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From Policy to Practice:

How Policy Influences Extra-Curricular Provision in the UK

By Holly Toombs, Yi Lin Zhao, Michał Pietrzak and Elizabeth Reid



Introduction

Extra-curricular activities (ECAs) are crucial for enhancing educational and social outcomes. However, their provision and uptake often varies significantly.

By examining policies and recommendations for ECAs and their positive impact, we seek to

- Review and understand differences and disparities in the implementation of ECA policy on national and local levels.
- Gain a deeper understanding of the reasoning behind recommendations surrounding ECAs.
- To create a basis for further research on the longer-term benefits of delivering ECAs in schools.

Methodology

Our primary data collection methods include interviews with strategic and operational stakeholders in government and education. This included a local policy-maker, researcher, and school inspector. We selected them to gain insights into current policy across different schools and attitudes towards it. We used two topic guides to structure our interviews for different stakeholder types.

We complemented this qualitative data with secondary sources: research papers, government policy, and advice on the provision of ECAs. Using these sources, we identified existing national policy on ECAs and the attitudes towards it.

Results

There is no requirement for schools to provide ECAs, so there is no budget for their provision. This has created a dependency on volunteers and government funding initiatives such as:

- PE and Sport Premium, which subsidises one third of school sports clubs.
- Enrichment Partnership Pilot (EPP), which partners schools with external ECA providers.
- Cadet Expansion Programme, which supports cadet units in state schools.

Unfortunately, the provision, quality and uptake of ECAs can vary between schools and socio-economic status. For example, schools in 'special measures' may need to prioritise the core curriculum. As such, children from low-income backgrounds are less likely to benefit from ECAs (Education Policy Institute, 2024).

Conclusion

ECA provision could be improved by creating a national policy specifically for it. Bringing the issue of ECAs to light would help guide policymakers to improve accessibility for students and ring-fence funding. Further research is also necessary to develop these recommendations, so enabling the reviewing of current provision and outcomes is vital.

Contact us:

holly.toombs@worc.ox.ac.uk

yilin.zhao@univ.ox.ac.uk

michal.pietrzak@worc.ox.ac.uk

elizabeth.reid@balliol.ox.ac.uk



Figure 1: How Policy on ECAs Could Improve Outcomes for Young People

Creating an annual extracurricular report reviewing the changes to the disparity in uptake, general level of availability of and newly published research surrounding the outcomes of ECAs.

Mandating the creation of extracurricular databases within local authorities.

Legislating young people's access to ECAs as a requirement for schools and local authorities, based on their right to play.

Ring-fencing funding for extracurricular provisions within the dedicated school's grant.

Figure 2: Policy Recommendations

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References

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