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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CURRICULUM ENRICHMENT FOR 21ST CENTURY SKILLS: A CASE FOR ARTS BASED EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Discussions on curriculum in the 21st Century have continued to indicate that the curriculum comprises three programmes: programme of studies (involving academic subjects and disciplines), programme of activities (involving experiential and incidental learning experiences) and programme of guidance (involving professional helping and advising offered to learners). It is expected that through well-defined academic, guidance, and co-curricular activities programmes, the schools will provide students with a variety of experiences which will allow them to make appropriate decisions in their curricular and extracurricular activities as well as in their personal relationships. The programmes will be responsive to the developmental needs of the students and they will be designed to help students understand themselves as unique individuals and to develop to their fullest potential through an enriching curriculum. These three programmes imply that an effective curriculum is founded in sensory-rich experience, uses a concept to integrate content, knowledge, and skills from multiple subject areas, offers students several activity choices, and extends relevant learning beyond the classroom into real-life situations. One of the routes to enriching curriculum is to involve students in real-life creative problem-solving (Piirto, 2011) scenarios through extracurricular activities. This paper

ABSTRACT

Enhancing an enriched curriculum for 21st century public education system that prepares students to compete favorably in the global skills race is an issue that has attracted attention in recent times. Students deserve not only exposure to the curriculum of academic learning but also extracurricular experiences that develop them as whole persons with a repertoire of 21st century skills. This paper makes a case for arts based extra-curricular activities. The paper discusses how music, dance, drama and visual arts have all been long-standing and effective extra-curricular activities in many schools across the globe. The potentials of these arts based activities on the development of 21st century skills are also explored. The paper concludes by noting that arts based extracurricular activities also encompass all of the fine and performing arts as well the use of ICT. As such, they can be used to encourage students learn to trust one another, take risks, become part of a larger community, learn to interact more effectively with their peers, form a deeper and more sophisticated sense of creativity.

seeks to contribute to current discussion on extracurricular activities by offering perspective on ways through which Arts based activities might be used to provide extracurricular learning experiences for students. Following some general descriptions of the 21st Century skills and concept of extracurricular activities, the paper describes some rationales for such activities. It also describes some arts based extracurricular activities that may be undertaken along with their benefits. Finally, some discussion is also devoted to the potential benefits of engaging in extracurricular activities for students in Nigeria.

21st Century Skills

The 21st century has witnessed greater importance being given to extra-curricular activities on the basis that such activities are instrumental for enhancing the creativity, productivity and well-being of students. Since for many people, life in the 21st Century has become international, multicultural and interconnected, new skills are needed to succeed in education and in the workplace. There is no single widely-accepted definition of '21st Century skills'. According to Silva (2009), there are hundreds of descriptors of the skills set, including life skills, workforce skills, interpersonal skills, applied skills, and non-cognitive skills. An emphasis on what students can do with

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knowledge, rather than what units of knowledge they have, is the essence of 21st-century skills. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2008, p.13) highlighted the skills as:

Learning and Innovation Skills

1. Creativity and innovation skills
2. Critical thinking and problem solving skills
3. Communication and collaboration skills

Information, Media and Technology Skills

1. Information literacy
2. Media literacy
3. ICT (information and communications technology) literacy

Life and Career Skills

- Flexibility and adaptability
- Initiative and self-direction
- Social and cross-cultural skills
- Productivity and accountability
- Leadership and responsibility

There are some perspectives that 21st Century skills can be nurtured successfully outside of lessons using extracurricular activities (Henry & Costantino, 2015; Piirto, 2011; Suto, 2013). Suto noted that this longstanding position has been described thus:

Many students seek, and seem to thrive on, activities outside of the traditional classroom setting. Such activities are variously termed the co-curriculum or the extra-curriculum, apparently depending on whether they are specific extensions of academic coursework, or are peripheral to it. Thus, students may extend and enrich previously learned academic skills through competitions (e.g. interscholastic debates) and by applying them to the real world simulations (e.g. writing skills in school publications). In the co/extracurricular setting they may also develop and practice artistic, musical, and psychomotor talents; leadership skills, and future career and occupational skills. Interpersonal and social strategies – proficiencies not considered basic elements of the academic curriculum – may especially be constructed through participation in the extra curriculum. (Haensly, Lupkowski & Edlind, 1985, p. 110-111) Active involvement in Arts based extracurricular activities at the institutional level is a vital component of any quality learning experiences for knowledge and skills for students. Hence such activities have become integral parts of the educational system and the day-to-day practice of schools in many countries around the world.

Extra Curricular Activities: Concept and Rationales

Extra-curricular activities are those freely chosen pleasurable activities and programmes that young people engage in outside school work, eating and sleeping. Bohnert, Fredricks and Randall (2010) defined extra-curricular activities as activities designed for school age people to participate in learning

activities outside of normal curriculum time. Henry and Costantino (2015) and Metsäpelto and Pulkkinen (2012) similarly presented extracurricular activities as outside activities that are used to enrich the curriculum, provide opportunities for participants to develop specific skills or knowledge, and take place outside of school hours. The activities are carried out during breaks, after school, at weekends or on school holidays.

Extracurricular activities are experiential, hands-on, action oriented and based on experience. Action can be exposed in three parts: the act of doing, the experience received in the doing process and the learning accumulated from the experience (Adachi-Mejia, Chambers, Zhigang, & Sargent, 2014; Bungay & Vella-Burrows, 2013). They engage students in action and whether this action encourages students to acquire tacit knowledge about enterprising behavior.

Extracurricular activities are often used to consolidate school learning among students. They include activities such as sport, media related activities (including watching television, listening to music, play computer games, reading), performance activities (such as music, dance and drama) and community service activities (such as volunteer work and church groups), have been used. These activities are organized by schools, youth organizations, and after-school programs. These activities can be shared or solitary, active or passive activities, or relaxed or constructive activities. A few examples of activities outside the school day may include pro-social activities such as dances, team sports, and performing arts, while in-school involvement activities may include intramurals, and academic clubs. Different levels of activity involvement and participation may positively impact future success for those who participate. Research also indicated that both the type of extracurricular programs and level of participation may impact the individuals' development (Eccles, 2003).

The rationale for extra-curricular activities according to Manitoba Education and Youth (2003), is that in every culture, there are hours in the day when young people are not formally required to be in class or engaged in household or paid work. They choose to be involved in various activities, and there are public and private programmes, organizations and individuals who support their participation. These hours, these activities and often even these programmes are considered discretionary. They are viewed as optional—nice but not necessary, or even particularly important. These are the hours, the activities and the programmes whose absence or disappearance would not be noticed by policy makers but would be very much felt by young people. Extra-curricular activities is a key context for education and learning, for health care and the decisions that affect young people's creativity, for full participation, and for the use of ICT. These out of class activities affect all domains of life such as cognitive (intellectual), emotional, social, moral, cultural and aesthetic (Groman, 2015). Competitiveness, excellence, quality achievements, creativeness and enthusiasm are few of the ethics of extra-curricular activities that also strengthen the meaning of co curricular activities in school. The activities are also inextricably connected with young people's employment opportunities and formal schooling (Metsäpelto &

Pulkkinen, 2012). Students gain the most benefit from their high school education by enriching themselves, not just academically, but through participation in other activities that allow for the development of individual skills and talents. Participation in extracurricular activities can also help contribute to the development of self-confidence while allowing students to interact with new people and make friends with similar interests. There is a growing interest in the developmental consequences of extracurricular participation, spurred in part by (a) high levels of alienation and boredom reported by youths in school, (b) developmental increases in underachievement and school disengagement, and (c) evidence of increases in the amount of time youths spend unsupervised by adults (Manitoba Education and Youth, 2003; Fredericks & Eccles, 2006). Almost every school in the world offers some type of extracurricular activity, such as music, academic clubs, and sports. These activities offer opportunities for students to learn the values of teamwork, individual and group responsibility, physical strength and endurance, competition, diversity, and a sense of culture and community. Extracurricular activities provide a channel for reinforcing the lessons learned in the classroom, offering students the opportunity to apply academic skills in a real-world context, and are thus considered part of a well-rounded education. Research suggests that participation in extracurricular activities may increase students' sense of engagement or attachment to their school, and thereby decrease the likelihood of school failure and dropping out (Arriagada, 2015; Finn, 1993; Suto, 2013). If, indeed, participation in extracurricular activities can lead to success in school, then the availability of these activities to students of all backgrounds becomes an important.

Some researchers have divided extracurricular activities into informal and formal activities (Tazhbayeva, Meterbayeva, Issayeva & Arymbayeva, 2014). The formal activities include activities which are relatively structured, such as participating in athletics or learning to play a musical instrument. Informal activities, on the other hand, also known as leisure activities, include less structured activities, such as watching television. Both formal and informal activities can be Arts based.

Arts Based Extra Curricular Activities

Recent years have seen much discussion about the role and value of the arts—music, visual arts, drama, and dance—in and out of the school day (Stiegelbauer, 2013). There are many forms of arts-integrated activities. Arts based extracurricular activities include the fine and performing arts – painting, sculpting, textile designs, writing poetry, playing an instrument, singing, dancing, acting, creating mixed media productions, and film-making. UNESCO (2010) outlined the dimensions of arts based activities to include:

1. Study of artistic works.
2. Direct contact with artistic works (such as concerts, exhibitions, books, and films)
3. Engaging in arts practices.

Each of these arts activities engages the learner wholly – intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. Some examples are project- or problem-based, or thematic projects

that require collaboration. For instance, in designing and publishing a brochure that advertises travel to a selected planet, students have to learn about the planets (science), travel advertising (economics, technology), persuasive writing (language arts), and combine all of those into an aesthetically pleasing print product that "sells" the planet of their choice. Some Arts Based extra-curricular activities are:

Music and Dance

Music and dance are profoundly interesting extracurricular activities that are common among youths. Music is sounds and silences created through body, voice, and acoustic and electronic instruments. Dance is expressive movement, using body, space, time, and energy. While music produces sounds, people respond to the sounds using dance. Music activities include listening to music, composing and singing songs, playing musical instruments and choir performances. Dance activities include folk, square, or ballet dancing that focus on rhythmic movement pattern.

Music can contribute to the acquisition of the 21st century skills because it impacts on brain functions related to spatial reasoning and spatial-temporal reasoning, or the relations of ideas and objects in space in time. The importance of music is seen from infancy when songs are used to cheer babies or lull them to sleep. Shaw (2000) revolutionized the listening industry in the mid nineties with his Mozart Effect (p. 205). The Mozart Effect theory centered on music listening and stated that if infants listen to Mozart, they will have more profound development. It appears that singing songs or playing musicals is the finest start for infants as these helps to develop their powers of understanding. A study by Smithrim & Upitis (2005) found that of all of the out-of-school activities – such as watching television, playing sports, playing videogames, listening to music, and reading for pleasure – listening to music is the activity most favoured by boys and girls alike, with an overwhelming 83% of the Grade 4 students reporting that they like to listen to music in their spare time.

Dance compositions or the performances of dance as products can develop dance appreciation through providing opportunities for creating, performing and viewing dance. Creative dance sees an exploration by the pupil of body parts, body shapes and body actions. Cultural dances can also be used as extracurricular activity. Dance also contributes to the acquisition of the 21st century skills as it helps to keeps body and brain active (it also boosts memory); improves strength and flexibility; improves posture and balance; reduces stress levels; reduces depression; provides insight into other cultures through dance styles; increases self esteem and confidence; and serves as a creative outlet for expression of self in a safe environment. It contributes to self-confidence, persistence, social tolerance, and appreciation of individual and group social development; indirectly also to originality, fluency, initiative, responsibility, flexibility, and creative thinking.

Among the most long-standing and effective extra-curricular arts activities are participation in musical and dance theatre. Participation in a music ensemble demonstrates leadership, entrepreneurship, communication, collaboration, teamwork,

focus, and dedication - all of which are invaluable traits for students. There are many accounts of the value of taking part in school musicals and dance, based on verbatim comments of students and teachers, photographs, and student-generated artifacts. These accounts provide vivid descriptions of how students learn to trust one another, take risks, become part of a larger community, learn to interact more effectively with their peers, form a deeper and more sophisticated sense of creative identity, and gain ownership over the creative process and product (Ogden, 2008; Uptis, 2011). The ultimate goal of music education is not great student performances, but musical learning that will allow young people to actively participate in their musical cultures for their entire lives. Therefore, extracurricular activities in music should go beyond the performance of published music and also provide students with opportunities to experiment with musical improvisation and composition, thus building their creative skills.

Drama

Closely related to music and dance is drama. Drama is a process that frees the voice, body, imagination, and creative self to express thought, space, and time. It involves role plays, improvisation, mimes, narrations, Oral interpretation of a poem, movie acting and others. Drama process integrates mental and physical activity, engaging the whole child in improvisational and process-oriented experiences. These dramatic learning activities nurture and develop both individual and group skills and enhance the participants' abilities to communicate their ideas, images, and feelings in concert with others through dramatic action (Maden, 2010).

In acting drama, words become realities, the things talked about become experience, discussions become actions, while role playing characters becomes experiencing their problems and dilemmas with the intent of attaining a deeper understanding or attaining mastery. It involves adding action and evoking emotion. Drama also provides students with opportunities to engage with drama including play productions, drama camps, excursions, participation in drama competitions/festivals and community projects (Mages, 2008; Maley & Duff, 2010). In addition to physical modes of creation and expression, the drama participants draw heavily on language to create meaning. Written responses from participants writing as themselves, or in-role as characters can be used. Responses to the drama, as well as reflection or analysis through art work, such as drawing or sculpting can be facilitated. Through collaborating with others, skills of communication and negotiation are honed, and skills of listening, turn-taking and team work are practised. Via the social art form of theatre, the shared dramatic exploration of the group can foster a sense of shared ownership, creativity, critical thinking, flexibility, innovativeness, identification and community.

Drama experience in education enables the students to use their language skills through integrating with games, stories, role-plays and drama activities and verbal self-expression (Erbay, Tepeli & Ku cu, 2015). Studies have shown that drama has consistent effects on narrative understanding as well as on

identifying characters and the motivations, reading and writing skills and interpersonal skills, collaboration and conflict resolution (Dailey, 2009; Bungay & Vella-Burrows, 2009). These help to deepen the students' commitment to the drama; to add tension; to develop relationships between characters; to develop plot; to play out potential courses of action; to consider the actions and behaviours of characters and to respond to and reflect on the action as it occurs.

Visual Arts

Visual arts are visual and tactile experiences in two- and three-dimensional, as well as electronic and digital, forms. Visual arts are a social discipline which encourages communication and collaboration, whether this is constructive critique, chatter whilst creating and project work. For instance, Visual arts are a social discipline which encourages communication and collaboration, whether this is constructive critique, chatter whilst creating and project work. Fine art also known as visual art is a branch of art concerned with conception or imagination, and creation of art works employing different resources and techniques for the production of objects of aesthetic or beautification values (Alasa, 2013). Painting, sculpture, drawing and printmaking fall within this category. This category of art encompasses all activities involving the application of aesthetic designs to everyday functional objects. Applied art on the other hand, involves the conception, design, and production of art objects using variety of resources and techniques for beautification and utilitarian purposes. Ceramics, textile design, photography, architecture, computer art, industrial design, graphic design, fashion design, interior design, as well as all decorative arts are included in this category (Stiegelbauer, 2013). While fine art provides intellectual stimulation to the viewer, applied art creates utilitarian items such as a cup, bowls, water closet, a couch or sofa, a clock, a chair or table using aesthetic principles in their design. Visual art activities can also focus on creating personal aesthetic objects such as painting, wood work, or sculpting.

The importance of utilizing visual arts as an extracurricular activity is obvious. Students today are growing up in a highly visual world, surrounded by the images of television, videos, advertising displays, and other media. There are also other skills involved in visual arts: learning to use the tools of the visual arts, learning to observe carefully, learning to express one's ideas visually, and learning that discipline and perseverance are necessary for achievement. Drawing is a visual art based activity that provides opportunities to pupils to be creative, innovative, solve problems, explore, express and experiment with ideas and to investigate possibilities of a range of materials and processes, through drawing, paint and colour, print, clay, construction, fabric and fibre. They can engage in solving complex, multidisciplinary, open-ended problems. They can explore their own experiences, stories, drama, music, or activities through making and creating art, either working on their own or collaborating with others, using a range of media, materials and processes. Students are also afforded opportunities to experience the work of artists and to appreciate the visual world through looking and responding to art, both within the classroom and by visiting galleries and exhibitions.

Sculpture, painting and drawing activities are also important extracurricular activities that are art based. In some cases, initiatives are taken to organize visits to places of artistic and cultural interest for pupils or to establish partnerships with artists and some countries have specific organizations or networks to promote arts and cultural education. Sculpting sessions at museums; and youth string groups, where a member from the local symphony works with young string players, providing them opportunities to play in ensemble. Many of these programs such as dance instruction in hip-hop, ballet, jazz, and tap. thrive for decades and, in some cases, serve as the central form of art-making activity for youth.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Society now demands new visual literacies for its citizens to function effectively in social and employment contexts. Communication in culture and society is becoming increasingly visual. The role of Arts based extracurricular activities therefore is not simply to facilitate the development of skills in art and design but to provide a context for assisting pupils to construct meaning from this array of visual information. Many artists and designers are using ICT to develop and create their work. Therefore to have the broadest experience pupils must also have access to ICT in relation to their art and design work (Alana, 2010). The tools and techniques available for visual arts expression have expanded tremendously with the advent of new hardware and software. ICT provides unique opportunities to extend music, dance, drama and visual arts activities. Students can use ICT to engage in music, dance, drama and visual arts activities. By participating in ICT, students become capable of developing local and global community, transcending social and cultural boundaries, and honouring diversity.

Alana (2010) and Bryant (2010) listed some Internet based tools that can be used for arts based extracurricular activities to include: ArtRage, Comic Life, Crayola Digi Colour, Artist's Toolkit, Image Blender, and Smartboard. This will aid them in thinking critically and making judgments about the barrage of information that comes their way every day—on the Web, in the media, in homes, workplaces and everywhere else. A tool like Artists tool Kit can be used to scaffold the students in developing skills, then steps away and lets them creatively explore and construct their own approach to using the elements. The ICT tools are flexible, interesting, and inspirational. They also cater to a range of learning styles and modalities. Such tools will provide skills that can be used to create collaborative works, capture works, give ownership over works and distribute works. These are all a part of the art making process in the real life context, giving the extracurricular relevance and learning twenty-first century skills, instead of producing just works of art.

Numerous studies have demonstrated those students' explorations in music and other art forms can be enriched by the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) (Crawford, 2009; Savage, 2007; UNESCO, 2003). A study by Ward (2009) showed that music students were more inventive and motivated when they were given the opportunity to use ICT in their creative work. Electronic portfolios, such as

ePEARL, (Electronic Portfolio Encouraging Active Reflective Learning). By using ePEARL – whether to study music, dance, visual art, cooking, or science – students can personalize their portfolios; set general and task-specific goals; create new work; reflect on, edit, and share work; and respond to feedback from teachers, peers, and parents. The inexorableness of the fundamentals of Art in technology cannot be underrated. This is because Art as a tool for technological development has contributed to the development of the technology of many nations.

CONCLUSION

The importance of extracurricular activities for students, particularly as it relates to personal and community development, is examined in this paper. Students deserve not only exposure to the curriculum of academic learning but also extracurricular experiences that develop them as whole persons in the 21st century. They need extracurricular activities rich in the arts. Arts based activities – in many forms – support the development of the whole child, and prepare the child for a life filled with opportunities for learning and joy. By involving multiple modes of learning, Arts based extracurricular activities will help students in developing independent thinking and meaning-making skills.

It is imperative that students be given a wide range of opportunities for meaningful participation in extracurricular activities within the community, provided or facilitated by a multitude of organizations, institutions and programmes in all sectors. It is therefore important that government, teachers, parents and students themselves arrange and encourage students to participate in Arts based extracurricular activities capable of developing in the students 21st century skills. These would help in improving artistic perception, creative expression and aesthetic valuing; fostering historical and cultural understanding; releasing the imagination and awakening the senses as well as engaging the emotions and stimulating creative thinking, among the students.

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