

Is being part of A SCHOOL CLUB WORTH IT?

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As a grade-schooler, I always thought that my seniors were an intriguing bunch. They all seemed so talented and appeared to have their lives put together. But the one thing that fascinated me the most was their access to school clubs.

This fascination eventually became a fixation. I, too, wanted to become a club president. It was a storied position – one accompanied by fun new experiences, opportunities, and prestige. By the time it happened, however, it felt a bit more down-to-earth.

There are plenty of benefits to being a president, or even an active committee member. However, running a club

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might not be the dream for everyone or as impactful in the long term. To get the full scope of whether it's something worth putting so much effort into, I spoke to students from committees of a wide range of schools about their experiences.

The good

As young people, we all want to feel that we add something valuable to the world. Becoming debate club president and teaching juniors everything I know validates the time I've

spent on the activity, even after my time with it has finished. Similarly, Tasfia Ahammed, founding President of the Maple Leaf Cultural Club, says that she feels like she has started a legacy that others could follow.

“I actually promoted our culture, and started something new,” she reminisces. “I would love to make people more aware of our roots, so I really hope to continue with this goal in the future.”

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Ayaan Shams Siddiquee, former General Secretary of the Josephite Language & Reading Club, states, “I made a lot of amazing friends. These were people I'd done classes with for years, but things like going to Katabon together to get crests made at 10 PM – how could the bond not grow, right?”

On the flip side, the best club memories for a lot of people tend to involve achieving something really meaningful.

“It was a Friday morning. We were looking down from the school balcony, expecting around 200 people. Instead, 600, 700 people showed up,” Ayaan shares his experience of organising the JLRC Language Festival 2020.

The bad

The most obvious con of being active in clubs is that it can take a lot of time, energy, and effort which you might not have to spare. It's important to realise that not everyone can handle the same workload, and if all this

responsibility sounds too stressful, it isn't worth risking one's well-being for.

Other negatives could be interpersonal. A common concern among those I spoke to was unhealthy competitiveness between clubs or “club politics”. For Ayaan, an additional difficulty was having to deal with problems that involved his own friends.

Ahnaf Ahmed, Senior Executive of the Business Club at Bir Srestha Noor Mohammad Public College, takes a pragmatic view.

“To be a good president, you need charisma and strong leadership qualities. You can't be too harsh or too lenient to your juniors, and you need to teach them everything they need to know before expecting them to succeed.”

How it helps

One of the biggest questions is to what extent will clubs actually be useful in the future.

“If you want to go to a public university, it might not be worth it. On the other hand, it's a really good extracurricular to participate in if you plan to apply abroad, or even to private universities, since they tend to value the boost to their reputations from successful university clubs,” Ahnaf says.

To get an educated opinion, I reached out to Sauda Musharrat. An alumna of American International University, Bangladesh, who is currently pursuing her MS in Integrated Design & Media at New York University.

At AIUB, she was Vice-Captain of the Robotics Club, even going to the USA as part of the international University Rover Challenge.

According to her, at university, you should pick a club that challenges you and provides many opportunities to learn. The process of moving from a STEM-specialised club into a master's degree and work was made easier since her resume and references from network connections were academically and professionally relevant. She explains, “It teaches you skills you need, as well as logistics, campaigning, management, how to get sponsorships, and so on – it is really, really valuable.”

Some people choose to simply not participate in clubs at all, and others find the experience deeply fulfilling. In the end, it comes down to what is right for you, as well as considering whether the labour will yield any worthwhile benefits.

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