

## **Assessment of Secondary Schools Teachers Participation in Co-Curricular Activities in Kirinyaga Central Sub County, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

*The fundamental aim of education is to produce holistic development in a child which encompasses intellectual, physical, social and moral development. However, evidence from school schedules indicate that schools do not put emphasis on the co-curricular activities as the lessons are taken over by examinable subjects. The purpose of this study was to examine factors influencing secondary schools teachers' participation in co-curricular activities in Kirinyaga Central Sub County, Kenya. The study was guided by the following objectives; to establish teachers' perception of co-curricular activities in secondary schools, identify the forms of teachers' involvement in co-curricular activities, establish the various types of co-curricular activities in secondary schools and examines the challenges teachers face as they engage in co-curricular activities in secondary schools. The study was guided by the holistic approaches to the curriculum development as postulated by Miller (2007). The study employed descriptive survey research design. The study population consisted of 36 principals and 624 teachers from the 36 secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub County. Simple random sampling was used to select a sample size of 7 principals and 125 teachers. The instruments used in data collection were questionnaires and interview guides. A pilot study of ten principals and ten teachers was carried out to test the instruments for reliability. Data was collected and analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means and standard deviation and presented in form of frequency tables and charts. The study found out that majority (60.3%) of the teachers did not take part in co-curriculum activities. The study established that most of the schools in the region had sports, drama, music and science related co-curriculum activities. The study concluded that teachers were aware of the importance of co-curriculum activities for mental and physical growth of learners since they have an opportunity to share ideas, agree on the rules and general behavior that they should exhibit during the activity. The schools and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should develop better strategies and motivational programmes to increase teachers' participation in co-curriculum activities in secondary schools. Teachers should be offered training in co-curriculum activities in order to increase their confidence and participation levels.*

### **Introduction**

Education is universally recognized to be prime key of moral, cultural, political and socio-economic development of a nation. It has provided nations with major innovations and leaps in development and integration in the last decade. Ahmad (2001) observed that, this great achievement is based on their effective educational system. Sarwar (2002) argued that the modern curriculum is wide and comprehensive and includes experiences acquired inside and outside the school. The academic curriculum is the only program offered to learners. Often a range of other classes and activities are available in class routine and even after school. These are referred to as the co-curricular activities and they are mostly voluntary for students and teachers (Haber, 2006).

These activities includes sports, musical activities, debate, Model United Nations, community service, religious study groups, among other charitable activities. In Kenya, Wax (2003) noted that the government spends a huge part of its budget on education. These funds are used to cater for purchase of teaching learning materials, payment of teachers' salaries and capacity building. Otieno (2012) noted that the government had at one time contemplated ranking schools according to the performance in co-curricular activities since as it was observed; in 2013 about 400 million had been spent in these activities.

Wangai (2012) noted that teachers' participation in co-curricular activities influenced the performance of these activities. Kirinyaga Central Constituency has 36 secondary schools of which two have featured in national co-curricular activities. During the zonal and sub-county co-curricular activities secondary schools present ill prepared activities that lack teamwork and cohesion due to hurried preparations. Therefore very few activities competitively compete at the zonal and sub-county stages of either Drama or Music Festivals. All the 34 schools have continually posted very poor results in the co-curricular activities (DEO, 2014). There is therefore need to assess the factors that influence teachers participation in co-curricular activities in secondary schools in the sub-county.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

The Kenyan education curriculum provides for academic and co-curricular activities in Kenyan schools. The secondary school education is aimed at preparing students to make a positive contribution to the development of society, and to acquire attitude of national patriotism, self-respect, self-reliance, cooperation, adaptability, and a sense of purpose and self-discipline. Co-curriculum programs therefore form an important place in development of social skills and also creating cohesion among the secondary school community. However the number of teachers who participate in the co-curriculum activities has been on the decline and majority of the schools seem to be discouraging the co-curriculum activities from their schools. Teachers have focused on the examination oriented curriculum thus denying learners an opportunity to exploit their talents and explore them to make their life better. The role of teachers' in co-curricular activities determines the success of the activity in shaping the learners and ensuring that they learn the necessary skills. Lack of participation of teachers in co-curricular activities leaves the learners to develop their own systems of engagement which might not necessarily lead to success in learning required skills. Hence the need to assess the teachers participation in co-curricular activities in secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To establish the perception of teachers regarding co-curricular activities in secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub County.
- ii. To establish the various types of co-curricular activities in secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub County.
- iii. To determine the challenges teachers face as they engage in co-curricular activities in secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub County.

### ***Significance of the Study***

Teachers' engagement is vital in ensuring success of co-curricular activities as educational activities that shapes the learners. This study might help school managers and administrators build an enabling environment that would ensure teacher participation in co-curricular activities and ensure each student is given a chance to develop their talents and abilities in a myriad of activities. This study established teachers' involvement in co-curricular activities and thus provided information to principals and educational manager on the level of teacher involvement. The study would also form material necessary for formulation of educational policies regarding application of co-curricular activities in development of learners in Kenya.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

This study was informed by the holistic approaches to the curriculum development. Miller (2007) indicated that holistic approaches thrive on balance, inclusion and connection. Accordingly the theory holds that all things have arisen mutually and are mutually supportive, in the sense they require one another as a condition for their existence.

The curriculum content in Kenya has two major components namely the curricular activities and co-curricular activities. The teacher's participation in the co-curricular activities plays a major role in ensuring the success of these programs just like the way they participate in curriculum activities.

Forbes (2003) noted that holistic education seeks to educate the whole child, (all parts of the child), educate the student as a whole (not an assemblage of parts), and see the child as part of a whole (society, humanity, the environment, some spiritual whole, etc.) from which it is not meaningful to extract the student. Thus holistic education educators see this approach as reflecting a materialist and consumerist culture that has reduced schooling to the training of individuals to compete and consume in the global marketplace. In fact, the present thrust can be seen as abandoning any attempt to educate the whole human being.

Mahmoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi and Liaghatdar (2011) stressed that a curriculum that emphasizes one aspect at the expense of another lacks balance and if skills, values and attitude developed in learners do not feed into all aspects of the other the connection and inclusion is lost. The teachers' perception of the importance and value attached to co-curricular activities determines the quality of education that is offered in the schools. The forms of involvement that the teachers engage in with their students as they participate in the co-curricular activities as well as the form and type of the activities determines the quality of education offered in the schools for learners' preparation into adult life. Miller (2007) further argues that a true education comes through the training of bodily organs and intelligent use of bodily organs ensures a faster way of developing the intellect.

### ***Literature Review***

#### **Perception of Teachers and Co-curricular Activities**

The perception of teachers in co-curricular activities determines the level and intensity of learners' engagement in such activities. Asmat and Saleem (2009) in a study conducted in India notes that teacher's perception about co-curricular activities determined the teachers' involvement in the same. The study concluded that the attitude amongst the school administrators and teachers in many schools favoured academic activities more and co-curricular activities were considered as waste of time and efforts hence of no use.

Ismat and Saleem (2009) had tried to find a link between co-curricular activities as viewed by educational stakeholders. The study established that teachers and school administrators had low opinion about co-curriculum activities and would rather concentrate on academic activities. However the current study comes at a time when there has been an increase in the sports sponsorships by various companies in Kenya and therefore this study seeks to find out if the perception of teachers towards co-curriculum activities has changed.

Suleman, Singh and Zeeshan (2014) in a study based in Pakistan on effects of overscheduled involvement in co-curriculum activities noted that teachers developed negative attitudes on co-curriculum activities when they feel that they become overcommitted in such activities. They argued that teachers who develop a negative attitude towards co-curriculum activities when they feel that such activities eat their academic time and affects their academic schedules. They concluded that teachers with a positive attitude towards the co-curriculum activities are more likely to participate in these activities.

Anyango (2012) carried out a study in Kisumu, Kenya to establish the role of co-curriculum activities on academic performance. In this study a sample size of 382 respondents from 12 public primary schools were used to provide data for the conclusions to be made. In this study it was discovered that teachers viewed co-curriculum activities as a waste of valuable study time and therefore discouraged learners from participation. It was also noted that break time in some schools was limited to lower classes and converted into study time for the upper primacy classes. Therefore the study showed that teachers in Kisumu had a negative attitude towards co-curriculum activities. Unlike Onyango (2012) this study will analyse secondary school teachers' involvement in co-curriculum activities in Kirinyaga Central and thus will provide insights on secondary school teachers.

#### ***Forms of Co-Curricular Activities***

In schools and other educational institutions, there are various forms of activities that could be classified as co-curriculum activities. Sikkha and Agnihotri (2013) posit that there are various classes provided for in educational institutions as guided by the curriculum developers across the world. They indicated that sports, drama and music are the various types of activities in majority of educational institutions whereas other forms including science related excursions, field trips, charity works could also be provided as a form of co-curriculum activity.

Verma (2012) noted that there are at least seven classes of co-curriculum activities. He adds that these are; activities for physical development, activities of intellectual development, social development, psychomotor development, cultural development, picnics and excursions and civic developmental activities.

Participation in sport and physical activity programs outside of the regular curricular physical education program provides many positive benefits to students. Centers for Disease Control (2002) noted that physical activity for physical development contributes to build healthy bones among learners, assists in controlling body weight, prevents the occurrence of diseases such as high blood pressure while reducing depression occurrence and contributes to development of physically active lifestyle among the participants. Siedentop (2001) added that physical development activities improve motor skills among children, assists in enhancement of normal physical and social growth and maturation, improvement of socialization, self-esteem, self-perception and psychological well-being and also the establishment of a basis for a healthy lifestyle and lifelong commitment to physical activity. In Kenyan secondary school the co-curriculum activities are classified into two categories as term one and term two activities. In term three only academic oriented activities are encouraged and this includes study symposiums, field trips among others. This study will assess the physical development oriented activities and classify them accordingly to their frequency and achievements made so far.

Siedentop (2001) posited that intellectual games such as scrabble and chess as well as monopoly fall into the class of co-curriculum activities for intellectual development. In Kenya the only activities known for intellectual development include debates, science congress and mathematics contests. Very few school invest in such activities since they require financial and human resources for some of these thesis to pass the initial zonal stages. Therefore this current study will assess the teacher's involvement in these intellectual oriented co-curriculum activities and also weigh their interaction with learners at this level.

### ***Challenges in Co-Curricular Activities***

Schools in the course of providing co-curriculum activities face a myriad of issues. Morgan and Hansen (2008) noted that there are barriers within schools that restrict teachers providing co-curriculum activities and could be classified as being either institutional meaning that they are outside the teachers' control or classified as teacher-related meaning that they arise from the teachers' behavior. This classification enables the challenges to be applicable at any level of institutional setting ranging from lower primary to higher institutions of learning.

Hardman (2008) noted that institutional barriers includes financial/budgeting constraints, scarce resources, lack of time for co-curriculum activities due to class work demands, lack of professional development programs, the crowded curriculum itself as well as lack of physical infrastructure. He posited that a combination of these plays a crucial role in determining poor implementation of co-curriculum activities in majority of educational institutions all over the world.

Sikkha and Agnihotri (2013) carried out a study in Punjab India on the organization of co-curricular activities in schools. They noted that co-curricular activities were the most neglected area of formal education in most schools. They cited that this was probably due to various physical, social and emotional problems of the students. In their study they reported that pupils were not provided with appropriate facilities to take part in co-curricular activities. This study was conducted to analyse the importance of co-curricular activities, the type of co-operation of the staff in schools and the co-operation of the community, as well as administration and organization of co-curricular activities and finally to evaluate the problems faced by the school in co-curriculum activities. This study reported that boys' schools had more co-curriculum activities compared to girl schools since the schools differed in manpower and facilities as well as attitude towards co-curriculum programs.

Trudeau and Shephard (2005); Dagkas and Stathi (2007) and Sherar et al. (2009) carried out research on barriers to participation in physical education and physical activity. These researchers reported changing attitudes to activity and physical education, decision making in favour of more sedentary activities, the role of peer pressure when choosing activities, a dislike of activity, a lack of understanding of the benefits of physical activity and a decline in student interest. Thus their studies concluded that the learners today have been intoned into academic competitions and as such they disregard non-academic activities, seen such activities as a waste of precious academic hours.

### ***Importance of Co-Curricular Activities***

Co-curricular activities play a very crucial role in the social development and cognitive development of individuals particularly during the early stages of life. Weber (2008) examined co-curricular participation and test scores during the 2006-2007 school years from the Olathe School District, located in Olathe, Kansas. This study was meant to determine whether students who are involved in co-curricular activities perform better on state assessments than students who do not participate in co-curricular activities. The data on co-curricular activity involvement and the Kansas Assessment results were collected from the Olathe School District student data base. A total of 1,807 students participated in the study with 1,500 having participated in at least one co-curricular activity. The results of this study indicated co-curricular activities had a positive effect on all four assessments studied. Co-curricular activities that represent a rich array of opportunities and experiences may be one of the reasons many students stay in school, and/or find personal meaning for this time in their life. Freitag (2005) applied the concept of attachment theory to support co-curricular activities in schools. He claimed students who participate in school-related activities have an enhanced attachment to and investment in their schools.

Lewis (2004) in her doctoral work at Texas A&M University participation in extracurricular activities is a useful and acutely appropriate vehicle for children to gain valuable academic and social experiences, as well as related strategies for overall healthy psycho-social development. Although co-curricular activities are meant to support the academic purpose of schools, these same activities provide positive reinforcements for the social and emotional aspects of schooling.

March and Sabina (2002) carried out a study related to the effects of co-curricular activities on student achievement has looked at student grade point average (GPA). As time passed, further research on the effects of co-curricular activities surfaced in related areas such as attendance, drop-outs, and discipline. Previous research in these areas has been completed by a variety of researchers, many independent but some associated with state athletic associations. Although debate concerning co-curricular activities continues, past research investigating co-curricular activities has produced clear results related to student achievement.

### ***Research Design***

This study applied descriptive survey. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008) explain mixed method studies as; studies that are products of the pragmatist paradigm and that combine qualitative and quantitative approaches within different phases of the research process. Borg and Gall (1989) observed that descriptive studies are aimed at finding out the situation as is and as such survey methods are frequently used to collect descriptive data. The design was deemed appropriate because the researcher gathered data on teacher's participation in co-curriculum activities in Kirinyaga Central Sub County.

### ***Target Population***

The study population consisted of 36 principals and 624 teachers in 36 secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County (CEO, 2015). This population was selected since they were the people who directly or indirectly handle co-curricular activities as administrators, facilitators and participants.

### ***Sample Size and Sampling Procedure***

Gay (2003) indicates that a sampling of 10% to 20% of the population is acceptable for descriptive research. The sample size will comprise 8 principals and 125 teachers from the target population.

Simple random sampling method was used to identify the teachers in secondary schools in Kirinyaga Central Constituency. Simple random sampling was applied to select the teachers who participated in this study. The researcher visited the school during the breaks and randomly issued questionnaires to teacher in the staff rooms and departmental offices.

### ***Data Collection Procedures***

The researcher got an introduction letter from Karatina University and thereafter applied for a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation. Once the permit was issued, the researcher booked appointments with the principals to visit and administer the questionnaire. The researcher visited each of the schools and administered the questionnaire. The respondents were assured of confidentiality after which they were given enough time to fill in the questionnaire, after which the researcher collected the filled questionnaire. Interview dates were agreed upon and carried out at appropriate dates.

## **Summary of Findings**

### **Teachers Perception of Co-Curriculum Activities**

The study found out that majority (60.3%) of the teachers did not take part in co-curriculum activities. All the principals also indicated that majority of teachers did not participate in co-curriculum activities due to low perception given to these activities. The study thus finds that majority (77.7%) of the teachers agreed that participation in co-curriculum activities contributed to mental and physical growth of learners. When learners engage in co-curriculum activities they share ideas, agree on the rules and general behavior they should exhibit during the activity. This contributes to learners mental and social skills which lead to better interaction with teachers, learners and other facets in the school community.

The study found that majority (66.1%) of teachers did not regard co-curricular activities as important in the current education system. Thus teachers had a negative attitude towards co-curriculum activities since they did not form part of their end year performance appraisal, there was no certification to acknowledge participation at lower levels and no consideration in the national examination or by the ministry of education. The study also established that majority (57.8%) of teachers agreed that learners benefit when they participated in school co-curriculum activities. The study determined that majority (58%) of the teachers agreed that engagement in co-curriculum activities promoted their engagement with learners

### **Types of Co-Curriculum Activities in Schools**

The study sought to determine the various forms of co-curriculum activities that exist in the schools. The study established that most of the school in the region had sports, drama, music and science related co-curriculum activities. These activities catered for physical development, activities of intellectual development, social development, psychomotor development, cultural development, picnics and excursions and civic developmental activities. The study established that sports, music and drama are the most preferred co-curriculum activities in the region.

Music and drama are first term activities whereas sports are term two activities and therefore schools prefer them since they do run concurrently and engage students' at different times. Schools engage in a single activity per term despite shortage of funds to run co-curriculum activities. The study found out that majority (53.7%) of teachers participated in co-curriculum activities due to fun and enjoyment as well as indulgence since the teachers felt compelled as young people. Therefore teachers' participation was influenced by a combination of factors such as participation in activities during school years, passion for the activity as well as pressure from teacher colleagues.

### **Challenges Faced by Teachers in Co-Curriculum Activities**

The study sought to establish the challenges that teachers face in participation in co-curriculum activities in secondary schools. The study established that majority (59.5%) disagreed that adequate time had been allocated for co-curriculum activities. The study determined that in a week only less than two hours were set aside for clubs and games and this demotivates teachers since little time was available for them to interact with students.

Majority (82.4%) of the teachers agreed that the current curriculum is too crowded to allow participation in co-curriculum activities. The study determined that 92.6% of teachers disagreed respectively that the school had the necessary physical infrastructure for co-curriculum activities. Majority (79.3%) of the teachers did not view co-curriculum activities as low priority activity.

### **Conclusions**

The study realised that very few teachers took part in schools co-curriculum activities in the region due to low priority given to these activities. The study concluded that teachers were aware of the importance of co-curriculum activities to mental and physical growth of learners since they have an opportunity to share ideas, agree on the rules and general behavior they should exhibit during the activity.

The teachers in the sub county had a negative attitude towards co-curriculum activities since they did not form part of their end year performance appraisal since the education system was more grade oriented in the national examination. The study also noted that majority (57.8%) of teachers agreed that learners benefit when they participated in school co-curriculum activities and also promoted teachers-student engagement in school.

The study sought to determine the various forms of co-curriculum activities that exist in the schools. The study found out that most of the school in the region had sports, drama, music and science related co-curriculum activities which are activities that cater for physical development, activities of intellectual development, social development, psychomotor development, cultural development, picnics and excursions and civic developmental activities.

Music and drama are first term activities whereas sports are term two activities and therefore schools prefer them since they do run concurrently and engage students' at different times. Schools engage in a single activity per term despite shortage of funds to run co-curriculum activities. The study noted that majority of teachers participated in co-curriculum activities due to fun and enjoyment as well as indulgence since the teachers felt compelled as young people.

The study sought to establish the challenges that teachers face in participation in co-curriculum activities in secondary schools. The study concludes that majority of teachers indicated that inadequate time had been allocated for co-curriculum activities. The study concluded that less than two hours had been set aside for clubs and games and this demotivates. The teachers also concurred that the current curriculum was too crowded to allow participation in co-curriculum activities. The study concluded that school did not have the necessary physical infrastructure for co-curriculum activities.

### **Recommendations**

In the light of the conclusions made, the study recommends that;

- i. The schools and the ministry of education should develop better strategies and motivational programmes to increase teachers' participation in co-curriculum activities in secondary schools.
- ii. The schools should diversify their co-curriculum activities from the traditional sports, music and drama that most schools invest in due to limited finances required by such activities. Academically oriented activities such as science congress, debate and symposiums should be emphasised since they directly contribute to academic performance of learners as well as offering learners' time to relax.
- iii. The schools and Ministry of Education should carry out extensive awareness to encourage teachers on the importance of co-curriculum activities to learners in order to increase teacher interests.
- iv. Teachers should be offered training in co-curriculum activities in order to increase their confidence and participation levels.
- v. The schools and Ministry of Education should allocate more time for co-curriculum activities and schedule them such that learners who progress do not lose out on class time as the situation discourages teachers and learners from participation in such activities.
- vi. The Ministry of Education should also assist schools to develop their co-curriculum infrastructure in order to motivate learners and teachers to participate in these activities.

### **Areas of Further Studies**

In the course of this study, the researcher came across issues that need further research.

- i. The correlation between academic performance and participation in co-curriculum activities.
- ii. The role of school administrators in ensuring success and participation of co-curriculum activities.

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