CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Locale of the study

Assam is a medium sized state of India. The state is situated between 89°.5´ and 96°.1´ East longitudes and 24°.3´and 28° North latitude. The tropic of cancer 23°.5´ North latitude passes just to the South of the state. So, it is natural that the state enjoys a tropical climate. The state is surrounded by hills and mountains on three sides. To the North of the state there lie the high Himalayan mountain chains of Bhutan and Arunachal, to the East there are southern branches of the eastern Himalayas, the Patkai range and the hills of Nagaland and Manipur. To the South, one portion of the state is bordered by the hills of Nagaland, one portion by the hills of the Mizoram and another portion by the hills of Meghalaya plateau. To the West, Assam is bordered by West Bengal, Bangladesh (in two places) and by the Meghalaya plateau and Tripura in two of the portions. The northern part of the state is covered by the Brahamaputra plain which is about 56,000 square km. in area. Similarly the Southern part of Assam is covered by the Barak plain which is about 6922 km. in area. In between these plains there lie the Karbi plateau and hills of North Cachar. The high Barail Range lies in the North Cachar Hills. In 2011 census, Assam had population of 31,169272 and its literacy rate was 73.18. The total area of Assam is 78,438 square km. It is surrounded by hills and mountains. If we want to divide Assam into geographical regions, we will have to divide it into i) the Brahamaputra Plain, ii) the Barak Plain, and iii) the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar upland.
The Barak plain is situated at the Southern part of Assam. It is about 85 km. long from the East to the West and about 70 km. wide from the North to the South. It has an area of about 6,962 square km. It is surrounded to the North by the North Cachar hills, to the East by the hills of Manipur, to the south of Mizoram hills and to the West there is plain of Surma Valley of Bangladesh and Tripura hills. There are three civil districts, viz. Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi on this plain. This study is conducted on these three districts of Assam.

The Cachar district is located between 92°24' and 93°15' East longitude and 24°22' and 25°8' North latitude in the Southernmost part of Assam and is one of the oldest districts of the state. It is bounded on the North by Barail and Jayantia hill ranges, on the South by the state Mizoram and sister districts Hailakandi and Karimganj, on the East Manipur, and on the West Karimganj and a part of Bangladesh. The district was created in 1830 after annexation of Kachari Kingdom by British. In 1854, North Cachar was annexed and tagged to the district. In 1951, former North Cachar sub-division was made a separate district and taken out of Cachar. In 1983, earlier Karimganj sub-division and in 1989 Hailakandi sub-division were announced as separate districts. At present Cachar district occupies an area of 3,786 square km. According to census 2011, this district had population of 1,736,319 and average literacy rate was 80.36. The Barak is the main river of the district and apart from this there are numerous small rivers which flow from Dima Hasao district, Manipur and Mizoram. The district is mostly made up of plains, but there are a number of hills spread over the district. The climate is Tropical wet with hot and wet summers and cool winters. The climatic condition of this district is significant for humidity and it is extremely beyond the limit. Because of this reason, during summer, it is intolerable. Bengali is recognized as official language in this district as majority of the people
primarily speak in Bengali and Sylhette, a Bengali-dialect. Apart from Bengali, other
minor languages spoken in the district include Meitei Manipuri, Bishnupuriya
Manipuri, Dimasa and Rongmei-Naga. There are also few Mizo, Kuki and Khasi
people who form microscopic minority. Economy of Cachar district is not very
encouraging. Due to geographical remoteness, poor communication and lack of
proper infrastructural facilities economic development is not up to the mark. In spite
of the miserable circumstances prospects of agriculture, horticulture and forestry
forming are the main sectors of economy of this district. Agriculture contributes
heavily to the economy of Cachar District. Livestock and poultry also occupy an
important place in the rural economy. The major forest products consist of timber,
cane, bamboo etc. In the organized sector, tea is the main industry of the district. The
district has one central university (Assam University), one National Institute of
Technology (NIT), one Medical College Hospital, one ITI, one Polytechnic Institute,
one Govt. Teacher’s Training College, one Basic Training Institute and two private
B.Ed colleges. The district also includes a number of Degree colleges and schools run
by state, central and private authority.

Karimganj, which attained its district status in 1983, is also located in the Southern tip
of Assam together with two other neighboring districts—Cachar and Hailakandi. It
constitutes the Barak Valley zone in Southern Assam. The geographical location of
the district is between longitudes 92°15' and 92°35' East and latitudes 24°15' and
25°55' North. The district is bounded on the North by Bangladesh and Cachar district;
on the South by Mizoram and Tripura states, on the West by Bangladesh and Tripura
and on the East by Hailakandi district. Karimganj district occupies an area of 1,809
square km. From the census 2011 it was found that the total population of this district
was 1,217,002 which also comprises of tribes of Dimasas, Khasis, Barmans, Tripuras,
Halams and many others. Karimganj town is an important centre of trade and commerce in the North East India. A Trade Centre situated at Suterkandi of the same district is also worth notable. The river port of Karimganj with elaborate infrastructures like cargo-terminal, jetty, warehouses etc., is capable of handling large volumes of cargoes carried by steamers plying through river ways via Bangladesh. The predominant language of the district is Bengali (particularly, Sylheti, a dialect of Bengali spoken by the people of Sylhet, now in Bangladesh, to which Karimganj once belonged). The other important languages spoken in the district are Hindi (used largely by the tea-plantation workers who migrated from Bihar, eastern UP and other states), Manipuri, Assamese, Dimasa, Khasi and so on. There are numbers of government and private schools and colleges run under state and central authority. It has one Kendriya Vidyalaya, one Navodaya Vidyalaya, one Basic Training Center, one DIET, two B.Ed colleges and so on. According to Census, 2011 the literacy rate of the district was 79.72. Kushiara, Longai and Shingla are the main rivers flowing through the district. The district shares 92 Km. of international border with the neighboring country Bangladesh.

It was in 1989 that Hailakandi was declared as the 24th district of Assam. Like Karimganj this district as well is situated in the Southern most part of Assam. The district lies between longitude 92°25' and 92°47' East and latitude 24°85' and 24°53' North. The total geographical area of this district is 1,327 square Km., and total population was 659,260 according to Census, 2011. The district is bounded by River Barak and Cachar district in the North and East respectively, state of Mizoram in the South and East and Karimganj district in the West. The district consists of plain and hill areas. The main rivers Dholeswari and Katakal run from South to North through the middle of the district. The interstate border with Mizoram is stretched over 76
Km. in the South East. There are number of govt. and private schools run under central and state board. Among them we have one Novodaya vidyalaya and one Kendriya vidyalaya, many govt. and private Degree colleges, two B.Ed Colleges, one DIET. According to Census, 2011 the literacy rate of this district was 75.26. The economy of Hailakandi district is agrarian in nature. Livestock is an important contributor to the economy of the district. Dairy and poultry farming is a subsidiary occupation of the farmers and in the organized sector, tea is the main industry of the same.

1.2 Rationale of the study

In today’s highly competitive world, students have to pass through excessive anxiety and over-stress of study which sometimes leads to various types of depression and even loss of life. They have to bear a lot of mental stress and also have to get involved in so many activities in order to acquire knowledge and thereby to keep abreast with the latest development of the time. Today getting good marks, grades, divisions etc. are more essential for students across all societies in the world. But being only brilliant in academics doesn't help a student to become a responsible citizen of any country. A student should also remain actively involved in other fields and even if not, he/she should at least pay some interest in them. Student’s involvement in different activities in school other than academic becomes more important because these activities reduce various types of anxieties and stress of our students.

Learner's academic achievement and progression is a great concern for all educational institutions, including schools. The primary role of schools everywhere is to act as places where future leaders are nurtured. Across the world, schools are usually expected to offer learners a core academic curriculum together with other co-
curricular activities, where the former is the core reason whose survival is partly influenced by the later (Kariyana et al. 2012). There is no doubt that academic activities are getting priority in a student's life but it would be very wrong to say that non-academic activities or out of class activities like sports, dance, music etc. are a kind of hindrance to academic excellence. By using the term co-curricular, the aim is to elevate them to an equal status to academic work, for curriculum has to be looked at holistically (Miller, 2007). As Smith (2008) puts it that participation in sports may provide students with unique development opportunities that positively impact their social self-concept. This may lead to a higher academic expectation and therefore better academic outcomes for student athletes. Wilson (2009) in her study also opines that by engaging in extracurricular activities, students may be required to maintain good grades in order to meet eligibility to participate in sports or cheerleading. Eligibility may motivate students to do their best academically in order to participate in the activity. Competing in a speech contest, may help a student gain confidence and being involved in a youth group or scouting organization may help the student develop character and connect with the community. Finally, community service or volunteering might help a student project a caring and compassionate attitude towards others. Therefore today students don't go to school only for study but it also seems that there is an intention to show their potential in other fields which can only get exposed through these activities.

All round development of the students is the dynamic trend in the new educational system. To realize the all-round development of student, curricular activities should be combined with co-curricular or extra-curricular activities. The function of education is to bring change in student’s behaviour and personality in a more desirable form. At present education has been considered in such a way that it has
engulfed the whole process of development of an individual. According to modern concept of education, the three traditional R’s should be replaced by 7 R’s, i.e. Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic (denoting school subjects in the old concept of education). Right, Responsibilities, Recreation, and Relationships (new 4 R’s in the context of democratic values). The concept of education has broadened from that of merely gaining knowledge or developing skills to those experiences which are beyond the formal institution called school. The main responsibility of the school is to prepare the students for the life itself. It should comprise all activities and experiences afforded by the community through the school i.e. physical, mental, moral and social development of the students. Therefore, education may be defined as the simplest process by which behavioural changes take place in an individual as a result of experiences which he/she has undergone in school. Thus a holistic approach to education is a must which will facilitate the total development of a child by providing the right atmosphere to develop and enrich his/her talent. Therefore, the curriculum should be designed by giving due emphasis on both scholastic and co-scholastic areas. In the practical life, the students are able to express their ideas freely due to active participation in debate and extempore. Discussion also helps in generating ideas and inculcating values. Games and Sports make them mentally and physically fit and sound. Games make them learn how to react while losing or winning an event. Sometimes, classroom teaching becomes monotonous and routine bound. Here, co-curricular activities can bring pleasant and joyous experiences. In co-curricular activities, students participate in various cultural programmes, which help them in socialization, self-identification and self-assessment. Participation in drama, play, etc. helps in developing balanced personality. People get acquainted with culture, customs, and activities of other places due to co-curricular activities such as field
trips, tours and excursions. It inculcates the feelings of harmony and thus develops unity and togetherness in the society. In community work, students require to meet with many people and develop the capability of adjustment. In many co-curricular activities, children have to perform in groups, and such performance with team spirit develops the sense of belongingness.

Co-curricular activities not only make the students active and energetic but also enable to harness the in-depth potential of students. It enhances knowledge in many domains, which benefits the student as well as the school. These activities are good platforms to secure the future of the students both professionally and socially and promote leadership quality. It nurtures student’s ability in co-operation, co-ordination, organization and lead them towards leadership. They further provide exposure to personality and help in psychological and sociological transformation. Schools channelize the energy of students with the help of co-curricular activities so that proper realization of student’s energy and potential can be ensured.

Questions are generally raised by students, parents, teachers and schools on how co-curricular activities help in education. There is a synergy between school education and co-curricular activities. In fact, the very concept of co-curricular activities genuinely strengthens the base of curriculum. These activities enable children to share their emotions and strengthen the bond of friendship. In extra-curricular or co-curricular activities, creative works are also given more importance, which facilitate skills and ideas of children. Adolescence stage is a period of turmoil and restlessness, where energy of student’s has to be tapped before it is used in unproductive work. Adolescent students who do not have opportunities to identify with a particular group or who are affiliated with delinquent social groups are more likely to suffer negative repressions including drop out, suicide, substance abuse, or disciplinary problems.
(Smith, 2008). These are the activities which help to motivate such students for learning and make their lesson enjoyable.

Education along with co-curricular activities helps in the overall development of personality. Co-curricular activities furnish many values among students. It depends upon students and teachers how they imbibe these values for better education and health of students. Students participate in physical activities, which contribute towards physical health, vitality, and endurance of the students. Psychological needs are also met by participating in various co-curricular activities. Psychological needs such as emotions, self-assertion, sex and curiosity etc. are trained and groomed in schools by organizing different co-curricular activities. A large part of theoretical works in discipline like geography and science can get value added from excursions, tour and nature study. Co-curricular activities help to inculcate civic and democratic values by participating in self-government and organizing different festivals and ceremonies. Co-curricular activities provide an effective platform for students to develop among them values like social, aesthetic, cultural, recreational, disciplinary etc.

The distinctions between curricular and co-curricular activities are gradually disappearing in modern educational practice and the co-ordination and integration of all the experiences of the pupils’ intellectual, social, moral, emotional and physical abilities have become the aim of school. Co-curricular activities, as the name implies, are those activities which are not directly related with the prescribed curriculum like games and sports, athletics, scouting, various hobbies, excursions, literary societies, dramatics, debates etc. to bring social, emotional and physical adjustments in the child. The basic idea behind such activities in educational institutions is to build up the students' character and personality as well as training of their mind that may further accelerate the academic achievements of the same.
India is the largest democracy in the present world. Democracy, as we know, is nourished by democratic methods adopted in the various institutions of a country. It depends more on the quality of its schools which is primarily based upon the educational experiences provided to the pupils. In this respect co-curricular activities form a vital link in the very pattern of blended educational experiences, necessary for all boys and girls in the modern Indian schools. Only well-equipped citizens will be able to ensure national development in all its parameters. The objectives of education in a democracy are broadened to meet the changing socio-political and economic situations of the country. The formal instruction imparted in the school can’t meet the requirements needed for citizenship training and so modern education lays special emphasis on the need of co-curricular activities. Therefore, these activities are looked from new perspective and are regarded as pertinent to the programme of general education. They are considered essential because they provide outlets for the flow of the surplus energies of the students. In this era of globalization such activities play a vital role for providing wider opportunities to develop child’s potentialities to the fullest form. Here it is worth mentioning that changes in the philosophical and psychological ideas have also given a new direction to the school curriculum.

Co-curricular activities are by no means new. They are as old as organized education itself. A number of activities which we perform today in the name of co-curricular activities existed in schools even in ancient times, for example music, debate, drama etc. In course of time, they were somewhat ignored and neglected, with more importance being given to academics. But today with the changes of individual as well as society it is realized that some objectives of education can’t be achieved by academics alone. Marsh and Kleitman (2002) also have established that students who
participated in co-curricular activities perform better academically than students who did not participated.

The present study especially focuses on the status of co-curricular activities in the middle and secondary schools of Assam and the importance of such activities in the same schools. Middle school (upper primary) includes classes from VI to VIII. The learners of age 11/12 years to 13/14 years come under this section. Acquisition of physical skills, ordinary games, getting along with age mates, developing necessary concepts for everyday living, achieving personal independence, developing attitudes towards social groups and institutions etc. are the characteristics of this stage. So, without the help of co-curricular activities it is not possible for the school to develop these things in a positive way as middle school period is a transitional stage for students between elementary and secondary level. On the other hand, secondary level which includes class IX and X that is the students of age between 14/15 to 16/17 years. From psychological point of view there are number of needs and motives which underlie the feeling, thinking and overt behavior of the child. These needs, urges and the drives are the basis of personal adjustment and are the forces which cause children to learn and to work. To fulfill their diverse needs the school curriculum should be well equipped with varied activities. Secondary education provides knowledge of the world and also serves as the link between elementary and higher education.

In different countries co-curricular activities have been highlighted in all the stages and in our country also every educational report, different committees and commissions on education insisted the need of such activities in school curriculum. Realizing the importance of such activities, in different schools of the various parts of our country these activities have been introduced and carried out successfully. As the principal aim of education is the holistic development of the individual and as it has
been seen that co-curricular activities are an integral part to get this objective fulfilled, the investigator feels it to be highly important to carry out a research on “Status of Co-curricular Activities in Middle and Secondary Schools of Assam with special reference to Barak Valley”.

Keeping in view the importance of co-curricular activities in schools, the investigator feels that it is pertinent to know the status of co-curricular activities in middle and secondary schools of Barak Valley. What sort of problems are faced by the schools and concerned teachers for implementing these activities? What is the opinion of parents towards co-curricular activities? What measures have to be taken in order to improve co-curricular activities? The present investigation is designed to answer the above questions.

1.3 Title of the study

Status of co-curricular activities in middle and secondary schools of Assam with special reference to Barak Valley.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are as follows –

1. To study the emergence and development of co-curricular activities in the educational programmes.
2. To find out the existing programmes of co-curricular activities in schools.
3. To find out the existing physical facilities for co-curricular activities in schools.
4. To find out financial status for conducting co-curricular activities.
5. To find out the problems faced by the schools in carrying out co-curricular activities.

6. To know the opinion of parents towards the co-curricular activities.

7. To find out the role of District Elementary Education Officers/District Mission Co-ordinator, Inspectors of Schools and School Management Development Committee in promoting co-curricular activities in schools.

8. To study the different co-curricular activities followed in the curriculum of SEBA and CBSE.

1.5 Operational definition of the terms used

Co-curricular Activities: Co-curricular activities (CCAs) are those activities which are undertaken side by side with the curricular activities and supplement and complement the curricular or main syllabi. Activities like recitation, play, parade, music, dancing, drawing, painting, fancy dress, assembly, reading, debate and discussion, school magazine, dramatics, study circle, clubs, societies, art groups, seminar, red cross, social survey etc. come under co-curricular activities.

Middle school: It includes classes from VI to VIII.

Secondary school: It includes classes IX and X.

1.6 Delimitation of the study

The study is delimited within the government and provincialized middle and secondary schools of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts of Barak valley, Assam.
REFERENCES


