The Implementation of English Extra-curricular Activities in Secondary Schools in Riyadh: Effects and Challenges

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المستخلص:

هدفت الدراسة إلى الكشف عن تأثير الأنشطة اللاصفية على تعلم الطالب للغة الإنجليزية، كما هدفت إلى التعرف على الصعوبات التي تواجه المعلمين عند تنفيذ الأنشطة وإعطاء الحلول للحد من هذه الصعوبات. وتم اتباع طريقة تحليل كمية للإجابة عن أسئلة البحث باستخدام أداة الاستبيان. وقد قام بالإجابة على هذا الاستبيان أربعة وستون معلمة لغة إنجليزية. و أظهرت النتائج أن للأنشطة اللاصفية باللغة الانجليزية تأثيرا ايجابيا على تعلم الطلاب للغة، كما أظهرت أن هناك بعض الصعوبات في تنفيذ هذه الأنشطة. واتفق الكثير من المعلمات على الحلول المقترحة في هذه الدراسة للتغلب على تلك الصعوبات. و توفر هذه الدراسة معلومات قد يستفيد منها المعلمون وصناع القرار في تحسين جودة الأنشطة اللاصفية باللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس الثانوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

الأنشطة، اللاصفية، اللغة ، الإنجليزية، الصعوبات، تعلم اللغة، المرحلة الثانوية

Abstract:

English extra-curricular activities constitute an important part of students' learning. This study aims to discover some of the effects of ECAs on students' language learning, the challenges that face teachers in implementing these activities and some possible solutions for these challenges. A quantitative analysis method using a questionnaire was administered in order to answer the research questions. A sample of 64 teachers responded to the survey. In general, the results showed that English ECAs have positive effects on students' language learning. Results also showed that there were some challenges in implementing ECAs. Teachers also mostly agreed on the suggested solutions proposed in this study to overcome some of the challenges. This study provides some information that both teachers and policy makers may benefit from to improve the quality of English ECAs in secondary schools.

Key words:

extra-curricular, activities, learning, ECAs, secondary, challenges

Introduction:

Extra-curricular activities (ECAs) are generally known to have positive impact on students' academic performance (Al-Alan, 2009; Annu and Sunita, 2013; Massoni, 2011). Whether it is in the role these activities play in raising students' confidence (Park, 2015), or in the progress they cause academically and socially (Park, 2015; Bahdi, 2014), ECAs are crucial for any school that aspires to achieve success and all-round development of its students. The National Center for Educational Statistics (1995) stressed in one of its reports that there is a relationship between participating in ECAs and success, and this was reflected in students' improved attendance, more achievement, and their ambition for getting higher education. Due to the importance of ECAs in education, many researches highlighted the benefits of carrying out such activities like Salamuddin, Harun, and Abdullah (2011) where they stated that "the academic curriculum and ECAs are related and are supportive of each other" (p.49). Although ECAs are important for school curriculum in general, their importance may be even more when learning a second language such as English.

In relation to this matter, it is important to point out when discussing teaching or learning English that communication and interaction are necessary in any ESL classroom. Mitchell (2015) claimed that "research in second language acquisition has suggested that meaningful interaction between individuals in the target language (L2) will increase a student's proficiency"(P.2). Thus, teachers are demanded to contribute in creating opportunities for students to communicate in English inside and outside the classroom. One of the suggested methods used to increase students' communication is the use of ECAs (Park, 2015).

In countries where English is a second language, such as the case in Saudi Arabia, many classrooms have large numbers of students, variation in students' English proficiency levels, low motivation and limited exposure to English (Xiao and Luo, 2009). All these features work as barriers to the development of students' communicative competence in the target language. Thus, the interaction that takes place in the ESL classroom needs to be enhanced by other means. Moreover, the policy of education in Saudi Arabia stated number of objectives in teaching English in the country which might not be fully realized if teachers depended solely on the academic curriculum. Neither the time allotted for the English class, nor the content of the textbooks would help teachers achieve the desired objectives stated by the policy of education. Therefore, implementing ECAs may provide good opportunities for students to practice English and help in achieving the objectives of teaching English in the country. Some English teachers recognize the role of ECAs and encourage their students to involve in English ECAs, but the outcomes of this involvement need to be investigated to enforce the positive results and try to deal with the challenges that hinder teachers from implementing English ECAs as they should.

This study investigates the effects of English ECAs on students' performance in English classes. In addition to that, it investigates the obstacles that teachers face in implementing such activities to present possible solutions for some of these obstacles.

Purpose of the Study:

Through conducting this research, the effects of English ECAs upon secondary school students in Riyadh are going to be investigated to see to which extent they can improve students' production of English. In addition, the challenges that face teachers when implementing ECAs are going to be studied to overcome them or at least reduce their impact in the future and provide possible solutions for the existing challenges.

Significance of the Study:

This study may provide some results that can add to the literature of English ECAs. It can be said that there is a huge gap in the research about English ECAs. This gap needs to be filled with studies that tackle different aspects of these activities and their role in ESL.

Few studies were conducted on English ECAs and even fewer studies dealt with English ECAs in Saudi Arabia. Thus, English ECAs in secondary schools in Saudi Arabia and their effects on students' second language development, the challenges teachers face when carrying them out need to be investigated. Consequently, these research studies can help in improving the planning and implementation of future English ECAs for better results in students' performance.

Research Objectives:

This study aims to:

1- Identify the effects of implementing English ECAs on students' language learning in secondary schools.

2- Identify the obstacles faced by teachers when carrying out English ECAs in secondary schools.

3- Provide some solutions for the difficulties that teachers face in implementing English ECAs.

Research Questions:

The study is guided by the following questions:

1- What are some of the effects of implementing English ECAs on students' language learning in secondary schools?

2- What are the challenges that teachers face when carrying out English ECAs?

3- What are some of the possible solutions for these challenges?

Definition of Terms:

● **Extra-curricular activities**

The literature discussing English ECAs shows that the term "extra-curricular activities" is not the only term used by educationists and researchers to describe activities outside the curriculum. Bartkus et al. (2012) proposed the following definition: "Extracurricular activities are defined as academic or non-academic activities that are conducted under the auspices of the school but occur outside of normal classroom time and are not part of the curriculum." (p. 698).

In this study, English ECAs are defined as: the activities that involve using the English language like recitation, role playing, debates, reading, writing or any other activity that requires the use of English and meets the rules of the Saudi education system. These activities are voluntary and can be carried inside or outside school under the supervision of English teachers.

Literature Review:

A Review of the existing literature tackles different issues related to ECAs guided by the questions and objectives of this study. These studies were classified under titles that represent their useful content to the current study. This classification includes: the effects of ECAs on students' language learning, the organization of ECAs, challenges in implementing ECAs and English ECAs in Saudi schools.

The Effects of ECAs on Students' Language Learning:

The effect of ECAs was investigated in relation to language in many studies. English language learners need to be exposed to the language through instruction in the classroom and by practicing it through conversation inside and outside the classroom setting (Park, 2015). Thus,

Park (2015) discussed the advantages of involving English language learners in ECAs and the effect of these activities on academic and social development. The results of the research indicate that ECAs contribute to the students' academic performance in English by developing their communication skills through their use of the language. In addition to the academic development of the learners, ECAs improve the learners socially through raising their self confidence which also may indirectly lead to students' progress in speaking. This result is important to teachers because when they plan and manage activities they have to make them feasible and positive to raise students' confidence. It can't be denied that self confidence represents a major factor in learner's ability to learn and use the language. In other words, confident students have the advantage of using the language without fear of being criticized or mocked which possibly makes them more fluent.

In a similar fashion, Bahdi (2014) discussed the impact of ECAs on the oral proficiency of the students in the English department at Ouargla University. In his study, Bahdi (2014) aimed at detecting the relationship between English language university students' involvement in ECAs and their achievement in oral proficiency. Bahdi (2014) concluded from the study that oral proficiency is positively linked to involving in nonacademic activities. They help to enhance students' performance orally; they have an impact on learners' language acquisition and skills, they are crucial for learners' communicative competence and learners' language fluency. In other words, students should participate in ECAs in order to develop their speaking skill in English. Furthermore, he stressed the fact that excellent planning and organizing of those activities is extremely crucial to this oral proficiency development.

In countries that teach English as a second language, English teachers need to encourage students to develop their ability to recognize the usage of the language around them and take responsibility of their learning as autonomous learners. Guo (2011) conducted a study to explore the effect of an out-of-class activity on the awareness of ESL students of the usage of English around them. The results of the study revealed that students before participating in the activity paid little attention to the English used in their daily lives such as English on campus or English signs. Gue (2011) concluded from the study that there was a positive change in the students' attention to English usage around them. Although this experiment revealed positive results, the researcher admitted that the students did not have high motivation to participate at the beginning despite prizes and extra credits. The students participated when she made the activities as a course requirement. This indicates that students' attitudes play an important role in the implementation of ECAs.

Yildiz (2015) proposed that students' involvement in ECAs can be a useful way to improve their English learning. He stated some of the effects of ECAs on English learning such as enhancing interaction, encouraging cooperation among students, allowing students to discover their skills, developing students' autonomy, and developing students' communication skills.

Yoedo (2011) argued that ECAs are capable of improving communication skills in young learners. He provided a procedure for using materials in ECAs to develop students' communication abilities. However, certain conditions must be provided in order to have effective ECAs. First, teachers have to prepare well for the activities since the time allotted for these activities is little. Second, the materials used in ECAs have to be selected carefully. Third, the activities need to be well designed. Fourth, both the materials and the activities should be appropriate and suitable for students' interest, abilities and needs. Finally, teachers need to provide encouraging atmosphere that helps students to learn. These procedures can improve learners' communication skills and develop their reading habits and reading skills.

Organizing ECAs:

The organization of ECAs requires some conditions to guarantee success of the activities. Salamuddin et al. (2011) stressed that knowledge and skills are required by teachers to manage ECAs in an effective way. In the same way, Bahdi (2014) mentioned some requirements to ensure good organization of nonacademic language activities. He proposed that such activities should be voluntary in order to motivate students and various to give the students an opportunity to choose from them; both the activities and the materials should be chosen carefully to be appropriate to the student's age and level of language proficiency and to link the activities to the in-class content and materials.

In regard to teachers' competency in managing ECAs in relation to planning, guiding, implementation and evaluation, it is clear that all these play major roles in the success of the implementation of ECAs. According to Salamuddin et al. (2011), who discussed teachers' management of ECAs in their research, the Malaysian Ministry of Education stated in a circular that students' participation in ECAs is obligatory and teachers have to participate in organizing the activities and supervising them. In addition to that, Ibrahim (2002 cited in Salamuddin et al., 2011) claimed that some teachers fail to realize the importance of implementing such activities, so they do not give them the same degree of importance as the academic curriculum. This can be attributed in some education systems to the overemphasis on academic achievement which is measured by examinations and the fact that students will not have grades on ECAs. The Saudi education system resembles the Malaysian education system in this aspect where much focus is on examinations and grades, while other methods might be more useful to students' learning.

Challenges in Implementing ECAs:

As for the difficulties encountered by both teachers and students in implementing the activities, Aldbsi and Al-Alan (2009) stated that some of the challenges that hinder the implementation of ECAs are: lack of designated periods for school activities, teachers' busy schedules, lack of facilities needed for the implementation of the activities, overloaded curricula and curricula's lack of care for school activities.

In the same way, Panigrahi and Geleta (2012) discussed the implementation of co-curricular activities in secondary schools in Ethiopia. The researchers stated according to their study that not having trained teachers or training courses for those activities, lack of necessary facilities and tools which are essential for carrying out the activities, deficient monitoring and supervision practices, heavy teaching load of secondary school teachers, insufficient budget and reward are the most important factors that can affect the implementation of co-curricular activities in secondary school.

Similarly, Salamuddin et al. (2011) mentioned in their study four problems related to teachers that could possibly hinder the success of ECAs, these are: absence of teachers' interest and skills, teachers' lack of experience in carrying out such activities, lack of training courses that train teachers on managing ECAs and lack or inadequacy of facilities and resources in schools to implement these activities. Furthermore, they mentioned some constraints that teachers face in managing ECAs such as lack of money, lack of support from parents and school, unsatisfactory equipment and lack of space.

Additionally, Bahdi's (2014) interview with a teacher revealed an obstacle that hinders teachers from initiating and developing ECAs which is the lack of time. This is a crucial issue whether in relation to organizing or even attending nonacademic activities due to the busy schedules of students and teachers.

According to Guo (2011), EFL teachers have some doubts regarding the usefulness of the activities done out of the classroom. She justified this attitude with what Little (2009) suggested in his study that these doubts can be attributed to three problems. There might be no adequate English language environment, insufficient knowledge in implementing the tasks, and the lack of lenience whether in the curriculum or other aspects of school such as the schedule or the textbook.

Wilson (2009) discussed financial challenges in implementing ECAs. He stated that some schools try to provide students with the best education but face these challenges and attempt sometimes to minimize the school expenses. As a result, ECAs may become on the list of things that schools cannot pay for and hence do not carry them out. In addition, he mentioned another important aspect that helps in carrying out ECAs which is transportation. He considered the limited transportation means as a challenge in implementing ECAs, so students may not be able to attend meetings or other out-of-school activities.

English ECAs in Saudi Schools:

Research studies done in Saudi Arabia on English ECAs are scarce. Some of these studies deal with ECAs at the university level. Bakoban and Aljarallah (2015) conducted a research to discover the effect of students' participation at King Abdulaziz University in ECAs on students' GPA. The researchers used a questionnaire to collect data for the research and more than two hundred university students participated in the study. The results of the study revealed that there is a positive impact of participation in ECAs on students' GPA. The researchers also claimed that the time spent in participating in the activities did not negatively affect students' studying time. Moreover, the study revealed that students are generally satisfied with the university ECAs that they participate in.

A study by Almunif (1995) discussed English ECAs in Saudi schools along with other school activities. He stated the objectives of these activities as: first, they should develop students' reading skill by providing texts that move from the easy to the more challenging to raise students' linguistic competence. Second, they should provide students with vocabulary that help students express what they want. Third, they should develop students' independence. Fourth, they have to enhance students' knowledge on the basics of the English language and its rules. Fifth, they should train students on how to search in English dictionaries for the words they need in their daily conversations. Finally, they should train students to communicate using English. Almunif (1995) provided practical instructions on how to perform some activities to develop the four language skills in addition to developing students' translation abilities. Although the study is somehow old, it provided good suggestions on ways to develop students' competency in English.

Research around English ECAs in Saudi Arabia is still in its infancy. This study is an attempt to shed some light on English ECAs in secondary schools as the studies investigated are either related to university students, too old, or deal with ECAs in other school subjects.

Methodology:

This study investigates the effects of English ECAs on students' language learning. Furthermore, some of the challenges that hinder implementing such activities in secondary schools in Riyadh are tackled, and some possible solutions are presented to overcome these challenges.

Some other previous research in the field of language learning found that participation in ECAs has a positive effect on language learning. For instance, Bahdi's study (2014) concluded that "there is a positive relationship between extracurricular involvement and oral proficiency." (p. 65). But what about implementing ECAs in Saudi schools? Does it provide outcomes that are similar to what already has been proven by research in other countries or not?

In order to find out the answers to the study questions, certain methods and tools are used to help in getting a better understanding of the effects and challenges of implementing ECAs in secondary schools in Riyadh. This chapter provides a description of the methods and tools used to answer the questions of the research along with an explanation of the sample, the collection of the data, and data analysis.

Research Design:

This study depends on the descriptive survey. According to Evans and Rooney (2008) "descriptive research involves describing a population of measurements. Usually inferences are made from a representative sample to a population." (p.16). Descriptive survey is used to serve the purpose of the study, which attempts to investigate the effects of implementing English ECAs on students' language learning in secondary schools and the obstacles teachers face in implementing these activities from teachers' point of view.

Population and Sample:

The population in this study consists of all the English teachers teaching secondary school in Riyadh. The respondents are female English language teachers who are currently teaching secondary school in Riyadh. The total of the collected forms was seventy two (72) forms; eight (8) forms were excluded from analysis due to their incomplete information. This resulted in having sixty four (64) complete surveys from which the data were gathered.

The "Google forms" software application was used to design the tool, and the link of the electronic questionnaire was sent to the teachers either directly or through their school administration or school representatives.

The Study Tool:

A questionnaire was chosen as a means for exploring secondary school English teachers' views. This tool was considered due to its efficiency in gathering a proper number of responses. The researcher decided to construct an original questionnaire because there was not an existing survey that dealt with all the variables that need to be investigated. The questionnaire was designed by using the "Google forms" application. It consisted of twenty items that belong to the closed-form type of questions. In addition, it used a five point Likert scale rated from (1 to 5) which is used to allow the respondents to express their different levels of agreement. This helps in investigating teachers' perspectives on the effects of English ECAs in secondary schools and the challenges teachers face in implementing them more directly. The length of the five point Likert scale used for the study is distributed according to the range of the five choices which can be shown as follows: "strongly agree" ranges from 4.20 to 5.0, "agree" ranges from 3.40 to 4.19, "neutral" ranges from 2.60 to 3.39, "disagree" ranges from 1.80 to 2.59 and "strongly disagree" ranges from 1 to 1.79.

The questionnaire consists of three constructs. The first part of it was about the effects of English ECAs on students' language learning and it consists of eight items. The second part was about the challenges teachers face in implementing English ECAs and it consists of five items. The last part of the questionnaire consists of a list of seven possible solutions to overcome the obstacles that hinder the implementation of English ECAs. The statements of the questionnaire were developed from the reviewed literature.

Validity of the Study Tool:

Validity of Experts:

According to Vogt (1999, cited in Kane, 2010), validity is "A term to describe a measurement instrument or test that accurately measures what it is supposed to measure (p. 6). In this study, the general appearance of the questionnaire and the clarity of its language and purpose were tested by giving the questionnaire to experts in the field of education. They were asked to judge and evaluate the questionnaire in order to make sure of its validity. They gave their observations and suggestions concerning the questionnaire whether in editing or deleting some of the items. Their opinions were taken in consideration and, thus, few changes were made on the survey tool accordingly.

The reliability value of the tool is about (0.88), the validity of the study tool is about (0.94) which is considered a high degree of validity.

Internal Consistency:

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to discover the correlation between each item and the construct to which the item belongs as indicated in table (1).

Table(1) the correlation between the constructs and the items

First construct		Second construct		Third construct	
No.	Pearson's correlation coefficient (r)	No.	Pearson's correlation coefficient (r)	No.	Pearson's correlation coefficient (r)
1	**.817	9	**.633	14	**.626
2	*.444	10	**.575	15	**.671
3	**.798	11	**.928	16	**.697
4	**.745	12	**.703	17	**.643
5	**.905	13	**.781	18	**.679
6	**.927	-	-	19	*..501
7	**.896	-	-	20	*..538
8	**.883	-	-	-	-

From the Correlations table, it can be seen that the correlation coefficient (r) for all the items is significant at 0.01 except for the second item of the first construct, the nineteenth and twentieth items of the third construct which are significant at 0.05 indicating a strong relationship p < 0 between the constructs and the items belonging to them.

Stability of the Tool:

Reliability:

Reliability is an important element to be investigated when it comes to research instruments. Vogt (1999, cited in Kane, 2010) clarified that "when repeated measurements of the same thing give identical or very similar results, the measurement instrument is said to be reliable (p.6). The stability of the tool was calculated using Cronbach's alpha resulting in the total value of about (0.88). In addition, all the three constructs had an acceptable value of reliability. The first construct had a value of about (0.92), the second construct had a value of about (0.78) and the third construct had a value of about (0.71). This indicates that the questionnaire has a high degree of stability and it can be trusted to be used to achieve the goals of the study. Table (2) illustrates the Cronbach's alpha value for each construct of the questionnaire.

Table (2) the Cronbach's alpha value for each construct of the questionnaire

NO.	The Construct	Alpha Cronbach's
1	Effects of English Extra-curricular Activities on Students' Language Learning	0.92
2	Challenges in Implementing Extra-curricular Activities	0.78
3	Solutions For The Challenges in Implementing Extra-curricular Activities	0.71
The Total		0.88

Data Analysis (Statistical Treatment):

The responses to the statements of the questionnaire represent the data to this study. The forms of the questionnaire were collected from the study sample and analyzed to measure the frequency and percentage of responses. The SPSS software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used in the analysis of the results to get the following statistical methods: Cronbach's alpha to test the reliability of the study tool. Also, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to test the internal validity. On the other hand, means, percentages, frequencies and standard deviation were used to rank the items of the study according to the samples' point of view. Then, the data were tabulated and displayed in diagrams and figures to provide a clear view of the results which were discussed in the fifth chapter based on the literature review and teaching experience of the researcher.

Results and Discussion:

Results and Discussion of the First Question:

The first research question is: What are some of the effects of implementing English ECAs on students' language learning in secondary schools in Riyadh?

To answer this question, frequencies, percentages, averages, and standard deviations were calculated and ranks were given to the items according to their means as shown in Table (3).

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Table (3): Frequencies, percentages, averages, standard deviations and ranks of the effects of English Extra-curricular Activities on Students' Language Learning.

NO.	Effects of English ECAs on Students' Language Learning	Response degree										Mean	SD	Rank
		Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree				
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	Help students to learn new vocabulary.	43	67.2	17	26.6	2	3.1	0	0	2	3.1	4.55	0.83	1
2	Develop students' knowledge of grammar.	28	43.8	14	21.9	17	26.6	3	4.7	2	3.1	3.98	1.09	7
3	Motivate students to study English.	36	56.2	14	21.9	6	9.4	6	9.4	2	3.1	4.19	1.14	5
4	Develop students' writing skills.	25	39.1	11	17.2	14	21.9	11	17.2	3	4.7	3.69	1.28	8
5	Develop students' communication skills.	47	73.4	8	12.5	5	7.8	2	3.1	2	3.1	4.50	0.99	2
6	Enhance students' oral proficiency.	43	67.2	10	15.6	6	9.4	4	6.2	1	1.6	4.41	1.00	3
7	Develop students' reading skills.	33	51.6	13	20.3	11	17.2	6	9.4	1	1.6	4.11	1.10	6
8	Encourage students to become autonomous learners.	37	57.8	12	18.8	8	12.5	6	9.4	1	1.6	4.22	1.09	4

Table (3) shows the ranks of the first construct about the effects of English ECAs on students' language learning. The averages range between about (4.55 and 3.69) and the total average of the construct is about (4.21). These results indicate a very high level of agreement among the respondents on the positive effects of English ECAs on students' language learning.

The first effect that received a very strong agreement among respondents was that ECAs help students to learn new vocabulary. This is a good indication that teachers maybe choosing activities that assist their students in their learning of the language. This study agrees in this effect with Bahdi (2014) and Guo (2011). They are similar in claiming that English ECAs have a positive impact on students' vocabulary. A possible justification for this result is that the repetitive exposure to authentic language could provide students with opportunities to improve their expressions. Hopefully, the activities implemented by participants met the condition stated by (Almunif 1995) regarding implementing English ECAs.

Communication and interaction are necessary for any ESL classroom. Language theorists stressed the importance of communication in learning a language. In this study, ECAs develop students' communication skills ranked second and got very strong agreement among respondents. This result agrees with Park (2015), Yoedo (2011), Yildiz (2015) and Bahdi (2014). They all confirm that ECAs contribute to the development of students' communication skills through their use of the language. Perhaps the nature of ECAs and the fact that participation in such activities is given no grades, makes students feel relaxed and at ease when speaking. This provides many opportunities for the students to use the language without fear of making mistakes. Almunif (1995) stated when talking about the conditions English ECAs should have that ECAs should train students to communicate using English. The result of this study may prove that English teachers make some endeavors to train their students to communicate using English.

The third effect that received very strong agreement among respondents was that ECAs enhance students' oral proficiency. This result agrees with Bahdi (2014) and it could be justified by the saying "practice makes perfect", and the fact that continual participation in English ECAs provides students with many opportunities to use the language which can enhance their oral proficiency. Therefore, it can be said that spending more time on English ECAs has a positive impact on students' oral proficiency.

The fourth effect is that ECAs encourage students to become autonomous learners. This result is similar to Guo (2011) and Yildiz (2015). Autonomy is an important concept in education. The strong agreement on this effect of ECAs could be attributed to the nature of some ECAs. These activities are not that limited as regular curriculum, rather they have a wide space for creativity and skills. Even the planning and management of ECAs could be shared between teachers and students. This might stimulate students to research and even become inquisitive in order to present good materials and requires them to read more on certain subjects.

Lesser in degree than the first four effects, however, still received strong agreement among respondents was that ECAs motivate students to study English. This result can be supported by many other previous studies. According to Dornyei (2001, cited in Bahdi, 2014) having a high motivation level is considered a strong element in learner's success in acquiring the language. A possible justification for this result is that some of these activities provide fun and a psychomotor aspect to learning as opposed to the rigidity of some curricula. Moreover, it is possible that participants in ECAs would try to learn English and improve their language to give the best performance in the activities. In this way, students are motivated to learn English due to ECAs.

The sixth effect is ECAs develop students' reading skills. This agrees with Yoedo (2011) except that he puts some procedures and predicts if they were to be applied they can develop students' reading skills and habits. The respondents in the current study maybe using activities that have features that require students to read more; thus, they might have noticed some development in students' reading skills. This is a very positive aspect in ECAs that helps developing students' knowledge. It agrees with Almunif (1995) that English ECAs should develop students' reading skill.

Developing students' knowledge of grammar was ranked seventh in the effects that got a strong agreement among respondents. This result came opposite to what Bahdi (2014) included in his research. The teacher who was interviewed in Bahdi's (2014) study didn't think that ECAs have much impact on grammar. Moreover, both the teacher and the students reported that they do not enjoy grammar or structural activities. Perhaps teachers in the current study use ECAs that involve focusing on grammar for the sake of knowledge of the structure. For example, research or surfing the net to get extra knowledge of the rules they take in class. Another assumption is that teachers may think that repetitive involvement in the activities would lead to students producing sentences that are grammatically correct.

The final effect is that ECAs develop students' writing skills. A possible explanation of the result of this current study is that teachers are maybe using activities that involve writing which helps students to improve in this skill. Another possible justification is that English ECAs that involve reading and communication in their development of these skills develop writing skills subsequently. English ECAs provided by the teacher may help but the effect wouldn't be much and this is perhaps why it was ranked last by teachers.

Results and Discussion of the Second Question:

The second research question is: What are the challenges that teachers face when carrying out English ECAs?

To answer this question, frequencies, percentages, averages, and standard deviations were calculated and ranks were given to the items according to their means as shown in Table (4).

Table (4): Frequencies, percentages, averages, standard deviations and ranks of the challenges teachers face in implementing English extra-curricular activities.

NO.	The challenges that teachers face when carrying out English ECAs?	Strongly agree		agree		neutral		disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	SD	Rank
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	Busy schedules of teachers.	48	75.0	6	9.4	5	7.8	3	4.7	2	3.1	4.48	1.04	1
2	Topics are not always interesting.	10	15.6	15	23.4	24	37.5	9	14.1	6	9.4	3.22	1.16	5
3	Overloaded curriculum.	35	54.7	11	17.2	11	17.2	3	4.7	4	6.2	4.09	1.22	3
4	Lack of training courses for teachers on how to implement those activities.	28	43.8	13	20.3	9	14.1	6	9.4	8	12.5	3.73	1.43	4
5	Insufficient budget and reward.	38	59.4	11	17.2	5	7.8	6	9.4	4	6.2	4.14	1.27	2

Table (4) shows the ranks of the second construct about the obstacles teachers face in implementing English ECAs in secondary schools. The averages range between about (4.48 and 3.22) and the total average of the construct is about (3.93). These results indicate a high level of agreement among the study sample on the obstacles teachers face in implementing English ECAs in secondary schools.

The first challenge that received very strong agreement was busy schedules of teachers. This is not a surprising result because busy schedules mean a lot of consumed effort and time that may leave less effort and time for other ECAs to be carried out. This result is shared with some other research like Panigrahi & Geleta (2012), Aldbsi & Al-Alan (2009), and Bahdi (2014). This is a crucial issue whether in relation to organizing or even attending ECAs. Due to the busy schedules of students and teachers, it becomes hard for teachers to implement English ECAs or observe well how their students are performing in these activities.

Insufficient budget and reward came second in the challenges that got strong agreement among respondents. Panigrahi & Geleta (2012), and Salamuddin et al. (2011) agree with this result. To implement ECAs, financial support is needed to cover the expenses of trips, facilities or materials used in the activities. If this support is not provided by the school, many teachers may either volunteer to implement these activities at their expense, or simply do not consider them as a priority. Consequently, this can lead to a decrease in the number of activities that are supposed to be carried out. In addition to the financial part of the issue, there is also the moral side which has to do with the encouragement teachers get from the Ministry of Education, their schools, and the parents.

The third challenge that had strong agreement among respondents was overloaded curriculum. This difficulty resembles what Aldbsi and Al-Alan (2009) found out in their study. In a book called "Teachers Under Pressure" by MacBeath and Galton (2008) (p.48), the obstacle overloaded curriculum came in the fifth rank among the different barriers to teaching. Regarding ECAs, some teachers would give the priority to covering the subjects of the regular overloaded curriculum over ECAs. Similarly, it would be hard for students to participate in ECAs while they still didn't fulfill the requirements of their course which is based on an overloaded curriculum. These could be the justifications for the high agreement among teachers concerning this point.

Lack of training courses for teachers on how to implement those activities came fourth in rank. This result agrees with Salamuddin et al. (2011) and Geleta (2012) in considering lack of training on implementing ECAs as a challenge to English ECAs. It is important to get proper training before involving in organizing and implementing English ECAs. To be trained on implementing ECAs means getting the best of other teachers' experiences in this field, keeping updated on the new methods and means of implementing them, and learning how to deal with ECAs from planning to evaluation.

The fifth challenge that received moderate agreement among respondents was topics are not always interesting. However, compared to the other challenges in the study, this challenge got the lowest rank as a challenge in teachers' point of view. This can be attributed to two reasons. First, this challenge is related to both students and teachers, and perhaps students' point of view is better taken regarding this challenge. Second, sometimes teachers are the ones who choose the topics; thus, they do not consider them as uninteresting.

Results and Discussion of the Third Question:

The third research question is: What are some of the possible solutions for these obstacles?

To answer this question, frequencies, percentages, averages, and standard deviations were calculated and ranks were given to the items according to their means as shown in Table (5).

Table (5): Frequencies, percentages, averages, standard deviations and ranks of some of the solutions to overcome the challenges in implementing English extra-curricular activities.

NO.	Some of the solutions to overcome the challenges in implementing English extra-curricular activities.	Strongly agree		agree		neutral		disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	SD	Rank
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	Providing an encouraging atmosphere for students to participate in the activities.	43	67.2	16	25.0	3	4.7	1	1.6	1	1.6	4.55	0.80	1
2	Providing students with variety of English extra-curricular activities.	28	43.8	16	25.0	13	20.3	4	6.2	3	4.7	3.97	1.15	5
3	Choosing age appropriate activities.	29	45.3	18	28.1	14	21.9	0	0	3	4.7	4.09	1.05	4
4	Making participation in the activities voluntary.	23	35.9	22	34.4	13	20.3	3	4.7	3	4.7	3.92	1.09	7
5	Organizing activities appropriate for students' language proficiency level.	33	51.6	21	32.8	5	7.8	3	4.7	2	3.1	4.25	1.01	3
6	Connecting extra-curricular activities' content to the materials used in the class.	24	37.5	20	31.2	13	20.3	5	7.8	2	3.1	3.92	1.09	6
7	Giving students a chance to choose their activities.	37	57.8	16	25.0	5	7.8	4	6.2	2	3.1	4.28	1.06	2

Table (5) shows the ranks of the third construct about some of the possible solutions for the obstacles in implementing English ECAs. The averages range between about (4.55 and 3.92) and the total average of the construct is about (4.14). These results indicate a high level of agreement among the study sample on some of the possible solutions.

These results reveal that there are some solutions for the challenges faced in implementing English ECAs. All these solutions had very strong or strong agreement among respondents. First, provide an encouraging atmosphere for students in order to participate in English ECAs. Students have to feel comfortable when participating in such activities in order to give their best performance and be able to learn. This solution could help remedy some of the challenges that have got to do with stress like overloaded curriculum. Second, give students a chance to choose their activities. Teachers have to be aware of their students needs; if they want their students to progress, they need to help them express themselves. They have to provide opportunities for them to choose activities and materials based on their preferences. This can help to overcome a challenge such as having uninteresting topics for English ECAs. Third, organize activities appropriate for students' language proficiency level. These activities should be challenging but make students feel successful and enjoy the activities at the same time. Fourth, choose age-appropriate activities. This can help students because they need some activities that relate to their stage of development. Both of the third and fourth solutions are important to ensure having activities that are appropriate for students to make them feel comfortable to participate in order to benefit from activities. Fifth, provide students with a variety of English ECAs. Participation in a variety of ECAs is important for students' development. In other words, this variation allows students to feel free to choose what suits their skills and preferences. Sixth, connect ECAs' content to the materials used in the class. This can help in enforcing what has been learnt in class and lessen overloaded curricula. Similar in rank with the sixth solution is the seventh solution which is to make participation in the activities voluntary. Thus, according to the view of the majority of teachers in this study, ECAs should be voluntary. It is possible if all these solutions are taken in consideration that students will be motivated to participate in English ECAs. Hopefully, participation in English ECAs will increase in the future and the challenges that hinder such activities will diminish.

Summary and Conclusion:

This descriptive research is an attempt to identify the effects of implementing English ECAs on students' language learning, to identify the obstacles faced by teachers when carrying out English ECAs in secondary schools, and to provide some solutions for the difficulties that teachers face in implementing English ECAs. There is a high agreement among the respondents to this study on the effects of English ECAs, the obstacles that hinder these activities, and the proposed solutions to some of the obstacles in implementing ECAs. In conclusion, the effects of implementing ECAs and the obstacles that hinder such activities could be much more than what was found out in this study. Therefore, further research can be done in this field to help in enhancing methods to develop students' language learning.

Recommendations:

Depending on the results of this study, the recommendations that can be offered to the schools, and teachers are the following:

To schools:

1- School administration has to evaluate the outcomes of English ECAs in order to implement them in the future if they are effective or discard them.

2- Facilitate implementing English ECAs and assist teachers when implementing them.

To teachers:

1- Teachers have to investigate students' needs of English ECAs prior to planning them.

2- Involving students in decision making regarding the topics and management of the activities.

3- Perhaps it is better for teachers to make ECAs an extension to the content that students receive in the class.

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