CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Accessibility to the services, including recreational, and elimination of the barriers to the access in the broader environment are a must if we have to ensure our commitment to child rights especially rights of children with disability.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived benefits of school recreation for the development of students with hearing impairment studying in the special schools in Mumbai, understand the process of development of a school co-curricular programme and examine the association between school recreation and student engagement with the school. Based on the theoretical framework of child development as well as recreation, information was sought on the needs and requisites for locating school recreation within school system and designing it in such a way as would facilitate the development of students.

This chapter gives an overview of the findings of the study and develops of model that can be applied to the development of school recreation program based on these findings Areas for further research are also identified. Grounding school recreation program and strategies in theory and research strengthens the possibility of improved recreational opportunities and better match between student needs and school recreation.

School recreation is an umbrella term that includes –

- Co-curricular subjects such as P. T. (Physical Training or Education) and Drawing;

- Extra-curricular activities which are –
  - Entertainment based – such as stage shows, film screenings
  - Skill based – such as competitions, workshops
  - Values based – such as celebration of Independence Day, Children’s Day
The setting of school recreational activity can be school itself, other special schools or an organisational or community setting.

Perceived benefits and negative effects of school recreational activities, students’ engagement with the school and locating school recreation within the philosophical and operational frameworks of the school were the three main areas about which information was obtained through questionnaires, interview schedules and group interviews. Following are the findings of the study:

- The study aimed to understand how school recreation is located in the philosophical and curricular frameworks of the school. The focus and objectives of school recreation perceived by the school personnel were linked to the vision of the schools; with ‘helping students achieve developmental tasks’ and ‘developing good citizenship qualities’ expressed as the goals of school recreation by majority of school personnel.
- Though the objectives of school recreation had all the four – emotional, intellectual, physical and social – aspects, the teachers emphasized intellectual aspects more than the other aspects.
- The main consideration while organising school recreation activities (other than co-curricular subjects) was opportunity of participation to all the students. The other considerations were opportunity for showcasing unique talents of the students and innovativeness and variance. Availability of time and trained personnel to guide the students on the new activity was also another factor that influenced planning of the school recreation activities.
- Teachers selected students for participation in the school recreational activities based on their talent and enthusiasm.
- The nature of school recreation included, according to the school personnel, both aspects – competitive as well as recreational – in equal measures.
- Majority school personnel said that the sessions of co-curricular subjects were progressive in nature, though sometimes they decided on a particular topic spontaneously based on the need felt at the moment.
- The planning of extra-curricular activities, however, was spontaneous according to majority of the school personnel.
• The participation of students in school recreation was high, with nearly all the students participating in more than half of the number of activities organised by the school.
• There was no significant difference in the frequency of participation by gender.
• The four major reasons given by majority of students for non-participation in some of the school recreation were not being selected by the teachers, not being interested, not having the required talent and not having enough time.
• Majority of the students participated enthusiastically in the activities but did not contribute to planning of the same. No student was involved in evaluating school recreation.
• There was not much difference in the levels of participation by gender or the class in which the student was studying. However, none of the students who were in classes above 6th standard said that their participation in school recreation was disinterested.
• The number of activities the students participate in – the frequency of participation – was found to be positively associated with the level of participation (nature of participation of students in school recreation), level of satisfaction with the perceived benefits of the school recreation and perception of the overall effect of recreation being advantageous. These associations were found to be statistically significant.
• Nearly all the students said that school recreation had overall positive effect on their development. The students who participated without any interest in the activities perceived the overall effect of school recreation as negative.
• Majority of students perceived physical exercise, enhancement of ability to respond quickly, and better health as the three major benefits for the physical development; whereas for the majority of teachers these were sharpening of old skills, learning of the importance of preparation and practice and development of tolerance of minor hurts. The other perceived benefits related to physical development developing accurate aim, better motor co-ordination and opportunity to learn music.
• Majority of the students and all the school personnel perceived ‘happiness’ to be a major benefit for the emotional development of school recreation. The other two benefits cited by majority of students were overcoming fear of failure and developing a sense of accomplishment. Other major benefits cited by the school personnel were confidence building and stress relief.
• Majority of students and school personnel cited development of communication skills and forming new friendships as major benefits for social development. The other major benefits perceived by both the participant groups were enhanced ability to work in and with a group, learning to appreciate others, learning to accept differences and learning leadership skills.

• In terms of benefits for cognitive development, opportunity to learn through visual presentation, getting new experiences and time management were the major benefits perceived by majority of students. School personnel perceived enhancement of problem solving capacity, ability to think independently and increased awareness of external environment as benefits related to cognitive development.

• Though the students perceived benefits in all the four domains of development – physical, emotional, social and cognitive, maximum votes – total number of students multiplied by total benefits cited in each arena of development – were for the social development benefits of school recreation.

• Majority of students were greatly satisfied with the benefits accrued by the school recreation. High level of satisfaction was associated with high frequency and high level of participation.

• The risks or negative effects of school recreation perceived by majority of the students were envy, peer pressure, performance anxiety and physical injuries. These were also the negative effects cited by some of the school personnel, though majority of the school personnel said that there was no negative effect of school recreation. Approximately one third of the students did not perceive any negative effect of school recreation.

• For majority of the students, school was the only agency that provided opportunity for organised recreation.

• Out of the total number of students who are engaged in recreation organised by agency other than the school, a little more than half of the students said that school recreation helps their performance outside the school.

• Overall, the attendance of the students was high; during recreational events, the students felt more motivated to attend the school.
• There was a statistically positive association between very high frequency of participation in school recreation and making extra efforts for performance improvement in academic and non-academic activities.

• There are two types of social relationships with the other fellow students in a school - peer or group acceptance and forming and maintaining close friendships. Students perceived school recreation to enhance both types of social relationships.

• Nearly all students had a feeling of belongingness with the school.

• There was a statistically significant association between having many friends in the school and a feeling of belongingness with the school.

• The findings of the study revealed that school engagement had two dimensions – ongoing engagement and rising to the challenge. School recreation was perceived to enhance both.

• School engagement or engagement of the students with the school, according to the students, was experienced in situations that highlighted the school’s role as a resource and a social agency.

• Specific aspects of the recreational activities provided opportunities for school engagement.

• School recreation gave students more opportunities for social bonding than social bridging.

• Teachers assess the students on all activities. The main criteria for student assessment included overall level of participation, students’ conduct during the activities and progress on the development of related skills. Each student was assessed by comparing his / her present level of skills to his / her previous level rather than comparing to a universal standard of performance.

• According to a majority of school personnel, the quality of school recreation was assessed on parameters such as appropriateness to the developmental stage of the students, opportunity for participation and relevance to the present as well as future life of the students. The other criteria included appropriateness level of competition, nurturance of a positive attitude and meaningful content.

• There were certain barriers perceived to organising school recreation, the nature of which differed depending upon the resources available in the school.
• One need expressed by the majority of school personnel was the staff development or training programs in the global recreation trends and innovative experiments in the field.
• One more need expressed by the social workers and the counselor was training and accessibility to resources for therapeutic recreation.

Schools have a key position at the local level for the child’s education. In case of children with hearing impairment, the present study found an even more prominent role for the school to play in the child’s development as it is perceived to be the main socialising agency and for a majority, the only recreation provision agency for the child with hearing impairment. Therefore, it becomes relevant to identify the gaps or barriers in the school recreation programme within its philosophical and operational framework, strengthen the competencies and guide the use of autonomy by different stakeholders in the school system. Given below are recommendations based on the findings of the study:

1. Students need to be more involved in planning of the school recreational activities. Majority of the students participate enthusiastically in the activities; however their contribution towards planning and organising these activities is very minimal.

2. For the participation of the students to be meaningful, exposure to the recreational activities across the world or innovating recreational activities tried out in other schools is useful.

3. Platforms need to be created for interactions and exchanges among teachers and schools for ideas about new activities and how to implement them.

4. The decisions at the larger policy or institutional level are supposed to be implemented at the school level. The alignment of the external demands or policy decisions with the school’s philosophy and broad aims of its recreational programme will help internal-external linkages of the school and the students. Once such an alignment is done, then, the findings suggest that decision making regarding school recreation needs to be undertaken about activities, settings, resources and assessment. The findings suggest the following model of school recreation decision making:
As the figure shows, the four major components of the decision making process while planning a school recreation programme are activities, settings, resources and assessment. Though within the figure participation is displayed in the domains of activity (source of the idea) and assessment, in the other areas also, students can be encouraged to participate. For instance, students can give innovative ideas about new settings or ways of mobilising resources. Parents are an importance resource for any school and their participation while planning and organising school recreation programme has benefits other than logistical (Mawjee & Grieshop, 2002; Rees, 2003; Jeynes, 2011).

5. The recreational activities were found to be linked to the vision and mission of the schools; however the linkage between school’s curriculum and recreation was not so strong.

In some of the schools, the teachers of co-curricular subjects - especially drawing and craft - are asked to help prepare educational aids. In two schools, the planning of the classroom sessions also happens with
linkages between academic and non-academic activities. However, even in this process, the focus is invariably on academic subjects, mainly language learning.

However, there is a potential for planning the sessions with equal weightage to both – academic and non-academic subjects. The way academic subjects taught in a day are linked to the co-curricular activities of that day, the content or skills aimed during the co-curricular activities can be supported during the learning of languages, social sciences, mathematics and science. This will also enrich the learning environment in the school as the research has shown that the use of multimedia enhances learning and facilitates cognitive development of the children with hearing impairment (Yoon & Kim, 2011)

6. It is worthwhile to reconsider the classification of subjects into curricular (academic), co-curricular and extra-curricular. The names ‘co-curricular’ and ‘extra-curricular’ automatically puts these activities on the periphery of school curriculum.

One way of classification is knowledge-based (academic subjects) and talent-based (co-curricular and extra-curricular activities). Skills is the common component in both the categories of subjects. The figure given below shows this classification:

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![Figure 7.2: Renaming and classifying the subjects for better integration in the school curriculum](image-url)
7. The selection of the students for different school recreational activities needs to be based on an objective, expressed criteria, along with the teacher’s subjective opinion.

8. Assessment of the students on activities need to be based on the objectives decided at the beginning of the academic year; these objectives need to be linked with the broader aims of the school recreation programme.

9. Parameters need to be developed, based on the philosophical framework and vision of the school, for assessing the school recreation programme, as a whole.

10. Staff development or training programmes need to be organised on talent based activities, innovations in the field and therapeutic recreation.

11. More opportunities need to be created for social bridging of the students with hearing impairment. Some of the ideas that have been tried out by schools outside India include summer camps, neighbourhood gathering, family day or parents-children programmes and job shadowing.

12. One of the major strategies for social bridging can be inclusive recreation. Programmes such as ‘Together We Play’ started in Midwest communities, United States have found to lead to benefits for both – disabled as well as non-disabled children (Scholl, Dieser & Davison, 2005).

The figure given below shows the favourable and unfavourable factors and perceived benefits of a meaningful and constructive school recreation programme, based on the findings of the study:
Endeavours in the field of school recreation also need to take account of binding commitments of the state to child with disability. Bal Kalyan Sanstha, Pune, founded in 1979, is a recreational and cultural centre for children with disability in the state of Maharashtra, India. It networks with the special schools for making recreational activities accessible to children with disability. However, there is no such organisation in Mumbai.
Deaf Sport is a phenomenon that has gained a lot of momentum and strength in countries like USA but has not yet been that prominent in India. Indian government and departments need to strengthen the sports for the deaf, globally known as Deaf Sport as it has found to have an empowering effect on the people with hearing impairment (Stewart & Ellis, 1999).

Inclusive recreation is gaining prominence globally. With the Indian government introducing Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan that aims at integration of children with hearing impairment in regular schools, the challenge in front of the schools – both special as well as regular – is how to make this transition least stressful and most beneficial for the children. If the schools have universal standards of school recreation programme, a uniform curriculum for both the categories of subjects and activities (academic and non-academic; knowledge based and talent based) even before the inclusion; it would facilitate the transfer of the students from the special schools to the regular schools or Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan.

One of the major barriers to any kind of inclusion is also social or attitudinal. For a school recreation programme to achieve its maximum potential, the teachers in regular schools as well as special schools need to move beyond the expected minimum while planning activities for the students with hearing impairment.

Increased exchange between schools, between schools and community, between schools and recreation professionals will help not only expand the concept of school recreation and provide the necessary technical assistance but would also limit repetitive work. Coalitions among organisations has proved to be an effective strategy (Scholl, Dieser & Davison, 2005) for planning inclusive recreation which uses the existing resources and builds new resources, together. The three ‘O’s in pathways of participation (Shier, 2001) – openings, opportunities and obligations – can be modified to suggest strategies for productive and enriching recreation for students with hearing impairment to the schools. Here, openings would mean identifying openings of collaboration and of student’s participation at a larger platform; opportunities would mean creating opportunities for students to participate in the recreational activities and obligations would mean making the community aware of its responsibilities towards providing equal opportunities to all children.

Within the context of special school that offers the children the opportunity to meet, learn and grow with other children with hearing impairment, school recreation seems to assume the role much beyond the entertainment or even edutainment. The theoretical frameworks offered by Maturational theory, Behavioural theory, Psychosocial theory, Cognitive theory, Social Cognitive theory, Constructivist
Developmental theory, Humanistic perspective and Ecological perspective highlight the possible benefits of school recreation for the development of children with hearing impairment.

These benefits assume even more importance in the light of research findings pointing out the challenges faced by children with hearing impairment in certain developmental aspects such as body balance. The study has pointed out benefits of school recreation perceived by the students as well as school personnel, the risks and barriers for participating in the same and implications for the curriculum development of the co-curricular programme in the special schools that would help maximize the opportunities for healthy development through school recreation.

As the study has shown, school recreation can be a resource to students with hearing impairment, offer stress relief and facilitate all round development of the students. Therefore, the planning, organising and evaluating of the same needs serious consideration if they are to lead to a provision of ongoing opportunities to engage in personally meaningful, socially fruitful and recreationally enjoyable experiences.