



## A Comparative Study of the Features of Extracurricular Activities in Iran with England, India and Malaysia

Mahin Teimoornia<sup>1</sup>  
 Mohammad Reza Imam Jomeh<sup>2</sup> (Corresponding author)  
 Gholam Ali Ahmadi<sup>3</sup>  
 Sadegh Nasri<sup>4</sup>

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 05 May 2020 Revised: 26 August 2020 Accepted: 07 November 2020 Online: 15 June 2021	The purpose of present study is to compare the features of extracurricular activities in schools of Iran with those of England, India and Malaysia. Comparative research method has been performed using Bereday's method. The unit of observation is "Macro" and the strategy for country selection was "different systems, different results". The method of data collection was library research using valid scientific articles and international websites such as UNESCO and the Ministry of Education of selected countries. In order to increase the validity of research data, original documents and to find reliability of data, self-assessment method was performed by researchers. John Stuart Mill's agreement and difference method were also used to analyze the data. The findings showed that the characteristics of extracurricular activities in schools of Iran, Malaysia, India and England are similar in dimensions such as cultivating a balanced human and complete growth; gaining real life experiences; variety of activities and formation of identity. There are differences between Iran and selected countries in such features as conducting extracurricular training for teachers, role of teachers in extracurricular activities, integration of activities with formal curriculum, and cooperation of organizations. Based on the research findings, it is recommended that Iran's educational system policymakers integrate extracurricular activities with formal curricula, and before starting work in schools, student-teachers should be given training related to extracurricular activities, and the role and duties of teachers in implementation of extracurricular activities should be clearly defined.
<b>KEYWORDS</b> Extracurricular Activities Formal curricula Teachers' Role	

<sup>1</sup> PhD Student, Department of Curriculum Studies, Shahid Rajaee University, Tehran, Iran, Email : teimoorniam@yahoo.com

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum Studies, Shahid Rajaee University, Tehran, Iran, Email: emamjomeh@sru.ac.ir

<sup>3</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum Studies, Shahid Rajaee University, Tehran, Iran, Email: ahmadygholamali@gmail.com

<sup>4</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum Studies, Shahid Rajaee University, Tehran, Iran, Email:s.nasri@sru.ac.ir

## **1. Introduction**

One of the tasks of education system in any society is to provide appropriate learning opportunities for growth and flourishing of learners' diverse talents. Sometimes the formal curricula may not meet all learners' needs. Therefore, schools devote time to extracurricular activities. These activities are an alternative form of learning and help pupils to relate what is offered to them in formal curricula to environmental realities. According to Kerr (2009), extracurricular activities can be seen as a bridge between formal curricula and real-life learning. Today, extracurricular activities are considered as an integral part of school educational activities (Kelly, 2004). These programs vary and require constant consideration by school officials to provide opportunities for meaningful student participation (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). These activities are divided into three types of entertainment, cultural and scientific activities, but in most cases in the daily school program, a combination of these programs is done under the supervision of school's administrators. In another division, extracurricular activities are organized into five forms: scientific knowledge and skills, practical competencies, interpersonal skills, and humanitarian activities. These activities are not limited to classroom and school and are affected more than any other factor by level of interest, experience and initiative of teachers, pupils and school officials (Hajie Aghaloo & Aghazadeh, 2004). In other words, extracurricular activities are voluntary and students do not receive a grade for it, and offered outside of formal curriculum but inside the school environment (Sullivan, 2018).

Research reveals that children who participate in extracurricular activities have a great tendency and sense of belonging to peer social groups. Through a variety of activities such as fine arts, sports competitions, familiarity with communities' customs, educational clubs, etc., students' skills in solving real-world problems are strengthened and their creativity increases. Students' participation in these activities also increases value of cooperation and teamwork, and group and individual responsibility. Other benefits of participating in extracurricular activities include building friendly relationships, improving social skills, developing professional skills, cultivating reasoning, attention to personal interests, and growing leadership. In addition, these programs are effective in strengthening the physical, emotional, social, scientific, aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of learners. Provision of a variety of extracurricular activities by school

staff and teachers increases learners' success and confidence. However, benefits of extracurricular activities encourage school staff to prepare variety of them for pupils. In addition, because of children's voluntary participation in these activities, schools use and support various incentive methods for student participation. It is obvious that the success of any activity depends on teachers and staff's thoughts and performance.

Historical background of extracurricular activities can be traced back to ancient cultures. These activities in ancient Athens included dialogue clubs, shows, special day celebrations, public events, and honorary associations. These activities can also be found in the school curriculum of the Homeric and Platonic periods. In addition, during the Renaissance, schools focused on sports, music, dance, and singing. In the new era and for the first time in the nineteenth century, extracurricular activities were provided for learners in American educational institutions, and discussion clubs, fraternity associations, and women's associations were formed (Freeman, 2017). First and from the 1950s onwards, Western countries began these activities with a formal curriculum to meet learners' new needs and interests (Massoni, 2011). However, these developments spread at different speeds in many countries. In some countries, administrators of education systems realized the importance and role of extracurricular activities very soon (Astiz, Wiseman & Baker, 2002).

The idea of carrying out extracurricular activities in Iran was formally conceived with establishment of Scouting Organization. The promotion of Scouting was deeply considered by Reza Shah and since 1934; the Ministry of Culture has been in charge of performing professional affairs (Mousavi, 2009). After the Islamic Revolution and due to ideological changes in the structure of government, the educational system and extracurricular activities also changed and took on a religious flavor. Because of this, in early days of revolution, an independent organization in the Ministry of Education took responsibility for designing and carrying out extracurricular activities (Zahedi, 1996).

During the four decades, extracurricular activities section in Ministry of Education has continued to work with an emphasis on strengthening faith, religious knowledge, and promoting value concepts of revolution. Currently, extracurricular activities with extensive

sections such as Quran, scientific journey, cultural-artistic, physical education and counseling work under supervision of the Social and Cultural Deputy of the Ministry of Education of Iran. The experience of Iran's educational system for the implementation of extracurricular activities shows that due to lack of a comprehensive, inclusive and scientific educational policy, the Ministry of Education has been less able to meet interests and demands of learners and expectations of society (Sadeghi, 2015). In addition, it must be acknowledged that in Iran, extracurricular activities are treated with taste and without attention to scientific features and methods. The question now is "what are the characteristics of these activities to meet the interests of learners and the expectations of society?" and "following what characteristics and principles can avoid personal and non-scientific decisions? Certainly, the study of activities and experiences of other countries can be the source of finding good ideas to improve and develop extracurricular activities in Iranian schools.

For example, Ferreira et al. (2018) indicates that extracurricular activities in educational centers increase technical skills of learners. The results of his research also showed that 80% of learners participated in these activities and 97% of them were satisfied. Sullivan (2018) examines transparency of how to define extracurricular activities and motivation of students who decide to participate in these activities. He found that these activities in UK schools are very diverse and affects individual growth. It affects students' social, physical and academic achievement. Musapour Miandehi, peyronaziri and Galyn Moghadam (2018) showed various functions of these activities focusing on issues such as cultural identity, social cohesion, and professional development. In addition, Musapour, Falahati and Mazinani (2017) describe functions of informal curriculum in three categories of psychological, Knowledge-attitude, and practical-behavioral. According to findings of Khanian (2016) the extracurricular activities were divided into three sections: out of school activities (Scouting, The Red Lion and Sun Society of Iran, and book and magazine publishing), out of class activities (Artistic, scientific, literary associations) and inclusive school activities (national-patriotic celebrations, humanitarian and social activities).

Findings of Shams al-Din al-Motlagh (2016) reveals that teachers have ability to perform extracurricular activities depending on level of school principal and colleagues' support,

amount of budget, existence of space and appropriate facilities in schools. Imam Jomeh, Ahmadi and Timurnia (2013) compared the objectives, content, implementation and evaluation of extracurricular activities in Malaysia, United Kingdom, United States and Iran and found similarities and differences among these elements in the selected countries. Their findings indicated that educational system of three countries of Malaysia, United Kingdom and United States are familiar with different local, regional and global religions and cultures, recognize other cultures, respect their own and others' customs and traditions. Furthermore, these researchers believe that level of teachers' participation in activities is more compared to their colleagues in Iran. Keyvanfar (2010) also believes extracurricular activities in Iran has a more religious aspect and seeks to achieve the ultimate goals of education such as guidance and growth, *Hayateeh Tayebee* (Excellent life), and piety. In the United States, due to the diversity of religions, policymakers in the education system have ignored the religious aspects of these activities. Since previous studies have not examined the characteristics of extracurricular activities of the selected countries, the purpose of this study is to examine it to provide a better picture of design and implementation process of extracurricular activities for Iran's education system policymakers. Therefore, the general purpose of this study is to compare the features of extracurricular activities in schools of Iran with those of Malaysia, India and England.

## **2. Research Method**

This research is qualitative in terms of nature, applied in terms of purpose and comparative in terms of method. The statistical population includes all countries of the world and method of sampling is judgmental. The selected countries are Iran, Malaysia, India and England. In this study, Malaysia has been selected as a Muslim country having political relations and similar religious and cultural backgrounds with Iran. India was also selected as a developing country and England was targeted for being a pioneer in providing extracurricular activities for school children. The unit of observation is macro (country) and strategy of selection is "different systems, different results". The researchers assume that the four selected educational systems have different performance and result in terms of cultural, social, political, economic activities and in extracurricular activities. The method of data collection is documentary through the study and review of most important sources and documents related to extracurricular activities in the education systems of selected countries and international websites such as UNESCO. In order to increase validity of the study, original documents were used and to increase its reliability, self-assessment was performed by researchers.

Mill's agreement and disagreement methods were used to analyze the data and Bereday's method was used to present the results.

### **3. Findings**

Since the main purpose of research is to compare characteristics of extracurricular activities in different countries, the researchers after describing data extracted them in interpretation stage. It should be noted that characteristic means a distinguishing feature and therefore attribute extraction is a process in which by performing an operation on the data, the salient and defining characteristics of each program are determined (Abadis Dictionary, 2020). Feature extraction is one of the basic and important processes that provide deep insights for researchers. In this study, features are characteristics that are considered as a criterion for performing extracurricular activities in selected countries.

#### *Description and interpretation*

According to the data analysis, it can be said that extracurricular activities in Iran pursue various goals. Some of these goals are:

- Strengthening faith, religious knowledge and promoting the original culture and civilization of Islamic society of Iran
- Transmitting the value concepts of revolution, especially revolutionary culture and thought
- Acquisition of moral virtues and human perfections based on excellent and pure teachings of Islam of Muhammad
- Special orientation to deepen the spirit of patriotism and country fondness
- Creating interest and faith in one's own culture, self-belief, etc. (Ministry of Education, 2019).

As the structure of education in Iran is centralized, the type and methods of extracurricular activities are communicated to all schools. There is also a wide range of extracurricular activities with religious, national, social, cultural, artistic and political themes in schools. These activities take the form of programs such as religious and national celebrations and festivals - religious ceremonies, cultural competitions, sports, art festivals, scientific, artistic and cultural exhibitions, scientific visits, wall magazines, arts handicrafts, performing arts, anthems, morning ceremonies, and student council-related activities. On occasions and events such as Teacher's Day, War Memorial, the beginning of the school year, Physical Education Day, Student Day, Book and Reading Day, Planting Day and other religious events, activities are carried out (Mousavi, 2009;

Deputy of Education and Culture of the Ministry of Education, 2019). Student participation in many programs is voluntary based on their interests. Of course, in some cases, such as attending public anthems and celebrations, the presence of all students is required. Some activities are done individually and others (such as preparing a wall magazine) with an emphasis on group collaboration. Most programs take place inside the school and in places such as prayer halls, libraries, corridors and classrooms. Most programs are run by students and supervised in sparsely populated schools by an extracurricular instructor who attends school for limited hours (12 hours a week to a maximum of 150 students). In densely populated schools, the supervision of activities is the responsibility of the extracurricular deputy working full time (one full-time extracurricular deputy for every 151 students) (Fars News, 2020). The role of teachers in the activities is less and they do not receive any training in this field.

Table 1: Description and interpretation of Iran's extracurricular activities

Description	Interpretation
Religious and national celebrations and festivals - religious ceremonies, cultural competitions, sports, art festivals, scientific, artistic and cultural exhibitions, scientific visits, wall magazines, arts handicrafts, performing arts, anthems, morning ceremonies, and student council-related activities and so on.	Variety of activities
Growth and flourishing of individual talents; Strengthening individual and social skills; Creating an atmosphere of love, intimacy, vitality and freshness; Stimulate curiosity, cultivation of research, reason, initiative and creativity spirit.	Cultivation of a balanced human being and her/his all talents
Teaching life skills in social, political, economic and biological dimensions; Accepting social responsibilities and facing problems and issues and trying to solve them	Acquisition of real-life experiences
Determining and communicating extracurricular activities to schools	Centralism
Teachers have little role in determining and implementing extracurricular activities. main role is played by the educational affair's teacher or the school's deputy for educational affairs	Faint role of the teacher
Attention to ideological foundations, promoting and getting acquainted with Islamic concepts, teaching culture, art and desirable customs of Islamic society, deepening the spirit of patriotism, strengthening revolutionary value concepts, developing moral virtues based on Islamic ideology, following Islamic, national and revolutionary models, Creating interest and belief in own culture	Identity development
Voluntary participation base on individual interests in extracurricular activities - mandatory participation in some group programs	Semi-voluntary / compulsory attendance
Teachers do not receive any training on extracurricular activities in teacher education centers	Lack of training for teachers

## *England*

Extracurricular activities in England are generally semi-centralized. The England National Board of Education is based on three important principles:

- Delegating powers to the education authorities of the districts,
- Encouraging volunteer institutions and associations to invest and participate in extracurricular activities,
- Avoiding explicit commands and prohibitions by National Board of Education in the field of extracurricular activities at districts and schools levels (Ghaffari, 2010).

The objectives of the extracurricular activities in the England are:

- Children love school and feel happy and proud of what they learn in school,
- Provide a safe and happy environment that encourages students' confidence, independence and interest in learning,
- Creating opportunities for the learner to be able to express their talents and achieve personal, social, emotional and scientific growth,
- Encourage learners to adhere to their values and accept peers, teachers and adults,
- Provide opportunities to expand curricula, including the use of visual arts, music, and sports,
- Equipping children with thinking, speaking and listening skills,
- Acquisition of learning experiences and scientific skills in context of real world,
- Strengthen the sense of individual and group responsibility, cooperation, sociability and creativity,
- Creating safe spaces for fun and entertainment,
- Development of physical and emotional health as well as good habits (diet) to maintain lifelong health, and
- Developing students' interactions with teachers, friends and parents and developing the relationship between school staff and parents (Sullivan, 2018).

A wide range of extracurricular activities are offered in England's schools, including field trips, visit museums, wildlife, environmental centers, art exhibitions, and historic buildings



(Donnell, Morris & Wilson, 2006). Teachers and students do these activities together voluntarily (Donnelly et al., 2019). Activities take place outside of class and on weekends. The facilities and equipment of the school are such that these programs are easily carried out. Some activities also take place outside the school and at the students' place of residence. Each school has a special method for pupils to participate in sports activities and clubs, etc.; instructions are written by school officials at the beginning of school year, and teachers are required to implement them in after-school activities. Indeed, teachers have a significant role to play in the activities.

Teachers carefully visit places related to extracurricular activities and check facilities and equipment. Other social organizations and institutions also cooperate with schools. In England, extracurricular activities are integrated into formal curricula. It is assumed that extracurricular activities are not separate parts of learning and represent real life situations. For example, in schools of Chamberland district, students are taught important scientific concepts related to environmental awareness, and integration of science with historical and social perspectives through a project entitled "Familiarity with Ports" (Lunenburg, 2010). In another example, a teacher after brief explanations about geographical issues, provides information about mountains, mountain slopes, mountain peaks, etc., and prepares students' minds for further study. He then, in the form of an extracurricular activity, asks students to be present in the mountains around their place of residence, discuss the subject for a few hours and submit a report to the classroom for next session (Keyvanfar, 2010). In English Teacher Education courses, teacher-students can choose subjects such as handicrafts and arts, religious education, physical education from specialized courses to obtain teacher qualifications (Nikonia & Imam Jomeh, 2006). They can also participate in hands-on workshops on painting, drawing, sculpture and textile weaving; participate in storytelling workshops and conversion of textbooks into dramatic texts and how to use it in classroom (Shabani, 2002).

Table 2: Description and Interpretation of England's Extracurricular Activities

Description	Interpretation
Children love school and feel happy and proud of what they learn in school; Provide a safe and happy environment that encourages students' confidence, independence and interest in learning; Creating opportunities for the learner to be able to express their talents and achieve personal, social, emotional and scientific growth; Encourage learners to adhere their values and accept peers, teachers and adults; Provide opportunities to expand curricula, including the use of visual arts, music, and sports; and Equipping children with thinking, speaking and listening skills	Creating learning opportunities and a comprehensive growth
Sports clubs and foreign language clubs, scouting, fashion design, photography, dance, anthem, lectures and theater, etc. Activities are presented in three forms: sports, clubs and artistic activities	Variety of activities
Teachers and students do these activities together voluntarily	Voluntary attendance
Extracurricular Activities provide opportunities for students; Strengthen the sense of individual and group responsibility, cooperation and sociability	Opportunities to develop individual and social skills
Extracurricular activities are semi-centralized; Delegating powers to the education authorities of the districts; Avoiding explicit commands and prohibitions by National Board of Education in the field of extracurricular activities at districts and schools levels	Decentralized
Encouraging volunteer institutions and associations to invest and participate in extracurricular activities	Cooperation of institutions and associations
Instructions are written by school officials at the beginning of school year, and teachers are required to implement them in after-school activities. Indeed, teachers have a significant role to play in the activities; Teachers carefully visit places related to extracurricular activities and check facilities and equipment	Collaboration of teachers
Teacher-students can choose subjects such as handicrafts and arts, religious education, physical education from specialized courses to obtain teacher qualifications. They can also participate in workshops on painting, drawing, sculpture and textile weaving; participate in storytelling workshops and conversion of textbooks into dramatic texts and how to use it in classroom	Extracurricular training for teachers

### *India*

This country has 28 States and 7 districts. India's education system is decentralized and self-governing at the State level. The main guidelines for teachers are:

- Completion of curriculum according to the situation

- Evaluate each person's learning ability and, if necessary, consider activities and complementary evaluation
- Regular meetings with parents talking about students' ability and progress
- Active and exploratory teaching and learning
- Attention to mother tongue, especially in practical activities
- Create a friendly atmosphere, without fear and anxiety and help learners to express their opinions freely
- Comprehensive and continuous assessment of learners' understanding, knowledge and ability to apply knowledge
- Enrichment of curricula for learners' growth instead of emphasize on learning through textbook,
- Cultivating the identity of learners according to the democratic policies of India (Sriprakash, 2012).

Tajik Ismaili (2008) considers extracurricular activities in India to include reading, sports games, discussion, speech, dance and drama, singing and participation in youth groups. These activities are responsibility of State Department of Education, although at the same time, other organizations are involved (Fazli Khani & Mozaffari, 2005). The India's Teacher Education Curriculum also teaches (1) engaging with the content of curriculum, examining discipline knowledge and social realities related to the learners' social environment, and (2) developing professional skills, observation, review of documents, analysis and interpretation, drama, art, and storytelling are recommended for teachers (NCERT, 2005). Practical and internship courses for teachers-students include: school communication program, child observation, storytelling for children, theater, creative performance, crafts and music, visits to education and learning innovation centers, and class-based research projects (Sadeghi, 2015). In India's education, to integrate knowledge and learning with the social and individual realities of learners; a critical look at the curriculum and textbooks, emphasize the curriculum according to local needs, promotion of values of peace and equality, citizenship education, justice and freedom, and secularism.

Table 3: Description and Interpretation of India's Extracurricular Activities

Description	Interpretation
Extracurricular activities are diverse	Variety of activities
Presenting and supervision of extracurricular activities is decentralized and is responsibility of the Ministry of Education of each state	Decentralized
Cooperation of other organizations in extracurricular activities	Cooperation of social organizations
Completion of curriculum according to the situation	Position-based curriculum
Attention to the ability, knowledge and talent of learners; to development of learners' physical and mental abilities; to mother tongue, especially in practical activities; Creation of a friendly atmosphere without fear and anxiety and help learners to express their opinions freely; Enrichment of curricula for learners' growth instead of emphasize on learning through textbook, Cultivating identity of learners according to the democratic policies of India	Cultivation of a balanced human being and her/ his all talents
Attention to the subjects, discipline knowledge and social realities of learners' lives in extracurricular activities	Involvement of curricula and social realities
Integrate knowledge and learning with the social and individual realities of learners	Integrating learning with social realities
Localization of curricula according to local/ environmental needs	Curriculum localization
Promotion of values of peace and equality, citizenship education, justice, freedom and secularism	Promoting social values
Design a formal curriculum in which extracurricular activities are seen such as health and physical education, art education, technical education, tribal education and emphasis on the integration of subjects	Integrated curricula
Practical and internship courses for school teachers include: school communication program, child observation, storytelling for children, theater, creative performances, crafts and music, visiting educational and learning innovations centers, class-based research projects	Extracurricular training for teachers

### Malaysia

The Malaysian curriculum is integrated and focuses on three areas of communication, human being - environment, and personal development in primary schools. These three axes are considered in 6 dimensions: basic skills, human relations, art and creativity, values and attitudes, life skills and participation in extracurricular activities (Shafie, Shah, & Abd Majied, 2019). The goal of education in Malaysia is the all-round development of the talents of individuals and the upbringing of children who are mentally, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and who believe in God. Also, cultivating knowledgeable and moral citizens with moral virtues is another goal of the Malaysian education system.

In Malaysia, the goals of extracurricular activities are in line with goals of education to complete and strengthen students' scientific learning. In addition, the purpose of providing extracurricular activities is to nurture balanced, healthy, and active students. Malaysian education emphasizes two main goals: A) critical and creative thinking, B) personality formation. Accordingly, in order to form student's personality, emphasis is placed on extracurricular activities and empowerment of learners. The policy of compulsory participation of every pupil is carried out in an activity - with the aim of nurturing the future leaders of Malaysia. Students realize the importance of order and understanding and acceptance of others in team work and through student parades or attending camps (Tahir, 2014). Some goals of extracurricular activities in the Malaysian education system are as follows:

- ❖ Expanding experiences, flexibility in learning, completing and strengthening training - Scientific and practicing real life situations,
- ❖ Strengthening belief and faith in God and performing religious ceremonies in students,
- ❖ Familiarity with the Qur'an, strengthening the skills of students in reading and interpreting the Holy Quran,
- ❖ Combining spiritual values and practical skills in order to integrate faith and action,
- ❖ Fostering discipline, social and teamwork interaction, and developing self-leadership skills and talents,
- ❖ Develop a spirit of participation, decision-making, responsibility, individual independence and obedience to group leaders,
- ❖ Preparing for competition and cooperation in national and international markets,
- ❖ Training in firefighting, floods, environmental protection and fostering a sense of responsibility towards the environment,
- ❖ Promoting the culture of journey among students and promoting racial integration among different races of the country (Shuriye, 2011).

According to Malaysian educational planners, the values that are best achieved in social sphere through extracurricular activities are: coordination, social development skills, participation spirit, patriotism and love for environment (Bourgonje & Tromp, 2011). Through these activities, spiritual values and practical and professions skills, - tailored to time and social conditions- are combined (Shuriye, 2011).

Table 4: Description and interpretation of Malaysia's extracurricular activities

Description	Interpretation
Development of Social skills, participation spirit, patriotism and love for environment through a wide range of programs in three form of activities (1) Sports (swimming, tennis, badminton, gymnastics); (2) Clubs and Associations (such as road safety club, robotics club, traditional dance club, entrepreneurship club, environmental club, performing arts, foreign languages club, religious studies club, etc.), and (3) Groups Wearing Uniforms (such as boy scouts and girls guides, school youth center, Red Crescent, etc.)	Variety of activities
Purpose of providing extracurricular activities is to nurture balanced, healthy, and active students, Provide useful courses for all-round personality development	Cultivation of a balanced human being and her/ his all talents
Acquisition of real-life experiences	Acquisition of real-life experiences
Teachers have a responsibility to plan, implement, and supervision these activities at school	Teacher as supervisor, planner
Values that focus on the personal sphere such as belief in God, honesty, knowledge, kindness, patience, tact and fairness, care, perseverance, competition, hard work, vigilance, having intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, spirit of volunteerism	Development of personal identity
necessary Skills for social development, spirit of participation, patriotism	Development of social identity
All students are required to participate in at least one extracurricular activity	Compulsory participation
Teachers are introduced to a variety of skills such as coaching, managing and leading extracurricular policies and activities	Teacher training for Extracurricular
Integration of spiritual values and practical skills ,Integration of specific and professional skills	Integration

In Malaysia, many extracurricular activities are in line with Islamic teachings and the philosophy of national education. A wide range of these programs are in three forms of activities (1) Sports (swimming, tennis, badminton, gymnastics); (2) Clubs and Associations (such as road safety club, robotics club, traditional dance club, entrepreneurship club, environmental club, performing arts, foreign languages, religious studies, etc.), and (3) Groups Wearing Uniforms (such as boy scouts and girls guides, school youth center, Red Crescent, etc.), (Jelani, Tan & Mohd-Zaharim, 2015). Teachers are expected to encourage students to choose and participate in at least one type of activity. In other words, Malaysian students are required to participate in extracurricular activities. They can freely choose an activity -based on their interests- from at least one of the three categories of above mentioned list. In Malaysian schools, evaluation of extracurricular activities is recognized and is one of the conditions for entering higher education

institutions (Tahir, 2014). Student performance appraisal is based on participation in uniform group programs, associations/clubs, sports clubs, and other competitions throughout the school year. Student activities are graded and these scores affect university entrance. Malaysian school principals and teachers play an important role in improving extracurricular activities' performance. Parents also encourage and support their children to participate in these activities. In addition, other organizations cooperate with the Ministry of Education in implementation of extracurricular activities (Pereira, Ismail & Othman, 2013). Teachers in Malaysia, in addition to teaching, participate for planning and supervising of extracurricular activities (Huey, 2015).

### *Juxtaposition and Comparison*

The present researchers put the data together and then compared it. The result of data analysis is the extraction of 10 characteristics of extracurricular activities.

Table 5: juxtaposition and comparison of extracurricular activities of the selected countries

characteristics of Extracurricular activities	England	India	Malaysia	Iran
Cultivation of a balanced human being	✓	✓	✓	✓
Acquisition of real-life experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓
Variety of activities	✓	✓	✓	✓
Role of teacher	✓	✓	✓	•
Voluntary attendance	✓	✓	•	•
Curriculum integration	✓	✓	✓	•
Extracurricular training for teachers	✓	✓	✓	•
Cooperation of organizations	✓	✓	✓	•
Identity development	✓	✓	✓	✓
Degree of centralization	✓	✓	✓	*

In the following, we will describe similarities and differences between features of extracurricular activities in the selected countries:

1. Cultivation of a balanced human being: One of the most important features of extracurricular activities can be considered as nurturing people. Data analysis shows that upstream documents of the Iran's education system emphasize the comprehensive and balanced human development through the provision of extracurricular activities. Iran's and Malaysia's educational planners aim to nurture people who believe in God - by conducting religious ceremonies in schools - to help them acquire moral virtues and human perfections in accordance with Islam. India and England's educators have not set such an aspiration goal.

2. Acquisition of real-life experiences: Data analysis shows that Malaysia, India, England and Iran's educational planners tend to use real-time opportunities and experiences in a safe and happy environment for learners through extracurricular activities providing their personal, social, emotional and scientific growth.
3. Variety of activities: The educational planners of the selected countries try to offer various and varied extracurricular activities so that students can choose them according to their attitudes, interests and needs. What is clear is that educational system can better and more easily pursue its goals and policies through a variety of activities. For example, in Iran, various religious and revolutionary activities are offered with the aim of strengthening faith in God, promoting Islamic culture and transmitting Islamic Revolution of Iran's values to students. In Malaysia, with the aim of fostering discipline, social interaction and teamwork, spirit of participation, responsibility, individual independence, obedience to group and promoting racial unity among the different races of the country, various uniformed groups have been formed. In England, with the aim of providing a safe and happy environment, increasing learners' interest, encouraging opportunities to expand curricula, fostering a sense of individual and group responsibility, and fostering a sense of collaboration, a wide range of activities are offered in the form of visits and scientific trips. Indian educational planners also anticipate a variety of activities for pupils.
4. Identity development: Selected countries seek to improve individual and social identity of learners through extracurricular activities. There is also an emphasis on cultivating a common Iranian-Islamic identity In Iran, and formation of a professional identity in Malaysia.
5. Role of the teacher: Teachers in Malaysia, India and England have an important role to play in extracurricular activities, but this role is responsibility of extracurricular instructors in Iran. It is true that in Iran, certain specialized people have been considered to perform extracurricular activities, but since the role of teachers in performing these activities is less, this policy requires reconsideration.
6. Voluntary attendance: One of the characteristics of extracurricular activities is selective and voluntary participation. In India and England, participation in these activities is voluntary, while in Malaysia, out of three types of sports activities, clubs and associations and Uniform Groups, students are required to choose and participate in one activity. In Iran, students must participate in some activities in a mandatory manner, while in many other activities they are free to select and participate.
7. Curriculum Integration: Data analysis revealed that Malaysia, India and England are paying more attention to integrate extracurricular activities with formal curricula. One of the reasons



for this is the prominent role of teachers in extracurricular activities. In other words, teachers in these countries are simultaneously responsible for teaching and implementation of extracurricular activities and therefore can easily combine these two tasks. But in Iran due to separation of two responsible groups; less attention is paid to integration of extracurricular activities with formal curricula.

8. Extracurricular training for teachers: In teacher education courses in Malaysia, India and England, teaching how to perform extracurricular activities to teacher- students is provided, while in Iran, there are different courses for people as extracurricular instructors and because of this, training about extracurricular activities to other teachers is neglected.
9. Cooperation of organizations: Since one of the characteristics of extracurricular activities is presence of students in real environments of social life, the cooperation of organizations and society is effective in their success and desirability. The results of present research reveal that in Malaysia, India and England, organizations outside the education system cooperate diligently with teachers and school staff in carrying out these activities, while in Iran this cooperation is minimal.
10. Degree of centralization: Comparison of data shows that extracurricular activities in Malaysia, India and England are semi-centralized, meaning that each educational districts and schools can act independently. In Iran, the type, nature and method of extracurricular activities are communicated to all schools by the Ministry of Education, and teachers and staffs are required to perform accordingly. It seems that due to the centralization of extracurricular activities in Iran's educational system, integration of them with formal curricula cannot be actualized.

As these 10 characteristics show, they affect each other and reduce or increase the usefulness of each activity.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The present study aimed to use experiences of leading and active countries in the field of extracurricular activities, and investigate the situation of Iran, Malaysia, India and England from a comparative perspective. By examining the data related to the extracurricular activities of the selected countries, 10 characteristics were extracted. The finding of this study is similar with Sadeghi's (2015) research findings in features such as integration of extracurricular activities with formal curricula, attention to multidimensional aspects of human personality, applicability of activities in real life situations, diversity of activities and assignment of them to organizations and

public institutions. The findings of the study also highlighted that selected countries have characteristics such as balanced human upbringing; gaining real life experiences; variety of activities and formation of identity. Another finding of the study indicates differences between selected countries with the Iranian educational system in aspects like role of teachers; voluntary participation; extracurricular education for teachers; integration with curriculum; cooperation of organizations and the level of focus. With the aim of educating people who believe in God and performing religious ceremonies in schools, Iran's educational planners help learners to acquire moral virtues and human perfection based on Islamic belief through participation in extracurricular activities. According to Imam Jomeh, Ahmadi & Timurnia (2013), Keyvanfar (2010) and Mousavi (2009), in Iran more emphasis is placed on cultivating religious and ideological aspects through these activities. As all selected countries are similar in the variety of activities, it is natural that educational systems will be more successful in educational goals by increasing the variety of activities. In Iran, with the aim of strengthening faith in God, promoting Islamic culture and transmitting the value concepts of the Islamic Revolution of Iran to students, various religious and revolutionary activities are offered. The present study also supports the findings of Musapour Miandehi et al. (2018) that one of the functions of these activities is to pay more attention to cultural identity, social cohesion and professional development. In addition, the present study showed that the development of identity is one of the characteristics of extracurricular activities in selected countries. In Iran, in addition to cultivating individual and social identity, the emphasis is on a common Iranian-Islamic identity and in Malaysia on development of professional identity. In addition, the results of this study are consistent with findings of Musapour et al. (2017) regarding importance and role of teachers in extracurricular activities. In Malaysia, India and England, teachers play a key role in organizing and designing these activities. In Iran, the implementation of extracurricular activities is considered the responsibility of school deputy and instructor. For this reason, Iranian teachers are less inclined to direct, lead, and supervise these activities. The presence of specialized educators in Iranian schools can lead to the good performance of these activities if the role of teachers in these activities to be more clarified. In Malaysia, India and England, teachers are trained to do these activities, but in Iran they are given less importance. What is shown in Iran's curriculum of teacher education courses is that most of the units are presented theoretically and teaching extracurricular activities to teachers has no place. It is obvious that attention to practical training of teachers leads to increasing their participation in extracurricular activities. One of the foundations of extracurricular activities is that these activities should be based on the content of curriculum to motivate better learning. These activities provide a space for

children to have a better opportunity to interact with the environment. Participating in extracurricular activities also provides a better opportunity to learn about real-life experiences. According to the findings of the present study, the following suggestions are provided to Iranian educational planners to improve the performance of schools to implement extracurricular activities:

- ❖ Integrate school curriculum activities with formal curricula,
- ❖ In the pre-service and teacher education courses, teachers should be taught how to organize, design and implement extracurricular activities,
- ❖ More attention to the roles and duties of teachers in performing extracurricular activities. A large part of these activities should be done with the guidance and supervision of teachers,
- ❖ The choice of the type, manner and stages of the extracurricular program should be delegated to school officials to move from centralized to semi-centralized and decentralized process and to encourage innovative and creative activities, and
- ❖ Schools should use more capacity and facilities of social, cultural, local and indigenous organizations in carrying out the extracurricular activities.

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