

MED2IaH

Mediterranean
Countries **Towards**
Internationalisation
at Home

Lesson 3: Intercultural extra-curricular activities at Universities

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This lesson will describe how important are for development of intercultural awareness and benefits for students the **extra-curricular activities (ECA's)**.

Through theoretical and practical examples, it will be also faced the theme of **internationalization at home, virtual mobility and extra curriculum activities** online and mutual intercultural benefit for students who share their intercultural background and expertise in ECA's.

The topic is elaborated as follows:

- 1) The background of extra-curricular activities (ECA's)
- 2) Internationalization, virtual mobility and intercultural activities (teahouses)
- 3) About internationalization and extra curriculum activities online
- 4) Benefits for students and university



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

It has been found that **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 opportunities to increase one's self-esteem and investment in school life



In a research of **Nebraska University (C. Wadsworth)** has been examined the engagement of various student demographic groups in various university and non-university linked ECAs, as well as the qualitative perception of ECAs on employment prospects by student alumni, and finally the views of actual employers, in order to assess **differences in student experiences, outcomes (marks) and career trajectories.**

In this research:

- some 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. Also their employers were asked to give their opinion on the impact the ECA's had on their employees.

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

It resulted that:



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. Most felt that ECAs were now of little or no importance to their CVs, given that they had more life and work experience to support their applications. However, some still referred to their ECAs in job applications, especially for activities where they had played a central or leadership role, reached a certain level of achievement or felt were still important to their sense of identity.

Only 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.

Employers:

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).

Employers highlighted not only work experience but also clubs and committees (especially leadership roles), voluntary work and team sports as key ECAs. However, some valued university linked team sports over voluntary work, positions on university councils and student union activities. This was particularly the case with computer science/IT employers, who advocated team sports as the best indicator of fit with the workplace. Employers emphasized the importance of graduates 'selling' their activities, by being aware of the skills they had taught them and using illustrative examples. This suggests that students would benefit from careers advice from their universities regarding ECAs.

Internationalization, virtual mobility and intercultural activities



Generally speaking almost all the stakeholders about **Virtual Exchange**, it often emerges that it is an incomplete experience. Most of them suggested that it could be integrated with a final meeting of the people joining the programme, and however everyone underlined that it cannot be compared to a mobility experience, claiming that it is a more superficial experience and it cannot substitute a physical mobility experience.

The **covid19 pandemic completely changed the perspective**, on virtual exchanges and on internationalization, and speeded up a process already on the road. Not only curricular activities, but **also extra curricular activities can be internationalized at home.**

There are many ways to learn from international experiences, and you can organize extracurricular activities that bring internationalization home. Universities must necessarily be supportive in this, providing a space or promoting different kinds of activities in various ways.

Internationalization, virtual mobility and intercultural activities



But let's do some **practical examples of possible Extra curriculum activities related to intercultural exchanges at home:**

- Cooking dishes of different countries, with the help or the advice of international students (social dinner)
- Trying to organize some sessions with “international” games (board games, group games, identity playing games). The games can be also of other countries, not necessarily the ones familiar in the host country. This can favour a mutual enrichment
- Aperitif or social multilingual dinner/lunch break: where the rule is only to choose in which language to speech. It can be English as lingua franca or the language of an exchange students that other local students are studying or vice versa;
- Karaoke night with songs from many countries
- City tours: local students can guide for a tour of the city foreign students
- Cinema night and discussion: organize a session where educative movie are watched, also in the local language with foreign languages subtitles
- Sport activities: with the support of educational department of University, can be organized some matches and team games that also involve students from different cultures, promoting integration through sport

From these activities, local students can learn more about foreign cultures and also replicate some of these activities or even develop new activities on the basis of what they learned from foreign students. For example:



- They can replicate the dishes they cooked with foreign students also in “cooking sessions” where only local students take part, in a sort of “challenge cooking show”
- They can replicate some foreign games and they can keep practicing the foreign language words they learned
- They can organize only “foreign songs karaoke” event, to test their capacity of singing into another language

About internationalization and extra curriculum activities online



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The covid19 changed completely the academic life, and it also **affected social and extracurricular activities.**

But **Online or hybrid study does not mean student life should take a back seat.**

To promote possible extracurricular activities online, can be developed:

- University Online clubs for students or dedicated platforms to find activities buddies.
- University may be offering online training sessions through their gym or physical education department.
- 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
- Teaching of English or another language to refugees.

Benefits for students and Universities



It is helpful to focus on how useful it is the mutual intercultural benefit for students who share their intercultural background and expertise in extracurricular activities. In fact, this exchange, allow students to:

- **Learn new skills:**
- **Broader social skills**
- **Improve time management**

Benefits for students and Universities

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The list of benefits for students involved in ECA's extends also to the academic life and their future paths:

- Extracurricular activities serve as great support to regular curriculum
- Some ECA's can evolve in passion and future jobs
- ECA's improve organization skills and task management
- ECA's are valued when getting a first job
- ECA's encourage student's progress

Benefits for students and Universities



Beside that, **also Universities can benefit from having their students involved in extracurricular activities.** Among the most evident, it is possible to list (among others):

1. the creation of an environment conducive to academic life for students, who will also be more predisposed to consciously invest in their choices and studies
2. Having attractive intercultural activities can be attractive to potential new enrollees and also to foreign students
3. having well-established activities not only provides benefits to students, but also gives luster and importance to the University
4. Having a more involved staff also means growing the university from an internal development point of view and allowing for faster internationalization at home as well



Some useful links:

Intercultural stimulation activities	Classic Intercultural Simulation Activity - Five Tricks - YouTube
Intercultural competence	Intercultural Competence (Part 1) - YouTube
Intercultural communication	Intercultural Communication - YouTube
extracurricular activities for college application	Top 5 At-home Extracurricular Activities for College Applications - YouTube
Intercultural communication at University	Intercultural Communication - YouTube

Thank you for your attention!