

THE ROLE OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN PROMOTING NATIONAL IDENTITY AMONG SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: *The formation of national identity among young learners has become one of the central objectives of contemporary education systems. Alongside academic instruction, schools are expected to cultivate students' moral consciousness, civic responsibility, and respect for cultural heritage. This study investigates the pedagogical potential of extracurricular activities as an effective mechanism for strengthening national identity among secondary school students. Based on observations, surveys, and interviews conducted in general secondary schools of Uzbekistan, the research identifies cultural events, creative clubs, sports programs, and community service projects as key instruments in value-based education. The findings reveal that systematic participation in such activities positively influences students' patriotism, social engagement, and commitment to national traditions. The paper proposes practical recommendations for integrating extracurricular programs into the educational process.*

Keywords: *national identity, extracurricular activities, value education, secondary schools, patriotism, civic responsibility*

In the era of globalization and rapid socio-cultural transformation, preserving national identity and transmitting traditional values to younger generations have become urgent tasks of modern education. Schools function not only as institutions for knowledge acquisition but also as environments for character formation and socialization. Classroom instruction alone is insufficient to achieve these objectives; therefore, extracurricular activities serve as an important complementary component of the educational process. Education extends examinations; it goes beyond textbooks and encompasses the holistic development of learners through cognitive, social, and emotional growth. In this broader sense, extracurricular activities (ECAs)—such as sports, arts, clubs, debates, and community service—play a central role in shaping well-rounded individuals capable of managing both academic and life challenges. ECAs offer structured environments where students interact, collaborate, and develop essential life skills such as leadership, empathy, resilience, emotional development, providing young people with experiences that enhance self-awareness, communication, and interpersonal competence. Social and emotional learning (SEL) enables adolescents to understand and regulate their emotions, develop empathy, and form meaningful relationships—key attributes that influence their academic motivation, mental health, and overall well-being. Through ECAs, students practice

managing emotions in competitive or cooperative settings, resolving conflicts, and achieving collective goals—essential processes for emotional maturity. In Nigeria, particularly in rural areas such as Mangu Local Government Area (LGA) in Plateau State, ECAs hold additional significance. Socioeconomic challenges, resource limitations, and large class sizes often restrict the extent to which schools can provide rich extracurricular opportunities. Yet, these programs offer unique platforms for rural students to express creativity, build confidence, and strengthen community bonds. ECAs in such contexts serve as protective factors against negative behaviors, promoting inclusion, resilience, and a sense of belonging (Mahoney et al., 2020). Despite their importance, many secondary schools in Mangu LGA struggle to institutionalize ECAs effectively. Limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of trained personnel constrain the range and quality of activities offered. As a result, students' opportunities for social and teamwork—skills often underdeveloped within formal classroom settings. Globally, scholars have emphasized that participation in ECAs. What is the Role of Extracurricular Activities in the Development of Leadership Skills Among Students?

Engaging in extracurricular activities initiates a dramatic shift that shapes people into capable individuals who are adept at navigating the challenges of the real world. In addition to receiving academic honours, students leave with improved interpersonal skills, and a tenacious spirit that has been formed through hardship. Students obtain a sense of responsibility, self-assurance, and flexibility through extracurricular activities, which equips them to take on obstacles head-on and succeed in both their personal and professional endeavours. Interacting with classmates can help students see themselves through their eyes, which in turn can boost our self-confidence and leadership skills. That's why teachers should motivate students to join clubs and activities outside of class to help them grow as leaders and build their self-image. The study employed qualitative and quantitative research methods, including classroom observations, student questionnaires, and interviews with teachers and school administrators. The collected data were analyzed to determine the educational impact of various extracurricular programs on students' moral and civic development. The analysis indicates that participation in extracurricular activities significantly contributes to students' understanding of national history, traditions, and cultural heritage. Cultural events and traditional celebrations enhance students' emotional attachment to their homeland. Creative clubs such as music, art, drama, and literature foster appreciation of national arts and customs. Community service projects develop responsibility and social cooperation, while sports programs encourage teamwork, discipline, and respect for others. Students who regularly engage in these activities demonstrate higher levels of patriotism, self-confidence, and social responsibility compared to those who do not participate. Extracurricular activities represent an effective pedagogical tool for promoting national identity among school students. Their systematic

integration into the school curriculum supports the formation of morally mature, socially active, and culturally aware individuals. Educational institutions should expand and strengthen such programs to ensure the holistic development of future generations..

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