to implement several crucial co-curricular programmes.

Even though there seems to be widespread information for co-curricular activities, there are some critics who question their position in schools. Critics believe the sheer number of co-curricular activities and the demands they place on public schooling has expanded to unmanageable levels (Camp, 1990, p. 272). Opponents contend that the vast number of extracurricular activities available and the pressures they place on public education have grown to untenable proportions (Camp, 1990, p. 272). Skeptics of co-curricular activities argue that schools should devote more time and resources to academia. They argue that extracurricular activities are only a diversion from the scholastic function of schooling (Weber, 2008). The implementation of co-curricular activities requires very committed staff to supervise students' participation to avoid accidents and even turning it into a mere form of entertainment instead of creating a learning experience. Poor management of co-curricular activities can yield to the students' cultivation of immorality. When teachers and other stakeholders refuse to manage them well, the aims for which they were instituted is likely not going to be achieved. Most detractors, according to Black (2002) and VanDuyne (2004), argue that time spent engaging in co-curricular activities takes time away from official academic endeavours. Other people explicitly believe that "identification with an extracurricular activity may displace identification with the school or that, at some point; too many extracurricular activities may leave too little time to pursue academic activities such as homework" (Branch, 2003, p. 22). In Senior High Schools, the syllabus is considered to be over-loaded as many of the schools organise extra classes for the students. At the end of the period of study, certificates are awarded based on

students' academic performance and not proficiency in any co-curricular activity. After all, students are admitted into tertiary institutions based on their academic qualifications.

II. Research Question

1. What are the views of students as to the student, school and curriculum related challenges of promoting Moral Education through co-curricular activities in SHS in Sunyani Municipality?

III. Literature Review

3.1 Challenges of Using Co-curricular Activities to Promote Moral Education

Holland and Andre (1987) investigated the availability of co-curricular activities and the amount of involvement. They discovered that the funding issues in the schools were critical and that there was a shortage of qualified teachers. Co-curricular activities were yet to be given a proper place in the educational calendar. Most schools preserve a timeframe for co-curricular activities solely to fulfil out the administrative officials' directives. Nonetheless, the schools organize annual sports, cultural events, and competitions, in which students participate enthusiastically. However, if they are provided with improved infrastructure, they will do better. This study, clearly informs that the integration of co-curricular activities in schools is most likely to face challenges. The current study will look at the situation in the Ghanaian Senior High School juxtaposing it with the existing findings in other parts of the world.

In researching co-curricular activities in girls' high schools and their effects on learners' lives, VanDuyne (2004) discovered that there were insufficiently prepared instructors and specialists to organize a substantial number of these events in these high schools. Many of the schools in the study area lacked the necessary tools for various co-curricular activities. This appears to be a widespread issue in all schools. The key findings were a lack of student engagement, insufficient personnel, demotivation on the part of teachers, students' disinterest, and a lack of a decent playground. With respect to these two studies, the researchers concentrated on challenges. This informed one of my research questions as the situation might be similar in Ghana.

Stakeholders need to finance education. Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) stated that "one of the progressive things about African Education is the general belief that the amounts of money invested in education will yield great dividends in the future" (p. 124). Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) believed that people need not worry about the amounts of money invested in education. In his view, this would surely yield much fruit in the future when the educated would contribute to nation-building, industrial development, scientific and technological improvement by using the skills and expertise they would have acquired during the process of being educated. Thus, the output of the products of basic and secondary schools, as well as University training, leads to the improvement in a people's living standards; good homes, good feeding and sound health maintenance and above all sound moral judgement. This is well said but still, the struggles persist with respect to financing education in Ghana. One of the key challenges of implementing co-curricular activities is sourcing for adequate funding for co-curricular activities in schools. Antwi (1992) wrote that the major problem facing schools in Ghana as elsewhere in Africa has been without exception, the consequence of inadequate financial support. Adequate funding is required to provide accommodation for rapidly increasing enrolment, ensure an adequate supply of qualified teachers, develop library holdings sufficient to support students' learning, develop infrastructure and provide financial assistance in the form of scholarships and loans to well-qualified students whose limited personal resources make it impossible for them to undertake their studies among others.

Many schools and school districts have looked to other income streams to cover some of the expenses associated with co-curricular programs. One alternative has been to charge students who engage in these activities usage fees (Pepe & Alice, 1984). Students are either charged a flat fee or billed per activity of involvement. The debt strain of engagement is shifted back to the participants and their parents as a result of these charges. This implies that involvement in co-curricular activities is contingent on the number of registration fees that students must pay. Those who do not have enough money to pay for it have no choice than staying away from it. Fundraising related to concerned parents and support clubs, according to Rozelle (2006), is another alternate stream of school funding to support co-curricular activities. So, in the end, the costs go back to the parents. Accordingly, parents who see co-curricular activities as important will finance them adequately while those who see them as useless activities will refuse to fund them. It is worth mentioning that, while the number of learners involved in co-curricular activities is well documented, the expense of offering school activities is still a factor in the discussion. Local and state levies, and other income streams such as user charges and philanthropic efforts by concerned parents and support clubs, can be utilized to finance co-curricular activities (Weber, 2008).

Sultana (2012) claims that the curriculum in various schools has grown overburdened for both instructors and learners. Courses are expected to be completed within the time frame set by curriculum experts.

Due to their overburdening, both students and teachers do not have enough time to devote to co-curricular activities at school. For the smooth implementation of today's broad-based and all-encompassing co-curricular activities, one period is sufficient. Even though several commissions, curriculum experts, and lawmakers may discuss its relevance, its practical implementation remains lacking from the curriculum in this situation. Many students fail to participate in these annual sports, cultural functions and some other competitions organised by the school due to lack of satisfaction. Co-curricular activities should be made entertaining enough to whip up the interest of the participants. Failure to sustain their interest could serve as a barrier or better still make the activities threatening for the students.

Furthermore, Nesan (2009) cites the following counter-arguments to co-curricular activities in schools: The official syllabus is far more significant than the co-curriculum, and it must continually be accorded higher priority in schools. Co-curricular activities are less important than acquiring recognized certifications. When it comes to picking students, institutions of higher learning and companies focus primarily on the curriculum than the co-curriculum. Societies do not demand multi-skilled experts, but rather professionals in specific domains. As a result, the main focus for preparing for meaningful employment should be on expertise for that goal. This means that the student will come out as a narrow-minded person. It all depends on the kind of student that the school system wants to produce. If it is that the school wants its products to be versatile in this fast-changing world, then this argument will not hold. There is also the argument that making co-curricular activities mandatory will deprive them of their appeal and merits. If students are compelled to participate, they will be less enthused and, as a result, their reluctance may jeopardize the activity. These objections are unpersuasive, and the evidence in support of co-curricular activities counter them fairly well (Marais, 2011).

IV. Methodology

The study was conducted using case study research design to address the research question provided for it. Because it may expose the many aspects that influence any potential transfer value from one context to another, the case study approach was chosen to explore the activity. It is also well-suited to the empirical study of a current event in a real-world setting where there is no clear distinction between the event and the setting in which it is situated (Yin, 1989). Goldby (1994) argues that a case study is not a separate research method because it incorporates different approaches that allow the phenomenon and setting to be crisscrossed for perspicuity to achieve a synoptic view. Goldby thinks that 'case study is appropriate where it is not yet clear what are the right questions to ask' (Goldby, 1994, p. 12), making it necessary to combine predetermined with emerging themes in the way the particular case is researched. The case study approach's merits are the scope and detail that may be achieved in intricate real-world circumstances, as well as the ability to examine natural settings and the potential for detailed and in-depth research that it gives (Avison, 1993).

The use of this research design is justifiable in so many ways. A few of them have been postulated as follows. Case studies, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), can probe issues in ways that quantitative simulation cannot do. Even though it is not wrong to employ statistical tools in analysing data in case studies, data that do not lend themselves to statistical analysis are appropriately dealt with with qualitative methods of analysis. With this, Robson (2002) comments that case studies "opt for analytic, rather than statistical generalisation, that is, they develop a theory which can help researchers to understand other similar cases, phenomena or situations" (p.183). The place of co-curricular activities in promoting Moral Education in the Sunyani Municipality is being assessed by the current study to warrant a wider survey in other parts of Ghana. A simple random sampling technique was utilized to choose a sample size of 316 students from a total population of 1800 students. The data of the study was collected through the use of a questionnaire and observation guide. The research instruments were administered personally by the researcher. After the collection and coding of quantitative data, an analysis was done using a software package known as the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 27.0). Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages as well as mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data. Narrative reporting was conducted for the Data from the observation sessions.

V. Results and Discussion

Table 1-Background Characteristics of Sampled Students

Variable	Subscale	No.	%
Gender	Males	214	67.7
	Females	102	32.3
School	Day	88	27.8
	Boarding	143	45.3
	Day and boarding	85	26.9
Age of students	11-15 years	2	0.6

16 to 20 years	303	95.9
21 years and above	11	3.5

Source: Field Data (2021)

Students form an integral part of the education enterprise especially when it comes to the issue of curriculum implementation. They are the target group and all efforts are directed at them to effect the necessary changes in their lives. In this case, one cannot research co-curricular activities without considering the student who the activities are designed and implemented. This section of the study deals with the responses of the Senior High School students who participated in the study. A few numbers of students filled their questionnaires halfway and so it was impossible to use such data.

From Table 1, out of the 316 students who participated in the study, 67.7% were males while 32.3% were females. The male dominance in education continues to reflect in Senior High School. According to Mehmood, Hussain, Khalid and Azam (2012), co-curricular activities have a significant impact on secondary school students' character development. Male secondary school students showed a greater link between co-curricular activities and gaining adaptability, self-confidence, integrity, friendliness, empathetic disposition, moral duty, and sense of responsibility than female secondary school students. Granted that this is true in the Ghanaian situation, then, co-curricular activities are likely to promote Moral Education in boys' schools than in girls' schools.

Boarding schools had ample time to implement many co-curricular activities than day schools. This is because students are confined in the school. Day schools try to push their co-curricular activities into after school hours but this meets the displeasure of parents. Here, 27.8% was in the day school, 45.3% in the boarding and 26.9% were in both day and boarding school. The majority of the respondents were in the boarding school since only 27.8% were in the day school. This is very heart-warming since most of the students had the opportunity to engage in a plethora of co-curricular activities and as such, were in a better position to tell how the activities promoted Moral Education among them. It was also found out that the majority of the respondents (95.5%) fell within the age range of 16 to 20 years. People who fell between this age range, that is, the adolescent age, are very vulnerable in terms of moral issues. Granted that the implementation of co-curricular activities was a very effective way of promoting Moral Education, then the Senior high school could be the best place that stakeholders should ensure successful co-curricular activities implementation.

5.1 Students' Views on the Challenges Associated with Promotion of Moral Education Through the Implementation of Co-curricular Activities

Students are likely to encounter some challenges as they involve themselves in the implementation process. Students are the main beneficiaries of co-curricular activities in schools and so are in the right position to tell the challenges associated with it. The level of effectiveness of a particular co-curricular activity is largely dependent upon how the challenges that threaten its effectiveness are curtailed. The challenges serve as a barrier to the effective implementation of the curriculum. The implementations of co-curricular activities in Senior High School also have their fair share of challenges. Skeptics of co-curricular activities argue that schools should devote more time and resources to academia due to the challenges co-curricular activities pose to the school system. Tables 2 to 4 centred on the challenges as perceived by the learners.

Table 2-School Related Challenges

Challenges	Mean	Std. Dev
The attitude among the headmasters and teachers in my school are in favour of academic activities only, making other activities a waste of effort	2.62	.58
The cost associated with providing school activities remains a challenge	2.57	.68
Funding for co-curricular activities are inadequate	2.56	.66
The fees charged for co-curricular activities place the financial responsibilities of participation back on the participants and their families	2.55	.68
Co-curricular activities in this school are boring	2.41	.63
Misuse and stealing of co-curricular funds is a challenge in my school	2.11	.65
Co-curricular activities are waste of instructional time	2.05	.50

Source: Field Data (2021)

Scale: 1= Uncertain 2=Disagree 3=Agree
Mean of means=2.41 Average Standard Deviation=0.63

It is obvious from Table 2 that the main challenges associated with the integration of co-curricular activities in the Senior High Schools were financial problems (Weber, 2008), the attitude of headmasters and teachers in the school being in favour of academic activities only making other activities waste of effort (Saleem, 2010). According to the students, fees charged for co-curricular activities puts the financial burden of involvement back on the participants and their parents. Means for these items ranged from 2.55 to 2.62 indicating that most of the respondents agreed that these were the challenges confronting co-curricular implementation in the schools.

According to the students' co-curricular activities were not boring; there was no misuse and stealing of co-curricular funds and the activities were not considered a waste of time. This is very positive regarding the successful implementation of co-curricular activities.

Some of the challenges concerned the students. Table 3 deals with the student-related challenges associated with the implementation of co-curricular activities to promote moral Education of Senior High School students.

Table 3-Learner Related Challenges

Learner Related Challenges	Mean	Std. Deviation
We lack teacher supervisors who serve as role models and guide	2.49	.60
Obtaining recognised qualifications is more essential than co-curricular activities	2.44	.69
Learners who are forced to take part, are less enthusiastic and therefore spoil the activity with their recalcitrance	2.43	.72
My interest in co-curricular activities is very minimal	2.42	.63
Students refuse to take advantage of co-curricular in the school	2.39	.69
Co-curricular pursuits merely serve as a distraction to academic work	2.23	.59

Source: Field Data (2021)

Scale: 1= Uncertain 2=Disagree 3=Agree
Mean of means=2.40 Average Standard Deviation=0.65

It is clear from Table 3 that none of the student-related challenges was applicable in the selected Senior High Schools, according to the students. The mean of means of 2.40 was obtained for all six items. Supervisors who served as role models and guides were available in the schools, co-curricular activities were seen as an equally important facet of the educational system and their interest in the activities was not minimal. Co-curricular pursuits did not serve as a distraction to academic work, as posited by Weber (2008). Students took full advantage of co-curricular activities in the various schools.

The nature of the curriculum can sometimes pose a challenge to its successful implementation. Table 4 deals with the curriculum related challenges associated with the implementation of co-curricular activities.

Table 4-Curriculum Related Challenges

Curriculum Related Challenges	Mean	Std. Dev.
Too many co-curricular activities may leave too little time to pursue academic activities.	2.70	.56
Inadequate co-curricular infrastructural facilities in the school	2.70	.55
The academic curriculum is much more important and must continue to be given more status in schools than the co-curriculum	2.53	.65
The present curriculum has become an overburden for me preventing me from completing my subjects	2.30	.58
Co-curricular activities are yet to get slots in the school's timetable	2.21	.72
The sheer number of co-curricular activities and the demands they place on public schooling has expanded to unmanageable levels	2.07	.70

Source: Field Data (2021)

Scale: 1= Uncertain 2=Disagree 3=Agree
Mean of means=2.42 Average Standard Deviation=0.63

So many extracurricular activities may result in insufficient time for academic pursuits (Branch, 2003). In addition, the selected schools lacked suitable co-curricular infrastructure. It's no surprise that the lack of infrastructure is a problem for most Senior High Schools in the research area. The academic curriculum is far more vital than co-curriculum, and it must be accorded higher priority in schools (Nesan, 2009). Mean scores for these items ranged from 2.53 to 2.70. The means fall into the scale of 3 (agree).

The current curriculum of the selected Senior High Schools was not an over-burden for the students preventing them from completing the syllabus. Co-curricular activities already had slots in the school's timetable. Even though there was an increasing number of co-curricular activities in the schools, they are still manageable.

Students were asked to add to the challenges they face during the implementation of co-curricular activities. They stated many challenges. Among them were the following: the students hinted that they were 'unable to mobilize funds to support their programmes. 'My problem is paying money or buying tickets to watch co-curricular activities; We lack support and funds from the administration of the school and lack of encouragement. Here, both students and teachers who participated in the study thought alike, and so financial problems could be said to be the greatest challenge that co-curricular implementation faced in the various schools. Holland and Andre (1987) found out that the financial burden of the schools was very critical and there were inadequate qualified teachers in the schools he studied in India. The current findings confirm the findings of Holland and Andre (1987) about the financial crisis in the schools they studied.

While some of the students wanted more of the co-curricular activities to be introduced and implemented others thought the already existing ones were not effectively organised and supported. It was posited by the students that 'there are not enough co-curricular activities in my school and there is no support in some of the co-curricular activities because co-curricular activities are not recognised in my school, they are normally scheduled at weekends. In fact, 'it wastes too much time and teachers also do not complete their topics. Still, on timing and the kind of support they get for the implementation of co-curricular activities, a student reported that 'they spend a long time in playing football and other games and providing health facilities for people who get wounded and students do not engage wholeheartedly in co-curricular activities. A student can get hurt by engaging in co-curricular activities and this can affect their academics which is seen as the main reason why they were admitted into the school. When this happens, there is no insurance cover for them and the responsibility is pushed back to the parent. It is no wonder that the level of participation in sporting competitions was low among the students.

Here too, 'students are not motivated to take part in co-curricular activities but to focus on their academic work. This leads to poor participation. Academic work is poor during those kinds of co-curricular activities. This was the response of one of the students. Students were not motivated adequately to partake in co-curricular activities. After all, they were going to receive certificates in their various fields of studies and not in co-curricular activities. There were cases where students were given certificates to show that they were members of clubs, especially for the cadet corps. However, this did not in any way follow that students would be recruited into the various security forces based on such a certificate. Normally it is the Senior High School certificates that are considered both for employment and admission into the tertiary institutions.

The compulsory nature of some of the co-curricular activities was also a challenge. Some students may not be enthusiastic about some of the co-curricular activities but were forced to take part. One respondent posited that 'students who have no interest in most of the co-curricular activities are forced to take part. This creates tension among participating students. When students participate in an activity out of compulsion, likely, the programme will not impact their lives and so they will not benefit in any way. It is a fact that when it is made compulsory, the level of participation will increase but the lessons that students will learn from it might be minimal. The ones that were not compulsory too received low patronage and a student bemoaned that 'whiles co-curricular activities are going on others will be in the classroom learning. Students who participate in co-curricular activities and fail in academic activities are repeated in class which discourages others to participate'. If co-curricular activities were given a scientific place on the school timetable that is time allocated for co-curricular activities where all students are to take part, then all students will have the opportunity to participate. This is the case that co-curricular activities in schools are not obligatory, and students do not obtain any grades for them as in academic circles (Holloway & Valentine, 2000).

It is very unfortunate that instead of school authorities encouraging and supporting the students, this is the case that they 'face interruptions from school authorities during co-curricular activities. Probably the students saw the directions and supervision that the authorities gave to the students as interruptions. The programmes organised were mostly internal. Authorities were to make sure they did not conflict with the schools' scheduled activities. 'It is sometimes very difficult to get the approval of the administration to support my club when organising a contest. No attention is given to it at all. The headmistress makes it seem that it is all about academics' (a student complained).

Does a co-curricular activity affect academic performance? It was hinted that ‘academic activities become less effective when we engage in co-curricular activities. It does not improve our academic performance and examination results. It affects our final examination results’. These were the issues raised by some students.

Some of the students seized the little freedom they had during co-curricular activities to engage in immoral behaviours. This was done especially when they moved outside the school. It was hinted that some of the students indulged in drinking, smoking and other immoral activities. This was even applicable to the ones organised on campus. A student hinted that ‘seniors take advantage of the time and bully juniors. Some students take the opportunity and not come to school when we have games’ (a day student intimated)

5.2 Observation Report on Challenges Associated with Co-curriculum

It was observed that most of the clubs on campus lack the necessary equipment. For example, projectors, public addressing systems and reading materials were lacking. Even a meeting place for some of the social clubs was a problem. It was observed in one of the day Senior High Schools that students and their patrons were having a talk under a tree. They were all standing. How effective will this study be?

Among the problems identified in the various social clubs were financial difficulties. The groups’ programmes were funded by the dues collected from members which were always very negligible. Some of the group members refused to pay their dues and any attempt to force them to pay always led to low patronage. If even all the members paid the dues in full, they could not have funded their programmes. One other important point here is that the amount they paid as dues was always minimal. Generally, some of the students saw it as an unprofitable venture and so were not willing to spend their money on it.

As indicated earlier, in day schools, programmes were affected by inadequate time. Students did not get enough time to fellowship, as they all rush to leave for the house after classes. What made it so unmanageable was the organisation of extra classes that prolonged the time students spent in the school. In one of the meetings I observed, officers of the National Commission for Civic Education had to rush the students through a computer programme that helped students to study the constitution. The meeting started five minutes after the break. So, it was only left with 25 minutes to have the discussions with the students. This was the case that students needed to use some of the time to find something to eat.

Another problem observed in the schools was inadequate supervision from patrons and teachers. Some of the clubs met without the presence of neither teachers nor their patrons. They were only guided by their club executive members. It is fact that co-curricular activities allow students to assume responsible positions of leadership. However, the teacher-supervisor is needed to serve as a mentor or guide (Stevens, 1999).

VI. Conclusion and Recommendation

It can be concluded from the study that despite the numerous lessons students obtain from taking part in the activities of these clubs, the clubs lacked vibrancy which is due to numerous challenges. This implies that, even though students were benefiting from engaging in co-curricular activities, these challenges mar the smooth running of the clubs’ activities. However, co-curricular activities still are very important in the promotion of Moral Education despite the setbacks. It is recommended that special levies should be charged to the students to fund co-curricular activities. Corporate bodies and Non-governmental Organisations should come in to sponsor co-curricular activities in Senior High Schools within the Municipality.

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