Strategies Used by Primary School Teachers to Identify Pupils with Non-Academic Talents in Tanzania

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Abstract

This study explored the strategies primary school teachers use to identify pupils with non -academic talents. A qualitative research approach was employed, using a multiple case study design. Data were collected from 70 participants through focus group discussions, observations, document reviews, and interviews and analysed using content analysis. The findings revealed that pupils with non-academic talents were identified through self-identification, teacher observation, parental input, peer identification, and assessment of performance. The study concluded that these strategies enable teachers to recognise pupils' non-academic talents and develop appropriate intervention programmes to nurture them. Based on these findings, it is recommended that schools continue to implement talent development programmes through targeted instructional practices and assessment tools. Specialised teacher training is also essential to support the identification and development of diverse talents, fostering a more inclusive and responsive learning environment.

Keywords: *gifted and talented, strategies for identification, non-academic talents, talent identification*

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Introduction

While schools aim to provide a quality education that fosters both academic and talent development, pupils often possess non-academic talents that receive limited attention from teachers. Many are not adequately supported in discovering or nurturing these abilities (United Republic of Tanzania [URT], 2014). Talent development initiatives—such as differentiated curricula and instruction—are essential for addressing the diverse needs of gifted pupils. Equally important are appropriate assessment tools and resources to identify and support these learners from an early stage. Teachers play a key role in this process and must be equipped to both recognise non-academic talents and adapt their teaching accordingly. However, in Tanzania, academic performance remains the main criterion for identifying gifted pupils, with less emphasis placed on talents in areas such as music, arts, and sports. These abilities are often overlooked due

to the education system's limited capacity to support them. This paper examines the strategies used by teachers to identify non-academic talents in pupils. What follows is a description of gifted and talented education in Tanzania.

Education of gifted and talented pupils in Tanzania

Gifted pupils are children who exhibit exceptional abilities that significantly exceed those of their peers in one or more domains (Worrell et al., 2019). In contrast, talented pupils are children who demonstrate exceptional abilities or skills in specific areas that exceed those of their peers (John et al., 2019). Gifted and talented pupils typically exhibit advanced cognitive abilities, learning more quickly and independently than others in their age group, often grasping complex concepts several grade levels above their peers (Piirto, 2021). These pupils possess a strong sense of curiosity and both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to explore topics of interest, leading to deep engagement with challenging material (Oudeyer et al., 2016). Emotional depth and sensitivity are also common traits, allowing them to connect with others on a profound level (Tonu et al., 2016). This combination of characteristics necessitates tailored educational approaches to effectively meet the diverse needs of gifted and talented pupils (Wood & Laycraft, 2020).

In Tanzania, the education of gifted and talented pupils falls under the umbrella of special and inclusive education (Milinga & Possi, 2017). These learners require tailored educational programmes, including appropriate teacher-pupil ratios, specialised funding, and differentiated instructional strategies to meet their unique needs (Bali et al., 2017). Effective talent development also depends on the availability of assessment tools, trained teachers, and resources for counselling and nurturing diverse abilities (Gargiulo, 2012). Although Tanzania has established special schools for gifted and talented pupils—such as Mzumbe, Iliboru, Tabora Boys, Kilakala Girls, and Kibaha—these institutions primarily focus on academic excellence, with admission based largely on examination performance (Milinga & Possi, 2017). This narrow selection criterion excludes many pupils with other forms of intelligence, such as bodily-kinesthetic, musical, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and spiritual, leaving their talents underdeveloped in mainstream education (URT, 2014). Antony (2010) notes that when these special schools were introduced in 1992, their focus remained on academic talents, reinforcing the perception that high examination scores equate to giftedness. As such, teachers often prioritise academic performance and overlook other forms of talent, shaping a limited view of giftedness (URT, 2014). This imbalance is further acknowledged in the Education and Training Policy (2014, 2023 Edition), which states that:

> Current curricula of Tanzania do not provide opportunities for identifying giftedness and talented pupils according to the learning

> needs of pupils in all domains. The available curricula recognise the high-performing pupils as the only gifted and talented. This notion does not provide an opportunity for the identification and development of other pupils' talents in different domains such as music, traditional dance, vocational skills, and arts and sports (URT, 2014, pp. 41-42; researcher's translation).

The statement criticises Tanzania's educational system for only recognising academic high performers as gifted, thereby neglecting talents in music, dance, vocational skills, arts, and sports. This narrow focus limits the development of diverse talents, hindering the personal growth and societal contributions of many pupils. In Tanzania, research on how non- academic talents are recognised and developed in schools is lacking, resulting in significant knowledge on how diverse talents beyond academic performance can be recognised and nurtured. Existing literature suggests a paucity of studies addressing the promotion of talent in different educational domains within Tanzania, highlighting an urgent need for research that explores identification strategies that can foster a more inclusive approach to talent development (Possi, 2007; Maree, 2018). Moreover, understanding how teachers identify gifted pupils through informal methods can help develop better frameworks to accommodate a broader range of pupils' capabilities.

Identification of gifted and talented pupils in Tanzania

In Tanzania, the identification of academically gifted pupils primarily relies on tests and grades (Humble, Dixon, & Schagen, 2018) rather than a broader range of assessment tools designed for early detection and intervention (Ngara & Mahdi, 2016). However, Humble et al. (2018) caution that standardised testing may not fully capture pupils' diverse abilities due to underdeveloped skills, cultural differences in interpreting test items, and limited exposure to formal education settings. They recommend more dynamic and equitable assessment methods, such as portfolios, checklists, observations, and student self-nomination. Pupils may be gifted in multiple domains, necessitating differentiated curricula to accommodate varying strengths (Calik, 2013). The traditional notion of giftedness—based largely on IQ—tends to overemphasise linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence while neglecting other areas such as art, music, design, dance, and entrepreneurship (Armstrong, 2018). Unfortunately, pupils with talents in these non-academic areas are often overlooked or mislabelled as having learning difficulties. Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences emphasises the need for teachers to use varied instructional strategies—such as music, cooperative learning, role play, and field trips—to support diverse talents. Despite this, the Tanzanian education system continues to prioritise academic performance, largely through the establishment of special schools since 1992 (Anthony, 2010). The relevance of these schools has

been questioned, with scholars calling for more contextualised and inclusive approaches to gifted education that recognise and nurture a broader spectrum of talents (Possi, 2003).

Theoretical framework

This study was guided by Carol Dweck's Mindset Theory, which distinguishes between fixed and growth mindsets and their influence on human behaviour (Dweck, 2015). Individuals with a fixed mindset view talent as an innate, unchangeable trait and tend to focus on proving their abilities rather than developing them. They often believe that talent alone leads to success. In contrast, those with a growth mindset see talent as malleable—capable of being developed through effort, persistence, practice, and motivation. According to Dweck (2000), pupils who believe their abilities can grow over time tend to perform better academically than those who perceive talent as fixed. She advocates for learning environments that support the realisation of every pupil's potential. Complementing Dweck's view, Matzel and Sauce (2018) highlight the dual nature of talent as both highly innate and malleable. They argue that intelligence arises from a complex interplay of genetic predispositions and environmental influences. This interplay creates a large reservoir of potential, supporting the idea that intelligence is shaped by both nature and nurture.

Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983) also underpins this study. Gardner challenges the notion of talent as a singular, measurable entity, traditionally assessed through IQ tests. Instead, he proposes that talent consists of multiple and distinct intelligences: linguistic, logical -mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist, and spiritual. Each learner possesses a unique combination of these intelligences, and education should nurture this diversity. Armstrong (2018) and Gardner & Hatch (1989) argue for a curriculum and instructional approach that accommodates varied learning styles and avoids over-reliance on linguistic and mathematical measures. Learners can apply their diverse talents to solve problems, innovate, and express creativity (Gardner, 1993). Teachers, therefore, should offer varied learning experiences that foster the development of these talents. This study embraces these theoretical perspectives, focusing on non-academic talents as natural abilities and lifelong skills developed outside traditional academic instruction (Ndirangu, 2015). These talents help pupils harness the full potential of their body, mind, and spirit to thrive within their environments and achieve meaningful life outcomes (Gori, 2014).

Methodology

Research design

This study aimed to gain in-depth insights from teachers in their unique school contexts using a qualitative case study approach. This approach enabled the researchers to explore the strategies and practices that teachers employ to identify pupils with non-academic talents across varying school settings. As highlighted in previous studies (see, for example, Pesambili, 2020a, 2020b; Pesambili, 2021; Pesambili, 2024), qualitative research is particularly valuable for capturing participants' lived experiences, contextual realities, and meaning-making processes. It allows for a deeper understanding of complex educational phenomena that cannot be easily quantified. The case study is useful in providing a rich, detailed account of events, processes, and interactions within real-life educational settings. It facilitates an in-depth examination of phenomena within their natural contexts, allowing researchers to explore how and why particular strategies are used. Previous studies show that a case study design is effective in examining context-specific practices, revealing the interplay between individual agency and institutional structures, and generating transferable insights grounded in real-world experiences (Pesambili, 2013; Pesambili & Mkumbo, 2018, 2024). Therefore, this approach was well suited for investigating the diverse ways in which primary school teachers in Tanzania identify non-academic talents among pupils.

Participants and sampling procedures

Data were collected from 70 participants: one District Cultural Officer (DCO), one District Primary Education Officer (DPEO), four head teachers, 40 teachers, and 24 pupils. Pupils were included as the primary focus group whose diverse abilities are to be recognised and nurtured. The DCO and DPEO were selected for their oversight roles in education and talent development, particularly during events such as UMITASHUMITA competitions. This diverse, purposively selected sample enhanced data triangulation. The DCO, DPEO, and teachers were chosen based on their expertise and active involvement in talent identification. Standard six pupils were selected using criterion purposive sampling, as standard seven pupils were likely to be preoccupied with preparations for the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) during the data collection period. Pseudonyms were used to ensure participant confidentiality.

Data collection methods

Classroom observation

A semi- structured observation method was employed to explore how teachers identify pupils with non-academic talents. Observations focused on pre-arranged co-curricular activities that showcase such talents and were conducted in natural

school settings. These were audio-recorded and supplemented with field notes and photographs taken with participant consent.

Interview and focus group discussions (FGDs)

Additional data were gathered through interviews and FGDs. Interviews with head teachers, the DCO, and the DPEO lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, while FGDs with teachers and pupils lasted about one hour. All sessions were conducted in Kiswahili to ensure clarity and were later translated into English by a language expert to maintain data integrity.

Documentary reviews

Documentary reviews included minutes from meetings on sports, self-reliance projects, artistic activities, scouting, music and traditional dance clubs, interschool competitions, and talent show schedules. These documents were selected based on their relevance to co-curricular activities promoting talent development.

Data analysis

Data were analysed using content analysis guided by Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework. This method, as supported by Allen (2017), is well-suited for analysing data derived from oral communication, video/audio recordings, texts, and documents. The data analysis process involved cross-case comparisons and both deductive and inductive coding to categorise and interpret the data. The process enabled the identification of recurring patterns and relationships relevant to teachers' strategies for identifying non -academic talents. This comprehensive approach enhanced the trustworthiness of the study and provided a robust understanding of talent identification practices in primary schools, as discussed in the subsequent section.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the key findings on the strategies used by primary school teachers to identify pupils' non-academic talents. The findings show considerable variation in these strategies, shaped by teachers' differing beliefs about the nature of talent—whether seen as innate, malleable, or a combination of both. The discussion is organised thematically and supported by direct quotes from interviews, focus groups, observations, and documentary reviews to illustrate participants' experiences and perspectives.

Pupils' self-identification

Teachers indicated that some pupils volunteered to show their talents whenever there was an opportunity. For example, they assumed leadership roles at home

when participating in family events. Moreover, teachers invited pupils to inform openly or through an opinion box on the areas in which they thought they had the ability. Lenatha from school "A" described: "*Our school gives pupils the freedom to mention an area which one thinks is better off. This strategy has helped the school to identify student singers, comedians, dancers, leaders and actors/actresses*". Similarly, Joshua, a teacher from school "B" stated that:

> We allow pupils to assess their performance and report to teachers. This strategy helps pupils to be aware of their weaknesses and strengths. It encourages them to be more responsible for their non-academic talents. Through this strategy, teachers are able to respond in a timely manner to various non-academic talents and plan intervention programmes according to pupils' abilities (FGD, July 2021).

Likewise, Josam, a pupil from school "A", explained that:

> We are free to do assessments in areas perceived as our talents and give feedback to our teachers. Such as comedy, leadership, dancing, singing, and music. We show how we sang during mass and how we played various games at home. Our teachers support and encourage us to participate more (FGD, July 2021).

These voices portray self-identification as a method that teachers use to discover pupils' talents. By creating avenues for pupils to showcase their abilities, hidden non-academic talents are found, enabling teachers to plan interventions to develop them. This encourages pupils to be more self-directed and responsible to develop their non-academic talents because they are aware of their weaknesses and strengths. The strategy frees pupils to inform teachers about various areas in which they think that they are talented. Through this information, teachers provide a room for those pupils to show their talents in front of teachers or fellow students. After the exhibition, pupils are guided according to their abilities. For example, Anita, a teacher from school "A", elaborated:

> Other pupils use the opportunities to show their talents before their peers during the lesson. One day, when I was teaching Kiswahili in class five, after the lesson, one pupil came in front of the class and told me that she was good at singing and writing poems. She showed me a song that she had written, which she sang in front of the class. It was a nice song. The good news to us is that she is currently a member of the Roman Catholic choir, and she sings at different events, including graduation ceremonies (FGD, July 2021).

Other avenues and events through which pupils self-identify and exhibit their talents include religious martyrs' day, graduation day, Parents' Day and annual school

sports events. Teachers further indicated that the strategy has made it possible for talented pupils in domains that receive less school attention, such as gymnastics, acrobatics, girl football and news writing, to come out and show their talents. Musa, who teaches in school "C", illustrated:

> My office receives pupils who come to show different talents. Almost all students who report in my office claim to be talented in somersaults, gymnastics, and news writing, and a few girls claim to have football skills. Unfortunately, we are focusing less on these domains because of poor infrastructure (FGD, July 2021).

Although pupils report various talents beyond academic excellence, not all self-proclaimed talents are given attention by teachers. Talents like gymnastics, somersaults and acrobatics are less attended because of poor infrastructure and a lack of teachers with relevant skills to provide appropriate instructional guides to pupils. A head teacher of school "B" explained:

> My pupils are open to everything because they are free to show their exceptional skills. They volunteer to show their talents in drawing, singing, playing football, traditional dance, and crafts, and this helps teachers assist them accordingly. However, the school has poor infrastructure and lacks skilled personnel to mentor pupils to develop their talents (Interview, July 2021).

Two teachers from school "C" acknowledged that the self-identification strategy helps discover hidden non-academic talents among pupils. It allows teachers to discover exceptional abilities beyond academic performance and guide pupils to achieve their full potential. This was accompanied by planning various school programmes that reflect and respect their cultures and learning styles, as teacher Jemsi from School C explained:

> Pupils' self-identification of their talents has helped teachers become aware of diverse non-academic abilities. For instance, the school has purchased trumpet level one, cruppers, balls, music speakers, and traditional and modern drums purposely to respond to pupils' needs (FGD, July 2021).

Similarly, teacher Rose illustrates:

> Talented pupils express their skills by mentioning their abilities, such as playing football, singing with a microphone, or drawing with modern tools. This helps teachers understand their interests and plan tailored support accordingly (FGD, July 2021).

Self-information from pupils helped teachers to know the various talents pupils possessed. Consequently, teachers had an opportunity to plan training programmes by considering talent diversity reported by pupils. On the other hand, information from pupils has created avenues for teachers and pupils to work together to empower and encourage all pupils and provide them with enriched educational materials and experiences, role models, and mentors. In the same way, Astin's (1999) theory illustrates that the effectiveness of any educational practice is directly related to the capacity of that practice to increase pupils' involvement. Teachers in our study seem to uphold this argument by letting pupils mention the areas of their talents for which various educational programmes which widen pupils' participation might be developed. Consequently, the interactions between teachers and pupils on school premises have increased pupils' commitment to their talents as well as towards the school. Subsequently, this increased the rate of talent retention.

Pupils' self-identification is considered an appropriate strategy for identifying pupils' non-academic talents through which they assess their performance and report to teachers. This has helped teachers plan intervention programmes that focus on the talents demonstrated. Through this platform, various pupils' non-academic talents like somersaults, gymnastics, comedians, news writers, footballers, singers, and athletes are identified. Self-identification helps pupils assess their performance, experiences and passions. It helps them reflect, critique and assume responsibility for their skills (Rubeba & Mwenda, 2015).

Teachers' observation

Teachers also identify talented pupils through observations during extra-curricular activities such as sports and games, self- reliance projects, arts, music, scouts, environmental clubs, athletics, traditional dance clubs and crafts. Furthermore, through these co-curricular activities, teachers cross-check pupils' levels of creativity, dedication, hard work, task commitments, and self-interest, which act as benchmarks for talent identification. On these platforms, pupils showcase their talents, and teachers notice them as teacher Matata of School C narrated:

> Teachers organise co-curricular activities where pupils perform various games. They hold talk shows and talent show days every Thursday. Pupils exhibit their talents like traditional drama, music, song and comedy. These platforms help teachers to observe and identify the most performing pupils (FGD, July 2021).

Likewise, teacher Jose from school "D" added:

> After classes, pupils engage in co-curricular activities such as sports, debate, and handwork clubs. Teachers observe these activities to identify

> talented pupils, leading to mentoring and coaching programmes. Observation highlights pupils' commitment and hard work (FGD, July 2021).

The evidence illustrates how teachers use observation to identify diverse gifts beyond normal academic talents through various platforms which allow pupils to demonstrate performance in multiple areas. Teachers appear to favour observations as they enable pupils to demonstrate important attributes for talent development, such as the level of dedication and persistence as teacher Nelson from School A clarified:

> Observation is an effective strategy for identifying pupils' non-academic talents, especially for young pupils who may not recognise their abilities yet. It allows teachers to detect interest, creativity, and commitment early on, enabling timely intervention programs that help pupils excel from an early age (FGD, July 2021).

Similarly, teacher Editha from school "C" described observation as an objective strategy for identifying pupils' talents. Talented pupils have some learning characteristics which differentiate them from other pupils. Therefore, using observation, teachers can detect many factors which are not noticeable using different methods:

> When observing, one gets a full picture of pupils' strengths in various domains. It is possible to see the full engagement of pupils, and you see some of the talented pupils who try to hide their talents. Pupils in the middle years of schooling frequently feel anxious and insecure. This can be detected only through observations (Observation, July 2021).

The findings indicate that teachers frequently rely on observation to identify pupils' non-academic talents. This strategy is widely used because it enables teachers to detect hidden abilities, especially among pupils who may be reluctant to showcase their talents. Teachers consider observation an unbiased method, as it allows them to directly assess pupils' interests, participation, and commitment during various school programmes. Despite the complexity of talent identification—given the diverse ways talents are expressed—teachers use observation to assess creativity, task commitment, and enthusiasm in activities such as music, singing, comedy, dance, scouting, leadership, and crafts. This aligns with Astin's (1999) Student Involvement Theory, which posits that pupil engagement in school programmes provides opportunities to demonstrate abilities across different domains. Such involvement allows teachers to understand pupils' strengths better and design educational interventions that support further development. Observation is also endorsed by Gardner (1991) and Tanu, Kamau, and Sambu (2016) as an effective strategy for talent identification, as it captures pupils' active engagement and varied

expressions of talent. Various tools were noted, including musical instruments (pianos, guitars, wind instruments, drums), sports equipment (playgrounds, football gear), and creative materials (drawing tools, microphones, audio recorders). The presence of these resources reflects a multifaceted approach to talent identification, enabling a comprehensive understanding of pupils' unique abilities.

Parental information

Teachers rely on information provided by parents to help identify pupils' non-academic talents. As primary caregivers, parents often observe their children's strengths in areas such as music, dance, storytelling, choir, leadership, and sports. They may also notice high levels of engagement in intellectual tasks and diverse interests or curiosities that are not easily detected in classroom settings. Teacher Florian from School A explained:

> In 2017, a parent introduced his son as a skilled footballer, seeking support. Despite poor academics, he excelled in football, dominating UMITASHUMITA locally and competing nationally (FGD, July 2021).

Similarly, Alex, a teacher from school "D", confirmed:

> One of the parents told teachers during Parents' Day that he had decided to enrol his daughter in this school because he knew that the school promotes various pupils' talents. He declared that his daughter is a good singer and musician and requested that the school develop her abilities (FGD, July 2021).

Teachers acknowledged parental information as another good strategy which helps them identify various talented pupils. Through visiting days, parents' meetings and phone calls, parents reported various talents their children possessed. They demand to know from teachers whether their children were provided with opportunities to develop their abilities. This strategy helped teachers to follow up on the pupils' reports by parents that they have various non-academic talents. Thus, programmes have been put in place to respond to the reported talents. Teacher Jose from school "D" explained how parents help teachers identify talents:

> A parent requested a list of Tanzanian secondary schools teaching religious subjects for her daughter, who she believed had spiritual intelligence. After completing primary school, the parent wanted her daughter to pursue religious studies. Upon investigation, it was observed that the daughter actively participated in religion class, preaching to her peers, confirming her talent in this area (FGD, July 2021).

Similarly, Moses, a teacher from school "C", explained that:

> Two years back, I received a message from one parent informing me about his child who was interested in environmental issues. He wanted to know if the school had environmental clubs to help pupils to develop their careers. He explained that his child liked the environment and she wanted to be an environmentalist (Interviewed, July 2021).

Teachers acknowledge that parental input plays a crucial role in identifying pupils with non-academic talents, particularly in areas such as sports, music, and painting. This information often serves as a starting point for schools to develop relevant programmes—such as environmental and religious clubs, news writing, and reporting sessions—to nurture pupils' interests and aspirations. Parental involvement in talent identification aligns with Astin's (1999) Student Involvement Theory, which emphasises the importance of supportive home environments, high expectations, and motivation in promoting talent development. Active parental engagement increases opportunities for recognising talents in diverse settings. As talent identification is a multifaceted process, it requires collaboration among teachers, parents/caregivers, students, and professionals. Collecting information from multiple stakeholders enables a more holistic understanding of pupils' gifts beyond academic performance (Antony, 2010; Davis & Rimm, 2011).

Peer-identification

Teachers often receive information from pupils who reported about their peers with different non-academic talents. Pupils themselves witnessed various talents demonstrated by their peers within the school setting or outside school settings. Rose, a head teacher from school "D", described:

> You cannot believe it! Pupils often know about their peers' talents. For example, fellow pupils informed teachers about two students in class VII who were skilled at drawing. Upon investigation, we confirmed this: all these drawings you see on the walls were drawn by those two pupils (Interview, July 2021).

A similar argument was provided by the District Primary Officer (DPEO) as well as the District Cultural Education Officer (DCEO), who asserted:

> In our meetings with teachers at the district level, we encourage them to ask students about various talents their peers possess. This helps identify hidden talents among students. I remember when I was teaching, I asked the students who could draw a picture of Julius Kambarage Nyerere. They mentioned a classmate who was indeed a very talented artist (Interview, July 2021).

From the above responses, one can safely argue that pupils themselves identify one another in terms of the talents they possess, which in turn becomes a very useful strategy for the development of the school. This strategy helps the school to know early about different pupils who are talented in various domains, thereby preparing them for special, gifted programmes. Encouraging teachers to ask pupils about their peers' talents fosters a collaborative environment that enhances talent identification. This approach not only helps uncover hidden abilities but also promotes peer recognition, which can boost students' confidence and motivation. Additionally, Vanessa, a pupil from school "C", clarified during the discussion that peer identification caused one pupil who is talented in news writing and reporting to be known at school. She explained:

> We identified one pupil in class IV who was talented in news reporting and writing. In the dormitory, she normally reported various school events that happened since morning. She performed well, and we enjoyed it. Teachers and matrons had no information about it, but we exposed it (FGD, July 2021).

That peer identification as a strategy helped schools to get pupils with various non-academic talents was further illustrated by teacher Zamora from school "D":

> When you ask pupils who a good singer is, they often mention well-known names. But when you ask them to identify talented classmates in music, dance, or gymnastics, their responses are accurate. Their observations are usually correct, and when you follow up, you find their information to be truthful. They don't lie (FGD, July 2021).

The quote illustrates that peers play a valuable role in identifying talented pupils. Even in environments where self-expression is limited, some pupils reveal their talents to others. Peer identification has helped uncover talents that might otherwise go unnoticed. As members of the school community, pupils often support one another by encouraging their peers to showcase non-academic abilities. Teacher Mugisha from school "B" added:

> Pupils effectively identify talented peers, such as those skilled in singing, traditional dancing, and acting. They are cooperative and accurate in their claims. For instance, pupils pointed out classmates who could mimic human and animal sounds, which was later confirmed by teachers during a follow-up (FGD, July 2021).

The quote suggests that teachers rely on peer-reported information to identify pupils with non-academic talents. This highlights the important role pupils play in recognising and reporting talents among their peers that teachers may not have observed. To support this, schools implement various co-curricular activities that

provide opportunities for pupils to develop their abilities further. Peer identification is an effective strategy for uncovering unique skills that may not be evident through traditional assessments (Smith & Johnson, 2018). It is particularly useful for identifying talented pupils who may be reluctant to showcase their abilities openly (Betts & Neihart, 1988).

Assessing children's work

Teachers also identified pupils with talents beyond academic performance by assessing the work they submitted during and after classroom activities. Joyce, a teacher at School "A", explained: *"It is easy to identify pupils who are talented when you assign them some work to do. Through assessing activities in the graphic club, crafts club, and news reporting, you can identify many talented pupils in these domains."* Similarly, Byamungu from School "C" elaborated:

> Our curriculum requires using teaching aids like pictures and maps. Pupils who excel in drawing these materials are identified as talented. For example, the school maps and illustrations of Oldowan and Acheulian tools were created by pupils whose skills were discovered during this process (FGD, July 2021).

Likewise, the District Primary Education Officer shares a similar view to Byamungu from School "C," who described that:

> As a district-level supervisor, I encourage teachers to assess student work during both academic and extracurricular activities. This approach helps identify talented pupils in areas like drawing, sculpting, and carving (Interview, July 2021).

The remarks above suggest that teachers identify talented pupils in news reporting, artistic, and other plays through class work. It seems classroom assessment provides an opportunity for teachers to identify the best pupils in various domains of gifts beyond normal academic talents. Furthermore, encouraging the assessment of pupils' work fosters a comprehensive understanding of their diverse talents, enabling tailored support and development at school. In that regard, Mr. Jovan, who heads school "A", confirmed teachers' experiences when he remarked:

> Assessing pupils' works has increased the number of pupils who are identified as talented, especially in drawing, sculpture, leadership and ceramic art. We have art classes at this school where students make various objects using earthenware materials such as clay. From this art, items like dishes, pots and vases are made. Through this platform, talented pupils are identified (Interview, July 2021).

Cohen, a head teacher from school "B", clarified:

> Some pupils aren't school prefects or class monitors. But during sports and games, art classes, environmental clubs, graduation ceremonies, talent day shows, and shamba works are the ones who assign tasks to pupils and report to teachers of lazy pupils, though they are less concerned. These pupils are considered to have leadership ability due to self-volunteering. Through assessing pupils' work, various strengths, creativity and commitments are observed (Interview, July 2021).

These responses indicate that assessing pupils' work allows teachers to identify talents in areas such as sculpting and ceramics. This strategy has proven effective in revealing pupils' abilities that might otherwise go unnoticed. Through this process, teachers can also evaluate pupils' creativity and task commitment. As Gardner (1999a) asserts, assessing pupils' work provides insight into the varied forms of creativity they demonstrate. It also highlights individual strengths and weaknesses, informing the planning of programmes to support talent development. Nitko and Brookhart (2019) affirm that this approach offers a comprehensive understanding of pupils' exceptional skills by examining the quality and originality of their work. Unlike peer identification, standardised tests, or self-reporting, assessment of pupils' work can uncover hidden talents that may not be visible through other methods.

Teacher-pupils talk about talents

Teachers identify talented pupils when they talk to pupils about talents. During the teacher-pupils' interactions, pupils openly talked about and demonstrated their talents. Through this platform, teachers can see various skills and outstanding competence among pupils, and pieces of advice are given to make sure that talented pupils produce maximum positive outcomes from their talents. Jordan, who studies at school "C", explained during discussion:

> There is a time when teachers and pupils join the clubs to discuss pupils' talents pupils. Also, through debates, various topics on non-academic talents are addressed under the guidance of teachers. This platform provides a chance for teachers to see varied creativity in pupils and talents discovered (FGD, July 2021).

Similarly, teacher Amina from school "A" illustrated:

> We conduct participatory discussions with pupils to identify and nurture their non-academic talents early. This approach helps uncover hidden talents, as some pupils may not openly display their abilities, and teachers believe that un-nurtured talents can have broader societal impacts (FGD, July 2021).

Findings imply that teacher-pupils talk about talents as an opportunity to identify and promote non-academic talents, especially during the early stages of pupils' learning. This seems helpful for pupils who shy away from demonstrating their talents. Early identification of pupils' talents is very significant to pupils themselves, family, society and country. The teacher-pupils talk strategy made teachers aware of the various talents possessed by pupils and thus prepared co-curricular activities concerning pupils' non-academic talents.

The head of school "D" affirmed that teacher pupils talk about various non-academic talents they possess, which has helped the school to have data on pupils' non-academic talents and to plan how these pupils would be supported. For example, the head teacher was quoted:

> Our school fosters a culture of teacher-pupil discussions to identify non-academic talents. This leads to the discovery of pupils skilled in sports, music, dance, drama, and art. We then hire specialist teachers to develop these talents further, offering training in music, dance, and drama, including the use of instruments like trumpets and modern music equipment (Interview, July 2021).

Similarly, teacher Jovan from school "C" explained:

> We provide opportunities for pupils to discuss their capabilities with teachers and peers. This leads to specialised training in non-academic areas like music, news reporting, arts, choir, netball, and football. We also invest in modern equipment to support talented pupils, such as developing the school band (Interview, July 2021).

Teacher Damian from School "B" further noted: *"Pupils receive training in reflective thinking during discussions, which leads to a deeper understanding and belief in their talents."* This illustrates how the teacher-pupil talk strategy facilitates self-expression and helps pupils reflect on their abilities. This strategy has enabled teachers to identify talents across various domains and to promote them through co-curricular activities such as sports, artistic work, music, environmental clubs, scouting, traditional dance, crafts, and graphic design. To support talent development, schools provide relevant programmes, trained teachers, assessment tools, and counselling services. With teachers' guidance, pupils engage in a range of co-curricular activities aimed at nurturing non-academic talents. Field observations confirmed pupil participation in such activities and the presence of both purchased and improvised equipment designed to support talent identification.

These school-based initiatives align with Legault's (2017) self-determination theory, which suggests that talents can be developed through motivation and supportive social environments where intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are internalised. Similarly,

Gargiulo (2012) argues that for pupils to benefit from their talents fully, schools must provide specialised materials, identification tools, teaching methods, and counselling services. According to Bali, Omollo, and Mapunda (2017), talented pupils require adapted educational programmes, appropriate funding, and skilled teachers to meet their instructional needs. Consistently, Gardner (1983) asserts that pupils possess multiple intelligences requiring diverse instructional approaches. He encourages teachers to use varied strategies to harness pupils' full potential. In his later work, Gardner (1997) further emphasises the importance of recognising diverse forms of intelligence and providing personalised, interdisciplinary learning experiences to help all learners thrive.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study's findings have demonstrated that teachers in both public and private primary schools in Tanzania employ a wide range of strategies to identify pupils with non-academic talents. These include pupil self-identification, teacher observation, parental input, peer identification, assessment of pupils' work, and teacher-pupil discussions. These approaches have enabled teachers to recognise talents across diverse domains and have increased pupils' awareness of their abilities. In turn, pupils have come to appreciate the value of non-academic talents for their future, motivating them to develop these gifts beyond the academic realm.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that primary schools implement comprehensive talent development programmes. These should integrate the various identification strategies and create structured environments that encourage the expression of diverse talents such as music, sports, arts, and leadership. Schools should foster a culture that values non-academic skills alongside academic achievement. These programmes should also include regular workshops, mentorship opportunities with professionals, and community engagement initiatives to offer pupils real-world exposure and practical experience. A holistic, inclusive approach to talent development will not only help pupils recognise their unique abilities but also empower them to pursue their passions and contribute meaningfully to their personal and professional growth.

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