CHAPTER 6
LOCATING SCHOOL RECREATION IN THE CURRICULUM

Curriculum is defining what schools purposefully do. It revolves around ideas about what should be taught and learned, how such teaching and learning might best be undertaken and then certified. The prescription and development of all curricula, therefore, revolves around what knowledge is of most worth; what knowledge best reflects what the school wants students to learn; to imbibe. Most of the discussions on curriculum have been about the academic subjects. The heading under which these subjects are brought together – co-curricular and extra-curricular activities – itself makes clear the peripheral position of school recreation in relation to the curriculum. However, there has been an increasing awareness that there are multiple intelligences and a student’s development happens in many contexts and ways other than the classroom teaching. This has highlighted the importance of going beyond the academic subjects and locating school recreation within the broader philosophical and operational framework of the school.

Focus and Objectives of School Recreation as Perceived by the School Personnel:

Every individual should have access to a type of education that permits maximum development of his / her potential and capabilities. There might be different educational philosophies, but one theme that runs common is that it is purposeful. Following were the vision statements of the special schools that participated in the study:

1. Making children better citizen by imbibing in them the values and socio-political awareness.

2. Helping children achieve their potential to the maximum and


The vision of a school needs to reflect in the objectives of the academic as well as non-academic programme it runs. Any educational system needs to translate its broad purpose or vision into objectives and goals. This is essential for selecting the right content, experiential opportunities and methods to impart and evaluate the student’s progress as well as the quality of the programme.

Majority of the respondents (88%) said that the objectives of the school recreation is the all-round development of the students, followed by the percentage of respondents who said that the school
recreation aims at helping the students to become better citizen of their country. The graph below gives the objectives identified by the school personnel for recreation organised by the school.

Graph 6.1: Objectives of school recreation as perceived by the school personnel.

The identification and enhancement of talents of students within local as well as global contexts was also given by 52% of respondents as the objective of school recreation. Forty one percent of school personnel highlighted the link between academic and non-academic subjects by saying that school recreation is also aimed helping the student learn academic subjects, better. The objectives of school recreation make it both – learner centred (as unique talents and citizenship emphasized) as well as behaviour centred (accomplishment of developmental tasks and learning objectives) programme.

However, there was no structured and standardized way of evaluating the assessment of fulfillment of these objectives. The ways in which school recreation was perceived or assessed to achieve these objectives were subjective, rather than objective. Each co-curricular subject was assessed based on fixed criteria as will be discussed later in this chapter, but there were no planned data sources to examine the fulfillment of the objectives of the school recreation, as a whole.

**Planning and Organising School Recreation**

Planning is an important part of effective teaching. It can be a set of basic psychological processes in which a person visualizes the future, inventories means and ends and constructs a framework to guide his or her future action (Warren, 2000). Thus, as per this cognitive conceptualization, school recreation will
start with the teacher’s perception about where should it lead the students. Once this is finalised, then the planning process starts. As mentioned earlier, the main objectives of school recreation identified by the school personnel were all round development of all the students and building better citizen of tomorrow. The focus, thus, is on taking all the students along rather than pushing a few talented ones for further achievements and glory for the school. Majority of the school personnel (55%) said the nature of non-academic activities organised by the school was recreational, rather than competitive. The graph given below gives the perceived nature of non-academic activities in a school:

Graph 6.2: Perceived nature of non-academic activities in a school.

There is a difference between co-curricular subjects or activities and extra-curricular activities in a school. Co-curricular subjects are compulsory activities and form an integral part of the structured programme of studies. They are scheduled during the instructional time of the school and are graded. These subjects are common for all the students. However in one school it was informed that the students were selected for certain non-regular or non-traditional co-curricular subjects. They were considered as co-curricular because they were taken regularly as a part of school time-table and were graded.

Extra-curricular activities are those activities which are not directly related to the program of studies, but are under the supervision of school instructional staff and are considered valuable for the overall development of the student. They may or may not be taken during the instructional time and assessment of extra-curricular activities is optional.
The teachers – either the class teachers or the co-curricular subject teachers - selected the students for participation in competitions and extra-curricular activities. All the respondents said that two major criteria for selecting students for participation in competitions and extra-curricular activities were:

- Talent of the student in that particular activity
- Enthusiasm shown by the student to participate

The nature of the planning was also dependent on whether the activities were co-curricular or extra-curricular. As the graph given below shows that the planning of the activities was predominantly progressive in case of co-curricular subjects as per majority of respondents (83%); whereas according to a majority of respondents (67%) extra-curricular activities were planned spontaneously. Progressive planning involved pre-planning based on an incremental approach to learning and skill development. Spontaneous planning involves on the spot or opportunity-based planning of activities.

Graph 6.3: Nature of planning of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Because extra-curricular activities were predominantly planned spontaneously, there was more uncertainty regarding the quantity and nature of extra-curricular activities. On the other hand, co-curricular activities were located firmly in the operational framework of the school.
Though the planning of extra-curricular activities is spontaneous most of the times, certain factors are considered while taking the decision about a new extra-curricular activity. In the present study, both – the students as well as the school personnel were asked about what they considered as important factors for determining plausibility and value of a new extra-curricular activity. The graph below shows these criteria expressed by the school personnel as well as the students along with the corresponding percentages:

Graph 6.4: Considerations for planning a new extra-curricular activity.

As the graph shows, the participation opportunity that the activity provides for all the students is the criterion expressed by majority of students as well as school personnel. Seventy one percent of the school personnel felt that the scope of the activity to give platform for showcasing unique talents of the students was an important consideration while deciding whether to have that activity. The third major factor, according to students (66%) as well as school personnel (64%) was the variance it offered to the overall extra-curricular programme. Other factors mentioned were resources – time and trained personnel. Relatively less students (37%) and school personnel (26%) considered possibility of risk or safety while deciding on a new activity.

Planning aims at reducing uncertainty. It includes decision making, integration into other plans of the school and a formalized procedure. At the graph below shows, majority of the respondents (83%) said that the curriculum of the co-curricular subjects is decided by the teachers along with the school so that
such an alignment happens automatically. Though National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) gives the guidelines, the content, order of sessions and methodology is decided at the school level. In all the schools, this planning also involves teachers of academic subjects. Such activities and material are prepared as would help the students’ learning of academic subjects. This, according to teachers, is especially helpful to facilitate language development of the students with hearing impairment.

Graph 6.5: Decision makers of the curriculum of the co-curricular subjects in special schools.

The process of planning or, as one Principal mentioned, pre-engineered planning of co-curricular subjects included four main steps: overall yearly plan, detailed session plans, introduction to the co-curricular subject, and deciding and preparing tools for implementation.

The figure given below enumerates the phases of planning of co-curricular subjects:
The tools for implementation of the session plan included the materials that might be required for students to participate in an activity. The next step was implementation of the plan. Monitoring and review took place to decide modifications, if necessary, in the content, difficulty level, process or strategy for teaching the same co-curriculum programme, the next year. The session plans were not inflexible. The teachers spontaneously changed the session plan to respond to any major social or political event that happened around that time.

**Role of the Social Worker and Counsellor in Special Schools**

When asked about the issues and concerns faced by students in middle childhood in their schools, all social workers as well as the counsellor cited behavioural problems in case of some students, especially those who either do not have enough or have problematic social interactions with the family and others. Parental attitude and non-acceptance of disability were perceived to be the root causes of child’s behavioural problems at the school. Recreational activities, mainly drawings, are used in social work interventions by all the social workers and the counsellor. Social workers felt that they wished to know more about therapeutic recreation.
All the social workers contribute to the planning and implementing of school recreational activities. They also have the responsibility of raising funds for the activities, if needed.

**Assessment of Students on School Recreational Activities**

Assessment is a multi-faceted function based on an understanding of student learning and a familiarity with the principles and purposes of that which is being assessed. It is a basis for making inferences about the learning and development of students. In the present study, the school personnel gave certain criteria which they use while assessing student’s performance in a co-curricular or extra-curricular activity. Each co-curricular subject teacher also had a set of parameters to assess the student’s progress in that subject. The graph given below shows the factors used for assessment of students’ performance on school recreational activities:

![Graph 6.6: Criteria for assessment of students’ performance on school recreational activities.](image)

Graph 6.6: Criteria for assessment of students’ performance on school recreational activities.

As the graph shows, majority of school personnel (86%) responded that student’s overall participation in extra-curricular activities and specifically in activities related to that particular co-curricular subject throughout the year was one criterion to assess the student. The other criteria given by majority of school personnel included overall conduct of the student during these sessions (81% of the respondents) and the motor skills displayed by the student (74% of the respondents). As the graph below shows, majority of the respondents (60%) said that recognition to students are given on the basis of both – frequency of participation and success in a particular activity.
Graph 6.7: Basis on which students are given recognition for school recreation.

The ways in which students’ success is acknowledged included:

1. Certification
2. Reward
3. Scholarship
4. Name of the student written on the school board
5. Verbal praise in classrooms and during PTA meetings.

The graph given below gives the percentages for these ways of acknowledging a student’s accomplishment in recreational activities.
There were certain barriers perceived to planning and implementation of especially the extra-curricular activities or new co-curricular activities. The barriers were both – material as well as attitudinal. These barriers were:

1. Lack of enough budget
2. Lack of enough equipment
3. Lack of enough space
4. Lack of trained personnel
5. Problem behaviour of children
6. Lack of enthusiasm of teachers
Graph 6.9: Barriers to planning and implementing school recreational activities.

**Review and Evaluation of School Recreation**

The review and evaluation of school recreation, the data revealed, had four aspects:

1. It consisted of a continuous process;

2. It linked the outcomes to the objectives of the school recreation though the linking was done subjectively rather than a standardized form.

3. It focused on the improvement in the content, process or methodology of the co-curricular subjects.

As mentioned above, monitoring was an important aspect of reviewing the co-curricular subject and its training. The Principals and a social worker was involved in the monitoring process. The monitoring was done on the basis of comparison to the yearly plan, regular meetings, rounds in the school, reports and follow-up on an activity as given in the graph below:
The criteria for assessing the school recreation given by the respondents included following factors:

- Daily physical activity
- Developmentally appropriate
- Nurtures positive attitudes
- Taught by qualified, well-prepared teachers
- Adequate accessible equipment and facilities
- Meaningful content and a sound process
- Extent of variance in the activities and talents
- Innovative
- Opportunity for participation by all
- Opportunity to try out new things
- Links to families and local communities – social bridging
- Builds capacity at par with others
- Appropriate level of competition
- Strong administrative support
- Relevant for the present life
- Relevant for the future
- Quality life in the school
- Consistent with the educational philosophy of the school
The graph given below shows the percentages of respondents for each of this criterion:

Graph 6.1: Criteria for assessing the quality of school recreation as a whole.

**Conclusion:**

The study showed that school recreation is perceived beneficial by both – students as well as school personnel. There is a variety of activities that are offered to the students. A certain amount of structure is present in planning of co-curricular activities. However, the measures of assessment are to a very large extent, subjective. The focus of future research can be towards helping develop an objective and measurable criteria for assessment of students as well as school recreation programme as a whole. It is in the best interest of the schools to remain aware of the emerging changes at the global level in practices regarding giving multi-faceted opportunities to students in a school and revise assessment plans, processes, and methods as needed to remain contemporary. Only through a continuous and systematic process with full collaboration among all vested individuals can a true culture of planned implementation and assessment of school recreation be attained.