Students’ Voices on the Extracurriculum: 
A Curriculum Necessity

Elizabeth Elaine Wheeley
BMus (Hons), PGDipEd, MEd

School of Education and Professional Studies
Arts, Education and Law
Griffith University

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.

June 2011
Abstract

Schools have been given responsibilities to engage young people in order that they may be educated. Aside from providing core curriculum components, schools across the world undertake other activities with students, some of which are labelled extracurricular. Research has identified benefits for students who participate in these activities, often linked with school engagement and increased academic success as well as non-academic and social benefits, all of which imply that processes exist within these activities, embedded in their school contexts, that aid student development. Other research of school and community activities has addressed positive youth development, however, the processes and mechanisms by which students develop in the secondary school extracurriculum are not yet made clear. Guided by Blumer’s (1969) symbolic interactionism, this study aimed at exploring the meanings held by students about their learning in the extracurriculum. In order to gain insight into how students perceived their learning by participating in secondary school extracurricular activities, a multiple case study in three schools was undertaken. The schools were chosen because all had well-functioning extracurricular programs and because they represented a range of characteristics in terms of school size, school governance, and student gender. Data were gathered using nominal group techniques (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975) in focus group discussions. Because activity in this extracurricular context is not formally assessed, student voice was paramount in eliciting a deep understanding of the participants’ development. Data were analysed using grounded theory methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) both within and across cases. From the resulting categories of learning taken from experience of the extracurriculum, a students’ view was distilled as a tentative model to explain this curriculum phenomenon. The model includes the diverse and comprehensive range of learnings students identify under four broad categories: social, physical, intellectual, and personal learnings. Findings from the study contribute to knowledge about student development in extracurricular activities, an understanding of the extracurriculum as an essential contributor to that development, and acknowledgment that student voice has a vital role to play in informing curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation in secondary schools. Given its rich potential for student development and its likely impact upon their future lives, the extracurriculum should be repositioned as an integral part of secondary school curriculum—a curriculum necessity.
Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

_____________________

Elizabeth Wheeley

30th June, 2011
Acknowledgements

The preparation of this thesis has involved the valued contributions of many people.

First, I would like to thank my supervisors. I appreciate immensely the support I received from:

Professor Neil Dempster for his patience, belief in the importance of the research topic, and invaluable advice throughout all stages of my thesis journey;

Professor Joy Cumming for her astute input and methodological clarity as well as her willingness to read and offer feedback whenever requested; and

Dr Simon Clarke for his thorough focus in the early stages of clarifying my area of research and preparing the project for confirmation of candidature.

Second, I would like to thank Griffith University and all the staff who have helped me in a variety of ways. In particular, I thank Dr Kay Hartwig, Dr Jennifer Tannoch-Bland, Ms Christine Webber, and the librarians who have given assistance on many occasions. I add my special thanks and genuine appreciation for the editorial support of Ms Elizabeth Stevens.

Third, I express my sincere gratitude to the students and staff of the case study schools, without whom a study of this nature would not be possible. I thank them for their openness, cooperation, readiness to share their understandings, and trust in me to represent their perspectives.

Finally, this thesis could not have arrived without the support of my family, in particular, my husband, Craig, and children, Emma, Matthew, and Samuel. My parents, Peter and Elaine, have given so generously of their time and resources to support my education as well as immense practical assistance. In addition, members of my extended family have journeyed with me in many different ways during my studies. Further support has been given by friends, in particular Chris, who generously gave hours of care to Emma in the early stages of my research; Anna, who is an extraordinary friend and academic and showed me a path; and Clare, who gave home and board freely for many focussed study weekends offering good food, her dining table as my office, and intelligent, well-grounded, and discerning feedback.
Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. iii
Statement of Originality ........................................................................................................ v
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................... vii
List of Tables ......................................................................................................................... xiii
List of Figures ......................................................................................................................... xv

Chapter 1 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 1
  Personal perspective ............................................................................................................. 3
  The extracurricular context ................................................................................................. 4
    The extracurricular tradition ............................................................................................. 5
    Extracurricular activities internationally ......................................................................... 7
    Extracurricular programs in Queensland secondary schools ........................................... 8
  Conceptualising extracurricular activities as a curriculum ............................................... 11
  Research focus .................................................................................................................... 13
  Research methods .............................................................................................................. 13
  Justifications for the study ................................................................................................. 14
  Chapter summary ............................................................................................................... 17

Chapter 2 Literature Review ................................................................................................. 19
  Curriculum definitions and conceptualising extracurricular learning ............................... 20
    Curriculum structures of secondary schools and student participation in extracurricular activities ............................................................................................................. 26
  Effects for students related to extracurricular participation ............................................ 27
    Academic effects for students attributed to participation in school extracurricular activities ..... 28
    Non-academic personal and social effects for students attributed to participation in school extracurricular activities ......................................................................................... 30
    Student engagement with school related to participation in school extracurricular activities ..... 31
  Adolescent development in structured activities ................................................................ 32
    Positive development in structured youth activities ......................................................... 33
    Expanding concepts of learning beyond skill development .............................................. 34
    Embedding research on student extracurricular development in schools ......................... 36
    Listening to students’ voices about their development ..................................................... 36
  Chapter summary ............................................................................................................... 38

Chapter 3 Research Design and Methods ......................................................................... 39
  Theoretical underpinning of the study ............................................................................... 39
  Methods ............................................................................................................................... 41
    Selection of case study schools ......................................................................................... 42
    Selection of activities within schools ............................................................................... 43
    Sampling of participants .................................................................................................. 44
  Data collection techniques ............................................................................................... 45
    Focus group discussions and nominal group technique .................................................... 45
    Pilot study trial of focus group protocols and observations ............................................. 47
  Data analysis ...................................................................................................................... 49
    Credibility and accuracy .................................................................................................. 52
    Ethics ............................................................................................................................... 53
    Limitations ....................................................................................................................... 53
  Chapter summary ............................................................................................................... 53

Chapter 4 Case Study 1 – An Independent Girls School .................................................... 55
  Context ............................................................................................................................... 55
    The philosophy and goals of the school and its extracurricular program ......................... 55
    School site ....................................................................................................................... 56
Chapter 7 Cross-case analysis .......................................................................................................................... 147
  Social learning across cases .......................................................................................................................... 148
  Physical development across cases ............................................................................................................. 148
  Intellectual development across cases ......................................................................................................... 151
  Personal development across cases ............................................................................................................ 153

Students’ voices on the extracurriculum and participant characteristics .............................................. 158
  Ages of students and relative emphasis on different learnings ................................................................. 158
  Gender of students and extracurricular experiences .................................................................................. 160

Students’ voices on the extracurriculum and school characteristics ....................................................... 162
  School type .................................................................................................................................................. 163
  School size .................................................................................................................................................. 163
  Individual school vision for their extracurricular programs .................................................................... 164
  Activities on offer in different school contexts and the idea of “choice” .................................................. 165

Students’ voices on learning embedded in the secondary school extracurriculum ............................. 167
  Social development in the secondary school extracurriculum ................................................................ 168
  Physical development in the secondary school extracurriculum ............................................................. 169
  Intellectual development in the secondary school extracurriculum ......................................................... 169
  Personal development in the secondary school extracurriculum ............................................................. 170
  Combined model of learning ....................................................................................................................... 174

Conditions, strategies, and consequences of development in the secondary school extracurriculum ............. 175

Examination of findings in the context of previous research ..................................................................... 177
  Adolescent development in structured activities and the students’ curriculum of the extracurriculum .... 177
  Curriculum definitions and the students’ curriculum of the extracurriculum ......................................... 181
  Student voice and the students’ curriculum of the extracurriculum ....................................................... 184

Chapter summary ....................................................................................................................................... 186

Chapter 8 Conclusions and implications ................................................................................................. 189
  Summary of the research process .............................................................................................................. 189
  Major findings: The curriculum of the extracurriculum ............................................................................ 192
  Limitations .................................................................................................................................................. 193

Implications of the research findings ........................................................................................................ 194
  Implications of findings for theory .............................................................................................................. 194
  Implications of findings for practice .......................................................................................................... 195
  Implications of findings for further research ............................................................................................. 196

Conclusion ...................................................................................................................................................... 198

References ...................................................................................................................................................... 201

Appendix A Access letter to Principal ....................................................................................................... 211
Appendix B Student letter for informed consent ......................................................................................... 213
Appendix C Pre-focus group survey ........................................................................................................... 217
Appendix D Initial focus group guide ......................................................................................................... 221
Appendix E Follow-up focus group guide .................................................................................................. 223
Appendix F Information about student participants from School A .......................................................... 225
Appendix G Additional diagrams of data from Case Study 1 .................................................................... 227
Appendix H Information about student participants from School B ........................................................ 229
Appendix I Additional diagrams of data from Case Study 2 .................................................................... 231
Appendix J Information about student participants from School C ........................................................ 235
Appendix K Additional diagrams of data from Case Study 3 .................................................................... 237
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Diagram of the category of social development</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Diagram of the category physical development</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Diagrams of the category and sub-categories of intellectual development</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>Diagrams of the category and sub-categories of personal development</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1 Percentage of Students Participating in School Extracurricular Activities at Least Once a Month ............................................................. 10
Table 2 Example of Data Analysis Process ........................................................................................................ 51
Table 3 Social Development Category and Properties Across Cases ............................................................... 149
Table 4 Physical Development Category and Properties Across Cases ............................................................. 151
Table 5 Intellectual Development Category, Sub-categories and Properties Across Cases ................................. 153
Table 6 Personal Development Sub-categories and Properties Across Cases ................................................... 156
Table 7 Comparison of Elements of Goals for Australian Schools with Students’ Curriculum of the Extracurriculum ............................................................................................................. 182
Table A1 Information about Student Participants from School A (Independent Girls School) ......................... 225
Table A2 Information about Student Participants from School B (Coeducational State School) .................. 229
Table A3 Information about Student Participants from School C (Catholic Boys School) .............................. 235
List of Figures

Figure 1. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 1, Student Group 1. .......... 61
Figure 2. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 2, Student Group 1. .......... 85
Figure 3. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 3, Student Group 1. .......... 117
Figure 4. Students’ curriculum of the extracurriculum showing the main categories of learning and their properties from the students’ perspectives. ................................................................. 174
Figure A1. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 1, Student Group 2. ....... 227
Figure A2. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 1, Student Group 3. ....... 228
Figure A3. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 2, Student Group 2. ....... 231
Figure A4. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 2, Student Group 3. ....... 232
Figure A5. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 2, Student Group 4. ....... 233
Figure A6. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 3, Student Group 2. ....... 237
Figure A7. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 3, Student Group 3. ....... 238
Figure A8. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 3, Student Group 4. ....... 239
Figure A9. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 3, Student Group 5. ....... 240
Figure A10. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 3, Student Group 6. ....... 241
Figure A11. Diagram of category, properties, and dimensions of social development. ............... 243
Figure A12. Diagram of category, properties, and dimensions of physical development. ............... 245
Figure A13. Diagram of category and sub-categories of intellectual development. ...................... 247
Figure A14. Diagram of sub-category, properties, and dimensions of intellectual development—knowledge. ........................................................................................................ 248
Figure A15. Diagram of sub-category, properties, and dimensions of intellectual development—applied knowledge. ........................................................................................................ 249
Figure A16. Diagram of category and sub-categories of personal development. ....................... 251
Figure A17. Diagram of sub-category, properties, and dimensions of sub-category of personal development—ability to deal. ........................................................................................................ 252
Figure A18. Diagram of sub-category, properties, and dimensions of sub-category of personal development—attention. ........................................................................................................ 253
Figure A19. Diagram of sub-category, properties, and dimensions of sub-category of personal development—meta-learning. ........................................................................................................ 254
Figure A20. Diagram of sub-category, properties, and dimensions of sub-category of personal development—self-management. ........................................................................................................ 255
Figure A21. Diagram of sub-category, properties, and dimensions of sub-category of personal development—personal dispositions. ........................................................................................................ 256
Figure A22. Diagram of sub-category, properties, and dimensions of sub-category of personal development—attitudes to self and the activity. ........................................................................................................ 257

xv
Figure A23. Diagram of sub-category, properties, and dimensions of sub-category of personal development—self-understanding.
Chapter 1
Introduction

Schools have been given responsibilities to engage young people in order that they may be educated. Aside from providing core curriculum components, schools across the world undertake other activities with students, some of which are labelled extracurricular. These activities often include team sports, musical and performing arts groups, and clubs. Whereas the core components of curriculum have received and continue to receive almost constant attention and evaluation, extracurricular activities have remained largely outside the scope of the lens. This is perhaps unremarkable in view of the almost unrelenting demands for standards in schooling that press for a narrowing in the official curriculum so that these standards can be measured and met (Madaus, Russell, & Higgins, 2009).

Some key questions about extracurricular activities have been and continue to be asked, linking student participation in activities with various outcomes from them. These activities have been provided and resourced for a long time, but still the mechanisms for understanding student experiences in extracurricular activities and what students perceive they get from their participation seem to have been largely overlooked. The purpose of this study is to explore the field of extracurricular education and to gain a deeper understanding of student development in secondary school extracurricular activities by illuminating the perspectives of those who participate in them. In this field that is only partly understood, student participants can play an important role in helping to expand our understanding of the conceptualisation of extracurricular learning.

Extracurricular activities are also called co-curricular activities or simply school activities in other contexts. Broadly speaking, they are structured activities, endorsed and organised by schools. These have also been labelled in some literature as extracurricular school activities (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002, p. 1002) to differentiate them from activities in which students participate outside the school. In other situations they may be called student activities or leisure activities, some of which may be school based.

Extracurricular activities form part of the overall student offerings in many secondary schools in Australia. Such activities are also common in other countries, although the extent to which schools are the main providers of those activities varies. Community organisations may also offer youth programs across similar disciplines, for example, sporting clubs, church youth groups,
and theatre clubs. In the school context, extracurricular activities can involve a great number of students and staff as well as receive an extensive commitment in terms of time and resources.

The reasons these activities are offered by schools are likely to be diverse. In Australia, school financial resourcing in both state and independent sectors is linked to student enrolment numbers. With competitive marketing for student enrolments, extracurricular activities are often highlighted in a school’s prospectus, implying that they form a desired part of secondary schooling. Also, as the working lives of families demand more than one income, extracurricular activities, particularly those conducted before and after school, may be seen as a useful and safe form of age-appropriate childcare for secondary school adolescents. Notwithstanding these pragmatic views of the need for schools to provide extracurricular activities, benefits for participants are well documented in research (e.g., Marsh & Kleitman, 2002). In addition, some research has focussed on adolescent development in the context of extracurricular activities (e.g., Catalano, Bergland, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004; Dworkin, Larson, & Hanson, 2003; Gilding & Wallace, 2003; Hanson, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003; Larson, 2000; Patterson, 2001), as well as the added effect of student involvement in extracurricular activities on their engagement with school (Fullarton, 2002). With the implication that these activities are therefore potentially providing a context for learning, an exploration of how participants understand their development through secondary school extracurricular activities is warranted. The research questions that this thesis will address are:

1. How do participants perceive the secondary school extracurriculum as a learning context?

2. How is this learning perceived to be similar to or different from other learning contexts?

3. What are the perceived positive and negative outcomes of learning within the secondary school extracurriculum?

4. What are the perceived positive and negative influences on learning within the secondary school extracurriculum?

These questions are included at this point to foreshadow the direction that this research takes. The route into these questions is further explained as a result of the literature reviewed and analysed, related to the extracurricular theme that is the focus of this work. To ensure an understanding of the thrust of the research, the ideas behind these questions are enriched through the literature in Chapter 2 through to the introduction of methodological structures at the beginning.

---

1 Schools in Queensland are overseen by the State government or are run independently. Independent schools charge fees for student enrolment, but also receive funding from the government on a per capita basis.
2
of Chapter 3. At this point, the research questions are explained more fully in relationship to the theoretical underpinning of the study.

**Personal perspective**

My interest in extracurricular learning has developed over time. As a secondary school student, I was very involved in extracurricular music activities. I feel that this influenced my decision to study music performance at university. Although following that undergraduate degree with further training as a secondary classroom teacher, I spent most of my school career teaching and developing extracurricular music programs. Awareness of broader issues in the provision of extracurricular activities increased through that professional experience. One issue was the strong “competition” for student recruitment and retention I perceived. This perception of competition for student participants was apparent and possibly exacerbated by a predominance of sporting activities and the prestige given to sporting activities in Australian culture.

Throughout my school teaching career, I considered extracurricular music to involve the same planning, programming, and aims in educating students about musical knowledge and literacy as did classroom musical experiences, but with a far greater emphasis on developing practical skills and experiencing musical performance of the highest quality possible. Where participation was “voluntary” for students, a developmental focus depended on students continuing to participate and challenged teachers to offer activities in a manner that appealed to students. At the same time, it remained apparent that in most contexts, these extracurricular ensembles were indeed considered an “extra,” receiving educational emphasis only from my approach and expectations. The broader school community seemed to consider the value of extracurricular programs to be more about the performance standards and status the school exhibited publicly than in any educational goals being met within the activities.

My research interest in extracurricular activities was extended through my Master of Education degree project, which examined an aspect of the tension between the reality of extracurricular performances and productions and teacher preparedness to take on the management roles these required. Not only did teaching pedagogy and curriculum seem an intrinsic part of the extracurricular music I taught, but its performance aspects extended the teaching role beyond that which was generally part of teacher training and professional development (Wheeley, 2002).

This present study derived from my interest in extracurricular activities and their role in student development. My practice was based on the assumption that students develop in the extracurricular context in a manner that warrants emphasis alongside the formal curriculum. My
experiences further deepened my understanding of how schools implement various programs alongside the formal curriculum and gave some support to the premise that they were therefore valued. My research began within the field of music and performing arts and again reinforced the fact that extracurricular performing arts activities received emphasis in practice, evident in the investment of school resources and time and energy expended by students and teachers. With this came the initial questions: Why do they do it and what do they get out of it? I had participated in teaching extracurricular music so that students could experience the highest level of music making possible and through that experience, develop their understanding of music as well as their personal skills. I realised that what they were experiencing in extracurricular music was more akin to performance and musical experiences in the broader community. I also had a hunch that the development was not limited to observable skills, but involved something less tangible. At the same time, I did not understand other extracurricular school programs and whether these ideas about student development held true across the main categories of extracurricular activities.

An assumption that was tested through this study was that students understood their extracurricular activity participation to include developmental outcomes. Furthermore, highlighting the nature of those activities and identifying their relationship to developmental outcomes in terms of skills or less tangible learnings could lead to a better understanding of the nature of learning in the secondary school extracurriculum.

In the remainder of Chapter 1, I outline the broad purpose of this study. First, a description of the extracurricular context, including historical, international, and local perspectives is provided. Second, I introduce conceptualising extracurricular activities in terms of a curriculum and explore where current debate lies. Finally, the research focus, methods, and justifications for the present study are introduced.

**The extracurricular context**

In this section, school extracurricular activities are discussed from historical, international, and Australian—specifically Queensland—perspectives. While provision of extracurricular activities has been extensive for some time, the learning gained by students is not yet identified in this context. Both the historical accounts and the persistence with which schools and communities continue to endorse these activities in modern times across a broad range of contexts support the perceived value of these activities. Research literature framing contemporary perspectives on extracurricular activities are addressed in more detail in Chapter 2.
The extracurricular tradition

Extracurricular activities have had a long tradition in secondary schools, as exemplified in English Public Schools. Early Australian schools embraced these traditions (Bessant, 1984; Mangan, 1992; Sherington & Connellan, 1988). The concept of engendering a “games ethic” in students, in particular, was seen as a vital component of secondary school education (Mangan, 1992).

Elementary education emerged in Australia soon after settlement, with increasing numbers of children in the colonies and a desire to affect the “social and moral condition of children” (Barcan, 1980, p. 10). State sponsorship of elementary schooling commenced in the 1830s. Schooling was extended beyond the elementary level presaged by the introduction of public examinations used for university entrance as well as by some employers (Barcan, 1980). Post-primary or post-elementary schooling initially consisted of small independent schools and the early Australian corporate schools, which were established by individuals or church denominations in the 1830s and 1840s. The style of schooling offered was modelled on many of the characteristics of the English public schools, although Hyams and Bessant noted that the absence of a class of gentility in Australian colonies “produced in the middle class schools a curriculum that was more modern and more practical than the programmes offered by the endowed grammar schools of England” (1972, p. 26). Opportunities for secondary schooling developed and became more prevalent in the early 1900s. The traditions of the early corporate schools were again adapted and transferred to the State schools.

In Queensland in 1860 the Grammar Schools Act was passed, paving the way for the development of grammar schools which focussed on providing a broad liberal education (Queensland Government, 2006). The 1910 Education Bill extended post-primary schooling with a 2-year common course and a 2-year course where students undertook studies labelled professional (in preparation for university entrance), agricultural, commercial, or domestic arts.

However, by 1914, it was clear that the high schools were to be academically orientated towards the professional course leading on to the public examinations conducted by the university. Only a very small proportion of students chose the alternative courses. (Hyams & Bessant, 1972, p. 96)

Although the early state secondary schools were intended to emphasise developing the industrial and agricultural skills of the working class, the selection of professional courses by children of middle class families dominated (Bessant, 1984). Despite the intentions of Frank Tate (Director of Education) and government officers in the early 1900s, “(State) high schools modelled their courses, organisation and traditions on the more prestigious private schools” (Bessant, 1984, p. 52),
hence an emphasis on the values that could be transmitted through extracurricular activities was maintained.

Historical accounts of school sport, performing arts, and journalism, and their perceived contributions to student development, imply that the extracurriculum is a rich learning environment. In the English public school tradition, sport epitomised the values desired in students—that they should be of “good character”. Schools in 19th century Australia adopted these values. C. H. Hodges, the second Principal of Sydney Church of England Grammar School, in a speech day address in 1901, commented thus: “Opportunities for the practice of those virtues which stamp the real man – courage, vigour, chivalry, straightforwardness – are found perhaps more frequently in the playing field than upon the school benches” (in Sherington & Connellan, 1988, p. 137)

Sport was seen as an integral part of a well-rounded education, reflected in school journalism of the time.

The ideology of athleticism was well-entrenched in the school magazine, The Torch Bearer, which Robson had established within two years of the school’s foundation. Its first editorial, written by an assistant master, McCullough Hughes, a former exhibitioner at Oriel College, Oxford, emphasized the need for the boys to create ‘sound traditions’ and ‘unwritten laws in school life’ founded on the true principles of ‘the triple cord of love’ which embraced the ‘tie of school work’, ‘the tie of school games’ and the ‘moral standard of “tone” that springs up and flourishes in every school worthy of the name.’ (Sherington & Connellan, 1988, p. 136)

Early Australian schools and, in particular, the Catholic school representation of Irish traditions, initially did not endorse “games” (Sherington & Connellan, 1988). But even though these Australian schools of the era were not overtly created along the ideologies of the English public schools, they came to conform to them under the pressures of competing for status amongst the Greater Public Schools. The transformation of the English public school ideologies to the Australian colonial context was affected by social structure. In Australia, students were “sons of professionals and businessmen.” The development of sporting competitions between schools was said to fulfil the role of providing evidence of the quality of education for which parents were paying, rather than “playing the games for its own sake” (Sherington & Connellan, 1988, p. 137). In contrast, interhouse rather than interschool2 sports had been the focus of the English public schools. Further to the character building that was perceived to be part of the participation in school games, the development of leadership qualities in the extracurricular context was also emphasised. E. W. Hornung stated, in writing to a friend regarding Fathers of Men:

2 Interhouse activities involved participation between groups or “houses” to which students within a particular school were attached. In some contexts these are also referred to as intramural activities. Interschool activities involved competition between teams or individuals from different schools.
When Jan’s housemaster comes to assess the chemical process (…by which ‘a public school can transmute the based metal of a stable boy into the solid silver of a gentleman’) he gives full credit to the role games have played in teaching the unacademic, average boy how to manage men. (Mangan, 1992, p. 16)

Other extracurricular activities were reported and valued, including school journalism and performing arts.

The appointment of prefects and the election of form captains, the establishment of the ‘School Record’…the writing of school songs, the school concert, the debates in the upper forms, the adoption of the school badge, and the outdoor excursions have all contributed to this [public school ethos]. (University Practising School Record, No. 3, 1913, p. 2 in Bessant, 1984, p. 54)

These schools developed their extracurricular programs according to individual school needs and values. One example was University High School, which “probably because of the artistic and cultural interests of its first two headmasters and the fact that it remained coeducational, became very strong in music and drama, with the annual concert becoming a feature each year” (Hoy, p. 13 in Bessant, 1984, p. 54).

Since the adoption of the English Public School values transmitted through extracurricular school activities, Australian schools have persisted in providing extracurricular programs for students. As discussed above, historically, extracurricular activities such as sport, journalism, and performing arts were recognised as powerful tools in the transmission of values and the engendering of leadership qualities. With a century of change in societal values and the roles modern students are preparing to fulfil in adulthood, the specifics of learning within the extracurriculum are likely to have developed accordingly. A long history of recognising the value of extracurricular activities to student development together with the likelihood that ideas regarding extracurricular learning have evolved over time further reinforce a need for research in this area.

**Extracurricular activities internationally**

Many secondary schools across the world provide extracurricular activities. Some similarities and differences in extracurricular provision and participation in Japan, Germany, and the United States have been examined by Stevenson and Nerison-Low (2002). Although there are similarities in some types of activities offered, the extent to which schools coordinate these varies. Japanese high schools offer a number of club activities. Student involvement in clubs is compulsory for their first year, after which many students continue to participate on a voluntary basis. Teachers were reported to identify a relationship between student participation and academic achievement (p. 81). German schools seemed to offer fewer activities, with students participating in community organised sport
Some Gymnasium teachers in Germany were reported to have concerns that involvement in school activities took time away from students focussing on their academic work. This is congruent with Coleman’s theory that students’ identification with programs outside formal schooling takes away from their ability to focus on academics (Coleman, 1961). Although lack of resourcing was also raised as a reason German schools did not offer more by way of extracurricular programs, most students and teachers supported the idea of schools developing more extracurricular activities (Stevenson & Nerison-Low, 2002, pp. 82-83). Schools in the United States offer a wide array of intramural (teams within schools) and interscholastic (teams competing between schools) extracurricular activities. It was reported that one motivation for participation was enhancing resumes for college entrance. Lack of resourcing was again raised as a major factor why some schools in the United States did not offer many activities, as well as safety concerns in some communities (pp. 82-83). In seeking to understand extracurricular learning in Queensland secondary schools, it seems likely that similar factors might affect the learning opportunities provided.

**Extracurricular programs in Queensland secondary schools**

In Australia, extracurricular activities are offered by many secondary schools. There are three main providers of secondary education in Queensland: the Queensland Government, the Catholic Education Commission, and Independent Schools.

Schools administered by the Queensland Government are often called state schools. All Queensland state schools are coeducational and the majority are non-selective in enrolling students. Some larger school populations are capped, limiting enrolments to those students who live in that particular local area.

A Catholic school is described as “a faith community and a teaching and learning organisation within the Catholic Church” (Queensland Catholic Education Commission, 2003). Catholic schools can be governed by one of five dioceses led by a bishop or by a particular religious institute such as the Sisters of Mercy or Marist Brothers. The Queensland Catholic Education Commission supports schools administered by each diocese in Queensland.

Independent schools are non-government schools governed by boards at individual school levels. They are also referred to as private schools. Although labelled collectively as independent schools, there are some fine-grained differences within this group. When independent schools

---

3 A Gymnasium is an academic secondary school in the German education system similar to a grammar school.

4 Currently there are three specialist state high schools, called Academies, as well as one central city school, that are selective.
receive government funding they do so as incorporated non-profit organisations. Some independent schools have particular religious affiliations. Some Catholic schools, governed by religious institutes rather than a particular diocese, identify as independent schools. Catholic and independent schools may be coeducational or offer education to a single gender, and have selection criteria for enrolment, including the payment of fees as well as requirements for academic achievement and religious affiliation.

Education Queensland, the governing body of all Queensland state secondary schools, makes the following statement regarding extracurricular activities in schools:

State schools throughout Queensland provide many opportunities for students to engage in activities outside the existing curriculum, such as instrumental music, choirs, drama, debating and many sports. Extracurricular activities enrich learning processes and can be enhanced by parental support and encouragement. (Education Queensland, 2011)

The assumption that participants’ learning is “enriched” further reinforces the value in exploring the meanings of learning held by those who participate in these activities.

Currently, there is no overarching policy or mandate regarding the provision of extracurricular activities in Catholic secondary schools. Although staff participation in these activities is described as “honorary and voluntary”, some records of expectations of employees indicate that more staff participation in such activities is being demanded (Queensland Independent Education Union (QIEU), 2002, 2003). More recently in a newsletter response to a teaching graduate, the QIEU wrote,

With the view that as teachers we have a pastoral care role, extra-curricular activities, although voluntary, are often undertaken because of our care and concern for the well being of our students…. Some schools might require you to take some form of extra-curricular activity as part of your contract, but this should be discussed at an interview. Taking on extra-curricular activities is often a fantastic way of getting to know students in a role outside the classroom and they appreciate the care you show them and the time you give up. (Queensland Independent Education Union, 2009, p. 2)

One difficulty expressed by a Catholic Education Officer concerning including extracurricular activities in policy documents was that, although these activities were assumed to be beneficial and were provided for in many school contexts, resourcing and individual school needs were diverse. It was therefore left up to each school to determine its provision of extracurricular activities.

5 This statement from Education Queensland was originally accessed in 2003, showing the same wording as is used currently.
Independent schools in Queensland offer a wide diversity of activities specific to individual schools. Examples of extracurricular offerings are provided on school websites, documented in school newsletters, and promoted in school prospectuses.

Extracurricular participation in the Australian context was used as an indicator of student school engagement in a report by Fullarton (2002). Given similarities that are likely to exist nationally, this report offers information that illustrates aspects of the context of my study. Fullarton defines, by example, the variety of activities available to many students in Australian secondary schools, as well as articulating learning benefits for students associated with participation in them.

These extracurricular activities are recognised by teachers and parents as providing students with opportunities for leadership, for personal growth and for developing a sense of commitment to the well being of the wider community. They offer students opportunities to apply skills learned in the classroom in an applied setting, for them to learn the value of teamwork, competition and cooperation, individual and group responsibility. (Fullarton, 2002, p. 1)

Based on data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth of 11,150 Year 9 students in 1998, Table 1, presenting information extracted from this report, details the percentage by gender of students participating in school extracurricular activities at least once a month (Fullarton, 2002, p. 12). The activity types were clarified earlier in the report and described as sport; music, band or orchestra; debating; drama, theatre, dance or school play; and community and support work at school (for example peer support or fundraising) (Fullarton, 2002, p. 6).

Table 1
*Percentage of Students Participating in School Extracurricular Activities at Least Once a Month*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Debating</th>
<th>Drama</th>
<th>Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All activities in this study were school based and as Table 1 indicates, a large number of secondary school students are involved in extracurricular activities at school. As part of her findings, Fullarton expresses a belief that the number and variety of activities offered do matter in terms of student school engagement. However, if engagement remains the predominant reasoning behind schools offering such activities, if and when resources permit, extracurricular activities are, indeed, an extra. Examining the extracurriculum to determine whether it has intrinsic value as a learning context, rather than simply providing an incentive for students to interact with their formal school subjects, again seems an important next step in understanding this component of secondary education.
Kinney (1993) compared extracurricular activity provisions across education providers in the United States, reporting differing rates of participation from students in different school sectors. Given some similarities in the provision of such activities between the United States and Australia, it seems likely that school governance affects the intentions, provision, and organisation of extracurricular programs, which, in turn, could affect students’ perceptions of their learning. Accordingly, selection of cases for this study sought to include schools from each of the three main providers of secondary education in Queensland. A multiple case study of schools, representing independent, Catholic, and state sectors, should assist in providing a broader understanding of the ways in which participants interpret their learning and development, as well as the importance they attach to it, than could be offered by a single case or even cases in a single sector of secondary education.

**Conceptualising extracurricular activities as a curriculum**

In order to understand ideas about learning and development in the context of extracurricular activities, it is necessary first to conceptualise this field. As extracurricular activities are part of the overall educational offerings of schools, in the broadest sense, they could be considered part of the secondary school curriculum. An issue that arises, however, is in the use of the term *extra*, which implies something outside, beyond or separate from the curriculum. Other terms, such as co-curriculum or informal curriculum, imply a status closer to the idea of formal curriculum, suggesting that learning outcomes may well be explicit in the intent of those who provide such activities.

In differentiating between forms of school curricula, Klesse and Biernat (1989) used the term “third curriculum” to refer to school activities (as did Frederick, cited in Berk, 1992), where the first two curricula were the mandatory and elective courses offered within school hours. In his more recent publication, Klesse goes further to argue that extracurricular activities should not, in fact, be deemed an extra at all, but rather, essential learning for secondary school students (Klesse, 2004).

Mahoney, Cairns, and Farmer (2003) use a key set of defining attributes of extracurricular activities. These are:

1. voluntary participation;
2. structure – one or more adults lead the activity, and the participants meet regularly in a context specific to the activity;
3. challenge – participation… [that] requires effort. (p. 410)
Berk (1992) draws attention to a blurred distinction between the formal curriculum and the extracurriculum given some similar objectives.

Educational objectives commonly ascribed to the extracurriculum – learning to work cooperatively with others, to be a responsible and productive contributor to society, to use leisure time effectively, and to develop one’s own abilities to their fullest – can also be applied to a great many formally sponsored school learning experiences. (Berk, 1992, p. 1002)

Some school activities change their position between formal school hours and outside school hours. One example here is instrumental music, where in many contexts in Queensland, lessons are undertaken during formal school hours but ensemble rehearsals are held outside formal school times. The above definitions, when applied to Queensland secondary schools, may incorporate other activities that are labelled as co-curricular and have a compulsory element in some school settings. This compulsory element most often relates to attendance requirements to maintain membership once a student elects to join a particular team or group.

At the same time, Berk (1992) supports as well as extends the defining points of Mahoney et al. (2003).

Despite the proliferation of terms, general agreement exists that extracurricular pursuits differ in essential ways from most formal classroom work. First, they are more social than cognitive in orientation, constituting the major portion of the organized social life of the school. Second, at least in theory if not always in practice, they are student planned and maintained rather than teacher directed, with teachers serving as advisors and guides rather than instructors and students assuming important leadership roles. Third, they generally, although not always, take place outside normally scheduled school hours, such as at lunch time, before and after school, or on weekends. Finally, participation is voluntary rather than required, leading the extracurricular program to be a domain for schooling that is especially responsive to individual differences in student interests and abilities. (Berk, 1992, p. 1002)

For the purposes of this study, I initially describe extracurricular activities by example in saying that they include team sports, musical and performing arts groups, and clubs. In addition, I define extracurricular activities as outside or beyond the formal activities of schooling. These formal activities include those mandated in formal curriculum policies such as core subjects students undertake that are formally assessed, elective subjects that students select that are formally assessed, as well as activities undertaken during formal school hours such as school assemblies that are considered a desirable part of school life but not necessarily formally assessed. One useful point by which to distinguish extracurricular from formal curricular activities is the times at which they are scheduled. Extracurricular activities are most often undertaken outside formal school hours, that is, before school, after school, or during breaks such as lunch times. As extracurricular activities are not mandated by policy, not formally assessed, nor required for matriculation, participation may be
considered voluntary. Accordingly, where such activities are not voluntary, do not have an outside of school hours’ component, and are formally assessed, they are not considered extracurricular for the purposes of this study.

At this time, most studies of extracurricular activities do not use the term extracurriculum, perhaps avoiding any curriculum debate. The learning outcomes of extracurricular participation are not yet fully understood, so although a few authors, mentioned above, have used terminology that suggests that the extracurriculum is, in fact, a curriculum conception, this is not yet clear in research literature. The use of the term extra-curricular, which may be interpreted to exclude it from conceptions of school curriculum, persists. Given this lack of clarity, the focus of this study is to examine the learning that students attribute to participation in school-based extracurricular activities in order to contribute to a broader conceptualisation of secondary school curriculum.

**Research focus**

The focus of this research is on students’ perceptions of their learning in their extracurricular activities. As participation is voluntary, students seem likely to be aware of what participation offers them. Through identifying and describing these perceptions of the learning that takes place in the secondary school extracurriculum, an appropriate curriculum conception might be proposed.

The student viewpoint is also important because it addresses two significant issues in identifying extracurricular learning: (a) attributing learning to the particular context, and (b) assessing learning where formal assessment procedures do not apply and where learnings are likely to extend beyond those highlighted in formal assessment.

**Research methods**

Given the focus of the research on how student participants understand their extracurricular learning, a qualitative research methodology is warranted. Such a methodology is consistent with a theoretical explanation of how people understand their lived world. The underpinning theory of this qualitative study is symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) which guides the focus and interpretation of data. Case studies (Merriam, 1988, 1998; Stake, 1995, 2006) of three schools with substantial extracurricular programs and focus are undertaken. In order to view extracurricular learning, this study requires extracurricular contexts that function in a manner to suggest that participants’ experiences are able to offer learning outcomes. Congruent with the theoretical underpinning of the study, grounded theory methods (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) of analysis are used.
to provide a rigorous procedure for unpacking data and establishing propositions about the extracurriculum. The research methods of this study are explained in more depth in Chapter 3.

**Justifications for the study**

A qualitative study of student learning in extracurricular activities has an important contribution to make in both academic and practical terms. An in-depth inquiry into the learning outcomes attributable to extracurricular activity participation in secondary schools is needed to fill a current gap in research in the area as well as to provide insight into secondary education at a time when formal and assessed school curricula are becoming narrower and more specific. Campbell (1978) identified that structures within extracurricular programs move against the trend of narrowing options in the formal curriculum as students mature. Berk (1992) supports broadly that extracurricular activities are an area of schooling able to be responsive to students’ interests and abilities. Further discussion of the characteristics of extracurricular activities is offered in Chapter 2.

Internationally, doctoral research has addressed various aspects of high school extracurricular activities, continuing the focus on examining relationships between participation and various effects using quantitative methods. To date, little research at doctoral level has been undertaken in the field of extracurricular activities in Australia. One exception is a professional doctorate by Ronald Sprosten (2005) offering a qualitative examination of personal development in an extracurricular theatre program. My study is looking more broadly across schools and domains of extracurricular activity types; however, data may lend further support to the findings of Sprosten related to personal development.

With the exception of two unpublished Masters of Education theses (Buckley, 1977; McKinnon, 1989), a current search of dissertations does not reveal other research focussed on extracurricular activities in Queensland, nor do these examples delve into student development or student perspectives about their extracurricular learning. Also situated in the Australian context, Fullarton’s report (2002), as mentioned previously, focussed on student school engagement, citing Finn who related participation in extracurricular activities to students’ “identification with school” (Finn, 1989). This concept of engagement has also received attention by Thomas (2010), who identified relationships between student involvement in secondary school extracurricular activities, connection with school, and cigarette and alcohol use in her doctoral thesis. While this is another example of Australian-based research in the field, it is a correlational study and does not examine student development in extracurricular activities.
Given current practices of secondary schools in offering, at times, extensive extracurricular programs, Australian schools offer a useful context for examining extracurricular learning. Current literature on extracurricular activities is predominantly focussed on effects for participants using large-scale data analysed quantitatively with a variety of variables and attempts to indicate some of the processes of extracurricular learning. The processes themselves and the meanings they have for students have not yet been addressed in depth.

The small body of literature that does take a qualitative approach (e.g., Dworkin, et al., 2003) includes both school- and community-based activities in the United States. As extracurricular activities are embedded in schools, the school contexts are likely to have an effect on how participants understand their development in the extracurricular context. In addition, gathering, where meaningful to participants, those variables that mediate or moderate learning in that context is important to garner a deep understanding of school-based extracurricular activities.

Holland and Andre (1987) identified a need for further research to address whether “different levels of involvement and success within an activity influence processes of participation” and to “include schools as a factor with individuals nested within schools” (Holland & Andre, 1987, p.455). The more recent literature review by Feldman and Matjasko (2005) also highlighted that “extracurricular activities do not exist in a singular context. They are nested in schools and neighbourhoods and are functions of the resources of those contexts” (p. 195). These recommendations lend further support to a need for qualitative research that focusses on extracurricular learning in the school context.

Theories proposed explaining the inclusion and effects of extracurricular activity participation for secondary school students are also varied. Coleman (1961) expressed concern that extracurricular participation diminished the effects of school education by taking students’ focus away from formal educational objectives. Given the number of studies that have since documented benefits of participation in relation to academic success and educational attainment (e.g., Camp, 1990; Lamborn, Brown, Mounts, & Steinberg, 1992; Lipscomb, 2007; Marsh, 1992), Coleman’s proposition seems unlikely to be sustained in light of current understanding. However, Stevenson et al. (2002) report support for Coleman’s idea from teachers in German schools preferring that schools should offer only that which focusses on the formal purposes of schooling. This, perhaps, explains why school-based extracurricular activities do not occupy a similar position in German schools as they do in some other Western countries. Another theory is that of engagement, where extracurricular activities are deemed to provide an incentive for students to access formal schooling owing to their motivation to participate in extracurricular activities. Indeed, Fullarton (2002) used
extracurricular participation as an indicator of engagement with school, believing it to be a substantial measure of that engagement. This theory seems to imply that extracurricular activities are not necessarily a source of learning in themselves, but rather an incentive for students to attend and receive formal learning in the classroom. Where learning is the focus, what goes on in extracurricular activities is not yet fully understood.

Teachers and school leaders are, however, aware of the value of extracurricular school activities for student development (e.g., Klesse, 2004). Providing further evidence of practitioners’ beliefs about the value of extracurricular programs, the Leadership for Student Activities Magazine is published monthly during school terms by the National Association of Secondary School Principals in Reston, VA. This publication focusses on issues related to the running of Honor Societies and Student Councils.6

Formal school curriculum has received much attention in research, especially compared with that focussing on extracurricular activities. As the objectives for learning in schools are steered by curriculum theory and policy, conceptualising extracurricular learning is an important step in understanding how this domain of secondary schooling can contribute to student development. It may also become necessary to review the implication that “extra” implies in any way “peripheral” and to acknowledge that provision needs to be made so that students can access these experiences while maintaining the characteristics of such activities that make them meaningful.

Extracurricular activities in secondary schools persist. Knowledge about how these contribute to student development and the characteristics of the activities that allow them to do this may prove a valuable guide for providers of these activities. In summary, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in:

• learning in the extracurricular context;
• curriculum in terms of an analysis of the learning occurring in secondary schools outside of the formal curriculum;

6 Honor Societies in American high schools can be chapters of the National Honor Society and are involved in community service activities as well as having criteria that include leadership, scholarship, and character. Further noted in the National Honor Society pamphlet (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2007), “Chapter membership not only recognizes students for their accomplishments, but also challenges them to develop through involvement in school activities and community service.” Student Councils frequently contribute to school leadership representing issues from the student population and/or undertaking fundraising activities particularly aimed towards student functions, e.g., the school dance or formal. According to Klesse, “Student councils often focus on promoting spirit, improving school climate, or planning projects in their buildings but also can plan activities for their community. They can work with other student activity organizations and the administration to address problems, needs, and concerns, and to unify the student body through schoolwide activities” (Klesse, 2004, p. 2).
• informing the development of a curriculum conceptualisation of the secondary school extracurriculum; and

• student voice in informing curriculum understandings.

In addition to contributing to the development of knowledge in the broad field of curriculum, this study addresses important practical issues in secondary education, which have potential to contribute to informing practice by offering information to:

• provide a theoretical framework for the role of extracurricular activities in contributing to learning goals which might, in turn, be reflected in the creation and interpretation of policy agreements;

• give some direction towards effective practice in extracurricular programs by which schools can assess their programs and consider organisational changes appropriately; and

• re-frame orthodox conceptualisations of curriculum in secondary schools.

**Chapter summary**

Chapter 1 has introduced the research problem that is the focus of this study, which is to examine student learning in secondary school extracurricular activities from the perspectives of the students themselves. Extracurricular activities have historically been and continue to be a part of many students’ experiences in secondary schooling. Although extracurricular activities have received some attention in terms of recognising the benefits of participation for students, understanding the learning that takes place in this domain is not yet deeply realised. As school curriculum may be understood to be what students take away from their school experiences (Schools Council (Great Britain), 1981), the extracurriculum is already part of the informal learning that students undertake outside the formal curriculum. It is, therefore, the purpose of this study to illuminate the learning the students experience in secondary school extracurricular activities in order to propose a grounded conceptualisation of the extracurriculum.

The following chapters consist of a review of relevant literature, a justification of the chosen research methodology, three case studies, a cross-case analysis, and a concluding chapter.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

School curriculum is conceptualised in a variety of ways (e.g., Eisner & Vallance, 1974; Ross, 2000), but very broadly encompasses the learning outcomes and materials to guide student learning in schools that support these outcomes. The interpretation of extracurricular activities in schools is generally about those activities being an added extra beyond the curriculum and ancillary to what students learn officially. Indeed, Berk (1992) asserts that the use of the term extracurricular “is somewhat of a misnomer, although it has been, and continues to be, the most widely used designation in the professional and research literature” (Berk, 1992, p. 1002). The problem here is the interpretation of the term: “The prefix ‘extra’ implies a set of pursuits apart from and unrelated to the curriculum, as well as something of peripheral importance” (Berk, 1992, p. 1002).

If there are valued outcomes for participants of extracurricular involvement this implies a need to reconceptualise secondary school curriculum in a manner that includes extracurricular activities and the learning outcomes associated with participation in them. The students’ view, proposed by the Schools Council of Great Britain, is the focus of a broad conception of curriculum: “For the children themselves the effective curriculum is what each child takes away” (Schools Council (Great Britain), 1981, p. 42). The Schools Council paper also draws attention to the challenge for secondary schools and teachers to know what students are bringing to their schooling and to assess what each child is, in fact, taking away from his or her learning experiences, especially where formal school structures for subject specialisation challenge teachers’ abilities to do this. As introduced in Chapter 1, the notion of accessing students’ perceptions of their learning is not only important for understanding extracurricular learning, but is also likely to help conceptualise the effective curriculum.

This chapter presents a review of literature on various aspects of curriculum and the learning outcomes related to student extracurricular activities. The aim of this review is to assist in understanding how secondary school curriculum is currently conceptualised and to realise existing understandings of school extracurricular activities and participant development in them. The contribution of this present study is delineated by the conceptualisations of school curriculum and what is known about student extracurricular participation. Currently, there exists a gap in terms of the placement of secondary school extracurricular activities within the broader concept of school curriculum. Claims exist that student learning in this domain is more than an extra to be tacked onto
school curriculum and sufficiently different from current directions in formal curriculum policy to demand attention in its own right.

Literature framing my study is examined in three main sections. The first addresses curriculum definitions and conceptualising extracurricular learning, including a discussion of curriculum structures in secondary schools and student participation in extracurricular activities. The second section focuses on research on the effects for students related to their extracurricular participation. This section includes discussions about academic effects for students attributed to participation in school extracurricular activities, non-academic and social effects for students attributed to participation in school extracurricular activities, and student engagement with school related to participation in school extracurricular activities. The final section of this literature review addresses adolescent development in structured activities, including positive youth development, expanding concepts of learning beyond skill development, embedding research on student extracurricular development in schools, and listening to students’ voices about their development.

**Curriculum definitions and conceptualising extracurricular learning**

Some definitions of school curriculum allow for the inclusion of extracurricular activities in their conceptualisations. The HM Inspectorate (HMI) 1985 is one such example.

A school’s curriculum consists of all those activities designed or encouraged within its organisational framework to promote the intellectual, personal, social and physical development of its pupils. It includes not only the formal programme of lessons, but also the ‘informal’ programme of so-called extracurricular activities as well as all those features which produce the school’s ‘ethos’, such as the quality of relationships, the concern for equality of opportunity, the values exemplified in the way the school sets about its task and the way in which it is organised and managed. Teaching and learning styles strongly influence the curriculum and in practice they cannot be separated from it. Since pupils learn from all these things, it needs to be ensured that all are consistent in supporting the school’s intentions. (Department of Education and Science, cited in Ross, 2000, p. 9)

This is a more holistic view of school curriculum and perhaps better fits with an ecological view of child development, which recognises that there are many contexts in a child’s life that affect development and even within the school, there are varied contexts.

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008) is the current iteration of common understandings of the aims of schooling for young people in Australia. Since 1989, government ministers have collaborated to develop these goals, creating first the *Hobart Declaration* followed in 1999 by the *Adelaide Declaration*. The *Melbourne Declaration* articulates
what is perceived to be of importance in the development of young Australians and the goals of all schooling. Currently, these include goals in two main areas: “Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence” and “Goal 2: All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens” (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 7).

The first goal is likely to have greater impact on the consideration of secondary school extracurricular activities if it is established that these contain learnings that address aspects of the second goal. The extracurriculum is likely to benefit from further research on the degree to which students experience equity in the opportunities afforded to them in this area and the resourcing and support for them to strive for excellence. Although the second goal is summarised in terms of a general statement, it is in the specificities and in asking the question of how schools might address these more particular goals that notions of learnings in the extracurriculum come to the fore. The more open structures of extracurricular programs and students’ voluntary involvement in such speak for the ability of those activities to support students to:

- develop their capacity to learn and play an active role in their own learning
- [be] creative, innovative and resourceful, and [be] able to solve problems in ways that draw upon a range of learning areas and disciplines
- [be] able to plan activities independently, collaborate, work in teams and communicate ideas
- [be] motivated to reach their full potential. (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 8)

In terms of the personal development that Ministers considered important for young Australians, these less tangible learnings might well be more effectively addressed in the extracurricular context, especially if research guiding the effective evaluation of those less tangible learnings that are not formally assessed allows them to be recognised. When articulating that young people become “confident and creative individuals,” the Melbourne Declaration states such ideas that students:

- have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity…
- are enterprising, show initiative and use their creative abilities
- develop personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others
- have the knowledge, skills, understanding and values to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying lives
- relate well to others…
- are well prepared for their potential life roles…
- embrace opportunities, make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions. (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 9)

Even in terms of citizenship, extracurricular activities often seem to mirror structures apparent in the broader community in terms of sporting clubs, cultural groups, government, and workplaces, where communication and interpersonal development have a strong bearing on success. These goals demand a broad range of student learning opportunities in terms of addressing the goals themselves as well as recognising students as individual learners who will not necessarily develop the desired knowledge, skills, understanding, and values through a narrow offering of secondary school experiences.

In contrast, if we look to information about the Queensland school curriculum, it appears that it is ever narrowing. Responding to pressure to make space in an “overcrowded” formal curriculum, policy is steering school practitioners back to ideas of curriculum consisting of the “basics,” specified “key learning areas,” or in terms of a more recent project to address curriculum issues and assessment up to Year 10, focussing on the “essentials” and establishing “standards” (Freebody, 2005). Indeed, this has now been focussed even more specifically on English, History,

---

7 Australian Primary Principals Association incorporating views from Government, Independent, and Catholic sectors of education published a Position Paper supporting the notion of an “overcrowded curriculum” stating that, “The crowded curriculum constitutes a significant problem facing teachers and principals in primary schools” (Australian Primary Principals Association, 2008, p. 4). The problem is explained more fully in a research paper titled *In the balance: The future of Australia’s primary schools.*

There is no firm agreement among stakeholders about the core purpose of primary schools. Hence, important policy decisions are made routinely without reference to a clear and authoritative public position regarding purpose. The consequence of this is that there is a tendency for primary schools to acquire new responsibilities without shedding old ones. (Angus, Olney, & Ainley, 2007, p. 7)

8 In Queensland the New Basics project sought to address an overcrowding of curriculum focussing on “clusters of essential practices that students need if they are to flourish in ‘new times’” (Queensland Government, 2000, p. 1). The term “basics” has been part of curriculum rhetoric for a long time meaning in general terms the basic knowledge, skills, and understandings that students might require to lead productive lives. The main focus of such has been and continues to be literacy and numeracy.

9 Currently, key learning areas or KLAs for primary and middle schooling consist of eight areas: English, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education, Languages other than English, The Arts, Studies of Society and Environment, and Technology. Supporting an emphasis on basics is the summary of curriculum balance articulated by Angus et al.

Literacy and numeracy dominate the curriculum. Teachers spend 38 per cent of their instructional time teaching English and 18 per cent teaching Mathematics – more than half of the total. The other six key learning areas share the rest. Next in order of allocated time is Health and Physical Education with 11 per cent, followed by The Arts (8 per cent), Studies of Society and the Environment (4 per cent), Science (3 per cent), LOTE (2 per cent) and Technology with 1 per cent of the total instructional time. The remaining 15 per cent was allocated to a range of activities, with school assemblies (4 per cent) and religious education (4 per cent) occupying the most time. (Angus et al., 2007, pp. ix-x)
Science, and Mathematics with a move towards a National Curriculum\textsuperscript{10} for Australian Schools (National Curriculum Board, 2009), with more recent additions of LOTE (Languages other than English), Geography, and the Arts. Although apparently addressing a real need from school practitioners to know what they are to teach and in turn what they are accountable for teaching in schools, these curriculum dictums and their assessment processes in fact have considerable power to restrain what is considered the legitimate school curriculum and how this is interpreted and implemented (Apple, 1993).

Practices of professional educators in secondary schools may well differ from the apparent limitations in students’ subject choices. Teachers and school leaders are likely to be well aware of the values of a curriculum that is well rounded across many areas and introduces students to real-world learnings. In this case, formal curriculum policies that narrow the range of what is taught may, in fact, provide practitioners with freedom to be innovative. Such innovations, however, will only be a potential if the mandated curriculum elements do not expand to consume the available time for teaching and learning in secondary school. Policy that proscribes exclusively the basic educational outcomes in curriculum, addressing this issue of overcrowding in the formal curriculum, is equally likely to imply that effective teaching and learning can occur solely within those narrow domains. Comparing these syllabus directives with the skills and capacities required to be successful adults in modern society challenges schools’ abilities to provide for students with diverse needs. The formal school curriculum, as articulated in curriculum documents, often does not reflect the broad skill, knowledge, and values bases of modern life beyond school.

When considering students’ preparedness to undertake a variety of roles in their adult lives, concepts of developing skills as lifelong learners also come to the fore. Hargreaves explains generic skills as:

[those] that are held to be important for lifelong learning and life in a knowledge economy, where what students have learned in school can be applied in the range of contexts they encounter in later life. These usually include:

- managing one’s own learning
- problem solving
- thinking
- research, enquiry and investigation
- invention, enterprise and entrepreneurship
- communication
- social and interpersonal
- teamwork

\textsuperscript{10} In future, the National Curriculum may become known as the Australian Curriculum.
leadership. (Hargreaves, 2004, p. 12)

It now seems possible, if not probable, even, that formal school curriculum might not have the scope to focus on the development of generic skills and that the extracurriculum might prove even more valuable to students in the future if we understand what it is that they take away from their extracurricular experiences.

Extracurricular activities might be an area of schooling that persists as an opportunity for teachers to provide experiences for students that compensate for an overcrowded and perhaps over-assessed formal curriculum. It is a context in which teachers (often the leaders of school-based extracurricular activities) have the freedom from many of the constraints of the formal curriculum and can really provide the rich, real-life experiences that certain formal curriculum policy documents purport to be striving to achieve. In this, the place of extracurricular activities in secondary school offerings for students may appear to present few concerns and the need to incorporate them in a conceptualisation of school curriculum seems, perhaps, unnecessary. However, if paying attention to ideas such as the needs of adolescents to transition successfully to adult roles\footnote{Fuligni and Hardway suggest three aspects of transition to adulthood investigated in terms of immigrant and minority adolescents. These are adolescents’ “educational achievement, their acquisition of employable skills and abilities, and their physical and mental health” (Fuligni & Hardway, 2004, p. 99). They also note that “Activities and programs that take place outside of regular school hours have become increasingly important settings for the development of skills, competencies, and attitudes that are conducive to a successful transition to adulthood” (p. 107).} and the broadening role that schools play in student development, current literature on extracurricular activities implies that they have an important contribution to make towards student development. Owing to the potential of extracurricular activities to provide a rich context for a variety of learnings, incorporating them appropriately in conceptualising secondary school curriculum seems a useful development to secure their place in adolescent education.

Conversely, owing to pragmatic concerns, there may also be a general reluctance to include extracurricular provisions as an integrated component of secondary school curriculum because to recognise their potential contribution to student learning then places a greater demand on resourcing. By adopting extracurricular activities into an endorsed or even required component of curriculum provision, we are putting pressure on schools to provide such activities in such a manner as to facilitate learning outcomes for participants. This then affects the professionalism with which students are led in these activities (such as providing accredited coaches for sporting teams, trained support persons such as sports medical personnel and team managers, skilled musical directors, and arts production managers) as well as the physical resourcing of activities (such as requiring equipment that supports potentially rich learning contexts as well as complying with health and
safety requirements). It also creates a need for such activities to be accessible to student participants within an appropriate timeframe.

There is a risk involved in “formalising” extracurricular activities as intrinsic to a school’s curriculum and recognising their potential learning outcomes. One key characteristic of extracurricular learning is that activities are not formally assessed. If they were no different from formal curriculum components or subjects, important questions of how extracurricular provisions might be evaluated would arise. The context and nature of the extracurricular activities define the very characteristics that allow them to provide a rich and broad learning context for secondary school students. As this context differs from most formal classroom experiences, it stands to reason that assessment practices developed for the formal curriculum would not be appropriate. The manner in which we determine what students learn in extracurricular activities in order to conceptualise their place in secondary schooling requires careful consideration.

The way participants view their extracurricular learning has a valuable contribution to make in understanding the role of these activities in student development. As the activities have rich potential for contributing to student development in secondary schools, it is an important next step to explain understandings of the extracurricular domain from the students’ viewpoint. Conceptualising extracurricular activities within the idea of school curriculum has benefits, primarily highlighting the contribution of such activities to student learning, pressing to make space for them in secondary school life, and resourcing them appropriately. There is also a need, then, to address student access to such activities so that benefits are not limited to students of a particular demographic group. The flexibility and broadening of curriculum opportunities for adolescents in schools offered by the extracurricular domain may, in fact, have such an important role that, as Klesse (2004) argues, they are not an “extra” at all. At the same time, the manner in which extracurricular activities become conceptualised within school curriculum is important in order to maintain the benefits that extracurricular structures possess. This will only be possible with an accurate and deep understanding of learning in this domain.

---

12 Some work into appropriate assessment and evaluation is included in the work of Klesse (2004, pp. 117-123). The research of the Harvard Family Research Project (e.g., Harvard Family Research Project, 2004) Lauver, Little, & Weiss, 2004) includes evaluations of a variety of programs, although these are most often community-based. Berk (1992, pp. 1011-1012) includes a brief discussion of assessment, but highlights the current lack of instruments to undertake evaluations and the difficulty in assessing school activities that do not have explicit objectives.
Curriculum structures of secondary schools and student participation in extracurricular activities

The structures in secondary school extracurricular activities are likely to be quite distinct from those experienced within the formal curriculum. Campbell (1978) examined the structure of learning in secondary schools in Queensland, arguing for the coordination of learning environments with the maturity of the students. She suggested that:

Programs at the senior level should expand, rather than contract, thereby continuing to open up new and exciting vistas towards which the students might move; and … within the programs, the degree of learning structure should diminish, and approximate that in the world beyond the school. (Campbell, 1978, p. 131)

At that time, the extracurricular domain was the only area of students’ school life that was found to support this expansion in opportunity to reflect life experiences beyond school. When examining many of the types of extracurricular activities offered in secondary schools, including sports, music, dance and drama productions, school government, and journalism, Campbell’s identification with structuring learning to reflect life beyond school is apparent. These activities are very similar to their counterparts in the broader community. Students are likely to learn through experience the structures, values, and rules governing these adult roles.

Formal curriculum, particularly under the auspices of those developing a national curriculum, is becoming more focussed on perceived essential academic learnings. To allow a strong focus on those endorsed academic learnings, structures and opportunities for students are likely to narrow. The extracurriculum remains a domain of secondary schooling where structures and opportunities can be diverse and focus on a broad range of goals and experiences for students. Understanding the learnings that students experience in the extracurriculum, as well as the structures that support them, may well allow personal and societal ideas of essential learnings to extend beyond the formal and academic components of schooling during this period of focus on establishing a formal curriculum across the nation. Indeed, when surveying the agreed goals of

According to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, responsible for the development of the national curriculum, “The curriculum for students between eight and 14 years of age (typically Years 3 – 8) is increasingly organised through distinct learning areas and also highlights and promotes links between learning areas to deepen knowledge and understanding. While continuing to prioritise English and literacy and mathematics and numeracy, the Australian Curriculum will deliver a comprehensive education that has children learning in each of the other areas of learning, as outlined in the Melbourne Declaration.” (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2010, p. 12) This brings students into the initial phase of adolescence and highlights the academic focus on various areas of learning. Following from this, the report states: “In Years 9 and 10, the Australian Curriculum will be written to build on prior learning and deepen understanding in each learning area” (p. 13). It is likely that these policy-makers are very aware of diverse learnings beyond formal subject areas and intend that other skills highlighted in the Melbourne Declaration be included in students’ classroom experiences, but ostensibly the curriculum focus is on academic areas and aims to address overcrowding in formal curriculum. Later in the document it is stated, “The Australian Curriculum…does not overload the curriculum” (p. 27).
schooling, it is clear that society regards the role of schools as encompassing a broader range of learnings than contained in the academic. It is, therefore, useful in focussing on what is learnt in the extracurriculum to keep the scope of study more open than that which is addressed in formal assessment. The learnings are likely to encompass those whose effects may not be directly identified in formal testing.

This study embeds structured activities outside the formal curriculum in their school contexts and focusses on the meanings (understandings, values, and intentions) students attribute to their learning through their extracurricular involvement. Through this study, it is hoped that a full and rich understanding of extracurricular participation is developed to extend future exploration of this area beyond concepts of development defined either by school context, most obviously formal classroom curriculum, or by the ideas developed within the frameworks of other activities in which adolescents participate outside of school.

**Effects for students related to extracurricular participation**

The largest body of extant literature specifically on extracurricular activities in secondary schools focusses on the benefits for students who participate. This has been investigated consistently for almost 50 years. Student involvement has been linked to a variety of positive outcomes including increased academic achievement (e.g., Broh, 2002; Gerber, 1996; Hanks & Eckland, 1976; Holloway, 1999-2000; Lipscomb, 2007; Otto, 1975), increased connection with school engendering an increased likelihood of staying in school (McNeal, 1995), and positive effects on student self-concept (Kort-Butler & Hagewen, 2011) and motivation (Holloway, 2002). Some authors have also examined potential negative effects for students of their participation. In addition, some comparative work between activity types has also been undertaken with positive and negative outcomes differentiated for each activity (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999; Marsh, 1992). In general, studies on student extracurricular activities have focussed on relationships between student participation and academic outcomes, non-academic and social outcomes, and connection or engagement with school. Also identified in the methods of current research are limitations related to the use of correlational data and the self-selection of student participants. In the following parts of this review, academic effects, non-academic and social effects, and student school engagement are addressed in turn.
Academic effects for students attributed to participation in school extracurricular activities

The interest in academic effects that might be related to extracurricular activity participation is perhaps unsurprising given the purposes of schooling. In broad terms, researchers have been using large-scale quantitative methods to examine a range of variables related to extracurricular participation with consistent attention being given to academic effects. A brief summary of current research is offered in this section, followed by an examination of theories developed to explain academic effects from student participation in extracurricular activities.

Researchers have found positive relationships between students’ extracurricular participation and academic achievement (Broh, 2002; Camp, 1990; Cooper, Valentine, Nye, & Lindsay, 1999; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Gerber, 1996; Lipscomb, 2007; Marsh, 1992; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; Shernoff, 2010; Spreitzer, 1994; Sweet, 1986) as well as higher educational aspirations and expectations (Otto, 1976; Otto & Alwin, 1977; Rehberg & Schafer, 1968; Wyble, 2009). Researchers who have incorporated variables of different gender, race, and socioeconomic status have found that positive associations generally hold true across these sub-groups (Blomfeld & Barber, 2011; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Marsh, 1992; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002; Peck, Roeser, Zarrett & Eccles, 2008). There are some studies where positive effects have not been substantiated (e.g., Melnick, Vanfossen, & Sabo, 1988; Schreiber & Chambers, 2002; Shulruf, Tumen, & Tolley, 2008).

Theories to explain the relationships between student participation and academic effects have been developing over time. Initially, according to a zero-sum model put forward by Coleman (1961), extracurricular participation detracted from other school goals by encouraging students to adopt values that were not in line with academic ones. Coleman argued that the values encouraged in extracurricular activities, and in particular athletics, are in opposition to academic pursuits. Specifically, Coleman contends that an adolescent society that emphasises peer acceptance, social status, and indifference to academic achievement is highlighted in these types of activities and that these values negatively influence adolescents’ academic performance.

Coleman’s (1961) model, however, has since been challenged (Marsh, 1992) with the notion that extracurricular involvement in most circumstances creates an increased engagement with school (Fullarton, 2002; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002), as well as an increased likelihood of staying in school (McNeal, 1995), thereby increasing students’ exposure to academic and social values as supported by the school. Breadth of extracurricular participation, aside from explanations regarding connection with school, still offers generally positive outcomes (Fredricks & Eccles, 2010).
and Kleitman (2002), however, report that this increased engagement was a non-linear trend that did not apply once a student was over-committed.

Indeed, over-commitment and pressure on students in extracurricular activities had long been an issue. J. Lee Pulling reported in the *Australian Journal of Education*, 1909: “Team games ‘have done much to make the kind of Briton with whom we are proud to be fellow countrymen’, but the demands for premierships were ‘too exacting and too constant’” (Sherington & Connellan, 1988, p. 138).

Also, reporting on a recent study examining the breadth of student participation in extracurricular activities, Fredricks and Eccles stated that:

…contrary to the media reports of stressed out and overscheduled adolescents, there was no evidence in this sample that high levels of organized activity participation was detrimental to the development of youth; students who engaged in a greater number of organized activities fared better on most dimensions than students who participated in very few or no activities. (Fredricks & Eccles, 2010, p. 328)

Broh (2002) presents a review of literature on extracurricular participation, in particular sports, and student test scores for American high school students. These provided disparate results and as identified by Broh offer little by way of explanation as to why participation might affect academic achievement and how different activities and levels of participation might impact on this relationship. She also identified issues of research design, especially limitations in using cross-sectional data, which do not allow us to distinguish between any positive academic effects of participation and the situation where more academically able students in general might participate in such activities.

Broh (2002) offers three models to explore why student participants in sport might achieve better academically. These are that participation in extracurricular sports “socializes adolescents in ways that promote educational success” (described as the developmental model); “offers student-athletes higher peer status…and membership in an academically oriented peer group that, in turn, facilitates higher academic performance” (the leading crowd hypothesis); and/or allows students “the ability to accrue benefits through membership in social networks (Portes, 1998 in Broh)” (the social capital model), of which the first and third models are supported by the research (Broh, 2002, pp. 71-72, 86). Differences are also identified in the type of activity in which students participated concluding that “interscholastic sports, intramural sports, and music (are) unique forms of participation, all having consequences for students’ achievement” (Broh, 2002, p. 84).
There are three theories that currently seem to be continuing to accumulate support in explaining students’ academic effects related to extracurricular activity participation, which are that students develop personally through their participation and that this development has an impact on their academic achievement (developmental); that students are connected to particular social groups and group behaviours that somehow become positive for their academic achievement (peer and social capital); or that students are connected to the values and processes of schooling, where they receive the teaching that promotes their academic achievements (engagement with school).

Consistent indications of positive effects on students’ academic achievement associated with extracurricular activity participation imply that processes exist in the activities that lead to student development. Even so, theoretically, the developmental model still looks at development more in terms of equipping students with skills to access academic learning in school and less in terms of the broad range of development that might occur within the activities themselves. Additionally, selection issues remain where students with similar traits to engage with school might also be those keen to engage with the nature of extracurricular activities offered. Despite this relatively strong body of literature linking extracurricular participation to improved academic outcomes, there appears to be a place for further examination of the learning that takes place with the extracurriculum.

**Non-academic personal and social effects for students attributed to participation in school extracurricular activities**

The social aspects of extracurricular participation have had an understandable role in the learning that takes place in this domain. As stated above, this is a theory put forward to explain student achievement attributed to extracurricular participation. Adolescent peer relations have been suggested to influence both positive and negative outcomes (Mahoney, 2000; Patrick et al., 1999). Literature reflects this in studies on how peer status is related to particular activities (Otto & Alwin, 1977; Spady, 1970). Given the social nature of extracurricular participation and the dominating peer culture of adolescents, some negative social effects have been explored. These include reinforcing gender stereotypes (Eder & Parker, 1987), perceptions of student popularity related to high status activities (Kinney, 1993), and certain deviant behaviours linked to peer relations in some activities (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Another potentially negative effect of extracurricular activity provision is the unequal access offered to certain groups to be able to take advantage of the benefits of participation (McNeal, 1999).

With some negative behaviours associated with extracurricular participation, personal and social effects can be difficult to separate. For example, risky behaviours are undertaken by
individuals but are often seen as being influenced by peer interactions. In some studies, drug and alcohol use are related to participation in some activities (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Hoffman, 2006), whereas other studies have determined that participation makes some adolescent groups less likely to engage in such behaviours (Elder, Leaver-Dunn, Wang, Nagy, & Green, 2000; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Fredricks & Eccles, 2010; Peretti-Watel et al., 2003). In addition, causal relationships between extracurricular participation, peer relationships, and deviant behaviours have been questioned on the basis that the youth who select to participate in certain activities may be those already experiencing such peer influences and conduct (Wilson, 2010). Guest and McRee also suggest that relationships between extracurricular participation and delinquency are likely to “depend more upon micro-level contextual factors than the type or content of the activities themselves” (Guest & McRee, 2009, p. 51).

Dawes and Larson (2011) establish the need for young people to be engaged at a psychological level rather than simply attend an activity in order to experience the benefits that participation might provide. This engagement in the activities themselves is also likely to be influenced by voluntary participation. Reinforcing intrinsic rewards is the potential for structure and challenge that encourage focus within these activities (Larson, 2000; Mahoney et al., 2003). These characteristics of extracurricular participation have been linked to certain types of learning, particularly the development of initiative (Mahoney et al., 2003). In addition, it is proposed that school extracurricular activities carry an additional benefit of connecting adolescents with their school. This idea of engaging students in school is examined in more detail in the following section.

**Student engagement with school related to participation in school extracurricular activities**

Further reinforcing the importance of the extracurricular domain of schooling as an area for study is the use of extracurricular participation as an indicator of student engagement with school (e.g., Fullarton, 2002; Holloway, 2002; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997) and the value of this area in developing adult-student interaction positive to student development (Holloway, 2002). Gerber (1996), who performed separate analyses for African American and white students, found that for both groups academic achievement was positively related to the amount of extracurricular participation (though more strongly related for white students) and that school-based activities had more of an effect for both groups than activities outside of school.

The benefits of student participation in extracurricular activities appear to be mediated by the learning that takes place in school; that is, extracurricular activities may assist in engaging students with the formal teaching that takes place in school, but not necessarily provide a rich
context for learning in their own right. On the contrary, a more recent body of research, reviewed and discussed below, has explored the positive development that takes place within youth activities themselves, although the contexts of these studies have been activities organised largely by community groups and in some instances by schools. The scope of these studies has provided a basis for the development of some ideas regarding the learning that takes place in organised youth activities, although this research does not have the school institution, itself, as a player in such an investigation. For that reason, my study sought to embed the focus on extracurricular learning within the school context.

The school context, beyond being recognised as a “social context” into which a student is “integrated” to varying degrees, has been studied in more depth, putting forward that the value of extracurricular involvement is its effect on student engagement with school. This theory of engagement is purported to explain the successes of students in formal school subjects, educational attainment, and non-deviant behaviour related to extracurricular involvement as being mediated by their greater connection with school (Fullarton, 2002; Hanks & Eckland, 1976; Holloway, 2002; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002; McNeal, 1995). Fullarton (2002) used extracurricular involvement as a measure for engagement with school. Some of these positive effects have been linked through personal development, social beliefs, and social relatedness developed through extracurricular participation (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001; Landers & Landers, 1978; Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Schaefer, Simpkins, Vest, & Price, 2011). Again, learning in the extracurricular domain is implied but not easily identified as separate from the learning achieved in other domains of adolescent life. Other studies have distinguished different benefits from school-based extracurricular activities and part-time work (e.g., Cooper et al., 1999; Marsh, 1992) and less structured after-school activities (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000). With the recognition that engagement with school is an important effect of extracurricular participation, examining the meanings of learning that occur within school-based extracurricular programs is reinforced. In addition, strong indications that such research should be open to exploring concepts related to academic learning, social development, and engagement with school are given.

*Adolescent development in structured activities*

Research on effects for students attributed to their participation implies that the extracurricular activities provide opportunities for students to develop. A problem persists in the nature of current research, however: Although relationships between benefits and negative effects have been established, there remain difficulties in attributing these effects to students’ participation. As participation is voluntary, would these students, in fact, demonstrate these effects regardless of their
extracurricular activities? In other words, are academically and socially competent students who are engaged with school those who opt to participate in activities? The breadth of studies focussing on effects for students of their extracurricular participation lends support to looking more closely at student development in these activities.

One possible direction for examining development in extracurricular activities is to explore activities that offer similar features outside the school context. With the interest in positive youth development, such structured activities for adolescents have received attention from researchers. This literature often combines activities provided by different organisations with those provided by schools. In light of the responsibilities given to schools for adolescent development, however, it is still argued as part of this thesis for school curriculum to encompass extracurricular activity programs. In addition, some studies (Gerber, 1996; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002) have found that school extracurricular activities were more beneficial for students than participation in other out-of-school activities.

The concise representation of research on extracurricular learning is addressed in detail in the following sections of this review.

**Positive development in structured youth activities**

Despite the number of studies focussing on the benefits of student extracurricular participation discussed in the previous section, learning in extracurricular activities has received little attention. Given certain similarities in adolescent activities between school and community providers, research on activities has, in some instances, combined study of participation in out-of-school and school-based extracurricular activities. The unifying features of such activities generally revolve around the idea that they are structured and led by a significant adult.

More recently, a new body of literature has emerged focussing on the developmental and growth experiences of students engaged in extracurricular activities in schools and communities. This research primarily addresses skills students may gain from participation. One study reporting student growth experiences undertaken by Hanson et al. (2003) addresses six processes of student development that the researchers derived from literature. These six processes were organised into two areas: personal and interpersonal. The personal processes included the development of self-identity, initiative, and skills described as emotional, physical, and cognitive. The interpersonal processes included the development of teamwork and social skills, peer relationships, and adult relationships (Hanson et al., 2003, pp. 27-28). Otto (1976) suggested that interpersonal skills are acquired in extracurricular participation. This suggestion has persisted throughout later explorations.
of the value of extracurricular participation including Mahoney et al. (2003) who examine further the effects of long-term participation in extracurricular activities and the development of interpersonal skills, found to be related to students’ educational success, and Shernoff (2010) who also supports the development of social competence in extracurricular activities, emphasising a need for program quality. Furthermore, Blomfeld and Barber (2011), reporting an Australian study, identified that positive development through participation in structured extracurricular activities predicted a greater sense of self-worth and more positive social and academic self-concepts in students (see also Blomfeld & Barber, 2009), particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Concepts of personal and interpersonal skill development through participation in extracurricular activities were also investigated qualitatively through focus group interviews on students’ self-report of “growth experiences” attributed to their extracurricular participation (Dworkin et al., 2003). The framework for learning reported in this phenomenological study supported the six personal and interpersonal skills identified in other work by Hanson et al. (2003). Both studies support strongly the inclusion of these skills in examining the nature of learning within the extracurricular domain.

**Expanding concepts of learning beyond skill development**

It is implied in other research on extracurricular activities that learning in the extracurricular domain extends beyond skills. Extracurricular learning may involve more intangible forms of learning such as the development of human, social, and cultural capital, in which case research should not be limited to that which contributes to student success as measured by assessment procedures within the formal curriculum. This section of the literature review presents research on extracurricular learning in terms of skills, capital, and activities as they relate to formal academic subjects.

Expanding the concepts of extracurricular learning beyond skills, McNeal (1999) stated that his research was based on four facts about student extracurricular participation and school culture. These were:

1. Participation in extracurricular activities is a likely source of human capital …conceptualized as an individual’s level of skills, knowledge, and educational attainment.
2. Participation in extracurricular activities is a valuable source of social capital … an individual’s network of relationships established with other persons … and the value or capital inherent within these relationships – Coleman, 1988).
3. Participation in extracurricular activities is associated with increased levels of cultural capital ... the acquisition and possession of more intangible forms of capital generally associated with the “educated class,” such as aesthetic preferences, linguistic styles, attitudes, and values (see Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Di Maggio, 1982).

4. School as a social context provides an opportunity structure that directly influences a student’s ability to be integrated in to the school environment, thereby affecting his or her ability to access the benefits of human, social, and cultural capital. (McNeal, 1999, pp. 292-293)

The first two concepts relate to the personal and interpersonal skill processes of Hanson et al. (2003) and support strongly their inclusion in any further examination of learning from extracurricular activities. Cultural capital and learning associated with cultural understanding and societal values support the expansion of the framework for investigating student learning.

There is a problem in assessing extracurricular learning in terms of its contribution to a student’s academic success (as detailed in studies such as Broh, 2002; Mahoney et al., 2003; Otto, 1975) in that it substantially narrows the conceptualisation of learning to skills directly related to assessment procedures within the formal curriculum. One differentiation between extracurricular offerings was made in terms of the educational effects of learnings in activities closely associated with academic subject areas and those less closely related.

Participation in these clubs [those closely linked to academic achievement e.g. math club, French club, national honour society] and organizations should enhance and extend classroom instruction. Other activities – such as football and other interscholastic athletics – have little obvious connection to academic achievement. It has been proposed that participation in the latter nonacademic extracurricular activities may be beneficial nonetheless. (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997, p. 241)

This statement implies that extracurricular learning involves skills and knowledge that are defined by academic assessment in the formal curriculum. Interestingly, it stops short of attributing the “benefits” of nonacademic activities to a concept of learning. Although participants’ meanings of learning may include relationships with the formal curriculum, the research agenda of this thesis is by no means limited to this understanding. The identification of skills (Dworkin et al., 2003; Hanson et al., 2003), concepts of capital (DiMaggio, 1982; McNeal, 1999), and a limited understanding of a wide variety of potential learning between activities related to formal academic subjects and those that are not (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997) reinforce the need to examine the broadest possible scope in what students understand they learn from their extracurricular activities. Indeed, students in these activities are best placed to inform us further.
Embedding research on student extracurricular development in schools

Although school and community activities for adolescents may bear similarities, participation has been examined differentially. Making the study of the learning outcomes from participation in secondary school extracurricular activities more complex is the need to understand the school context and how this context impacts upon the extracurricular program. Aside from issues such as resourcing and facilities, the school organisation and community will influence the way in which participants experience each activity. This implies a need to embed any study of extracurricular learning within the school community and extracurricular program in which students participate.

Holland and Andre identified a need to “include schools as a factor (in research on extracurricular activities) with individuals nested within schools” (Holland & Andre, 1987, p. 455). McNeal (1999) introduces school effects of particular relevance in exploring social learning in the extracurricular domain. These include the socioeconomic background of the student population and school size. Stearns and Glennie (2010) recognise the influence of school size and poverty levels on the number and types of activities available and that where more activities are available, more students participate. In addition, they link positive academic outcomes for students to participation in school extracurricular activities.

There are important features of learning within secondary school extracurricular activities which highlight the need to understand this learning more fully. One is motivation. This is aided by voluntary participation where students are able to select activities in which they are intrinsically interested. One study of extracurricular participation that takes a qualitative approach examined students’ commitment to extracurricular activities and the factors involved in their choosing to participate and continue their participation in an activity (Fredricks et al., 2002). They found that adolescents sought a degree of challenge in their activities, which affected their choice to engage in school-based or non-school-based activities. Finding that the context of the activity altered the characteristics also leads me to believe that examining extracurricular activities embedded in their school context is of value.

Listening to students’ voices about their development

The idea of giving an authentic voice to students in my research is discussed in Chapter 3 as it informs the methods used in the study. Student voice is becoming increasingly part of research literature related to schooling. According to Fielding, “there is mounting evidence from a wide range of countries in Australasia, North America and the UK that consulting young people about
their experience of schooling is moving from the periphery towards the centre of government attention” (Fielding, 2006, p. 299). Despite this assertion, student voice has received little attention in terms of curriculum. This may be due to practitioners’ awareness of the challenges of such discussions.

Too much contemporary student voice work invites failure and disillusion, either because its methodologies and contextual circumstances reinforce subjugation, or because its valorization pays too little attention to the extent to which young people are already incorporated by the practices of what is cool or customary. (Fielding, 2004, p. 296)

Although student voice has been discussed and used in research on broader school issues, primarily around school reform and students’ engagement (e.g., Cook-Sather, 2006; Fielding, 2001, 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2011; Flutter, 2006; Giroux, 1986; Kennedy & Datnow, 2010; Levin, 2000; Lodge, 2005; Mitra, 2004a, 2004b, 2006a, 2006b; Osterman, 2000; Rudduck, 2007; Smyth, 2006), students are largely excluded from voicing their ideas with respect to curriculum development and implementation. One exception here is research by Brooker and Macdonald (1999), who offered an appraisal of student voice during the evaluation of a senior physical education syllabus in Queensland, Australia. The input of students was limited by traditions in curriculum evaluation and the requirements of the authority overseeing the curriculum development. Brooker and Macdonald did, however, draw attention to the potential for students to have meaningful input, not just at the phase of evaluation, but also in the development processes of the curriculum itself: “The challenge is to embrace curriculum-making practices that are more inclusive and valuing of student voice” (Brooker & Macdonald, 1999, p. 95).

Not only does student voice address methodological issues in my study on student learning in the secondary school extracurriculum, but notions of how students’ voices might be heard in terms of curriculum conceptualisations may also be expanded. The methodological challenges of investigating extracurricular learning arise from the nature of the learning context in that:

• extracurricular learning is not formally assessed,
• extracurricular performance that is observable may not necessarily be attributed to learning that took place in the extracurricular activity, and
• extracurricular learning is not an area that has already been delineated effectively from other aspects of schooling and other learning contexts.

In researching this area, giving attention to student voice recognises that:

• students are in a position to have a perspective on their extracurricular learning,
• students are able to attribute their development to their experiences in their extracurricular activity or other settings, and

• students can be placed to have an authentic view of learning that remains open to many learnings beyond that which formal schooling already assesses so that their perspectives on their development are not limited by formal assessment tools.

Furthermore, inviting students to voice their understandings of learning in the secondary school extracurriculum might assist in realising how secondary schooling may move towards creating genuine learning communities where curriculum is not solely the domain of educational authorities.

**Chapter summary**

Although curriculum is conceptualised in a variety of ways, some of which might incorporate the extracurricular activities, to date, the focus of research on extracurricular activities has primarily been given to effects for students related to their participation. There is a sense of tension between considering the extracurriculum as an extra, rather than focussing on the development that might occur in this domain of schooling. Given current trends and the pressures for establishing and assessing standards in the formal curriculum, the learnings implied to be part of the extracurriculum deserve attention.

For the purposes of this study, curriculum is considered to be what students take away from their experiences. In terms of investigating extracurricular learning, students’ views of their development allow issues raised in previous research to be addressed. These issues include embedding the study of extracurricular learning in the school context as well as extending learning to encompass development beyond that which is likely to be assessed in the formal curriculum.

So, the challenge for this study is to ascertain what, in fact, students do take away from their participation in their extracurricular activities. Student voice is re-emerging in literature as having value. It offers an effective means to garner what students learn from their extracurricular participation where this development is not formally assessed and where the characteristics of the context may not be appreciated effectively should formal assessment strategies be employed. Student voice will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter, which explores the methods of this study.
Chapter 3
Research Design and Methods

The focus of this study is the examination of how students understand learning resulting from participation in secondary school extracurricular activities. At the end of Chapter 2, I touched upon my rationale for listening to students’ voices in order to examine the phenomenon of extracurricular learning. Listening to students’ voices addresses two areas of importance in this research—one practical and one theoretical. In practical terms, researching extracurricular learning presents challenges in viewing the phenomenon. These are assessing learning in a domain of secondary schooling that is not formally assessed, and attributing development viewed in the extracurricular activity to that participation where, ecologically, we understand that students develop through interactions with a range of people and settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1975). In theory, this study offers another dimension to research on student voice and highlights what students might offer to inform curriculum development in secondary schools. As discussed in Chapter 2, student voice in education has a strong rationale with researchers exploring both the value of listening to students and mechanisms through which their voices might be heard. However, at this point in time, students are generally silent in curriculum development and implementation.

In the following sections of this chapter, the research design and methods of my study to hear and give justice to students’ voices are described. First, the theoretical underpinning of the study is explained. Second, the research methods, including selection and sampling of participants and data-gathering methods, are presented. Third, the data analysis techniques used are described followed by considerations of ethics, credibility, and limitations.

**Theoretical underpinning of the study**

To explore the phenomenon of learning in secondary school extracurricular activities as identified and experienced by participants, a qualitative approach to the research agenda is warranted. As learning in the extracurricular community is bounded by the social relationships between individuals and the meanings placed on social interactions in this context, it is appropriate that the study is informed by symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969). Blumer states that the nature of symbolic interactionism is based on three premises.

First, “human beings act towards things on the basis of the meaning that the things have for them” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2).
The perceptions of participants regarding their learning within school extracurricular activities are crucial in exploring the nature of this learning. How participants act towards the extracurriculum as a learning context will be related to how they perceive this learning. The understandings of what and how they learn within the secondary school extracurriculum, as perceived by participants, are defined through this study. This gave rise to the first guiding question of the study:

1. How do participants perceive the secondary school extracurriculum as a learning context?

Second, “the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2).

Participants’ learning, as well as their understandings of their learning, is likely to be influenced by their social interactions. Jarvis, Holford, and Griffin (1998) state that, “learning clearly has a social dimension or context. We learn from and alongside other people, in all our social relationships. This is particularly evident in education, which involves relations between teachers and learners, and between learners themselves” (p. 37). As the secondary school extracurriculum is part of schooling but often takes place without the formal structure of classroom lessons, it is likely to be a rich environment for social learning. This led me to believe that a study of extracurricular learning should take into account the social context. It is through participation in these activities that learning experiences are defined. This premise supports the second guiding question of this study:

2. How is learning in the extracurriculum perceived to be similar to or different from that of other learning contexts?

Third, “these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he (sic) encounters” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2).

The final two guiding questions for the study involve the participants’ interpretation of the effects of and influences on extracurricular learning. Students’ reflections on these factors highlight the processes by which they develop and modify their understandings of learning in their extracurricular activities. These guiding questions are:

3. What are the perceived positive and negative outcomes of learning within the secondary school extracurriculum?

4. What are the perceived positive and negative influences on learning within the secondary school extracurriculum?
The meanings participants attribute to their learning within the secondary school extracurriculum as well as the processes through which these meanings are modified guided the exploration of this research agenda. By exploring meanings, a combination of understandings as well as discernment of values, significance, and intended purposes of participants’ extracurricular learning is examined. How participants understand their extracurricular activity centred on the broader question of what they felt they “got out of” participating. At times, this was guided by focussing on how they perceived they changed or developed in terms of what they can do (skill/psychomotor competencies), how they think (cognitive), and how they feel (emotional/affective). Additionally, their discernment of the value and the significance of their extracurricular involvement further defines the boundaries of the extracurricular context by identifying how it contributes to their lives in ways that are similar to or different from other contexts. The intended purposes of their extracurricular experiences can be immediate or future oriented. Understanding this aids in knowing how participants enter this context and their reasons for staying involved. Layered on this is the potential for self-awareness that may be likened to metacognitive awareness where students understand how they learn in the extracurricular context and the more abstract purposes that surround their experiences. The meanings participants draw from their extracurricular involvement are both important in themselves as well as providing the potential for giving insight into the phenomenon of extracurricular learning. In order to elicit students’ meanings, listening to their voices is an essential aspect of gaining an authentic and in-depth understanding of their extracurricular experiences and perceptions of their learning.

**Methods**

Congruent with a symbolic interactionist approach, student voice is vital to this study, both in terms of eliciting the meanings they attribute to their extracurricular learning and also providing important insights into the nature of this learning. In order to hear the voices of students reflecting on their learning, opportunities to discuss extracurricular learning with them were essential. Given the social nature of the activities in which students are involved as well as the social interactions of meaning making, focus group discussions were used.

In addition, owing to the in-depth nature of this inquiry and given that these activities are embedded in the school context, case study methods were used (Merriam, 1988, 1998; Stake, 1995, 2006). As school structures are deemed likely to impact upon extracurricular programs, a multiple case study of three schools, one from each of the main secondary school education providers in Queensland, was justified. The following section addresses the selection and sampling of participants, then the data collection methods employed.
Selection of case study schools

A multiple case study allows for comparison of students’ perceptions of their extracurricular learning both within and between schools. Three schools, each from one of the three main providers of secondary education in Queensland, were selected.

Le Compte and Preissle (1993) identify certain research characteristics that “make statistical sampling irrelevant,” including “where the goal of the research is explication of meanings or microsocial processes” (p. 83). Given that the phenomenon of learning in secondary school extracurricular settings has received little attention in research to date and that this study is aimed towards “explication of meanings” of learning as held by participants in extracurricular programs, criterion-based selection of sites and participants was warranted.

The rationale for selecting a school from each sector was the notion that school governance might affect extracurricular programs. In addition, a multiple case study sought a broader range of student perspectives than might be discovered in a single setting, given that extracurricular contexts are embedded in the culture and community of their schools. Owing to the school effects acknowledged in previous research detailed in Chapter 2 and the recommendation by Holland and Andre (1987) that further study of extracurricular activities recognise that they exist within the culture and communities of schools, gathering more than a single school perspective was necessary.

The school effects, identified in previous studies, which promote participation and engagement include such characteristics as:

- school size (Lindsay, 1984) and socioeconomic status (influencing student participation and adequacy of activity resourcing (McNeal, 1999));
- consistency of participation (Mahoney et al., 2003);
- quality of programs and adult leadership (Hanson et al., 2003); and
- variety, structure, and context of activities (Cooper et al., 1999).

Schools selected for participation fulfilled these requirements and accordingly were able to provide rich sources of data for this study. The criteria guiding the selection of the case study schools were:

- extensive extracurricular programming across a variety of categories including sport, music and performing arts, service groups, and clubs;
- high levels of student involvement in activities;
• clearly articulated support and rationale for extracurricular programming; and
• activities that are well-established within the school’s extracurricular program.

The three schools selected together met the following criteria including:

• single gender and co-educational schools;
• varied school sizes according to student populations; and
• well-established programs and activities.

A number of schools in Queensland would meet these criteria and some were approached. It must be emphasised, however, that the nature of the research meant that schools invited to participate held a direct and clear commitment to their extracurricular provision. Without that investment, students would not have the necessary experiences to describe what they take away from their extracurricular participation. Because of the intrusion of the researcher and focus group methods, it was important that the three schools not only met the criteria but also were willing to participate fully. Had the schools that were approached failed to meet the above criteria, both singularly and together, more invitations to participate in the research would have been necessary. Further investigation of schools with a wider range of programs and populations, including small schools, may be beneficial in the future.

This selection of Queensland secondary schools represents a variety of organisational structures, sizes, and cultures that enrich information obtained about extracurricular learning and allowed depth of access for extensive data collection. Having explained the selection of schools, I now describe the selection of activities and sampling of participants.

Selection of activities within schools

The value of social learning indicated the use of group activities as the focus of this study. This meant that individual activities were not included. Further selection of activities is made in terms of representing the categories of activities as used in previous research studies. These categories are sport, music and cultural activities, clubs, and service activities. Outdoor education programs are not included in this study, although labelled extracurricular in some schools. These programs benefit from focussed research in a separate study (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997).

Options for performing arts activities include participation in the school production (the school play or musical), band or orchestra, or choir. Options for sports were any team sport.
Options for club activities included Interact (a student level group affiliated with Rotary International), debating, environmental or social justice groups, and other hobby clubs. These groups span the domains of hobbies, service, and academic clubs. Student government (school councils) was also included as an option.

**Sampling of participants**

Campbell (1978) suggests that extracurricular activities are settings where the structures may change with year levels. As the experiences in extracurricular activities are likely to develop as students mature and adopt different roles within the activities, a random sample of students across year levels 8 to 10 is included. Year 8 is the intake year for secondary schools in Queensland with most students being 12 years of age. Kinney (1993) reported that in the younger years of secondary school, participation rates in extracurricular activities were similar between public and Catholic schools, with participation at private schools being slightly higher; this gap widened in the later years. Assuming that rates of participation may be similar between sectors in Australia, focus on students at junior level may also facilitate comparison between schools. The year levels selected for study are deemed to provide a group of students representing initiation into extracurricular activities (at Year 8) through to those whose extracurricular participation is more established. The senior years of secondary education (Years 11 and 12) are excluded from this study. Thus a cohort of Years 8 to 10 students balances a need to view changes in extracurricular learning structures as implied by Campbell (1978), while narrowing the focus of the study to secondary students who are in a position to participate to an optimal level in their chosen extracurricular endeavours. This cohort provides perspectives from students in the “middle years,” a current focus in education. An action plan published by Education Queensland states:

State schools will work with parents and students to increase access to a range of extracurricular activities and options to ensure students in Years 8 and 9 continue to engage in relevant learning…. Schools should actively encourage the involvement of students in a range of innovative curricular and extracurricular activities both in and out of school. (Education Queensland, 2003, p. 10)

Sampling within schools at all stages depended on individuals’ involvement in the extracurricular program. It was intended that students involved in focus groups should:

- be involved in meetings, rehearsals, activities, or training sessions and all performances, competitions, and inter-school activities; and

---

14 State schools are publicly funded government schools.
represent a variety of levels of involvement, from undertaking leadership roles to highly involved non-leaders, to those less involved.

In each case, a staff member from the school liaised with students to recruit participants for the study. I requested that students needed to be involved in at least one activity so that they would be able to respond to questions regarding their extracurricular involvement. I also explained that it would be useful to have students who were involved in different types of activities and at different levels or in different roles.

**Data collection techniques**

Congruent with a qualitative study based on symbolic interactionism, students were involved in an initial and a follow-up focus group discussion. At the beginning of the initial focus group discussions, a short questionnaire was administered to obtain individual responses to the guiding questions to prompt discussion as well as to provide an alternative data source should students be reluctant to share particular ideas. This is explored in more depth in the following section.

Understanding each school culture, community, and extracurricular context is essential in interpreting students’ voices with integrity. Additional research included interviews with school principals, staff, and parents; non-participant observations of activities; and investigation of school documents pertaining to each school’s extracurricular program. As this study gives primacy to the voices of student participants, these data are not reported directly, but rather used to ensure that the context is revealed with depth and veracity. The data collection techniques are now explored in more detail.

**Focus group discussions and nominal group technique**

Focus group discussions are supported as an established data collection tool in qualitative research (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001; Morgan, 1997). A number of focus group discussions with between three and eight student participants at a time were held in each of the three schools. Students were involved in both an initial and follow-up focus group session held approximately five weeks apart. Student focus groups were divided approximately into year levels at each site. The liaison staff member in each school determined my access to particular groups of students. In the first and third case studies, year levels of students in focus groups were distinct. In the second case study, students from different year levels participated together in each discussion. Focus group discussions followed a Focus Group Guide (see Appendices D and E) derived from the research questions for the study using language deemed to suit the student participants.
Varying the modes of focus group discussions through activity-oriented processes can aid the development and depth of discussions (Colucci, 2007) encouraging multi-dimensional group participation and interaction. The processes of Nominal Group Technique (NGT) (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975) offered a structured approach to the focus group activities employed in this study. NGT involved a specified process by which participants could contribute individual ideas as well as discuss those raised by other members of the group. Initially, participants completed a set of written questions independently (see pre-focus group survey, Appendix C). These were used to establish a set of discussion points to share in a round-robin fashion. As points were raised, I wrote them on a sheet of poster paper so that all participants could view them. Each point was then revisited in order to elaborate and describe them more deeply. Participants were asked to assist in grouping or summarising the points so that they could then individually rank order them according to the importance that point held for them. These techniques were aimed at involving the participants in as many steps of the initial data gathering and analysis as possible. Invariably, the points raised in discussion formed initial provisional categories for open coding (discussed below with data analysis).

The pre-focus group discussion questions offered a guide to participants so that they might understand the nature of the enquiry more fully. They also provided additional sources of data so that individual opinion might be separated from group opinion where these differed. Plaut, Landis, and Trevor (1993) suggest that this technique of requesting written information was, for them, “significant for cases in which a respondent noted either an issue passed over in the discussion or something he or she felt was too sensitive to be mentioned in the group” (Plaut et al., 1993, p. 207). Combining the gathering of written data from individuals with records of the focus group discussions was important in these focus groups where participants were very likely to know one another and have a social dynamic well established. The opportunity to offer written responses was deemed to improve the likelihood of frank and comprehensive data from those participants who might be more reserved about their views in a group situation.

Additional data were collected by way of observations, interviews with school principals and staff, and also reviews of documents pertaining to the schools’ extracurricular programs. These data assisted in creating a deep understanding of the contexts in which students participated in their activities and confirming that the learnings students voiced were, in fact, feasible and might be interpreted and represented effectively in the research process. The context statements about each school articulated at the beginning of Chapters 4, 5, and 6 reflect much of what was understood from these observations, interviews, and documents. Given that confidentiality and anonymity of schools and individual participants are required, these data have been amalgamated into a narrative
to allow readers to perceive key features of the school contexts and, in turn, read the students’ views as they were voiced.

**Pilot study trial of focus group protocols and observations**

Prior to undertaking the data collection at the main sites, a pilot study was completed at a separate venue. The aims of this pilot were to trial the student focus group discussion as a data-gathering technique; to review research instruments including the student focus group guide and student pre-focus group questions, and to undertake pilot observations to determine what these could contribute to the main study.

A focus group discussion was held with eleven students from Years 7, 9, and 10. Year 7 students were included as the pilot school had a middle-school structure and Year 8 students were not available during the research period. As these Year 7 students were part of the middle school, engaged in a formal timetable of classes similar to their Year 8 counterparts, and accessed similar extracurricular activities, their involvement in this pilot phase was warranted.

A focus group discussion of 90 minutes was held. The discussion was audio taped and notes were made during the session on poster paper, which could be taken away and used in analysis. This discussion highlighted important areas that were taken into consideration in adapting the student focus group protocols for the main study. Relying on audiotape to provide a useful record of the discussion for further analysis proved challenging because the clarity of the recording itself, with students at times speaking over one another, was affected. In addition, identifying different participants was not possible. On the basis of the pilot study, arrangements were made to record student focus group discussions on digital video. Accordingly, changes to the ethical clearance protocol and informed consent materials were made. The pilot focus group discussion also made clear that in order to cover the questions that would illuminate perspectives on extracurricular learning, 11 participants in a single session was not ideal. This number of student participants meant some confusion of ideas where students spoke over one another, as well as a tendency for less assertive students to be silenced. It was at this stage that I determined that 4 to 6 participants in each discussion would be beneficial to allow interactions and explication of meanings from a variety of perspectives without losing focus on the research agenda. The length of the session also proved a challenge for participants in their abilities to concentrate and remain interested in the discussion. Although I had always intended to hold an initial and then follow-up focus group sessions with student participants, the need for this—in terms of gaining the most from student participants—was reinforced; therefore sessions in the main study were kept to less than 60 minutes.
Research instruments were also adapted in the light of the pilot focus group session. The pre-focus group questions, although an important facet of the focus group data gathering and nominal group technique structure, involved too many questions and took students a significant time period to complete. Students also responded that they were not keen to do the writing task as it was too like schoolwork. This perception altered the tone of the students’ interactions with me. Rather than being perceived as someone interested in their perspectives on their extracurricular participation, it seemed to resemble classroom interaction between students and a teacher. Students did confirm, however, that the pre-focus group questions would be fine if they were phrased in a way that was easy to understand and if there were not too many.

Accordingly, I determined that the research agenda could be satisfied in asking two main questions in the initial focus group discussions:

1. Why do you participate in extracurricular activities?
2. What do you think you get out of participating in extracurricular activities?

The reasons students gave for participating were likely to give insight into the meanings that the activities held for them and possibly give some indications of the characteristics of the activities that delineated the context. Perceptions about the secondary school extracurriculum as a learning context were also deemed to include what and how students learn in their activities, hence the second question to students which sought to balance focussing students’ attention on broadest scope of learning or development with a question that could be easily interpreted by adolescents.

Further probing questions that could be used as needed were also included in the Focus Group Guides (see Appendices D and E).

Two further questions were asked in the follow-up focus group discussions. These were:

3. What are the positive or negative effects of what you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities?
4. What influences what you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities positively or negatively?

Additional data were included in the pre-focus group questionnaire so that I had a record of the participants’ ages, their extracurricular activities and a brief description of them, and written responses that formed the basis of the discussion. I also decided that I would act as scribe during the
focus group discussions so that it was less like schoolwork for participants. The revisions made in
light of the feedback from the pilot study did much to simplify the process and broaden the scope of
the discussion that was possible in the time frame.

The process for making observation notes was revised in view of the pilot study. Rather than
creating a narrative of student behaviours in their extracurricular activities, I decided that it was
more useful to focus on the interactions of participants and how they might be related to their
testimonies of learning in the extracurricular setting. The role of the non-participant observations
was to verify or challenge data gathered directly from participants in their verbal accounts of
extracurricular learning as well as to gain a more complete picture of their experiences to facilitate
credible interpretation of focus group data. This refocussed the type of notes that were taken during
observations in the main study.

Data analysis

The lack of research into the processes of learning within the secondary school extracurriculum
from the perspective of students meant that there were many categories and properties of the
phenomenon yet to be identified. Grounded theory methods of analysis are particularly suited to this
task. They offered a systematic approach to collecting, organising, and analysing data from the
empirical world in question. They also constituted “an approach to theory development based on the
study of human conduct and the contexts and forces that impinge on human conduct” (Chenitz &
Swanson, 1986, p. 14). As Chenitz and Swanson note:

Using a symbolic interactionist perspective, grounded theory provides a way to study human
behaviour and interaction. This approach is particularly useful to conceptualize behaviour in
complex situations, to understand unresolved or emerging social problems, and to understand the
impact of new ideologies. (p. 7)

As stated above, grounded theory methods were used to analyse “extensive amounts of rich data
with thick description” generated from the focus groups (Charmaz & Geertz in Charmaz, 2000, p.
514). These data were then analysed using a two-step coding process. Initially open coding was
used to break down the data conceptually into categories. Axial coding was then used to link these
categories and plot relationships between them (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A “constant comparative
method of analysis” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 62) was employed to challenge systematically
emerging themes. This was undertaken by examining the data and asking such questions as, “What
is this? Who does it involve? Where does this occur? What does it represent? How often?” My
thinking about these data was noted in memos. Data, codes, and memos were organised using N6
qualitative data analysis software (Version 6) (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2002).
Students’ voices conveyed in the focus group data were given primacy in the first stages of analysis. These data were then verified and challenged through my non-participant observations as well as triangulated with reports from other data sources including the school principals, staff involved in their school’s extracurricular program, and parents. School documents also provided another important perspective on how extracurricular activities were perceived in each school context. Owing to the importance given to the meanings participants had for their extracurricular learning, I wanted to give as much weight and emphasis as possible to student voices in discussions as well as in analysis. Nominal group technique (Delbecq et al., 1975) proved a useful tool in balancing group and individual views (recorded individually in response to the pre-focus group questions) as well as creating shared discussion points, rather than a one-way interview where I would ask the questions. Students were not always forthcoming and in some groups I felt I took a more active role in the discussion than in other situations. In these instances, I would generally invite the students to challenge my reiteration of their ideas to check whether I had understood them. In most instances, the nominal group techniques were effective.

One option identified by Strauss and Corbin (1990) in doing open coding is to use “in vivo” words or phrases as the initial categories. I used the nominal group technique in a provisional manner to create these first open codes. Students’ views shared at the round-robin phase were recorded on poster paper to focus the discussion. The labels of these points or groups of points, where similar items were agreed by the participants to be able to be grouped together, were clear categories; I used them directly from the focus group session as such. I then reviewed the digital video recordings in order to describe these categories more extensively based on the model of Strauss and Corbin (1990), where the properties and dimensions of each are explored as fully as possible. Properties form the characteristics of a category whereas dimensions describe the parameters of each characteristic.

Axial coding was then used to link these categories (derived in the open coding processes) and plot relationships between them (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This moved data analysis forward to examine

…the conditions that give rise to it (a particular category); the context in which it is embedded; the action/interactional strategies by which it is handled, managed, carried out; and the consequences of those strategies. These specifying features of a category give it precision, thus we refer to them as sub categories. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97)

An example of this process is included as Table 2.
Table 2

Example of Data Analysis Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-focus group questionnaire student response</th>
<th>Poster notes from student voice in NGT process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ‘Swimming - Sense of dis[c]ipline and calm’. (A13) | Discipline  
Give up free time  
Stay calm |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open code from student label</th>
<th>Student voice text units from video recording (Student identification in brackets)</th>
<th>Memo about text units</th>
<th>Axial codes - categories offered by students in focus group discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Discipline                   | For rowing, you have to discipline yourself to like get up so early (A12). You have to discipline yourself like before a trial you have to discipline yourself to stay calm and not to like completely freak out and fall out of the boat or something (A13). | Two aspects of discipline using rowing as the example activity. It requires students to get up early. This seemed an understandable challenge for adolescents. Note the phrase ‘discipline yourself’ – the discipline is from within not external to the individual. The second example is under the pressure of competition. Discipline seems to be about controlling reactions to situations. The consequence of not controlling the reaction is provided by the activity and the student relating ‘freak[ing] out’ to ‘fall[ing] out of the boat.’ The ‘or something’ seems to apply to another alternative that is possibly considered equally dramatic. Controlling emotions and being calm under pressure. Note: Pre-focus group questionnaire, discipline connected with swimming. In discussion, connected with rowing. | Ability to deal  
Commitment |

The data analysis process took data from three sources. First, students’ individual written responses in the pre-focus group questionnaire often introduced a concept, which they then shared in the discussion. Second, during the discussions I wrote notes on poster paper that the students were to read and check. These were then revisited later in the discussion in order to give students
opportunities to clarify, give more information, or share the thinking behind the response. Third, the discussions were digitally recorded so I could review the discussions and use students’ words to elaborate on the concepts raised. These are written above as text units. All material was imported into the N6 qualitative data analysis software (Version 6) (QSR International Pty Ltd, 2002). From there, I added memos of my reflections, thinking, and interpretations of the students’ words as well as different levels of coding.

Although maintaining the focus on the students’ actual words at the first stage of analysis led to a more diverse collection of codes than if I had endeavoured at this stage to label more consistently across groups within and between cases, I felt that this maintained the data as close to participant views as possible for as long as possible in the analytic process. Accordingly, in the case study Chapters 4, 5, and 6, the grouping terms agreed by the students are discussed as their categories of learning in their terms. In the next stage of the research process, a further level of analysis was undertaken. I examined the students’ words again and drew together their ideas with additional open codes and a meta-axial coding of their categories and sub-categories into similar concepts to allow for a more cohesive and thorough examination of themes across and between cases.

Grounded theory methods may be taken further through a process of selective coding in which a core category is chosen (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This core category describes a single basic social process under which all other categories and sub-categories are incorporated. Given that this study aims to identify and describe how participants understand their learning in the secondary school extracurricular context, the processes of open and axial coding, and the descriptive analyses they offered, were considered sufficient. For these purposes, grounded theory methods provide a rigorous process by which to analyse the data rather than a methodology through which to establish a particular grounded theory.

Credibility and accuracy

Careful recording of processes from the selection and sampling of participants through to thorough recording of data and data analysis procedures enhance the credibility of this study. Member checking was used internally in the process of the initial and follow-up student focus groups whereby summaries of the main themes from the initial focus group discussions were returned to students for verification and further discussion in the follow-up focus group session. Focus groups also included a written record from participants to gather individual responses to the key areas discussed and to provide further written records to substantiate other data recording. Non-participant observations supported the accuracy of student reports as well as my interpretations and
representations of the students’ voices. The handling of data emphasised maintaining the integrity of the perspectives of the participants in presenting data in their words in each of the case study chapters so that readers could verify the interpretations and meta-analysis undertaken for the cross-case analysis.

Ethics

The project received ethical clearance through Griffith University prior to approaching schools to participate. Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all participants, including the consent of a parent or guardian in the case of student participants (see Appendices A and B). The data gathered from participants remained confidential and reports of the research maintained participants’ anonymity.

Limitations

LeCompte and Preissle state:

Where statistical sampling to ensure representativeness is obviated by research circumstances, ethnographers aim for comparability and translatability of findings rather than for outright transference to groups not investigated. Assuring comparability and translatability rest upon the systematic application of nonstatistical selection procedures and provide a foundation for making inferences about similarities and differences among groups. (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 83)

The results of this study are embedded in the contexts in which the data were gathered. Systematic selection of participants, comprehensive data collection methods, structured data analysis, and rich, thick descriptions of the contexts under study do, however, allow for some assessment of comparability with other settings and therefore the potential for results, at least in propositional form, to be translated to other contexts.

Chapter summary

Symbolic interactionism offers a way of understanding how students interpret their extracurricular learning. Here, it is used as a theoretical framework to underpin the methodological approach as well as to understand the relationship between the phenomenon of extracurricular learning and the meanings students attribute to it. From this theoretical viewpoint, students act towards their extracurricular learning on the basis of the meanings that it has for them and they develop and adapt these meanings through their social interactions. So, through examining the meanings students have for their extracurricular learning, a lens is held which focusses on the nature of that learning. Grounded theory methods of analysis provide the means to elicit those understandings from student focus group discussion data. It is reiterated here that grounded theory methods provide a rigorous
system of analysis of qualitative data consistent with the tenets of symbolic interactionism. The methods of this study have been addressed in order to fulfil the research aims of understanding the secondary school extracurriculum as experienced by students, addressing important factors including the assessment of learning and attribution of that learning to the extracurricular context. As detailed in this chapter, attention has been paid to developing and applying a systematic and rigorous approach to data collection and analysis.

Chapters 4 to 6 present data from each of the three case studies: an independent girls school, a coeducational state high school, and a Catholic boys school. As described in Chapter 3 in the data analysis processes, findings reported in the case study chapters give primacy to the words and ideas voiced by students. Given the overall focus on trying to illuminate the curriculum of the extracurriculum, the greatest detail is given to students’ responses about what they get out of participating in their extracurricular activities. Other aspects of their learning are presented and discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, drawing upon data from the focus group questions. The students’ voices are brought to the fore through this process, leaving the consolidation of the meanings students offer to the cross-case analysis in Chapter 7. At this point, a further level of analysis of students’ responses is presented and more direct links to the guiding questions of the study are established.

Chapter 4 commences the presentation of data from the first case study in an independent girls school.
Chapter 4

Case Study 1 – An Independent Girls School

This chapter is constructed in three parts. Part 1 describes the context of the first case study. Part 2 presents data from students in response to the question, “What do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activity?” Part 3 then presents a synthesis from the range of interactive discussions that took place in the initial and follow-up focus group sessions highlighting students’ perceptions of their extracurricular activity as a learning context, the influences they perceive affect their extracurricular participation and development, and the effects they attribute to their extracurricular participation and learning.

Context

Case Study 1 focuses on the extracurricular activity program at an independent girls school (School A). This school is a Protestant Christian school in suburban Queensland. It was established in the early 1900s, and caters for students from a preparatory year (circa age 5 years) to Year 12 (circa age 17 years) who are located in adjoining campuses.

The philosophy and goals of the school and its extracurricular program

A denominational school with a Christian foundation for supporting student development, School A also focuses strongly on achievement in academic subjects. The school prides itself on high academic achievement with more than 90% of students progressing to tertiary courses.

Extracurricular activities in which students may participate are listed in the school’s prospectus, and include group activities that form the basis of this study, as well as individual activities, annual excursions, workshops, and competitions aligned with formal curriculum areas. Specific reference to an overarching vision or set of goals for the extracurricular program as a whole is absent from the prospectus, although these goals are evident when discussing extracurricular provision with the school Principal. The Principal asserts that the school’s extracurricular program allows the very academically able student to get lateral extension; the student who is not particularly academic to receive kudos in another area; and social inclusion for the loner. She highlights that:

*If school life is broken up into classroom academic focus, other interactions that might occur at lunchtimes [and so on], and [the] extracurricular, the extracurricular has a huge role in interpersonal development...* Principal A, Interview 2
This interpersonal development is related to the team structures that require a sense of commitment to attend, make a contribution, and interact effectively with other people. In addition, the Principal singles out the role of extracurricular participation in students’ development of resilience.

In a team situation, you have to develop resilience. … This happened last year [you have won] every other race in the season and the one race that really counts, you have a gear [equipment] failure. Well, you know, it happens – it’s life sometimes. And you have to recover from that. Principal A, Interview 2

Consistently, it appears that extracurricular participation is promoted, endorsed, and supported. The code of conduct also specifies that students should be actively involved in school life as participants or spectators. At the same time, students are encouraged to maintain a balance between extracurricular activities and their academic commitments.

**School site**

The school presents a tidy outlook, the physical environment giving the impression of pride in the grounds with some attention to aesthetics including the use of gardens and other decoration. The secondary school campus (Years 8 to 12) includes classroom buildings—mostly two storeys—as well as specialist facilities. These include a performing arts complex (a multi-purpose hall with a performance stage adjoining with adjacent classrooms which can function as backstage areas, and sound-proof practice rooms for instrumental music), indoor sports complex, swimming pool, chapel, and library. The school’s sports fields are located off-site. In addition, some specialist facilities used for extracurricular activities are external to the school, for example a community basketball centre.

**School community**

At the time of the main data collection period, 556 students were enrolled in the secondary school. Each year level had a similar number of students enrolled, except Year 12, where the enrolment was just under 100 students.

The school is situated in a metropolitan suburb of above-average socioeconomic status. The school population consists of students from the local area as well as many students who travel greater distances to attend, often using public transport. There are also some school bus services, which some students use. The distance students travel to and from school, as well as the extent to which they rely on public transport, may affect involvement in certain extracurricular activities.

The small population of the school is marketed as an attraction to provide greater opportunities for students to participate, particularly in the extracurricular domain. Although
students pay high fees, the level of government support is relatively low (calculated from the indexing socioeconomic status of students enrolled), therefore the wealth of the school is lower than some other independent schools, in spite of appearances.

An academic focus is promoted at the school. The prospectus upholds a well-rounded education with a focus on academic standards, values, and leadership opportunities. Balance in the learning environment is reflected in the school’s commitment to a broad extracurricular program. The high academic standards promoted are reflected in academic results, which are published in the school’s annual report. Students at the school achieve above the state average in the Overall Position (OP) rankings that are awarded to determine tertiary entrance. More than 90% of students were offered tertiary places in the first round of offers in the year preceding data collection.

The school has a tradition in which the school Board of Trustees sets policies which the Principal is given authority to manage in day-to-day decision making at school level. This role includes overseeing the extracurricular program. Teaching staff at the school are also involved in extracurricular activities. However, the specialist requirements of these activities are acknowledged in the school’s commitment to employ specialist staff in a number of areas. Sports activities often involve specialist coaches, with teaching staff acting as team managers. Teaching staff with specialist skills are involved in leading certain extracurricular activities as well. The Enterprise Bargaining industrial agreement under which teaching staff are employed specifies that extracurricular participation is “honorary and voluntary.” However, a system is being established for the remuneration of staff who take extracurricular activities to be funded by the Parents and Friends Association.

Curriculum

The school offers a unitised curriculum in Years 8 to 10, so students may attend classes where they study with girls in other year levels. Extracurricular sports are most often organised in age categories. However, groups such as music ensembles and clubs are offered across age groups, so the interactions between students of different ages are not, therefore, solely the domain of extracurricular activities in this school context.

Certain senior subjects such as Health and Physical Education (HPE) and Music Extension have a strong relationship with their extracurricular counterparts. Annual competitions and events closely related to academic subject areas are undertaken and listed as extracurricular in the school prospectus.
Extracurricular activities

This description of the extracurricular offerings at School A refers to those in operation during the period in which data were collected. The activities offered included 10 instrumental music ensembles, 2 choirs and a vocal group, 18 sports, 9 club activities, and debating.

Teaching staff in music and performing arts undertook leadership of the music groups. Again, these staff were specialists in their areas and had skills and experience beyond those normally associated with classroom teaching. Of the 18 extracurricular sports offered by the school, 10 were team activities that were the focus of this study. This delineation, however, is blurred somewhat by how students, staff, and the school regard individuals competing within a group. For example, swimming was considered a team activity by the students. The team sports offered that are the focus of this study were badminton, basketball, cricket, hockey, netball, rowing, soccer, softball, volleyball, and touch football. The variety of individual sports included artistic gymnastics, athletics, cross country, equestrian, rhythmic gymnastics, swimming, surf lifesaving, and tennis. Sports were coordinated by a Head of Sport whose duties were primarily directed towards extracurricular sporting activities. Each sport had a coordinator who was a member of the teaching staff at the school. The coordinator roles were varied, but often did not include coaching. Specialist coaches were sub-contracted from outside the school. For a small number of sports, the management of training was also under the control of external training organisations. Debating was coordinated by a teacher, although other people including past students were brought in to the school to coach debating teams. Club activities were coordinated by teaching staff.

Many sports also had a parent support group, as did debating and music. These support groups performed a variety of roles which included fundraising and management of uniforms. In many cases, specialist uniforms were designed to suit particular activities. Parents from support groups often volunteered to be team managers for different sporting teams. These team managers would attend games, look after the care of uniforms, and support the coaches and coordinators. They were considered a valuable support to the school’s endeavours to provide a wide variety of quality experiences in extracurricular activities. During the data collection period, the music support group reported at a school concert their fundraising efforts, which had allowed the school to purchase a number of new instruments, particularly the larger more expensive instruments which students may not otherwise have been able to access. The support groups operated under the management of the Parents and Friends Association with a staff position at the school responsible for facilitating and coordinating the support group fundraising activities. It was quite evident in this
study that attention had been paid to organising a framework under which these support groups could operate effectively.

**Participants in the study**

Twenty students from School A participated in this study. The ages, year levels, and activities in which each student participated are summarised in Appendix F. Eight of the students were in Year 8, seven in Year 9, and five in Year 10. They were involved in a variety of sports, cultural activities, and clubs. Most students were involved in more than one activity and often involved in different types of activities.

**What students at School A report that they learn in the secondary school extracurriculum**

As explained in Chapter 3, a focus group process was used to enable student participants to create a list of ideas about what they got out of participating in extracurricular activities. These were noted on poster paper. Ideas were then described, clarified, and grouped into main themes by the participants themselves. Cover terms and items reported here remain in students’ own words. The focus group discussions allowed students to discuss ideas and then propose some connections between them through grouping ideas that they perceived were related or could be incorporated into some main themes. Accordingly, these groupings and items should not be seen as exclusive; at times, items are included across groups and the similarities between some of the cover terms suggest strong relationships.

In order to present the data and show these relationships, I use diagrams. It is my intention that these diagrams represent the relative emphasis students placed on their ideas. Although this visual representation is a useful tool for communicating and clarifying the themes students put forward, the complexities of the relationships between items need to be considered. These diagrams are almost exclusively in an individual student’s words; however, consensus within groups occurred in the focus group discussion when students joined together to clarify or explain their ideas on a particular item. There is a move then, from the perspective of an individual through discussion in the group to further development and modification of those meanings in the group setting. When ranking the themes, there were often different opinions and so the diagrams offer an interpretation of the students’ responses representing a common perspective from each group rather than the shades of students’ individual perspectives. This said, the clarity of the representation still remains useful in understanding these data and the symbolic interactionist approach to the study provides a way of understanding meaning that is modified in interaction between individuals.
The sections below take each of the three student focus groups separately and detail their ideas (items) and the initial categorisations or groupings of ideas (cover terms) they suggested. Some student statements are so indicative of a cover term, for example “we learn to cooperate,” that further clarification is not necessary. In contrast, where the meaning students attribute to a particular idea is nuanced or expressed in a manner that does not share a common understanding, further explanations are given. For example, the cover term *expressions* offered by the first student focus group has a number of layers of meaning that are explained in more depth. The diagrams became primarily a process through which I analysed ideas and categories with the relative emphasis indicated hierarchically from the top of the figure. Accordingly, I have included the diagrams as figures in the discussion of the first student group in each case study only, attaching the remainder in appendices.

**Case Study 1: Discussions with Student Group 1**

Group 1 in the first case study school consisted of Year 8 students. Eight students participated in these discussions: two students who had not attended the initial focus group discussion were present at the follow-up focus group discussion; two students who attended the initial focus group were not available for the follow-up focus groups. Grouped terms were established at the initial focus group. Owing to time constraints, the items were then attributed to the grouped terms in the follow-up focus group.

The discussion of the key question, “what do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities?” resulted in the following terms that students determined covered the items that they had raised. To highlight their importance, these concepts are italicised here and in the discussion of them following. The first group in Case Study 1 described learning in these cover terms:

- *Social [experiences]*,
- *Expressions*,
- *Physical/Doing things*, and
- *Learning things about extracurricular activities*.

These grouping terms represent the main themes of extracurricular learning as perceived by the participants in this focus group. The grouped terms are placed centrally in Figure 1 with red boxes highlighted with white text. When students ranked the importance of these learning outcomes to

---

15 A liaison staff member at the school arranged for students to participate. At School A, there were three groups, one from each year level.
them personally, those rankings were combined to establish a group perspective of relative importance. To represent this ranking, the grouped themes are organised from top to bottom in Figure 1 in order of importance. As can be seen, aspects of social development were seen as most important for this group.

Figure 1. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 1, Student Group 1: Cover terms (coloured in red with white text) located centrally ranked from top to bottom in order of importance with other items (coloured according to how items were devised) joined by continuous lines, indicating the connections students made, and dotted lines indicating connections I made based on students’ discussions.
When students talked about social as an area describing what they got out of participating in their extracurricular activities, they spoke of teamwork, sociability, cooperation, and making new friends. These aspects seemed to have common meanings for the students including ideas such as working in a team, developing the ability to be social, cooperating with other people, and forming friendships.

This group placed particular emphasis on relationships with adults in their activities. A student described an example of her social learning thus:

*My debating coach doesn’t like me very much and you learn how to deal with that.* Student A5

Another student responded to the issue of relationships with adults saying,

*You learn to like, secretly get on, behind his back.* Student A8

In these data, students draw attention to perceptions of themselves and whether or not they are “liked.” They seem to be aware of solving a problem and being able to “get on” in spite of potentially challenging interactions. They attribute the development of social skills to handle working in a group situation, to their extracurricular involvement. In particular, they are considering how to handle getting on with an adult who would presumably hold a higher status, where that relationship does not seem necessarily supportive. This foreshadows the type of social development that students are likely to require later in life in adult workplaces.

A key theme is students seeking to express themselves and interact with others. Expressions was the term students gave to having a sense of self-expression. They chose activities that allowed them to express their natural personality traits. For some, this meant the ability to talk or argue (debating). One student commented:

*In debating, you learn how to express your ideas.* Student A3

Others elaborated:

*You can do that in fighting with your brother or sister.* Student A6

*But in debating, you don’t get into trouble for yelling at people.* Student A3

*Excuse me, I do!* Student A5
The students express ownership of their ideas and recognise different contexts in which they express them. They also recognise that different types of communication are appropriate, and that they receive feedback in the context of the activity. Students referred to continuing an activity in which they had participated previously and perceived that they had developed skills. For some, this ability to express themselves and display their talents was a main consideration in both the reason they chose to participate in a particular activity as well as what they expected to get out of that participation.

Interestingly, students connected dealing with a coach to both social and expressions themes. Items included under dealing with a coach are relatively evenly grouped between these two themes. The student-coach relationship seems important in the minds of these students.

Well, because she [the coach] doesn’t really like me, I just kind of try and stay quiet and if I try and help, she gets mad at me, so I’ve learnt to stay quiet. Student A5

You’ve got to get along with them; you’ve got to be friends with them and like don’t think of them as a teacher; think of them as a friend. Student A8

To follow the rules, not break them... Because they [the coaches] set a bunch of rules, if you don’t do it, they get really angry. Student A1

Well like you learn about how to deal with your coach because you learn who they are. Student A4

Students discussed interacting with a significant adult and thinking about these interactions in terms of knowing the adult (“who the coach is”), discerning the nature of the relationship (“teacher-friend”), and requiring particular conduct in communication (students identifying “when to listen and when not to” and “learning to stay quiet”) and behaviour (“getting along with them”). In learning “when to listen and when not to,” students said that they have opinions about the activity in which they are engaged and the assistance that is offered through the coaches’ communications. They seemed aware of the social requirements of manners and respect given to adults in their school context as well as control over their involvement in the activity.

Students communicate different ideas about knowledge and applied learning in extracurricular activities in items such as first aid. Some students consider this as a physical/doing thing while others categorised it as learning about extracurricular activities. This, again, might be understood as a separation between knowledge and applied learning. Some students also considered items as both knowledge and skill based, but thought about them in terms of “learning about yourself.” Students talked about learning “the skill of doing it [the activity].” Other examples are:
You can learn a different language, like in music, it’s Italian. Student A6

You learn how to do first aid because my sister like, in netball always hurts herself so my Mum taught her how to strap everything. Student A5

In the second example, the knowledge gained was attributed to a parent, rather than a person involved directly in the activity. Even so, the need for this skill development was created through involvement in sport. The student expresses the idea that her sister is developing a skill in order to handle a challenge in the activity as well as implying a personal knowledge that the sister is cognisant of her tendency to experience certain injuries.

Physical/doing things was the grouping term (see Figure 1) that students used when talking about their skill development. For these students, the items of skills, first aid, how to play (e.g., an instrument) and write speeches (e.g., for debating) were closely linked to learning things about extracurricular activities, implying a strong relationship between knowledge, understanding, and applications. The terms the students linked only to physical/doing things were coordination and staying healthy. Students demonstrated that they were health conscious, raising the idea of staying healthy as both a reason why they participate in extracurricular activities as well as something they perceive they get out of their involvement. Physical/doing things also involved non-sport training.

Like voice training, you train your voice to get a different level. Student A8

Learning things about extracurricular activities is a term put forward in the initial focus group. Although the phrase “learning things about extracurricular activities” was used, more broadly this seemed to encompass learning or developing knowledge about and within the activity. When these categorisations were returned to students for further feedback in the follow-up focus group, some students did not agree with the label and suggested that the label “academic skills and learning” was more accurate for them. It is possible that in this area where learnings seem more knowledge based than applied (as in the skills/doing things grouping), students conceive that such knowledge is “academic.” Reports from students, when asked whether they perceive aspects of their extracurricular participation to be related to their formal classroom learning, reveal that students identify only more overt relationships between their activities and classroom subjects. For example, students perceive that band activity is related to a music subject, extracurricular sport to a health and physical education subject, and debating to an English subject. This implies that students’ use of the term academic should not be seen as having the same meaning as formal classroom learning.

Another item, “learning about yourself” (shown in Figure 1), also received a variety of groupings although it was not agreed to be a particular cover term for students’ learning. This
possibly reflects students’ differing interpretations of some aspects under discussion. Students considered that learning about yourself involved developing understanding of your abilities, what you can do, your limits, how you are different from other people, individuality, how you get along with other people, and how you become calm. Owing to the complexity of the figure, only the heading learning about yourself is included. These aspects of learning about yourself were considered by students to encompass all areas: social, expressions, physical/doing things, and learning about extracurricular activities. Two students agreed on the additional grouping of academic/skills/learning and included the aspects of learning about yourself in this area. It is interesting to note that this learning about yourself seems to moderate self-expression, especially the item learning how you are different, your sense of individuality. Self-expression for one student is also manifest in her understanding of her abilities and limits, although for most students in the discussion group, these aspects were again considered both applied learning (physical/doing things) and knowledge focussed (learning about extracurricular activities or academic/skills/learning.) As a component of learning about yourself, one student suggested:

You learn how to learn something. Student A5

She went on to say:

Like if you’re a kinaesthetic learner... I don’t really know what that means, but it sounds good. Student A5

When the idea of learning how to learn was raised with the other members of the group, most students did not identify with the proposition; however, they were much clearer when talking about learning about themselves and what they can do. The discussion about learning how to learn as well as the terms students discussed about learning about yourself show a developing understanding of aspects of metacognition.

**Case Study 1: Discussions with Student Group 2**

Group 2 consisted of seven Year 9 students. When asked, “what do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities?” students developed the following terms to cover the items that they had raised.

- **Self-esteem**,  
- **Physical abilities**,  
- **Commitment**,  
- **Social skills**,
• *Ability to “deal”,* and

• *Mental abilities.*

A diagram of the cover terms, rankings of relative importance, and individual items about their extracurricular learning is included in Figure A1, Appendix G.

Students grouped most items in the initial focus group as detailed above. Some additional items were added to the above categories in the follow-up focus group. Below is a list of those additional items that students did not attribute to particular categories. Some comments below relate closely to other items, suggesting that they are offered as descriptions or explanations of these. As such, they are not accorded the same prominence as the italicised items.

- “[We] develop socialising skills in team sports, music and club activities, also with new people”
- “Discipline involves giving up free time and staying calm”
- “Calm includes sport and referee’s decision. Swimming and yoga can be calming as can debating.”
- “Learning how to play includes experience and rules. This is like life.”
- “Leadership is shown by team captains and involves responsibility.”
- “Team building occurs in extracurricular activities because you work with other people”
- “Trying new things [is linked to a] sense of satisfaction”
- “Camaraderie” “Learning something new”
- “Have fun”
- “Supporting people – comforting them – helping them improve”
- “Fill up time”
- “Compromise”
- “Practice”
- “Commitment relates to discipline and leadership”
- “Preparation”
- “Confidence”
- “First aid – [know how to] help [people]”
- “Fun is a way of learning – more people do it”

During the follow-up focus group, the items that were not linked to particular cover terms in the initial focus group were followed up, and students suggested some further connections. In addition, where examples seemed to fit logically with a particular cover term, I have included them in Figure A1, Appendix G and the following discussion.

This second focus group offered a different emphasis in their rankings of the grouping terms than did the first. *Self-esteem* was ranked as most important. *Self-esteem* was gained within the activity itself, offering students a sense of self-satisfaction, which in this grouping seemed to relate
to a further sense of self-worth. In addition, they talked about gaining confidence and the opportunity to try something new.

Physical abilities were also identified as a component of their extracurricular development. Students ranked this highly. Perhaps this is indicative of the nature of the activities in which these students participated and an emphasis on physical skills. Students regarded these activities as giving them opportunities to develop fitness, quicker reflexes, stamina, and strength.

Commitment is the next grouping term, to which students linked leadership, discipline, and preparation. Two students expressed a link between filling up time and showing commitment to an activity.

If you’re doing something outside of school, it usually cuts into your free time you have to yourself, so you’re disciplining yourself to give up something. Student A10

As students were discussing what they get out of participating in their extracurricular activity they seemed aware of their choices in how they spend their time, and for these students extracurricular activities are a positive option. Practice is seen as an aspect of commitment specifically, where students think about committing to practise the activity.

If you really want to do it, you’ve got to commit yourself to it. So you’re saying, you’ve got to get up early, you’ve got to attend the trainings. Student A11

Practice was also seen by another student as inherent in all outcomes from participation in extracurricular activities. Preparation, notably, was also linked to all categories by two students and to commitment by another. Students endorsed the view that commitment is related to discipline and leadership.

Confidence was linked to self-esteem directly by most students; however, one student expressed a link between confidence and all the other cover terms. This outlines a relationship between the development they experience and the development of confidence. As student groupings of ideas are not necessarily mutually exclusive, clues to the relationships students draw are interesting.

Social skills identified by these students included the idea of having the opportunity to socialise. They said that they are able to interact with new people and understand other opinions and different cultures. The extent to which socialising is endorsed in activities is explained thus:

There’s sort of like the sports you are supposed to socialise in and those you’re not supposed to but you do.... Like in band, you’re not supposed to socialise, you’re not
supposed to talk. It’s not meant to be a socialising activity, but in a team sport you’re supposed to because you actually have to know each other to work as a team. Student A11

Compromise was grouped with social skills in the follow-up focus group. Related to the grouping term of commitment are the ideas of camaraderie and supporting other people.

Students in this focus group also gave further weight to the idea of developing their ability to deal: with other people, under pressure, with problems, and with other opinions. Further to this there is the concept of how students choose to “deal” and their recognising choice in remaining calm when they disagree with a referee’s decision.

If you’re in a sport and say the ref blows something you don’t like, you just have to learn to go with it. Student A10

Mental abilities is the final grouping term used by these students when they considered the items of knowledge about different cultures and knowing how to play and the rules of an activity. As with the first group in this case study consisting of Year 8 students, first aid is considered by the Year 9 students as both a physical and mental ability (called physical/doing things and learning about extracurricular activities in the Year 8 focus group discussion). Students discussed learning how to play a sport:

It’s the experience of learning to play sport. You’re taught how to understand it. Student A11

It is interesting that this student does not simply talk about knowing the rules, but rather understanding the sport. Another student did, however, focus more on rules.

You learn to play by the rules like life is dominated by rules and you start by learning the basic rules of sport. Student A10

Other skills were discussed that applied to other activities. One student summarised what she learnt in different activities as:

[in debating] you learn how to speak and project your voice and what words to use. In music, you learn how to play your instrument and how to read music, and work with other people in the band. Student 10

Case Study 1: Discussions with Student Group 3

The third group in this case study consisted of five Year 10 students. From discussion of the key question, “what do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities?” this third group in Case Study 1 described the main themes of learning as:

- Development skills,
• **Social skills,**

• **Team skills,**

• **Personal satisfaction,** and

• **Responsibility.**

A diagram of the cover terms, rankings of relative importance, and individual items about their extracurricular learning is included in Figure A2, Appendix G.

Other thoughts noted at initial focus group were explanations aimed towards clarifying some relationships between students’ ideas. These include:

° “Development skills include how to get along with others”

° “Team skills may relate to increased stubbornness and increase aggression”

° “Social skills could be called life skills”

° “Social skills and responsibility could be linked as to have social skills needs a sense of responsibility”

° “Self-satisfaction relates to ‘fun’”

° “Personal development relates to self-respect.”

Students in this focus group proposed their cover terms in a manner that incorporated many of the items they put forward. There were five grouping terms with *development skills* ranked as most important. It is interesting to note here that students no longer distinguished between physical and intellectual learning, grouping them as one. *Development skills* included ideas of techniques and new skills as well as refinement of their abilities where they considered that their extracurricular participation allowed them to “pick up the finer points.” Students said that *development skills* were:

*Pretty much things you learn for yourself.* Student A16

Another student added:

*Through experience.* Student A20

Intellectual skills were also included in the cover term *development skills* where the students considered that they were able to increase their knowledge, see both sides (of an argument), position biased views, learn how to help people, and improve listening skills. They also included items that indicated more about how they learnt than what they learnt. They drew attention to developing for themselves and through experience.
Again, students in this focus group emphasised social learning including communication, coping with other people, and developing and keeping friendships.

*You learn how to communicate with people. And cope with them as well.* Student A18

Sportsmanship was also seen as a social term. Students seemed to place value on the nature of their social interactions, not simply their skills for coping with particular situations.

Students emphasised the relative importance of team skills by giving it a specific grouping term when it might have been included in social skills. The idea of working together is emphasised in students’ discussion. One student put forward the item “not hierarchies” which seemed to suggest an emphasis on working together in a group rather than adhering to other social structures. Students also identified accepting other people, helping them, and “putting in” – contributing more to pull up another team member. One student talked about being in a team as follows:

> [Some team members] only putting in 25% and the rest of the team *is* trying to pull them up. Student A19

For another student, team skills were about:

> Not necessarily *to* be the leader *but* to learn how to follow. Student A20

This student also noted that she learnt to:

> [let go of] stubbornness because you’ve got to accept other people’s ideas. Student A20

**Personal satisfaction** was a grouping term where students identified that they are able to participate in activities for themselves, for enjoyment and to feel good about themselves. They also noted that participating in activities was a way of exploring different ways to have fun.

**Responsibility** was the final grouping term of this focus group. They identified the importance of learning to take responsibility for one’s own actions. This grouping term also included commitment to and involvement in the chosen activity. Students connected the idea of “putting in” to having this sense of responsibility. Given the team context of this idea, where students look to give more of themselves to support a weaker team member, I connected this sense of responsibility to the development of team skills.

The students at School A who participated in the focus group discussions detailed a range of learnings that they attribute to their participation in extracurricular activities. In the following section, ideas about students’ perceptions of the extracurricular context are discussed.
Students’ perceptions of their extracurricular context

Reasons students participate in extracurricular activities

Students’ reasons for participating in extracurricular activities give some indication of how these are perceived as a learning context as well as influencing whether students choose to participate and the extent to which they might engage with the activity. Understanding and characterising the extracurricular context are important so that attention to curriculum development does not undermine the very features that allow extracurricular activities to be a context for student learning and development.

Other reasons students give for their participation imply personal and interpersonal development. Life balance, health, and psychological well-being are aspects students find in their extracurricular participation, so in this way, they are developing and forming habits of life skills for their futures.

Students discussed the question, “why do you participate in extracurricular activities?” Students at School A gave varied responses. Common to all focus groups were the ideas of enjoyment and the influence of other people. Enjoyment included doing something that comes naturally, being “addicted” to the activity, having fun, being “good at it,” being passionate, loving doing it, and getting a “thrill” from participating. For the Year 9 and Year 10 groups, they were also aware of past experiences and continuing activities that they had enjoyed previously. The influence of other people was discussed differently by different groups. Year 8 students talked about peer influence and adult influence, whereas the older students considered the role of peers to be less controlling and more a matter of choice. They chose activities because “friends were doing it,” or to “enjoy with friends” and to “meet people with the same interests” rather than perceiving overt pressure.

The second and third focus groups also had other reasons for participating. They were aware of developmental goals, choosing their activities to increase understanding, because they were related to schoolwork, to improve skills, and to learn about the real world. They were also motivated by ideas of health and well-being in terms of physical fitness as well as relaxation and doing an activity to take their minds off school. Gaining confidence, doing something for themselves, being able to make a contribution, and experiencing challenge were also raised by particular groups. The characteristic of choice in selecting extracurricular activities allows students to build on their sense of identity in choosing activities in which they perceive they have a talent or an interest.
How students perceive their extracurricular activity as a learning context

Students emphasised enjoyment in how they chose their activities. Fun was articulated in terms of both motivation (wanting to do it again) and challenge (wanting to try harder). It also affected the extent to which students engaged with the activity. One student noted:

*If you’re not enjoying it, then you spend all of your time thinking about how much you hate it, not everything else that you can get from it.* Student A10

For some students, their personal development was a significant reason for choosing to participate in extracurricular activities. However, most seemed to seek enjoyment and a sense of fulfilment. When considering the curriculum of extracurricular activities, the nature of these activities to inspire students with a sense of “joy” is essential. This comes from students having opportunity to access a variety of activities so that their individual interests are expressed as well as the ways in which the activities are experienced.

What students perceive influences what they get out of their extracurricular participation

Students discussed the influences they perceived affected their extracurricular participation and what they were able to get out of this participation. Although all students in the focus groups participated in at least one extracurricular activity, students talked about their abilities to access the activities in terms of the support they received from other people, particularly parents, and their ability to attend the activity, most notably affected by time.

As introduced above, other people—often parents—influenced students’ decisions to participate. This occurred on two main levels. First, students learnt about activities and what they involved from friends and relatives. Influences from other people could also be less direct in the form of media and students watching people participate on television. These influences gave students ideas about what the activity involved. Second, students were influenced more directly by other people recommending they participate in a specific activity. Parents, in particular, were spoken of in this regard with such statements as, “mean parents make you do it” or “[it is about] not letting parents down.” Parents seemed to offer reasons for students to participate, including awareness that an activity might influence academic development.

*Mum comes up to me and she goes, “Right, I just saw your maths test and I am not happy. And you are going to maths club because you need to brush up on your maths, or else.”* Student A1

In the area of sport, parental influence in the value of sports participation is identified.
[Dad said to me] it would be good for you [to do this activity] because you don’t do any other sport. Student A5

There is also the perception held by students that parents harked back to their own involvement in such activities.

*It’s kind of like Mum said how much fun she had had doing stuff when she was young…* Student A3

“When I was a girl, they didn’t have computers or televisions…” Student A5

*My Mum – she wants me away from the fridge.* Student A1

“Back in the old days…” Student A8

Although the influence parents had ranged from suggestion and offering of information to what students perceived to be stronger determination over their participation, generally students considered that feeling forced to do an activity was a negative influence on what they got out of their participation. Alternatively, some students agreed that they did an activity because people thought they were good at it or to impress other people. Kind parents were also mentioned more in a manner of facilitating students engaging in activities in which they were interested. This idea of support was quite specific with the Year 10 students, who explained that the support of family, friends, and coaches was important and that a lack of support was a real barrier to what they could get out of their extracurricular participation.

Perceptions of the activity were another influence on students. As suggested above, these perceptions were sometimes formed through interactions with other people, for example, parents’ advice, or watching a sibling participate, or through watching media. Often, though, students’ perceptions of the activity were informed by their own prior experience. Students noted that perceiving an activity as fun or a cool thing influenced their participation positively. Within an activity, negative influences were boredom, which students attributed to doing “repetitive stuff” or “easy stuff,” having a coach favouring “good” players, changing coaches a lot, and not getting in a good team. Competition was both a positive and negative influence. When students considered an activity to be too competitive, it became a negative. Students also recognised that activities required commitment and could become an addiction, and students may well decide against participating if they considered it to mean that they “can’t do normal things.”

Students recognised that resources influenced their abilities to access activities. In this context, however, they did not perceive that the resourcing of the activities themselves had an
impact on what they could get out of their participation. This might well be because their experiences are within the one program which did have a good level of resourcing. The resources students identified were primarily money and support, particularly from parents as discussed above. Additionally, time availability was both an influence and an effect that students considered quite carefully.

Social aspects, learning, time, and self-perceptions both influenced what students perceived they got out of participating in their extracurricular activity as well as being categories of effects students experienced from their participation. These will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The main social aspect influencing students’ participation and what they perceived they got out of their participation were friends and people you don’t like. Interestingly, older students placed more emphasis on their perceptions of the activity, rather than its social aspects. In addition, positive and negative influences and experiences of the adult leader, particularly the coach, also influenced what students perceived they got out of their activity participation.

Learning and personal development were factors in some students’ choice of activity as well as the value they placed on their experiences. Previous experience and abilities were considered important by some students as they influenced whether they could get into a good team or good group, as certain activities are accessed by try outs or auditions. Whether the activity and the experiences they gain from participating had a particular use in life was also considered influential in some students’ choices.

Time influenced students’ choices: Awareness of what they were giving up was taken into account in choosing to spend their time participating in a particular activity, as well as clashes in timetabling where students may not be physically able to attend an activity they desired. They were aware also not being overworked or having lots to do, as well as having a need to be effective in their time management. Interestingly, students also suggested that participating in an activity can be effective procrastination and that, at times, doing an activity may act to condone students’ avoidance of schoolwork and other pressures. Although aware that activity participation can take away from their commitment to schoolwork, students also seem aware of developing their understanding of themselves and what they need in terms of a sense of life balance.

Self-perceptions also influenced students’ participation in particular activities. They placed weight on whether they perceived they were, or would be, good at it or “stink” at it. They also considered how they might be perceived in their participation. One example given was that if the
uniforms were horrible, then they would feel self-conscious. One group also mentioned the idea of perceived social ranking as influencing what activities a student might access.

What effects students attribute to their extracurricular participation

Students in Case Study 1 attributed a number of effects to their extracurricular participation. These can be considered in categories including future goals, rewards, social outcomes, learning outcomes, time, self-perceptions, and sense of well-being.

In terms of future goals, career and working lives were considered important and students perceived that the effects of their extracurricular participation would aid their aspirations. This ranged from gaining skills that might assist in getting a part-time job, to networking (“knowing people [leading to] future shared careers”) and learning how to “express opinions in a professional forum.” They also noted that specific experiences and expertise gained would assist them to participate later in life and possibly coach and teach others. For some activities, students perceived that they learnt about career opportunities. More general skills included dealing with the coach, which students considered being like dealing with workplace bosses. Some future effects were experienced more immediately. Students talked about these effects of their extracurricular participation in terms of making goals, reaching a team, or making progress in another area. They also felt that not making goals led to losing confidence.

Rewards were suggested only by the Year 10 group, who mentioned benefits to include receiving recognition, perhaps by means of a pocket on the school blazer or an award or acknowledgment at a school assembly. Other rewards were more intrinsic to the activity where students suggested enjoyment as its own reward and being selected for a particular team.

Social development was perceived to be both an influence on participation and what students felt they got out of participating. Students also believed that there were social effects of participation, included making friends and losing friends. Friendship in activities seemed important where one student suggested that if people don’t like you, or you are not popular, then you don’t get your say. At the same time, the demands made on students’ time by their extracurricular participation were potential negative effects where students felt they had no time for schoolwork or socialising. Stress was an effect students suggested when there was confusion between coaches’ instructions or problems with peers. Students perceived a potential effect in challenging situations being aggression, both verbal and physical. More positively, students proposed extracurricular activities had effects such as helping with groups, handling people you don’t like, and learning to communicate well. They attributed to their participation in extracurricular experiences the
development of confidence for social events, for example meetings, and their ability to become more of a “people person” and get along with others. The extracurricular context also allowed participants to see people in a different way.

Learning was also raised as an effect of participation, not simply in response to what students perceived they got out of their extracurricular engagement. This included academic and intellectual abilities and general knowledge as well as being seen as helping schoolwork in some instances. Students drew relationships between activities that most closely mirrored aspects of formal school subjects, for example band and orchestra with classroom music, sport with their health and physical education subject, and debating with their English subject. One group suggested that an effect of their extracurricular participation was to know how their brain works; another group talked about knowing how to go about something. The students placed emphasis on knowing themselves and their capabilities. Other learning included developing personal management skills like time management and dealing with problems and qualities such as commitment, self-discipline, perseverance, and patience. Students talked about aspects of working in a group including leadership: not only learning how to lead, but also when to follow. As a negative idea, students also felt that an effect could be learning “not-team skills” defined by them as the opposite of cooperation. Generally, challenges seemed to be met positively as learning experiences, such as dealing with frustration by learning to count to 10 (presumably before acting) and learning mediating skills. Another effect was that students felt they were developing good habits for life and establishing a way of living.

The effects on time of student participation in extracurricular activities had to do with the commitment these activities required. Students recognised both their time commitment and that of their families to support them. They mentioned having to make sacrifices, becoming stressed out, and rushing. On a more positive note, they also drew attention to developing better time management skills to manage their lives.

Self-perceptions were also seen as being affected by students’ extracurricular participation as well as influences on the ways in which they participate. They considered that participation could lead to the development of personality and level of confidence. They also noted that their experiences within the activities could influence their self-esteem. This might have the effect that if they were not good at the chosen activity, they may not take helpful criticism and would exhibit low self-esteem. Increased self-esteem was also attributed to certain extracurricular participation, particularly where students reached a goal or experienced success.
Well-being was another effect students attributed to their extracurricular participation. They spoke of this in terms of physical fitness for short-term health and long-term health. Health was explained to include both physical and emotional well-being, the students talking also about enjoyment and having participation affect their frame of mind. One student noted that “endorphins make you happy.” Students were also aware of the potential negative impact of their participation including tiredness, injuries, even death as a potential outcome. They were aware of their overall load and how this could contribute to bad habits, for example, school assignments being rushed and poor eating habits emerging due to lack of time. There was also an aspect of students recognising that extracurricular participation could lead to their feeling shut off from life and having their social life diminish. For the negative effects on well-being, students conveyed that these were more likely to occur when there were excesses in the quantity of activities and time demands for participation.

Chapter summary

Chapter 4 presented data from the first case study school, an independent Christian girls school. When asked to consider their extracurricular participation, students at School A were articulate in expressing their ideas about why they participated in extracurricular activities, what they perceived they got out of participating, as well as the influences on and effects of their participation.

Consistent with the Principal’s statements regarding the extracurricular context providing a forum for the development of interpersonal skills, students at School A expressed an emphasis on social learning and self-expression. In addition, they chose activities in order to moderate their feelings as well as talking about dealing with challenges in the activities themselves. This supports the idea that skill development involves building resilience. Students were also aware of committing to their activities.

Students talked about choosing activities they perceive to have an impact on their future careers, about taking opportunities, and having no regrets. They identify that activities represent, for them, aspects of the “real world” as opposed to school, perhaps because similar activities exist outside of school.

Notably, students identify that their individual development is by experience. In the secondary school extracurriculum, students find opportunities to experiment. They discover what types of activities they enjoy or perceive have benefits for them, for example, choosing activities for which they have a talent, a desire to be good at, or that balance life and allow them to relax and keep fit in the face of other pressures.
Students also voiced that they find opportunities to experience challenge and do something outside their comfort zone. They also mentioned the opportunity provided by extracurricular activities to try something new. Perhaps these opportunities are highlighted in students’ minds in contrast to choices offered within formal schooling.

Through participation in extracurricular activities, students reported that they are able to develop skills and activities that moderate other facets of their lives. They talk about relaxation, balance, making a contribution, and exercising choice to spend time in activities that make them feel good about themselves and allow them self-expression and self-development. There was a range of views in this that extended to an idea of escape from the pressures of schoolwork and a place where students can be themselves.

Students discussed how they are able to develop values within the activities, like discipline, responsibility, commitment, and “putting in.” They also feel a power to make a contribution and learn ways in which they are able to, and desire to, make their contribution.

You learn how to help people to the best of your ability, not just donating 5 cents in a Macca [McDonald’s fundraising] jar. You help so that they really get something out of what you’re doing. Student A10

Having presented findings in descriptive form from Case Study 1, Chapter 5 undertakes a similar presentation about Case Study 2 of a coeducational state school.
Chapter 5

Case Study 2 – A Coeducational State School

Following the structure of Chapter 4, this chapter is comprised of three parts. Part 1 explains the context of the second case study. Part 2 presents data from student participants from their discussions about what they get out of participating in their extracurricular activities. Part 3 then puts forward themes from the initial and follow-up focus group discussions that illustrate students’ perceptions of their extracurricular participation as a learning context, the influences they perceive affect their extracurricular participation and development, and the effects they attribute to their extracurricular learning and participation.

Context

School B is a coeducational state school in suburban Queensland. It was established in the late 1950s. The school caters for students from Year 8 (circa age 12 years) to Year 12 (circa age 17 years) at a single campus.

The philosophy and goals of the school and its extracurricular program

School B is a school with a variety of programs, both academic and vocational, for supporting student development. The school prides itself on a number of innovative programs, some of which integrate extracurricular involvement with formal curriculum courses. Sport, more often an extracurricular endeavour, is taken further in the formal curriculum with school-based subjects supporting academically those students seeking to develop skills for post-school pathways in sport. School-based apprenticeships and traineeships are also offered within the formal curriculum.

Extracurricular activities are listed on the school prospectus. These are debating, public speaking, rock eisteddfod, musicals, and variety concerts. Sport is referred to separately under the banner of its program of combined curricular and extracurricular offerings. An overarching vision or set of goals for the extracurricular program is not articulated either in the prospectus (a short colour brochure offering few details) or on the school website. The school handbook does give details of extracurricular offerings including a graphic representation of an “infused curriculum” where “cross-curricular activities” are promoted to offer students opportunities that will foster skills and knowledge to become “life long learners.” Consideration of the value of these activities is apparent when discussing extracurricular provision with the school Principal who spoke about the activities in terms of extending individual students and expanding their horizons. The
extracurricular program was viewed in general terms as providing interest or excitement for students and making a contribution to school culture.

...it’s like building a culture that you need a range of things to happen in a school. It’s not just one area. It’s the extracurricular that add the flavour to the meat, virtually. Principal B, Interview 1

The Principal drew attention to some aspects of student development including working in a team and developing a sense of responsibility. The peripheral role implied by the terminology extra was also put forward.

I guess one of the misnomers about extracurricular is that it shouldn’t be called extracurricular. It should be called part of the curricula or it should be called – I don’t like the word hidden, either. But maybe it’s the excitement curriculum, or the extension curriculum, more than extra...You know, if we didn’t call it extra, we would know that it is part and parcel and...we wouldn’t live without it. Principal B, Interview 1

Even within this discussion, the view of extracurricular activities fluctuated between ideas of adding interest and engagement for students and providing a program focussed on student learning. Nevertheless, extracurricular activities are offered and involvement in them is encouraged at the school.

School site

The school exists on a pleasant bushland setting. Gardens are sparse, but tidy. A courtyard area between buildings has received attention to give students an area in which to congregate informally. At break times, students will cluster in small groups sitting on the cement pathways outside classrooms. Facilities include buildings of classrooms, mostly two storeys, as well as specialist facilities. These specialist facilities include an indoor sports hall, an assembly hall (also used for school concerts and productions), a library, a swimming pool, a large oval and sporting fields, a tennis court complex, and netball and basketball courts. During the data collection period, some of the performing arts area was closed awaiting repairs and refurbishment and music activities had been relocated.

School community

At the time of the main data collection period, 1133 students were enrolled. In Year 8, there were just fewer than 300 students, dropping to under 200 students in the senior years. The school is situated in an outer metropolitan suburb with a student population of below average socioeconomic status. The school population consists primarily of students from the local area. There are indigenous students and students who speak languages other than English in their home.
The large student population may be interpreted to allow additional resources as some funding of government schools is linked to student population. This may also place the school in a position to offer a wider range of programs than available at smaller state high schools.

The school provides academic and vocational courses. Post-school, approximately 25% of students enter university courses, 35% enter further vocational training, and 30% engage in full-time or part-time work.

The school is managed by a team of administration staff, including the Principal and three Deputy Principals. Teaching staff at the school are involved in leading all extracurricular activities with no additional provision for remuneration. Sports activities often primarily involve teaching staff from within the Human Movements faculty who have specialist skills to coach. Performing arts activities are generally overseen by teaching staff within drama and music teaching areas who have specialist skills to direct such performances. Music staff include full-time staff who teach classroom programs as well as itinerant instrumental music staff.

Curriculum

The school organises its formal curriculum according to a Middle Phase of Learning, structured around Key Learning Areas (KLAs). In Year 8, students engage in a foundation course incorporating all KLAs in their first semester and then proceed to study English, Science, Mathematics, Studies of Society and Environment as well as three elective subjects from semester two. Years 10, 11, and 12 are labelled the Senior Phase of Learning. During the first semester of Year 10, students continue their chosen courses from the Middle Phase of Learning; however, in second semester can change to focus on preparation for subject disciplines for Years 11 and 12. Students in Years 11 and 12 study 6 subjects from 28 subjects based on syllabuses that have been approved and issued by the Queensland Studies Authority and may contribute to tertiary entrance selection, and 13 Authority-registered subjects that are not used in calculating tertiary entrance. The school also offers school-based apprenticeships and traineeships. Vocational education is emphasised with almost half the student population receiving a Senior Certificate as well as a vocational education and training qualification. Particular curriculum offerings include specialist courses in information and communication technology (ICT), sport, and music. The ICT course is offered in Years 8 and 9, where students apply advanced levels of ICT skills to core curriculum offerings. Programs involving specific sports, including football, netball, cricket, and soccer, are offered to students with recognised athletic ability following a generic first semester of Health and Physical Education (HPE) in Year 8. In Years 11 and 12, one sports program is equivalent to one subject. The specialist music program is offered to students in Years 8 to 10 so that they may be
involved in extension activities. Music Extension, a senior subject focussing on one of three specialisations of performing, musicology, or composing, is also offered to students.

**Extracurricular activities**

This description of the extracurricular offerings at School B refers to those in operation during the period in which data were collected. Extracurricular activities offered included debating, two concert bands, a string ensemble, a stage band, and Rock Eisteddfod. Sports included cross country, swimming, athletics, basketball, tennis, hockey, girls and boys soccer, cricket, boys and girls rugby league, Australian Rules Football, girls netball, girls and boys volleyball, and girls and boys touch football. For the purposes of this study, all sports except cross country, athletics, swimming, and tennis are considered to be team activities.

Some team sports in operation during the data collection period were noted to have been less successful with staff indicating that they would not be offered in the future. This seemed largely due to student attendance, in particular, the abilities of students to attend games on weekends.

Teaching staff were involved in coordinating extracurricular activities as well as coaching sporting teams. Most sports were coached by physical education staff, although some non-specialist staff were involved with some teams. Music activities were directed by specialist music staff. Debating and the school yearbook were coordinated by an English teacher with special interest in these activities.

As part of the school’s Parents and Citizens Association, a music committee offered support to the extracurricular music programs in the school.

**Participants**

Nineteen students from School B participated in this study. A summary of ages, year levels, and activities in which students participated is included in Appendix H. Student participants included eight students from Year 8, five students from Year 9, and six students from Year 10. Three students were involved in only one sport activity, soccer. Three students were involved in one or more music activities, but no sports. Four students were involved in two of more sports, but no cultural activities. The remaining students were involved in both sport and cultural activities. No students in this cohort were involved in club activities or student government, although these activities were offered at the school.
What students at School B report that they learn in the secondary school extracurriculum

As described in Chapter 3, students participating in this study were involved in focus group discussions including the question “what do you get out of participating in extracurricular activities?” During the discussions, ideas were noted on poster paper then further discussed in order to describe, clarify, and group according to students’ perceptions of the main themes. As students’ voices were paramount, students were involved in the decision-making processes during these stages of analysis so that categories and items remained in students’ own words. As discussed in Chapter 3, grammatical forms of words may be changed for fluency in communicating these results, but the meanings students offered are retained.

As in Chapter 4, I used diagrams to depict the relationships between the students’ ideas about what they get out of participating in their extracurricular activity. There is also an attempt to illustrate the relative emphasis that students place on their grouping terms by positioning the cover terms students perceived to be most important for them at the top of the diagram, moving down to that which students felt was least important. This visual representation aided analysis and writing about students’ responses. The diagram is included as a figure in presenting data from the first group in this case, with the remainder included as appendices. Individual ideas put forward in these discussions are in the words of individual students. Discussion then followed culminating in students deriving grouping terms or cover terms that incorporated many of their ideas. These cover terms were derived by group consensus and thereby represent a common view rather than the meanings offered by individuals. As symbolic interactionism includes the idea that meanings are adapted and modified in social settings, this representation of the data offered by each focus group is useful in understanding the students’ meanings, the relationships they perceive connect their ideas, and the importance, as a group, that they place on the things they get out of participating in their extracurricular activity.

Students were able to draw relationships between ideas and incorporate these into what they perceived to be the main themes. This has meant that different student groups have differing notions in how they group their ideas and establish categories. Some student groups let their data remain separate; others grouped items into a few categories that they perceived encapsulated their meanings. Accordingly, the cover terms and items are not always exclusive to particular categories and the levels of categorisations offered by student groups differ.
In the following section, data from each of four student focus group discussions are presented separately, including a diagram and discussion of their ideas (items) and the groupings or initial categories (cover terms) the students proposed. Where the student statements represent a cover term very closely, for example, “we learn cooperation,” further explanation is not included. Some student statements, however, do not share a common understanding; in which instance more detailed descriptions are offered in the following presentations of focus group data.

**Case Study 2: Discussions with Student Group 1**

Group 1 in the second case study school consisted of Year 8 and 9 students. Five students participated in these discussions.

In response to the main question, “what do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities?” students reported a number of items that they grouped into the following terms.

Through participation, students perceived they:

- Get better at it,
- Learn better skills,
- [Develop] self-confidence,
- Learn how to be a team player,
- Make new friends,
- Play sport instead of watching TV,
- Learn the rules, and
- [Learn about] leisure time choices.

These cover terms represent the categories of learning that students in this focus group discussion perceived incorporated their ideas about extracurricular learning. Figure 2 illustrates these cover terms placed centrally in yellow, with the term students perceived to be most important placed at the top, scaled down to that which had the least importance for them as a group. Items that students connected with particular cover terms are also included.

---

16 A liaison staff member at the school arranged my access to student groups. At School B, I was given access to four groups of students across year levels, whereas in Schools A and C, each group consisted of students from one year level only.
Figure 2. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 2, Student Group 1: Cover terms (coloured in red with white text) located centrally ranked from top to bottom in order of importance with other items (coloured according to how items were devised) joined by continuous lines, indicating the connections students made, and dotted lines indicating connections I made based on students’ discussions.
In asking students to describe what they get out of participating in their extracurricular activity, students identified that through participation they get better at it. It was important that they were able to get better at it because, when asked “what would it be like if you didn’t get better at it?” students responded:

*You’d shut down. You’d get bored, then you’d quit.* Student B2

Students linked to this grouping term the ideas that they would be able to do more and that being coached contributed to this ability.

*If you like the coach and they’re helping you, then you’ll do more stuff.* Student B2

Students emphasised the impact that the coach could have.

*If you’ve got a coach that’s like really determined, then you’ve got to have good people…otherwise they just get really angry.* Student B2

*Coaches who don’t know how to do the sport, they just...* Student B1

*Won’t care.* Student B2

Implied is the necessity that the coach, or in other activities, the adult leader, needed knowledge of the activity in order to care and that the quality of performance was related to the coach’s expectations as well as having good team members.

The second grouping term, in order of importance, was to learn better skills. Students understood this to require practice.

*If you’re playing a really hard game, then you need skills.* Student B5

This term, although offered as a main grouping term, appears very closely related to the concept of getting better at the activity.

Students also identified the power of their participation to help them to develop self-confidence.

*Well, I did debating and that helped my self-confidence because I could actually speak in front of a crowd...It’s just believing that you can do it.* Student B4

As students also indicated that the activities were sources of skill development for them, the concept of self-belief also linked with the idea of competence, not just testing innate skills.

*I do debating with [student 4] too and... I’m good at speaking now.* Student B5
There were also times in their activities where that level of confidence might be challenged. Interestingly, students seemed to overcome this.

*It’s just like really getting yourself up. I mean...you can really lose a lot of confidence in soccer. Like if you’re going to kick and instead you like fell on your butt, everybody would just like laugh at you. But when you kick a really good one, everyone just cheers for you so it gets your confidence up.* Student B3

Students expressed two distinct ideas in handling embarrassment and whether or not it would be a big deal. The first was related to the importance of the occasion.

*If you made a mistake] you’d get like a two second giggle, then everyone is alright with it.* Student B4

*Depends if it’s a grand final.* Student B2

*You’d get yelled at.* Student B4

The second seemed to be the extent to which the mistake reflected on the individual’s skill level.

*It’s like you know how to do it, but you still fall over or something...* Student B5

*It’s just not that big a deal...* Student B1

*...If you know how to do it. But if you don’t, it’s a big deal.* Student B5

Students suggested different responses to situations that they found embarrassing. They spoke of coping with it, that these experiences occurred all the time, and that they would start laughing. One student summarised these comments about resilience saying, “It’s part of your learning” (Student B5). Although these ideas came through, the discussion revealed differences in personal attitudes towards making mistakes. One student, who raised a scenario he had found embarrassing, did not join in the discussion where other students conveyed that they just got over it. Possibly, he felt more deeply about the experience and the impact that it had on him.

The next cover term students perceived to be of importance for them was *learning how to be a team player.* Students expressed a number of thoughts about what it meant to be a team player. For them, being a team player meant:

*People help each other out and that stuff.* Student B4

*When people call out to each other to help.* Student B3

*...people working together, like doing a drill. In football, passing down a line.* Student B4
Team playing was not the exclusive domain of sports. Students involved in Rock Eisteddfod agreed that they needed to work as a team as well. The importance of team playing was summarised by one student.

*When you work together, you achieve more.* Student B1

*Making new friends* for this group of students affected their interest in the participating. When asked what would happen if you were in a team with no friends, students said, “you’d get bored” (Student B4). Another suggested,

*You’d have to make new friends… [or] you don’t want to participate.* Student B5

Students recognised that sometimes teams could have people in them that “get along well” or not. When asked, students agreed that it was possible to make “enemies” in their teams as well.

*If you’re better than them, they just don’t like that.* Student B2

These relationships were perceived to affect their ability to play as a team.

*Like every time they get the ball, they hold it or something. And they won’t pass it.* Student B5

Students agreed that if another player did not like them, they may not pass the ball to them, thereby excluding them in a manner from the activity. Despite a focus on playing as a team, personal relationships seemed to have potential to affect this.

On the other hand, another student commented that his team got along well with team members.

*We don’t have that in my team. Yeah, we go jet skiing and everything… everybody.* Student B5

These students did not decide to withdraw from an activity or avoid doing something where they perceived they did not have friends or did not fit in.

The idea of *playing sport instead of watching TV* came up very early in the initial focus group discussion. The student who raised it as one of his reasons for participating seemed passionate about his belief. His words were:

*Play sport instead of sitting on the couch watching TV… Because when you watch TV, you eat more rubbish.* Student B4

The statement includes not only an opinion about the relative value of sport versus television, but also an awareness of eating habits related to television viewing. This student seemed to know
himself, be aware of his habits, and make a choice in the use of his time that he considered to be healthier. Other students agreed that more generally this is like creating a positive habit to take the place of other choices that might be less positive.

Students put forward that learning the rules to what they were doing had importance for them. In part, this included knowing the terminology or language of the game. This came up when discussing team playing and being able to make helpful “calls” to other players. These students, involved primarily in sports, were familiar with jargon including such terms as play back, offside, and play through. One student mentioned an awareness of the penalty for not knowing the rules.

If you don’t know the rules like you got a bad call and you didn’t know the rules and know you’re not allowed to disagree with the ref, you’d get a red card. Swear your head off and stuff. Student B4

One apparently positive effect of knowing the rules was the ability to communicate them to others.

You can explain them if you can, like, you can coach little kids, like under 7s or under 8s. And if you know the rules, it puts them in your mind so you can tell the little kids how to play properly. Student B4

From this statement, the student identified that rules were a type of knowing, an understanding that took place in their mind. He was also aware that understanding was helpful to teaching other children to play the sport.

Leisure time choices was given emphasis as a cover term by this student group, however, its meanings seemed closely related to the choice to play sport instead of watching TV. Students detailed, when asked, that other ways they could spend their time included sleeping or reading. Although there was some disagreement over the idea of reading for leisure, sleep was a shared issue for this group. Their extracurricular commitments meant that they sometimes had to get up early to travel to sport on weekends, although they seemed prepare to do this.

**Case Study 2: Discussions with Student Group 2**

Group 2 in the second case study school consisted of three Year 8 and 9 students. When asked, “what do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities?” students developed the following terms to group or cover the ideas that they had raised. This second group in Case Study 2 put forward their categories of learning in the following terms:

- *Cooperation*,
- *Skills*,
- *From their mistakes*,

89
• Self-control, including not to complain,
• The rules or guidelines for the activity,
• Confidence in front of other people,
• To express themselves, and
• Leadership skills.

A diagram of the cover terms, rankings of relative importance, and individual ideas about extracurricular learning is included in Figure A3, Appendix I.

Cooperation was a term for which students did not offer further illustrations. Students related learning how to get along with other people with learning to cooperate. The importance of cooperation was described by one student:

If you can’t cooperate with someone, you can’t play with them. Student B6

Getting along with other people was also related to the concept of trust.

Well, you learn to get along with other people and you learn to trust people in sport. Because, like, if you know somebody’s open and you want to pass the ball to them, but you don’t know whether they’re going to do the right thing or muck around with it or anything. But, when you play sport, you learn to trust them. Student B8

The concept of trust was explored further as well as the ability “not to get stressed” if you are in a position to pass the ball and they do “stuff up.” A student also noted that the other players had to trust him too, so trust was not just about learning to trust other people, but also being trusted as well.

Students discussed a number of situations in which they developed skills in their extracurricular activities. Skill development was seen to be related to the level at which students participated in their activity and the demands that activity placed on them.

I don’t think you learn skills much in [interschool] sport, but when you get to a higher [level], like to [a district team], then you start learning skills. So I didn’t know much about touch footy...like I know the basics, then I got to [district] like as a shadow... Student B6

Previous experience also related to the extent to which students attributed skill development to their participation.

I learn more skills in debating [than Rock Eisteddfod] because like I already sort of knew how to dance and stuff. Student B7
Skills are linked to a knowledge of the rules. In discussing skills, students raised rules in two circumstances.

For the rules, some of the girls didn’t know like where to stand, what position and stuff. Student B8

This seemed to be about having some basic concepts of how the game worked. In comparison, a more sophisticated application of the rules of the game was described by another student.

If you know the rules good enough, you can like use them to your advantage. So like the off-side rule – just before their player kicks it, the full-back can run forward and can get their man off-side. So it’s risky, but if you know it well enough, you can use it as a skill and use it to your advantage. Student B6

Learning from mistakes seems related to learning skills, but focuses on the manner in which students might learn in their extracurricular activity. One student detailed an example of where he learnt from his mistake.

I was playing touch [football] and I thought the rule was…when dummy half gets caught, it’s a change over and I thought penalty, but it was only a [...] ball. It was a grand final and like I stuffed up so we lost. Student B6

Although students had discussed the impact of competition and emphasised that the stakes were higher in the situation of a grand final, this student was able to talk about it apparently without stress, simply to communicate that he had made a mistake and would learn from it. Learning from mistakes was part of debating as well.

In my first two debates, I kept swaying when I was talking and because the adjudicator always tells you your mistakes and how to learn from them, I eventually didn’t do it. Student B7

Initially, students introduced this idea as learning not to complain. The term self-control came into the discussion later and when the students grouped their main ideas, they decided that learning not to complain was part of learning self-control. Instances where this was deemed important revolved around interactions with other students and referees. Interactions with students included learning not to complain when having to work with someone who was not a friend.

In maths competition, if you get partnered up with someone you don’t really like, but they’re smart, you can’t really go, ‘Well, I’m not going [to work] with you.’ You, like, do your questions and move on. Student B6

In part, this statement reflects the student recognising that the activity meant working with different people, in particular, someone that he did not really like. There is also recognition of that other person’s talent, referring to them as “smart.” This might mean that the activity drives who
participates, and that the student recognises that any complaint would be ineffective. It could also be an example where the student recognises a talent and rates it ahead of a friendship preference. Another example of learning not to complain to or about other students arose in a student’s Rock Eisteddfod experiences.

_in Rock Eisteddfod, you learn not to complain as much because there’s people like doing your hair and pulling at it...and you just got to try not to complain...because there’s like four people doing your hair at once, sometimes._ Student B7

Referees and adjudicators were recognised by students as having roles where students needed to demonstrate self-control at times. From their perspectives, students were aware that the referees and adjudicators had their own perspectives.

_in debating, if the adjudicator makes a decision that you don’t agree with, you have to learn not to shout out and get angry._ Student B7

_in soccer, if the ref makes a decision you don’t agree with, you sort of just keep it in your head and don’t yell out._ Student B8

It is important to note that students speak about the decisions of the referees or adjudicators, not in terms of being a wrong decision, rather being a decision that the students “did not agree with.” A student also expressed an understanding of the possible consequence of complaining to a referee.

If you get in the ref’s bad books, you could be sent off and not be able to play your next few games. Student B8

Students are aware of rules and these seemed to be considered as specific rules documented for specific activities, most commonly the rules of the game. In sport, this awareness included the role of the referee in enforcing certain rules. Knowledge, perhaps not precisely rules, included knowing positions and roles within the team for a particular sport. The term guidelines was raised to refer to the ideas that were not as specific or supported in documentation. This seemed more applicable to activities such as debating and Rock Eisteddfod.

_In debating, there’s not really exact rules, but there’s more like guidelines; like you should [speak for] over three minutes, but under five minutes... And there are probably rules like you can’t insult the other team and stuff, but like more of the things you use are like guidelines, and not exact rules in the ‘rule book.’_ Student B7

_on the day of Rock Eisteddfod, you have to know, like, you can’t have chewing gum on the stage when you’re dancing and no-one is allowed to smoke or anything like that. All the people’s sets has to be fire retardant... [but] I don’t think there’s actually rules to how you dance and stuff._ Student B7
Application of knowledge of rules in practice was discussed as a skill as in the previous description of how a player could put another player “off-side.”

Developing confidence was attributed to participation in extracurricular activities.

*You learn to have, like, confidence when you’re in front of people and stuff.* Student B7

The idea that students could practise and experience performance in front of an audience was important. Performance skills were discussed as something that could be developed through participation. Although developing confidence was included by all students when they ranked what they got out of participating in their extracurricular activity, in discussion, two out of the three participants considered that confidence was a quality they already had, so did not really develop it in their activity.

*I’ve always been confident, so I don’t really have to [learn it.]* Student B6

Having an opportunity for self-expression was important for students and also given as a way in which extracurricular activities are different from other contexts. One student related his perception of extracurricular context in contrast to the classroom.

*I like getting heard when I talk and stuff. Like when you’re in class, you don’t get that much… Just like, if I think differently from someone, I’ll just say it. In the classroom, if you think differently from the teacher, you can’t really say.* Student B6

In their activities, they considered that they were given the opportunity to “have their say.” In the context of debating, the opportunity for self-expression lay in the nature of the activity itself where the student explained that “you get to say your ideas of the subject.” With sport, the opportunity to be heard involved the students’ opinions about the processes of the activity.

*In volleyball, if you think you have a better combination, you can just tell the coach. He might say ‘Yeah’ or he might say ‘No’, but, you know, you can like give your ideas.* Student B6

*…like in all sports, you tell the coach and he’ll listen to you.* Student B8

On clarifying that the coach would actually listen to the students’ ideas, one student agreed saying, “Yeah, and not put you down” (Student B6).

*Leadership skills* is an interesting item in that the student who raised the idea, did not include it in his ranking of the things that he felt were most important to him in what he got out of his extracurricular participation. In discussion, he said,
Some of the people who play on my team, we’ve like played for ages and some of the people haven’t played for that long, so like we tell them what to do, how to do it, when to do it and stuff. Student B6

During the discussion, he also raised that leadership could be related to a particular role, like captain, but was confident in his response that students did not have to be captain in order to lead. The other students in this discussion did not talk about leadership and one student agreed that she did not really think about leadership in her activities. Nonetheless, both these students included leadership as more important than some other items of their ranking. Possibly, in general terms they considered it important, although they did not have specific examples where they felt they had experienced leadership for themselves in their activity.

**Case Study 2: Discussions with Student Group 3**

Group 3 in the second case study school consisted of five Year 9 and 10 students. From discussion of the key question, “what do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities?” students used the following cover terms for the ideas they had raised about their extracurricular learning. This third group in Case Study 2 described their ideas in terms of learning:

- *To be part of a team*,
- *New skills*,
- *Self-discipline*,
- *To know [personal] limits*,
- *To keep nerves under control*, and
- *Socialising skills*.

In addition to the above items, students in this group considered the idea that their “friends do it” as an important aspect of what they get out of participating; although not apparently a learning, it gives insight into the emphasis they place on friendships. This issue is explored further as one of the students’ reasons for participating.

A diagram of the cover terms, rankings of relative importance, and individual items about their extracurricular learning is included in Figure A4, Appendix I.

Being *part of a team* for these students meant listening to and including people, encouraging rather than putting people down, and helping people. Students considered that a team at the most fundamental level was a group of people, which led to a discussion of who makes up the team. A distinction is made regarding the adults involved in extracurricular activities. If the adult leader, for
example the coach or music conductor, performed the activity with the students, they were considered to be part of the team.

*You’d have to [include the coach as a team member] – he played with us once.* Student B12

*The conductor is like part of the team as well because they’re performing with you on the night.* Student B10

Listening to people had two facets. In the context of being part of a team, the initial meaning is that team members have a voice and are included in team interactions. Listening was also related to leadership where it required that leaders, whether students or coaches, “knew what they were doing.”

*If [coaches] know what they’re doing, you tend to listen to them.* Student B9

*[Students] have to be good and know what they’re doing.* Student B13

In one example, however, listening to follow a leader was attributed to a particular playing position.

*...like in hockey, our goal keeper is important because they can see everything, so you listen to the goal keeper. If they say, ‘Come back,’ as a player, you come back. You don’t say, ‘You don’t know what you’re doing’ [to them]”* Student B10

There is the element here that the student understands something of the processes of the game and the role that the goal keeper takes. This seems to take precedence over whether or not the player knows what they are doing.

Given the emphasis students place on someone knowing what they are doing, we discussed their experiences with coaches. It seemed that knowledge of the activity was not a requirement in undertaking a coaching role in this school context.

*In some sports, teachers like coach a team because there’s no-one else to do it, so they’re not really interested.* Student B13

In part, it seems that a teacher may take on the role simply to support students’ involvement in the activity. From this statement, the student relates the level of interest in the activity with a perception of knowledge about it. In other words, if the teacher is doing the activity simply because no-one else will, they may not have coaching skills, or have an interest. It also seems possible, however, that a teacher may have interest, without a level of expertise. Students related experiences where coaching was minimal and of little assistance to them.

*Year 10 soccer, the coach just said, ‘Yep, get on the field and play.’ That’s all he said.* Student B9
If someone is interested...they become part of your team, but if they come like ‘Do whatever you want’ then [they’re not really part of the team.] Student B10

Students identified the potential assistance that the coaching role could provide.

If you’re on the field and you know your coach knows what they’re doing and everything, you’re going to perform better. Student B10

Students also tried to compensate for a lack of leadership from a coach, although this impacted on their potential to work as part of a team.

If [the coach] says just, ‘Everyone organise your positions’ then everyone is going to be yelling and screaming, ‘I want to go here,’ ‘No, I want to go here.’ And so the team is all angry with each other before they get onto the field and so they’re not going to play as a team and you get fights within the team. Student B10

Teamwork was not the sole domain of extracurricular sports.

...if you’re in a little group like practising with a group of flutes, then you’ve got to listen to each other as well. The teamwork like goes into music as well. Student B10

Students differentiate between team skills and individual skills. In discussing new skills, students primarily focussed on individual skills. The skills discussed included physical skills, for example,

In soccer, we’re learning to be able to control the ball and not kick it too far in front of you. Student B9, intellectual processes,

I think like with debating, you learn how to write speeches and you learn how to say them and you get skills. Student B10

I can read music. Student B10,

and knowing oneself:

If you’re not as good as some of the others, you won’t help out as much. Student B12

Yeah, play within your limits. Student B13

Some of these skills are seen as closely aligned to classroom subjects.

Like English [subject], you get a lot of orals so you have to learn how to speak in front of people. Also I think with debating, it helps you develop those skills. Student B10

Other relationships were drawn between playing extracurricular sport and the school subject HPE, and teamwork that students considered very much part of their extracurricular experiences was
related by one student to her work in her school Drama subject. One student suggested that playing in an extracurricular music ensemble “definitely helps” with a classroom Music subject.

Self-discipline came up as a topic for discussion after one student commented that he learnt “not to back chat the ref.” The student detailed an instance the previous year where he challenged a penalty and received a yellow card. Another student’s comment indicated that self-discipline was a particular challenge for that student. It is interesting that self-discipline is not simply a mode of expected behaviour, but also seems to be a matter of knowing oneself and one’s reactions and learning to modify them. It is also interesting that students perceive that their extracurricular involvement gives them the opportunity to develop self-discipline. For the most part, the discussion involved students learning to keep their reactions under control, in particular, when situations occurred where the students felt entitled to react.

[You need self-discipline] when you know you're right. Student B12

You need self-discipline if you like get accidentally elbowed in the face or something… Student B9

Students seemed to realise certain consequences to reacting that meant it was in their best interests to show self-discipline.

Although coming to know personal limits came up in terms of teamwork and understanding the contribution an individual can make to a team, it was also discussed in terms of two main aspects: knowing personal limits and knowing consequences of actions.

[You need to] know how far you can go. Student B12

In like water polo, you know you won’t keep on trying to push yourself to keep playing or like you’ll drown…you’ve got to know when to stop yourself. Student B10

Further clarification linked knowing personal limits with one’s ability to contribute to a team. Thinking in terms of the team involved both choosing not to play beyond one’s limits, and also choosing to play for the sake of the team.

You’re better off going off if you are injured than keep on playing because you’re not going to play as well as you can if you hurt yourself. Student B9

If someone’s injured and they play the game anyway, they know that they are going to get hurt, but they don’t want to let the team down. They’ve got to know to stop and take a break, and then they’ll be able to play later. Student B10

If you get injured, and you have like no players on the bench, you have to keep playing; otherwise your team will be short on the field. Student B9
For these students to keep nerves under control meant to keep focussed on the activity, rather than thinking about other things.

*If it’s really important to you, you’re thinking ‘Well, I’ve got to do that and that and that’ and you get really nervous.* Student B13

Students agreed that their activity participation contributed to their developing the ability to keep their nerves under control.

*Yeah, I find I’m always nervous for anything, like whether it’s a concert, debating, sport or anything. But I’m a lot less now than when I started them [extracurricular activities] because I’m used to it and I know if I stuff up, it doesn’t matter.* Student B9

There is also an element where the performance of the activity provides the opportunity to experience a certain level of performance anxiety, but without consequences that are so great as to inhibit participation. Pressure to perform and the associated nervous reaction is attributed to both the individual and other people.

*You cause the pressure yourself, I reckon. Before the game, it’s like ‘We have to play really well, or we’re just going to lose’ and you put a lot of pressure on yourself.* Student B9

*Family and friends can do that too [put pressure on]. Like just on the sideline [saying] ‘Come on, you’ve got to do it’ so you’ve [then] got to do it for them.* Student B10

During the discussion, students agreed that it was a fine line between what is encouraging and what causes pressure. Nerves were identified as both an individual experience, but also a collective reaction within a team.

*[If everyone in a team is nervous], it just makes it worse.* Student B10

Being with friends is important for providing a reason for participating, but is also raised in what students get out of participating, that is, an opportunity to spend time with friends. From this, students discussed developing *socialising skills*. One student described this idea quite simply as meaning to “be nice and not yelling” (Student B12). In general terms, students seemed to use *socialising skills* to describe the knowledge they applied to interact with others effectively.

Elements came up throughout the discussion of other points as well, in particular in working with a team and interacting appropriately with students, coaches, and referees. The impact of not interacting appropriately was detailed by one student, “They’ll all get angry and not like you” (Student B10). This comment was made during discussion about self-discipline in working with team mates and the coach. Further clarification of this element was not offered by students.
Case Study 2: Discussions with Student Group 4

Group 4 in the second case study school consisted of six Years 8, 9, and 10 students, all of whom were involved in extracurricular music ensembles. Three students were also involved in sports. Students in this discussion kept most of the terms they raised as separate categories. In response to the question “what do you get out of participating in extracurricular activities?” students used the following cover terms for the items they had raised. This fourth group in Case Study 2 perceived that in their extracurricular activities they:

- Have fun,
- Gain experience,
- Develop a level of professionalism,
- Learn teamwork,
- Learn technical aspects,
- Make friends,
- Develop leadership [skills],
- Learn new things,
- Get better at it,
- Learn how instruments work,
- Learn responsibility,
- Feel privilege,
- Develop communication skills,
- Develop skills [in general], and
- Develop decision-making skills.

If the focus is on what students take away from their extracurricular experiences, these categories refer to different elements of their participation, not immediately apparent as learnings. Perhaps, a clearer way of understanding this is to suggest that students learn in their extracurricular activities as indicated by the development they attribute to that participation. The context is such, however, that they do this “by having fun” and “through the experiences” that the activities provide. These students also recognise that through participation where they practise their activity, they “get better at it.”
The other item that is not a clearly delineated “learning” is the term “privilege,” in that students would not overtly learn to feel privilege. The term was raised in discussion with particular attention to their musical participation. These students were skilled at playing musical instruments. They recognised that this was not universal; not everyone has the skills or opportunities to be able to play as they did. Accordingly, this term predominantly refers to a feeling perhaps of being honoured in their ability to participate in instrumental ensembles. If I were to articulate this in terms of learning, students in this group had a social and emotional awareness of the value that they placed on the talents they were able to express in their activity.

Although the above list represents all the terms that students put forward as what they got out of participating, a summary of the learnings they attribute to their extracurricular participation is provided in a diagram (see Figure A5, Appendix I) showing the cover terms, ranked according to relative importance, and individual items about their extracurricular learning. These cover terms and examples are discussed below.

Students in this group proposed that through their extracurricular participation, they develop a level of professionalism. This particularly referred to the manner in which they presented themselves in musical performances. Professionalism included “knowing what to do” which was attributed to experience.

>You’ll be able to perform at a better level in future because you have the experience, so you’ll know what to do... Like your first time performing, you aren’t as sure and you’ll be nervous. Each time you’re performing, you get better and it gets easier. Student B15

Learning about teamwork is also a part of what these students gained from their extracurricular experiences. Students were aware of the characteristics they considered were important in a team, which included being supportive and encouraging of other team members.

>When you’re in a team, you can either have lots of support or no support. If you’ve got a great team, then, well, you’ve got all this support helping you...if you’re in a bad team and you make a mistake, they won’t say, ‘Nice try,’ they’ll just blame you for it. Student B19

These students paid particular attention to learning technical aspects of their activity with particular reference to music. Participation in extracurricular ensembles was attributed by one student to his developing this type of knowledge.

>It taught me a lot about the technical aspects of music...and enjoyment and making friends. Student B14
Interestingly, he adds the components of enjoyment and *making friends* to his statement about his learning, lending support to the above suggestion that learning in this domain is characterised by experiences and “having fun.” Another student added later in the discussion about the impact of being in a team and learning.

*And if you’re in a team, too, you’ve got other people who, like, know the rules of music so they can tell you how to improve it. If you’ve like by yourself, you’re the only one who’ll know it and then you can’t pick it out as easily what you need to do.* Student B18

*Leadership skills* were raised by one student who was in a smaller jazz ensemble as well as the large concert band. He suggested that in the smaller group, he was able to take more of a leadership role. Although clarification of this term and additional examples were not put forward in further discussion, four of the six students in this focus group ranked it as important in what they were able to get out of participating in their extracurricular activity.

*Learn new things* involved “learning new instruments” as well as more generally “learning new stuff.” These students emphasised communication skills and decision-making skills, as well as leadership, discussed above, by keeping them as separate terms, rather than grouping them as similar. In very general terms, the discussion of skills was about how students do their activity. In the instance of music, students could read music and had skills to play their instruments. Music seemed different from other extracurricular participation, requiring an established level of ability in order to participate in extracurricular ensembles.

*Playing an instrument, you can do things other people can’t do. People can play, like, Rugby League, but you can play an instrument and that can take more thought – you have to think more.* Student B15

Playing an instrument was seen as an intellectual endeavour as well as a skill.

*Yeah, also with playing an instrument, there’s so many things that you have to think about like tone quality and how you articulate and how loud it’s going to be and playing together as a band, tuning – there’s so many things to think about at one time, while playing.* Student B15

*Learning a sense of responsibility* in extracurricular music ensembles was highlighted by a student in saying:

*I guess you get responsibility...because if you don’t know your bit, you stand out.* Student B14

The activity itself provided feedback and a natural consequence for not taking responsibility for one’s level of participation. Music students indicated a requirement that they prepare individually,
although the level to which students focus on ensemble music varied. One student found that the band music was less challenging than what he did independently.

_Band stuff – you can just, like, look at the thing [piece of music] and you can play it. It’s not too hard. You’ve got to think a bit in the nitty gritty bits, but I find I do more other things at home, like piano and guitar and stuff and that’s what I find you got to [work] at it a lot._ Student B14

The students at School B attributed a broad range of learnings to their participation in extracurricular activities and were articulate in discussing them. In the following section, students’ ideas about their extracurricular context are discussed.

**Students’ perceptions of their extracurricular context**

**Reasons students participate in extracurricular activities**

Students participate in extracurricular activities for a variety of reasons. These reasons give some insight about how students access these activities as well as their level of engagement in the activity. Establishing a deep understanding of students’ perceptions of their extracurricular participation is important in order that this context retains the very elements that allow it to offer students experiences that facilitate their development.

Students’ reasons for participating also imply personal and interpersonal development. For the groups in this second case study, these include aspects of choice in how they use their leisure time, health, and psychological well-being. They participate choosing “to do something rather than stay at home,” “to get fit,” and for “enjoyment.” Their clarifications about their enjoyment of an activity range from an immediate emotional feedback described as having “fun” as well as recognising certain components of this enjoyment, which include being with friends, experiencing challenge and interest in what they are doing, and giving the activity “their best.”

In this case, the ideas common to all focus groups were to experience enjoyment or fun, meeting new people, and socialising with other people. When asked, “What’s fun about it?” students responded, “You’re in a team with your friends.” They also considered making new friends.

_You can make friends through it [participating]. Like probably half the people in band I’d never even talked to normally because I wasn’t in it._ Student B17

_Because, like, my [social] group’s not very sporty but then when I do sports outside of school [extracurricular], I’m with the people that like ‘Hey, yeah, you’re in that other group, but I can actually see you and I know you and everything.’_ Student B10
I suppose when I came to this school, I didn’t know anyone and then I started sports and like I know those people. And I wouldn’t really go up to them at school, but then when I got to know them more through sports, I could go up and talk to them at lunch and stuff. Student B10

Although perceived to be an important aspect of their extracurricular participation, the potential for students to socialise varied.

I had hockey and our coach is all, ‘Don’t socialise at training. Don’t socialise at the game; you’ve got to concentrate.’ So, we didn’t get to know each other. I started not to like it because I didn’t know the people and then I ended up quitting. Student B10

The impact of being able to socialise and make social connections went further than the activities themselves.

I think on the whole with extracurricular activities, you’ve kind of got to be cool at school to fit in with them, like to start to make friends as well. You’ve got to be someone who’s thought of as ‘You’re kind of cool, so we’ll talk to you.’ Like your [social] group at school kind of influences how people talk to you and stuff. Student B10

Students were aware of a social status, although this could be overcome within an activity, in particular by being recognised as “good” at the activity.

If you’re good at a certain sport that they’re good at, then they’ll accept you. Student B13

All groups except the second focus group had elements associated with development including “learning new things,” developing a sense of “responsibility,” “increasing self-confidence,” and doing an activity that required thinking or “mental” development. Self-confidence was associated with developing skills in doing the activity as well as experience that allowed students to better know themselves and their reactions under the pressure of performing the activity. Students also saw extracurricular activities as providing an opportunity for them to “try something new” or to “learn new things.” There was interest in new experiences.

Two groups raised the idea that the activities also provided the opportunity for them to share their talents, perform, and give something back to the school. This was particularly apparent in music groups.

You get to show people what you’ve done instead of just being in the practice hall, just playing... When you have public, then other people can see what you’ve done, see how you’ve improved. Student B15

In performance, we can be giving – we’re giving them music. Like they might not hear music like that normally. Student B19

Not all students agreed that they were concerned with giving to others when performing.
For me, performance is something [that] you’re doing for yourself to show people but it’s not really giving. When we perform…let’s face it, we’re not really giving to other people, because most of the performances we do are to show people how good we are at the end of the year and how far we’ve come, to measure up to the private schools. Student B17

Students considered the idea of giving with respect to sports involvement as well and talked about “giving to the team,” but the lack of an audience was a factor.

Even in interschool sport, it’s not the same as performance because parents don’t come. It’s just really the two teams there, the coaches – there’s normally one or two parents there, but... Student B14

The idea of performance as displaying achievement or development was also perceived to be different in the context of sport.

You might get recognition from the school if you actually achieve something like make the finals, but other than that, it’s just the enjoyment of playing for the team. Student B15

Two groups also indicated that their previous experience in the activities influenced their choice to continue participating in high school. The level of participation required was also a factor; it had to be fun.

I played soccer for like seven [years and] I wanted to get out of it, but school’s easier. You don’t have to like train three times a week. You can play for fun, not for serious stuff. Student B6

Here, it seems that the level of commitment matched the goal of the student. Possibly, if more weight were placed on skill development or striving to gain a place in a representative team, participation that was “easy” might not support the student’s goal. Another student was also looking for participation that was “fun” rather than focussing on ‘perfection.”

Rock Eisteddfod is just funner, because it’s like you’ve still got to do a dance, but our [outside school dance class] teacher used to like really really make us do it like perfect like the first time she showed us the dance or something. Student B7

The dance teacher from dance class outside of school was also referred to as being “mean.” It could well be that the manner of the dance teacher was the deterring factor rather than striving for a high standard, but in any case, the student was keen to have fun in participating as well as acknowledging that she was building on previous experience.

Another reason students raised to participate was being asked to by an adult.

I was made to do debating. Mum works here [at the school.] Student B5
I did it because Miss… was my English teacher and she asked me if I could do it and [my friend] wanted to as well and I just wanted to do it with her. Student B7

On clarification, this student agreed that she would probably not do it if her friend did not. A band student auditioned for another program at the school and was then invited to join the highest level concert band.

I did it because I was asked to... Actually that was pretty good because I’d only just started Year 8 and they hadn’t auditioned or anything. Because I’d previously auditioned for [another program], they knew what level I was playing at so I was pretty happy with that... I wasn’t exactly going to turn it down because it was pretty good to be asked to do it when you’re only Year 8. Student B17

How students perceive their extracurricular activity as a learning context

Students’ reasons for participating assist in developing a picture of how they perceive their extracurricular activity as a learning context. When asked what they perceive they get out of participating in their extracurricular activity, students were articulate in identifying the ways in which they believed they developed through participating.

Social goals, however, were of prime importance to these students, indicating that in order for them to access other learning benefits, opportunities to participate with friends, socialise, and experience “fun” when sharing an activity with other people are essential.

What students perceive influences what they get out of their extracurricular participation

Students discussed a number of factors that they perceived influenced both their participation in their extracurricular activity and what they were able to get out of that participation. Access to the activities was not taken for granted as students noted issues such as sports games being affected by weather or another team forfeiting, parental support affecting whether students could attend, and other team members’ commitment affecting whether a team has enough players to play or to play competitively. Access to certain activities is on the basis of a “try-out,” so students’ skill levels relative to other potential players influenced whether or not they could participate in that activity.

One main factor raised by students was that of time. They felt they have to make choices and realise the consequences of committing to an activity. “Doing too much” was an issue for some students and could lead to “worrying about school pressures.” They explained that this could mean that they were “not prepared,” “pre-occupied,” or “unable to focus on what they were doing.” This seemed true both for the activities themselves as well as formal school commitments. At times, students felt they were unable to attend their activity due to their culture or traditions or special occasions. One group suggested that parents “reinforce your commitment.” This seemed to be at the
stage where students decide to commit as well as giving support in that commitment in more pragmatic ways, such as providing transport and helping students to get up early to attend certain activities. A lack of commitment was seen to impact on their extracurricular activity both in terms of participants attending as well as the effort individuals gave when participating. Students talked about the negative influence of playing with fewer team members making competition particularly difficult as well as players “not giving one hundred percent.” Attendance was seen to be important both at training and at competition. The level of training was also raised by one group who recognised “coaching and training to your level” were important. Another group said that “what you get out of training” also influenced their participation as well as the number of training sessions required.

The aspect of competition, itself, was an influence on students’ participation. Students anticipated the effect of winning as feeling “happy” and being “upset” by a loss. If the competition were “close,” students felt influenced to try and “not give in.” When the competition was perceived to be uneven with little chance of success, students felt that this generally made them feel as though they “can’t be bothered” trying, leading to a tendency to give up. In competition against a “good” team, they could feel “pumped up” or “more relaxed” if the competition were less challenging. Students desired a sense of fairness in their competition. Attending a government school, these students expressed that they felt there were occasions where favouritism towards independent schools was apparent.

Feelings influenced students’ participation as well as what they perceived they got out of their participation in response to competition as discussed above, but also in how they felt while participating and how other people responded to them. Students discussed how the activities could be “fun” but also cause them to feel “tired.” Other people influenced their feelings. One group discussed encouragement and said that this “makes it more enjoyable” and can contribute to greater “belief in yourself.” Another group also felt that the attitudes of the people around them had an effect on how they felt when participating.

Students perceived that the people involved in an activity affected their participation. These include other students, parents, coaches (teachers and conductors), and referees (adjudicators and umpires). As discussed above, the commitment of other team members was important. In addition, students felt that team members should know the rules of the activity. They were also respected for “putting in effort.” Students suggested that cliques could exist in activities and this could cause team members to “blame each other for mistakes.” Friendships were important as students considered that “doing it with people you like” influenced their participation. Students were also
aware of how another team behaved especially if they were “snobby” or “mean.” Parents, in addition to supporting students’ commitments, discussed above, influenced participation by driving to activities, supporting financially, and in some instances helping with coaching. Parents could also influence the choice of a particular activity and embarrass students, particularly by using nicknames. Coaches were influential in both positive and negative ways. Students considered that coaches were “meant to train the team, give advice, give pointers [and offer] encouragement.” This was perceived to be different from what commonly occurred. Advice and pointers were only given “sometimes” and students considered that encouragement would be rare. Students also valued whether people “knew what they were doing.” This was also applicable to referees and adjudicators. One group explained that a referee could be “good” or “not know what they’re doing or have a hangover.” An adjudicator could be “strict” or more “laid back” and a student expressed that she felt more comfortable with the latter.

The nature of social interactions occurring in extracurricular activities influenced students’ desire to participate as well as what they felt they got from that participation. Interactions between team members were considered especially important: “Team members who attend participate…and talk to you and be a team.” Communication between students varied. One group identified that if the “coach takes over, student input is low.” On the other hand, “on the field, students take no notice [of the coach].” Students felt it was important to do the activity with “people you like.”

Two groups identified resources as having an influence on their participation. This included having appropriate equipment and safety issues affected by the quality of the grounds, playing fields, or rehearsal space. They considered the term resources to refer to physical resources and not to people.

**What effects students attribute to their extracurricular participation**

Three items addressed as influences were also raised by students in this case study as effects of their participation. These are commitment, feelings, and time. In terms of effects, developing a sense of commitment was considered an effect of participating where students said they had to “decide between activities and [other] commitments.” They talked about “missing out on going to a friend’s [place]” and “time with family.” When considering such “clashes” in their timetables, they thought about “who they will get in more trouble with.”

Students considered feelings as an effect of participation, as well as influencing their choice to participate and what they considered they got out of participating. Many of these feelings were raised in a social context through interactions with other participants. Pressures they put on
themselves included thinking that they are “not good enough” or “nervous, especially if you don’t know what you’re doing.” Over-commitment also related to certain feelings students considered to be effects of their extracurricular participation. Students raised that they would “feel shocking [when they] suddenly realise an assignment is due” and can also find their participation “emotionally draining.”

Similarly, students recognised that their participation impacted upon their issues with time, and clashes in timetables could arise where they had to decide between their schoolwork, social life, part-time work, or activity. Additionally, they felt that their commitments could cause them to “stay up late” and “get tired.” More generally, they felt that their activity could “crowd their life” or “get annoying.”

A positive effect of participation had to do with making new friends or having an opportunity to meet with friends. They considered that their extracurricular activity could affect skill development and have a positive effect when they perceive that they perform well or become “good at it.”

Fitness was recognised as a positive effect that could contribute to a sense of well-being. A negative component of this physical well-being was injuries that could occur through participating.

Stress was attributed to issues of time and injury occurring in the activity, as discussed above. Some interactions with other people were also recognised as stressors. These included being “put down by other people” or “made fun of.” One student related experiences of racist comments made by other students. Students suggested that these events caused negative feelings that occurred within their extracurricular activity.

**Chapter summary**

Chapter 5 presented data from the second case study school, a co-educational state (government) school. Students offered a broad range of ideas about their learning in their extracurricular activities including what those learnings were and the influences on and effects of their participation.

The Principal articulated the possibility that students would be able to explore individual interests and students certainly confirmed that they participated in activities that were of interest to them. Students were keen to improve their skills with all groups raising learning, skill development, and/or improvement in their discussions.
Students primarily were interested in the social aspects of their activities. Activities were seen both as a medium for developing friendships and sometimes social status as well as requiring a certain level of social capital in order for students to participate.

Thoughts of future benefits were not as clearly articulated by students in this case: The effects that they presented were more immediate in nature. They did value commitment to an activity and how they felt either doing the activity or as an effect of their participation.

In Chapter 6, findings from the third and final case study are presented in a similar format to Case Studies 1 and 2.
Chapter 6
Case Study 3 – A Catholic Boys School

As with the two previous case study chapters, this chapter is organised in three parts. Part 1 gives details of the context of the case study school. Part 2 presents students’ responses to the main research question, “What do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activity?” Part 3 then reports on a combination of themes expressed by students in the initial and follow-up focus group discussions articulating their perceptions of their extracurricular participation as a learning context, the influences they perceive affect their extracurricular participation and development, and the effects they attribute to their extracurricular learning and participation.

Context
School C is a Catholic boys school in an outer metropolitan suburb. It was founded in the late 1800s. At the time of data collection, the school was attended by boys from Year 8 (circa age 12 years) to Year 12 (circa age 17 years), offering facilities for day students as well as boarders. Some younger students boarded, but attended another campus for their primary schooling.

The philosophy and goals of the school and its extracurricular program
School C aims to uphold the values established since its foundation, seeking to offer a holistic education focussing on academic achievement, personal development, spiritual growth, and extracurricular pursuits. A large proportion of the school population is involved in extracurricular sports with the school having a strong tradition of sporting endeavours, in particular rugby. Following a change in leadership, more attention has recently been given to encouraging and developing sports activities that had previously experienced less support, as well as cultural interests. The Principal explains the goals of the extracurricular program thus:

The main goals of the extracurricular program are these; they’re not in any priority order: One, to provide the notion of balance within the students’ learning is the first thing. [Two,] to develop life skills which they may find useful in terms of leisure activities later on. The third one would be to extend areas of exceptional ability, which they may have. The fourth one would be to let them develop a sub-concept as to how good they are in a particular area, because sometimes kids have a dream that that’s what they want to be when they grow up…. Fiftihly, it’s about keeping kids involved in a sense, keeping them busy. And it’s also about taking some boys beyond their comfort zone…. There are social aims of course as well, and they would relate to the kids’ capacity to work in a team situation, and develop skills of leadership as well in a team situation. And just the whole social atmosphere. Principal C, Interview 1
In seeking to develop the whole person, the school leadership takes a calculated approach to guiding the pathways of its students. In discussion with the Principal, there is awareness that all students are different and that the experiences they have at school help shape their development into young men. The school has therefore developed specific plans that guide them in leading students through such developmental experiences and the extracurricular program is included in their understanding of student learning. The Principal explained the concept during an interview:

“To me it’s a mental vision in a metaphor of a pinball. We put the kid [in], in the beginning ... we pull back the spring, and away it goes. And the kid will end up over there, his path will be different but he’s got to make contact with a number of things. And they have to be there. They will learn differentially from those contacts, but ... it’s very clear that there will be certain experiences.” Principal C, Interview 1

Later, the Principal specified that “the extracurricular program is seen here as an integral part of the plan” to provide the boys at School C with those experiences.

School site

The school site is very large with extensive facilities on campus. The main buildings are traditional reflecting the architectural history of the school, with classroom buildings of three levels. In addition, the school possesses 11 rugby and cricket pitches, cricket nets, two swimming pools including one Olympic size, basketball courts, indoor volleyball courts, 12 tennis courts, an Olympic standard athletics track, a 9-hole golf course, three soccer pitches, a shooting range, a gymnasium, a purpose-built art block, drama space, and music facilities including a recording studio. Plans are being developed to advance the cultural facilities at the school. There is also a health centre on site available. Rowing sheds are off site overlooking the Brisbane River.

School community

Students attend school from the local area and greater metropolitan area; as well there are students from further afield, who can board at the school. The boarding community adds rural students as well as international students from Asian, Pacific, and other countries. At the time of data collection the school student population was over 1100 with a relatively even distribution of students across all year levels. At that time, Years 10 and 11 had the greatest student numbers. The school is situated in an outer metropolitan suburb. Current analysis of the relative socioeconomic status of the student population indicates a varied population, most likely related to the boarding community and the social justice orientation of the school, which means that fees are waived for some students.
The large population of the school in part explains the extensive resources and the large number of activities offered to students. Particularly in the more popular sports, there are many teams available to students in each year level and at different playing grades.

The focus of the school is on the development of the whole student. The term *balance* is used in the school prospectus in regard to student development. The school holds high the status of developing spirituality alongside academic, cultural, and sporting pursuits.

Post-school, approximately half of the graduates pursue tertiary education and one quarter follow on to further vocational education and training. Of the remaining, most move directly to work with a very small number neither engaged in further education nor employment.

The school is governed by a school board and managed by the school Principal and a leadership team of four deans. Coaches and leaders of activities may be teachers, but are recognised as those who can lend a level of expertise to the activity. Skills are recognised as part of leading activities, for example in encouraging the accreditation of coaches. Teaching staff also fulfil roles as managers of activities. Ten sports had parent support groups specifically for the activity.

**Curriculum**

The school offers a range of academic and vocational programs, including certificate level courses, apprenticeships, and traineeships. It is also proud of its academic tradition, drawing attention to successful past students on its website. Students in the middle school are involved in structured learning based on a thematic approach where they are involved in tasks that integrate a number of curriculum areas.

Students in the senior phase of learning have a number of options in their academic program including pathways to tertiary education whereby they study academic subjects where assessment goes towards an Overall Position (OP); vocational studies involving a program of subjects in which students are not eligible for an OP; school-based apprenticeships and traineeships which generally include part-time paid work as part of the training; and a variable program where students may complete their senior studies over three years rather than two.

**Extracurricular activities**

Extracurricular activities are included in the school prospectus and on the school website as well as in the psyche of students. During the year of data collection, 15 different sports were available to students, of which 12 are considered team sports for the purposes of this study; 7 cultural activities were specified on offer in the prospectus; and 13 clubs were active in addition to debating and
competition chess. When considering the school’s focus on extracurricular participation, one student related:

_one of the things we were told at orientation day was, ‘Get into it.’_ Student C1

Rugby remains the dominant activity in terms of student participation and public awareness. The number of people involved on game day is huge and the professionalism brought into coaching, training, and developing teams is high. The coaching program involves a curriculum designed in a manner that seeks to develop students’ skills in a sequential manner with drills taught in younger year levels being built upon as students progress through teams. There are a number of teams in each age group catering for students of different abilities. Other activities, for example soccer, are now developing similar programs for student development within the activity now that they have further support in leadership. The school employs personnel with expertise to guide the coaching and development of students in sport.

The extracurricular program also benefits from the management of a full-time staff member who oversees the activities offered by the school. This role may be considered to be a significant position in what is a very large program involving a great number people, including coaches and managers of teams and activities. Some attention is given to realising the interests of students from different backgrounds. With the boarding community, students from rural areas are able to be involved in a club that tours rural shows each year, developing students’ expertise in particular animal husbandry skills.

**Participants**

Twenty-two students from School C participated in this study. The ages, year levels, and activities in which each student participated are summarised in Appendix K. There were seven students in Year 8, nine students in Year 9, and six students in Year 10. They were involved in a wider variety of sports, with some students involved in clubs and cultural activities. All students, except one, were involved in more than one activity. Seventeen of the 22 students were involved only in sports.

**What students at School C report that they learn in the secondary school extracurriculum**

As described in the previous two case study chapters, students participated in a focus group process that elicited a list of ideas in response to the key question “what do you get out of participating in extracurricular activities?” Student responses were written on poster paper, and then discussed as a
group. The discussion involved students describing, clarifying, then grouping those items in to the main themes that they perceived covered their extracurricular learnings.

As part of the analysis process, I developed diagrams to illustrate the rankings of the cover terms and visually connected items to them. Items are exclusively in the words of an individual student who proposed the idea. Cover terms were derived collectively. The diagram for the first group in this case is included as a figure in text. The remaining diagrams are attached as appendices.

The sections below present each of the six student groups separately. The ideas (items) and the initial categories into which those items were grouped (cover terms) are explained. Sometimes items share such a common understanding that no further explanation is offered, for example, “We learn cooperation.” Where the meanings are not common or have a particular interpretation for the students involved, further explanations are given.

Case Study 3: Discussions with Student Group 1

Group 1 in the third case study school consisted of Year 9 students. Four students participated in these discussions. In response to the key question, “what do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities?” students detailed a number of items that they grouped into the following cover terms. Through participation, students in the first group in Case Study 3 perceived they:

- Gain relationships and social skills,
- [Develop a sense of] responsibility,
- [Develop] organisation skills,
- Learn about themselves,
- [Learn] cooperation,
- [Experience] happiness,
- Feel better when helping {others},
- [Practised] how to learn and how to listen,
- Read play [and practised] applying [and] using skills,
- Learn skills and new moves,

Access to students in each school was determined by a liaison staff member at the school. At School C, I was given access to smaller groups of students, hence undertook more focus group discussions. The results presented in this chapter reflect both the greater number of focus group discussions held as well as a greater level of detail apparent at times, presumably because individual students had more input during the time allocated to the discussions.
• *Become* alert, and

• *Fix mistakes*.

Certain items students raised have a common understanding and further illustration seems unnecessary. Students identified both learning new skills and practising applying them in game situations. Cooperation was identified as an important facet of team activities. Sports activities were attributed with the potential to encourage students to be alert. Figure 3 illustrates the cover terms, placed centrally in red with white text, that students ranked from most important to least important descending down the page. Items students connected to cover terms are also included.
Figure 3. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 3, Student Group 1: Cover terms (coloured in red with white text) located centrally ranked from top to bottom in order of importance with other items (coloured according to how items were devised) joined by continuous lines, indicating the connections students made, and dotted lines indicating connections I made based on students’ discussions.
Students recognised that their extracurricular participation offered them opportunities to gain relationships with other people.

*It’s kind of like gaining relationships. You’re learning like how to talk to people.* Student C3

Another student called this idea socialising skills, although the label was changed to social skills further in the discussion.

Students offered two perspectives on the concept of responsibility:

*Responsibility* [is] like if you’re in a team game and you miss a tackle and they [the opposition] score a try. Student C4

*Responsibility* in this instance involved a commitment to performing a role in a team and a concern with being able to be relied upon by other team members. Another student also recognised a personal responsibility.

*It’s not just what happens in a game. It’s like the responsibility of packing your bags the night before and remembering everything.* Student C2

Students agreed that responsibility was part of their preparation as well as their practice. This linked with their ideas about developing organisation skills. Students perceived that in doing so many activities outside of school, they needed to be organised. All the students in this group seemed to be busy participating in a number of different activities. One student described his afternoon program.

*This afternoon, I’ve got soccer [at school], then half an hour at home, which I don’t really use because I have to have something to eat quickly then I go to club [soccer practice]. By the time club finishes, it’s 8.30pm. I have a shower, then it’s time to go to bed. So I have to do all my homework at school during lunch time and morning tea... And this morning, I had band practice [at school] at 7.30am.* Student C2

This student acknowledged the idea that handling activities and schoolwork required him to be organised and do his homework ahead of time, as his afternoon was filled with soccer. He had also noted earlier in the discussion his motivation to participate in soccer.

*I’ve always played soccer and like it’s something I’ve been brought up with. I’m Asian, so it’s like it comes [with that]. I love it.* Student C2

It is possible that activities may provide an incentive for students to develop their organisational skills in order to participate in the activities they enjoy.

Students perceived that their participation in school extracurricular activities allowed them to learn about themselves. In particular this seemed to be about learning how to balance their lives and take advantage of opportunities to follow their passions.
...I think the most important thing in life is to keep a balance of stuff. To keep that balance you don’t just want to like study, study, study. You want to like play your sport and have a bit of fun doing that. It doesn’t matter if you don’t like make the first team or anything, you’re still having fun doing what you’re doing. Student C2

The extent to which students felt they had a passion for the activity affected the extent to which they wanted to commit.

Like for soccer at school, you don’t really need a passion [for it], because it’s fully laid back, but for like cross country and rowing, you’d need a passion [for them] because the training hour and the commitment [is more intensive]. Student C3

Students’ perceptions of the levels of commitment required and their interest in particular activities seemed to differ. This might indicate a value in schools offering activities that allowed for different levels of participation. This relates to the idea suggested about not necessarily needing to be in the “first team,” as well as the need the student above identified to have “fun doing what you’re doing.”

Happiness seemed to include the idea of doing something that was “fun,” as well as experiencing success, for example, “Scoring goals is good” (Student C3).

Students gave weight to being able to make a contribution.

If you try your best, you are [giving back to the school]. Student C4

But for this group of students, the opportunity to contribute to others’ well-being was also a source of happiness.

There are programs like the big breakfast, where you go out and feed homeless people. Student C1

Another student was involved in a club activity that involved visiting the elderly in the community at a retirement home, which he related to a sense of happiness in being able to contribute to the happiness of others.

Within activities, students also recognised the opportunity to help other people. This included assisting other students to develop skills.

In music, this guy didn’t know how to play the drums and he’s like, ‘how to you do it?’ And I taught him like one beat [pattern] and he’s over the moon and you feel good about that. Student C2

The students in this discussion also agreed that there were “definitely” opportunities in their sports training sessions to help other people.
Students alluded to learning how to learn through participation in their activity.

*Learning skills like learning how to step in rugby – that’s a different thing – but learning skills as in knowing how to learn properly and how to listen.* Student C1

This implied an understanding of metacognitive processes practised in extracurricular activities.

Students talked about learning to *fix mistakes*.

*Fixing mistakes – if you make a mistake in extracurricular activities, it kind of helps you when you make a mistake in just schooling and you fix that up.* Student C1

*It’s* experience. Student C2

*It’s just if you’ve made a mistake you know how to fix it because you’ve already done it.* Student C1

The extracurricular context was deemed to be different from formal schooling in that they had an opportunity to make mistakes and “fix them.”

*It is different [in extracurricular activities]. Like you kind of know how to fix them [mistakes] and you know not really to worry about them too much, just to fix it up. It kind of brings it back to everyday life and how you have to fix things up every day.* Student C1

**Case Study 3: Discussions with Student Group 2**

The second group of students at the third case study school included five Year 9 students. In discussions about the main question, “what do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities?” students reported a number of items that they grouped into the following terms.

Students perceived they developed through their participation in that they:

- **[Develop]** fitness, physique and/or appearance,
- **[Gain]** confidence,
- **[Develop]** friends,
- **Learn how to work as a team,**
- **Find their physical limits,**
- **[Develop]** communication [skills],
- **[Develop]** skills,
- **Handle problems and difficulties,**
- **[Experience]** physical and emotional challenges,
- **[Learn about]** preparation,
• [Learn about] how to eat and drink,
• [Receive] compliments from people they looked up to,
• [Develop] strategy,
• [Learn] life skills,
• [Learn to] support others and get support from others,
• Feel good about themselves when helping people,
• Meet new people, and
• [Learn] general knowledge.

They also noted that they developed patience and learnt “when to stop,” using the example of knowing when not to talk.

Some terms were not expanded upon further in discussion and the meaning of the concept was generally shared. For example, when raising confidence as something students get out of participating in their extracurricular activity, the student simply said,

*You get confidence really. Student C8*

Similarly, students raised ideas such as discovering if they were good at something and handling problems or difficulties without further clarification or description. Consequently, these items are not elaborated further below.

This focus group also kept many terms separate and did not consider them part of a larger grouping term. Accordingly, some items are explained or elaborated upon during discussion about other concepts. For example, “eating well” and “preparation” were raised in terms of maximising the potential to optimise physical performance during the discussion about the capacity for activities to assist students to explore their personal limits. The example offered for learning about strategy was the idea of pacing yourself in physical activity, also likely to be related to maximising physical potential.

Some items were described and clarified in more detail. These are included in the discussion below. A diagram of the cover terms, rankings of relative importance, and individual ideas about extracurricular learning is included in Figure A6, Appendix N.

Students rated developing *fitness, physique, and appearance* as the most important issue for them in terms of what they got out of participating in their extracurricular activity.
Well, you don’t notice it straight away. You still have those forwards that are big. You don’t become muscly and stuff. You certainly get fitter and stuff. Student C8

They were aware of the physical aspects of their sport and perhaps also the transition to manhood that their changing physiques might represent. It is interesting to note that size was identified as important for particular playing positions, in this instance rugby. There was also an emphasis on fitness rather than expecting an immediate result in developing muscle bulk.

Developing friends was important for these students in their extracurricular participation. They noted that you could develop friendships through playing and even meet students from other schools “if you’re playing their team” (Student C5). The fact that they were able to participate with their friends also enhanced their enjoyment of the activity.

My friends play so it’s a social thing as well. Student C8

It comes back to enjoyment. Student C7

Yeah, it helps [that friends do it] to enjoy it more. Student C9

Friends offered a strong motivation to participate. An activity might be chosen because friends were participating: however, if the activity were not enjoyable, students felt they might “give it a go, anyway” (Student C5).

I’ve never played football, like rugby before last year and I just did it because all my friends were doing it and I turned out to be all right at it. And so I just got a drive from my friends to play football. Student C9

In this instance, the student also had the opportunity to learn more about himself in discovering that he was “all right at it.”

When you’re playing also you could be in a team where your friends are better and you may not like be as good and would be in a lower team and eventually through time you make new friends as well. You still end up with friends doing it. Student C7

They believed it was more challenging if they did an activity and their friends were not in their team, but making friends was also part of their activity participation.

The process of making new friends was articulated by one student with awareness that friendships were based on the perception of that other person in their mind.

Because usually if you’re making new friends you haven’t seen them as a friend before so you don’t really give them a chance in your mind. So it will be a lot harder to... I reckon it is. Because most of my friends are in my team. Student C8
One student even raised the opportunity for meeting new people, in particular students from other schools if they were playing sport against them. The term “meeting new people” was not, however, grouped with the concept of friends by the students in this group.

There was, at times, a greater emphasis placed on the activity itself, in particular doing an activity for which a student had a natural talent.

*I do cross country and some of my friends do it now. But when I first came here, I didn’t really do it because my friends were here; I did it because…it’s just kind of a natural thing for me to do.*

Student C7

*He’s a freak at it.* Student C8

Students identified a difference between team and individual activities. Teamwork was considered to be more important in some activities than others.

*[You work as a team] more so in some than others because like athletics and swimming, they’re more individual sports so you don’t really like have to work as a team.* Student C9

For the purposes of this school, some individual activities, such as swimming and athletics, were organised as teams representing the school. One aspect in this team idea was that students would then cheer on the swimming or athletics team when they are competing. A distinction was made by one student, clarifying,

*But you’re really doing it more individually because you’re the only person competing well for yourself. There’s not like trying to help [another person] win in a race if you’re in the same race.*

Student C9

Implied in his description of the nature of a team activity is that teamwork involves helping others.

Students explored their personal physical limits through participating in their extracurricular activities.

*You can do it [the activity] like to find out what your physical limits are.* Student C9

Students were specifically aware of what their physical limits might be.

*Your body deteriorates like [a] torn muscle, but that was some weird thing.* Student C8

*I vomit.* Student C9

*I passed out once in the middle of a shopping centre. I’d just done cross country training and I didn’t drink anything, so I passed out.* Student C8
Some students had reached what they perceived to be their physical limit. One student, however, suggested that this could always be pushed further.

*I reckon you can always like beat them [physical limits] if you think about it. Because you never push yourself that far... Usually like stuff stops you before [you get to your limits]. Like eating too much, you vomit. To reach a physical limit, you have to be like perfectly prepared. Like if you ate too much food, then you vomit it. It doesn’t mean you reach your physical limit.* Student C8

Students were also aware of skills associated with maximising their potential to perform. They considered these skills to include:

*Knowing about how to eat and what to do after it [the activity].* Student C8

*Strategical planning of how you’re going to pace yourself throughout what you’re doing.* Student C7

*Communication* referred both to specific language and communication that occurred during play, but also a more abstract concept of learning to communicate with different people.

*There’s like in volleyball and rugby like you’ve got to call for the ball or else there’s going to be mayhem like two people running for it.* Student C7

*There’s like moves you have to learn that have got special names.* Student C8

*I reckon communication it’s more deep right – communicating with people you don’t like. Like you have to learn patience and to know when to like give it up and just let them go off on whatever they want to talk about. Sometime you learn like when to shut your mouth and listen.* Student C8

They also noted that they developed patience and learnt “when to stop,” using the example of knowing when not to talk.

*Physical and emotional challenges* were identified by students as part of their extracurricular involvement. Activities were deemed to be more of a challenge if the student is “not very good at it” with students seeming to participate in activities that might well challenge them.

*...in the areas you’re not as skilled in... Cross country for me, because I’m like not very good at it.* Student C8

Certain activities are particularly physically challenging and it is the physical challenges that can also challenge students emotionally.

*More on the physical side like in rugby if you get a hard hit, you still need to challenge yourself to... get back up into the game.* Student C7
Interestingly, students clarified that being hit and having to get back up again was more of an emotional challenge, although it could also be a physical challenge if the student “was hurting.” One student commented,

*You’ve got to be tough in rugby.* Student C8

They also thought about how they handled the physical challenges of the sport and considered the emotional challenge of the activity having an impact on how they played.

...*running hard at someone [can be a challenge]. Usually you run slower because they absolutely nailed you. But if you run hard, you’ve got less chance of getting hurt.* Student C8

Part of this was “toughness,” but also an awareness of skills that minimise potential for injury. Students recognised an emotional component to strong physical challenges.

*Compliments* were described as an aspect of experiencing support, although students did not choose to group these items together. Compliments were most valued when offered by people whom the students respected.

*I reckon compliments are good, especially from older or people you look up to. If someone in grade 12 gave me a compliment about something I did, it would make you feel a lot better because...* Student C8

...*more support.* Student C7

One student also clarified that support was about receiving as well as giving.

*It’s a bit of both ways. You kind of you can’t really expect if you don’t support someone, you’re going to get support from them.* Student C7

Helping others was seen as inherent in a particular service club, but students also felt they had opportunities to help others in their sporting activities.

*If you do social justice or something...you feel good for helping people.* Student C8

*You could help someone out like if they’re having trouble with a drill or something. Say in volleyball, if they’re having trouble just doing some moves, you could just go through it with them and just help them out. I guess that’s another feel good thing.* Student C7

Students recognised a feeling of satisfaction that could be attained through helping others.

*Life skills* was a term specifically defined as learning that relates to what they want to do professionally.

*I guess you could get life skills out of it if you want to pursue it professionally.* Student C5
Along with life skills, general knowledge seemed to be a proposition that students supposed might apply. General knowledge was identified as part of certain club activities, rather than the sports in which most students in this group participated.

*Like how to communicate with other people, people you like or don’t like – communication sort of stuff, general knowledge maybe if you’re in some kind of club.* Student C8

This seems like a broader conceptualisation of life skills.

**Case Study 3: Discussions with Student Group 3**

Four year 8 students participated in the third group discussions. They identified that they perceived a number of areas in which they developed through participating in their extracurricular activities. From discussion of the key question, “what do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities?” students used the following cover terms for the items they had raised (illustrated in a diagram in Figure A7, Appendix K). Through participation, students believed that they:

- *Develop [thinking] skills,*
- *Develop life skills,*
- *[Gain skills that] help with schoolwork,*
- *[Become] more a team player,* and
- *[Had the opportunity to participate] with other people.*

*Thinking* includes ideas of “thinking on-the-spot,” knowing about set plays, and persistence. There was a sense of immediacy in the thinking that their extracurricular participation required.

*Like in rugby, you have to think of things like play, on the spot.* Student C10

The development of persistence through extracurricular participation was a facet that students believed transferred to their attitude to formal schooling.

*[It’s] kind of persistence when you’re doing swimming for example like they’ll say, ‘Come on, you can go that bit further.’ So then you become a bit more strong, mentally. So when you’re doing homework, you say, ‘Well, I’d better do my homework’.* Student C10

Students also recognised that their involvement in extracurricular activities helped them to be organised as well as “turned on” mentally.

*If you’re at footy training, you’re like turned on mentally and that. When you go home for homework, you’re like already thinking and that. If you’re not doing anything you might not be thinking by the time you get home.* Student C12
Yeah, [it gets you] organised. Student C13

It might be that some people use sport as getting organised and some people might use some other thing, like some other extracurricular activity. Student C13

It is interesting to note that when being organised is not attributed to sports participation in particular, it is attributed to other extracurricular involvement. Students seemed very aware of their extracurricular participation and the need to be organised. When asked what being organised meant for them, one student explained:

Nothing left behind at home. Have everything ready, like all your books for the day. Student C13

There was also an element of mental toughness with the idea that students “build up mentally.”

Yeah, like in swimming some people might think in 400metres freestyle or something, you might be thinking to yourself ‘I can’t do this’ or whatever when you start but then later on down the track you build up mentally, so you think, ‘I can get through this.’ Student C12

Although including life skills as something students perceived that they got out of their extracurricular participation, this term was only loosely described as including physical skills and ball skills with the relationship to life left quite tenuous. Other groups had considered life skills as those they would use later in life, in particular for their chosen career. Perhaps this is similar in this instance where students might perceive that they would pursue sport later in life.

They also raised the idea that learning to work as part of a team could be considered a useful life skill, and leadership in particular was suggested to be an aspect of life skills. One example given, perhaps a little tongue-in-cheek, was,

Like when you’re a swimmer – if you like one day fell off a boat or something into the ocean, you’d know how to swim. Student C12

Help with schoolwork includes organisation and persistence and becoming stronger mentally.

The learning you do mentally helps you with schoolwork. Student C12

Beyond being switched on by sport, as discussed above when students talked about thinking and their extracurricular participation, the activities also took their minds off school, which was considered to be “frequently a bore.”

The main relationship drawn between the extracurricular and formal schooling for these students was in the subject of Health and Physical Education (HPE). The activity, however, allowed
them to train at a level that they perceived to be higher than in their formal school HPE class. Different sports and activities were included in the class subject with some similarities in the skills taught and the drills practised, although “sometimes you might just play some game they [the teacher] make up” (Student C12) and if doing rugby in HPE, there’s “no contact.” The students were aware of game and practice structures, for example,

*Skills are like learning how to play it; drills help you perfect it.* Student C13

*[Drills] help you with technique.* Student C12

*Team play* includes leadership, working as a team, and cooperation. Some team skills were identified as being similar to activities that occur in some formal school subjects.

*When you’re in a team, you’re working together, you’re cooperating.* Student C13

Leadership was attached to the role of a captain or a team, but also seen to be where a more experienced player would help another.

*You don’t really need to be a captain to be able to lead – you can still help other people out.* Student C13

*Well, let’s say if you’re a bit higher, than some people in your team, then you can help them out and that helps you.* Student C10

Team play also included communication.

*On the field everyone needs to talk, not just the captain.* Student C12

*If you see someone who’s obviously not doing the right thing, then, or people not doing the right thing, you tell them.* Student C10

It is possible that although students attach the term leadership most overtly to a leadership position, they do acknowledge other opportunities to lead. Sportsmanship was also deemed important in that extracurricular participation was attributed with the potential to help students develop sportsmanship. In addition, they considered that this quality was important in creating opportunities to interact with other players and even meet players from other teams. Overall, students saw these skills as an added bonus, rather than a motivator for participating. When asked if he participated for developing skills, one student replied, “Nah, I just like it” (Student C11).

Students identified the opportunity to *participate with other people* as an aspect of what they got out of participating in their extracurricular activity.
I participate in extracurricular activities] because other people do it and I don’t want to be by myself. Student C13

They were not specific in talking about participating as a way to spend time with friends, but participating with other people came up frequently in discussions about how they like to spend their time and the nature of their extracurricular participation. Training at an extracurricular sport was labelled as more “prepared” and the consequences of participation more structured.

Training’s just always prepared, like you’ve got a coach there and he tells you what time to be there, what day and everything. Having your mates over, it’s just like calling them up, ‘Do you want to come over?’ Student C13

When you’re at training and say you kick the ball like away from where you’re training or something, coach will want you to go and get it. But if you kick it in the back yard, you might just not be bothered to go get it and go back inside. Student C12

If you do something wrong in the back yard, it’s not going to matter. If you do something wrong in training, it’s not going to be good. Student C11

[If you do something wrong at training] the coach yells at you. Student C11

You’ll be dropped from the A’s to the B’s. Student C12

You let your team mates down. Student C13

Students perceived consequences in their play to include responses from the coach, being dropped from a particular team, but also letting team mates down, recognising an attitude of responsibility to other players.

Case Study 3: Discussions with Student Group 4

Group four in this third case study consisted of three students from Year 8. Students put forward a number of items in response to the question “what do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities?” Through participation, students:

• [Learn to] be part of a team,
• Meet new people,
• [Experience the] joy of winning,
• Learn tactics,
• Learn manoeuvres,
• Learn techniques,
• Learn tips for things to do at home,
• [Are able to] discuss local sport, and
• [Have] parties afterwards.

A diagram of these cover terms, rankings of relative importance, and individual items is included in Figure A8, Appendix K.

Students placed being part of a team as the most important aspect of what they got out of participating in their extracurricular activities.

One of the things I learnt playing sport is that you really have to work as a team. Student C15

This student felt it was a reason to participate, not so much to gain skills in working as a team, but,

Yeah, because it’s fun to be working with other people. Student C15

The ability to work as a team included learning to “share.” The students also attributed value to being part of a team.

It gives you pretty good self-esteem. Student C14

Being able to support and encourage your team mates. Student C15

When asked, students were not sure whether they overtly learnt to support team mates, but it was part of what they considered as playing in a team meant. Students did think they developed skills, but also were “just part of a team” in their activity.

Students in this focus group discussion also emphasised the opportunity to meet new people.

You meet new people [doing extracurricular activities]. Student C15

...like other kids from other schools maybe or maybe they’ve just come to the suburb and they’ve only just joined and they don’t know what to do or anything. Student C16

Since you go to [this school], it’s like sporty, you meet the same people. Student C14

One student described this as “meeting new friends,” implying the development of friendships through shared activities. Another student consciously seemed to use his extracurricular involvement to get to know people at his new school.

About two months before school started, I moved up from New South Wales and I didn’t know anyone but sport’s a good way to get to know the kids you’re going to be in the same class as. Student C15
Joy of winning was about enjoyment, receiving recognition for achievements, but also an intrinsic belief in effort.

[Winning and] knowing that you’ve worked hard and put the effort in. Student C16

Say if it’s a really good team and you win by heaps or you win by a fair amount, they like buy you stuff. Like last year they used to buy us Powerade if we won stuff. Student C16

Students talked more generally about enjoyment and finding activities “fun.” Incentive to try a new activity required that it looked fun, but also involved students’ perceptions of how they might perform in the activity.

You think you can do it. Student C14

...like you’d be good at it. Student C16

Or you’re willing to give it a go. Student C14

Or challenge yourself, maybe. Student C15

Tactics, manoeuvres, and techniques are items that this group of students kept as separate items, but ranked with equivalency. Reflecting the link between these items, discussion of them will also be handled together. Students were also careful in telling me how these learnings are different and were able to define them. Tactics were conceptualised as involving thinking, whereas manoeuvres were actions that had to be known in order to do them.

Well, manoeuvres is something you do and tactics is something you’re told. Student C14

You actually think about it. Student C16

Yeah, tactics is in your mind and manoeuvres is a physical thing. Student C14

Techniques were about learning specific skills for particular situations.

Tips for things to do at home included things to practise at home, in particular if there was “nothing to do.” Students seemed to be seeking ways to spend their time. There was also the idea that they could develop a “different look on things,” which seemed to be about experiencing a different perspective on their activity, a way of practising or the way it was coached at school, when they had experience outside of the school context.

Students also thought that participating in an extracurricular activity could help them develop skills and a common interest from which to discuss sports with other people. Students identified that when experiencing their sports in different ways, they preferred playing the sport
first, then to watch a live game, then to watch sport on television. They were aware that, for them, watching live play was more exciting than watching television. Discussing local sport included the idea that they had a different level of understanding of the game, developed through playing. The example given was watching city games in the soccer league and understanding the plays. Watching a game also had the potential to motivate students to emulate particular plays that they had the skills to recognise.

If you’re watching a game and someone does something really spectacular… Student C14
...it makes you want to learn to do it yourself. Student C16

Parties afterwards involved celebrating, presumably the perception of success in the activity, as well as the “break up” party at the end of the season. Rewards such as receiving a drink for winning as mentioned above were part of what students perceived they got out of participating as well as getting a “mention” on assembly.

Case Study 3: Discussions with Student Group 5

Students in Group 5 were in Year 10 at the time of data collection. Three students participated in the focus group discussions. When asked “what do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities?” students responded that they:

- Improve [their] sporting ability as [they] do more,
- Improve [their] people skills,
- [Develop] confidence,
- [Develop] ways of learning how to train and play,
- [Experience a] fitness component,
- [Learn to] organise [their] time better,
- [Learn] strategy,
- [Develop their] concentration, and
- [Learn] improvisation.

Students chose to keep the above ideas separate in their grouping of ideas (as shown in the diagram in Figure A9, Appendix K). They did, however, link some ideas in discussion, in particular an overarching concept of “getting better at an activity” through “doing more of it.” In discussion, students linked this concept with ways of learning, strategy, concentration, and improvisation.
Accordingly, those terms will be clarified and explained as a group in the text below, although students still considered that they referred to different aspects of what they got out of participating in their extracurricular activities.

Improving sporting ability was the item that students perceived to be the most important thing for them about what they got out of participating in extracurricular activities.

*It improves your sporting ability. You get better at it from doing more of it.* Student C19

*Just a few everyday things like coordination, reaction time, flexibility and things like that.* Student C17

When asked earlier in the discussion why students participate, one concept was “to challenge yourself to improve.” It seems from this, that the activities can provide the means to develop students’ sporting skills, but also a motivation to improve.

*Motivation is about setting goals.* Student C19

That motivation, according to one student, depended on the goals an individual had in doing the activity.

*With that, it depends how you feel about the sport. Like if you’re doing it to, as I said like, keep fit or do that, but if you’re really doing it to go somewhere or play well or win, then you’ve got to [challenge yourself to improve] ... I don’t think it really matters as long as ... you’ve got a goal to improve whether you want to go up one team or go up to the Australian team or whatever, as long as you want to improve.* Student C17

In this example, “going somewhere” related to making representative teams and playing at a higher level than the school teams. The level of playing seemed less relevant than the goal to improve, with students recognising effort regardless.

*If you get like fifth in a race, you kind of really want to get to the top, improve...* Student C19

*...train harder.* Student C18

*Yeah, you just challenge yourself to try and get past the next person.* Student C19

*Wherever you come, you sort of got like the same amount of improvement – you sort of have the same intensity whether that be to go from second to first or from like 90th to 89th or whatever.* Student C17

The idea that different people could have different goals was also reinforced in discussion about other people being proud if you do well.

*Like say you come first, they’ll be like all happy and stuff and, you know, it feels good.* Student C18
The people involved included parents, friends, and the coach. Where this recognition came from depended on the level of achievement, although personal challenge was also relevant.

*It kind of depends on like...I don’t want to be mean or anything, but say if some big fat kid wanted to do like fifty or a hundred freestyle and he did it, that’s doing well for him so his parents would be proud.* Student C19

*It’s like your own standards.* Student C17

*People skills* were also identified as an important aspect of what students got out of participating in their extracurricular activities.

*For me, it’s like, learning to talk like talk to new people...you get like more civilised when you speak to someone – you get used to it.* Student C19

There was also considered to be opportunities to meet new people, perhaps even spectators congratulating students after a game. In developing relationships, one student observed,

*You also find that with most people you have sort of a common link if they also do something [e.g. sport].* Student C17

*Confidence* was an aspect students raised and was related to a belief that effort would reap rewards.

*I think you get confidence out of it, sort of thing, like believe you can do something if you apply yourself to it.* Student C17

This also had an impact on how the students handled other areas of their lives.

*I just think like say you set a goal like for yourself in sport or wherever and you just set a goal and then you achieve it, then in just everyday life, like you say ‘Oh, yeah, I want to do that,’ you’re confident you can achieve it again.* Student C17

The potential to develop confidence was affected by the individual’s personality.

*I’m like a naturally confident person. I don’t know – I have a big ego or something – I just think I can do most things if I apply myself.* Student C19

Confidence was also attributed to external encouragement.

*Well for confidence, you kind of get it from like before a race or something [like a game] someone...gives like a psych up talk. If you like kind of believe what they say, it gives you a lot of confidence.* Student C19
Developing ways of learning through participating in extracurricular activities was deemed by students to be related to “doing more of the activity” (Student C19). It involved learning about the game itself as well as aspects of training.

Like improve ways of like learning how to do the game. Like different ways of training almost. Student C19

Say if you’re [doing] cricket for the fielding training we used to do games and it got us like a lot more involved and it’s like different from what we usually do and it’s just like a different way of training. Student C19

These included strategies (Student C18) and abilities,

Like concentration and how you improvise. Student C17

Fitness was also a component of what students perceived they got out of participating in their activities, although it was considered to be a benefit, rather than necessarily a drive to participate.

It’s like in the back of your mind, kind of thing. Like if you stop doing it, you might become unfit. Student C19

When asked what this fitness was about in their activities, aspects included

...strength, power, speed, agility. Student C17

Organising time was something that students perceived that they got out of participating in their extracurricular activities.

You learn how to organise your time better because like you’ve got other stuff to do when you’re doing your sport. Student C18

They agreed that the skills to organise themselves developed because they were juggling a number of activities.

Strategy, concentration, and improvisation were kept as separate items for these students, but mentioned when discussing ways of learning. They felt that they developed strategies, the ability to concentrate, and their ability to improvise through participating in their activity.
Case Study 3: Discussions with Student Group 6

Three Year 10 students participated in the final focus group discussions at the third case study school. In response to the question “what do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities?” students perceived that they:

• [Have] learning experiences,
• [Experience] fun,
• [Receive] physical and psychological training,
• [Develop] leadership qualities,
• [Develop] knowledge about different things on offer, and
• [Experience] social involvement.

A diagram of the cover terms, rankings of relative importance, and individual items about their extracurricular learning is included in Figure A10, Appendix K.

Learning experiences were discussed by students in this focus group and held to be the most important aspect of what they got out of participating in their extracurricular activities. This was summarised by one student as,

You just learn how to handle things. Student C22

Students spoke about having an opportunity to learn from their mistakes.

You can learn from your mistakes. Like, for example, last year in rugby, I split my eye open and then through the season I thought to myself, 'Right, I've got to do this otherwise my eye will be split open.' Student C20

You learn from defeat...you learn from your mistakes. Student C22

Yeah, to do things right. Student C20

Students linked some learning experiences in extracurricular activities with the requirements of some of their formal school subjects. Debating, in particular, was seen to be related to their English subject. In debating, students believed they learnt new vocabulary, research skills, and the use of evidence in their arguments. One student said that debating is like

...producing an English oral every second week along with all the schoolwork. Student C20
Other humanities subjects used similar skills in research. In addition, knowledge of the social justice issues arising from participation in a particular club was seen to be related to a Study of Religion subject.

*That’s sort of more like human rights. So more sort of looking outside of the school yard.* Student C22

Along with team sports, students recognised that in debating they had to learn team skills in particular because the speakers had to link together and “know what everyone’s saying” (Student C20).

*As well as like team sports, you have to learn like how to be cooperative.* Student C21

Other subjects related to extracurricular participation were sport and the HPE subject, music groups and the Music subject, and extracurricular groups focusing on teamwork and presentations and the Drama subject.

Students expressed that *having fun* was an important aspect of what they got out of participating in their extracurricular activities as well as a primary reason for choosing to participate.

*If you don’t really like doing it, then why would you do it in the first place?* Student C20

This emphasis on enjoyment seemed to be a key feature of the activities in which they participated and also related to their performance in the activities.

*Because if you don’t love to do it, then you’ll never really get good at it.* Student C22

They did not expect to enjoy the activity all the time and acknowledged that there could be aspects of training that they didn’t enjoy. At the same time, one student expressed an awareness of how particular activities were organised and chose to discontinue participating. His comment was, “I just didn’t like the way they were set up” (Student C22).

*Physical and psychological training* were identified by students as areas of development in their extracurricular activities. Physical training was about training their bodies to “be stronger” (Student C22) and to “suit that particular aspect” of an activity (Student C21). Another student noted that,

*You could run faster for longer if you’re more fitter.* Student C22

Psychological training was defined by one student:
Strong to what people say to you. You can just think fast, so no one can like use you... and being psychologically strong if someone’s like putting you down, you don’t give into it. Student C22

Practising this resilience seemed to be part of their extracurricular activity participation and was seen as particularly relevant when participating in activities that held less status with their peers.

It’s a bit uncool to do debating. Student C20

Within sport, a hierarchy was evident.

Like here at [our school], if you don’t do like rugby or soccer, then it’s pretty...odd. Student C20

No, it’s just rugby...if you don’t do rugby. Student C22

Sometimes you’ll be seen as soft and... Student C20

Students were adamant that they could get by at school without participating in rugby and that students might get “paid out,” but not bullied for their choices.

...it’s just like ‘Oh, you’re not playing rugby, so what are you playing?’ – ‘Soccer, so you’re soft.’ That’s pretty much all that ever gets said. Student C20

Yeah, like they judge you on what you play, rather than what you are so like – straight away. Student C21

We don’t get – like no-one gets bullied about it or anything, it’s just like a friendly sort of pay out. Student C22

There was also the idea that a student might choose to participate in a particular activity in order to gain acceptance from peers.

You sort of want to be a part of like feel a part of them so like say you have to do this [activity] to be liked then... Student C21

The development of leadership qualities was attributed to experience. When asked how students get leadership skills, one student simply said, “You lead” (Student C22). The meaning of leadership was described by one student.

If you’re given a task, you have to make sure that you tell everyone, give everyone the proper directions and that everything’s done properly... Student C22

Leadership qualities were described in a variety of ways.

Someone who is like – I don’t know – like bossy. Student C22

Showing the way. Student C20
Yeah, shows the way. Student C21

You’re good at it [the activity]. Student C20

Someone who’s got a good strong voice everyone can listen to. Student C22

Leadership was related to roles, such as that of captain, but also to particular positions in sports teams that take responsibility for particular plays. Examples were given for leading in a particular sports team position.

For example, if you’re goal keeping in soccer and there’s a indirect penalty being taken… it’s like outside of that 16 yard box and a shot being taken at goal and the goal keeper has to make sure the wall [of people defending] – they’re in line and in position and everything’s set up. Student C22

Or in like rugby, the hooker deciding what to throw and the captain making a choice to take a scrum or a line out or penalty or something like that… [Hooker is] just a position on the field – like throws in the line out and decides what call to make. Student C20

Sometimes, leadership seemed less formally organised.

But sometimes you share it. Like, for example, if a team does like all their war cries before a game, random people do it every week. Student C22

Knowledge about different things on offer came up about activities being perceived as relating to experiences in the wider world.

It [extracurricular participation] just shows you what’s in the world – what’s available… what there is to do, like in the world, sport and like debating would sort of be more like a law sort of thing. So it could help you in the future being a lawyer. Student C22

Social involvement attributed to extracurricular participation was also identified. Participating with friends was seen as a positive, because “you’ve got someone to talk to” (Student C21). Students also suggested that they met new people, particularly “people in your grade that you didn’t know” (Student C22). Again, the element of experience was recognised as activities were seen as providing opportunities to “interact with other people” (Student C20).

Focus group discussions at School C elicited a range of learnings that the student participants attributed to their extracurricular participation. In the following section, students’ perceptions of the extracurricular context are presented.
Students’ perceptions of their extracurricular context

Reasons students participate in extracurricular activities

The reasons students in this case study put forward for participating in extracurricular activities were varied. This information is meaningful, however, because it suggests the ways in which students are able to access various activities as well as the extent to which they might engage in the activity. In turn, these reasons help create a picture of the qualities of the context that make it a rich learning environment, rather than allowing us to misinterpret contextual potential and direct programs in such a manner as to be counterproductive to student development.

Students also offered reasons for participating that were directly related to their personal and interpersonal development as well as other reasons that implied learnings. In this third case study school, students related ideas specifically about their own personal development as well as social interactions, making personal choices in using their time, developing their strengths and seeking balance in their lives, and developing skills to support their future goals.

All student groups talked about enjoyment, social factors, personal development, and issues related to schoolwork as reasons why they participate. Enjoyment was associated with opportunities to spend time with friends, having a passion for the activity, and feeling a sense of achievement. Students related having fun with a sense of self-satisfaction: they were willing to work at the activity to receive benefits. When asked what makes an activity fun, one student group responded, “other people” (Student C14), “winning” (Student C15), and “knowing that you’ve worked hard and put the effort in” (Student C16). There was an acceptance that there might not be fun all the time and there were aspects of activities that were less enjoyable. One student commented:

*It’s only one factor, yeah, that you don’t enjoy sometimes. It could be like the coach or a certain member on your team, but you can learn to adapt.* Student C8

Students also raised that “doing too much” could have an impact on enjoyment of activities.

Other social factors, beyond spending time with friends, included cooperation in team activities. The social component, however, did focus largely on friendships and interactions with other players. One group made a distinction that participating in an activity with friends was most important when first starting as a beginner. Once a certain level of skill and confidence were achieved, students considered that it was less important to be in a team with their friends. Interest in an activity was also given importance although friends provided an incentive to try an activity.

*I like the activity I do, even if my friends are in it. But if I didn’t like it, I’d probably give it a go anyway.* Student C5
Social interactions extended beyond team members to include interacting with supporters at games, members of teams from other schools (where sportsmanship was deemed to be required), as well as getting to know other students in the school. This school has a large student population and students perceived that participating in activities provided them with the opportunity to meet other students in their school.

Personal development was offered as a reason students participate before students discussed what they felt they got out of participating in their activities. They acknowledged that they developed skills and qualities through participation in their activities. These included physical skills for playing the game such as hand-eye coordination, footwork, and reflexes, as well as the idea of keeping “mentally fit” through participating in cultural activities such as debating. Other development was more general, for instance setting goals, challenging oneself to improve, decision making, and building values such as a sense of commitment.

"[In your activities], you want to show you’re committed and sometimes, I think commitment is good for you – it’s good for you to learn moral(s) and stuff like that." Student C2

Students discussed their activity participation in terms of its relationship with school in terms of assisting with their schoolwork.

"[Extracurricular participation] kind of helps you think better. It improves your brain and stuff." Student C3

Certain extracurricular things I do help me with school, like debating helps me with public speaking and Optiminds helps me with problem solving and that sort of thing." Student C1

They also recognised that their activities could provide a release from thinking about schoolwork.

"[I do my activity] to escape from work – schoolwork and stuff." Student C8

The impact students perceived their activities had on schoolwork varied.

"When you get a fair few assignments and you kind of got a lot of training at the same time. And like you come home from training and like sit down for a fair while – you don’t really get any work done." Student C19

"It’s sort of like me, but then when I find I do have time to do assignments, I really knuckle down and do it like – I find myself have more focus in that selected time period whereas like if I had heaps of time to do it, I’d sort of like be on and off task." Student C17

All groups except one talked about time use in considering their extracurricular participation. Mostly this involved perceiving extracurricular participation as a better alternative to “doing nothing.” One student stated that he did activities,
...because it gives me a reason to get out of the house...and it’s fun. Student C16

Other students talked about participating:

just because I like doing stuff in my free time. Student C7

It just gives us something to do instead of sitting in front of the TV all afternoon. Student C5

I like being active and like do stuff all the time. Student C6

Students seemed to be very aware of the choices they made in using their free time and extracurricular participation was regarded by these students as a good option.

Most groups (four) also considered balance in their lives when choosing activities and believed that extracurricular participation could provide this. Students sought an alternative to “study,” and to “have fun” regardless of the level of the activity. Half the groups in this case study talked about previous experience and future goals as reasons they chose to participate in extracurricular activities. Future goals included more immediate aspirations to gain access to a higher level team either in school or at representative level, as well as looking towards a future career. For them, the activity had a greater purpose than just fun.

I take it [my activity] seriously like I do it for fun and everything, but also I might like to go somewhere with it like go a bit further and after school. Student C9

Interestingly, students noted a broader role of activities in adult life, talking about playing golf in relation to business networking. Some groups also mentioned that they valued the ability to make a contribution. This manifested in activities specifically directed towards service to other people, but also in conduct within activities, where students perceived opportunities to help their peers and contribute by representing their school.

Other people influenced students in three of the focus groups in this case. These people included parents and family members, coaches, and friends as well as being inspired by professional players and “big stars” seen in the media.

Two groups mentioned personal ability and competition as reasons to participate. They felt that extracurricular activities provided the opportunity for them to do activities where they perceived they had natural ability. Students also discussed enjoying competition. This was perceived to “make training worth doing,” provide “challenge to keep improving,” and “test out how well you’ve trained and how well you’re playing.”
One group included the reason “to try something new” in their choice of participating in an extracurricular activity. In this instance, the activity “looked fun,” but also there were elements of being “willing to give it a go” and accept a challenge. Students’ perceptions of their personal abilities were also seen to have a role in their willingness to try something new in that they thought about whether they would be “good at it.”

How students perceive their extracurricular activity as a learning context

The reasons students offered for participating in their extracurricular activities shed light on how students perceive their extracurricular participation as a learning context. Students in this case study explicitly chose activities because they offered them opportunities for personal development. These students seemed very aware of their choices in using their time, balancing their lives, and enjoying doing activities with friends. In addition, students were articulate in discussing what they got out of participating in their activities.

What students perceive influences what they get out of their extracurricular participation

Some influences were also discussed as effects of participation. These included students’ moods and physical fitness. Mood was perceived to influence students’ involvement in extracurricular activities where students reported that they might have had a “bad day at school.” If “grumpy,” students felt that they would not train well. More often, however, students spoke about mood as an effect of their participation as discussed below.

Physical fitness both influenced students’ participation in their extracurricular activities as well as being an effect of their involvement. In particular, injuries acquired through participation affected students’ ability to participate. Mostly, extracurricular participation was deemed to affect students’ physical fitness. Fatigue both influenced students’ access to activities and their level of participation as well as being deemed to be an effect of their involvement.

Students emphasised that many other people influenced their participation in a variety of ways. Family members influenced students in both providing encouragement as well as a family tradition of participating in certain activities. Siblings provided both incentives for students to participate as well as a desire to do well in an activity to impress the sibling. Parents, in particular, had the most influential role. This included practical support in providing gear, being on the committee for a particular activity, or manning the barbecue on game day. It also included influence to try an activity, giving feedback, and focussing on their child when watching. The role could have a negative influence where parents push students too far or tell the student what to do.
The most extensive influence by another person on students’ participation and what they got out of their extracurricular involvement came from the coach. Students were clear and articulate about the qualities of their coaches and their influence on them. Positive traits included the ability to give praise, encouragement, and keep morale up; helpful communication including one-on-one; setting appropriate expectations based on team ability rather than the coach’s desire to win; and knowing what they are doing so that students perceived that they received effective tips, support, and good technique. Negative attributes were exhibited when the coach “doesn’t turn up,” “teaches wrong things,” patronises or makes training too basic, expects perfection and punishes participants, yells and puts students down, and doesn’t understand that students have a life outside of that activity. Many of these features seem related to the coach’s ability to relate to participants and develop effective relationships with them. One student talked about a good coach as being a “friend to a degree.”

Friends and team members were also perceived to influence students’ involvement in their activities and what they got out of participating. Peers provided pressure to do an activity: they could challenge, pay out, have fun, lift, inspire, and help. One student acknowledged that “good friends support you.” Students also raised a perceived status in activities to which their friends might draw attention. Students boarding at school mentioned other students in their dormitory as having an influence on their extracurricular participation. At least one activity included a boarders-only team that had less input from adults and allowed students to organise themselves to train. Cooperation of team members was seen as a positive influence, whereas negativity from other players was perceived to be unhelpful. Students also mentioned the influence of meeting new people and being able to make new friends or perhaps being taught a new skill.

Student recognised that other people doing well, whether they are other students or professional players, could inspire them and influence their participation.

**What effects students attribute to their extracurricular participation**

Students recognised that personal development was an effect of their extracurricular involvement as specified in discussions about what they got out of participating in their activities. Many of the skills were of a general nature, such as cooperation, improved people skills, and being more organised because of their participation. In addition, students talked about the manner in which they learnt, including the benefit of being in a “good team.” This was believed to mean that usually the coach was better and the individual was able to learn harder skills because other team members had good skills.
Students perceived the impact of their extracurricular involvement on their time. On a positive note, they expressed that their involvement gave them “something to do” so that they would not “get bored.” They also noted, however, that extracurricular participation could mean that they did not get much time to themselves and that they could become “burnt out” from doing too much. The effect of this burnout was described as affecting judgement and quality of schoolwork.

Students’ moods were perceived to be affected by their extracurricular participation. Training, in particular, had the potential to impact how students felt. Students assessed the quality of training, the type of training, as well as the number and lengths of training sessions. The coach had the ability to affect students’ mood: for example when a coach was positive and made training “fun’ish,” students believed that they would feel good. Even if the coach were a “hard coach,” but one who taught well, students had positive responses to training. When a coach was boring, unenthused, or “had a go” at a student, the mood of participants was affected negatively. Other students’ behaviour at training could also affect the mood of participants. Students spoke about getting angry in their activity “if the coach pushes [too hard],” “if they don’t get skills right,” if they felt “degraded” having been “dropped from a team,” or if they did not “train hard and were dropped [from a team].” Students also perceived that the type of training affected their mood, and preferred other training than fitness. Team participation was also seen as having a positive impact on how students felt. They enjoyed doing activities with other people. Finally, mood was affected by success in competition. Students noted that winning had a positive effect on their mood and losing a negative impact. Students attributed stress to their extracurricular participation at times. These stressful feelings were related to the amount of schoolwork they had to complete and the number of trainings they were expected to attend. They noted that this could affect their relationships, particularly with their parents because when stress “builds up” they tend to find an outlet for it. At the same time, one student suggested that they were able to become stronger mentally and get better at handling stressful situations.

Students believed that their participation affected their physical fitness, both positively in providing exercise and assisting students to “get fitter” as well as negatively in causing muscle soreness and potentially, injuries. Students also showed that they had some knowledge related to physical self-care in that they attributed negative effects to poor posture, not stretching, and “doing too much.” The impact of injury was taken further when students recognised that if the injury were serious, it had potential to diminish their overall quality of life. Fatigue was mentioned as an effect of their participation where they might be less energetic and lose their spot on the team. They also recognised that it affected their schoolwork, in particular their ability to concentrate. This was deemed to depend on how hard morning trainings were.
Other effects mentioned by students included their perceptions about their reputation which was affected by whether they were “good at it,” “looked after their friends” or were “selfish in play,” or were “angry, unenthused or badly behaved at training.” Students attributed the self-esteem to participation when they received compliments or criticisms as well as their own assessment of how they played.

Chapter summary

Chapter 6 presented data from the third case study school, a Catholic boys school. Students talked about a wide range of learnings they experienced in their extracurricular activities as well as the influences on and effects of their participation and development.

The ideas put forward by the Principal about putting into effect a more conscious plan for student experiences as they developed during adolescence seemed to be reflected in the types and depth of learnings that students reported. Students were able to express themselves clearly about aspects of their development that they attributed to their extracurricular participation.

In effect, the main ideas from the data from Case Study 3 are that students attributed the development of skills, social relationships, and thinking processes to their extracurricular participation. In addition, they met challenges and developed personally through that participation. Some learnings they connected as having influences on their formal schoolwork. They also talked about emotions and dispositions they connected to their activity participation.

Having presented findings from each of the three case studies, Chapter 7 presents a cross-case analysis.
Chapter 7

Cross-case analysis

As described in Chapter 3, in the presentation of case data I sought to emphasise and reproduce student voice. Accordingly, when presenting individual case data, the cover terms used for initial category descriptions and individual data samples or illustrations remained in students’ words wherever possible, with the exception of an occasional change in tense or part of speech. In order to analyse data across cases, other levels of analysis were undertaken. These included further open coding, using a strategy of constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 12) of student meanings across focus groups within a school context, as well as between cases. In addition, meta-axial coding of students’ words into similar conceptual categories, where they were present, allowed for a more effective and cohesive approach to analysis across cases.

Despite contextual, cultural, and community differences among the case study schools, the categories of learning attributed to extracurricular activity participation were largely consistent across cases. Students in all case study groups referred to concepts of social development, physical and intellectual development, and aspects of personal development. From the process of meta-axial coding, there are some constructs that incorporate components of these different categories of learning. Students frequently overlapped ideas about physical and intellectual development, but for clarity, from this point they will be considered as separate categories to enable the discussion of findings to honour the prominence students gave to their learnings in these areas. In most cases the categories of learnings, although interdependent and embedded in the contexts and processes of the activities themselves, can be conceptualised distinctly. Social learning includes those learnings that involve interaction, understanding, and communication with others. Physical development includes sporting skills and techniques, but can more broadly be defined in one student groups’ words as doing things. Psychomotor development would also be an applicable term thereby incorporating the gross motor skills of sports and the fine motor skills of playing a musical instrument. In addition, there is some distinction between skills acquired and different techniques learnt. Physical development is demonstrated in the performance of the activity, itself. Intellectual development, on the other hand, involves development of the mind in terms of knowledge and understandings. Students talked about this development using particular examples, or when grouped, the terms mental abilities and psychological training were used. There are also ideas pertaining to the application of knowledge extending the nature of this development further towards understandings of processes. Finally, and most difficult to contain conceptually, is the idea of personal development. Although the individual person develops socially, physically, and intellectually, in
identifying this as a separate core category what distinguishes this concept of learning is that it is contained in the person, rather than explicitly demonstrated in the activity. It is developed through participation in the activity, but the development occurs on a personal level. If seeking to define by example, these learnings include understanding of the self; developing the ability to deal with problems; personal dispositions such as the development of self-esteem, confidence, and discipline; and attitudes and values such as responsibility and commitment.

This chapter first explains the categories of extracurricular learnings aggregated across cases, namely, social, physical, intellectual, and personal learnings. Second, issues surrounding students’ voices on the extracurriculum and participant characteristics are discussed, including age and gender. Third, matters of students’ voices and school characteristics are presented, involving discussion of school type, size, school vision for their extracurricular programs, and the activities offered. Fourth, a synthesis of students’ voices on their learning embedded in the secondary school extracurriculum, attending to social, physical and intellectual, and personal development, is presented to put forward a model of the secondary school extracurriculum, followed by a discussion of the conditions, strategies, and consequences of their development. Finally, the findings of this research are discussed in relation to current literature.

**Social learning across cases**

Social learning was identified by student participants in all three case study schools as part of their development in their extracurricular activities. Consistent with grounded theory methods, I have separated these terms into a category of social learning and consider the other elements raised by students to be properties of that category. Table 3 shows the main category of social learning across cases and the terms used in each school. The terms used in the table are in students’ own words.
Table 3
Social Development Category and Properties Across Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
<th>School C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social skills</td>
<td>Learn socialising skills</td>
<td>Social involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improve people skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Learn to cooperate with other people</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Support for and from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>Learn how to be a team player</td>
<td>Part of a team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Being part of a team</td>
<td>Learn how to work as a team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Become more a team player</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
<td>Leadership qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In School A, social elements were grouped under generic headings such as social skills. Student Group 3 in this case also included team skills as a separate category, although it involved social learning. Cover terms were less generic in the second case study school (School B), which kept ideas as separate categories that could be considered properties of social development. These included constructs such as learning to be a team player, cooperation, leadership, communication, and self-expression. The focus group discussions in School C elicited mostly similar ideas to those from School B, again keeping specific ideas separate, rather than grouping them under a generic term incorporating the word “social.” The exception to this was one group of students in School C who described what they learnt in this area as “people skills.” The only additional property of social learning offered by this third case was giving support to and receiving support from others.

The social nature of the activities was highlighted by students as were differing types and levels of communication. Students expressed developing socially in terms of experiencing contexts in which they met new people, developing and selecting appropriate interpersonal modes for interacting with a variety of people, and creating and encouraging friendships. All activities involved communication, although verbal communication was endorsed in some more than others. Certain activities had particular frameworks for the communication required within the activity. For example, debating competitions involved particular communication skills and understandings in which the debates, themselves, operated; at the same time, talk about the meetings held to prepare debates elicited ideas about interactions and communication, in particular with coaches, which used more generic interpersonal skills. Students in School A expressed understanding of the social
frameworks of activities such as music which did not encourage socialising and verbal interactions. Sport was an area that elicited ideas of needing to communicate verbally for successful team interactions. Jargon was associated with many activities. Sometimes this was language related, for example music students identifying the use of Italian terms. At other times jargon referred to rules of particular activities, for example terminology related to sports playing positions and plays.

Social development in activities was also identified in terms of students having a voice. Schools A and C identified as important that the coach would listen to ideas. In School B, the extracurricular structures did not seem to support students’ self-expression as successfully. Students acknowledged a desire and goal to have a voice, but did not always possess the skills to listen and be heard in particular peer groups. Coaches in School B were presented as being less likely to intervene and support peer interactions and student leadership.

Social skills were also highlighted in terms of handling interactions with other people. Students talked about selecting appropriate communication techniques associated with the activity, with other people (e.g., adult, peer, familiar, and unfamiliar people), and with the challenge perceived to be created by the interaction. They talked about coping with other people and handling social interactions in order to cooperate and work successfully with other people. The motivation was created by the desire to participate effectively in the activity. Students recognised the tone of particular interactions and the effects of these. Students from School C talked specifically about being encouraging rather than putting other people down.

Team skills involved practical elements in terms of communication and interactions in order for students to work effectively as a team. Students were also aware of their potential to contribute to the manner in which their team functioned. In this, there seemed to be a transition between a focus on the self, that is, what social interaction will help create success, to how an individual might contribute to a team, that is, identifying social interactions that might benefit the team or group.

Leadership was included as a social element experienced in extracurricular activities; it was attributed to roles such as captains or leaders in activities, but also to the adult leaders, for example coaches. The role of the coach seemed to influence the roles undertaken by students. Where the coaches were highly professional in School A, students said that they deferred to their coaches’ judgements. In School C, where coaching programs and student development across year levels was coordinated, students reflected that training included the leadership related to certain team roles. Interestingly, it was in School B, where some coaches were deemed to have little to offer by way of guidance in the particular sport, that students took over informal leadership roles more frequently.
Students in all cases seemed to demonstrate the ability to identify experience and knowledge amongst peers.

Similar social learning concepts were discussed in focus groups across and between schools; any differences highlight possible dimensions of student learning. There is potential for students to be aware of the social structures of activities and to develop appropriate communication. In addition, there is potential not only to learn skills in order to function in a team, but also to be empowered to believe in making a contribution and taking a leadership role. This means having an awareness of others, rather than simply viewing the team and effective teamwork as a means of achieving greater success in the activity. The role of adult participants is perceived by students to impact on the functioning of the activities and the roles undertaken by students. Recognising that the activities might mean more than achievement at the chosen sporting or group activity, perhaps also involving other learnings such as social development, could impact on the way in which activities are organised and the roles offered to students. Student voice is not only an approach to identifying a curriculum for secondary school extracurricular activities, but is also apparent in students’ involvement in the programs themselves. When discussing their voice, students were clear that the extracurricular context was one in which they might more likely be heard than in formal classroom settings. Social learning as presented by these students across cases included both generic constructs as well as activity-specific social requirements.

**Physical development across cases**

Physical development was identified by all groups in all cases. Again, there are differences in the ways in which students conceive of their ideas and group them. Table 4 shows the category of physical development and the properties students in each of the case study schools discussed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
<th>School C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
<td>Physical abilities</td>
<td>Physical training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Properties</strong></td>
<td>Physical/Doing things</td>
<td>Technical aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Learn better skills</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Learn skills</td>
<td>Learn skills and new moves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>New skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Learn new things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some student groups were happy to combine ideas into a generic concept such as physical abilities or even “doing things.” This did not apply solely to sports, but could be interpreted along the lines of psychomotor development. Most groups, however, talked about skills and techniques. Although these ideas are similar and have common meanings, the ways in which students talked about their physical development differed. There were a number of different focal points when students discussed their physical development. These included focusing on an outcome, such as fitness; focusing on a process, such as training; focusing on skill development, such as coordination; or focusing on technique, such as how to “step” in rugby.

Students discussed aspects of their physical development in terms of the consequences for them of participation in physical activities, in other words, a focus on the outcomes from participation. Positively, these outcomes included developing fitness, a better physique, and improving their appearance. They also identified as an effect a greater ability to focus on schoolwork.

Students from School A spoke in general terms of developing physical abilities or “doing things.” Students in School B focussed on two facets, understanding technical aspects and learning or developing skills. In a similar manner, students in School C talked about learning techniques and learning skills or particular moves in a sport. These ideas encompassed dimensions of developing new skills as well as practising to reinforce or improve known skills. Students made a distinction between what they needed to do or develop in order to participate in an activity, and understanding the process of improving their skills in the activity. The focus on different techniques appeared to equate to knowing different ways of doing particular elements of an activity.

Although these aspects of skill development and executing particular techniques were apparent in students’ discussions, the depth of understanding of physical development in activities differed. For some, the identification of skills was the primary focus. Skills were also spoken about in comparative terms, as in some students having more skills than others. In other discussions, students identified learning new skills and techniques, changing the focus of their activities from acquiring a skill set in order to participate in the activity, to conceiving of the extracurricular activity as a developmental context in their lives. While some students were able to articulate the development of techniques, others focussed primarily on rules, both groups using jargon specific to their activity.
Intellectual development across cases

Extracurricular activities require that students understand their chosen activity. Students raised a wide variety of learnings related to intellectual development. Some were activity specific, for example “learn how instruments work,” whereas others were applicable to many extracurricular activities such as learning “rules or guidelines.” Table 5 shows the terms students in each case used to talk about their intellectual development in extracurricular activities. I have added a separation between discussion of ideas related to knowledge and application of knowledge.

Table 5
Intellectual Development Category and Properties Across Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
<th>School C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Properties of sub-category—knowledge</td>
<td>Mental abilities</td>
<td>Learn the rules</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning things about extracurricular activities</td>
<td>Rules or guidelines [of the activity]</td>
<td>Psychological training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learn how instruments work</td>
<td>Learn how instruments work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of professionalism</td>
<td>Level of professionalism [Structures of professional performances]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Properties of sub-category—applied knowledge</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Decision-making skills</td>
<td>How to eat and drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[in preparation for activities, specifically sport]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tips of things to do at home [in preparation for activities]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>General knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learn tactics [thinking]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learn manoeuvres [doing]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading play—using/applying skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Improvisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The terms students used to describe their intellectual development varied considerably. Table 5 illustrates the differences between student discussions at the different schools in both language use, for example, “mental abilities” versus “psychological training,” and the level of specificity in their discussion. Students at School A talked about developing their mental abilities or learning things about their activity in general, whereas School C students, on the other hand, used the phrase “psychological training” then proffered other specific terms such as “learning manoeuvres.” Although related in terms of intellectual processes, these terms may carry quite different meanings. Possibly the term “psychological training” was about resilience and mental toughness brought about through participation in a contact sport, whereas development of mental
abilities may be more closely aligned with strategising to develop an argument for a debate. For the purposes of some cross-case comparisons, these are combined as processes of the mind, rather than of the body.

Generally speaking, in the first instance, intellectual development in extracurricular activities seemed to focus on rules. Some groups in School B were specific in talking about rules without explicit understanding of other intellectual development that might be part of their extracurricular participation. This may imply a lack of focus on other intellectual aspects within their activities, or simply that students are not aware of these understandings. Most other groups across all cases identified such development in generic terms, which included mental abilities. They used simple terms such as “thinking,” but also specific understandings they attributed to their extracurricular participation. These more specific ideas included decision-making skills, reading play and applying skills, strategy, tactics, and improvisation.

Students in School A agreed on generic terms for their development, differing with the age group of participants. This is discussed in the following section on participant characteristics and the perspectives they offered. Students in School B focussed on rules and knowing what was on offer for them in their discretionary time. One group did not talk explicitly about their cognitive development at all. The group in School B that did specify aspects of their development to include developing a level of professionalism, learning technical aspects, learning how instruments work, and decision-making skills, was the group where students were all involved in music ensembles. It is possible that music activities in their school focus on more specific cognitive development where students develop a language and understanding of that domain. It is also possible that students with an understanding of their own intellectual processes are drawn to music activities. These students perceived differences between their peers involved in music, and the greater school community.

The specificity in references to intellectual processes may indicate a deeper understanding of them, but it also may reflect the extent to which those specifics are relevant to the students. Relevance could be determined by the programs in which students are involved and what is expected of them in their participation. Relevance could also be determined by students’ familiarity with those processes. In School A, in particular, students were more precise in their labelling of the grouping term of their development when they had less experience (that is, the Year 8 student focus group). The group with the most experience—the group of older students—offered the least specific term, incorporating both physical and intellectual development, labelling them both “development skills.” Rather than meaning that these students had less understanding of their experience, this
implies that as students become familiar with skills and understandings, they conceive of them in a more abstract manner.

**Personal development across cases**

Personal development included the greatest number of sub-categories and was the most complex in terms of the types of learning that students perceived they take away from their experiences. Table 6 illustrates the sub-categories and properties of personal development across cases.
Table 6

Personal Development Sub-categories and Properties Across Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-categories and properties</th>
<th>School A</th>
<th>School B</th>
<th>School C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to deal</td>
<td>Learn from your mistakes, Know your limits</td>
<td>Learning how to handle problems or difficulties, Learn to adapt Physical and emotional challenges, Fixing mistakes, Find physical limits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility Commitment</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
<td>Self-confidence, Confidence in front of other people, Self-discipline, Self-control, Keep nerves under control</td>
<td>Ways of learning how to train and play, Knowing how to learn and how to listen</td>
<td>Keep a balance of stuff, Organisation skills, Organise your time better, Preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn about yourself, Something for myself, Learn how to enjoy yourself, Personal talents, How you are different from other people/how you are a bit the same, How you get along with other people, Personal satisfaction</td>
<td>Helps you to express yourself, Why I find it that way, Privilege</td>
<td>Personal strengths, What comes naturally to me, Find out if you’re good at something, Physical limits, Feel better when helping, Feel good about yourself when helping people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in Table 6, areas of personal development were common in the grouping terms of all focus groups except one across all case study schools. Even so, the group of Year 8 students...
from School C, which did not have a category incorporating personal development, talked briefly about developing self-esteem by working as part of a team. Two categories of personal learning dominated discussions across schools and focus groups. These were the development of the “ability to deal” and personal dispositions.

The ability to deal has two main dimensions: dealing with problems personally and dealing with problems interpersonally. Personally, students talk about dealing with stress, pressure, and challenges that may involve handling competition, particularly losing; nerves in the performance of an activity; and learning from mistakes and developing strategies to fix them. There are also elements of dealing with physical limitations, discomfort, and injuries. Interpersonally, a significant theme was dealing with other people, more specifically differences in opinion. Dealing with other people included the ability to “get on with them” even if you did not like them or they did not like you. Students identified that there were physical as well as emotional challenges they handled. In some instances a situation could require a student to deal with both. Groups in all cases talked mainly about handling problems mostly of a physical or emotional nature. Interestingly, the focus groups in School A did not focus on these aspects of “dealing with problems.” Theirs was more in terms of self-regulation and handling “life’s problems” in general, although they did mention developing the ability to “work under pressure.”

Students also described dealing with problems in ways that involve addressing them as well as escaping or avoiding them. Escaping problems and stress imply a personal learning strategy for handling stress. Primarily, groups in School A talked about using their activity to “get away from the stress of life.” One group in the third case school (School B) also raised this.

Examples of avoiding problems dealt mostly with exhibiting self-control rather than reacting in interpersonal conflicts. On more than one occasion, conflicts referred to handling a decision by a referee. Students also talked about coping with other people and their opinions as well as learning to compromise. Students were aware of other people’s opinions, talking about people “who don’t like you” and the views of others towards the student’s activity. There was also the idea of trusting other people and dealing with their mistakes. Students expressed awareness of dealing with other people in a manner that is socially acceptable in the context of the activity. One group included demonstrating sportsmanship in the face of a competition loss and recognising that the quality of sportsmanship is challenged by that loss.
**Students’ voices on the extracurriculum and participant characteristics**

Understanding extracurricular learning might be elusive given the absence of formal assessment and inaccuracies in attributing learning to that particular setting in students’ lives. Listening to students’ voices offered a solution to examining extracurricular learning, because students are in a position to assess their development and attribute that development to their extracurricular experiences. In addition, where curriculum is understood to be what students take away from their school experiences, students’ voices provide a realistic way to view the secondary school extracurriculum in which they participate. Their voices allowed them to put forward their understandings of extracurricular learning, which, according to symbolic interaction theory, offers insight into how they will act towards their extracurricular learning, while acknowledging that those understandings are socially derived and modified through handling those experiences. In these three case studies, students’ perspectives provide a useful picture of the extracurriculum. I acknowledge, however, that every student will bring his or her own personal traits and understandings to focus group discussions, and that concepts of extracurricular learning are nested in activity experiences. In turn, these experiences are nested in a particular school context. Given the complexities, therefore, of those student perspectives, the following sections are included in order to bring the data into interaction with the research literature (presented in Chapter 2) that is the background for this study.

Influential personal characteristics that were exposed during the analysis within and between cases were the age and gender of participants. Students of different ages and genders spoke about their extracurricular learning in different ways. These will be addressed in turn in the following sections.

**Ages of students and relative emphasis on different learnings**

The first case study site (School A) offers a useful illustration of the relationship between the ages of participants and the emphasis they placed on different learnings in the extracurricular domain. Similar characteristics are found across focus groups in School C, which also had students of a single year level in each discussion.

The Year 8 students emphasised choosing an activity in which they can express themselves. For example, the students who said they loved to talk chose debating. Students seemed to want this opportunity to be heard and to exercise their decision making. Perhaps this is a demonstration of that emerging independence that comes with early adolescence. However, the younger student group talked about the influence of adults and peers in their choices. Older students did not
emphasise self-expression, beyond their ability to choose activities without attributing influence to others. They also chose activities for which they perceived they had ability. In other words, they did choose activities in which they could express themselves; however, this was not a main purpose for them. Possibly they already believed in their abilities to exercise their independence and express themselves in their choices.

The ability to perform skills related to activities was evident in the focus group discussions with all year levels, but the ways in which students spoke of them changed across the years. The Year 8 students talked about physical skills and doing things. The Year 9 students spoke of physical abilities. In addition, these students discussed the knowledge associated with the activities. The Year 8 students referred to learning things about extracurricular activities, whereas the Year 9 students articulated a similar theme as mental abilities. These factors were referred to more generally with the overarching term development skills by the Year 10 students. The older students’ perceptions had altered emphasis towards social skills and learnings involving the development of personal dispositions and attitudes. In contrast, values were not identified in those groupings of student ideas amongst the Year 8s.

Personal development became increasingly evident with the older student groups. The concepts emerged with the Year 9s discussing self-esteem, confidence, the ability to deal with various challenges, and having a sense of commitment. Some of these ideas seem embodied in the individual, for example self-esteem and confidence. External factors included commitment, involving having a sense of attachment to the activity beyond consideration only for the self, whereas the ability to deal gave the idea of resilience to external factors. These ideas took primacy for the Year 10s who emphasised and categorised them in a more all encompassing manner by naming them responsibility and personal satisfaction.

This seems to imply a transformation from initially choosing an activity for self-expression and learning how to do the activity itself, to a greater emphasis and awareness of social and emotional development and values. Perhaps for the older students, the former ideas of self-expression and learning an activity become intrinsic and their focus changes to the broader, more abstract concepts of personal development. There appear to be two important issues in this idea of transformation with age. First, skills and knowledge are challenged in extracurricular activities, so there are learnings related to participation in the activity itself. Second, what students articulate that they develop in extracurricular activities in this case, changes with age. They are not simply extending their knowledge of the activity itself or their skills in performing it. There is a depth to the learnings that are part of the extracurriculum that includes less tangible forms of learning,
beyond those immediately apparent from the outside, which are the skills an observer can see. These students attribute certain types of social and emotional development to their extracurricular participation.

By Year 10 in School C, students again were discussing their skill development in the domains of physical and intellectual development more generally. Social development emphasised leadership, but social involvement was discussed simply as a consequence of participation, rather than as an area for development. Again, collated in the cover term of learning experiences, students included team skills. The other Year 10 focus group again talked very generally about components of physical and social development, grouping their ideas simply as people skills and improving their sporting ability. The phrasing implies consequences perceived of participation, rather than focussing on a need to learn these aspects. Development is still implied and attributed to participation. Intellectual development for this group focus on more applied notions of learning, talking about strategies and improvisation. Students in both Year 10 discussions articulated personal learnings, one including them in the general term of learning experiences, the other including aspects of developing confidence, self-management, attention to a task, and meta-learning in terms of understanding ways of learning how to train and play.

The relative ages of students appeared to have an impact on the meanings they attributed to their extracurricular learning and how they spoke about their extracurricular experiences. Gender, on the other hand, seemed to influence aspects of their extracurricular participation, which is discussed in the following section.

**Gender of students and extracurricular experiences**

Case studies included an all boys, an all girls, and a coeducational context. Data offer some insights that may reflect gender in terms of activities in which students participated and what they experienced in them. These themes may not, however, be distinct representations of gender but might also reflect characteristics of the individual students as well as their school, cultural, and community contexts.

School C, as an all boys school, contained ideas of masculinity with values and associations related to what it means to be or become a “man.” This seemed incorporated in the strong dominance of the sport of rugby. A masculine quality associated with rugby was that of being “tough” and handling challenges such as physical discomfort or pain. Another student chose his activity because his father did it.

*My Dad made [the city team], so I want to get better than that.* Student C4
This was more than following the father’s example: it was almost competing with the standard set by the parent.

The dominance of rugby as an activity has a long tradition in the school. In this, it is not necessarily the perceived masculinity of the activity that leads to its popularity. One explanation of why students follow a dominant activity is that their friends do it.

*Especially in rugby, heaps of your friends do it.* Student C8

Having friends participate seemed to be sufficient reason to try an activity, but once involved in the activity, students perceived a need to be competent.

Another non-gendered reason for involvement in the dominant activity was the social outlet it provided.

*It’s pretty social here, especially rugby. If you come to a game on Saturday...* Student C8

*...there’s lots of people...* Student C9

*...adults, parents, girls from other schools, boys from other schools and really...* Student C8

*...it’s quite social.* Student C9

On the other hand, students were aware of the status of the activity related to perceptions of gender characteristics. This was evident in School C, where most prestige was given to rugby and sometimes to soccer, although participation in activities other than rugby was associated with the student being seen as “soft.” Nonetheless, with reference to the school culture, students agreed that it was possible to get along at school without being involved in that dominant activity.

A different perspective is discussed in the context of the coeducational school, School B. There is not one particular activity that dominates, but there are perceptions about what is and is not acceptable for male students to do.

*I get paid out by my soccer team [for being involved in Rock Eisteddfod] ... I don’t mind.* Student B5

The mother of this student at School B taught at the school. He talked about other students learning about his extracurricular choices that were less common for male students.

*I used to do tap dancing and jazz, but I stopped. All of Mum’s Year 8 classes know that. She tells them the stuff I don’t want people to know. And they’d come up to me and go ‘Did you used to do tap dancing?’ And like as soon as they said that [I did, it’s] like, ‘That sucks.’ Then she brings in the photo in the newspaper!* Student B5
The social consequences of participation in activities perceived to be feminine were explained by another student.

You get called a sissy, a girl... a sheila or something like that... Like if you did ballet, you'd get beaten up. My cousin used to do cooking and he used to get beaten up all the time. This is a long time ago. He used to go to [another high school] then he came here.... If you get beaten up, you soon grow tired of that activity. Student B4

Gender stereotypes seemed less apparent for girls. In both coeducational and single gender environments, female students participated in activities traditionally associated with boys. Students in School A were involved in activities that would traditionally have been male dominated, for example soccer, rowing, and cricket. Touch football was also offered at the school. Girls in School B, a coeducational environment, also participated in activities that would traditionally have been male dominated. Of eight female students who participated in Case Study 2, three were involved in soccer, two played touch football, and one student participated in each basketball and volleyball.

Gender and perceptions of gender in relation to activities affected students’ choices and experiences in activities. Eder and Parker (1987) put forward that participants of different genders are exposed to different values through the activities in which they participate. Unlike in their study, female students in the Australian context participated in activities that are seen as traditionally male, rather than glamourising cheerleading and its associated values as the dominant female activity. This, perhaps, insulates Australian girls somewhat from the values of the American cheerleaders for whom appearance and “emotion management” were emphasised. Masculinity, on the other hand, seemed to entail a narrower understanding of roles they could take in activities and could feasibly present barriers to participation and inhibit male students from pursuing their interests. It seems important, therefore, to consider positioning the extracurriculum as a context for students to develop as individuals, rather than to conform to narrow interpretations of gender roles.

**Students’ voices on the extracurriculum and school characteristics**

Students’ perspectives on their extracurricular learning are bounded by their personal experiences. Although students referred to their primary years of schooling on occasion, their voices speak of the secondary school extracurricular context in which they, themselves, participated. The nature of the data collected from engaging students in discussions about their extracurricular learning means that although school factors articulated in literature exist and are perhaps even exemplified in what students report, the findings do not explicitly address the relationship between the school and the learning. In this section, aspects of student data that appear related to certain school factors will be
presented in order to extend understanding of the interactions between context and meanings that will operate in students’ reports of their extracurricular learning. These aspects include the type of school, school size, individual school vision for their extracurricular programs, and activities on offer in different school contexts and the idea of “choice.”

School type

Although this study did not examine participation rates between types of schools, literature suggests that school size (Lindsay, 1984) and congruency between school and community values affect participation (Kapferrer, 1978). In this present study, resourcing, both physical and human, appears the most overt component influencing students’ extracurricular activity experiences. The variety of activities offered within the private school sector is greater. Although all case study schools had functioning extracurricular programs (a requirement for their selection as discussed in Chapter 3), information about the school sites as well as observations conducted during this research show clearly that physical resourcing of activities at School B was obviously less than those which students in Schools A and C could access. Certain activities offered in School A, such as rowing, have expensive resource requirements that are not apparent in most government schools. But even for those activities common to all schools, for example soccer, the resources available differed greatly.

The most overt difference in human resourcing was the experience and expertise of coaching staff. Schools A and C both employed professional coaches for many activities; School B relied primarily on teaching staff. Some teaching staff members at School B had coaching qualifications, skills, and experience in a particular activity. In other instances, the adult participant in the activity could really only offer a level of supervision and perhaps pastoral care, rather than expertise that might better facilitate student development within the activity. However, some students recognised that certain teachers offered generous support in giving their time to students’ interests regardless of the teachers’ own expertise or interests.

School size

School size has also been purported to affect the number of students whose extracurricular interests may be met (Lindsay, 1984). Morgan and Alwin (1980), too, put forward a theory of “manning” activities where, in small schools, a student may be induced to participate because activities are “under-manned,” whereas in large student populations activities are “over-manned.” This research continued along the lines of the theory of Barker and Gump (1964), who found that the smaller the

---

18 Kinney (1993) found similar participation rates across state and Catholic sectors with a small increase in participation in private schools in his study based in the United States.
size of the community, the greater was the pressure for people to participate. Mc Neal (1999), too, found that larger schools generally had less participation in activities. The Principal at School A noted that the school’s smaller population was promoted positively as providing an environment where all students were likely to be able to access activities in which they wanted to participate.

On the other hand, a larger school generally has more resources, both physical and human. Stearns and Glennie (2010) found that larger schools with more affluent student populations were able to offer more activities. In addition, in schools where a wider variety of activities were offered, more students engaged in the extracurriculum. The cases in this study included schools with large student populations—Schools B and C—as well as School A, which had a more moderate student population. All schools offered a variety of activities. Notably, School C, with a large student population similar to that of School B, had a predominance of students participating in rugby. It was able to field many teams at different levels in each age group and seemed to have very high rates of participation. School B, also with a large student population, seemed to have difficulty sustaining participation for more than two teams at a particular level in a particular sport, although this school had a greater number of music ensembles than did the Catholic boys school.

In these cases, the notion that schools need to offer and resource a variety of activities seems to be supported. This is reflected in how students discuss their participation and their common representation of having an intrinsic interest in the activities in which they participate. Given the presumed diversity of student interests, it seems likely, therefore, that for extracurricular programs to be successful in providing learning contexts for students, a wide range of activities needs to be offered. The size of school in these cases did not appear to cause an inadequacy of resourcing, although the private schools, including the smallest school in these case studies, were much more richly resourced. In this, it seems that the school’s determination and capacity to resource an extracurricular program with a broad range of quality activities is more important than school size alone. This is discussed further in the following section.

**Individual school vision for their extracurricular programs**

Interviews with the Principals of each case study school allowed further insights beyond the rhetoric of school documents. School A drew attention to the idea of students’ gaining something from extracurricular activity participation in terms of social development, commitment, and resilience. The Principal spoke of extension, individual “kudos” and a sense of inclusion experienced by students when they selected an activity for which they had an interest and a talent. A wide variety of activities are offered and supported in terms of physical and human resourcing. This is reflected in students’ views of learning in their extracurricular activities.
School B presented the notion that extracurricular involvement could be perceived to offer opportunity for individuals to pursue interests and contribute to the culture of a school. There appeared to be a tension between perceptions that the extracurricular program was an extra, even if it were considered to have benefits, and a seeming inability to conceptualise the program as intrinsic to student development within the secondary school curriculum. Nonetheless, the students involved expressed a range of learnings they attributed to their extracurricular participation. It is possible that the nature of these learnings reflects a more ad hoc approach to the program where activities are offered and supported to varying degrees. Students involved in music ensembles, well established at School B, articulated more learnings in some areas than students involved in sporting activities, where student development at times seemed to be in response to compensating or handling a lack of support from leaders and peers. This might also reflect school factors where the community’s perceptions of the extracurricular program might be at odds with the school’s values (Kapferrer, 1978). Socioeconomic pressures, likely to have a far greater impact in School B, might also mean that the extracurricular programs are competing for a place in students’ lives against part-time work. Students’ engagement with school might also then be affected by greater pressures on them to fulfil other roles.

The Principal at School C was explicit in the role he perceived the extracurricular program had for students in terms of their development, in particular life skills, social aims, and incorporating a sense of balance in students’ learning. Again, as in School A, there was the idea of providing extension for those students who had abilities in a particular area. An added facet of this was that the extracurriculum could provide a forum for students to have, in a sense, a reality check on their perceptions of their own talents to counter unrealistic, romantic illusions of possessing the talent to become professional. There was the added benefit of keeping the adolescent boys busy and encouraging them to participate in activities outside of their comfort zones. It appeared that participation in the extracurricular program was promoted and highly regarded from the Principal’s viewpoint.

Activities on offer in different school contexts and the idea of “choice”

Voluntary participation, structure, and challenge were the defining characteristics of extracurricular activities as identified by Mahoney et al. (2003). Social reasons for participation were most prominent for students participating in the present study. Their goals for extracurricular participation ranged from trying something new, to having fun in an activity, to developing skills in an area to the extent of having a career path. Opportunities for skill development varied. Development was often attributed to the quality of adult leadership, in particular coaching. School
C, in particular, had in place a developmental program for rugby and was in the process of
developing similar scope across teams and age groups in soccer. School B merged skill
development in activities that are considered extracurricular with formal school subjects designed to
assist students who might choose to pursue a sport professionally.

Students were aware of their development of skills within their school as well as in other
contexts, but also had different goals in their participation. Sometimes participating at a higher level
was not an ambition.

*I played soccer for like seven [years and] I wanted to get out of it, but school’s easier.... You
don’t have to like train three times a week. You can play for fun not for serious stuff.* Student
B6

On the other hand, students talked about making representative teams and using their school
experiences to develop skills to make such a team.

*I played it through school... I gained an interest so I wanted to play at a higher level so I
joined club [outside school] and then there’s like rep. [representative] teams.* Student B1

*The reason why I do it is to gain experience so I can make a rep team outside school.*
Student C4

Pathways outside the school context were important for some students even through to state level
teams. Students were aware that participating at a higher level involved training for it and often
competing more. Generally sports teams were based on age until students’ skills were high enough
for them to be accepted in an “open” team. Music ensembles, on the other hand, were related to
standard rather than age where sufficient ensembles were offered for participation at a variety of
levels. Students were aware of the skill requirements of different activities and participation at
different levels.

A status hierarchy of particular activities was apparent especially in School C, where sport
dominated in general and rugby was the most prominent activity within the sport offerings. Students
acknowledged and identified the school as being known for sport and for rugby. This seemed to
contribute to the identity of the school and to inspire students to participate in that activity. They
also indicated that participation in other activities was accepted by peers and did not attract bullying
behaviour. Thus from the view of school culture, the dominant activity related closely to the
school’s identity and seemed important in tapping into students’ sense of school pride. The pull to
be involved and participate in that activity, however, may implicitly limit student choice where
individuals have not developed self-understanding and confidence to determine their own
extracurricular pathways. Further exploration of the issue of choice, not simply provision, of a
variety of activities that allow students to discover their personal strengths and enjoy contexts where they can develop in the extracurricular domain is needed.

Personal status with peers also impacted upon student choice in their activity participation. There was the idea that one needed to be “cool” to “fit in” and “start to make friends.” Students belonged to certain peer groups at school that influenced how other people would treat them. Status could be affected by extracurricular participation.

*Like what status you’ve got...what grade [you play].* Student B13

*I usually have to prove myself before people actually like me.* Student B12

*Then at school they’ll start talking to you and your status starts to rise.* Student B10

This is congruent with Eder and Kinney’s (1995) findings that participation in some activities had positive effects on peer status and popularity.

The findings of Fredricks et al. showed that the two main reasons adolescents in their study chose to participate in an activity were that “they were good at it and that their friends were involved” (Fredricks et al., 2002, p. 91). This was certainly true for participants in the present study; however, the idea of competence flowed through to a sense of status. Students appeared to respect those who demonstrated that they were good at an activity. It makes sense then that in order for students to engage in the extracurriculum, a variety of activities to respond to students’ interests needs to be offered. In addition, incorporating the ideas of challenge and giving students an opportunity to be “good” at what they do, it is also reasonable to extrapolate that the level of activity provided needs to match the goals of the students and developmental structures within the activity need to allow students to feel competent.

*Students’ voices on learning embedded in the secondary school extracurriculum*

If curriculum is considered to be “what students take away,” these three cases offer an extensive list of items and categories highlighting student learnings in the extracurricular domain. From these, I have developed a tentative model of the extracurriculum based on listening to students and endeavouring to uncover their understandings of learning from their experiences in secondary school extracurricular activities. As explored at the beginning of this chapter, learnings may be considered to include social development, physical and intellectual development, and personal development. Although this study did not specifically examine personal and contextual factors
believed to be related to students’ extracurricular experiences, some thoughts have been discussed in the previous section.

Combining students’ ideas about learnings from the secondary school extracurriculum, layers of meanings including categories, sub-categories, properties, and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) of extracurricular learning can be seen more clearly. These are illustrated in Appendices L, M, N and O.

**Social development in the secondary school extracurriculum**

According to student participants in this study, social development resulting from the secondary school extracurriculum includes *communication skills*, *cooperation*, the ability to *give and receive support*, *team skills*, and *leadership* (see Figure A11, Appendix L).

*Communication skills* developed through the secondary school extracurriculum required appropriate modes of communication for self-expression and interactions with a variety of people, adult and student. Students included in their discussions listening and learning when to be quiet, so they were aware of when to be active in their communication as well as receptive to others’ communication. Specific to certain activities was the use of particular jargon and terminology that students learnt.

*Cooperation* was deemed to facilitate getting along with other people. Students spoke about having to cope with other people and work together in their activities. Other people included students in a group or a team as well as adult participants such as coaches.

*Support for and from others* was presented as a particular social interaction where students considered their ability to encourage others rather than put people down. They were also sensitive to the support or criticism offered by other people.

*Team skills* included the ability to lead as well as to follow. Students identified the need to work together in their activities in order to experience success. They also recognised their personal responsibility as part of a team and the ways in which they might develop and become “more of a team player.”

*Leadership* was related to experience and expertise. Consistently, students felt that leaders needed to know what they were doing. Leadership was connected with a title or role in an activity, for example a team captain; a particular position or role in a team, for example a hockey goalkeeper who had a particular perspective on play; but leadership could also be informal and flexible
where a more experienced player might mentor or assist in organising the practice of less experienced students.

The dimensions of social development range from those abilities which are specific or embedded in the activity, for example particular team skills and leadership related to a specific role in an activity, to those which are more general, such as cooperation. Although cooperation was also seen to be required for effective teamwork, on analysis it was kept separate as cooperation could also occur in the context of the activity outside the functioning of a team, for example cooperating with adult participants or even family members to organise commitment to an activity. Although students spoke about the development of social skills within the activity, in a more general sense, it is likely that these skills may also transfer effectively to other contexts.

Physical development in the secondary school extracurriculum

Students in this study put forward a range of physical learnings resulting from their extracurricular activities (see Figure A12, Appendix M). As these ideas referred to different types of activities, including sports and music, physical development can be seen to incorporate both gross and fine motor skills. Students spoke about their physical development in a variety of ways including physical abilities, training, or simply doing things. Being active in doing the activity was a key characteristic of students’ involvement. Not only did they learn how to do the activity, they learnt by doing it, which some students called learning through experience. This is not to say that the physical development happened in an ad hoc manner. Students were often given structures within which to practise and develop their physical abilities. These included learning specific drills and practising particular techniques.

Properties of students’ physical development involved learning technical aspects or techniques as well as skills. Specific technical aspects included how to perform particular components of the activity, for example, how to step in rugby, or more generally, how to play a musical instrument. Skills were less process oriented and were often described more generally, for example as “ball skills.” Students talked about learning new skills and better skills. From this, an idea about the dimensions of physical development emerges, ranging from the learning of new skills to practising established skills in order to develop further.

Intellectual development in the secondary school extracurriculum

Intellectual development, called mental abilities by some and psychological training by another group, involves two main components: knowledge and applied knowledge (see Figure A13, Appendix N). According to students, knowledge developed in their extracurricular activities
incorporated *learning things about their activities, learning rules, learning how to eat and drink* in preparation for their participation, *tips for things to do at home, how instruments work, a level of professionalism, and general knowledge* (see Figure A14, Appendix N). These learnings have been organised according to the dimensions of the category ranging from those that are specific to the activity to those that are general. Learning was embedded in the activities. The activities, themselves, required certain understandings in order for students to participate. More generally students learnt about the activities, themselves, including the rules. One student group talked more about the guidelines for an activity, but also about preparation and practice. There was also equipment involved in some activities, in particular music, where students performed on their instruments. Students in performance activities also recognised what it meant to demonstrate professionalism, learning the social mores of their activity in a broader public context. General knowledge was wide ranging and had potential to take students beyond understandings bounded by personal social spheres or roles as school students. Often this was related to service and seeking to have an effect beyond self.

Applied knowledge was the sub-category used to organise the students’ data where the learnings related to processes rather than knowledge (see Figure A15, Appendix N). Students talked about *learning tactics, learning manoeuvres, reading play and applying skills, making decisions, using strategies, and improvising*. These processes involved thinking, doing, and applying knowledge and understandings in the contexts of students’ activities. It is also conceivable that through consistent practice of these processes, students will be able to apply them across a broader context. The dimensions for the application of knowledge included thinking or understanding, ranging to applying or implementing an action or response, and those mental applications that might be specific to a certain activity, to others which might be general. Examples of a more general application could include assessing given information (called “reading play” in sport) and applying a response or more generally interpreting a context and determining when a quick decision is required and acting upon it.

**Personal development in the secondary school extracurriculum**

Personal development was the most extensive category that participants in this study reported. In order to organise the data, seven sub-categories were established. These are the *ability to deal, attention, meta-learning, self-management, personal dispositions, attitudes to self and the activity,* and *self-understanding* (see Figure A16, Appendix O). Each of these sub-categories is discussed in turn.
The ability to deal might be talked about in terms of developing resilience, but it also seems more immediately to be about learning strategies and personal dispositions for handling challenges (see Figure A17, Appendix O). Students discussed learning how to handle problems and adapt, coping with physical and emotional challenges, fixing or learning from mistakes, and knowing personal limits. Some examples of developing their ability to deal were general, such as coping with stress, nerves, pressure, and challenges. Interpersonal relationships within activities also created factors with which students needed to deal. In particular, they spoke of people whom they felt they could “get on with” and those they could not. Competition, a component of some activities, also created situations in which students felt that they developed their ability to deal, for example the pressure of competing or performing, personal nervous responses, and losing or winning in competition. Dimensions of students’ ability to deal include personal and interpersonal challenges as well as strategies to handle, but also to avoid, problems.

Students perceived that they developed their ability to pay attention in their activities (see Figure A18, Appendix O). This consisted of learning to be alert and developing the ability to concentrate. Learning to be alert was about being prepared and able to respond. This seemed particularly evident in activities that required students to make decisions quickly. Physical readiness seemed to be part of students being alert. Developing concentration involved being able to focus on the activity. This is possibly facilitated in extracurricular activities where students choose to participate voluntarily. At the same time, demands on concentration might be extended where students are required to focus on performing for particular periods of time. They are also likely to get immediate feedback from poor concentration, be it missing a play in sport or losing fluency in a speech or performance. Dimensions of this ranged from being able to concentrate to being distracted. Students applied this learning to focussing on a particular activity, but also recognised that their active participation could have an added effect in assisting them to be alert and able to concentrate on their formal schoolwork.

The term meta-learning was not used by students, but seemed an appropriate descriptor where students talked about ways of learning how to train and play and knowing how to learn and how to listen (See Figure A19, Appendix O). As these are strategies for learning about learning, particularly when combined with other aspects of personal development, a depth of reasoning and higher-order processing is implied. Because students talked specifically about knowing how they, personally, might learn and develop, this construct is included as an element of personal development. The dimensions of this again ranged from learnings that could be considered to be activity specific to those where self-knowledge might be applied in other contexts.
Self-management involved students’ abilities to keep a balance of stuff, organise their time, and preparation (see Figure A20, Appendix O). They considered that their self-management included being organised for school as well as for their activity. At times, the desire to participate became the motivation for students to develop their abilities to manage themselves. Students were not only aware of managing immediate concerns like their time and being prepared to participate, but they also had a more holistic view in terms of the power of choosing activities in their discretionary time to give them a sense of balance in their lives. Dimensions of these elements ranged from their potential to be organised or disorganised, balanced or unbalanced in their activities, and prepared or not prepared for their activity or for other aspects of their lives.

Students expressed a range of personal dispositions they felt developed through participating in their activities (see Figure A21, Appendix O). These include the development of self-esteem, self-discipline, and self-control. Self-esteem seemed closely related to confidence commonly related by students as resulting from performance in front of other people, but also in terms of setting goals, acting, and believing that those goals might be reached. Students also spoke about an element of needing a level of self-confidence in order to try something new. Self-discipline came about in social interactions, but also in students’ abilities to commit to an activity and to persevere at it. Self-control related to students’ social interactions, but also linked back to being able to keep nerves under control when performing in front of other people. Dimensions of this sub-category involved aspects that are expressed personally and those expressed interpersonally, but also the idea that development could facilitate effective handling of these aspects to create a positive sense of self-esteem, appropriate self-discipline, and sufficient self-control rather than having them impact negatively.

Attitudes to self and the activity were apparent in students’ discussions about what they get out of their extracurricular participation (see Figure A22, Appendix O). Students developed views towards the activities in which they participated, but also experienced a degree of reflection of themselves and their identities in the extracurricular context. These attitudes included a sense of responsibility, commitment, and contribution. Dimensions of these learnings involved the extent to which students could express attitudes about the activity itself, or to specific people involved, most often team members. These aspects of personal development could also be directed towards the school community and beyond. It seems important that students come to believe in their own sense of agency and their ability to make an impact beyond themselves. Although the learnings are manifest in the individual, the effects may become external when the individual displays his or her attitudes with others.
**Self-understanding** incorporated a range of learnings (see Figure A23, Appendix O). Students talked about being able to *express yourself; learn how to enjoy yourself*; discover and build on *personal strengths and talents*; *learn how you are similar to or different from other people*; *learn how you, personally, get along with other people*; *discover personal limits*; and experience a sense of *personal satisfaction*. Self-expression was evident in students’ perceptions of how and why they communicate with others in their activity. It was also discussed in relation to self-understanding where students recognise their power to exercise personal choice, explaining their participation in activities as something they could do for themselves. In the latter case, a student’s choice of activity was a matter of self-expression. Self-understanding also included going beyond simply experiencing enjoyment, interest, and a sense of satisfaction in their extracurricular activities, to recognising the personal factors involved. This meant that students were discriminating and able to recognise what they found to be interesting in their chosen activities. Students also selected activities for which they perceived they had talent. This demonstrated their ability to express themselves through their extracurricular choices. In terms of gaining self-knowledge from these activities, students also spoke about participating in order to find out if they were good at something. Self-understanding extended students’ perspectives beyond themselves. They came to recognise that they could be similar to other students where they shared an interest or at the very least shared experiences in a particular activity, but also to see how they were different from others. Self-understanding took social skills further where students reported learning how they, personally, get along with other people. Personal limits could be explored in their participation, especially physical limits. Students experienced a sense of satisfaction, not in this instance about being able to choose an activity related to personal talent or interest, but in being able to make a contribution by helping other people or recognising a sense of privilege in being able to do their activity. In short, the dimensions of self-understanding could be both personal and social, could explore capabilities and limits, and could apply to concepts within the self, between the self and others, or the self and the activity.

The main categories of learning in the secondary school extracurriculum as identified by students included social development, physical and intellectual development, and personal development. In the following section, a propositional model of the students’ curriculum of the extracurriculum is put forward, combining the learnings students attribute to their extracurricular participation.
Combined model of learning

If the diversity of learnings that students voiced about their development are connected and viewed graphically, the curriculum of the secondary school extracurriculum can be illustrated as in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Students’ curriculum of the extracurriculum showing the main categories of learning and their properties from the students’ perspectives.

As Figure 4 shows in each of the four fields emanating from the centre, the categories of student learning in the extracurriculum are social, physical, intellectual, and personal; radiating out from them is an extensive range of properties identified by the students. From this, it can be seen that there is great potential for the extracurriculum to contribute positively to student development and be worthy of attention as a powerful learning context for students. It might also be recognised that although these learnings are desirable, they might well not be found in many formal classroom experiences. Care then should be taken to understand the extracurricular domain fully and deeply, otherwise limited or narrow views of a school’s curriculum might become dominant.

In response to the guiding questions of the study, student data provide a comprehensive picture of how the secondary school extracurriculum is perceived as a learning context. Students are aware of the rich and diverse learnings they experience through participation. Development is both something they consider they get out of participating in their activities and also a reason for choosing to participate. Students’ views of the secondary school extracurriculum establish some
overt relationships between their participation and certain academic subjects in formal schooling, most often those that share a common focus, for example, debating and an English subject, sport and a health and physical education subject, and music and a classroom music subject. The nature of the extracurriculum activities is still considered to be different from their classroom experiences. Less overt relationships exist where students perceived that their extracurricular participation offered skills and capacities that affected their formal schooling. Aside from these relationships, the nature and characteristics of students’ extracurricular activities appeared quite distinct from their formal school experiences. The structures offered in the extracurriculum were also perceived to be different from interacting with friends in unstructured ways. The development that students’ experience in the extracurriculum appears to be closely linked to the structures and characteristics of the activities, themselves.

The final two guiding questions of this research addressed the perceived positive and negative outcomes of learning within the secondary school extracurriculum and the influences on that learning. These ideas are explored in the following section linked to the grounded theory methods employed in this study.

**Conditions, strategies, and consequences of development in the secondary school extracurriculum**

When employing grounded theory methods to help fill out the categories of the phenomenon of extracurricular learning, Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest exploring the conditions, strategies, and consequences of those categories. For the methods to be rigorous, these ideas must arise from the data. In this study, student perceptions regarding the conditions, strategies, and consequences of the learnings they attribute to their extracurricular participation, as well as the participation itself, provide an incomplete picture of the phenomenon, but nonetheless one that is derived from those data.

Students’ views about the conditions that support or undermine their participation or the development they attribute to their participation were explored during the follow-up focus group discussions with each student group in each school. Students were asked to share what influenced their participation in extracurricular activities as well as what they got out of participating. These data were presented in each of the case study chapters. Some conditions can be attributed to participation in general but below I present a summary of those that may be linked to social, physical, intellectual, and personal development.
Social development requires group or team activities that support interaction with peers and adults involved in the activity. Some students expressed a requirement for a certain social standing in order to be accepted in an activity while others saw activity participation as a way of demonstrating skills that could provide social kudos.

Physical development required students to practise and learn particular skills. Often this involved learning particular drills or processes through which they could develop such skills. This again was dependent on the skills of the coaches or adult leaders of an activity.

Intellectual development, although offering generic skills at one level, was embedded in the experiences of the activities themselves. The types of activities in which students were involved, although related at times by students to particular academic subjects, were not about academic coaching. It is in the characteristics of the activities themselves that certain intellectual development is situated.

Personal development offered the widest range in the types of learning experienced by participants. These learnings seem to be conditional on students becoming involved in activities which hold a personal interest for them and on an intrinsic motivation to participate. Students talk about developing their knowledge of themselves and skills by which to manage their involvement in activities in their discretionary time.

Although I had hoped that students might draw relationships between the influences on their extracurricular participation and the development and effects of those experiences, they did not talk about their participation in this way. Strategies by which students handle the processes of their extracurricular involvement are implied in their discussions about what they get out of participating, but are not made explicit. In the most general terms, students talked about learning by experience through participation. This is an important characteristic of the extracurricular context. The activities provide opportunities for learning and development through the experiences offered, rather than through the direct instruction associated with classroom teaching.

Students’ views about the consequences of their participation were also explored during the follow-up focus group discussions with each student group in each school. Students were asked to talk about the effects of their participation in extracurricular activities as well as what they got out of participating. These data were presented in each of the case study chapters. Many of these consequences were immediate for students. Sometimes they consisted solely of what students perceived they got out of participating at the time, for example better skills, fatigue, or new friends. At other times, students saw pathways to participating in their activity at a higher level. Students
developed certain personal attributes as a consequence of their participation. The ideas students put forward were about self-management, including preparation, organisation, and finding a sense of balance in their lives. More generally, it can be seen from the broad variety of learnings that students reported that potential understandings in the areas of social, physical, intellectual, and personal development are so pervasive that they reinforce the value and power of extracurricular experiences in students’ lives.

**Examination of findings in the context of previous research**

The literature framing this research agenda was described in Chapter 2 and included curriculum definitions and conceptualisation of extracurricular learning, research on the effects for students related to extracurricular participation, and adolescent development in structured activities. Concepts of curriculum broadly encompass students’ development in school-sponsored extracurricular activities; however, the curriculum of these from the students’ perspectives had not been clearly articulated. This study gave rise to a propositional model of the secondary school extracurriculum based on students’ voices about their learning. The findings provide additional understandings to what is known about adolescent development in structured activities where the concepts of learning retain the broadest interpretations possible and the activities are those sponsored by schools and embedded in those school contexts. Curriculum definitions and the students’ curriculum of the extracurriculum are discussed before addressing student voice.

**Adolescent development in structured activities and the students’ curriculum of the extracurriculum**

Various effects for students of participation in extracurricular activities have been researched, mostly involving large-scale correlational studies (e.g., Broh, 2002; Camp, 1990; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Gerber, 1996; Marsh, 1992; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002, 2003; Spreitzer, 1994; Sweet, 1986). Details of these effects lent support to further investigation of student learning in secondary school extracurricular activities. Particular attention had been paid to the influence of extracurricular participation on students’ academic outcomes (Broh, 2002; Camp, 1990; Cooper et al., 1999; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Gerber, 1996; Lipscomb, 2007; Marsh, 1992; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; Otto, 1976; Otto & Alwin, 1977; Rehberg & Schafer, 1968; Spreitzer, 1994; Sweet, 1986). The research agenda of my study intentionally did not focus on academic outcomes as a measure of student learning in the extracurriculum. Both literature on student development in extracurricular activities and the findings of the present study indicate that the learnings experienced by students were broader than those assessed in formal classroom settings. At the same time, students drew relationships between their extracurricular activities and their
academic learning, largely where there were obvious likenesses in the nature of the activity and particular subjects, for example, music activities and the classroom music subject, sports activities and the health and physical education subject, and debating and English subject oral assessments.

Unlike in Coleman’s findings (Coleman, 1961), the students who participated in my study did not claim that extracurricular participation detracted from their attention to schoolwork. One student explained that she used practising her musical instrument as a form of procrastination, as she recognised that it happened to be endorsed by her parents. At the same time, she was recognised as very academically able, so it seems unlikely that this procrastination did, in fact, interfere with her studies. For most students, their extracurricular participation appeared to motivate them to be more organised to handle their schoolwork. It also provided much appreciated relief from the pressures they felt from their studies at times. They did, however, recognise that it was possible to become over-committed and were aware of the consequences this might have. The theory put forward by Coleman had been challenged previously (e.g., Marsh, 1992), nonetheless, academic benefits associated with extracurricular participation were considered to be mediated by students’ engagement with formal schooling or the development of certain peer relationships or skills that aid engagement with formal schooling. Broh (2002) talked about social factors of extracurricular involvement linking students to an academic peer group. The present study did not assess particular academic effects from students’ involvement or observations of peer groups in the school settings that were studied; however, students understood their peer relationships to be affected by and to have an effect on their extracurricular involvement.¹⁹

In broad terms, the learnings identified by students in this study seem likely to promote engagement with school and increase the likelihood of students’ achieving their academic potential, even if not directly related to learning for formal school subjects. Academic success, when correlated positively to the broad variety of extracurricular activities offered, is likely to be mediated by a complex interaction of learnings including personal and intellectual development (as identified by students in this study) as well as social development facilitating access to positive peer groups and skills that allow effective interaction with other students and adults.²⁰ Although engagement with school, measured in one instance by students’ extracurricular involvement (Fullarton, 2002), was seen as a primary mediator of academic success, it seems likely, given the

¹⁹ As this study did not examine academic effects, the models of Broh (2002) discussed in Chapter 2 were not addressed. The development of particular peer relationships through participation in activities, however, is congruent to Broh’s developmental model.
²⁰ These findings imply connections to Broh’s social capital model (Broh, 2002).
breadth of development students attributed to their extracurricular involvement, that the extracurriculum is more than simply an incentive to attend formal schooling.

Students in the present study related a broad range of social learnings that they associated with their extracurricular participation. They were also aware of the relative status of various activities and how their participation could facilitate access to certain peer groups (Eder & Kinney, 1995; Marsh, 1992). Students involved in my study did not report deviant behaviours associated with extracurricular involvement.

Although all participants in this study were involved in functioning extracurricular programs, there was evidence of differences in the level and qualities of activities offered, from those where a high level of professionalism guided the structure and leadership of activities to those that were more informal. The relationship between professionalism and students’ learning outcomes was not clear. Highly professional adult leaders were seen to provide a more structured range of experiences for students participating in the activity, but this appeared, at times, to limit student leadership. On the other hand, where students perceived inadequate skills on behalf of the adults involved, the students sometimes adopted more dominant roles. That said, adults were still perceived to be important facilitators and students did not always feel they had the capacity to overcome the adults’ inadequacies. Students perceived a range of skills required for effective leadership and did not always feel empowered to adopt the roles required to run an activity successfully. Leadership from adults might involve not only facilitating students’ development of the skills of the activity, but also mentoring the structures of leadership within the activity and allowing the students’ roles to evolve. Based on their research, Dworkin et al. (2003) reinforce the positive role of adults as leaders of adolescents’ activities.

This central finding, that adolescents see themselves as the agents of their own development in this context, is a critical one for leaders of these activities. It suggests that, at least at the high school age, leaders’ focus might be better directed, not at teaching youth, but helping them teach themselves. Research on parenting and classroom learning suggests that the most effective adults in adolescents’ lives are not overdirective, but rather are responsive and provide appropriate structure, challenge, and support (Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde, 1998; Eccles et al., 1998; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2001). These findings support the conclusions of McLaughlin (2000) that effective programs for youth are youth-centered, and provide a context in which adolescents take responsibility. (Dworkin et al., 2003, pp. 24-25)

The dynamics of different school extracurricular structures and their leadership would benefit from further study.
The findings from my study reinforce the categories of student development identified by Hansen, Larson, and Dworkin (Dworkin et al., 2003; Hansen et al., 2003), who delineated the processes of adolescent development in school and community activities to involve personal and interpersonal skills. Participants in the present study, however, interpreted their learnings differently. Physical and intellectual development were conceptually separate from other personal learnings. As defined in the beginning of the chapter, the differences in these concepts pertained to learnings that were demonstrated as part of the activity and less tangible learnings that developed within the individual person. As these cases are Australian, this study responds in part to the call of Hansen, Larson, and Dworkin that further research on student development in youth activities be undertaken at other sites.

McNeal (1999), however, looked beyond skills to talk about student development in extracurricular activities to be a setting for the development of human, social, and cultural capital. In addition, he identified that school is a social context where student extracurricular involvement can facilitate access to and acceptance from social groups. My findings add support to students’ perceptions that school extracurricular activities do, indeed, lead to the development of skills and knowledge that may be understood as human capital. With the network of relationships identified in the extracurricular activities and the social skills they develop, students’ perceptions may align with concepts of social capital. Cultural capital, considered in relation to the ideas discussed by students in this study, is not necessarily solely developing an aesthetic associated with high culture, but rather an idea of a shared culture and understandings of particular aesthetics and values related to the chosen activity. This shared culture may include aspects of that which is considered prestigious. In one case, students talked about learning “different music,” which I interpreted to mean that the styles of music they experience in their music program, which had a reputation for excellence, was different from that of the students’ popular culture. In addition, given the high status given to sports in Australian culture, understandings of the practices of sport might also be considered to build cultural capital.

Holland and Andre (1987) called for research into extracurricular activities that are embedded in the school context. In looking at positive development in structured activities, most studies combine school and community activities. Although these activities have common characteristics, school activities have been found to be more beneficial to students (Gerber, 1996; Marsh & Kleitman, 2002). In addition, the present study, along with Dworkin et al. (2003), continues to broaden the scope of qualitative research in extracurricular activities by exploring a range of school-based activities, rather than a single activity type (e.g., Braddock, 1981; Otto & Alwin, 1977; Rehberg & Schafer, 1968; Youniss, McLellan, Su, & Yates, 1999).
Campbell (1978) noted that curriculum structures in formal schooling narrowed as students progressed through secondary schooling. My findings on student roles indicated that opportunities in the extracurriculum seemed to extend and diversify as students matured. With assessment of formal curriculum causing teachers in classrooms to focus more of their time and energy into those areas that are assessed, the extracurriculum can maintain a broad range of goals and provide structures for diverse learning opportunities. Students’ ideas about learning in the extracurriculum are comprehensive and highlight development that is perceived to have value, but is not likely to flourish if students’ only schooling is that which they experience in the formal curriculum.

**Curriculum definitions and the students’ curriculum of the extracurriculum**

Holistic perspectives on views of the curriculum, in general, easily incorporate the secondary school extracurriculum. More specifically, this study identified with the British Council (Schools Council (Great Britain, 1981)) definition of curriculum as “what students take away.” Methodologically, the idea of identifying what students take away was kept to the fore by seeking the meanings student participants, themselves, gave to their extracurricular learning. Given the extent of their responses, students in this study indeed take much away from their school extracurricular participation, pointing clearly towards the need to give attention to the secondary school “extracurriculum.” The examination of curriculum definitions framed the exploration of the place of extracurricular activities as part of the secondary school curriculum and whether, in fact, it should be an extra or peripheral to the main business of schooling. If this business is student development, then the extracurriculum is a curriculum necessity.

The goals for Australian schools (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008) articulated a broad range of learnings, some of which were selected in Chapter 2 as having the likelihood of being addressed in the extracurriculum. As apparent in the presentation of findings of this study, students in the secondary school extracurriculum do, indeed, “develop their capacity to learn and play an active role in their learning” (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 8). The extracurriculum is characterised by students choosing to participate and engaging in their chosen activities. They are aware and articulate about their development, so in this context, they are active participants. Table 7 marries elements of the goals for Australian schools with the students’ curriculum of the extracurriculum.
As shown in Table 7, if we look at the personal learning quadrant of the students’ curriculum of the extracurriculum, in particular, these personal learnings make it apparent that the
extracurriculum addresses the principles for education that are valued in policy. These ideals are likely to hold true for adolescents internationally and certainly knit closely to concepts about providing adolescents with the skills and understandings to be lifelong learners.

Conceptually these goals indicate a focus on preparing young people for the future and developing lifelong learners (Hargreaves, 2004). Of Hargreaves’ list of generic skills, the students’ extracurriculum includes aspects of “managing one’s own learning, problem solving, thinking, communication, social and interpersonal, teamwork, and leadership”(Hargreaves, 2004, p. 12). The other ideas of “research, enquiry and investigation, and invention, enterprise and entrepreneurship” (Hargreaves, 2004, p. 12) might still be evident in some extracurricular activities, where students are, for example, investigating the preparation needed for performance in a particular activity, or which tap into their creativity in organising events related to their activity.

School curriculum is continuing to evolve. Most recently, we are experiencing the transition to a new national curriculum as well as national testing in literacy and numeracy. The effects of national testing have been found to influence and narrow what is taught formally in schools (Madaus et al., 2009). This narrowing is not evident in the extracurriculum, either in what has been presented in the research literature or what students report in this study. One characteristic of the extracurriculum is that goals and performance are inherent in the activity itself, whether it is competing in a team sport, performing in music or the creative arts, or undertaking fundraising as part of a service club. Students are aware of what they take away from their participation, but can also explain how they learn about themselves and their capabilities through participation. In other words, students know how they perform. The structures of the extracurriculum currently are not constrained by assessment such as that which exists in the formal curriculum. If we look at the effects of assessment procedures on the breadth and depth of the formal components of schooling, one significant implication of this study is that the extracurriculum should be considered a necessity in adolescent schooling if the benevolent aspirations for adolescent education, such as those articulated in the Melbourne Declaration (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008) are to be addressed. But the curriculum of the extracurriculum needs to be handled with care by administrators and educational leaders to ensure that the characteristics that allow it to offer adolescents the learnings they need are accessible. In addition, attention is needed to resource such a valuable aspect of secondary schooling so that it may, in all contexts, offer the rich and diverse learnings that these students reported were evident in their school contexts.
Student voice and the students’ curriculum of the extracurriculum

Student voice literature, on the face of it, lends support to the importance of listening to students about their extracurricular learning as a means of examining the nature of that learning. This focus assists in overcoming the problems that come about because the extracurriculum is free from formal assessment. But the purposes behind student voice in this study run deeper. As Brooker and Macdonald (1999) state:

If relevant and meaningful curriculum offerings are to be made to students, then it is appropriate to move beyond the question of why students must speak to consider how ‘students’ engagement in the construction of their own schooling experiences’ might be made more explicit (Grundy 1988: 91). (Brooker & Macdonald, 1999, p. 95)

In this study, which was the journey from the choice of curriculum definition to developing research questions to undertaking a pilot study to preparing focus group questions, the process was to find a means of discussing the extracurriculum with students without using the term curriculum or having to explain various meanings that have been developed by adults in education. When a common language was found, that is, simply asking students “What do you get out of participating in your extracurricular activities?” they engaged ably and freely in explaining their perspectives to me.

Student voice is re-emerging in literature on education with ideas about how students might be heard and findings on the effects of what they say. Mitra explains: “Listening to students is the most common form of student voice reported in the literature…. When gathering students’ information, adults seek student perspectives and then interpret the meaning of the data (Costello, Toles, Spielberger, & Wynn, 2000)” (Mitra, 2006a, p. 8). After hearing students’ voices about their extracurricular learning and engaging the student participants in the initial analyses, I wonder if there is, as yet, unexplored scope for students, rather than adults, to be the interpreters of meanings.

Fielding (2001) categorises four levels of student voice: students as a data source, students as active respondents, students as co-researchers, or students as researchers. I characterise the students in my study as active respondents, with their role extending towards that of co-researchers as they undertook the first level of analysis, identifying and ranking what they got out of their extracurricular participation. With the extracurriculum free from formal assessment, I propose that students could play a very active role in curriculum development and evaluation in this context. Indeed, the Principal at School C had held an informal focus group with some senior students about how the school could make their training for an elite school sports team better. He reported that students were very able to see the issues and to offer thoughtful solutions to the challenges put
before them. In order for authentic and effective student involvement in the curriculum of the extracurriculum to come to the fore, the conditions for these interactions to garner the meanings of students’ voices need to be understood and developed into a practical framework. Fielding also talks of “dialogic democracy” and raises questions about examining the conditions for effective student voice around the ideas of speaking, listening, skills, attitudes and dispositions, systems, organisational culture, spaces, action, and the future (Fielding, 2001, pp. 134-135). There can be little doubt that students could become more involved in curriculum development and implementation in the extracurriculum. Furthermore, such mechanisms, once founded in the extracurricular context, might well serve equally well in the formal curriculum.

This study emphasises an area of adolescent development, that is, students’ learning within the secondary school extracurriculum. There is also a facet of student voice literature that links closely to that focus on adolescent development. Where students are given a voice, the effects are not only evident in the topic of those communications, but may also hold developmental benefits for participants. The relationship between being heard and development has been explored by Mitra (2004b), who found that student voice work could have developmental benefits for students. For students involved in the Pupil School Collaborative and the Student Forum at Whitman High School in San Francisco, she explains the effects thus:

Participating in these groups helped (1) to instill agency in students, or belief that they could transform themselves and the institutions that affect them, (2) to acquire the skills and competencies to work toward these changes, and (3) to establish meaningful relationships with adults and the peers that create greater connections to each other. (Mitra, 2004b, p. 681)

Although the student participants in my study were active in their responses and involvement in handling the data during the focus group discussions, their ability to affect their extracurricular experiences through participation in this research was limited by the scope and purposes of the study. It is important then, that the implications of this research include the as yet largely untapped power of students to evaluate and develop the secondary school extracurriculum. It will be at that stage, that students’ sense of agency and potential for shared leadership in the extracurriculum might be developed appropriately. When talking about leadership for learning, MacBeath raises extracurricular activities as an example of an out-of-school learning context that might “offer opportunities for hidden talents to emerge and take a lead” (MacBeath, 2002, p. 9). In reflecting on this use of student voice in examining the extracurriculum, it is of great interest to me that MacBeath goes on to say,
what happens outside mainstream school life challenges what happens within. With a little imagination these ‘leaderful’ experiences can be transfused into the daily practice of learning and teaching. Building social and learning capital, that is the challenge for twenty-first century school leadership. (p. 9)

**Chapter summary**

Students’ awareness of what they take away from their extracurricular experiences is high and supports my claim that attention should be paid to student voice. In addition, students identify their development across similar domains, including social learning, physical development, cognitive development, and personal understandings and values, validating the view that extracurricular activities incorporate opportunities for developing these skills and understandings.

Across, as well as within cases, differences occurred in a number of categories of extracurricular learnings and the properties associated with them. Most obvious were student discussions that emphasised different elements of those learnings. These differences might reflect differences in types of activities or the contexts in which the activities are situated. The latter would support the idea that school extracurricular activities are embedded in school contexts, communities, and cultures, and, as such, need to be developed in relation to each school. Student voice, again, could be valuable as a means of determining a school-specific curriculum of extracurricular activities. At the same time, these cases reflect different philosophies regarding extracurricular provision and different levels of involvement and resourcing.

Drawing conclusions about differences related to activity type are also subtle. Students’ experiences in similar activities in different schools can have quite different outcomes. The nature of the activities themselves, and the level of coaching or leadership offered by adult participants, are noticeably varied between schools. It is likely, therefore, that listening to students’ discussions on what they take away from their extracurricular experiences across contexts will help distil the essence of the extracurriculum and highlight the potential for these experiences to change the lives of young people in school.

School factors which impact upon the ability to build programs to provide a richness in learning opportunities for students will need to be considered, such as resourcing, adult and student leadership, and provision of variety in order to offer students the potential to explore personal interests. Other factors, however, highlight the limitations placed on student participation and development. These include the ability of students to select activities of interest to them, to participate actively where adult and student leadership are effective, and to have resources to pursue
the activity to a level as to provide satisfaction. Given these circumstances, there is likely to be much more to learn from students about their extracurricular learning in different schools. Their views will highlight aspects of extracurricular programs that are valuable, but might not yet be supported in particular school contexts. Care will be needed to ensure that accounting for different contexts, communities, and cultures does not become a way of supporting inequalities in the education offered to students. The extracurriculum is a rich learning environment for students and one to which all students should be entitled to access.
Chapter 8
Conclusions and implications

Extracurricular activities have long been incorporated in secondary schooling, with various views as to their legitimacy and value. In general, provision of such activities has persisted, implying their accepted value. Most recently that value has been related to the goal of student engagement, that is, extracurricular activities are considered indicative of a connection with school and an incentive for students to attend school. This helps explain a connection between extracurricular participation and various positive school outcomes. Although some previous research addresses positive youth development in structured activities, what is not made clear is the power of the secondary school extracurriculum as a learning context.

Chapter 1 introduced the extracurricular context and the aim of this study to explore the meanings students attributed to their extracurricular experiences. A review of relevant literature surrounding the themes of curriculum, effects of student extracurricular participation, and adolescent development in structured activities, was presented in Chapter 2. The methodology of the study including its theoretical underpinning, use of qualitative case study methods, and the processes of the research, was discussed in Chapter 3. Chapters 4 through 6 presented the data from each of the case study schools: an independent girls school, a co-educational state school, and a Catholic boys school. Themes from the cross-case analysis were examined in Chapter 7 to put forward a students’ curriculum of the secondary school extracurriculum, using a curriculum definition focussed on what students take away from their experiences. In this final chapter, I first provide a summary of the research process, followed by a discussion of the major findings, limitations, and implications for theory, practice, and further research.

Summary of the research process

The main aim of this study was to explore the nature of learning in secondary school extracurricular activities from the perspectives of student participants. Given that this domain of schooling is not formally assessed, student learning is not revealed in records of assessment. To quote the definition cited in Chapter 1, in practical terms, “the effective curriculum is what each child takes away” (Schools Council (Great Britain), 1981). So, it is a proposition of this study that secondary school students are well placed to articulate what they take away from their extracurricular activities in order to explore the nature of the extracurriculum.
The research literature examining student voice in schooling is developing. Areas in which research has focussed have included school reform (e.g., Mitra, 2007), student engagement (e.g., Rudduck, 2007), and a small focus on student contributions in curriculum development and implementation (Brooker & Macdonald, 1999). This study takes further the potential for students to contribute actively to our understanding of the curriculum of extracurricular activities. Both students’ contributions to understanding curriculum and consideration of extracurricular activities as an intrinsic component of secondary school curricula have, to date, been limited. Although students in this study were voluntarily giving their opinions about various aspects of their extracurricular involvement, their insights about their learning give weight to the potential for their voices to inform and guide extracurricular learning beyond this study.

In order to access student perspectives on their learning, this study was guided by a number of key questions. The primary research question was simply to endeavour to uncover the nature of learning in the secondary school extracurriculum. A further set of guiding questions was developed and explained in Chapter 1. Students in the pilot study indicated that the questions posed to participants needed to be phrased for students in an open way that would be easy to understand. Accordingly, to elicit information from students on the nature of their extracurricular learning and to prompt open discussion, students were asked four questions:

1. Why do you participate in school extracurricular activities?

2. What do you perceive you get out of participating in school extracurricular activities?

3. What influences what you get out of participating in them?

4. What effects do you perceive you experience from participating in them?

The purpose of the first question was to try to discover the qualities of the activities that attract student engagement in a domain of schooling which is largely voluntary. It is important to understand the context as well as the learning because these aspects are inextricably linked to student experiences in their activities in a context which is aside from formal schooling and other areas of students’ lives.

The second question focussed on the idea that students could identify the curriculum within their extracurricular experiences through talking about “what they take away” from them. This becomes a primary focus in analysis and in creating a picture of the extracurriculum.
The third and fourth questions again focussed on the context to assist in understanding what students perceive influences their involvement and their development in their activities as well as what effects participation and learning have on them. Again, these questions assist in giving a broader entry into understanding the extracurriculum.

Students’ responses to those four questions linked closely to the guiding questions of the study. The first two questions above elicited a variety of perspectives. When students talked about the reasons they participated in school extracurricular activities, the emphasis they placed on reasons incorporating learning or developmental goals addressed the first guiding question which was:

1. How do participants perceive the secondary school extracurriculum as a learning context?

As students discussed what they got out of participating in their extracurricular activities, they talked about their experiences of learning and how these were similar to or different from other contexts in their lives. This provided data on the second guiding question:

2. How is this learning perceived to be similar to or different from that of other learning contexts?

In the follow-up focus group discussions, students were asked about the effects of and influences on their extracurricular participation and learning. Here, they were able to give their perspectives on the final two guiding questions of the study, which were:

3. What are the perceived positive and negative outcomes of learning within the secondary school extracurriculum?

4. What are the perceived positive and negative influences on learning within the secondary school extracurriculum?

The theoretical underpinning of the study was symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) which assists in conceptualising how the meanings students attribute to their extracurricular experiences affect the ways in which they act towards the extracurriculum as well as offering insight into the learnings they experience. In order to draw out meaning in each case study school, students were involved in an initial and a follow-up focus group discussion. At the beginning of the initial focus group discussion, students answered a brief questionnaire followed by a process of offering ideas in response to the guiding questions “round-robin style.” Further opportunity was then given for all students to define, clarify, or illustrate each point in discussion. Next, students were involved in grouping ideas where they felt there were similarities. Some student groups were
content to leave many different items while others assembled them into more central categories. Students were also asked to rank individually the grouped items raised in order of importance for them personally. This process was adapted from nominal group techniques (Delbecq et al., 1975).

As student voice is crucial to this study, analysis for each case study chapter involved organising the cover terms students themselves identified and grouped in their focus group process. The rankings students gave to these cover terms were collated and used to organise the main themes with other points attached as appropriate. In presenting the data for individual cases, students’ perceptions of their learning were maintained in their own words and their conceptualisations were reproduced as far as possible in honouring the relative emphasis they placed on the different categories of learning they discussed. It should be noted that these analysis processes followed the grounded theory procedures of Strauss and Corbin (1990) through which the presentation of students’ initial ideas could be seen as open codes; their discussion offering further information in data units, and their grouping terms being a form of axial coding, hence maintaining, above all, the primacy of students’ voices and the students’ position as data sources and active participants in the first stage of the research process.

In order to present data across cases, an additional level of analysis was required. This also followed grounded theory procedures, first undertaking a process of open coding where data units in transcribed excerpts from the initial focus group discussions were examined individually and their meanings explored, then axial coding of these data units and their open code notes in order to rebuild the concepts and offer a higher level of abstraction. This focus on data from these initial focus group discussions honed in on the primary question of what students got out of their participation in order to move towards conceptualising a curriculum of the extracurriculum.

**Major findings: The curriculum of the extracurriculum**

Students themselves identified what they get out of their extracurricular participation and indicated that these activities provide a powerful learning context for them. Through listening to students, I was able to gain an inside view of the meanings these activities have for them and understand that the learnings they identify are embedded in their extracurricular experiences. The aggregation and categorisation of these learnings offers a platform for the conceptualisation of a curriculum of the extracurriculum in secondary schools. This was presented graphically in Chapter 7. This curriculum conceptualisation includes extensive social, physical, intellectual, and personal learnings.

Given the depth and breadth of learnings that students attribute to the extracurriculum, the term *extra* is really the misnomer that Berk (1992) asserts. Although research explains the benefits
for students of their extracurricular participation in terms of engagement with school (e.g., Fullarton, 2002), the development of skills to facilitate learning in school (developmental model), and the development of relationships with peers and adults that provide support in school (social capital model) (Broh, 2002), learning occurs in the extracurriculum that extends beyond formal academic subjects and embraces a wide range of skills, values, and capacities. Learnings in the school context are, therefore, not solely the domain of the formal curriculum. The extracurriculum is more than an enjoyable incentive for students to attend and connect with school. If the school curriculum is considered to be what students take away (Schools Council (Great Britain), 1981), emphasis and status need to be given to the extracurriculum.

Listening to students’ voices in this study allows us to hear what they gain from their extracurricular experiences, but it also offers perspectives about the experiences themselves and how this learning context is different from other learning contexts in their lives. The extracurriculum is distinct from the formal curriculum in its nature and its modes of learning as well as in its structures and methods of evaluation. This means that new ways of developing, implementing, and evaluating curriculum need to be devised for the extracurriculum.

Recognising the power of the extracurriculum as a learning context and identifying the learnings that can occur through it justifies its inclusion as a critical component of what students take away from their schooling. Moreover, when faced with pressures to narrow the formal curriculum in response to a drive for standards, the presence of broader learnings becomes essential for young people, making the extracurriculum a necessity rather than an extra.

**Limitations**

As this research employed case study methods, only three secondary schools amongst almost 500 in Queensland were examined. The sampling was purposive (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Merriam, 1998) in that schools with well-functioning extracurricular programs were sought to ensure that the participating students had a perspective on learning in that context. Given that three cases were undertaken, the findings of the study are reliable representations of those case contexts only, but readers may determine meanings that enlighten their understanding for other contexts. Stake (1995) summarises the purposes of case study thus:

The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself. (p. 8)
This study sought to provide perspectives from students in schools, one from each of the main providers of secondary school education in Queensland, and to record a deep level of description. The cross-case analysis, which highlights similarities and differences across the cases, may also draw attention to features of extracurricular learning that might be apparent in other contexts. Furthermore, in theorising extracurricular learnings in terms of the model proposed here—a curriculum of the extracurriculum—it is hoped that readers will identify the potential of their own contexts for student development and work towards enhancing extracurricular programs to support it.

Implications of the research findings

Knowledge gained from the findings from this research contributes to current understandings of curriculum, in particular, the extracurriculum, and could assist participants in extracurricular activities, school principals and leaders of extracurricular programs, and policy makers in secondary schooling. In addition, the study exposes areas where further research could prove valuable.

Implications of findings for theory

This study has implications for the development of theory about the effects for students of their extracurricular participation. While it is clear that the extracurricular context is connected to certain positive outcomes including improved academic success, this study challenges us to recognise the extracurricular domain as a learning context rather than perceiving it primarily as a tool to engage students with formal schooling.

Findings from previous research on positive youth development in structured activities for adolescents are supported by the students’ voices in the case study schools presented here. These cases provide a conceptualisation of student learning that differs in detail and the relative emphasis given to categories of learning from those put forward in previous research. These differences may reflect the focus of the present study on the school extracurricular context whereas research on positive youth development often groups school and community activities together.

Students are well aware of what they take away from their extracurricular participation. This study supports the view that giving students a voice in the extracurriculum will be beneficial for all. Indeed, schools should be supported to conceptualise and support the extracurriculum for the valuable learning context it is. Doing so, however, seems to go against current directions in curriculum policy which emphasise standards in a limited range of formal learning fields. Developing a model of the extracurriculum focusses on students rather than standards.
Given that students across these case study schools have been able to identify their learnings clearly, student voice is likely to be able to make further contributions to curriculum development and implementation. Theory surrounding student voice and how it can be honoured and employed for positive outcomes is given further support by the findings from this study.

**Implications of findings for practice**

Students in this study have articulated, unambiguously, the learnings that they attribute to their extracurricular participation. Nonetheless, the extracurriculum remains on the periphery in most schools. While extracurricular activities are used in marketing, in engaging students in broader school life, and in seeking to support a holistic approach to the education of individuals, these activities are often seen as value-adding, but not essential learning. Students have explained the key characteristics of extracurricular activities as inextricably linked to what they learn. These activities are different from other learning contexts in their lives. Therefore, it is a challenge for practitioners to understand more fully the curriculum of the extracurriculum and to apply their professional knowledge and experience to enrich the learning that this context has potential to provide.

Assessment in the extracurriculum is intrinsic to the activities themselves: Students are most often aware how well they perform. Furthermore, student voice offers an added mode of evaluation that contains feedback and direction for those learning together, enabling them to reflect on and develop their programs. Indeed, where students are actively engaged in discussing issues in the extracurriculum, the processes they develop and practise may be found to have applications in curriculum innovation on a larger scale, including formal schooling.

When students were given the voice to articulate their learning within chosen extracurricular activities, they identified elements of social development, physical and intellectual development, and personal development, and described learnings which support these elements. For them, extracurricular activities involve vital learnings that contribute to overall school experiences in terms that reflect the goals articulated in the Melbourne Declaration (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training, and Youth Affairs, 2008). Through their extracurricular participation, students engage in becoming successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. It then appears that the extracurriculum should be recognised as a curriculum necessity by practitioners who give so much by way of time and resources to these programs.

Educational leadership can be extended to students in their extracurricular activities in ways that go further than a token representation in ancillary tasks, as Johnson describes. He gives an
example of student councils where student “leaders” were perceived to be involved primarily in tasks of no greater importance than choosing a colour scheme for the school dance or selecting an amusement park for a school social outing (Johnson, 1991, p. 17). In contrast, leadership for learning (MacBeath, 2002) is a way of empowering students to lead their own learning. Student voice in curriculum design and implementation is another step towards an evolution, perhaps even a revolution, in leadership. At the same time, it is naïve to expect students to understand curriculum in the same ways as administrators and teaching professionals, who, in general will see a larger purpose in curriculum design and implementation. Therefore, there certainly is a need for further research into how students can be engaged effectively in curriculum decision making in a manner that is authentic, rather than tokenistic, so that their voices are heard and heeded. Given that the structures of extracurricular programs are currently free from many of the restrictions of standards accountability that have been placed on the formal curriculum, this might well be the ideal domain in which schools can develop effective mechanisms for dialogue on active student engagement in curriculum development.

**Implications of findings for further research**

To complement symbolic interactionism in examining the extracurriculum, the use of Actor Network Theory (ATN) (e.g., Latour, 1990; Law & Hassard, 1999) presents an opportunity for further research. Whereas symbolic interactionism focuses on the meanings developed and adapted in social contexts by individuals to give insight into the phenomenon of extracurricular learning, ATN would allow the inclusion of aspects of the broader extracurricular context, both personal and inanimate. Fenwick and Edwards (2010) draw attention to incorporating human—non-human interactions in understanding education:

> In educational research, important questions are opened up when we consider how things work in and through complex human—non-human relations to enact social worlds, expertise, learning, pedagogy, policy and curriculum. We can examine how things [italics added] enact conceptual categories and reconfigure relationships. (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010, p. 9)

The methodological approach taken in the present study focussed on human interactions in the first instance, justifying listening to the voices of young people. Given the nature of the data that arose from this study and evidence of differences between schools, their environments, and non-human elements, the lens of ATN might elicit additional understandings owing to students’ interactions with their material surroundings, thus giving greater attention to the ‘things’ of the extracurriculum in understanding this phenomenon.
It is also a challenge for future study in this area to explore the processes through which schools can incorporate student voices in curriculum design and implementation in the extracurriculum.

Notwithstanding the scope of this research, meaningful application of student opinions about their extracurricular learning is limited to the extent to which schools choose to use the feedback offered by these findings. Nonetheless, the insights of student participants indicate a great potential for creating a better understanding of this developmental context in adolescents’ lives and may assist schools to develop and enrich their programs. The strong suggestion is that there is a need to investigate mechanisms for student input more deeply in schools, possibly in the form of action research.

Literature on the importance of student voice highlights reform initiatives and addresses an imbalance in who is “heard” in schooling and who gets to influence schooling practices. On the other hand, there are pragmatic reasons for students to feel that they are getting a greater level of control in their schooling. A key effect of extracurricular participation is that students’ sense of engagement with school is enhanced and there is, therefore, a greater likelihood that they will stay in school. Students’ influence on schooling practice remains, however, largely outside curriculum concerns.

Questions need to be answered about the ways in which students are able to express themselves and influence their schooling. Schooling is intended to be a benevolent influence on young people, enabling them to achieve productive outcomes for their future lives. This requires a commitment to what will be needed for their futures to be successful and rewarding. There is, then, a risk that students may be heard and their ideas implemented and concerns addressed which might, in fact, result in poorer schooling outcomes for them. The probable solution is that participants, students and adults, in extracurricular activities recognise themselves as learners and collaborators in developing curriculum, learning from their experiences and developing rich and full extracurricular programs that extend students socially, physically, intellectually, and personally.

It is possible that student voice research is more essential now than ever at a time when standards rather than student needs drive schooling. When we acknowledge the ways in which students might drive their own schooling, significant others can make valuable contributions to developing effective communities of practice with them. In these communities, student voice would no longer be a catch-phrase, because all parties in the community would have effective mechanisms to voice their perspectives and influence schooling positively.
Conclusion

Emerging from this study is a conceptualisation of extracurricular learning as a curriculum in its own right. In addition, implications for theory, practice, and further research have been put forward in this chapter. The potential for extracurricular learning to produce rewards during the growth and development of adolescents has also been discussed.

Current curriculum in the formal aspects of secondary schooling is subjugated by policies pushing for standards to be assessed on a national scale and given transparency in the public domain. Although support for evaluation, diagnosis of effective learning, and implementation of strategies to assist students to achieve the best outcomes possible from their secondary education is noble, the effect of these processes can have a paradoxical impact (Madaus et al., 2009). In particular, it is understood that high-stakes testing causes a narrowing in what is taught and learnt in school. The idea of narrowing opportunities for adolescents in their schooling was identified early (Campbell, 1978), before this current political climate emphasising performativity came into being. The extracurriculum, however, remained the one component of adolescents’ schooling where structures provide broader opportunities for adolescents as they matured.

If the focus of secondary education is to remain on students, two important aspects arise from this study. The first is the potential of students to offer insight into their learning if they are given the voice to do so; the second recognises the extracurriculum as a valuable learning context for students. When the value of this context is acknowledged, it is realised that schools have great potential to address the increasing imbalance between what teaching professionals perceive to be essential development for adolescents and what drives formal curriculum design and implementation. The extracurriculum has not received much attention in research and largely not in a manner that recognises its developmental possibilities. Klesse (2004), as a well-informed and knowledgeable practitioner in the extracurriculum, pushes for further understanding of extracurricular activities as offering essential learning. Holland and Andre (1987) called for further research to explain how these programs affect students. This study moves attention beyond the identification of benefits for students and correlations between positive education outcomes and student participation, to recognising that students can and should be given opportunities to offer insight into their development, and that this development is embedded in the activities in which they participate, rather than simply encouraging their compliance with a formal schooling agenda.

Finally, characteristics of the extracurricular context need to be understood alongside a proposed curriculum of extracurricular learning. Conventional approaches to curriculum development and implementation, created for the classroom context, are unlikely to allow
extracurricular programs to be enhanced effectively, as this context has different features from formal schooling. Student choice in activity, intrinsic interest, and activity structures that resemble those in the broader community rather than those within the school fence, make this domain of secondary education worthy of significant attention. Given its rich potential for student development and its likely impact upon their future lives, the extracurriculum should be repositioned as an integral part of secondary school curriculum, in other words, a curriculum necessity.
References


Colucci, E. (2007). “Focus groups can be fun”: The use of activity-oriented questions in focus group discussions. *Qualitative Health Research 17*(10), 1422-1433.


QSR International Pty Ltd. (2002). N6 qualitative data analysis software (Version 6).


Appendix A

Access letter to Principal

Date

<<Name of Principal>>
<<Position title>>
<<School>>
<<Address>>

Dear <<Name of Principal>>

PhD Research Project

I am currently undertaking research into the nature of learning in secondary school extracurricular activities. In particular, I am interested in the views of Principals, teachers/instructors/coaches, students in Years 8 to 10, and parents about their experiences in the school’s extracurricular domain. This information will contribute to my PhD thesis in Education at Griffith University.

My aim is that the study’s focus on participants’ views about their extracurricular school activity experiences will promote a deeper understanding of how participants engage with the extracurricular dimension of schooling. During the course of the research my intention is that, at all stages, individuals involved should find the process informative and enriching.

I am writing, therefore, to seek your support for <<School>> to participate in this study. I am particularly interested in <<School>> as it is a <<State/Independent/Catholic>> school with a sound reputation for extracurricular programming and an apparent commitment to the importance of extracurricular activities as part of a well-rounded education.

On the following page is a table outlining the participants and the activities that are likely to be undertaken as part of this research project. It is expected that data collection at each school site will take place over one school term.

Participation at all stages of this project is voluntary and informed written consent will be gained from individual participants and in the case of students, their parents or guardians.

I realise that you must receive many requests of this nature, but I would very much appreciate the opportunity to discuss my research with you further. As a follow up to this letter, I will contact the school at the beginning of Term 1. In the interim, if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on ____________ or by emailing E.Wheeley@griffith.edu.au

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Wheeley

Dr Simon Clarke
Principal Supervisor
**Brief outline of the study**

It is anticipated that the study will involve the following persons and activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Research Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Two groups 6 to 12 **students** in Years 8, 9 and 10 | Each group will be involved in:  
  • One focus group session at the beginning of a school term lasting approximately 90 minutes  
  • Writing weekly responses in an individual Reflective Journal for a period of 6 weeks  
  • One follow-up focus group session and/or short individual interviews towards the end of the school term following completion of the Reflective Journal |
| One group of 6 to 12 **teachers/coaches/instructors** of extracurricular activities | One focus group session lasting approximately 90 minutes |
| One group of 6 to 12 **parents** of Years 8, 9 and 10 students involved in extracurricular activities | One focus group session lasting approximately 90 minutes |
| **Principal**                                     | One interview lasting approximately 60 minutes                                       |

(Note: Students, teachers/coaches/instructors, and parents should represent a variety of different extracurricular school activities. The group of parents is not restricted to the parents of students who participate in this study.)

Other research activities will include:

- Reviewing school documents pertaining to the school extracurricular program
- Observing school extracurricular activities as a non-participant
Appendix B

Student letter for informed consent

<<Date>>

Dear Student and Parent/Caregiver

PhD Research Project

I am currently undertaking research into the nature of learning in secondary school extracurricular activities. In particular, I am interested in the views of students about their extracurricular experiences as well as the perspectives of parents and caregivers. This information will contribute to my PhD thesis in Education at Griffith University.

My aim is that the study’s focus on participants’ views about their extracurricular school activity experiences will promote a deeper understanding of how participants engage with the extracurricular dimension of schooling. It is hoped that, at all stages, individuals involved should find the process informative and enriching.

<<Name of school>> is participating in this study. I am therefore seeking approval for you to participate in the research.

Student participation will involve one initial Focus Group session of approximately 60 minutes during school time, the completion of a Reflective Journal, and a follow-up Focus Group session and/or individual interviews. The Focus Group sessions will be scheduled in liaison with the school to minimise any disruption to the students’ class commitments. Up to 24 students in Years 8 to 10 who are involved in extracurricular group activities, such as sports teams, performing arts groups or productions or music ensembles, student government, service groups, clubs and other school organized activities run before school, during school breaks, or after school may participate in this study. Should more than 24 students be given permission to participate, participants will be selected on the basis of representing the widest variety of activities.

The first Focus Group sessions will be held in <<Term>>. These sessions will involve small groups of students answering a number of written questions about their extracurricular involvement as well as activities and discussions focussing on extracurricular learning. Discussions will be audiotaped and/or videotaped. Recordings will be played back for analysis purposes but, at all times, participants will remain anonymous. Recordings and any transcripts from the recordings will not be made available to any other party.

Students involved in Focus Group sessions will also be asked to complete a Reflective Journal. This exercise will involve writing responses about their extracurricular activity each week for six weeks. Following this, a second Focus Group session and/or individual follow-up interviews will be held towards the end of the school term.

Throughout the term, observations of extracurricular activities will also be undertaken. These will not be videotaped. During observations, students who have permission to participate may be asked questions about their extracurricular participation. These informal interviews will be short and disruption to the student’s engagement with a particular activity will be minimal.

Participation at all stages of this project is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any time. Feedback from this research will be provided to participants on request.
If you have any queries or concerns regarding this project or require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact:

Elizabeth Wheeley, School of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
3875 5940  e.wheeley@griffith.edu.au

This research project is being supervised by:

Dr Simon Clarke  
Principal Supervisor  
School of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning  
38755893  
Simon.Clarke@griffith.edu.au

Professor Joy Cumming  
Associate Supervisor  
School of Cognition, Language and Special Education  
38756862  
j.cumming@griffith.edu.au

Any concerns regarding the manner in which this research is conducted may be raised with the researcher, Principal Supervisor or the University’s Research Ethics Officer, Office for Research, Bray Centre, Griffith University, Nathan, Qld 4111, telephone 38756618.

If you wish to participate in this study, I would very much appreciate if you could complete the Informed Consent Form on the following page including your parent/caregiver’s signature to indicate their permission and return it to <<School liaison name>> by <<Date>>.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth Wheeley
Informed Consent Form for Students and Parents/Caregivers

I have been asked to participate in a research project investigating school extracurricular activities and hereby give my consent.

I, _____________________________ ___________________ give consent for the researcher to:

- Collect data from me during the initial Focus Group session
- Collect written data from me in the form of responses to written questions and activities during Focus Group session/s and a Reflective Journal to be completed by me each week over the period of 6 weeks
- Observe my involvement in my extracurricular activity/ies, make written notes, and conduct occasional brief interviews with me about my extracurricular participation
- Collect data from me during the follow-up Focus Group session and/or individual interview
- Audiotape and/or videotape focus group sessions
- Audiotape some individual interviews
- Transcribe recordings
- Analyse the data
- Protect me by keeping records confidential and by using a pseudonym for me if quoting my point of view in the publication of findings

I understand that data collected as part of this project will be used solely for research purposes. I may request a summary of the findings of the research at the conclusion of the project.

I have read this form and the letter accompanying this form and agree to participate of my own free will. I also understand that I may withdraw from the project at any time.

Signatures:

Student participant _____________________________ Date

Parent/Caregiver _____________________________ Date

Researcher _____________________________ Date

I am involved in the following extracurricular activities:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
Appendix C

Pre-focus group survey

Dear Student,

Griffith University PhD Research Project

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this Focus Group session. Your involvement in the discussion about your experiences of extracurricular activities will make an important contribution to this research project.

During this Focus Group time, we will be discussing some of your ideas about what you do and what you get out of participating in extracurricular activities. This can be considered to be extracurricular learning. There are many different kinds of learning, so if you think about it in terms of what you do in your extracurricular activities to develop new abilities or what you do to maintain your abilities, you are likely to be considering what learning means to you. These ideas are really important to this study.

Some points to remember:
1. Your point of view is really important even if it is different from other people, so feel free to be confident and speak up.
2. Please listen while other people are speaking and take your turn.
3. You do not need to share anything that makes you feel uncomfortable and can leave the session if you no longer wish to participate.

Next, please complete the questions over the page. It is best if these are your own ideas. Group ideas will come out during the discussion. If you have any questions, feel free to ask.

Thank you again for giving your time to participate in this research project.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Wheeley
1. What extracurricular school activities are you involved in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity name/s</th>
<th>Role/s  e.g Stage manager, member, team/section leader, captain, secretary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Write something about why you became involved in each of your extracurricular activities…

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

3. Briefly describe what you do in each of your extracurricular activities…

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
4. Write something about what you get out of each of your extracurricular activities, that is, what types of learning you experience…

Other comments:

Thank you again for your participation in this exercise. Your willingness to contribute to this research project is much appreciated.
Appendix D

Initial focus group guide

**Welcome and general introduction**  
**5mins**
Thanks for participating – I really appreciate you giving your time.  
This session is part of my research into extracurricular activities and learning. By participating, you will be giving me ideas about your extracurricular learning.  
This session will involve some written questions, which I would like you to complete on your own, then a group discussion about school extracurricular activities.  
Clarify extracurricular school activities to mean group activities. Ask students for examples  
Let’s go through the questions first. *(Read first page and questions, ask if any clarification needed)*  
Brief introduction about “learning” not just “classroom” or “tuition”  
You may answer questions in sentences or phrases or single words  
Participation is voluntary. If for any reason, you no longer wish to participate, you can leave the session and return to class.  

**Complete pre-focus group questions**  
**10mins**

**Introductory activity**
Let’s introduce ourselves by saying your name and year level, what activities you are involved in and what you think is the most important thing you get out of participating in your activity.  
*(Group introduction)*

**Discussion questions for brainstorming**  
**40mins**

**Why do you participate in extracurricular activities?**
Based first on responses in pre-focus group question 2, ask each student to respond round-robin style until list exhausted.  
You may add more ideas as they come to you.  
Are any of these ideas the same or can be grouped as examples of other ideas?  
Serial discussion for clarification  
Clarify  
Give more information  
Share thinking behind responses  
Anyone can address any of these items, not just the ones you put forward.  
**Probe:** *How is extracurricular activity participation different from other areas of your lives?*

**What do you think you get out of participating in extracurricular activities?**
Based first on responses in pre-focus group question 4, ask each student to respond round-robin style until list exhausted.  
**Probe as needed**  
PRACTISING OR DEVELOPING SKILLS  
DEVELOPING FEELINGS ABOUT …  
DEVELOPING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT …  
You may add more ideas as they come to you.  
Are any of these ideas the same or can be grouped as examples of other ideas?  
Serial discussion for clarification  
Clarify  
Give more information  
Share thinking behind responses  
Anyone can address any of these items, not just the ones you put forward.

Review and number list and vote
Choose the top five most important things you get out of participating in extracurricular activities. If you feel that something is missing, you can add another idea at this stage as well. Write them down either by number if it is exactly as we have it on the poster or in your own words. On the left, rank your items by choosing the most important out of the five, then the least important, then the second most important and so forth.

Probe as needed

**Negative**
Do you feel that time spent on extracurricular activities takes away from your ability to focus on school subjects?
How much is too much extracurricular commitment?

**Positive**
Do you think that the things you learn in your extracurricular activity help you in your school subjects?

**Final discussion** **5mins**

What are the most important things that you would like me to take away from today’s discussion?

For the last couple of minutes, could you please write in the other comments section of your question sheet your most important points, any ideas you have that were different from the rest of the group.

**Closing**
Thanks again for your time and all the ideas you offered me in this session.

**Resources**

- Name tags
- Tape recorder
- Tapes
- Video recorder
- Video tapes
- Pre-focus group questions
- Spare pens/pencils
- Lined coloured paper
- Poster paper
- Poster pens
Appendix E

Follow-up focus group guide

Welcome and general introduction 5mins
Thanks for participating – I really appreciate you giving your time.
Like last time, we will be discussing your extracurricular activities and learning.

Distribute list of outcomes from last group discussion

Is there anything you would like to add to your list?
Is there anything there that you think no longer applies and should be taken out?

Question 1 “What are the positive or negative effects of what you get out of your extracurricular involvement?”

Ask each student to respond round-robin style until ideas are exhausted.
You may add more ideas as they come to you.
Are any of these ideas the same or can be grouped as examples of other ideas?
Serial discussion for clarification
Clarify
Give more information
Share thinking behind responses
Anyone can address any of these items, not just the ones you put forward.
Reduce and rank

Question 2 “What influences what you get out of your extracurricular involvement positively or negatively?”

Ask each student to respond round-robin style until ideas are exhausted.
You may add more ideas as they come to you.
Are any of these ideas the same or can be grouped as examples of other ideas?
Serial discussion for clarification
Clarify
Give more information
Share thinking behind responses
Anyone can address any of these items, not just the ones you put forward.
Reduce and rank
## Appendix F

### Information about student participants from School A

**Table A1**

*Information about Student Participants from School A (Independent Girls School)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Year level</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>12yrs 6mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Auditioned choir, cricket, netball, book club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Orchestra, basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>12yrs 6mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Debating, orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>12yrs 11mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Debating, basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>13yrs 2mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rowing, soccer, softball, debating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td>12yrs 8mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>String ensemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Basketball, hockey, debating, non-auditioned choir, concert band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8</td>
<td>12yrs 10mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Non-auditioned choir, auditioned choir, hockey, learning skills club, volleyball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9</td>
<td>13yrs 10mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Did not complete survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A10</td>
<td>13yrs 6mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Service group, debating, hockey, swimming, athletics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A11</td>
<td>14yrs 4mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Soccer, concert band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A12</td>
<td>14yrs 2mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rowing, social justice club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A13</td>
<td>13yrs 10mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rowing, running club, debating, swimming, cricket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A14</td>
<td>14yrs 4mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Debating, soccer, netball, swimming, softball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A15</td>
<td>13yrs 10mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rowing, orchestra, debating, softball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A16</td>
<td>15yrs 1mth</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Netball, softball, concert band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A17</td>
<td>15yrs 5mths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Swimming, cross country, athletics, netball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A18</td>
<td>14yrs 11mths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Hockey, soccer, cricket, service club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A19</td>
<td>15yrs 5mths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Running club, cross country, netball, yoga, non-auditioned choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A20</td>
<td>15yrs 4mths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Soccer, concert band, debating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Where age is not recorded, the student did not attend initial focus group
Appendix G

Additional diagrams of data from Case Study 1

Figure A1. Diagram of students' cover terms and items from Case Study 1, Student Group 2: Cover terms (coloured in red with white text) located centrally ranked from top to bottom in order of importance with other items (coloured according to how items were devised) joined by continuous lines, indicating the connections students made, and dotted lines indicating connections I made based on students’ discussions.
Figure A2. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 1, Student Group 3: Cover terms (coloured in red with white text) located centrally ranked from top to bottom in order of importance with other items (coloured according to how items were devised) joined by continuous lines, indicating the connections students made, and dotted lines indicating connections I made based on students’ discussions.
# Appendix H

## Information about student participants from School B

### Table A2

*Information about Student Participants from School B (Coeducational State School)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Year level</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>13yrs 11mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>13yrs 9mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Soccer, touch football, Rock Eisteddfod, athletics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td>12yrs 11mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B4</td>
<td>13yrs 2mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Volleyball, debating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B5</td>
<td>13yrs 5mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Soccer, debating, Rock Eisteddfod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B6</td>
<td>14yrs 8mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Soccer, volleyball, touch football, basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B7</td>
<td>13yrs 1mth</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Rock Eisteddfod, debating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B8</td>
<td>13yrs 9mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Soccer, touch football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B9</td>
<td>14yrs 11mths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B10</td>
<td>15yrs 4mths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Senior concert band, basketball, debating, Rock Eisteddfod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B11</td>
<td>15yrs 1mth</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Soccer, Volleyball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B12</td>
<td>15yrs 10mths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Touch football, volleyball, soccer, basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B13</td>
<td>13yrs 11mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Soccer, touch football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B14</td>
<td>15yrs 2mths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Senior concert band, stage band, hockey, baseball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B15</td>
<td>15yrs 10mths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Senior concert band, stage band, hockey, baseball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B16</td>
<td>14yrs 10mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Senior concert band, junior concert band, debating, Rock Eisteddfod, volleyball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B17</td>
<td>13yrs 4mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Senior concert band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B18</td>
<td>13yrs 7mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Senior concert band, stage band, string orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B19</td>
<td>13yrs 0mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Senior Concert Band, String Orchestra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I

Additional diagrams of data from Case Study 2

Figure A3. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 2, Student Group 2: Cover terms (coloured in red with white text) located centrally ranked from top to bottom in order of importance with other items (coloured according to how items were devised) joined by continuous lines, indicating the connections students made, and dotted lines indicating connections I made based on students’ discussions.
Figure A4. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 2, Student Group 3: Cover terms (coloured in red with white text) located centrally ranked from top to bottom in order of importance with other items (coloured according to how items were devised) joined by continuous lines, indicating the connections students made, and dotted lines indicating connections I made based on students’ discussions.
Figure A5. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 2, Student Group 4:
Cover terms (coloured in red with white text) located centrally ranked from top to bottom in order of importance with other items (coloured according to how items were devised) joined by continuous lines, indicating the connections students made, and dotted lines indicating connections I made based on students’ discussions.
## Appendix J

### Information about student participants from School C

Table A3

*Information about Student Participants from School C (Catholic Boys School)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Year level</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>13yrs11mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Soccer, cricket, AFL, debating, Optiminds, fishing club, social justice club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>13yrs 10mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Stage band, big band, soccer, cricket, basketball, social Justice club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>13yrs 7mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Soccer, cross country, cricket, AFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4</td>
<td>13yrs 7mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rugby union, cricket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C5</td>
<td>14yrs 5mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Soccer, volleyball, design technology club (building surf boards)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C6</td>
<td>14yrs 1mth</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rugby, basketball, rowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C7</td>
<td>14yrs 3mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Volleyball, rugby, cross country, athletics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C8</td>
<td>14yrs 4mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rugby, volleyball, cross country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C9</td>
<td>14yrs 4mths</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Volleyball, athletics, basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C10</td>
<td>13yrs 4mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rugby, swimming, cricket, AFL, tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C11</td>
<td>13yrs 0mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rugby, cricket, AFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C12</td>
<td>13yrs 0mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rugby union, swimming, basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C13</td>
<td>13yrs 1mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rugby union, swimming, athletics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C14</td>
<td>13yrs 9mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sailing, tennis, golf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C15</td>
<td>13yrs 0mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Volleyball, rugby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C16</td>
<td>13yrs 3mths</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C17</td>
<td>15yrs 1mth</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Cricket, rugby, basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C18</td>
<td>14yrs 8mths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rugby, athletics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C19</td>
<td>15yrs 5mths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Cricket, soccer, cross country, athletics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C20</td>
<td>14yrs7mths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Football, tennis, debating, cricket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C21</td>
<td>15yrs3mths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rugby league, rugby union, AFL, cricket, tennis, water polo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C22</td>
<td>15yrs2mths</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Soccer, basketball, tennis, rock band, debating, school play, target club</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix K

Additional diagrams of data from Case Study 3

Figure A6. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 3, Student Group 2: Cover terms (coloured in red with white text) located centrally ranked from top to bottom in order of importance with other items (coloured according to how items were devised) joined by continuous lines, indicating the connections students made, and dotted lines indicating connections I made based on students’ discussions.
Figure A7. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 3, Student group 3: Cover terms (coloured in red with white text) located centrally ranked from top to bottom in order of importance with other items (coloured according to how items were devised) joined by continuous lines, indicating the connections students made and dotted lines, indicating connections I made based on students’ discussions.
Figure A8. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 3, Student Group 4: Cover terms (coloured in red with white text) located centrally ranked from top to bottom in order of importance with other items (coloured according to how items were devised) joined by continuous lines, indicating the connections students made, and dotted lines indicating connections I made based on students’ discussions.
Figure A9. Diagram of students' cover terms and items from Case Study 3, Student Group 5: Cover terms (coloured in red with white text) located centrally ranked from top to bottom in order of importance with other items (coloured according to how items were devised) joined by continuous lines, indicating the connections students made, and dotted lines indicating connections I made based on students’ discussions.
Figure A10. Diagram of students’ cover terms and items from Case Study 3, Student group 6: Cover terms (coloured in red with white text) located centrally ranked from top to bottom in order of importance with other items (coloured according to how items were devised) joined by continuous lines, indicating the connections students made, and dotted lines indicating connections I made based on students’ discussions.
Appendix L

Diagram of category of social development

*Figure A11.* Diagram of the category, properties, and dimensions of social development as aggregated from students’ data.
Appendix M

Diagram of category of physical development

**Figure A12.** Diagram of the category, properties, and dimensions of physical development as aggregated from students’ data.
Appendix N

Diagrams of category and sub-categories of intellectual development

Figure A13. Diagram of the category and sub-categories of intellectual development as aggregated from students’ data.
Figure A14. Diagram of the sub-category, properties, and dimensions of intellectual development—knowledge—as aggregated from students’ data.
Figure A15. Diagram of the sub-category, properties, and dimensions of intellectual development—applied knowledge—as aggregated from students’ data.
Appendix O
Diagrams of category and sub-categories of personal development

Figure A16. Diagram of the category and sub-categories of personal development as aggregated from students’ data.
Figure A17. Diagram of the sub-category, properties, and dimensions of personal development—ability to deal—as aggregated from students’ data.
Figure A18. Diagram of the sub-category, properties, and dimensions of personal development—attention—as aggregated from students’ data.
Figure A19. Diagram of the sub-category, properties, and dimensions of personal development—meta-learning—as aggregated from students’ data.
Figure A20. Diagram of the sub-category, properties, and dimensions of personal development—self-management—as aggregated from students’ data.
Figure A21. Diagram of the sub-category, properties, and dimensions of personal development—personal dispositions—as aggregated from students’ data.
Figure A22. Diagram of the sub-category, properties, and dimensions of personal development—attitudes to self/the activity—as aggregated from students’ data.
Figure A23. Diagram of the sub-category, properties, and dimensions of personal development—self-understanding—as aggregated from students’ data.