A Comparative Study of Extracurricular Activities in Teacher Education Systems of Australia, Germany and the United States: Lessons for Iran

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to investigate the experiences of extracurricular activities in the teacher education systems of Australia, Germany, and the United States in order to provide suggestions for educational and curriculum policy makers in the Iranian Teacher Education System. This is a qualitative, non-experimental, applied, comparative study in terms of nature, variable control level, purpose, and method, respectively. It uses George Bereday's four-step approach and similarity and difference design based on John Stuart Mill's Method of Agreement and Difference. This is a macro study in terms of unit of observation, conducted using the selective sampling method with "limited variables, small n" and the selection strategy of "different systems, similar results". Findings indicated that the selected countries emphasized the cultural and social goals of the extra-curricular activities. Also, the various functions of these activities were mainly directed towards cultural identity, social cohesion and professional development. There were similarities and differences among the selected countries in terms of the scope of extracurricular activities. According to the findings, educational planners of Iran at the Teacher Education University and the Ministry of Education should consider that extracurricular activities are one of the most appropriate, attractive and indirect methods for educating the younger generation of teachers.

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Introduction

One of the main tasks of educational systems is to provide appropriate learning opportunities for the growth and prosperity of different talents of school and university students. Learners' individual needs, social needs at both local and national levels, and international requirements have created new challenges for educational systems. Therefore, different countries seek to meet these challenges by adopting different methods based on the approaches governing their educational systems. One of the methods is designing appropriate "extracurricular activities" to meet the new educational needs. To this aim, teachers need to be well-prepared, skillful and competent enough to present and participate in extracurricular activities and keep up with learners. In fact, the changes in all aspects of life have changed learners; for instance, there are now students who, in some areas, have more knowledge, abilities, and skills than their teachers. This situation has created inevitable changes in the roles and functions of teachers.

A review of the literature shows that there is no general and accepted definition for the concept of "extra-curricular activities". For example, Rubin, Bommer, and Baldwin (2002) argue that "extracurricular activities are those in which students improve their personal and interpersonal skills" (p. 443). Keser, Akar, and Yildirim (2011) describe extracurricular activities as follows: "part of the informal programs including visits to various departments and institutions, exchanges between schools, voluntary tasks, student organizations and clubs, and out-of-school projects. These activities may be held after or concurrent with school curricula inside or outside schools" (p. 812). Some scholars consider extracurricular activities to be synonymous with "non-academic efforts" (Chia, 2005, p. 76) or "out-of-class experiences" (Nelson et al., 2002, p. 278).

The concept of extracurricular activities is related to and in some cases synonymous with other concepts, such as out-of-school/university activities, open door education, education for leisure time (Ahmadi, ImamJomee, & Timurneya, 2013), and co-curriculum and extra-class activities (Fretell, 1980). Extra-curricular activities can be considered part of curricula because they naturally provide learning opportunities. Klein (1991) defines seven levels of curriculum, the last one being empirical curriculum, referring to learners' experiences, pre-set designs, and classroom interactions. In addition, most of the definitions are accompanied by examples. Barnett (2007) states that "... Schools encourage students to be engaged in various educational activities such as sports, professional clubs, student hypothetical government,

preparation of newspapers and periodicals, and specific groups" (p. 316).

However, Teachers were not well aware of the role and importance of extracurricular activities until the 19th century. From the 1950s onward, first Western countries and then other countries started these activities along with the main curriculum to meet the new needs and demands of learners at various levels of education (Massoni, 2011). However, like any other transformations, these changes occurred in different countries at different speeds. In some countries, the managers of teacher education systems noticed the role of extracurricular activities very soon, while other countries took the initial steps slowly (Astiz, Wiseman, & Baker, 2002). One of the barriers to the acceptance of changes in the curricula of the Teachers Education Centers and Universities is their lack of readiness to recognize these activities in the formal structure of teacher education syllabi. In some teacher education systems, there is a wide boundary between curricula and extra-curricular activities, with the latter undervalued in those systems (Shamshiri, 2008).

However, changes in the role of teachers have led to changes in the curricula of teacher education systems. For example, most advanced countries have extended the duration of teacher education programs and predicted more apprenticeship and retraining programs for teachers (European Union, 2018). The results of a comparative study of teacher professional development in teacher education programs between Japan and the United States in 2001 revealed that it was necessary to change and reform the professional development of teachers in both countries (Collinson & Ono, 2001). In another study, Taheri et al. (2013) dealt with the perceptions of novice teachers about education in teacher education programs and their professional development during their first three years of teaching. The findings of this study indicated that these programs rarely developed these teachers' knowledge and skills, and they learned more when they attended school spaces and classrooms and were engaged in free interaction with learners and informal activities (Taheri et al., 2013).

The Teacher Education System of Iran has faced many ups and downs. Over the past half century, the teacher education centers (affiliated with the Ministry of Education) and a small number of universities (affiliated with the Ministry of Higher Education) have been tasked with teacher education for two-year and four-year educational programs (Madandar Arani & Kakia, 2010). After the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, the teacher education centers were closed for about a decade, but they were re-opened in the 2000s. These centered finally merged into the Teacher Education University in 2011 (Farhangian University: in Persian

دانشگاه فرهنگیان), organizationally affiliated with both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education.

This university was tasked with supplying, training, and empowering teachers and human resources for the Ministry of Education in Iran. Currently, this university has 98 branches, including 64 campuses, 34 affiliated centers and more than 40000 students (Khanifar, 2018). Given the fact that the Farhangian University is tasked with employing highly competent and up-to-date teachers, and considering the previous experience of the teacher education program in Iran, the researchers consider that one of the challenges faced by the practitioners of this university is the ignored role of the extracurricular activities in educating novice teachers.

In fact, contrary to the modern teacher education systems, it seems that Iranian teachers cannot take on the role of friends for learners at schools because they are not properly trained about the role and importance of extracurricular activities (Ahmadi, ImamJomee, and Timurneya, 2013). Iranian teachers usually regard themselves as rulers in classrooms and follow the teacher-centered approach. However, if student teachers were acquainted with the role of extracurricular activities and the impact of factors such as games on their curricula, we would not encounter such school refusal behaviors. For this reason, the present researchers have focused on this challenging issue for the Iranian Teacher Education System and sought to understand the status of other educational systems in this regard. Attempts have been made in this study to compare the activities of teacher education centers in Australia, Germany, and the United States and help the practitioners of the Iran Teacher Education System regarding the role of extracurricular activities in order to promote the quantitative and qualitative levels of educating student teachers. Accordingly, the main question of the study deals with the status of extra-curricular activities in the teacher education centers of the countries under study. The research sub-questions are:

- What similarities and differences are there between the teacher education systems of the selected countries in terms of the **goal** of extracurricular activities?
- What similarities and differences are there between the teacher education systems of the selected countries in terms of the **role** of extracurricular activities?
- What similarities and differences are there between the teacher education systems of the selected countries in terms of the **function** of extracurricular activities?
- What similarities and differences are there between the teacher education systems of

the selected countries in terms of the **scope** of extracurricular activities?

- What similarities and differences are there between the teacher education systems of the selected countries in terms of **responsibility** for extracurricular activities?

Research Method

This is a qualitative, non-experimental, applied, comparative study in terms of nature, variable control level, purpose, and method, respectively. It uses George Bereday's comparative method with four description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison steps (Madandar Arani and Kakia, 2014). With regard to the research literature, only the three countries of Australia, Germany, and the United States were selected from among the advanced countries as the sample. The strategy used for this selection was the strategy of "different systems, similar results". It is assumed that the three educational systems under study are culturally, socially, politically and economically different from one another, but have similar performance and results in extracurricular activities (Bray, Adamson, & Mason, 2007).

Results

The present section contains information related to the four steps of description, interpretation, juxtaposition, and comparison. In the first step, the researchers describe the phenomenon on the basis of the evidence and information that they obtained from various sources by studying documents and reports. They examine the phenomenon in each country separately in the interpretation step (the second step). In the third step, the information examined in the two previous steps is classified and juxtaposed, and a framework is provided to pave the way for the next step, (i.e. comparing the similarities and differences of the phenomenon).

A) Description: Based on George Bereday's approach, the description step involves taking notes and providing enough information to examine the subject of the research, which is presented separately for each country:

Australia: The length of primary and secondary education and the condition for entering universities vary from state to state in Australia. The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership is responsible for educating teachers in Australia, while both the government and educational districts are responsible for teacher registration. Both groups determine the qualification and employment of teachers. Teacher education is provided by

private universities and colleges in Australia and various aspects of university life, such as curriculum, blended learning, internationalization, employment, social participation, university facilities, and student support services affect students' experience (Staddon & Standish, 2012). Australian universities provide students with the opportunity to carry out social services voluntarily as part of their academic experience. This is explicitly stated in the strategic plan of the Australian University of Queensland to support technology-advanced learning as follows: "The best practical curricula and syllabi emphasize physical experiences and educational outcomes achieved through students' engagement or direct work of trainers/teachers" (University of Queensland, 2012, p. 8).

Germany: Independent states in Germany organize teacher education programs for all levels at universities. Various institutions, such as teacher education centers, science and technology universities, teacher education academies, and faculties of education, arts, and music are also responsible for teacher education in this country. Teacher education in this country is divided into two stages of academic education and practical education in schools, the latter lasting from 1 to 2 years, while the former lasts 10 semesters (5 years) and ends with a final exam and postgraduate certificates in education (Mullis et al., 2015). Improving students' academic achievement, motivating them to study, their engagement in the learning process and satisfaction in educational settings, and development of student associations are important aspects to be considered in their education. Professional education, with the cooperation of professors and staff through informal and extra-curricular activities, is an effective tool for achieving these goals (Muscalua & Dumitrascua, 2014). The content of the curricula of teacher education universities and institutions can be divided into three groups: (a) content related to curriculum, (b) content related to teaching profession, and (c) content related to informal and extracurricular activities. The purpose of the third group is to give more flexibility to teacher education institutions in order to create a balance between the first and second groups. Student teachers need to study the content of each group comprehensively and nationally. Content related to the informal and extracurricular activities includes topics dealt with by students practically, freely, and voluntarily (Nairami & RahimiRad, 2013).

United States: The educational system of the United States is considerably decentralized and has different goals and methods. However, it has general goals, such as teaching democratic ideas, commitment to individual freedoms, and respect for population diversity and equal education for all groups. In this country, there is a variety of teacher education programs

requiring at least the bachelor's degree. Another precondition for entry into such programs is theoretical and practical abilities. One thousand and one institutions and universities offer teacher education programs and postgraduate certificates in education (PGCE) for graduates. Fourteen teacher education universities of this country are among the 100 top universities in the world. Studies show that extracurricular activities in North America include: educational trips, field trips, community-based learning, learning based on experience and work outside the university, work in local homes with children, work in local hospitals, church activities, drama, cultural activities, sports, educational clubs (including scientific clubs or language clubs), professional education clubs (newspapers, magazines, bibliographies), student governments, political clubs, social service activities, honorary associations, women's clubs, and associations of fraternity (Baker, 2008; Fujita, 2006; Reva, 2012). Extracurricular activities in North America can be divided into six groups of sports organizations, social fraternity organizations, political organizations, religious organizations, artistic organizations, and student organizations of minorities.

B) Interpretation

At this step, the emphasis is on evaluating the extracurricular activities of each country based on the findings of the previous step. It will involve examining the phenomenon under question in each country separately for each factor (research evidence). According to the objectives and research questions, the following factors are considered separately for each country:

Australia

In terms of the social system, the distinctive features of Australia can be stated as follows: this is a developed country in the southern hemisphere of the planet, the sixth largest country in the world with a population of about 25 million and more than 70% being Christians. The majority of people are white and there is no official language. It has a developed economy with the 14th rank in the world in terms of gross domestic product (World Bank, 2019). The educational system is structurally decentralized, and educational priorities are selected with regard to the budget and agreement with the states. Teacher education is carried out by private universities and colleges in this country, but there has been an increasing rate of the central government's intervention in teacher education over the past decade. The current policy framework for teacher education graduates is to prepare them for classroom

attendance and increase their effectiveness and impact on students' learning (Ling, 2017). Extracurricular activities in Australia, like the other countries under study, are based on voluntary engagement of students. The goal of these activities, based on the information available in the Extra Curricular Network Australia (ECNA) includes educating people who are socially and ethically aware, educating Australian youth with leadership skills to lead large companies and the future community, and finally promoting educational creativity and job capability. The primary role of extracurricular activities is to place students within the wider framework of social development in order to strengthen social capital, sense of belonging, identity and flexibility in the Australian community (Darling, 2005). Universities are responsible for managing and supervising associations, clubs and teams associated with extracurricular activities. In fact, the distinguishing feature of extracurricular activities in Australia is emphasis on the central role of universities in activities and understanding the concept of "place" to create a collective feeling. This is done by constructing suitable spaces and providing students with support services. The concept of "place" reflects the specific function of extracurricular activities to create a sense of social belonging among students with different racial, religious, linguistic and social backgrounds in the variable Australian community (National Multicultural Advisory Council, 1999). Extracurricular activities in Australian universities are broad and diverse in scope, but the greatest emphasis is on providing extracurricular cultural activities.

Germany

In terms of the social system, the distinctive features of Germany are as follows: it is located in the green continent, the majority of people are white, it is the most populous European country and one of the largest economies in the world (5th rank in GDP), about 65 to 70 percent of the population are Christians, and its official language is German. The educational system is structurally decentralized, and the states have considerable authority while supervised by the government. Independent states also develop the rules for teacher education programs, how to employ teachers, as well as the educational content. Extracurricular activities are not compulsory in this country. The content of the curricula of teacher education universities and institutions can be divided into three groups: (a) content related to curriculum, (b) content related to teaching, and (c) content related to informal and extracurricular activities. The main purpose of extracurricular activities is to promote German culture, and its main role is to create a balance between the content of the curricula and

teaching methods. Extracurricular activities are within the responsibility of student institutions with the central role of students in the process of selecting the members, and emphasis on little voluntary presence and supervision of administrative and organizational authorities. Accordingly, the extracurricular activities in this country are divided into nine categories and introduced by more than 90 websites.

United States

In terms of the social system, the distinctive features of the United States are as follows: the majority of people are white (61%), it is the third most populous country in the world and has the world's largest economy in terms of GDP, and the second-largest global power in terms of purchasing power equality. The majority of people are Christian, and this country has no official language at the federal level. The educational system is structurally decentralized and while the states, schools, and parents have extraordinary authority, they are supervised by the government. The educational system is largely decentralized and has different goals and methods. The teacher education programs are based on different conditions of different universities without a lifelong employment structure for teachers. Extracurricular activities in this country are non-compulsory. These activities were developed for the first time in Harvard and Yale universities in the nineteenth century and expanded rapidly to other American universities and colleges. Many historians, such as Frederick Rudolph, John Brubacher, George Schmidt, and Richard Hofstadter argue that the purpose of extracurricular activities and student associations is to shape the values of the new century (Church & Sedlak, 1976). In addition, extraordinary activities of teacher education centers in the United States are aimed at improving the quality of this system. Planning the extracurricular activities is the responsibility of selected institutions in the voluntary presence of various student groups. One of the main functions of extra-curricular activities in the United States is to recognize individuals' occupational characteristics based on an analysis of interests and how they are engaged in these activities. In fact, the committees or councils interviewing teacher volunteers do not pursue a particular activity in the interviewees' resumes; rather, they want to know, for example, what extraordinary activity/activities they were engaged with during their education and how those activities affected their life and behavior. Our investigations show that the scope of extracurricular activities in North America include educational trips, field trips, community-based learning, learning based on experience and work outside the university, working in local homes with children, working in local hospitals, church activities,

drama, cultural activities, sports, educational clubs, including scientific clubs or language clubs, professional education clubs (e.g., newspapers, magazines, annual bibliographies), student governments, political clubs, social service activities, honorary associations, women's clubs, and fraternity associations (Baker, 2008; Fujita, 2006; Reva, 2012). Extracurricular activities in United States are divided into six groups: sports organizations, social fraternity organizations, political organizations, religious organizations, artistic organizations, and student organizations of minorities.

C) Juxtaposition

Based on the information obtained in the previous step, research evidence for the interpretation step is classified at this step to pave the way for a comparison of the similarities and differences in the educational phenomenon under investigation. This step includes the juxtaposition of the social structure, the structure of the educational system, the teacher education system, and the five criteria of goal, role, function, scope and responsibility of the extracurricular activities. It is noteworthy that these eight factors are divided into other sub-factors that are presented in separate tables. Table 1 presents the main eight factors by the number of sub-factors:

Table 1. The main eight factors and number of sub-factors

Factor	Number of sub-factors
Social structure	5
Educational system structure	2
Teacher education structure	4
Goal	3
Role	2
Function	4
Scope	4
Responsibility	4

1. Juxtaposition of the social system structure

In terms of social structure, the juxtaposition of six countries is examined according to the factors listed in Table 1. The sub-factors of the social structure are: geographic location, race, language, religion, and economy.

Table 2. Juxtaposition of the selected countries in social factors

Country	Australia	Germany	United States
Geographic location	-	*	-
Race	*	*	*
Language	*	-	*
Religion	*	*	*
Economy	*	*	*

The information presented in the table shows the degree of juxtaposition of the selected countries based on 9 factors affecting the social structure. Based on this information, we can conclude that:

- All 3 countries are among the developed countries in the area of economic growth and development.
- All 3 countries are very similar in terms of religious structure (the majority being Christian)
- All 3 countries have a similar race (the majority being white)

2. Juxtaposition of the educational system structure

The structure of the educational system can be examined at three levels. First, all affairs related to formal education are performed by the Ministry of Education. Second, local governments at the level of states or provinces have the main responsibility, and third, the main role is assigned to municipalities. The findings presented in Table 3 indicate the juxtaposition of the selected countries in the first and second cases, while municipalities lack an active role in school affairs only in Australia and schools make decisions on issues, such as selecting and employing teachers or conducting school-related activities. It should also be noted that the juxtaposition of the selected states regarding the intervention of local governments (states) is not entirely the same.

Table 3. Juxtaposition of the selected countries in the structure

of the educational system

Country	Australia	Germany	United States
Ministry of Education	*	*	*
States	*	*	*
Municipalities	-	-	-

3. Juxtaposition of the Teacher Education System

In all three countries, the roles and responsibilities of teacher education have been assigned to different universities. Local governments in Germany and private colleges in Australia are also involved in the selection of individuals and teacher education programs.

Table 4. Juxtaposition of the selected countries in the teacher education system

Country	Australia	Germany	United States
Ministry of Education	-	-	-
States	-	*	-
Universities	*	*	*
Private Colleges	*	-	-

4. Juxtaposition of extracurricular activities in terms of goal

The main goal of providing opportunities for students' participation in extracurricular activities in the selected countries can be divided primarily into cultural goals (Germany and the United States) and economic goals (Australia).

Table 5. Juxtaposition of extracurricular activities in terms of goal

in the selected countries

Country	Goal
Australia	educating people who are socially and ethically aware, leadership skills, promoting educational creativity and job capability
Germany	Promotion of German culture
United States	Formulating and accepting new values

5.   Juxtaposition of extracurricular activities based on the role

To achieve the main goal of extracurricular activities in the selected countries, various roles are assigned to related institutions (associations, clubs, etc.). The analysis of the contents of Table 6 shows that these roles are mostly aimed at fostering certain characteristics in students as the young generation.

Table 6. Juxtaposition of extracurricular activities in terms of role in the selected countries

Country	Role
Australia	Strengthening social capital and the sense of belonging, identity and flexibility
Germany	Creating a balance between the content of curriculum and teaching methods
United States	Improving the quality of the educational system

6.   Juxtaposition of extracurricular activities in terms of function

Depending on the goal of extracurricular activities in each country, various functions are assigned to the relevant institutions (associations, clubs, etc.) While the concept of role corresponds with behavioral patterns determined by custom or law, the term "function" or "duty" relates to the tasks of the relevant institutions in the process of extracurricular activities. These institutions must indicate what they do and what they should do.

Table 7. Juxtaposition of extracurricular activities in terms of function in the selected countries

Country	Function
Australia	Strengthening the sense of social belonging among students with different racial, religious, linguistic, and social backgrounds
Germany	Turning universities into exciting, challenging, and motivating environments
United States	Recognizing and analyzing students' job interests based on their engagement in activities

7. Juxtaposition of extracurricular activities based on scope

The information presented in the description step revealed that the selected countries provided students with a wide range of extracurricular activities to be selected depending on their own various personalities, racial, religious, and linguistic characteristics. In this way, there is a juxtaposition of activities in all countries, though not equally emphasized. As Table 8 shows, social activities have received little attention in the teacher education programs of Germany and the United States, while cultural and sports activities have been undervalued in the teacher education program of Australia.

Table 8. Juxtaposition of extracurricular activities in terms of scope in the selected countries

Country	Australia	Germany	United States
Social activities	*	-	-
Cultural activities	-	*	*
Sports activities	-	*	*
economic activities	*	*	-

8. Juxtaposition of extracurricular activities in terms of responsibility

One of the dimensions or factors affecting the implementation of extracurricular activities is the institution or legal entity, which is responsible for establishing, organizing, and providing executive facilities (excluding space and physical facilities) and the budget required for these activities. The analysis of the information at the interpretation step and the findings presented in Table 9 indicate that there are four types of responsibility and administration of institutions associated with extracurricular activities:

(a) Student selected groups: In most cases, students propose and establish an association, club, team, group or other appropriate forms of extracurricular activities and choose the board of directors, chairman, deputy chairman and others from among themselves.

(b) Non-student selected institutions: These institutions refer to a group of individuals elected as members of a board of directors, clubs, teams, groups, or other appropriate forms of extracurricular activities. These individuals are usually a combination of students, staff members and people outside the university (such as charitable public endowers or activity-

related professionals).

(c) University: In some countries, universities are responsible for establishing associations, clubs, teams, groups, or other appropriate forms of extracurricular activities, and all affairs are carried out by the members of the board of directors appointed by relevant authorities.

(d) Out-of-university institutions: Those institutions that may belong to private, public-interest (charitable and endowment), or quasi-governmental sectors are responsible for organizing extracurricular activities for all people, including students.

Table 9. Juxtaposition of extracurricular activities in terms of responsibility in the selected countries

Country	Australia	Germany	United States
Student selected groups	-	*	-
Non-student selected institutions	-	-	*
Universities	*	-	-
Out-of-university institutions	-	-	-

According to the above explanations, there is a difference between the studied countries regarding responsibility for establishing associations, clubs, teams, groups, or institutions to start extracurricular activities.

D) Comparison

At this step, the subject of the research is examined in detail based on similarities and differences. The design of similarities and differences is based on John Stuart Mill's Method of Agreement and Difference.

- **Comparison based on social structure**

In terms of social structure, we can determine the similarities and differences among the studied countries with regard to the factors listed in Table 10.

Table 10. Number of similarities and differences in terms of effective social factors

Factor	Similarity	Difference
Geographic location	0	3
Race	3	0
Language	2	1
Religion	3	0
Economy	3	0

The findings presented in the above table show that the greatest similarity of the three countries in terms of the social factor relates to economic similarity, because they are all considered to be developed countries. After the economic factor, their religious similarity is evident. The greatest difference among them lies in their different geographic locations. Further, the studied countries are similar in both race and language. However, it seems that these factors can affect extracurricular activities in the universities of each country differently.

- **Comparison based on the structure of the educational system**

In terms of the structure of the educational system, we can determine the similarities and differences among the studied countries with regard to the factors listed in Table 11.

Table 11. Number of similarities and differences in terms of

the structure of the educational system

Factor	Similarities	Differences
Ministry of Education	3	0
States	3	0
Municipalities	3	0

In all the selected countries, the ministries of education have the main responsibility of the teacher education systems in the formal structure and in legal, organizational, educational, and scientific affairs, although states or the local government also play a role (perfect similarity).

- **Comparison based on the structure of the teacher education system**

The information presented in Table 12 shows that the ministries of education in the three countries play no significant role in selecting candidates for teacher education programs and determining the content of curricula and courses. This is also the case about the role of states (non-federal governments) and private colleges, so that the state government and private colleges are engaged in the teacher education process in Germany and Australia, respectively.

Table 12. Number of similarities and differences in terms

of the teacher education system

Factor	Similarity	Difference
Ministry of Education	3	0
States	2	1
Universities	3	0
Private colleges	1	1

- Comparison in terms of the goal of extracurricular activities

In terms of the goal of extracurricular activities, we can determine the degree of similarity and difference between the studied countries considering the factors listed in Table 13.

Table (13). Number of similarities and differences in terms of

the goal of extracurricular activities

Goal	Similarity	Difference
Cultural activities	2	1
Social activities	2	1
Economic activities	3	0

According to the available information, it can be stated that the main goal of Germany and the United States in the creation and expansion of extracurricular activities for students is to promote the cultural values accepted by these two societies. While Australia emphasizes social goals, none of the countries emphasizes career goals.

- **Comparison in terms of the role of extracurricular activities**

The information obtained from the juxtaposition step showed that Germany and the United States consider improving the quality of the educational system and creating a balance between the content of the curriculum and the teaching methods among the main roles of extracurricular activities, which both reflect the educational dimension, while Australia emphasizes the social role of extracurricular activities through creation of engagement opportunities, professional networking, meeting with friends, strengthening social capital and the sense of belonging, identity and flexibility.

Table (14). Number of similarities and differences in terms of the role of extracurricular activities

Role	Similarity	Difference
Educational	2	1
Social	2	1

- **Comparison in terms of the function of extracurricular activities**

Considering the information obtained in the previous steps of Bereday's approach, we can classify the functions of extracurricular activities in the four groups of creation, recognition (distinguishing and isolating), strengthening (enhancing the desired behavior), and evaluation (assessment of the current status). Accordingly, the function of extracurricular activities in Germany is based on creating universities as exciting, challenging and motivational environments, creating innovative and cost-effective strategies to promote students' physical and cultural activities, and creating the personality and identity of students to make them ready for life in the multicultural community. The three countries have the greatest similarity in terms of this function, while the functions based on recognition, strengthening, and evaluation are considered by planners and practitioners of extracurricular activities in Australia and the United States, respectively.

**Table 15. Number of similarities and differences in terms
of the function of extracurricular activities**

Function	Similarity	Difference
Creation	2	1
Recognition	2	1
Strengthening	2	1
Evaluation	2	1

- **Comparison based on the scope of extracurricular activities**

In terms of the scope of extracurricular activities, we can determine the similarity and difference between the studied countries in terms of the factors listed in Table 16.

**Table 16. Number of similarities and differences in terms of the scope of
extracurricular activities**

Scope	Similarity	Difference
Social	2	1
Cultural	2	1
Sports	2	1
Economic	2	1

The analysis of the content of the description step suggests that the universities of the countries under study, which are responsible for teacher education, have provided students with a wide range of extracurricular activities, indicating no significant difference between the countries at first glance. In fact, if we divide extracurricular activities into four groups of social, cultural, sports, and economic activities, all these activities undoubtedly exist in all of the studied countries. The differences among the countries lie in the number of clubs, associations, groups, teams, or meetings associated with one of the four above-mentioned types. Thus, it should be noted that extracurricular social activities have a wider scope in Australia than in the two other countries. In addition, Germany and the United States have a similar scope of cultural activities. Germany and the United States are also similar in terms of the scope of sports activities, while Germany and Australia are similar in terms of the scope of their extracurricular economic activities.

- **Comparison in terms of responsibility for extracurricular activities**

As Table 17 shows, Germany is the only country in which students play the principal role in achieving extracurricular activities from a variety of dimensions (perfect difference). Similarly, the United States is the only country in which decision-making and responsibilities associated with extracurricular activities are assigned to students and other members inside and outside universities. Therefore, the greatest difference between Australia and the other two countries is that the practitioners of universities in Australia consider themselves responsible for formulating, implementing, and monitoring these activities.

Table (17). Number of similarities and differences in terms of responsibility for extracurricular activities

Responsibility	Similarity	Difference
Students	2	1
Selected institutions	1	2
Universities	1	2
Out-of-university institutions	3	0

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to investigate the experiences of countries in relation to informal and extracurricular activities in teacher education systems with an emphasis on the experiences of Australia, Germany, and the United States. The researchers argue that the great changes and dramatic developments in new technologies have caused universities and colleges to train teachers skillful and competent not only in the teaching profession but also in other occupationally non-related areas. On the other hand, the merger of all teacher education centers in Iran into the Teacher Education University as the sole center for selecting and educating teachers reveals the need to consider the experiences of successful countries regarding formal and informal curricula.

The findings of this study suggest that, in terms of social structure, the studied countries are considerably similar to one another in terms of sub-factors, such as economy, religion, language, and race. At the juxtaposition step, it was shown that all of the 3 countries are among the economically developed countries. Further, the juxtaposition of the selected countries with regard to the intervention of local governments (states) was not completely

the same, but the ministries of education play an important role in the teacher education process. The selected countries have provided students with a wide range of extracurricular activities in order for them to select from among those activities with regard to their own racial, religious, and linguistic characteristics. The most important finding of this study at the comparison step was that race has caused the relative attention of the selected countries to take advantage of extracurricular activities as an effective tool for the realization of national identity, cultural identity, and social cohesion. This has also affected the goals of extracurricular activities. While Australia emphasizes the social role of extracurricular activities through creation of engagement opportunities, professional networking, meeting with friends, strengthening social capital and the sense of belonging, identity, and flexibility, the function of curricular activities in Germany is based on creating universities as exciting, challenging and motivational environments, creating innovative and cost-effective strategies to promote students' physical and cultural activities, and creating students' personality and identity in order for them to be ready for living in a multicultural society. In addition, all four major groups of social, cultural, sports, and economic activities are common in all of the studied countries, but their differences lie in the number of the clubs, associations, groups, teams, or meetings related to such activities. Extracurricular activities have a wider scope in Australia than in the two other countries. Further, Germany and the United States have a similar scope of cultural activities. Germany and the United States are also similar in terms of the scope of their sports activities, while Germany and Australia are similar in terms of the scope of their extracurricular economic activities.

Based on these findings, it is suggested that practitioners of the Teacher Education System in Iran create a close link in the design and formulation of the curricula between the specialists of extracurricular activities and teacher education specialists and consider organizing training courses for the individuals and groups involved (i.e., teachers, staff and related institutions). Since extracurricular activities have opened a new perspective on the impact of the modern technologies on teacher education, practitioners of teacher education should avoid the traditional fears of Iranians in the face of innovations and should regard student teachers' engagement in extracurricular activities as a valuable opportunity for their professional development. Establishing communication and friendship between learners and teachers is one of the main goals of extracurricular activities. The practitioners and planners of the Iranian Teacher Education University should consider the advantages of these activities in the teacher education process and pave the way for their development. Accordingly, educational

and curriculum planners in teacher education programs, particularly the Ministry of Education and the Teacher Education University, as the two main custodians of teacher education in Iran, are recommended to:

- Adopt an incentive policy through responsive organizations to encourage relevant academic/non-academic institutions to formulate, design, and provide extracurricular activities for student teachers,

- Consider educating specialists for extracurricular activities (teacher instructors)

- Provide more opportunities to measure and test the methods of providing extracurricular activities in teacher education programs,

- Identify and provide opportunities for the use of local/native and regional facilities outside the campuses of the Teacher Education University in order to provide optimal extracurricular activities,

- Provide student teachers with more information and education to be engaged more effectively in extracurricular activities as an attractive way in the teaching/learning process, and

- Make use of the financial resources and scientific support of organizations and ministries, such as the Ministry of Sports and Youth in the process of educating student teachers.

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