

Students' Co-Curricular Activities: A Tool for Character Formation

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Abstract

Character formation remains one of the primary goals of basic education as schools strive to develop learners who are not only academically competent but also morally responsible and socially engaged. Co-curricular activities provide authentic learning experiences that complement classroom instruction by fostering leadership, responsibility, discipline, collaboration, and civic engagement. This study aimed to examine how co-curricular activities contribute to students' character formation through the analysis of official school documents. A qualitative research design employing document analysis was utilized. Documentary sources included annual activity plans, accomplishment reports, project proposals, participation records, and related documents from various academic departments of San Pedro Relocation Center National High School. Data were analyzed using content and thematic analysis to identify recurring character values embedded in school activities. The findings revealed that co-curricular programs consistently promoted values such as leadership, responsibility, discipline, resilience, creativity, teamwork, self-awareness, lifelong learning, and community engagement. These values were intentionally integrated into school programs designed to support holistic learner development. The study concludes that co-curricular activities are valuable instruments for strengthening character education by providing meaningful opportunities for experiential learning beyond the classroom. Schools are encouraged to sustain and enhance co-curricular programs as integral components of learner development and values formation.

Keywords: School Co – Curricular Activities; Character Formation; Student Behavior

1. Introduction

Education has long been recognized as a transformative process that extends beyond the transmission of academic knowledge. Modern educational systems increasingly emphasize the holistic development of learners by nurturing intellectual, emotional, social, ethical, and civic competencies. In the Philippine context, the Department of Education advocates learner-centered approaches that promote not only academic excellence but also the development of responsible, resilient, and values-driven citizens. Consequently, schools are expected to provide learning opportunities that cultivate character alongside cognitive achievement.

One of the most effective means of achieving holistic learner development is through co-curricular activities. Unlike formal classroom instruction, co-curricular programs provide authentic contexts in which learners apply knowledge, practice leadership, collaborate with peers, solve real-world problems, and engage with their communities. These experiences contribute to the development of responsibility, discipline, empathy, teamwork, creativity, and other essential values that are central to character formation.

Character formation is a lifelong developmental process influenced by meaningful experiences within the family, school, and community. Among these contexts, schools play a unique role in intentionally designing learning experiences that reinforce positive values and desirable behaviors. Co-curricular activities—including leadership programs, academic competitions, community outreach, health initiatives, cultural events, and student organizations—allow learners to internalize values through active participation

rather than passive instruction. Such experiential learning opportunities reinforce classroom learning while promoting personal growth and social responsibility.

Previous studies have reported that participation in co-curricular activities is positively associated with improved academic engagement, leadership development, self-confidence, communication skills, and civic responsibility. Researchers have likewise emphasized that these activities enhance students' social and emotional competencies by encouraging collaboration, problem-solving, and ethical decision-making. However, despite the recognized educational value of co-curricular programs, limited research has examined how school documents explicitly reflect the integration of character-building values across various academic departments within Philippine public secondary schools. Most available studies focus on student outcomes or participation rates rather than the values intentionally embedded in the planning and implementation of co-curricular activities.

This study addresses this gap by examining official school documents to determine how co-curricular activities contribute to students' character formation. Specifically, it analyzes the character values embedded in school programs and explores how these initiatives support holistic learner development. By providing documentary evidence of the role of co-curricular activities in character education, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on values education and offers practical insights for school leaders, teachers, and policymakers seeking to strengthen character formation through school-based programs.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing document analysis as the primary method of inquiry. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing, evaluating, and interpreting printed and electronic documents to generate meaningful understanding of a particular phenomenon (Bowen, 2009). This approach enabled the researcher to examine how character formation is embedded within school co-curricular activities through the analysis of official institutional records.

Qualitative document analysis was selected because it allows researchers to investigate naturally occurring data without altering the research environment. Unlike surveys or interviews, documentary evidence reflects actual institutional practices, policies, and program implementation. Through systematic examination of school documents, the researcher identified recurring themes, values, and educational practices that contribute to learner character formation.

2.2 Research Setting and Documentary Sources

The study was conducted at San Pedro Relocation Center National High School, a public secondary school located in San Pedro City, Laguna, Philippines. The school offers Junior and Senior High School programs and implements a wide range of co-curricular activities designed to complement classroom instruction and promote holistic learner development.

The documentary sources analyzed consisted of official school records produced during the implementation of various co-curricular programs. These included:

- Annual Activity Plans
- Project Proposals

Activity Designs
Accomplishment Reports
Narrative Reports
Activity Documentation
Student Participation Records
Monitoring and Evaluation Reports
Departmental Co-Curricular Activity Reports

The documents represented activities implemented by different learning areas and student development programs, providing comprehensive evidence of how character values were intentionally integrated into school activities.

2.3 Selection of Documents

Purposive sampling was employed in selecting the documentary sources. Documents were included in the study if they met the following criteria:

- officially approved by the school administration;
- directly related to co-curricular activities;
- implemented during the identified academic year;
- contained sufficient information regarding objectives, implementation, participants, and expected learner outcomes; and
- reflected educational activities intended for student development.

Documents that were incomplete, duplicated, or unrelated to student co-curricular activities were excluded from the analysis.

2.4 Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained permission from the school administration to access institutional records. Documentary materials were collected from the respective academic departments and school offices responsible for implementing co-curricular programs.

The documents were organized according to program type and academic department. Each document underwent repeated reading to familiarize the researcher with its content. Relevant information—including activity objectives, implementation strategies, learner participation, and intended character outcomes—was extracted using a structured document review matrix.

The matrix facilitated systematic comparison across the various programs and ensured consistency in documenting recurring concepts related to character formation.

2.5 Data Analysis

The collected documents were analyzed using content analysis and thematic analysis.

Content analysis was first conducted to identify recurring words, concepts, objectives, and descriptions associated with learner development. These data were then subjected to thematic analysis, wherein similar concepts were grouped into broader themes representing the character values promoted by the co-curricular activities.

2.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the rigor of the qualitative findings, the study adopted established criteria for trustworthiness.

Credibility was strengthened through the analysis of multiple documentary sources obtained from different academic departments.

Dependability was ensured by following a systematic document review procedure involving document selection, coding, categorization, and thematic interpretation.

Confirmability was achieved by grounding all interpretations on documentary evidence rather than personal assumptions.

Authenticity was maintained by analyzing only official institutional records that accurately reflected actual school practices.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to accepted ethical principles governing educational research.

Permission to access institutional documents was secured from the appropriate school authorities before data collection commenced. Only official documents relevant to the objectives of the study were included in the analysis.

Confidentiality was observed by excluding personally identifiable information from the presentation of findings. Documentary evidence was used solely for academic purposes, and all scholarly and institutional sources were properly acknowledged.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Co-Curricular Activities as Instruments for Character Formation

The analysis of the documentary sources demonstrated that co-curricular activities at San Pedro Relocation Center National High School were intentionally designed to support holistic learner development through meaningful educational experiences beyond classroom instruction. Across the reviewed programs, character formation was consistently embedded in activity objectives, implementation strategies, and expected learner outcomes. Rather than functioning solely as supplementary school events, these activities served as structured opportunities for students to develop values, attitudes, and life skills essential for responsible citizenship.

The documentary evidence revealed that the school implemented a diverse range of co-curricular programs involving academic enrichment, leadership development, health promotion, community engagement, literacy, entrepreneurship, and values formation. Despite differences in program objectives, common character values emerged consistently throughout the documented activities.

Table 1: Analysis of Events and Embedded Values

Event	Participants	Objectives	Embedded Values
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Moral Recovery Program	110 Composition: 8 EsP Teachers 100 Selected Students 1 Head Teacher 1 School Head	To monitor, encourage, and guide students' character development	Guidance, Character Development, Encouragement
National CaCHET Saxum Recognition and NCE/NCG Program	25 Composition: 8 EsP Teachers 15 selected students 1 Head Teacher 1 School Head	Mentor and train students' character development; promote leadership development by doing responsibilities	Leadership, Responsibility
Culminating Activity	26 Composition: 16 selected candidates 8 EsP Teachers 1 Head Teacher 1 School Head	To provide students with the opportunity to enhance knowledge and skills throughout the activity; to develop social skills, self-discipline, and be role models	Confidence, Leadership
Classroom Restructuring	Composition: JHS Students (4,231) 8 EsP Teachers 1 Head Teacher 1 School Head	Maintaining classrooms and environment conducive to learning; integrating multimedia tools to improve learning; educate learners in the safekeeping of school physical facilities	Innovativeness, Creativity
Basic Skills in Focus (Project BSF)	961 Composition: Grade 8 (934) Students 25 Math Teachers 1 Head Teacher 1 School Head	Improve learners' numeracy skills	Empowerment, Critical Thinking, Lifelong Learning
Demonstrating Excellence in Mathematics	6327 Composition: All Students (6,300) 25 Math Teachers 1 Head Teacher 1 School Head	Improve learners' Higher Order Thinking Skills	Critical Thinking, Lifelong Learning
TRADE FAIR 2024	4311 Composition: TVE Students (4, 231)	Showcase and celebrate technical prowess, creativity, and innovation; strengthen community ties; highlight re-application as a TESDA Assessment Center	Excellence, Community Engagement, Economic Empowerment, Creativity

	78 TVE Teachers 1 Head Teacher 1 School Head		
PROJECT LOVE	4263 Composition: JHS Students (4,231) 30 English Teachers 1 Head Teacher 1 School Head	Enable learners to enhance reading comprehension and undergo deeper understanding from classical to contemporary literary pieces	Patience, Critical Thinking, Open-Mindedness
Project SHAPE	202 Composition: Selected JHS Students (100) 100 Teachers 1 Head Teacher 1 School Head	Promote overall well-being and active lifestyle among learners; recognize importance of personal health management and benefits of regular physical activity	Discipline, Resilience, Perseverance, Self-Awareness

3.2 Character Values Embedded in School Programs

Document analysis identified several recurring character values intentionally integrated into the implementation of the school's co-curricular activities. These values included leadership, responsibility, discipline, cooperation, teamwork, creativity, resilience, self-awareness, critical thinking, community engagement, and lifelong learning. The recurrence of these values across different academic departments indicates that character formation is not confined to a single subject area but is embedded throughout various educational experiences.

Among the identified initiatives, the Moral Recovery Program emphasized the development of ethical behavior, self-discipline, respect, and personal responsibility by encouraging learners to reflect on their actions and make value-based decisions. The National CaCHET Saxum Recognition and NCE/NCG Program likewise promoted leadership and accountability by providing learners with opportunities to assume responsibilities and demonstrate commitment to school activities.

Academic enrichment programs such as Project BSF, Demonstrating Excellence in Mathematics, and PROJECT LOVE highlighted the importance of critical thinking, perseverance, creativity, and lifelong learning. These programs encouraged learners to become active participants in the learning process while strengthening both academic competence and positive learning behaviors.

Similarly, TRADE FAIR 2024 and Classroom Restructuring fostered innovation, collaboration, entrepreneurship, and community participation by engaging learners in authentic tasks that required planning, teamwork, and problem-solving. Meanwhile, Project SHAPE promoted health awareness, resilience, discipline, and self-management, demonstrating that learner development encompasses both physical well-being and character formation.

Collectively, these programs illustrate how co-curricular activities provide multiple opportunities for learners to internalize values through meaningful participation rather than through classroom instruction

alone.

3.3 Discussion of Major Findings

The findings indicate that co-curricular activities contribute significantly to character formation by creating authentic learning environments where students practice desirable behaviors through active participation. Rather than treating character education as a separate instructional component, the documented school programs integrated values into regular educational experiences, enabling learners to develop leadership, responsibility, cooperation, and ethical decision-making in real-life contexts.

This finding supports the view that experiential learning plays a crucial role in character development because learners acquire values more effectively when they are practiced in authentic situations than when they are taught solely through theoretical instruction. The diversity of documented activities also demonstrates that character formation can be achieved across multiple learning areas, reinforcing the concept of holistic education.

The analysis further revealed that effective character-building programs share several common characteristics. Successful activities were clearly aligned with learner needs, encouraged active participation, promoted collaboration, and provided opportunities for reflection and personal growth. These characteristics enabled learners to develop both cognitive competencies and socio-emotional skills that are essential for lifelong learning and responsible citizenship.

Furthermore, the documentary evidence suggests that sustained implementation of well-designed co-curricular programs contributes to a positive school culture by promoting learner engagement, strengthening relationships among students and teachers, and encouraging active participation in school and community activities. These findings emphasize the importance of maintaining co-curricular activities as integral components of the educational program rather than treating them as optional or supplementary experiences.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that character formation is most effectively achieved when schools intentionally integrate values education into diverse learning experiences. Co-curricular activities provide practical opportunities for learners to apply positive values, assume leadership roles, collaborate with peers, and contribute meaningfully to their school and community. Consequently, these programs play an essential role in promoting holistic learner development and supporting the broader goals of quality basic education.

4. Conclusion

The present study examined how co-curricular activities contribute to students' character formation through a qualitative document analysis of official school records from San Pedro Relocation Center National High School. The findings demonstrate that the school's co-curricular programs were intentionally designed not only to supplement academic learning but also to cultivate values and competencies essential for holistic learner development.

The analysis revealed that leadership, responsibility, discipline, cooperation, resilience, creativity, critical thinking, self-awareness, community engagement, and lifelong learning were consistently embedded across the documented co-curricular activities. These values were integrated into academic enrichment programs, leadership initiatives, health promotion activities, literacy programs, entrepreneurship projects, and community-based engagements, providing learners with authentic opportunities to apply positive behaviors in

meaningful educational contexts.

The findings further suggest that character formation is strengthened when schools intentionally integrate values education into structured co-curricular experiences. Rather than treating character education as a separate component of the curriculum, the analyzed programs demonstrated that desirable values can be effectively developed through experiential learning, collaboration, and active participation in school activities. Such opportunities enable learners to practice ethical decision-making, teamwork, leadership, and civic responsibility beyond the traditional classroom environment.

Overall, the study affirms that co-curricular activities are valuable instruments for promoting holistic education and character formation. Schools should therefore continue strengthening and institutionalizing well-designed co-curricular programs as integral components of basic education to support the development of responsible, values-driven, and socially engaged learners.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study have several practical implications for educational leaders and practitioners.

School administrators may use the results as evidence for strengthening institutional support for co-curricular programs as part of school improvement initiatives. Teachers and activity advisers may intentionally embed character-building outcomes into the planning, implementation, and evaluation of school activities to maximize their educational impact. Likewise, curriculum planners and policymakers may consider expanding opportunities for experiential learning as complementary strategies for promoting holistic learner development.

Future researchers are encouraged to investigate the long-term effects of participation in co-curricular activities using mixed-methods or longitudinal research designs. Comparative studies involving different educational contexts may also provide broader evidence regarding the contribution of co-curricular programs to learner character formation.

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