



Implementation of Extracurricular Activities in Developing Students' Interests and Talents

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Keywords:	Abstract
Extracurricular Talent Interests Student development	<p>Background: This study aims to (1) Explain the extracurricular implementation that has been applied at SD Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta in developing students' talent interests, (2) Describe school perceptions about the importance of developing students' talent interests, (3) Describe the steps or efforts taken by the school in developing the interests of student talent at SD Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta, (4) Explain the obstacles experienced by PK Muhammadiyah Elementary School Kottabarat Surakarta in developing students' interest in talent.</p> <p>Method: This research is a qualitative research. Data collection uses interviews, observation and documentation. The validity of the data uses source triangulation and method / technique triangulation.</p> <p>Result: The results obtained are the development of interest in talent by discovering the potential of children, channeling each of their talents into extracurricular activities that are honed and trained so that it becomes an achievement. The school's perception of developing students' talent interests is very important. Student talent interests must be explored and developed according to each child's expertise. Steps taken by the school by way of scrining new students. Then directed to follow the three compulsory extra curricular namely swimming, painting and dance. Students are required to choose an extracurricular out of 13 existing extra curricular. The extracurricular selection is done by filling out a questionnaire given to students and parents. The constraints faced when developing talent interests are the parent factor and the friend factor.</p>

INTRODUCTION

Each child is naturally born with unique mindsets, diverse abilities, distinct skills, and personal hobbies that are adapted to his individuality. Talents, in this context, can be viewed as an innate potential that exist within each child. They need to be detected early, nurtured with attention, and continuously developed through carefully designed educational strategies. Developing process of a child's talents must align closely with his own interests and passion. Therefore, such a process must be carried out without losing sight of his nature

and personality. Coercion or external pressure must be avoided, in order to optimize his personal growth and self-actualization (Sari, 2016). In this regard, schools, as formal institutions entrusted with educational responsibilities, play a crucial role in stimulating students' interests and unleashing talents, both through structured academic activities and non-structured enrichment programs such as extracurricular activities.

Extracurricular activities, although categorized as non-compulsory elements within the education system, serve as important learning experiences that are deliberately designed to support students' personal and holistic development beyond the formal academic curriculum (Fathan, 2016). As emphasized by Lasmintayu (2017), extracurricular participation significantly helps to shape students' personalities. Such a step makes it easy to detect and unleash their talents across multiple fields of expertise. This requires though the creation of a more balanced and integrated educational experience. Furthermore, extracurricular programs provide an essential platform for students to cultivate crucial socio-emotional skills, creativity, leadership qualities, interpersonal skills, and resilience, all of which are vital for their success in broader social contexts.

Nevertheless, in practical implementation, many elementary schools still encounter substantial challenges in optimally identifying and nurturing students' interests and unleashing their talents. Among the challenges encountered are the limited availability of facilities, the shortage of a trained staff for a successful operation, and the minimal application of career counseling services tailored for young learners' needs (Mirnawati et al., 2017). At the elementary level, career counseling should not only serve as a preparatory step toward future occupational choices but also function as an important mechanism for the early detection of students' natural aptitudes and inclinations (Sungkowo, 2014).

In support of the significance of extracurricular activities, Carbonaro (2019) affirms through empirical research that active participation in extracurricular programs is positively correlated with both cognitive development and socioemotional growth among children and adolescents. This is a crucial period when the primitive reasoning starts. By then, the child realizes that he has a vast amount of knowledge but he has no ideas he acquired it. Moreover, findings by Kubilius (2014) indicate that talented students, when provided with sufficient opportunities, tend to demonstrate greater involvement in competitions, matches, and other extracurricular arenas, underlining the critical need for schools to design and offer a wide spectrum of activities that can accommodate and refine various dimensions of the student's potential.

Within this framework, SD Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta emerges as an exemplary educational institution that recognizes the importance of systematically stimulating the interests and unleashing talents of its students. Through the provision of a rich and diverse range of extracurricular activities, the school actively speeds up the student's growth in both academic and non-academic areas. Consequently, this study aims at exploring deeply how the extracurricular programs at SD Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat are implemented, what strategies are appropriate in order to stimulate the student's interests and to unleash his talents. It also gives hints to the school how to address the various challenges that arise in the process of unlocking the student's potentials.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design. The phenomenological method was chosen to explore and describe the real phenomena experienced by students, teachers, and school administrators regarding the implementation of extracurricular activities at SD Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta. According to Miles and Huberman (1992), qualitative research emphasizes deep exploration of social realities from the perspectives of the participants involved.

The study was conducted from April to June 2019 at SD Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta. The school was selected as the research site because of its proactive efforts in fostering students' interests and talents through a variety of structured extracurricular programs.

The data sources in this study were divided into primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through interviews with the principal, vice principal of student affairs, and the guidance and counseling (BK) teacher. Meanwhile, secondary data included supporting documents such as photos of activities, school archives, extracurricular schedules, and records of students' participation in activities.

In this qualitative research, the researcher acts as the main instrument (Arikunto, 2013). The researcher directly observed the school environment, conducted interviews, and collected relevant documentation. In carrying out these roles, the researcher maintained an active and objective stance to ensure the validity of the observations and interpretations.

The data collection techniques used included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to directly monitor the implementation and dynamics of extracurricular activities. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with key informants to gain an in-depth understanding of the school's policies, challenges, and strategies in unlocking the student's potentials. Documentation was collected to support and strengthen the findings obtained from observations and interviews.

To ensure the validity of the data, the study applied triangulation techniques, namely source triangulation and method triangulation (Sugiyono, 2015). Source triangulation was performed by comparing information obtained from different informants, while method triangulation was carried out by cross-checking data collected through various techniques.

The data analysis process followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1992). This process involved several stages, namely data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The collected data were subject to the next step which consists of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting the information relevant to the research focus. The reduced data were then displayed systematically to highlight their interpretations. The final stage dealt with verification before drawing conclusions. Such a step was conducted continuously to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

RESULT

The research findings indicate that SD Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta has implemented extracurricular activities systematically to stimulate students' interests and unleash their talents. The school requires Grade 1 students to participate in three different extracurricular activities. This obligation is based on the school's goal to balance cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects of student development. Participation in multiple activities during the first year enables students to explore various potential talents before choosing their specialization in subsequent years.

The school offers thirteen extracurricular activities covering academic, artistic, sports, and religious fields. These include swimming, drama, dance, tapak suci (martial arts), MIPA (math and natural sciences), English club, computer studies, futsal, painting, badminton, sermons, music, and journalism. According to observations and documentation, each activity is guided either by class teachers or other trainers who are experts in their respective fields.

Efforts to map students' interests and talents were conducted using a dual-questionnaire system for students and parents. If discrepancies occurred between parents' expectations and students' choices, the guidance and counseling service provided consultation sessions to mediate and align decisions with students' true interests.

Infrastructural limitations were found, particularly the absence of a dedicated sports field and swimming pool, which the school compensated for by renting facilities elsewhere. Another obstacle encountered was the location of the counseling room on the upper floor, discouraging parental consultations. To address this, the school prepared an alternative counseling space on the ground floor.

Peer influence was also noticed as a factor affecting students' extracurricular choices. Some students initially selected activities based on their friends' preferences rather than personal interests. However, the school allowed flexibility in re-selecting activities at the end of the academic year to ensure that students ultimately engaged in activities aligned with their genuine talents.

Parental coercion in choosing extracurricular activities was another issue reported. The school consistently emphasized to parents the importance of respecting their children's interests and provided guidance counseling interventions to put an end to such related conflicts.

The success of the extracurricular program is reflected in the achievements of students in various competitions at the local and regional levels, highlighting the effectiveness of the school's approach to talent development.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reaffirm and strengthen the understanding that extracurricular activities play a pivotal and strategic role in fostering students' interests and in unleashing talents at the primary education level. Extracurricular activities are no longer seen merely as leisure or complementary commitment, but as structured, intentional programs that are integral to the comprehensive development of students' potentials outside the confines of formal academic learning (Fathan, 2016). This conceptualization is evidently reflected in the practices at SD Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta, where the provision of a wide range of extracurricular options has created an expansive platform for students to explore, recognize, and refine their diverse talents across various domains.

In line with the perspective articulated by Lasmintayu (2017), extracurricular activities significantly contribute to the enhancement of students' socio-emotional competencies, leadership abilities, creativity, and collaboration skills. The school's policy requiring Grade 1 students to engage in three different extracurricular activities exemplifies an educational philosophy that values early exposure to varied experiences. Early involvement in multiple domains increases the probability of discovering latent talents and developing a holistic identity. This practice is also supported by developmental psychology theories, which highlight that childhood is a critical period for acquiring diverse experiences that nurture cognitive, emotional, and social growth (Santrock, 2011).

Moreover, the school's collaboration with professional external trainers aligns with the framework suggested by Carbonaro (2019), emphasized that partnerships with experts and practitioners enhance the importance and quality of extracurricular programs. By involving external trainers, SD Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat not only diversifies its extracurricular offerings but also elevates the standard of mentoring and coaching provided for students, thereby fostering higher achievement levels and more professional skill development among learners.

The findings regarding peer influence in the choice of extracurricular activities also resonate with prior research. Blomfield (2010) found that peer groups can mediate students' participation decisions, which sometimes results in students selecting activities based on social conformity rather than personal passion. Recognizing this potential pitfall, the school's policy that allows students to revisit and revise their extracurricular choices after one academic year represents a thoughtful corrective measure. Such an approach is consistent with Super's (1990) career development theory, which posits that interests and

career preferences evolve over time, particularly during early educational phases, and therefore must be periodically reassessed to ensure alignment with the individual's true aspirations.

Parental influence, as revealed in this study, illustrates the double-edged nature of parental involvement in educational development. While parents can serve as important motivators and facilitators for their children's growth, they can also inadvertently become barriers by imposing their own aspirations onto their children. Sungkowo (2014) asserted that external factors, especially parental expectations, can profoundly influence or even distort children's career and talent development pathways. In this regard, the proactive role of the school's guidance and counseling services in mediating conflicts and educating parents about the importance of honoring their children's authentic interests is a commendable and necessary strategy for protecting students' autonomy in personal growth. Parental influence misleads the students who will end up the unacceptable parts of their own personalities into shadows. They will end up masquerading as half-backed version of themselves.

The infrastructural challenges faced by the school, such as the lack of a dedicated sports field and swimming pool, further illustrate the complex dynamics of extracurricular program implementation. Despite having robust human resources and program designs, the limitations in physical infrastructure remain a tangible barrier to optimal program execution. Nonetheless, the school's solution—renting external facilities—demonstrates adaptability and managerial resourcefulness. This is in line with Bush's (2003) assertion that effective educational leadership in resource-constrained environments must exhibit flexibility, innovation, and problem-solving capacities to sustain high-quality programming.

Overall, the systematic and deliberate efforts undertaken by SD Muhammadiyah PK Kottabarat Surakarta portray an integrated and responsive model for extracurricular program management. The school's initiatives, ranging from comprehensive student mapping, the provision of varied and meaningful extracurricular activities, strategic collaboration with external parties, to sustained engagement with parents, collectively constitute best practices in contemporary education management and child development. These practices not only support the academic success of students but also contribute to shaping well-rounded individuals who are prepared to navigate complex social environments and pursue lifelong personal and professional growth.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and conclusions, the researcher provides several suggestions as follows: For schools, they are expected to pay more attention to teaching human resources so that they have the required skills to meet the students's needs in their fields. Schools must get prepared to implement plans to increase the number of extracurricular activities so that multi- talented students can ensure their own personal growth properly. Schools are also required to provide both facilities and infrastructure appropriate enough for students to unleash their talents and stimulate their interests. Last not least schools should take tremendous efforts to make parents conscious of the importance of a child's choice regarding his talents and interests. Parents should act as facilitators and collabolators to help their children make their dreams come true.

For teachers, teachers involved in each extracurricular activity are expected to update their skills so that they can help provide training to students in extracurricular activities.

For students, they should display commitment to seriously hone their abilities in extracurricular activities to ensure their personal growth properly. The students should be governed by their own inspirations in choosing extracurricular activities instead of day dreaming about or living in ecstasy with their friends' fantasies. They are free to choose what suits them best without coercion or external pressure. In the long run, further

researchers should be conducted to find suitable data that address the issues more efficiently.

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