

## **An Evaluation of Secondary School Principals' Leadership Roles and Student Participation in Sporting Activities in Nyandarua County, Kenya.**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of secondary school principals' leadership roles in development of students' non-academic talents in Nyandarua County Kenya. Specifically, this study sought to establish the influence of secondary school principals' leadership roles on students' participation in sporting activities in Nyandarua County; whether there a relationship between secondary school principals' leadership role of preparing school calendar of events and development of learners' non-academic talents in Nyandarua County; and whether there is a relationship between secondary school principals' leadership role of guiding and counseling and development of learners' non-academic talents in Nyandarua County. Survey research design was used while quantitative research strategy was used in this study. The target population comprised of 185 principals from 185 secondary schools in Nyandarua County. Questionnaires were used to collect data from a sample of principals. Stratified random sampling technique was used to arrive at the sample for this study. Data was analysed using paired t-tests with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) while results were presented in Tables. The study revealed that development of learners' non-academic talents was being affected by inadequate training for the principals and lack of recognition of students who excel in non-academic talents. The study recommended that secondary school education policy makers, MOE officials, principals and teachers give development of learners' non-academic talents as much emphasis as the academic talents development.

**Key Words:** Non-academic, Talent, Co-curricular activities, Role, Leadership.

### **1. Introduction**

Non-academic talents which include natural abilities and lifelong skills that one acquires outside the regular academic lessons are inclined towards cultivating the mind so that the individual can accomplish all his/her educational goals in life. They also enable the individual to use full potential of the body; mind and spirit, develop ability to make the best use of his personality, surroundings and circumstances in order to accomplish maximum positive outcomes in life for him and for others (Fordham, 1993).

Lipsitz (1991) as well as McPartland, Letgers, Jordan and McDill (1996), observe that talents such as creative arts, athletics, ball games and leadership among students can be developed through secondary school's principals' leadership in co-curricular activities. They further argue that through participation in co-curricular activities, majority of secondary school students may develop talents that would make them self-employed or self-reliant even if they do not proceed with post-secondary education. In its annual report, UNESCO (2008) gave an account that development of non-academic talents would be comprehensively met, if key stakeholders

of secondary education provide the right atmosphere, environment and support for the learner to pursue his/her potential.

One such key stakeholder of secondary education is the principal who has the responsibility of setting the direction of his/her school in anticipation of development of learners' academic and non-academic talents Okumbe (1999). Okumbe's argument seemed to illuminate an earlier assertion by Eshiwani (1993) on principals' role of developing students' talents, where he had pointed out that success of secondary schools would be realized if school principals played a number of leadership roles in the course of their work. Sushila (2004), Ojiambo (2009), and Republic of Kenya, (1988) all talk about various principals' leadership roles but it is Okumbe (1999), who summarizes six major principals' leadership roles as follows: Formulation of sound policies, goals and objectives in the school; procurement of resources necessary for the achievement of school objectives; organizing and coordinating activities of the school; influencing and stimulating the human resource available; integrating the school and its activities in to the set- up of the society and to evaluate the school activities in accordance with the school's blueprint.

## **2. Background to the Study**

School leadership has become a priority in education policy agenda across the global (Gray 2000). It is also interesting to realize how global governments have reacted towards developments of students' non-academic talents in their education departments. Non-academic talents are now recognized world over as relevant ingredients of quality education which goes a long way in nurturing a healthy and an economic viable society (Digolo, 2006).

Many countries from many parts of the world have realized the importance of co- curriculum, and this has enhanced review of their education system to ensure early identification of their students' talents. This has facilitated a good environment for tapping, nurturing and developing the talents from a tender age. This Endeavour has borne fruits through production of a mass pool of sports personalities. This has in turn developed careers for thousands of their citizens. Such a realization has helped some countries nurture nonacademic talents for example in southern America, Brazil has produced many renowned professional footballers, playing their trade across elite European clubs. This in turn earns their country foreign exchange in form of monies repatriated back to their county.

For a long period of time the provisions of nonacademic talent programs in USA, Jamaica, Germany, England, France and China have come out clear as the most important mechanism for development of students. These activities have been evolved as an integral part of their learning process. Education as has been said elsewhere is a creation of a sound mind in sound body. So children need ways and means to express their emotions and learn to adjust themselves in the broad society. In Nepal nonacademic talent programs activities include activities such as physical, literary, aesthetic, cultural, hobbies, craft activities, excursions, social welfare etc. National education system plan in Nepal has made extra-curricular compulsory and had given directives to carry-on such activities. Some of these activities are given as follows - gardening competition, quiz, folk-song and dance, debate, arts, games, etc. Most of these activities are suitable for high school children.

In Africa, specifically in Nigeria and Zaire, nonacademic talent programs activities have been developed in areas such drama and music. In Kenya, several schools running alternative curriculum seem to do better on the co-curriculum scope and achievement. A good example is St. Andrews Turi that has for over 80 years, had a stand-alone department such as Drama and Theatre Studies with specific attention to instrumental Music, Drums and Tennis (Republic of Kenya, 2000).

In Kenya, Ministry of Education has given the responsibility of supervising development of both academic and non-academic talents at school level to the principals. However secondary school principals' have not done much in this endeavour in promoting realization of nonacademic talents among students (Republic of Kenya, 2000). Even those schools that do well in non-academic talents like athletics and games in general are not

associated with principals of schools but through clubs and individual initiatives. Republic of Kenya 1981 & 1988 and the Heads Manual (1979), outlines how principals' roles of checking schemes of work and lesson preparation, making of school time table, accounting of school finances, staff development, admission of students, guiding and cancelling and public relation determine the academic results of a school. There is need to conduct a study on the specific influence that secondary school principals' roles has in development of students' non-academic talents. These talents are largely enforced through co-curricular activities such as creative arts, athletics, ball games and leadership among students. They also contribute significantly to the achievement of educational aims Urevbu (1985). According to the National Curriculum and Research Centre (NCRC) in Kenya under Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), in their strategic plan 2006 – 2010, they stated that non-academic talents helps the youth to achieve their psychological and social needs without which they become maladjusted and begin to indulge in drug abuse hence becoming unemployable. Since independence, Kenya has endeavored to provide education to all its citizens. The Government recognizes the need for all children and youth to have access to both academic and non-academic education (Republic of Kenya, 1999).

### **3. Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between Secondary school principals' leadership roles and student participation in sporting activities in Nyandarua County?
2. Is there a relationship between secondary school principals' leadership role of preparing school calendar of events and development of learners' non-academic talents in Nyandarua County?
3. What is the relationship between secondary school principals' leadership role of guiding and counseling and development of learners' non-academic talents in Nyandarua County?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of secondary school principals' leadership roles in promoting development of learners' non-academic talents in Nyandarua County of Kenya.

### **5. Statement of the Problem**

Despite the critical role of non-academic talents in many sectors of society like socializing, motivation, community integration cultural heritage and youth employment, it's apparent that education sector has not fully prepared school principals especially in leadership towards development of learners' non-academic talents in secondary schools in Kenya. These activities that form part of non-academic programmes are not emphasized since most principals concentrate more on academic programmes. There is lack of proper guidance from principals in regard to their roles in supervising teachers and motivating students to take part in participation in creative activities while in school. Students from Nyandarua though involved in sporting activities, do not excel in school competitions at national level. Calendar of events and activities as put down at every beginning of year seem to be clearly spelt out but not fully adhered to especially where co-curricular activities come in.

### **6. Significance of the Study**

From a practical perspective this study has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the policy and management as it provides an understanding of influence of secondary school principals on development of learners' non-academic talents. It will provide educators, curriculum planners and government functionaries

with detailed information about the influence that secondary school principals' leadership roles may have on non-academic talents development practices in Kenyan secondary schools.

## **7. Literature Review**

School principals work mainly outside the classroom and their impact on students' learning is largely mediated through other people, events and organizational factors such as teachers, classroom practices and school climate (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). As Gori (2015) argue, resources for use in schools are decentralized and that their use depends on how best the principals utilize them. The finding that the relationship between principals' leadership and student talent development is mediated through such factors underscores the powerful role of the school principal in helping to create the conditions for effective development of both academic and non-academic talents. School principals influence the motivations, capacities and working conditions of teachers who in turn shape departments practice and student learning. Moving a step further, research on school leadership effects has revealed a number of leadership roles and responsibilities that are particularly conducive to enhancing student learning such as; supporting and developing teacher quality, defining goals and measuring progress, strategic resource management and collaboration with external partners (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Marzano *et al.*, 2005; Robinson, 2007; Waters *et al.*, 2003).

In addition to the above roles, (Burns, 1978; Bass & Avolio, 1996; Fullan, 2002) identified three other roles played by school principals, namely, the roles of an instructional leader, a transformational leader and a transactional leader. There could be as many roles as there are principals but Okumbe (1999), summarizes six major principals' leadership roles as follows: Formulation of sound policies, goals and objectives in the school; procurement of resources necessary for the achievement of school objectives; organizing and coordinating activities of the school; influencing and stimulating the human resource available; integrating the school and its activities in to the set- up of the society and to evaluate the school activities in accordance with the school's blueprint. The capabilities of principals to perform such roles greatly influence student learning outcomes aligned to school and individual goals, school organizational structure and culture.

Gori (2015) and Republic of Kenya (1988) indicate that quality of management of institutions, make a difference between the success and failure of a school. For a school to make a difference to students' achievement in both academic and non-academic talents, the principals' leadership is main contributor to its success or failure. Principals in effective schools therefore involve themselves in improving academic and non-academic talents and are responsible for day-to-day assignment of duties and supervision of the teachers, a role which is neither clearly defined in the education Act nor emphasized. According to Sushila (2004), the principal is the leader in a school, the pivot around which many aspects of the school revolve, and the person in charge of every detail of the running of the school, be it academic or non-academic. The principal should be involved in making most of the decisions of the school. It is therefore important that the principal is a leader, a thinker and a decision maker as opposed to only pushing learners and teachers to do well in national exams.

## **8. Methodology**

This study adapted the survey research design. The target population for this study comprised of all the 185 secondary schools in Nyandarua County. Stratified random sampling was used in this study. This strategy was used to ensuring that all parts of the population are represented in the sample in order to increase the efficiency (that is to decrease the error in the estimation) (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). It also catered for obtaining of estimates of known precision for certain subdivisions of the education stakeholders in Nyandarua County. Data was analysed using paired t-test with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) while results were presented in Tables.

### 9. Instrumentation and Reliability

Questionnaires were used to collect data from the principals, teachers and students. This was because they could gather voluminous amount of information on a timely basis (Orodho, 2005). An interview schedule was used to collect data from the parent’s representatives. This helped to collect in-depth information about cases of interest in this research (Kombo & Tromp, 2006).

To ascertain validity, the instruments used for the study were subjected to scrutiny by the researchers who happen to be specialists in educational management and administration. To ensure whether the measure reflected the content of the concept in question, the researchers applied face validity before the items were used to collect data from principals, teachers and students that formed the accessible population. Estimation of the tool’s reliability was essential for reliable results (Bryman, 2012; Gay, et al, 2006). The tool’s reliability for data collection was tested using Cronbach’s alpha index and was found to be .82.

### 10. Data analysis and Research Findings

Data was analysed based on the three main variables, the main research questions and on the research items that emerged out of the research questions.

#### 10.1 Secondary School Principals’ Leadership Roles and Student Participation in Sporting ctivities in Nyandarua County.

Both teachers and students were asked questions on the aspects related to student participation in co-curricular activities that related to nonacademic talents. Figure 1 shows students’ responses on their involvement in school implementation of co-curricular activities in their schools.

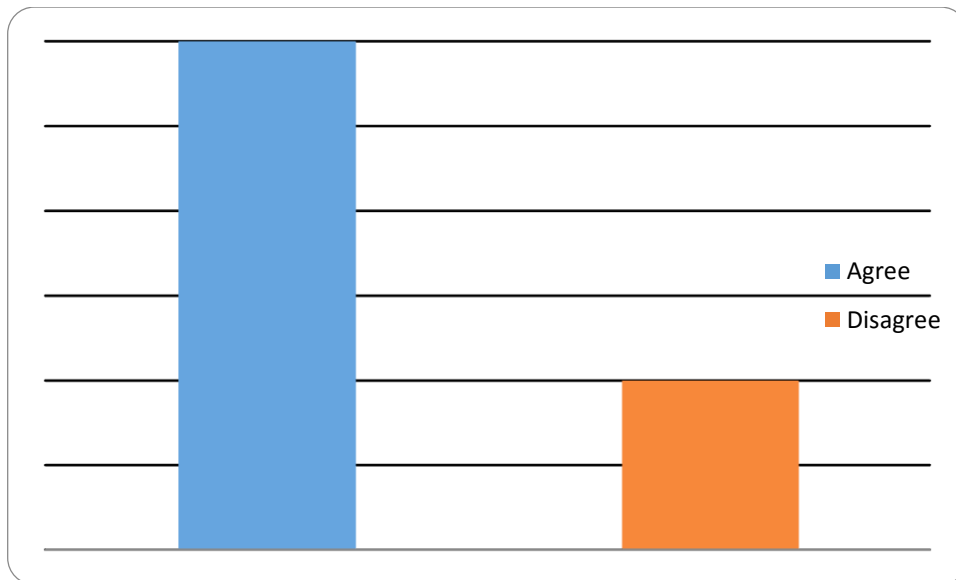


Figure 1: Students’ Response on involvement in meetings for Implementation of Co-Curricular Activities  
According to Figure 18 above, more than half of the students as indicated by 372(54.07 %) agreed that students in the schools were regularly involved by teachers and by school administration to contribute suggestions on implementation of co-curricular activities while a 316 (45.93 %) disagreed. The three respondents namely, principals, teachers and students were asked to tell whether school parents were supportive in the implementation of co-curricular activities in their schools in terms of student change of attitude. Table 1 has information from parents in regard to this phenomenon.

Table 1

*Responses on Parents' Support in Implementation of Co-Curricular Activities*

| Respondents | Responses |       |           |       |           |      |
|-------------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|------|
|             | Disagreed |       | Agreed    |       | Undecided |      |
|             | Frequency | %     | Frequency | %     | Frequency | %    |
| Principals  | 25        | 71.43 | 7         | 20.00 | 3         | 8.57 |
| Teachers    | 69        | 34.16 | 125       | 61.88 | 8         | 3.96 |
| Students    | 447       | 64.97 | 206       | 29.94 | 35        | 5.09 |

The data shows that the number of principals who agreed that the school parents were supportive in the implementation of co-curricular activities in their schools in terms of student attitude change was high as indicated by 25 (71.43 %). Only 7 (20.00 %) of the principals disagreed with the same as 3(8.57 %) were undecided. Similar responses were received from the students' respondents with those agreeing being more as indicated by 447 (64.97 %). Those who were against were indicated by 206 (29.94 %) while 35 (5.09 %) were undecided. Teachers' respondents appeared to have taken a different dimension from the principals and the students as their majority responses went the other way round. The number of teachers who thought that school parents were supportive of co-curricular activities was smaller as indicated by 69 (34.16 %). A large number of teachers disagreed as indicated by 125 (61.88 %) while 8(3.96 %) were undecided. The teachers argued that most parents consider co-curricular activities as waste of time which their children should be guarded against. On challenges that hinder students from participation in co-curricular activities, teachers were asked to react to different items that gave the following responses as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Challenges that Hinder Students' Participation in Co-Curricular Activities*

| Items/Hindrances                                      | Score | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Poorly motivated trainers and no incentives           | 19    | 9.41       |
| Negative attitude among students                      | 34    | 16.83      |
| Absence   | 10    | 4.95       |
| Lack of professional trainers and equipments          | 63    | 31.19      |
| Inadequate time allocated to co-curricular activities | 47    | 23.27      |
| Insufficient funding and poor management              | 15    | 7.43       |
| Few choices of games                                  | 14    | 6.93       |
| Total   | 202   | 100.00     |

The study revealed that the most acute challenge that hinder proper participation of students in co-curricular activities was lack of professional trainers as indicated of teachers, inadequate time allocated for co-curricular activities and negative attitude among students, insufficient funding and poor management and few choices of games in that order (see Table 2). Students were also asked to mention some of the challenges that hinder them from participating in co-curricular activities. Their responses are shown in Table 3 with lack of professional trainers and equipment and prioritizes in academic achievements leading in the list.

Table 3

*Students' Response on Challenges Hindering Participation in Co-Curricular Activities*

| Items/Hindrances                            | Score | Percentage |
|---|-------|------------|
| Poorly motivated trainers and no incentives | 88    | 12.79      |
| Health and development problems             | 41    | 5.96       |
| Negativity towards co-curricular activities | 135   | 19.62      |

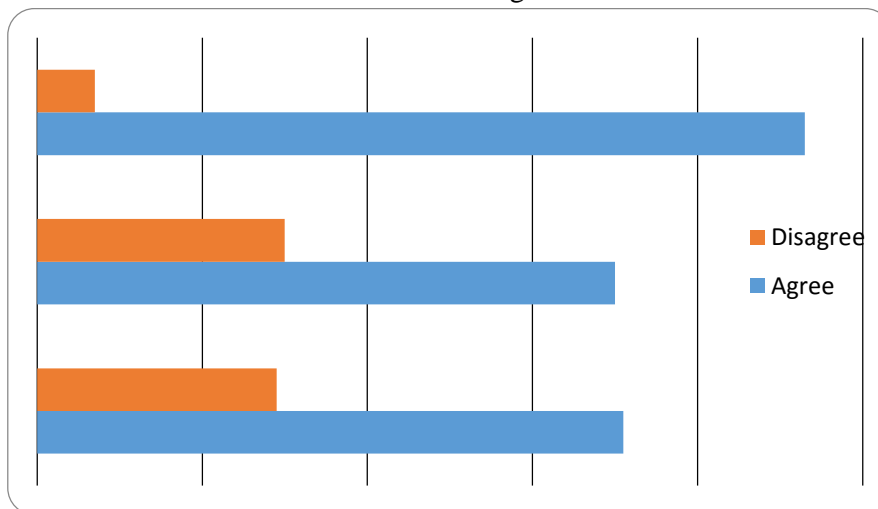


|   |     |        |
|---|-----|--------|
| Prioritizes academic achievements           | 160 | 23.26  |
| Lack of professional trainers and equipment | 219 | 31.83  |
| Insufficient funding and poor management    | 35  | 5.09   |
| Few Choices of games and reduced exposure   | 10  | 1.45   |
| Total                                       | 688 | 100.00 |

The least challenge according to the students came from few choices of games (see Table 3).

**10.2. Principals’ use of Guiding and Counseling role in Promoting Leadership among Students**

The study established that most schools were having guiding and counselling programmes which help in promoting development of leadership among the students. However, majority of teachers disagreed that regular meetings are held with the BOM to discuss leadership needs in co-curricular activities. Although democratic elections of student’s leaders were done, but majority of students disagreed that they were involved in decisions of governance towards co-curricular activities. Majority of the respondents disagreed that reward system was well known by teachers and students though they agreed that co-curricular activities are effectively planned and executed according to school programme. While the principals and the students agreed that school parents were supportive of implementation of co-curricular activities, the teachers disagreed that academic talents were recognized and rewarded as non-academic talents. When principals, teachers and students were asked whether their schools had policies and programs that encourage development of leadership skills among the student body, their comments were valid therefore recorded in the figure 2.



*Figure 2: Responses on Role of Guidance and Counseling in Promoting Leadership among Students*

According to Figure 2, there appear to be close similarity between teachers and students’ respondents but rather a disparity between the principals and the rest of the respondents. Most of the principals as indicated by 33 (94.26 percent) in the county, agreed that their schools had initiated guiding and Counseling policies and programs that encourage development of leadership skills among the student body. Only a few, 2 (5.71 percent) disagreed on the same. Although not as firmly as the principals, most teachers who responded to the research question agreed that the schools had initiated guiding and counseling policies and programs that encouraged development of leadership skills among the student body. These teachers were represented by 140 (69.30 percent) while the rest 72 (30.69 percent) disagreed on the same. Majority of the students as indicated by 505 (73.40 percent) agreed that students’ leaders in their schools were elected democratically and are highly regarded by the students’ body teachers and school administrations, while the rest 183 (26.60 percent) were of contrary opinion. The result of the study agrees with report of a task force by the Ministry of Education on causes of school unrests Republic of Kenya (2008). It recommended that schools administration should involve the students’ body in school governance through democratically elected students’ leaders. A policy on

involvement of students in school leadership was introduced in secondary schools which the findings of this study confirmed that it is still on to date. Additionally, the study wanted to find out if the principals held regular meetings with stakeholders for guiding and counseling and also to discuss co-curricular activities. To do this, principals and teachers were asked to give their views that is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Responses on Guiding and Counseling Meetings for Implementation of Co-Curricular Activities*

|            | Respondents        |       | Responses             |       |                        |       |
|------------|--------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|------------------------|-------|
|            | Agree<br>Frequency | %     | Disagree<br>Frequency | %     | Undecided<br>Frequency | %     |
| Principals | 24                 | 68.57 | 7                     | 20.00 | 4                      | 11.43 |
| Teachers   | 135                | 66.83 | 50                    | 24.75 | 7                      | 8.42  |

According to Table 4, majority of principals in the county as indicated by 24 (68.57 %) agreed that there were regular guiding and counseling meetings with relevant stakeholders to discuss implementation of co-curricular activities. However, 7 (20 %) disagreed while 4 (11.43 %) were undecided. On the other hand, most of the teachers as indicated by 135 (66.83 %) disagreed that there were regular meetings with the principal or the BOM to discuss implementation of co-curricular activities in the schools. Minority of them as indicated by 50 (24.75 %) agreed that regular meetings were held while 7 (8.42 %) were undecided. The study revealed that most principals were aware of the importance of guiding and counseling meetings with stakeholders to discuss co-curricular activities though it came out as self-assessment which is not a quite prudent way of getting information. A total of 11 (31.43 percent) of principals either disagreed or dissented which indicated that improvement of stakeholders meeting was inevitable.

**10.3. Relationship between Secondary School Principals’ Role of Preparing School Calendar of Events and Development of Learners’ Non-Academic Talents**

Data analysis was also done to test the relationship between secondary school principals’ role of preparing school calendar of events and development of learners’ non-academic talents. To test this relationship, research question 2 was used. The analysis of data for this is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

*Paired Samples Statistics*

|        |   | Mean   | N   | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--------|---|--------|-----|----------------|-----------------|
| Pair 1 | Principals’ role of preparing school calendar of events | 1.9145 | 925 | 1.28367        | .11868          |
|        | Development of learners’ non-academic talents           | 2.7949 | 925 | .84627         | .07824          |

As shown in Table 5, there is a significant relationship between principals’ role of preparing school calendar of events (M = 1.9, SD = 1.2) and development of learners’ non-academic talents (M = 2.7, SD = .8);  $t(924) = 3.858, p < .05$  and is significant. Therefore this shows that secondary school principals’ play an important role in preparing school calendar of events and development of learners’ non-academic talents in Nyandarua County. Further with a 95% confidence interval from 0.10222 to 0.65846; the t-test statistic was 3.857 with 924 degrees of freedom and an associated P value = 0.00.



## **Discussions**

Information given by principals indicate that almost all the students in the schools in Nyandarua county, participated in co-curricular activities. A small number of students do not participate. The study findings revealed that secondary school principals are aware of the importance of encouraging students' participation in co-curricular activities. This was clearly demonstrated by the co-curricular activities being allocated weekly hours on the school time table.

The study established that most schools were having guiding and counselling programmes which help in promoting development of leadership among the students. Majority of principals in the county agreed that there were regular guiding and counseling meetings with relevant stakeholders to discuss implementation of co-curricular activities. On the other hand, most of the teachers disagreed that there were regular meetings with the principal or the BOM to discuss implementation of co-curricular activities in the schools. Majority of the respondents disagreed that reward system was well known by teachers and students though they agreed that co-curricular activities are effectively planned and executed according to school programme.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

The study found out that participation in ball games provides opportunity for enhancing special skills and abilities and can lead to personal economic gains. The students' participation in creative arts subjects provides an opportunity for enhancing social skills like communication. This affirms Modi, Konstantopoulos and Hedges (1998) who found out that talented student appear to spend their time out of school participating in constructive activities. This study also established that schools policies on non-academic talents through guidance and counseling was essential.

It was concluded that secondary school principals' leadership role of supervision and motivation has great influence on development students' non-academic talents. The findings indicated that through supervision and motivation of students and teachers by the principals, students are encouraged to participate in creativity arts subject of their choice upon admission in secondary school. The study also revealed that preparation of calendar of activities in schools was essential and this could be used to enhance the identification of students for non-academic activities development. However, the study also established that due to lack of working staff development policies to ensure availability of skilled teachers in various fields at all times, most schools did not have creative arts teachers

## **Recommendations and Further Research**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made with further research recommended as shown.

- Ministry of Education, TSC should come up with realistic policy paper out of which BOMs should extract plans and calendar of events showing specifically how co-curricular activities in the schools are to be managed.
- The Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Education should create a curriculum for co-curricular activities that should be examined like other subjects in secondary schools.
- A similar study should be conducted to find out whether primary schools in Nyandarua County have got any influence on what is happening in secondary schools in Nyandarua County in regard to tapping of non-academic talents.

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