

The Challenges of Managing Extracurricular Activities for Pre-Primary Children's Physical Development in Meru District Council-Arusha

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ABSTRACT

Globally, extracurricular activities promote children's readiness to master their physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. This study assessed the challenges in managing extracurricular activities toward children's physical development. The Administrative management theory by Henry Fayol and Froebel's Play Theory was employed in this study. The study employed semi-structured interviews with five pre-primary teachers, five head teachers and five sports teachers. The findings suggest the existence of the following challenges: the shortage of playing facilities in schools, a lack of some children's interest in participating in extracurricular activities, a lack of in-service training on handling extracurricular activities which promote children's physical development, tight school timetables and schedules with no space for extracurricular the participants also shortage of funds to run extracurricular activities. To address the challenges, schools started small projects for fundraising, promoting teachers' mentorship and collaboration among schools to share knowledge and skills on how extracurricular activities encourage children's physical development. Schools frequently meet with parents to emphasise the importance of extracurricular activities to their children's physical development. The study recommended that the school management team educate parents on the importance of extracurricular activities. Further, research needs to be done on the influence of physical development on a child's academic achievement.

Keywords: *Extracurricular activities, Physical development, Pre-primary children*

INTRODUCTION

Extracurricular activities present educational manifestations from the level of non-formal activities. They are comprised of academic, physical, and artistic activities that are generally planned, implemented, and assessed at the level of educational institution individually for each class in addition to the subjects included in the framework curriculum and the school-based curriculum (Jucan & Ungurasn 2023). Pre-primary education enables children to engage in extracurricular activities, contributing to their holistic social, cognitive, emotional, and physical development. Extracurricular activities at pre-primary schools encompass a range of activities, including sports, which entail running, jumping, swinging, sliding, clapping hands, crowing, pushing, rolling, inhaling and exhaling, walking in a straight line, sports, arts, music, dance and drama. Instructing pre-primary children necessitates educators to employ greater creativity in imparting information to children through extracurricular activities. Due to their limited attention span, it is imperative to incorporate extracurricular activities within learning hours. Extracurricular activities originated in Europe during the early 19th century to oversee and manage students outside regular class hours. During that period, extracurricular activities were known as after-class activities (Park & Zhan, 2017). The earliest extracurricular activities such as debates, fraternities, and sororities encompassed literacy groups at prestigious institutions like Harvard and Yale University. Subsequently, athletic clubs were introduced in American schools (Casinger, 2011). The advancement of extracurricular activities in the United States has positively impacted students' moral and academic growth. Since then, extracurricular activities have been implemented in various schools and colleges worldwide, and their impact is closely related to the attainment of social, physical, emotional and cognitive development.

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities in Tanzania pre-primary schools are implemented within and outside the class hours; the involved schedules within the pre-primary timetable include morning circle for twenty-five minutes, learning corners for 40 minutes, learning activities for twenty minutes per each period, break time for 35 minutes and during reflection circle for 10 minutes (URT, 2016). Mastering artistic skills as one of the identified competencies in the

pre-primary curriculum directly links children's physical development as it covers a variety of extracurricular activities within learning hours. The competence has two main objectives, which are directly related to physical development through extracurricular activities, mastering creative arts by using hands where in this specific objective, children in pre-primary classes perform various activities including but not limited to drawing, colouring, clapping hands, grouping objects according to their shapes. Another specific competence involves mastering creative arts involving the whole body, including running, walking, jumping, pushing and pulling objects, walking in a straight line, sitting in a circle, inhaling and exhaling, and playing different games. Performing and mastering artistic skills helps children balance their body movement, growth of strong muscles, healthy growth of bones, and more physical relaxation abilities. Numerous studies have examined the substantial advantages of engaging in extracurricular activities in enhancing children's overall development. An example of this phenomenon may be observed in the research conducted by Eccles and Fredricks (2010), whereby it was shown that students engage in a diverse range of extracurricular activities beyond the official curriculum. These activities encompass athletics, performing arts, academic pursuits, and volunteer work.

Moreover, Martinez et al. (2016) asserted that a significant number of students engage in multiple extracurricular activities. Eccles (2010) incorporated gender as a variable in examining participation rates across various activities. The study's findings indicated that males exhibit a statistically significant inclination towards sports compared to other activities, whereas females tend to engage more frequently in artistic pursuits. Furthermore, Singh (2014) highlighted many extracurricular activities inside school settings, including dances, team sports, performing arts, and academic groups. Participating in sports activities and games has been linked to academic performance, as seen by greater achievement levels in students' studies (Carbonaro & Maloney, 2019). According to Xu (2017), there has been an increased emphasis on prioritising students' access to extracurricular activities in China. There has been a growing trend in providing extracurricular special interest classes beyond regular school hours (Xu, 2017). According to Stearns and Glennie (2010), extracurricular activities are perceived to be advantageous for students as they provide opportunities for

self-expression and self-discovery, foster the development of practical abilities and skills, and facilitate the establishment of relationships with peers and educators. Extracurricular activities are considered an essential component of the educational system in pre-primary schools. Incorporating optional programs that foster children's engagement in play-based learning and exploration of creative outlets holds the potential to facilitate their future progress. Extracurricular activities extend beyond the fundamental curriculum, allowing children to enhance their cognitive abilities, energise their physical wellbeing well-being, and cultivate self-assurance (Mohamed & Osaki, 2022). Furthermore, it is widely recognised that extracurricular activities are crucial in enhancing students' motivation, hence fostering a positive attitude towards education, which is essential for effective learning and academic success (Yintore & Lekule, 2022). Indeed, one of the contributing factors prompting numerous financially capable countries worldwide to allocate significant investments toward ensuring the availability of resources required for the successful implementation of extracurricular activities (Emanuel, 2020).

The study conducted by Salamuddin et al. (2011) revealed that schools faced challenges such as a lack of adequate facilities and infrastructures, and teachers lacked the necessary competence and interest to plan various extracurricular activities. Assefa (2019) reports that implementing extracurricular activities in schools was poor due to insufficient facilities, financial issues, low motivation, and teachers' lack of commitment and focus. Extracurricular activities necessitate facilities, qualified personnel, sufficient funding, and the motivation of implementers to increase participation. Moreover, the Duncombe et al. (2022) study shows that poor physical development in young children has been shown to impact readiness for school, behaviour, social development and academic achievement. In the research conducted by Mohamed and Osaki (2022) in Tanzania, several obstacles were identified concerning extracurricular activities, notably the insufficient provision of facilities and infrastructure necessary for the successful execution of such activities. The study by Mohamed and Osaki (2022) revealed no significant relationship between the number of facilities and pupils, which hinders the implementation of extracurricular activities within a given timeframe. The lack of enough playtime and unsuitable playing

environments challenges the implementation of extracurricular activities in pre-primary classes, occasionally hindering children's engagement due to their unpleasant nature. Moreover, the study by Mligo (2017) considers parents' engagement in their children's education-related matters. As a result, Mligo revealed that many parents need an understanding of the importance of early education for their children and the importance of participating in invited events concerning extracurricular activities, which mainly involve sports which include but are not limited to running, playing football, jumping, crowing, rolling over and others. Mligo identified parents' limited engagement and participation in the invited events involving children in organised school activities. Further, most parents try to engage in school-related matters, such as meeting with teachers rather than attending the invited events involving extracurricular activities.

Despite the efforts made by the Tanzanian government in implementing pre-primary education, extracurricular activities are not given the importance they deserve promoting children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. Participation in extracurricular activities has been linked with the available material and human resources; the available teachers are not sufficient to manage all sorts of activities due to the high enrollment rate in pre-primary schools; thus, most of them place most of the critical hours in academic activities rather than extracurricular activities. Playing resources and playing grounds are not friendly to the children's needs, making it challenging to implement extracurricular activities in pre-primary settings. Moreover, most of the reviewed literature focuses on managing extracurricular activities in secondary schools, colleges and universities, and they mostly look at the relationship between extracurricular activities and academic achievement; few studies focus on extracurricular activities in pre-primary education settings. Therefore, this study examines teachers' perspectives on the challenges associated with managing extracurricular activities in pre-primary schools and the strategies adopted by head teachers to solve the challenges relating to extracurricular activities management in pre-primary schools.

Theoretical Framework

Fredrick Froebel believed that play represents the most advanced manifestation of human development during childhood, as it serves as the sole means for the kid to freely express the contents of their inner self (Froebel, 1887). According to Froebel, children engage in the process of constructing their understanding of the world through direct engagement during play. The concept of acquiring knowledge through engagement with the natural environment and recognising the significance of playful activities has been disseminated globally. Froebel regarded various aspects of a child's growth, including their bodily well-being, mental capacity, emotional state, social interactions, spiritual dimensions, and the influence of their surroundings, as significant (Froebel, 1887). The theory is relevant to the study since it emphasises children's direct engagement in extracurricular activities such as playing games, football, running, jumping, rolling over, and others to improve their overall physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development. Henri Fayol's management theory guided the study by identifying a hierarchy of authority as the fundamental value of any organisation because it provides each employee with a clear career path and set of responsibilities (Ojogwu, 2017). Effective management of extracurricular activities requires a hierarchy of authority in supervising the organisation's numerous activities. The theory relates to the study since it emphasises the effective use of managerial functions to enhance the management of extracurricular activities. The theory also reveals that if the school management fails to manage their managerial functions effectively, that is, planning, organising, leading, and controlling, it may lead to challenges in implementing extracurricular activities in pre-primary schools.

Methodology

This study employs a case study design to gather detailed information from pre-primary teachers, head teachers, and sports teachers regarding the challenges associated with managing extracurricular activities to enhance the physical development of pre-primary children. The study employed semi-structured interviews to allow them a certain level of autonomy in articulating their experiences related to the subject matter of the study. The interview session primarily focused on discussing the challenges associated with administering extracurricular activities aimed at enhancing the physical development of students, as well as the strategies employed by school

administrators to overcome these obstacles. Using a purposive sampling technique, study participants who were directly involved in managing extracurricular activities in pre-primary schools and possessed the requisite knowledge were selected from pre-primary schools within the Meru District Council. The study's sample consisted of fifteen individuals, which included five pre-primary teachers from five pre-primary institutions, five heads teachers, and five sports instructors. The selection process for participants was based on their professional experiences in pre-primary schools, specifically in the administration of extracurricular activities. The texts were classified into themes for thematic analysis, which was applied to the collected data (Cohen et al., 2018). Additionally, ethical considerations were considered before, during, and after data collection.

Findings and Discussions

This section presents the qualitative data collected from teachers, sports teachers, and head teachers regarding the challenges that are encountered in managing extracurricular activities to enhance children's physical development. The findings were categorised into subthemes reported in the subsequent subsections.

Shortage of Playing Resources

The interviewed pre-primary teachers reported that the management of extracurricular activities lacks adequate facilities for them to be implemented successively. Fewer playing facilities are directly connected to inadequate funds that can be used to purchase enough playing facilities such as balls, constructing friendly see-saws, and sliding and swinging instruments. The pre-primary teacher noted that;

In managing extracurricular activities, the difficult challenge we face is the issue of the playing facilities. If the facilities are available, it is easy to run the activities. The playing facilities are insufficient for the learners' needs" (Interview with one of the pre-primary teachers of school B in Meru District Council, 28th February 2022).

Children in pre-primary institutions have difficulty attaining proper physical development due to inadequate playing facilities. Children needing access to

these facilities may gain opportunities to develop their gross motor skills, coordination, and overall physical fitness. Inadequate playground facilities in pre-primary institutions may foster competition and conflict between children. Children may find sharing and taking turns with inadequate play facilities challenging, resulting in conflicts and disputes. Managing extracurricular activities with limited playing resources within the school compound is difficult. Again, the lack of recreational facilities for extracurricular activities decreased children's motivation and engagement. The findings concurred with the study done by Carbonaro and Maloney (2019); Sulamuddin et al. (2011) who added that lack of adequate facilities made most schools' extracurricular programs unattractive. Adequate play facilities are found to boost children's engagement and motivation in extracurricular activities. When facilities are limited, children may become disinterested or less motivated to participate in less stimulating or pleasurable activities. Poor playing facilities, including opportunities for physical development, can discourage their engagement and learning experiences.

Lack of Children's Interests

Lack of children's interest in performing the assigned tasks was among the key challenges of managing extracurricular activities in pre-primary schools. One of the research participants added that;

Each child has their personality; thus, some children feel too shy to participate or interact with others during extracurricular activities. Sometimes, even when you force them to participate in the planned activity, they respond negatively (Interview with Sports teacher of school A in Meru District Council, 25th February 2022).

Another participant added that;

Children ignore to participate in extracurricular activities due to harassment they get from their fellow children while attempting extracurricular activities' (Interview with sports teacher of school B in Meru District Council, 28th February 2022).

Some children experience anxiety when participating in extracurricular activities, anticipating physical harm to their peers, and are sometimes disinterested in attending. In addition, some students fear interacting with

their peers due to physical disabilities. This finding was consistent with Eccles and Fredricks (2010) who concluded that many students fail to participate in playing games or assigned activities due to the fear of their fellow children. Children's lack of interest is sometimes linked with a lack of motivation from the available playing facilities. The management must adopt a proactive approach to address the children's anxiety. The school administration should foster an environment where children feel secure, supported, and encouraged to participate. Implementing strategies such as providing clear expectations, establishing positive relationships with children, providing various activities to cater to children's diverse interests, and promoting open communication can help address these challenges and increase children's comfort with extracurricular participation.

Lack of In-service Training

The research revealed that most pre-primary teachers had limited knowledge of handling extracurricular activities in their schools. The interviewed pre-primary teachers reported that they lacked the necessary training concerning the management of extracurricular activities. One of the pre-primary teachers noted that;

Extracurricular activities management needs necessary skills that help run them smoothly, yet we never receive any training relating to extracurricular activities. Sometimes, we tend to practice the same activity, which undermines children's creativity to perform various extracurricular activities, including dramas (Interview with the pre-primary teacher of school D in Meru District Council, 23rd February 2022).

In-service training enables educators to plan and design age-appropriate and engaging extracurricular activities. Preschool teachers find it challenging to design activities that meet the children's developmental needs without adequate training. This result in activities are too tricky or straightforward, reducing engagement and learning opportunities. The findings imply that teachers need in-service training to manage pupils' behaviour during extracurricular activities, which may result in student disruptions or conflicts. Another sports teacher noted that;

Sometimes we undergo in-service training, but funny enough, the training received does not relate to extracurricular activities management in pre-primary schools. In this level of education, each child learns at their own pace, and we need a lot of time to train them on how to attempt the extracurricular activities at the school compound. Thus, handling such activities without training is challenging (Interview with Pre-primary teacher of school B in Meru District Council, 28th February 2022).

One of the challenges associated with a lack of in-service training is a decline in children's participation in and passion for such activities. Well-planned and executed extracurricular activities enhance children's focus, enthusiasm, and curiosity for learning. Without appropriate training, the activities may lack the elements necessary to capture and maintain children's attention and interest. Lack of in-service training led to a decline in engagement and participation, thereby reducing the overall benefits of extracurricular activities. The findings from this research concurred with the study done by Katherine (2019), namely that the availability of in-service training provides necessary skills to pre-primary teachers in handling various activities within pre-primary settings. Moreover, the study by Sulamuddin et al. (2011) concurs with the finding by highlighting that teachers lack the necessary competence and interest to plan various activities.

This study shows that most teachers rely only on a single activity as they lack necessary skills to perform other activities. Active participation in extracurricular activities can promote children's physical, social, cognitive, and emotional development due to the training they have received. In addition, the findings relate to Froebel's child development theory, who believed that instructors of young children should have a high level of education and training to work with the stage that he viewed as the foundation for later adulthood. This theory stresses the importance of in-service teacher training to influence children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development.

Shortage of Funds to Run Extracurricular Activities

This study revealed that financial constraints restrict pre-primary school extracurricular activities. Consequently, it imposes restrictions on its performance and practices. In pre-primary institutions, lack of funds directly

impacts the management and implementation of extracurricular activities, which limits the purchase of playing equipment such as balls, construction of playing grounds, and the payment of instructors and field trips. Activities such as playing football and performing arts require some funds to purchase the resourceful materials to support these activities. Due to limited funds for purchasing extracurricular activities materials, some pre-primary institutions utilise the same extracurricular activities. The head of the school noted that;

Depending on one source of income creates difficulty managing extracurricular activities due to insufficient funds. It is difficult to manage those activities with limited funds...'
(Interview with head of School E in Meru District Council, 22nd February 2022).

Inadequate funding in pre-primary schools reduces the quantity and variety of extracurricular activities available to pre-primary students. Providing various activities such as art classes, music lessons, sports programs, and numerous field trips may be challenging without adequate funds. Additionally, funds are needed to ensure all children's access to extracurricular activities. If certain activities require additional fees or costs, children from low-income families may be unable to participate, resulting in unequal educational opportunities. The findings concurred with Kadri's (2019) study, which found that the school committee and parents were only marginally involved in the budget planning for extracurricular activities. Again, Assefa's (2019) research concurs with the finding that financial constraints severely constrain most extracurricular activities. Pre-primary school extracurricular activities necessitate sufficient funds to administer all school-based activities.

School Timetable and Tight Schedules

The findings revealed that most pre-primary classes had limited access to extracurricular activities due to strict daily schedules. Participants in the study reported that most pre-primary children learn at their own pace and require sufficient time to standardise each child's understanding, requiring teachers to spend some of their time assisting students with weaker understanding skills to acquire the content effectively. One of the interviewed pre-primary teachers noted that:

The pre-primary timetable does not allow children to attend extracurricular activities actively. Sometimes, we adjust the schedule to ensure that these activities are participated in effectively (Interview with pre-primary teachers of school B, 28th February 2022).

Tight schedules in school timetables challenge the management of extracurricular activities in pre-primary schools, whereby due to tight schedules, teachers limit time slots available for extracurricular activities. Frequently, pre-primary educators prioritise fundamental academic subjects, leaving little time for extracurricular activities such as sports, arts, music, dance, and drama. In addition, when school schedules are stuffed with academic subjects, children feel overwhelmed, which decreases their participation in extracurricular activities. Instead of participating in activities, pre-primary educators prioritise completing assignments and studying. Tight schedules limit overall participation and engagement in extracurricular activities. Another research participant from school B added that;

Tight schedules are associated with many children in the class. It is difficult for my class, where I have 93 children, and I must ensure they understand the lesson effectively. Thus, I probably use the extra hours in helping my pupils with lower understanding skills to understand better' (Interview with pre-primary teacher of school B in Meru District Council, 28th February 2023)

The Ministry of Education (2020) identified a pupil-teacher ratio 25:1. The data indicate a high enrollment rate in pre-primary classrooms, which affects

the regular schedule of extracurricular activities. The ratios of students to teachers at each institution were 131:1 at School A, 93:1 at School B, 170:1 at School C, 189:1 at School D, and 120:1 at School E (NBS, 2022). The findings from this study concurred with the study done by Tandika and Kamboru (2018), which shows that schools with high enrollment rates create difficulty for teachers in managing various activities within the given short school hours. Therefore, teachers devote their time to assisting students who need additional assistance comprehending the material. Every child learns at a different rate, making it challenging to comprehend the material being taught concurrently. These problems have arisen due to the growing number of students enrolled in primary education and limited budgetary resources. The presence of numerous students in a pre-primary classroom at a government school poses a challenge for teachers, limiting their capacity to implement scheduled activities effectively.

Measures to Solve the Challenges for Effective Implementation of the ECA

Findings from the study revealed some measures to overcome challenges relating to managing extracurricular activities in pre-primary schools. The identified measures have been directly linked to improving the management of extracurricular activities in pre-primary schools. They include but are not limited to;

School Started Small Project for Fundraising

The findings of head teachers indicate that fundraising through small projects is the best way to minimise the school's expenditures on the acquisition of facilities required for the administration of extracurricular activities. Participants in the study suggested that small initiatives facilitate the use of funds for daily school activities. Interviewed head of school, D pointed out;

We have established small projects in our school to reduce the notion of depending on school fees as a source of income. For instance, in our school, we started implementing the project of sewing the students' school uniforms to increase the school income, and we made a law that no one is allowed to wear a uniform that is not from our school. In implementing such a law, we ensure that all clothes have the school' seal...'

(Interview with Head of School D in Meru District Council, 23rd February 2022)

Pre-primary education is essential for children's growth as they learn and develop through various activities. Thus, establishing small projects assists the school administration in accumulating funds to implement extracurricular activities in pre-primary settings. Due to limited facilities, offering engaging and enriching extracurricular activities can take time and effort. The establishment of small projects aims to raise funds to support the administration of extracurricular activities in pre-primary schools, thereby fostering the students' holistic development and talent cultivation. In addition, Mohamed and Osaki's (2022) study concurs with the study's findings, emphasising the establishment of various initiatives to maintain financial standard in educational institutions. Thus, establishing multiple initiatives reduced the school's dependence on fees as a source of revenue. (Biller & Vasko, 2020) Integrating children into school projects helps them discover their creativity and enhances their physical, social, and reasoning abilities. The study's findings are consistent with Henry Fayol's administrative management theory, which emphasises the need for a hierarchy of authority in management through active planning, budgeting, and leading the overall activities and facilities in pre-primary education. The school administration plans for which project will raise funds, and they use their managerial skills to ensure that the established projects develop as planned.

Promote Teachers' Mentorship and Collaboration

The findings from research participants revealed that the head teachers have started promoting pre-primary teachers' mentorship and collaboration with other pre-primary schools to see how other schools manage extracurricular activities toward enriching children's physical development. The head of school D noted that:

We always allow teachers to collaborate with other neighborhood schools so that they can see what other schools did in performing extracurricular activities. Sometimes we prepare friendly events that give them a chance to interact with other teachers...' (Interview with school teacher D in Meru District Council 23rd February 2022)

Teacher mentoring and collaboration with other schools can be beneficial when acquiring new skills in preschool education's management of extracurricular activities. Educators can expand their knowledge, create innovative strategies, and establish a support network within the education community by collaborating and exchanging knowledge. To accomplish this, school administrators established mentorship programs that enhance instructors' skills in extracurricular activities. Schools establish formal mentorship programs where experienced instructors guide and support their peers in specific areas, such as managing extracurricular activities. Mentors provide guidance, share resources, and provide feedback to assist mentees in acquiring new skills. In addition, another head of the school added that.

When there is an interaction between teachers from different schools, they gain new skills they may not gain when attending various training. Actual engaging in practical activities helps capture content within a short time...' (Interview with head of school A in Meru District Council 25th February 2022)

Participants in the study insist that adhering to actual practice is more important than focusing on theory. Pre-primary school teachers devise new techniques for managing extracurricular activities through collaboration with other schools. Again, it permits teachers to communicate with colleagues from other schools. They collaborate and communicate ideas using their mobile phone and email addresses. The findings concurred with Muraya and Wairimu's (2020) conclusion that instructors' mentorship and collaboration are essential for enhancing their pedagogical skills. It positively affects teachers' commitment, classroom instructional practice, and pupil participation in various school-assigned activities (Amin et al., 2018). Mentoring enables instructors to gain knowledge from their peers, significantly benefiting gradual interaction theory and practice. This study's findings relate to the theory of administrative management, which emphasises the necessity of positive cooperation through communication. Effective communication bridges the ignorance divide between pre-primary teachers, which facilitates the acquisition of new skills from other schools by forming numerous WhatsApp groups that facilitate the exchange of ideas regarding extracurricular activities in pre-primary schools.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that extracurricular activities in pre-primary schools significantly promote children's physical development. Although children's development theory highlights the importance of play in all domains of children's development, implementing extracurricular activities in pre-primary schools encounters significant challenges. The challenges in this context pertain to insufficient funds for acquiring extracurricular facilities, a lack of children's engagement or interest, and the constraints imposed by the school timetable. The proper implementation of extracurricular activities relies heavily on school management's managerial function, as Froebel advocates in the administrative management theory and teachers' creativity in planning suitable activities which have low cost, such as running, jumping, walking in a straight line, and sitting in a circle.

Recommendation

The research indicates that engagement in extracurricular activities significantly influences the physical development of children. Therefore, the study recommends that the government allocate sufficient funding to support the implementation of extracurricular activities in pre-primary schools. Moreover, pre-primary teachers are encouraged to be more creative in designing various extracurricular activities that do not require high cost. Furthermore, further research is necessary to examine the influence of physical development on a child's academic performance.

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