

## The Influence of Students' Participation in Drama on their KCSE Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Nakuru County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** Studies on the influence of students' participation in co-curricular activities on academic performance have reported mixed findings. This paper is an attempt to examine the influence of drama on students' academic performance in Nakuru County. The study adopted descriptive survey design where the target population comprised 285 public secondary schools in the study area. The sample size was selected using the simple random sampling and purposive sampling technique where 86 public secondary schools from which 344 students' representatives, 86 teachers in charge of co-curricular activities and 86 head teachers were engaged. Data from the head teachers and teachers was collected using questionnaires, while that from the students' representatives was collected by use of interview schedules. The collected data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences computer software for descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages and means) and inferential statistics such as Pearson moment correlation ( $r$ );  $z$  score analysis. The findings established that students' participation drama influenced students' academic performance. Influence was noted in enhanced cognitive skills and competence levels. However, participation in drama activities was not taken seriously in some schools and in some schools, it was not professionally done, given that, the teachers in charge were not well trained. Following this, the study recommends that secondary schools management in the county to make efforts to ensure successful implementation and mobilise resources to have teachers trained in drama and other co-curricular activities.

**Keywords:** Academic Achievement, Kenya certificate of secondary examination, drama.

### INTRODUCTION

It is the aim of any educational institution to produce graduates equipped with both academic and non-academic competencies. This aim is realized in complementing academic activities with co and extra-curricular undertakings that widen the horizon of students [1]. Also, to enhance their potentials, heighten their academic performance, develop them personally and eventually expand the curricula. Thus, co-curricular activities are encouraged and enjoined in all secondary schools. The terms extracurricular activities, co-curricular activities, and non-classroom activities have all been used interchangeably to mean experiences and activities such as debate, athletics, music, drama, school publications, student council, school clubs, contests, and various social events [2]. Arguably, without co-curricular activities, students will not be mentally, physically, socially and morally in order to perform well in KCSE. It has been reported that participation in co-curricular activities is not fully supported by most schools and the contribution of it to the students' self-concept and academic performance have not been clearly articulated to the educators, teachers, students and even parents. Some studies report positive influence of co-curricular activities on students' academic

performance [3], while others report a negative influence [4]. This paradox needs to be unraveled and therefore is the task of this paper.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Participation in Drama and Academic Achievement

In a study by Turner [5], which included interviews with principals and teachers, the results indicated that activities such as music helped with the development of analytical and problem-solving skills [6]. Participation in drama, a form of arts and theatrics enhances individuals' cognitive skills. The cognitive skills, relationships, and connections that were built through participation in school-sponsored performing arts club potentially contributed to a student's academic achievement.

Ruppert [7] demonstrates a correlation between drama involvement and academic achievement. In addition to having higher standardized test scores than their peers who do not experience the arts, student who participate in drama often experience improved reading comprehension, maintain better attendance records, and stay generally more engaged in school than their non-arts counterparts. Schools with

arts-integrated programs, even in low-income areas, report high academic achievement. From learning to read to the in-depth study of Shakespearean literature, drama can play a significant role in the continual development of students' reading comprehension skills. Studies indicate that not only do the performance of a story and a number of other drama activities in the classroom contribute to a student's understanding of the work performed, but these experiences also help them to develop a better understanding of other works and of language and expression in general. The results below were gleaned from studies where educators and students alike noticed a difference when drama played a part in their classrooms.

DuPont [8], study on the arts and education revealed a consistent causal link between performing texts in the classroom and the improvement of a variety of verbal skills, including especially significant increases in story recall and understanding of written material. Performance of Shakespeare texts helps to improve students' understanding of other complex texts including science and math material. Drama can improve reading skills and comprehension better than other activities, including discussion.

### **Theory of Involvement**

The researcher relied on the theory of involvement whose proponent is Astin [9]. Astin studied and wrote extensively in the area of student involvement in higher education. He referred to the academic experience in a broad sense that encompassed both classroom learning and out of class experiences. Astin's theory presents a paradigm for viewing students' participation in co-curricular activities, stressing the concepts of commitment and time. Involvement is an active concept that requires the student to invest in time and energy. Programs that motivate students to make such a commitment are the most successful.

Students' involvement refers to the quantity and quality of physical and psychological energy that students engage in schools' experience [10]. Such involvement can take many forms such as absorption in academic work, participation in extracurricular activities and interaction with faculty and other institutional personnel. The theory argues that the more the students are involved in school activities, the greater the students' learning and personal development [11].

This theory has many applications in the world of higher education and is one of the strongest pieces of evidence for co-curricular student involvement [12]. The theory has many tenets, which were adopted in this study. First, the theory assumes that student

involvement in co-curricular activities such as student organizations, leadership positions and activity in schools and campus has a positive correlation with retention and academic [13]. Second, it assumes that students' participation in co-curricular activities influence students' leadership and public speaking skills [14]. It also argues that students who are involved are able to develop a purpose, lifestyle planning and life management [15]. The theory further avers that students who are involved demonstrate leadership skills, are more thoughtful in their ethical decisions and are able to articulate the benefits from their involvement [16].

Astin's [17] theory of involvement posits that students learn more when they are involved in both the academic and social aspects of the institutions experience. The students who are involved devote significant energy to academics, participate actively in student organizations and interact often with faculty. Uninvolved students neglect their studies, spend little time on campus, abstain from extra-curricular activities and rarely initiate contact with other students [18]. Application of this theory to this study is that it offers students a wide variety of academic and social opportunities to become involved with new ideas [19]. The weaknesses of the theory is that, academic failure is not always lack of skills but in many cases due to the devastation, students feel from social Isolation [20].

According to this theory, involvement or active engagement in academic and other activities is positively related to student learning and development. Proper management of the co-curricular activities (CCAs) will therefore positively influence students' performance in KCSE. The theory also holds that both the quantity and quality of involvement are important in determining student outcomes and development, which is academic performance. Quantity refers to the actual amount of time a student invests in the overall academic and co-curricular endeavor. Student participation in CCAs activities such as drama and music is important and thus should be encouraged, since it has a positive influence on academic performance of students.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings presented here include demographic characteristics of the respondents and the influence of students' participation in drama on their academic achievement in KCSE in public secondary schools

#### **Response Rate**

Questionnaires were distributed to 516 respondents and the response was as provided in Table 1 below.

**Table-1: Analysis of the Response Rate**

| Categories             | Questionnaires Issued | Questionnaires Returned | Response Rate |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| Principals             | 86                    | 78                      | 91%           |
| Teachers               | 86                    | 78                      | 91%           |
| Pupils                 | 344                   | 312                     | 91%           |
| <b>Total / Average</b> | <b>516</b>            | <b>468</b>              | <b>91%</b>    |

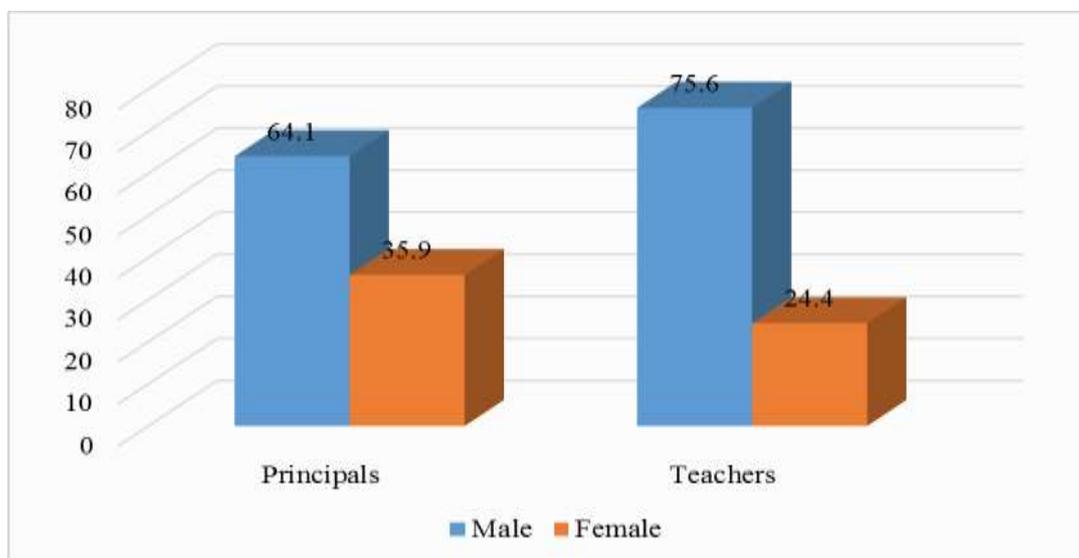
516 questionnaires were prepared and administered to the Principals, Teachers and Students, 86, 86 and 312 questionnaires respectively to 86 primary schools. Out of the researcher was able to successfully get a response from 78 principals, 78 teachers and 312 pupils. This translated to a response return rate of 91%. This was sufficient to enable the researcher come up with reliable conclusions and recommendations. The acceptable response rate for on-paper surveys is 75%, therefore the attained percentage was good.

**Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

This section presents the findings in respect to the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The subsections presented here include gender of the respondents, level of education attained by respondents, and their working experience in current school.

**Gender of the Respondents**

The results in respect to the gender of the respondents were as provided in Figure 1.



**Fig-1: Gender of the Respondents**

The findings in Figure 1 show that 64.1% of school Principals and 75.6% of teachers were male, while the rest were female. This implied that most of the respondents were male. In the case of school principals, the implication that in most schools visited in the county majority of the principals were male. There was also a higher involvement of male teachers in co-curricular activities in majority of the schools.

However, this did not affect the outcome of the research since the research was able to capture the views and perceptions of both genders.

**Highest Level of Education attained by Respondents**

The findings in respect to the education background of the respondents were as provided in Table 2.

**Table-2: Highest Level of Education attained by Respondents**

| Response            | Principals |            | Teachers  |            |
|---------------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                     | Frequency  | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| <b>Degree level</b> | 62         | 79.5       | 58        | 74.4       |
| <b>Masters</b>      | 16         | 20.5       | 20        | 25.6       |
| <b>Total</b>        | 78         | 100        | 78        | 100        |

The findings in Table 2 show that 79.5% of the school Principals and 74.4% of teachers indicated that their highest attained level of education was the Degree level. The rest of the respondents indicated that their highest attained educational level was Masters’ degree level. This implied that all the respondents had attained an educational level sufficient to enable them comprehend the influence of co-curricular activities on

students’ performance on KCSE performance in public secondary schools in Nakuru County.

**Respondents’ Working Experience in Current School**

The respondents were asked to indicate their experience in the current school and the response was as provided in Table 3.

**Table-3: Respondents’ Working Experience in Current School**

| Response        | Principals |            | Teachers  |            |
|-----------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                 | Frequency  | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| Above 3-6 years | 37         | 47.4       | 22        | 28.2       |
| Above 6-9 years | 41         | 52.6       | 51        | 65.4       |
| Above 9 years   | 0          | 0          | 5         | 6.4        |

The findings in Table 3 show that 52.6% of the school Principals and 65.4% of the teachers indicated they had had been working in their current school for a period of 6 to 9 years, whereas, 47.4% of the school Principals and 28.2% of the teachers had been working there for a period between 3 and 6 years, while 6.4% had worked in their current school for a period above 9 years. This implied that that most of the respondents had worked in their respective schools for a period long enough to be able to understand the dynamics in the

operational issues and co-curricular activities influence on students’ performance on KCSE performance in public secondary schools in Nakuru County.

**Teacher Training in CCA and their perception on CCA Implementation**

Teachers were asked to indicate whether they had received training in the CCA they patronized. The response was as given in Table 4.

**Table-4: Teacher Training in CCA and their perception on CCA Implementation**

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| No       | 67        | 85.9       |
| Yes      | 11        | 14.1       |
| Total    | 78        | 100.0      |

The findings in Table 4 show that 85.9% of the teachers were not professionally trained in the CCA that they patronized / coached while 14.1% were professionally trained. This implied that CCA was not properly implemented given the fact that all trained teachers felt that implementation was not properly done.

**Students’ Participation in Drama and Academic Achievement in KCSE**

Select statements were used to solicit information on the teachers’ view on the on the relationship between students’ participation in drama and academic achievement in KCSE. Means were computed based on a Likert scale of 1-5 and the results (Descriptive Statistics) are presented in Table 5 below.

**Table-5: Teachers’ View on the Relationship between students’ participation in drama and academic achievement in KCSE**

|  | N  | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--|----|-----|-----|------|----------------|
| Students who participate in Drama record high academic achievement in KCSE                             | 78 | 2   | 4   | 2.67 | .617           |
| Students who participate in drama have enhanced cognitive skills                                       | 78 | 2   | 4   | 3.13 | .632           |
| Students participation in drama leads to improved academic competence                                  | 78 | 2   | 4   | 2.92 | .619           |
| Student who participate in drama often experience improved reading comprehension                       | 78 | 3   | 5   | 3.26 | .545           |
| Student who participate in drama stay generally more engaged in school than their non-CCA counterparts | 78 | 2   | 5   | 3.22 | .784           |

The findings in Table 5 show that the statements recorded the following mean scores. Students who participate in drama have enhanced cognitive skills (3.13). This mean score was slightly above the mid mean score of 3.0, thus implying that students' participation in drama did contribute towards enhanced cognitive skills, an ingredient to high students' performance on KCSE in public secondary schools in Nakuru County. This finding is in line with a study by Turner [21] who established that Participation in drama, a form of arts and theatrics enhances individuals' cognitive skills. The cognitive skills, relationships, and connections that were built through participation in school-sponsored performing arts club potentially contributed to a student's academic achievement.

The findings in Table 5 show that the statement that read "Student who participate in drama often experience improved reading comprehension" recorded a mean score of 3.26. This mean score was above the mid mean score of 3.0, thus implying that students' participation made them improve in reading comprehension, this was necessary for it contributed towards better students' performance on KCSE in public secondary schools in the County. This finding was in line with a study by Ruppert [22] who noted a relationship between drama and improved reading comprehension. Ruppert argued that from learning to read to the in-depth study of Shakespearean literature, drama can play a significant role in the continual development of students' reading comprehension skills.

The study revealed that the statement that found that "Student who participates in drama stay generally more engaged in school than their non-CCA counterparts" recorded a mean score of 3.22. This mean score was above the mid mean score of 3.0, thus implying that students' participation made them stay generally more engaged in school than their non-CCA counterparts, this was necessary for staying engaged in school provided the students with an opportunity to perform well in KCSE in the County. This finding is in line with that of Ruppert [23] who established that student who participate in drama often experience improved reading comprehension, maintain better attendance records, and stay generally more engaged in school than their non-arts counterparts.

The findings also show that according to students who participate in drama recorded high academic achievement in KCSE to a small extent as shown by a mean score of 2.67. It was also established that students' participation in drama led to improved academic competence to a small extent, and this was supported by a mean score of 2.92. These mean scores were lower than the 3.0 mid mark. From the teachers, it is thus noted that students' participation in drama did not influence much students' academic achievement in KCSE.

**Performance of Students who participated in Drama**

Mean for academic performance were computed for students participating in drama (as their main co-curricular activities) and the results were as presented in Table 6.

**Table-6: Performance of Students who participated in Drama**

| CCA categorization     | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean   | Std. Deviation |
|------------------------|-----|---------|---------|--------|----------------|
| Drama                  | 39  | 3.00    | 8.00    | 4.9231 | 1.38383        |
| Non Drama Participants | 273 | 1.00    | 12.00   | 5.6447 | 1.79515        |

The findings in Table 6 show that the average grade (mean score) students participating in drama in their last test was 4.9231, which is an equivalent of C-grade. When compared to the score of non-drama participants (m=5.6447), it was established that those students participating in drama had a lower score on average. This grade was low likely to suggest that participation in drama had a negative effect on their academic performance. Although it is important to note that according to the Table there was a situation where a

student registered a mean-score of 8, an equivalent of B – grade (See grading appendix 1 below).

**Relationship between Students Participation in Drama and their Academic Performance**

In order to determine the relationship between students' participation in drama and their academic performance, means were computed to determine the scores for the amount of time spent on drama and academic performance and the results were computed and the results were as shown in Table 7.

**Table-7: Mean scores for participation in drama and academic performance**

|   | N  | Minimum | Maximum | Mean   | Std. Deviation |
|---|----|---------|---------|--------|----------------|
| Academic Performance                    | 39 | 3.00    | 8.00    | 4.9231 | 1.38383        |
| Number of hours spent on Drama Activity | 39 | 4       | 5       | 4.33   | .478           |

a. Main Co-curricular activity = Drama

From the findings in Table 7 it emerges that students' academic performance for drama students recorded a mean score of 4.9231 out a maximum score of 12, while the mean score for the number of hours spent on Drama Activity was 4.33 on a scale of 5.0. The interpretation was that academic performance was below average, while it is also noted that the 4.33 score

for time spent corroborates with a time spent of close to 2 hours every day. To further understand the relationship between students' participation in drama and their academic performance, Pearson correlation was computed and the results were as provided in Table 8.

**Table-8: Relationship between Students Participation in Drama and their Academic Performance**

|   |                     | Academic Performance | Number of hours spent on Drama Activity |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|---|
| Academic Performance                    | Pearson Correlation | 1                    | -.398*                                  |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     |                      | .012                                    |
|   | N                   | 39                   | 39                                      |
| Number of hours spent on Drama Activity | Pearson Correlation | -.398*               | 1                                       |
|   | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .012                 |   |
|   | N                   | 39                   | 39                                      |

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

a. Main Co-curricular activity = Drama  
 $r = -0.398$ ,  $N = 78$ ,  $p < .01$ .

The findings in Table 8 are reported as follows. The Pearson Correlation test statistic =  $-0.398$ . SPSS indicates with \*\* that it is significant at the .05 level for a two-tailed prediction. The actual p value is shown to be .012. These figures are duplicated in the matrix. These results indicate that as students' participation in drama increases, their academic performance decreases, which is a negative correlation. Therefore, students' participation in drama negatively influenced their academic performance, and in fact during the study, it was observed that some schools had noted this relationship and were not having this as part of the CCAs in their schools.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The study sought to establish the influence of students' participation in drama on their academic achievement in KCSE in public secondary schools in Nakuru County. The findings show that student participation in drama though important, did not greatly influence their KCSE academic performance in public secondary schools in Nakuru County. Their participation in drama however was found to positively contribute towards enhanced cognitive skills. Their participation in drama made them improve their reading comprehension, stay generally more engaged in school than their non-CCA counterparts to a moderate extent, and led to improved academic competence to a small extent.

Therefore, students' participation in drama moderately influenced their academic performance. Participation in this CCA did not appear to greatly contribute towards enhanced cognitive skills and improved reading comprehension. It can be concluded that given that this CCA had little influence on

students' academic performance, some schools were not having it. Participation in drama did not make students who participated in school stay generally more engaged in school than their non-CCA counterparts did while engaged in other CCAs. The study concludes that educators were not positive about learners' participation in this co-curricular activity. In fact, it was the CCA with fewer participants, given that the exceptional cases of students who participated in the CCA performed well in class. This was noted in earlier study by Newman [24] who observed that participation in co-curricular activities was not fully supported by most schools and the contribution of it to the students' self-concept and academic performance have not been clearly articulated to the educators, teachers, students and even parents. The findings prompts the researcher to recommend that school management consider ensuring teachers are involved in managing drama have the relevant and requisite training so as to help generate expected benefits to students' academic performance.

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#### Appendix-1: KCSE Grading System

| Kenya Grade | Grade Points |
|-------------|--------------|
| A           | 12           |
| A-          | 11           |
| B+          | 10           |
| B           | 9            |
| B-          | 8            |
| C+          | 7            |
| C           | 6            |
| C-          | 5            |
| D+          | 4            |
| D           | 3            |
| D-          | 2            |
| E           | 1            |

Source: Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education