

Stakeholder Perceptions regarding Learner Participation in Non-formal Curricular Activities in Secondary Schools in Kakamega County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated stakeholder perceptions regarding learner participation in Non-Formal Curriculum Activities (NFCAs) in secondary schools in Kakamega County, Kenya. NFCAs, which include sports, clubs, music, drama, and debates, play a vital role in promoting holistic education by enhancing learners' physical, emotional, and social development. Despite national education policies advocating for active engagement in such activities, many schools continue to experience low levels of learner participation in NFCAs. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and utilized questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis to collect data from teachers, learners, parents, and school principals. Findings revealed that while stakeholders generally appreciate the value of NFCAs, participation is often hindered by resource constraints, limited time allocation, negative parental attitudes, and weak policy implementation at the school level. The study concludes that strategic interventions—such as capacity building for teachers, increased sensitization of parents, and improved school leadership support—are essential for enhancing learner involvement in NFCAs. Recommendations are offered to have further research combine qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding and to have policymakers consider integrating non-formal curricular activities into the national curriculum framework to promote holistic learning and development across all regions, not just in Kakamega County.

Keywords: Stakeholder perceptions, Non-formal Curricular Activities, Secondary Schools

INTRODUCTION

It has been established that there is need for a balanced curriculum for the development of an all-rounded learner but Kenya's 8-4-4 system of education has remained skewed towards the implementation of the formal curriculum with little regard for the informal and non-formal curriculum (Amutabi, 2019). Non-Formal Curriculum Activities (NFCAs) such as sports, music, drama, debates, scouting, and clubs play a vital role in the holistic development of learners. These activities complement academic programs by fostering leadership, teamwork, creativity, and moral values. While the formal curriculum focuses on cognitive development,

Stakeholder's put emphasis on academic success but achievements in NFCAs are not fully recognized by schools. The education system has been criticized for failure to fully accommodate non-formal curricular programmes. The curriculum as a whole is overloaded, exam oriented, and extra tuition consumes time for games, clubs and societies and other non-formal curricular activities (Aduda, 2003).

The summative evaluation of 2009 (KIE, 2009) and the Sessional paper No. 5 of 2012, 'Reforming education and training Sectors in Kenya', established that curriculum was too academic and examination-oriented. This implies that only the formal curriculum was emphasized in schools promoting academic intelligence alone as opposed to emotional intelligence and the acquisition of soft skills (World Bank, 2019)

NFCAs address affective and psychomotor domains, thereby contributing to a well-rounded education. In Kenya, the Ministry of Education, through policy and co-curricular calendars, underscores the importance of these activities in school life. However, participation in NFCAs varies significantly across schools due to differences in stakeholder engagement, infrastructure, school culture, and administrative support. This study explores the perceptions of key stakeholders—including teachers, learners, parents, and school administrators—regarding learner participation in NFCAs in secondary schools in Kakamega County.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The Sessional Paper No. 1 (2019) emphasizes the need to mainstream non-formal curricular activities with talent development within the basic education structure. It, also advocates for schools to provide opportunities and resources for learners to participate in sports, music, drama, debate, and other cultural and leadership activities.

The inclusion of Non-Formal Curriculum Activities in Kenyan education policy stems from the recognition that learners benefit not only from academic excellence but also from emotional, physical, and social development. The Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF) advocates for a competency-based approach where learners are exposed to varied learning experiences beyond the classroom. NFCAs offer platforms for such experiential learning. Despite this, participation in NFCAs is often constrained by school priorities, resource limitations, and cultural attitudes towards education, particularly in rural and semi-urban settings such as Kakamega County.

Kakamega County, located in the western region of Kenya, has a diverse socio-economic and cultural context that influences educational experiences. While some schools have embraced NFCAs robustly, others give them minimal attention. Learners' participation in NFCAs is often shaped by stakeholders who in their various capacities provide parental support, school leadership, teacher attitudes, and the availability of facilities. Therefore, understanding the perceptions of stakeholders toward NFCAs is crucial in enhancing policy implementation and improving learner outcomes across the board.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of key education stakeholders regarding learner participation in Non-Formal Curriculum Activities (NFCAs) in secondary schools within Kakamega County; Kenya.

Objective of the Study

The study was guided by the following objective

To examine the perceptions of teachers, learners, parents, and school administrators regarding learner participation in Non-Formal Curriculum Activities (NFCAs) in secondary schools in Kakamega County.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the recognized benefits of Non-Formal Curriculum Activities in promoting holistic education, many secondary schools in Kakamega County report low learner participation in these activities. This is in contrast to national education policies that encourage schools to integrate NFCAs into their learning. The lack of comprehensive data on stakeholders' perceptions—especially regarding barriers, enablers, and attitudes—hampers effective planning and implementation of such NFCAs. Without this insight, efforts to strengthen learner participation in NFCAs remain fragmented and potentially ineffective. This study seeks to fill this knowledge gap by investigating how various stakeholders' perceive and support learner involvement in NFCAs in the region.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the descriptive survey design. According to Fraenkel (2010), the descriptive design involves the systematic collection, analysis, classification, and tabulation of data pertaining to a specific phenomenon, such as prevailing practices, beliefs, processes, trends, and cause-and- effect relationships. Subsequently, the collected data is interpreted, either with or without the use of statistical methods, to draw appropriate conclusions.

Data Collection Tools

Primary data was obtained through questionnaires, interview guides and observations, whereas secondary data was through existing documented material such as the timetable, school routines and certificates of participation

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative data was first collected then cleaned to identify errors and any missing values. It was then coded and analyzed using the Statistical package for social sciences SPSS Version 20. It was presented in descriptive statistics and presented in tables, frequencies and percentages , the median, mode, mean and standard deviation. Data was also generated from documents that included the time table school routines and NFCA calendars from the MOE.

Qualitative data was gathered from school routines and school timetables. Recurring patterns were analyzed and similarities and differences on how NFCAs are scheduled and implemented. From the scheduled activities the researcher was able to tell whether the schools adhered to MOE guidelines of scheduled activities. Interviews were analyzed thematically in narrative forms and verbatim citations were captured from the QASOs.

Study Population

The study population consisted of quality Assurance of standards officers, secondary school principals, Heads of Departments, teachers, learners and parents. Below is a table illustrating the study population.

Table 1: Study Population

Description	Total
CQASOs	13
Secondary School Principals	414
Heads of Department of Non-Formal Curricular Activities	414
Teachers	10151
Learners	116363
Parents	116363
Total	243718

Source: Kakamega County Office (2018)

Table 2: Sampling Frame

Stakeholders	National Schools	Extra- County Schools	County Schools	Sub-County Schools	Private Schools	Total
Principals	1	3	6	30	2	42
Teachers	20	30	60	300	20	430

Learners	90	135	270	1350	90	1935
Parents	4	6	12	60	4	86
	115	174	348	1 740	116	2 493

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study employed questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis to capture the views of the school principals, Heads of Department, teachers, learners and parents. The narrative from the Quality Assurance of Standard perceptions is presented below

The QASOs interview question ‘what is your view of teachers’ level of involvement in drama, games, clubs and societies in schools?’ attracted divergent responses. One QASO answered that

in some of the schools that they visited while in their line of duty’ little time was assigned to NFCAs as the school is expected to excel in examinations. All efforts are therefore directed to academic work. All form four learners are supposed to take remedial lessons which are scheduled every Tuesday and Thursday when other learners participate in NFCAs (SQ 8, personal interview, 3rd September 2021)

Another QASO said

“that teachers level of involvement in the sub-county was very high. Schools had a very high level of competition in games, music and drama. Teachers were well motivated and were happy to see their learners excel in NFCAs and so preparation of learners in NFCAs by their teachers was very high. The teachers had both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic because they were happy to see their learners participate to the regional and National Competitions and excel at those levels and extrinsic because they were rewarded by their schools. (SQ 9, personal interview, 5th September 2021)

This view held depended on the school typology that the QASO had interacted with Fig 1

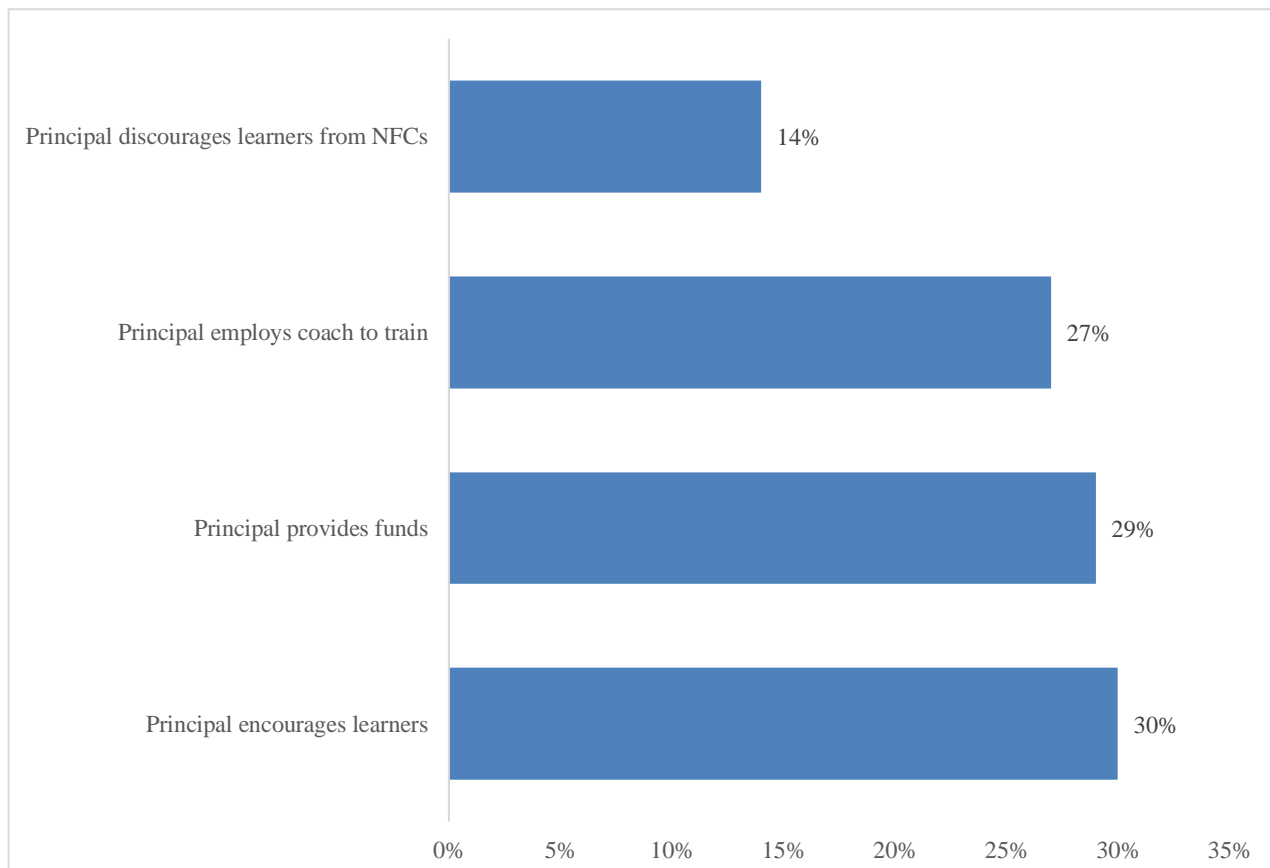


Fig1 illustrates the perceptions of school principals regarding their roles in promoting or hindering learners' participation in Non-Formal Curriculum Activities (NFCAs). The findings reveal that the majority of principals are seen to support such activities, with 30% encouraging learners to participate, indicating a strong endorsement of co-curricular engagement as part of holistic education. Additionally, 29% of principals are reported to provide financial support for NFCAs, demonstrating a commitment that goes beyond verbal encouragement to practical facilitation. A further 27% of principals' employ coaches to train learners, reflecting an appreciation for the need for skilled guidance and structured development in non-academic areas. However, 14% of the respondents indicated that their principals discourage learners from participating in NFCAs. Although this is a minority, it points to the existence of school leadership that may undervalue or deprioritize non-formal learning opportunities, potentially limiting students' all-round development. Overall, the data suggests that while many principals actively promote and invest in NFCAs, a small proportion may still view them as secondary to academic pursuits

Table 3: Perception on principals' level of Participation in NFCAs

Mean	312.00
Median	352.00
Mode	177 ^a
Std. Deviation	90.998

The data presented in Table 3 provides statistical insights into the perception of principals' level of participation in Non-Formal Curriculum Activities (NFCAs), analyzed using measures of central tendency and variability.

The mean score of 312.00 suggests that, on average, principals are moderately involved in supporting or participating in NFCAs. This reflects a general perception that many principals recognize and contribute to non-formal education, though not at an optimal level.

The median value of 352.00, being higher than the mean, indicates that more than half of the respondents perceive principals as having above-average participation. This positive skew implies that while a number of principals may be less involved, a substantial proportion are actively engaging in promoting NFCAs within their schools.

The mode of 177, which occurs most frequently in the dataset, is significantly lower than both the mean and median. This suggests that a considerable group of respondents perceive low levels of principal participation, indicating a diversity of experiences across different schools. The superscript "a" may indicate that this value is tied, or that it's the only mode in a multimodal distribution—additional context would clarify this.

Finally, the standard deviation of 90.998 shows a high variability in perceptions of principal involvement. This wide spread suggests that there is no uniform pattern across schools, with some principals being very supportive and others being minimally involved or disengaged

Table 4: HOD's responses learner's non-participants on NFCAs

		SD	D	UD	A	SA
Some learners do not participate in any NFCAs.	f	0	0	3	19	15
	%	0	0	8.1	51.4	40.5

Table 4 shows the responses by the HODs that 51.4% agreed and 40.5% strongly agreed that some learners did not participate in any NFCAs as presented in table 4.8. If the Ministry of Education set guidelines for participation in NFCAs which need to be adhered to by the schools, the problem would be that there is no strict monitoring of these activities by the teachers. HODS, Deputy Principals and Principals.

The findings differ from Han and Kwon (2018) who found that majority of learners participated in NFCAs because they perceived them as beneficial to them and in turn, to their career development and college life. The learner is a recipient of the curriculum and the very reason why curriculum is developed (Yaro, *et al.*, 2016). Learners are directly influenced by the curriculum, it is the schools' responsibility to develop the learners' skills, talents, and attitude in NFC as this helps in preparation for life. Jamil and Muhammed (2020) recommended that learners who participated at the school level should be recognized as extra ordinary learners at both school and international level as they and created awareness that Pakistani was a good country.

Khandu (2021) in a study that sought to find out the teacher's involvement level in co-curricular activities in the schools of Thimphuon agreed that because teachers had no specialized training in NFCAs, they had little understanding of them and that affected the learners' level of performance. Learners agreed to an overwhelming level of support by the Principal who offered encouragement to learners to participate in NFCAs. The Principal also provided funds for the activities as well as engaged coaches where possible assist train learners in NFCAS.

Table 5: Perceptions of Teachers on NFCAs

Table 4. 1: Learners' perceptions of their teachers on participation in NFCAs

		SD	D	UD	A	SA
Teachers prefer that we learn than get involved in non-formal curricular activities, and so there is little participation.	f	198	208	63	51	58
	%	34.2	35.9	10.9	8.8	10.2
Our teachers are not trained to guide us in participating in NFCAs	f	316	145	28	31	59
	%	54.6	25.0	4.8	5.4	10.2

n response to "Teachers prefer that we learn than get involved in Non-Formal Curricular Activities, and so there is little participation."

Table 6

Item 1

Response	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree (SD)	198	34.2%
Disagree (D)	208	35.9%
Undecided (UD)	63	10.9%
Agree (A)	51	8.8%
Strongly Agree (SA)	58	10.2%

Table 6 indicates a combined 70.1% (SD + D) of learners disagree with the statement that teachers prefer that we learn than get involved in Non-Formal Curricular Activities, and so there is little participation. This suggests that the majority do not perceive their teachers as deliberately discouraging participation in NFCAs. Only 19% (A + SA) believe that teachers prefer academics to the extent that it limits their involvement in NFCAs. The 10.9% undecided could reflect learners who are uncertain about their teachers' actual attitudes, which may point to inconsistencies in practice across teachers or schools. Most learners do not feel actively restricted by teachers from engaging in NFCAs. However, the relatively significant percentage (nearly 1 in 5) who feel otherwise highlights the need for clear institutional support and consistent teacher attitudes toward co-curricular participation.

Table 7

Item 2: "Our teachers are not trained to guide us in participating in NFCAs."

Response	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree (SD)	316	54.6%
Disagree (D)	145	25.0%
Undecided (UD)	28	4.8%
Agree (A)	31	5.4%
Strongly Agree (SA)	59	10.2%

An overwhelming **79.6% (SD + D)** of learners disagree that their teachers lack training in guiding NFCAs. This suggests that learners believe their teachers are qualified to support these activities. Only 15.6% (A + SA) agree that their teachers are not trained, indicating a minority concern that may stem from specific schools or subject areas where NFCAs are underemphasized.

The implication of this is that learners generally view teachers as competent facilitators of NFCAs, which is a positive indicator for NFCAs implementation. However, the perception held by a minority suggests the need for regular capacity building and refresher training, especially in areas such as talent development, mentorship, and NFCA planning

Many students expressed interest in NFCAs, with sports and music ranking highest in popularity. However, some reported limited access to resources and inadequate encouragement from teachers and parents. Gender biases also affected participation, with boys more active in sports and games and girls more engaged in performing arts.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics Showing Parental Support on NFCAs

Description	
Mean	267.67
Median	263.00
Mode	255 ^a
Std. Deviation	15.535

Fig 2

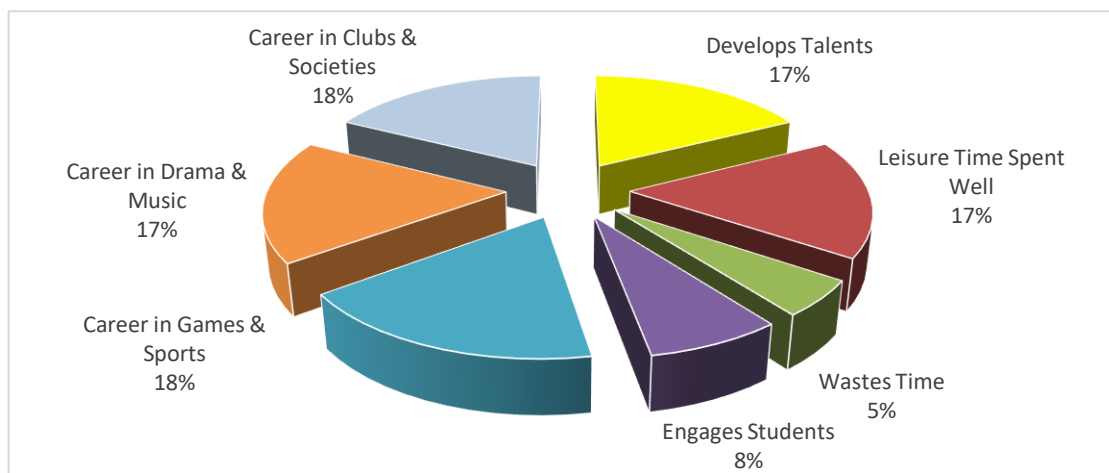


Fig 2 illustrates parental perceptions towards Non-Formal Curriculum Activities (NFCAs) in secondary schools. The data reflects a predominantly positive outlook, with a few reservations: positive perceptions

stand at 95%. A large majority of parents acknowledge the value and developmental benefits of NFCAs for their children. Career in Games & Sports (18%) Career in Clubs & Societies (18%) Career in Drama & Music (17%)

These responses indicate that 53% of parents believe NFCAs can be a viable pathway to future careers, showing strong support for nurturing student talents beyond academics .Talent Development (17%):Many parents view NFCAs as platforms for identifying and nurturing students' innate talents, which aligns with the goals of competency-based education .Effective Use of Leisure (17%):A notable portion of parents see NFCAs as a constructive outlet for learners' energy and time, helping prevent engagement in harmful behaviors .Student Engagement is at (8%) implying that some parents appreciate that these activities keep learners actively involved, promoting discipline and reducing idleness .Negative Perception that NFCAs wastes time is at (5%) implying that a small fraction of parents believe that NFCAs are a distraction from academics. This reflects a traditional bias toward academic achievement as the sole measure of educational success

Overall, the chart suggests that parents in Kakamega County are largely supportive of NFCAs and recognize their importance in the holistic development of learners. However, the existence of a small but significant negative perception points to the need for parental sensitization programs. These would reinforce the importance of a balanced education that integrates both formal academics and non-formal learning experiences

While some parents valued NFCAs for talent development and behavior shaping, others viewed them as distractions from academic success. Financial constraints also prevent some parents from supporting participation, especially in activities that required uniforms or travel.

School leaders varied in their commitment to NFCAs. Some schools had structured NFCA programs with dedicated time and budgets, while others lacked organized implementation, citing inadequate funding and facilities.

School records showed inconsistent documentation of co-curricular achievements and limited planning in some schools. Policy documents were available but often not implemented fully.

These findings indicate a mixed perception landscape, with enthusiasm for NFCAs tempered by structural, economic, and cultural barriers.

Parental reinforcement is positively correlated with their children's participation in NFCA. In this study, Parents highly supported the learner's participation in NFCAs as seen from of 70% response; 36% parents were in support of their children's participation with another 34% sponsoring their children in the activities. Findings in this study agree with Wangai (2012) (Lagace & Casc, 2010), Fletcher, Elder and Mekos (2000) and those of Jian Xu (2017) who all agreed that parental support played an important role in influencing learner participation in NFCAs. Wangai (2012) is also in agreement when she points out that parents contributed positively in the development of learner talents especially when they monitored how their children spend their time outside school.

Learners

The table below shows the perception of learners towards the support by the school administration

Table 9: Learner Perceptions on Administration's support of NFC.

		SD	D	UD	A	SA
The Ministry of Education encourages school participation in NFCAs and so our school has a variety of activities.	f	95	58	51	184	191
	%	16.4	10.0	8.8	31.8	33.0

The school principal has little support for NFCAs.	f	284	170	41	43	41
	%	49.1	29.4	7.1	7.4	7.1
The HOD does not follow up the participation in NFCAs	f	297	165	54	52	11
	%	51.3	28.5	9.3	9.0	1.9

From the Table 9 majority of the learners, (31.8% agreed and 33%) agreed that they had a wide variety of NFCAs as a result of the support from the MOE . Again, participation in NFCAs thrived best when there was maximum support by the school administration. The school principals are the ones on the ground who can oversee the requirements by the MOE and put them into practice. From the view of the learners, the Principals support was evident through encouragement of learners to participate in NFCAs, funding the activities and engaging coaches/trainers to prepare the learners in the activities The principals support was rated at 51.9% by the learners. The percentage is not good enough given that just almost as much a percentage of 48.1 % did not support the learners in NFCAs.

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics Showing Parental Support on NFCAs

Description	
Mean	267.67
Median	263.00
Mode	255 ^a
Std. Deviation	15.535

A standard deviation of 15 is low and indicates that the variation of parents support is minimal and therefore supports the fact that parents actually support their children's' participation in NFCAS. This agrees with Figure 4.8 in which parental support is recorded at 70% with parents encouraging participation in NFCAs and also through financing the activities.

The overall impression created was that, most learner's perceived that their parents would want them to participate in NFC activities. The findings agreed with Jian (2017), that parental involvement played an important role in influencing learner participation in NFCAs and those of Kumar and Arockiasamy (2012) who examined how parental influence shapes students' perceptions of the psychological benefits of participating in co-curricular activities. Results showed that while some parents were skeptical, most recognized that such activities significantly enhanced personality traits, underlining the need for effective student participation thus agreeing with the findings of this study.

(Mafuniko & Pangani, 2008) on the other hand found some parents viewed sports as a waste of time with no future benefits, and that mixed-gender events for example wearing shorts were morally inappropriate, This is supported by results by Kisango (2016) in interrogating the role of parents on development of NFCA differed when he found 76% of the students indicated that there was no positive parental involvement in co-curricular activities. There was therefore need for parents to be made aware of NFC, and the roles they could play to make participation of their in NFCAs successful.

Other than participation at the school level there were also competitive NFCAS at the zonal, sub- County, county, regional, national levels and East Africa region. To ascertain the levels, the learners were asked to indicate their highest level of participation in NFCAs, whether the NFCAs were a part of the school routine and the time that was allocated to NFCAs in their schools. The response to the first question was summarized in Table 4.20. The higher the level of performance the less the performers as demonstrated in the table. At the school level, participation is free for every learner as part of the school routine but as you get to the zonal level, it is for completion . Winners at the Zonal region move the next level which is the County level. At this level , they compete with all the other winning teams in the county to get winners for the next level which is the regional level. Winners at County level are reduced even further up to 3 teams

from the county in all the activities. If the school does not qualify to this level it implies that they cannot participate in the competition above the county.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that while stakeholders generally recognize the importance of Non-Formal Curriculum Activities, learner participation in Kakamega County secondary schools is hindered by systemic and attitudinal challenges. Effective implementation of NFCAs requires increased sensitization of parents, capacity building for teachers, committed school leadership, and enhanced resourcing. For Kenya to realize the full potential of its education reforms, NFCAs must be given equal prominence alongside academic programs in policy and practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the topic "Stakeholder Perceptions regarding Learner Participation in Non-formal Curricular Activities in Secondary Schools in Kakamega County, Kenya, it is suggested that schools should create more inclusive and structured programs to encourage student involvement in non-formal curricular activities.

Stakeholders such as parents, teachers, and community leaders should be actively engaged in planning and supporting these initiatives.

Further research could combine qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

Additionally, educational policymakers should consider integrating non-formal curricular activities into the national curriculum framework to promote holistic learning and development across all regions, not just in Kakamega County.

The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with school boards and heads of institutions, should ensure the effective implementation of Non-formal curricular activities policies. Schools should be required to integrate NFCAs into their annual plans with clear objectives, timelines, and budgets.

Getting everyone involved in NFCAs should be compulsory and the QASO, School Principals and teachers should monitor the learner in participation in NFCAs.

Continuous professional development programs be conducted to equip teachers with skills in organizing, supervising, and assessing NFCAs.

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