

The role of Secondary School Extracurricular music activities as a learning context

Author

Wheeley, Elizabeth

Published

2004

Conference Title

Australian Association for Research in Music Education: Proceedings of the XXVIth Annual Conference

Version

Version of Record (VoR)

Rights statement

© The Author(s) 2004. The attached file is reproduced here in accordance with the copyright policy of the publisher. For information about this conference please refer to the conference's website or contact the author(s).

Downloaded from

<http://hdl.handle.net/10072/2005>

Link to published version

<https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=250141360164366;res=IELHSS>

Griffith Research Online

<https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au>

The Role of Secondary School Extracurricular Music Activities as a Learning Context

Elizabeth E. Wheeley, Griffith University

Music education in secondary schools often incorporates an extracurricular dimension with choirs, instrumental ensembles, and school productions given a considerable commitment of time and resources outside of formal school hours. In general, participation in school extracurricular activities has been linked to improved academic performance, greater connectedness with school and the development of certain personal and interpersonal skills. The meanings participants make of their learning in the extracurricular context, however, is not yet fully understood. As participants will act towards their extracurricular learning on the basis of the meaning that the learning holds for them, understanding these meanings is important in itself. Given the difficulty in attributing particular learning to participants' involvement in school extracurricular music activities, their meanings also offer a useful lens through which to view the nature of this learning.

This paper will outline current research into participants' meanings of learning in the secondary school extracurriculum including initial data from a Music Head of Department involved in the direction and coordination of extracurricular music activities.

Introduction

Extracurricular music activities, such as choirs, instrumental ensembles and musical concerts and productions form part of the secondary school extracurriculum encompassing those activities that are run by schools outside of formal school hours. These musical activities often rehearse before school, at lunchtime and after school. Extracurricular music activities regularly share the extracurricular school context with team sports, student government and club activities given their common characteristics including "voluntary participation", "structure", and participation requiring "effort" (Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003, p.410). Despite a substantial body of literature relating benefits for and other negative effects on students who participate (e.g. Cooper, Valentine, Nye, & Lindsay, 1999; Gerber, 1996; Gilman, 2001; Hanks & Eckland, 1976; Marsh & Kleitman, 2003; Murtaugh, 1988; Van Matre, Valentine, & Cooper, 2000; Yarworth & Gauthier, 1978) and a small amount of research on the development of certain personal and interpersonal skills (Dworkin, Larson, & Hanson, 2003; Hanson, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003), the meanings participants attribute to their extracurricular learning are not yet fully understood.

Extracurricular activities have a long history in Australian secondary schools with the adoption and adaptation of the traditions established by the English Public Schools (Bessant, 1984; MacBeath, 1998; Mangan, 1992; Sherington & Connellan, 1988). Traditionally, extracurricular activities were seen to be related to the development of values and fostering "good character", particularly through participation in school "games" (Mangan, 1992). Despite an initial intention that Australian state secondary schools should focus on industrial and agricultural skills for working class children, this aim was not upheld by the children of middle class families who chose, instead, professional courses (Bessant, 1984). The early state schools

came to “model... their courses, organisation and traditions on the more prestigious private schools” (Bessant, 1984, p.52). Arts activities were not excluded from these historical reports of extracurricular activities with reference to 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)

Extracurricular activities continue to be endorsed by secondary schools across the sectors of education in Australia. Internationally, adolescents are also involved in such activities, although the school’s role in their provision may differ (Stevenson & Nerison-Low, 2002). With a long tradition of extracurricular activities forming part of the overall school program, the relationship perceived between extracurricular activity participation and student development, and social change over time, there is a need to understand the role of the secondary school extracurriculum as a learning context in the early 21st century.

In the following sections of this paper, aspects of a study exploring extracurricular learning will be described. First, a review of literature on extracurricular learning and the effects of extracurricular participation will be presented. Second, the main study on participants’ meanings of learning will be outlined. Finally, the findings from one participant in the study, an independent school Music Head of Department will be presented.

Learning in Secondary School Extracurricular Activities

The body of literature focussing specifically on extracurricular learning is relatively small. This research may be structured from the following viewpoints: skill development, access to capital and academic extension.

Dworkin, Larson and Hanson (2003; Hanson et al., 2003) have focussed their research on the developmental and growth experiences of students involved in extracurricular activities. They organise the skill development attributed to these experiences into two areas: personal and interpersonal skills. Personal skills were seen to include the development of self-identity, initiative, and emotional, physical and cognitive skills. Interpersonal skills were considered to involve the development of teamwork and social skills, peer relationships, and adult relationships (Hanson et al., 2003, pp.27-28). Other authors including Otto (1976) and Mahoney, Cairns and Farmer (2003) also supported that interpersonal skill development occurred in the extracurricular domain relating the development of these skills to academic success.

The concept of extracurricular activities providing sources of capital, put forward by McNeal (1999), extends the idea of extracurricular learning beyond skills. McNeal stated that his research was based on four “facts” about student extracurricular participation. These were:

1. Participation in extracurricular activities is a likely source of human capital (...conceptualised 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 – Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Di Maggio, 1982); and
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, p.292)

This concept of capital also implies that learning in the extracurricular context may not manifest itself immediately, nor necessarily be able to be assessed in the same manner as skills. McNeal's descriptions of capital do, however, contain some elements that link quite closely to the work of Hanson, et al. where the acquisition of personal skills may relate to enhanced human capital, just as increased interpersonal skills may relate to the development of social capital. Cultural capital does not appear to have a counterpart in the listed skill development processes. The idea that school extracurricular activities allow for integration into a learning community, in this case the secondary school, has also received further attention with Fullarton (2002) using extracurricular participation as a measure of engagement with school. This notion of engagement, however, does not necessarily recognise that the extracurriculum may be a learning context; rather that it has a role in connecting students to learning in the formal curriculum.

Relating particular extracurricular activity participation to academic learning, Mahoney and Cairns (1997) support that activities closely related to academic subject areas may offer support or extension for academic learning.

...participation in these clubs (those closely linked to academic achievement e.g. math club, French club, national honor 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 non-academic extracurricular activities may be beneficial nonetheless. (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997, p.241)

The learnings related to academic subject areas may not be comprehensive when applied to the extracurricular context but, instead, reflect those learnings that can be validated by assessment procedures in place in the formal curriculum. This implies that learning within the extracurriculum may include certain skills and knowledge as defined by that academic assessment in the formal curriculum. It is interesting to note, however, that the benefits attributed to the other extracurricular activities are not linked to a concept of learning.

Despite focussed research on skill development in extracurricular activities and the learnings that may be assessed by the criteria offered within the formal curriculum, McNeal's suggestion that extracurricular activities are a source of capital (that is probably unlikely to be validated easily in formal assessment) indicates that an investigation that considers the broadest range of meanings of learning will make a valuable contribution to our understanding of the extracurriculum as a learning context.

Other Effects of Participation in Secondary School Extracurricular Activities

Both positive and negative effects of student participation in extracurricular activities have been addressed in the literature. These include increased academic achievement (Broh, 2002; Cooper et al., 1999; DiMaggio, 1982; Gerber, 1996; Hanks & Eckland, 1976; Holloway, 1999-

2000; Mahoney et al., 2003; Marsh, 1992; Otto, 1975), increased connection with school and greater likelihood of staying in school (Fullarton, 2002; McNeal, 1995), positive self-concept and motivation (Holloway, 2002), and the development of adult-student interaction (Holloway, 2002). Again, these benefits are not explicitly related to a concept of learning within the extracurricular domain, rather they seem to be explained by virtue of the greater connection between school and the students thereby encouraging them to access learning within the formal curriculum. Negative effects include certain peer influences (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Eder & Parker, 1987; Kinney, 1993), over commitment (Marsh & Kleitman, 2002), and a perceived threat to academic learning that arises from students' extracurricular involvement taking priority over their commitment to the demands of the formal curriculum (Coleman, 1961).

The likelihood that the secondary school extracurriculum is a learning context is supported by research on student learning as well as implied by the reported effects experienced by students who participate. With the variety of perspectives on the nature of this learning, including skills, capital, academic learning, and benefits attributed to greater engagement with the formal curriculum rather than learning itself, the nature of learning in the secondary school extracurriculum is not yet fully explained. The current focus on student development does not incorporate the possibility that adult participants may also be learners within the extracurricular context. Cooper, Nye and Valentine recommend that, "Future researchers need to conduct studies that explore the meaning of extracurricular activities for students, teachers, and parents." (Cooper et al., 1999, p.377)

This paper outlines an investigation into participants' meanings of learning in the secondary school extracurriculum as well as the perspective of a Music Head of Department regarding learning in extracurricular music activities. In the following sections the aims and methods of the larger study will be described briefly followed by a discussion of data from the Music Head of Department.

Aims of the Present Study and Research Questions

This study uses symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework from which to approach the research questions and guide the analysis. According to Blumer (1969), individuals develop meanings through social interaction which may be modified through an interpretative process and that meanings are important in understanding the ways in which individuals will act.

Meanings are seen to include an idea of understanding, but also incorporate the values, importance, and intended purposes that participants attribute to their extracurricular learning. By examining meanings as a way to investigate the nature of extracurricular learning, two potentially confounding issues are addressed. These are the difficulty in attributing particular learnings to participants' extracurricular involvement without their testimony (that is, their meanings of learning) and the limitations placed on the conceptualisation of learnings addressed if the assessment procedures of the formal curriculum are the measure. As stated above, the idea of capital encompasses some less tangible forms of learning, including values, beliefs and notions of aesthetics. Meanings, therefore, provide a useful lens through which to view the nature of extracurricular learning and, congruent with the theory of symbolic interactionism, these meanings will also provide insight into the way in which participants will act towards their extracurricular learning experiences.

The main research question addressed in the larger study is: What are participants' meanings of learning in the secondary school extracurriculum? This study aims to examine meanings of

learning within the secondary school extracurriculum from the perspectives of the participants, themselves. This paper will report of the perspective of one participant, a Music Head of Department in an independent school.

Methods

The larger study involves qualitative methods to gather data across multiple school contexts. Participants include teachers, instructors, coaches, parents, and school administration staff as well as students. Data collection methods involve semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, a student reflective journal activity, and observations of extracurricular activities as a non-participant.

This paper presents an interview with a Music Head of Department. Her perspective encompasses her own experiences of learning within the extracurricular context as well as her views on the learnings of students and other adult staff involved. The approach of this study is to look in-depth at the meanings held by individual participants. In no sense is it conjectured that one participant's meanings are likely to be the same as another, hence the meanings attributed by each individual are deemed to be significant in developing an understanding of extracurricular learning. The meanings of the Music HOD presented in the following sections are used to highlight congruency with the findings of previous research on the perceived value of extracurricular activities and learning. However, her views also provide insights that extend beyond the current literature and imply areas in which further examination of participants' perceptions of their extracurricular learning can extend our understanding of this under-researched area.

The Music Head of Department's Perspective

An analysis of data gathered from the Music Head of Department (HOD) of an independent girls' school in a moderate to high SES suburb of a state capital city in Australia are presented in this section of the paper. These data were gathered during an interview that explored the Music HOD's perspectives on the secondary school extracurriculum as a learning context; similarities and differences between extracurricular learning and other contexts; positive and negative effects of extracurricular participation; and positive and negative influences on extracurricular learning. The interview data from the Music HOD included responses about her personal experiences of extracurricular learning, as well as her observations of students and other staff involved in extracurricular music activities. Her ability to voice viewpoints about students and other staff was seen to be related to her leadership role within the Music Department. She is both a director of extracurricular activities, specifically school choirs and large-scale school productions, as well as the coordinator of instrumental music ensembles in the school. She is, therefore, able to provide critical insight through her experience of her perceived values of extracurricular learning.

The Secondary School Extracurriculum as a Learning Context

Factors supporting that extracurricular activities provide a learning context came to light during the interview with the Music HOD where she identified that ensemble direction was perceived as a teaching role, the employment of ensemble directors was made on the basis of teaching experience with formal teaching qualifications valued, and that student development, both in terms of skills and less tangible abilities, was attributed to their extracurricular participation. She also identified areas in which she, personally, had developed through her participation in extracurricular activities.

Adult Participants' Learning

The Music HOD identified areas where she had developed through her participation. In terms of developing musical skills through her participation in extracurricular music activities, she reflected, "I think I've really grown as a musician. I've really improved." Focussing on a less tangible area of development, she expressed a belief that:

It's given me more compassion...because you're dealing with students on such a personal nature with regard to them performing because it is such an emotional and personal journey.

Another focus of her personal development that she attributed to her extracurricular participation was in the area of management skills. She responded,

I think the way I manage classroom and extracurricular is pretty similar, but I think taking extracurricular has made me a better teacher... Skill development, simple behaviour management (made more challenging with large size groups)... organisation... (and) just general sort of ... pedagogical issues.

Organisation, in particular, was identified as an important ability for all teachers and her extracurricular experience possibly had an impact on her classroom teaching. She remarked that, "Organisation is so important and of course an organised teacher is often more effective." When discussing large-scale performances, she also commented on the interpersonal skills required particularly when liaising with other schools. It is interesting to note that she mentioned skills as well as emotional development as part of her learning within the extracurricular context.

Adult participants' learning was also valued in a different way. Of the part-time ensemble directors, two were former school students of the school and the Music HOD knew of the school experiences of the other. All these part-time ensemble directors were currently undertaking tertiary study in music. The Music HOD commented:

So they're all engaged with learning (at tertiary institutions studying music) and we see that as being a real bonus because we think that people who are engaged with learning ... can often be very good teachers themselves. I guess because they are engaging in metacognition.

This relationship between engaging with learning and developing teaching skills relates to a lifelong learning focus apparent in many tertiary institutions. The former experience of the students opening opportunities for them to teach also reflects that their extracurricular learning while at school also held the meaning of developing abilities that were beneficial in their future careers. It is still interesting to note that apart from reference to a preference for experienced employees, these students' current learning was perceived to be situated at a tertiary institution, not ostensibly attributed to their current role in directing school ensembles.

The Music HOD also fulfilled the role of instrumental music coordinator. She described her development in this position by saying, "I had no experience doing it and I had no training to do it, so I learnt it on the job... it's all been self-taught." This reinforces that learning in this area occurred in the workplace. It also identifies the opportunity provided by extracurricular participation for adult participants to learn skills required to fulfil their roles. Although the processes identified by Argyris and Schon (Argyris, 1999; Argyris & Schon, 1996) involved in

organisational learning are more complex, the recognition that adults may be learners in the extracurricular domain suggests that this idea of organisational learning within extracurricular programs may warrant further attention.

Student Participants' Learning

Student learning in the secondary school extracurriculum according to the Music HOD included musical development associated with the rehearsal and performance skills and aesthetic awareness. It also involved social and interpersonal development recognising the social nature of the activities and the collaborative approach that was taken in striving for performance goals. Often these ideas were intertwined; however, recognition that learnings included both observable skills as well as less tangible forms of development was given.

The performance focus of the extracurricular music groups highlighted the practical nature of the activities. With such an emphasis on rehearsal and performance that reflect their performance counterparts undertaken by musicians in the broader community, student learning is likely to incorporate characteristics of experiential learning (Jarvis, Holford, & Griffin, 1998) possibly with related elements in situated learning (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Winn, 1993), authentic learning (Newman, Marks, & Gamoran, 1996), and constructivist learning (Roelofs & Terwel, 1999; Terwel, 1999).

When explaining what students got out of participating, the Music HOD identified it as a social activity in which students may derive status (for auditioned groups) or receive acceptance (in non-auditioned groups), but also that students enjoyed performing. She qualified that enjoyment of performance required students to perform well and that they experienced "beautiful music". She also supported that they developed a judgement about what constituted "beautiful music" but commented that, "They have differing judgements, of course, which is interesting." This aesthetic awareness touches upon the concept of students developing cultural capital.

Student and teacher participation in extracurricular activities was seen to be collaborative where interaction and student input were encouraged. The Music HOD described this saying:

There can be a lot of interaction with those students and helping them achieve certain musical goals and performance goals ... dealing with nerves...

I enjoy a collaborative approach with students in performance so I encourage suggestions for repertoire and what I really like is seeing students be self-critical about the group's performance and know when things can be improved and making suggestions.

Such collaboration supports the probable development of social capital as well as the promotion of interpersonal skills including peer relations (Mahoney, 2000) and adult-student interaction (Holloway, 2002). In recognising the students' ability to be critical about their group's performance and to take an active role in improving the standard of performance, the development of their capacities to analyse the musical performance and respond with a level of social awareness to be constructive in these processes was implied. The Music HOD also felt that students contributing in these ways were:

...showing me that they have really high standards and they are really trying to aim for them, just as I am – so when they are starting to share those high expectations, that's very rewarding.

The above statements also indicate that participants uphold the value of good performances, demonstrate a sense of commitment to standards, as well as come to understand processes to achieve such performances.

Further to the idea that a certain level of social skills is required to facilitate communication within the music ensemble experience, the emotional development of students related to concepts of tolerance and compassion was also attributed to extracurricular participation. The Music HOD expressed this in the following statements:

I think that as they grow and get older, the more repertoire they engage with, (they develop tolerance in dealing with other views). And the more exposure they have to other groups.

...it's interesting to see that the older, more mature students will often deliberately position themselves around girls who may be struggling without, you know, making any sort of overt comment, but simply to help the ensemble and to help them (the struggling student). So I find that they can develop their maturity in dealing with people. And being performers themselves, they are quite aware of how hurtful and stinging negative comments can be about your ability as a performer.

The second statement also reflects a type of informal leadership where “more mature students” demonstrate awareness of musical and social factors, identify a need and act independently to help the group. They also seem to demonstrate compassion and if not developing this within the extracurricular context, they are provided with the opportunity to apply this virtue in their practice of interpersonal and leadership skills. It also echoes the historical viewpoint of extracurricular activities providing opportunities for students to develop “character” and other “virtues”.

With this emphasis on interpersonal relationships within the extracurricular activities, the power of social learning theory to assist understanding extracurricular learning context is supported. Bandura states that social learning relies on. “...a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental determinants” (Bandura, 1977, vii, in Jarvis et al., 1998, p.42). Given the characteristics of extracurricular music activities as espoused by the Music HOD, including cognitive awareness of the music and performance requirements, behaviours expected and allowed in rehearsals and performances, and the structures of the extracurricular context overarching students’ participation, it seems likely that the extracurricular domain provides a context for social learning to be manifest.

Similarities and Differences Between Extracurricular Learning and Other Contexts

Certain similarities and differences between extracurricular learning and other learning contexts were identified by the Music HOD, with particular reference to her role in both the extracurricular and classroom teaching contexts. As stated above, she perceived her role in extracurricular activities to be similar to that of her role in the classroom, in that she considered it a teaching role. According to the Music HOD, her role in extracurricular activities was that of a teacher but with certain differences particularly in having a collaborative performance focus and, at times, greater numbers of students involved.

I think that in performance, you derive a lot of pleasure – aesthetic pleasure from performing with students, because that’s what it is, you are performing together.

The potential for large numbers of students to participate in extracurricular groups had the effect of encouraging the Music HOD to develop her behaviour management skills beyond the usual demands of classroom teaching. At one time, she referred to a choir of 90 students being a particular challenge. She also noted that in her experience, large groups of instrumentalists seemed a little easier.

In considering classroom and extracurricular music experiences, the Music HOD described the relationship as follows:

The strength of the classroom program is enhanced by the strength of the extracurricular program. So I see the two as a fairly symbiotic relationship and you really can't have one without the other.

This statement echoes Mahoney and Cairns (1997) linking extracurricular learning to academic subjects that are closely aligned with it. The Music HOD also identified other relationships between academic and extracurricular learning, highlighting English and debating, as well as mentioning that there might be some transfer across arts as well as perhaps to History subjects. At the same time, she challenged to some extent the distinction between classroom and extracurricular activities with the following statement:

It would be nice if more of the extracurricular activities could be recognised through classroom activities, but I just don't think it's possible time-wise. And also there are many students who don't elect to do classroom music who do participate in extracurricular and we can't deny them the joy of participating in a group.

Possibly one benefit of extracurricular participation is that students are able to access a learning contexts in particular areas in which they are not accessing in the formal curriculum.

When exploring the idea of generic skills, those not necessarily related to music, the Music HOD expressed a need for some caution when seeking to justify extracurricular music in terms of "extrinsic reasons".

I think Swanwick said that we often give reasons for students to participate in extracurricular activities that are extrinsic to the area. So... while they're all valid, we should really be looking at the value of the actual (activity), you know, what emotional meaning they are deriving from it or what aesthetic meaning...I think now it's a little puritanical.

When discussed further, this statement was not intended to diminish the idea that students develop skills and abilities in extracurricular music activities, not related to the music, itself, but rather, that the emotional and artistic meaning-making should not be undervalued. She did specify that a sense of discipline was a main area in which students developed through their extracurricular participation and that this could transfer to their school subjects.

Positive and Negative Effects of Extracurricular Participation

Positive effects of extracurricular participation included providing opportunities for students' development of self-identity, the development of performance abilities, as well as the creation of powerful memories of group performances. It was also recognised that extracurricular music activities provided a valuable vehicle for marketing the school. The potential for extracurricular music experiences to contribute to students' future career

opportunities was exemplified by the part-time staff mentioned above whose school extracurricular activity experiences were known to their future employer.

On emotional development and related to the ideas of development of self-identity (Hanson et al., 2003), the Music HOD referred to a “sense of self”. This was described as “getting to know yourself”. She went on to say, “I don’t think I can explain the emotional side so much, or that deeper spiritual side, but certainly knowing how you react to nerves.” Performance abilities were seen to transfer. An example of this was given: “Knowing that if you can sing in front of someone by yourself, a job interview’s going to be a piece of cake.” Creating memories was seen as closely related to the performance goals of the extracurricular music activities. The Music HOD described it thus:

I think ... key performances will be with them for the rest of their life. You know, the final night of the musical will be an experience they never forget, because of the buzz that you get when you perform. Or when the waves of applause wash over you ... or when a really beautiful moment occurs.

In this statement positive memories were related to recognition for performances as well as an idea of emotional feedback from aesthetic appreciation of the “beautiful moment”.

Marketing was discussed in two main ways. Firstly, musical activities offered a way to showcase the school.

...it is very easy to put a musical act up at a particular event which may be in the public eye and that will market the school... it’s performance oriented...

Secondly the way in which the activities were undertaken reflected the values of the school and the opportunities that clients appreciated.

At this school ... I’d have to say that the emphasis is more on participation than competition...so ... one of the things they market here ... is opportunity to participate in many things, whereas at another school they wouldn’t get in the team because there’s more competition (within the school).

Negative effects of extracurricular participation included the stress for students and staff related to pressures on time and maintaining high standards. Another effect was the potential limiting of career opportunities experienced by teachers.

Time pressures included the immense extra commitment required of teachers as well as students’ abilities to manage their commitments appropriately. The Music HOD suggested that a “conservative estimate” was “about 400 hours a year” committed to extracurricular activities. When asked about official structures that facilitate students managing their time, the Music HOD responded:

I wouldn’t say there’s official collaboration between the groups (within the school who run extracurricular activities), but we certainly exchange timetables etc to try and avoid clashes but because there’s so many, it’s inevitable. So we often say to students you have to make a choice. The year coordinators are really the people that will handle it, I guess, in an official capacity.

There is the potential here that students may be encouraged through their extracurricular participation and interests to develop their time management skills and prioritisation. This will be examined further with student participants in the larger study.

Related to a pressure felt to maintain high standards was the negative effect of becoming “obsessed” with winning competitions and proving these standards. The Music HOD related a situation where a group she directed performed beautifully but didn’t win a competition.

Sometimes I look back at that time and I worry that I had too much of an emphasis on winning and we did do some really wonderful performances.

I particularly remember where the audience wept and we received a standing ovation. It was a competition, so you would regard that audience as relatively hostile. ...and we didn’t win, we only... came second, and I remember that as one of probably the most outstanding musical events in my life and so did the students. So I guess that was really a good lesson for me to not emphasise competition so much. ...just being careful not to become too obsessed by competition or just by really personally taking on board the standard of your group.

The problem with this obsession was explained as making the extracurricular music experiences such that, “...standards of performance (become) more important than (the students)...”

Contrary to the experiences of the part-time teachers whose entry into their teaching positions was facilitated by their former school extracurricular experiences, the Music HOD saw her current participation as career limiting, “...because I need to put so many hours in I am putting my career aside at the moment.”

She also raised an issue of choosing not to seek promotion driven by her recognition of the rewards that she received through performing with students.

...I’m worried that in an administrative position... it’ll just be too dry and I’m going to lose all of that wonderful stuff that goes on in a Music Department.

Despite a possible reluctance to seek an administration position she expressed a belief that:

...music teachers have, because of their position... great organisational skills and would therefore, probably, be good in a position such as deputy or some sort of administrative position. They don’t do it, because they are exhausted...

Positive and Negative Influences on Extracurricular Learning

Facilitators and barriers to extracurricular learning potential, identified as positive and negative influences on participation in order to access learning or influences on the learnings themselves were discussed. School culture and support from school administration, as well as relationships with other staff involved were identified as positive influences, whereas the potential for a negative experience in an activity to impact negatively upon the teacher’s involvement in a particular activity was noted.

School culture was seen as important in influencing the provision of extracurricular activities.

...bottom line, it (school culture) goes back to administration and what they see as the culture of the school... also the history of the school... School culture really needs to value the arts and if it doesn’t, I don’t think you can get a good program.

Linked above with school culture, the Music HOD identified that a supportive administration was very necessary for providing quality extracurricular music programs. This support included recognition of the great time commitment her role in extracurricular activities demanded even though minimal recompense for this time was given.

The Music HOD also related the benefit of having a certain kind of relationship with other staff involved in extracurricular music activities. This was explained as staff within the department having:

...similar processes ... do you agree that students need to be punctual, do you agree that their attendance needs to be regular, do you agree (to) have a set rehearsal schedule and you stick to it... and you're not having to pull extra rehearsals frequently because you haven't quite achieved what you would like to at the time. Agreeing that students have physical limits, so while we really aim for high standards, we also are aware that...there is only a certain point they can go to...

She also noted the benefit of staff sharing similar musical expectations and agreeing "on what's good and what's not..." The idea of performance standards came through as necessary in order for participants to feel good about their participation. The responsibility for these standards was given to the musical directors.

It's important not to put students in the situation where they are not going to perform well. So it's important to take responsibility for standards if something goes wrong.

This need for teachers to be responsible for standards of performance recognised the stress that might be experienced by the students, particularly if their group did not perform well. It also reinforces the effect implied above where teachers may feel pressured by the responsibility for these standards and may not achieve an appropriate balance in their approach to their ensemble's repertoire selection and performance preparation.

Negative experiences were credited with influencing the teacher's participation in extracurricular activities. She alluded to this by saying; "Sometimes if you have a bad experience with someone that can put a negative slant on your experience with that particular activity." Interpersonal relationships that she had mentioned during the interview included a need to deal with students, sometimes in large numbers, but also coordinating with other staff and addressing the queries and concerns of parents. Given her reported extremely high level of commitment and the potential stress associated with meeting performance requirements and giving so much of her time, perhaps it is within the context of these demands that the impact of negative relationships might be understood.

Conclusion

Throughout the interview with the Music HOD, the areas addressed supported that the extracurriculum, specifically where music activities were concerned, was a learning context where both adult participants and students had opportunities to develop. These learnings described from the perspective of this Music HOD included skills as well as less tangible forms of learning including values, virtues and aesthetic awareness, reinforcing the benefit of including the broadest scope of meanings of learning in this study. Although seen as complementary to the classroom music program, differences between the extracurricular context and the formal curriculum were identified, particularly in that extracurricular music groups in which the Music HOD was involved enjoyed a collaborative approach in striving towards their performance goals. The effects of and the influences on extracurricular

participation and learning provide some insight into the environment in which this participant's perspective on the secondary school extracurriculum as a learning context has developed.

About the Author

Elizabeth Wheeley is currently a full-time PhD student at Griffith University. Prior to commencing full-time research, Elizabeth taught instrumental music in primary and secondary schools and coordinated instrumental music programs, having completed a Bachelor of Music degree with Honours in performance (1993) and a Postgraduate Diploma of Education (1994) both at the University of Queensland. In 2002, she completed a Master of Education – Research through Griffith University. Her research interests include the management of Performing Arts programs and extracurricular learning in secondary schools.

Contact Details

Elizabeth Wheeley
c/- School for Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning
Mt Gravatt Campus
Griffith University
NATHAN QLD 4111
Phone: 07 3875 5886
Email: e.wheelley@griffith.edu.au

References

- Argyris, C. (1999). *On organizational learning* (2nd ed.). Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- Argyris, C., & Schon, D. A. (1996). *Organizational learning 2: Theory, method and practice*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley.
- Bessant, B. (1984). The influence of the "public schools" on the early high schools of Victoria. *History of Education Review*, 13(1), 45-57.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Broh, B., A. (2002). Linking extracurricular programming to academic achievement: Who benefits and why? *Sociology of Education*, 75(1), 69-71.
- Brown, J. S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher*, 18(1), 32-42.
- Coleman, J. (1961). *The adolescent society*. New York: Free Press.
- Cooper, H., Valentine, J. C., Nye, B., & Lindsay, J. J. (1999). Relationships between five after-school activities and academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 91, 369-378.
- DiMaggio, P. (1982). Cultural capital and school success: The impact of status culture participation on the grades of U.S. high school students. *American Sociological Review*, 47, 189-201.
- Dworkin, J. B., Larson, R. W., & Hanson, D. M. (2003). Adolescents' accounts of growth experiences in youth activities. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 32(1), 17-26.
- Eccles, J. S., & Barber, B. L. (1999). Student council, volunteering, basketball, or marching band: What kind of extracurricular involvement matters? *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 14, 10-43.
- Eder, D., & Parker, S. (1987). The cultural reproduction of gender: The effect of extracurricular activities on peer-group culture. *Sociology of Education*, 60, 200-213.
- Fullarton, S. (2002). *Student engagement with school: Individual and school-level influences* (No. 27). Camberwell, Victoria: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Gerber, S. B. (1996). Extracurricular activities and academic achievement. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 30, 42-50.
- Gilman, R. (2001). The relationship between life satisfaction, social interest, and frequency of extracurricular activities among adolescent students. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 30, 749-767.
- Hanks, M. P., & Eckland, B. K. (1976). Athletics and social participation in the educational attainment process. *Sociology of Education*, 49, 271-294.
- Hanson, D. M., Larson, R. W., & Dworkin, J. B. (2003). What adolescents learn in organized youth activities: A survey of self-reported developmental experiences. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 13(1), 25-55.
- Holloway, J. H. (1999-2000). Extracurricular activities: The path to academic success? *Educational Leadership*, 57(4), 87-88.
- Holloway, J. H. (2002). Extracurricular activities and student motivation. *Educational Leadership*, 80-81.
- Jarvis, P., Holford, J., & Griffin, C. (1998). *The theory and practice of learning*. London: Kogan Page.
- Kinney, D. A. (1993). From nerds to normals: the recovery of identity among adolescents from middle school to high school. *Sociology of Education*, 66, 21-40.
- MacBeath, J. (1998). *Effective school leadership: Responding to change*.
- Mahoney, J. L. (2000). School extracurricular activity participation as a moderator in the development of antisocial patterns. *Child Development*, 71(2), 502-516.

- Mahoney, J. L., & Cairns, R. B. (1997). Do extracurricular activities protect against early school dropout? *Developmental Psychology*, 33, 241-253.
- Mahoney, J. L., Cairns, R. B., & Farmer, T. W. (2003). Promoting interpersonal competence and educational success through extracurricular activity participation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(2), 409-418.
- Mangan, J. A. E. (1992). *The cultural bond: Sport, empire and society*. London: Frank Cass.
- Marsh, H. W. (1992). Extracurricular activities: Beneficial extension of the traditional curriculum or subversion of academic goals? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 84, 553-562.
- Marsh, H. W., & Kleitman, S. (2002). Extracurricular school activities: The good, the bad, and the nonlinear. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(4), 464-514.
- Marsh, H. W., & Kleitman, S. (2003). School athletic participation: Mostly gain with little pain. *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 25, 205-228.
- McNeal, R. B. (1995). Extracurricular activities and high-school dropouts. *Sociology of Education*, 68(1), 62-80.
- McNeal, R. B. (1999). Participation in high school extracurricular activities: Investigating school effects. *Social Science Quarterly*, 80(2), 291-309.
- Murtaugh, M. (1988). Achievement outside the classroom: The role of non-academic activities in the lives of high school students. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 19, 382-395.
- Newman, F. M., Marks, H. M., & Gamoran, A. (1996). Authentic pedagogy and student performance. *American Journal of Education*, 104, 280-312.
- Otto, L. B. (1975). Extracurricular activities in the educational attainment process. *Rural Sociology*, 40, 162-176.
- Otto, L. B. (1976). Extracurricular activities and aspirations in the status attainment process. *Rural Sociology*, 41(217-233).
- Roelofs, E., & Terwel, J. (1999). Constructivism and authentic pedagogy: state of the art and recent development in the Dutch national curriculum in secondary education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 31, 201-227.
- Sherington, G., & Connellan, M. (1988). Socialisation, imperialism and war: ideology and ethnicity in Australian corporate schools. In J. A. Mangan (Ed.), *"Benefits bestowed"? Education and British imperialism* (pp. 132-149). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Stevenson, H. W., & Nerison-Low, R. (2002). The place of school in adolescents' lives. In *To sum it up: Case studies of education in Germany, Japan, and the United States*. Washington, DC: National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum, and Assessment (ED/OERI).
- Terwel, J. (1999). Constructivism and its implication for curriculum theory and practice. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 31, 195-199.
- Van Matre, J. C., Valentine, J. C., & Cooper, H. (2000). Effect of students' after-school activities on teachers' academic expectancies. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, 167-183.
- Winn, W. (1993). Instructional design and situated learning: Paradox or partnership. *Educational Technology*, 33(3), 16-21.
- Yarworth, J., & Gauthier, W. (1978). Relationship of student self concept and selected personal variables to participation in school activities. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 70, 335-344.