

MED2iaH

Mediterranean
Countries **Towards**
Internationalisation
at Home

Cultural Diversity in Curriculum and extra-curriculum activities

Sabrina Brillante
P5-Pegaso University, Italy

*The quality of life is determined by its
activities.*

– ARISTOTLE



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Nevitt Sanford (1956), renowned expert professor of ethnic studies at the **University of California** suggested that students learn at best when they are both **challenged and supported**.



challenged → **in learning course content and new skills.**

supported → **classroom environment, teaching strategies and content that includes the perspectives from their own ethnic, class, and gender groups.**

College classrooms contain a **diversity of students**, but most know little about **communicating across cultures**



Creating an inclusive Classroom can start from **curricular activities**:
Ex. Learning in groups and promoting team work is one of the best ways to create inclusive classrooms.



Curricular activities and diversity of students

Workshop of Emily C. Wadsworth from Nebraska University

- **Focus:** investigation of cultural diversity perception in classrooms

The facilitator divided participants (teachers or people who worked in University) into groups of three to six and ask them to **design activities that would make their classrooms more comfortable for students from different context and cultures.**

Examinations taken on both

- an individual basis
- group projects with all group participants earning the same grade.

* In this way, the teaching will reflect an inclusiveness that allows students, regardless of cultural background, to feel both **comfortable** and **challenged**

To stimulate their **creative thinking** they were asked to imagine:

- to create activities for the first day of class
- to prepare out-of-class homework assignments
- to prepare in-class work
- To analyse examinations

As participants share the ideas in the large group, **they generate a list of culturally sensitive teaching techniques.**

What about ECAs?

Activities such as music and dance, public service, interscholastic team sports, and student government all **improved students' likelihood of getting into college.**



These activities provided:

- **hands-on skills and training**
- opportunities to **increase one's self-esteem** and investment in school life.

*Such **Extra curricular Activities (ECAs)** may benefit students by helping them to stand out, defy expectations, and appear unique among their peers.*

(Kaufman and Gabler, 2004)

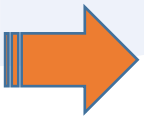
Following several researches on the topic emerges that:

- ➔ **Employers** may favour certain **ECAs** such as those indicating **responsibility, reliability and maturity** (Sattinger).
- ➔ **ECAs** undertaken at leadership level **gave better access** to large firms, job security and protection against unemployment.
Participation in solitary activities, the social sector or citizenship activities, on the contrary, disadvantaged students' labor market entry (Tchibozo, 2005)
- ➔ Other research with graduates seeking first jobs indicated **mixed-effects of ECAs on unemployment and job security** (Tchibozo, 2007).

- ➔ students' participation in competitive sports may have a **positive effect on future earnings**, but this can change following the ethnic background (Eide and Ronan, 2001)
- ➔ participation in sports, clubs and societies has been found to benefit graduate employment prospects **for younger students only** (Brown and Scase, 1994; Purcell and Hogarth, 1999).
- ➔ Taking part in ECAs **did not seem to improve mature students' job prospects**, but younger students who spent more than 10 hours per week on ECAs were more likely to be successful in their subsequent employment (Blasko, 2002).

However, all studies show a significant proportion of students appeared to be **missing out on opportunities** to develop and engage in social networks at university, and were missing out on the **strategic potential of ECAs in achieving employment objectives**

It is therefore clear that there is a need for a better **understanding of the long-term impacts of extracurricular activity**, as relatively little research to date has examined the role of extracurricular activities on student life and future career prospects.

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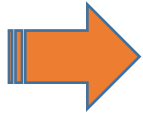
*However, researches undertaken with high school students suggest that **students' engagement with ECAs** varies **across gender, social class and ethnic group**.*

(Brown and Evans, 2002; Dimaggio; Dumais, 2002; Farkas; Flores-Gonzalez, 20), as do the benefits of these activities for academic achievement and employment (Eide and Ronan, 20).

In the research of Nebraska University (C. Wadsworth) has also been examined:

- **engagement** of several students and demographic groups in various university and non-university linked ECAs
- **qualitative perception of ECAs on employment prospects** by student alumni
- **views of actual employers**, in order to assess differences in student experiences, outcomes (marks) and career trajectories.

Alumni



Successful employed alumni (n = 12) were asked to reflect on the **ECAs** they did at university and the **effect** these had on **their university performance and subsequent employment.**

NB: Alumni were all employed at managerial level, including the areas of design consul-tancy, hardware sales, IT, immigration officership, charity directorship, government policy, lecturing, human resources and marketing.

The ECAs the alumni had engaged in *ranged widely from part-time work, university/student union activities* (for example, pub quiz organizer, events manager), university clubs (for example, philosophy, sports, rowing, choir) and external community activities – volunteering, family commitments, acting as DJ and more.



Most alumni **emphasized the social aspect of ECAs** describing them as an important opportunity to network and make new friends. Some socialized with people from university clubs, particularly sporting clubs, which often met around the student union pubs and bars.

In general, all alumni described how **the social networks** they made in ECAs helped them to **find jobs or to progress within their chosen careers**, some directly, others indirectly via their social contacts helping them with job placement.

All stated that friendship networks from university were still important within their social and working lives, even years after university, as they had helped them to feel socially supported to carry out their jobs more effectively.



Identity development vs constraints DATA:

Many of the **younger alumni** said that social activities were important for developing:

- their self-confidence
- their sense of well-being
- happiness at university.

Some of the younger students also talked about activities in terms of their social development and maturity, leading to social skills, which they came to rely on in their later careers.

Many of the alumni described how activities had given them transferable skills that they later brought to the workplace.

Mature students were more likely to state that social activities gave them academic confidence rather than social confidence, and described the importance of receiving academic support and advice from their peers.

Some ethnic minority alumni said that they were not involved in certain activities because they **did not feel welcomed by**, or a part of, their students' union.

*Some of the mature student alumni, irrespective of their ethnicity, claimed that many ECAs were not accessible to them, although they also reported that their studies and career were their main university **priority**.* As they had been fee-paying students, many of the working student alumni discussed financial and time constraints with regard to ECA participation.

Some alumni wished that **they had done more ECAs**. Voluntary work in particular was an activity that many students regretted not having done, seeing it as important for job opportunities.

Conclusions on alumni

- ❑ *There was general agreement from the alumni that **ECAs had been beneficial to their initial job searches** and that the **social networks** made at university had been either directly or indirectly **linked to their current career paths**.*
- ❑ *Some **still referred to their ECAs in job applications**, especially for activities where they had played a central or leadership role, or felt were still important to their sense of identity.*
- ❑ *One particular ethnic minority alumni said that they would have engaged more in activities had their students' union been **more welcoming**, or had their university offered more activities targeted at mature students' interests and compatible with their external responsibilities.*

Conclusions on employers

Employers were involved to in the survey highlighted that:

- *They were generally in agreement that ECAs were useful in demonstrating key skills and competencies sought by a graduate employer, as well as 'cultural fit' with the company (that is, seeking sociable, outgoing and extroverted graduates who would fit in well with colleagues and communicate effectively as part of a team).*
- *Not only work experience affected the attitude of candidates, but also their experience in clubs, IT activities and committees (especially leadership roles), voluntary work and team sports as key ECAs.*

According to employers and alumni, ECAs such as voluntary work, and particularly university-linked ECAs (such as team sports and committees), **help to distinguish graduates in the job market** (in line with Kaufman and Gabler, 2004). This is particularly important given the **current economic climate**.

University career services should highlight employer-valued activities in their advice to students.

According to alumni the differences in participation appear to be occurring for a variety of reasons (such as time constraints, and feelings of non-inclusion). However, it's possible to agreed that *lack of participation may 'disadvantage' students in obtaining what is considered to be the 'full' student experience*

**What about
internationalization and
extra curriculum activities
online?**

More and more universities around the world are offering **online or hybrid options** for Masters degree studies.

They range from fully remote study to an on-campus experience in which some instruction takes place online. Students now have more choice than ever and can find a programme that fits their preferences and their life.

Do the schools have clubs the students could be interested in?

Extracurricular activities are inherently social

In some universities there are students who are available to be “**tutors**”, happy to connect students (also foreign students) with current students and include them in their activities.

It may be a good idea to promote this opportunity for new students, offering them to get in touch with these **clubs even before they enrol.**

Then, once the semester starts, they will already **have a potential circle of friends** who will be there for them.

Include
students in the
process

➤ Do you have an activity in mind but no online club is available for it?

you can start one yourself!
It is as easy as posting in
groups on social media or
asking classmates

Some people may find it harder to approach a classmate in an online environment.

People may be reluctant to be the first one to reach out, but they would be grateful if other do so. Also in **classrooms some discussion should be promoted.**

It's been proven that if someone reveals in a class discussion that they have an interest other share, and if other overcome shyness and reluctance they could both benefit from a shared online extracurricular activity

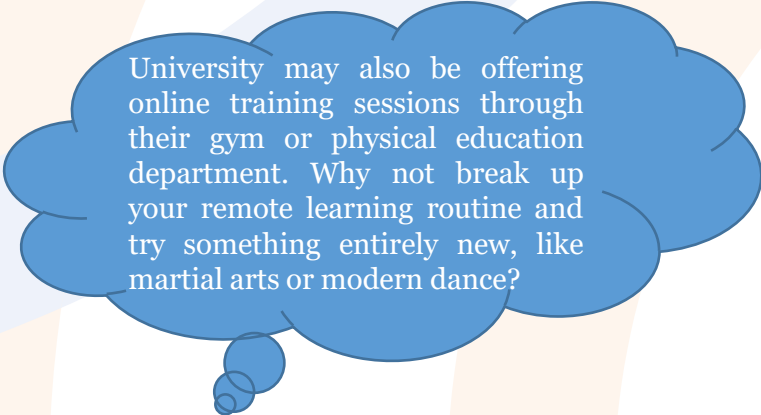
University Online club for students or **dedicated platform** to find activities buddies:

-Running, yoga lesson, football etc.

Maintaining physical activity during online studies will keep students in good health and enable them to make the most of your programme.



Look for others who like same sport and schedule a time to do it together remotely.

A blue thought bubble with a small tail pointing towards the bottom left.

University may also be offering online training sessions through their gym or physical education department. Why not break up your remote learning routine and try something entirely new, like martial arts or modern dance?

Mentor and support others

Another **extracurricular activity** that can be promoted by Institutions and easily be done online is **tutoring younger students** or providing **support to people from marginalised groups**.



- coach a high school student who is struggling to keep up with their maths classes
- teach English or another language to refugees.

Working for a cause will help students to feel focused and grounded, as well as developing skills such as communication and teamwork.

If they would like to work in the non-profit sector after graduation, this can also lead to a future career. The world has never been in greater need of social innovation and mutual support

-Extracurricular engagement helps growing, whatever the learning format – immersive on-campus studies, blended, or online.

-Propose an extracurricular activity or course online for interested students in order to let them have some ECTS or only to familiarize with some aspects of team work.



OPEN DEBATE

Question: *During the height of the pandemic period (or even now), did your Institution(s) promote some online extracurricular activities?*

➤ If yes, which ones?

➤ If no, what do you think are the biggest challenges to their implementation (other than whether priority was given to online curricular activities)?

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Thank you for your attention!

