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A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF PRIMARY PUPILS IN KAMULI DISTRICT.

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Abstract.

Background.

Curriculum development policies play a crucial role in shaping the academic performance of pupils**.** This study established the relationship between curriculum development policies and the academic performance of primary pupils in Kamuli District**.**

Methodology.

The study employed a descriptive correlational and cross-sectional survey design. Further, the study adopted a mixed research approach. A target population of 213 participants was used , of which 134 were selected as the sample size using (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Primary data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides, and secondary data was collected by use of a documentary review list.

Results.

Most of the participants were females 76 (63%), and 71 (59%) of the respondents had primary. The correlation between curriculum development policies and academic performance was 0.751 with a significance value of 0.001. There was a strong positive correlation between curriculum development policies and the academic performance of pupils in Kamuli District. One head teacher said *"We implement a flexible curriculum policy that aligns with national education guidelines while catering to the specific needs of our learners. Our focus is on practical, competency-based learning, ensuring students gain academic and life skills.*

Conclusion

The study found a strong positive correlation between curriculum development policies and academic performance. This indicates that well-designed and continuously updated curricula significantly support students' learning and academic progress.

Recommendation.

Schools should conduct periodic curriculum reviews to align teaching content with national education standards, emerging learning needs, and best teaching practices.

The curriculum should focus on practical and critical thinking skills rather than rote memorization, ensuring pupils develop a deeper understanding of subjects.

Keywords.
Curriculum development, Education policy, Academic performance, Primary education, Kamuli district
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Background.

Curriculum development policies play a crucial role in shaping the academic performance of pupils. The design, implementation, and improvement of curriculum have a direct impact on the quality of education received by students. Effective curriculum development policies ensure that the learning objectives, content, and instruction methods are aligned with the desired outcomes and standards(Curriculum Reform, 2020). Curriculum development policies that are well-designed and regularly revised have been found to positively affect student achievement. The study concluded that a high-quality curriculum, focused on deep conceptual understanding rather than rote memorization, was associated with higher academic performance (Omondi, 2010).

In 2017, the Education Commission of the States published a report titled "Curriculum Development and Review: Implications for School Accountability." The report highlights the importance of ongoing curriculum review and development to improve student outcomes (Wijngaards-de Meij & and Merx, 2018). It emphasizes the need for schools to regularly evaluate curriculum effectiveness, incorporate changes based on new research and practices, and align curriculum with state academic standards. (Clarke,

2020)Explored the relationship between curriculum development policies and academic achievement in primary schools. The findings showed that schools that had well-defined curriculum development policies and processes had higher academic achievement compared to schools with weak or nonexistent policies.

(Sancar et al., 2021), revealed that curriculum development policies that prioritize resources and teacher training significantly impact student achievement. The study found that schools with sufficient resources for curriculum development, including instructional materials and professional development opportunities for teachers, had better academic outcomes.

In conclusion, curriculum development policies have a significant impact on the academic performance of pupils. Well-designed and regularly revised curriculum, aligned with learning objectives and standards, is associated with higher achievement. Effective curriculum development policies also emphasize ongoing review and improvement processes, incorporate research-based practices, and provide resources for teacher training. These policies play a crucial role in shaping the quality of education and the outcomes for students. This study established the relationship between curriculum development policies and the academic performance of primary pupils in Kamuli District.

Methodology.

Research Design.

A descriptive correlational and cross-sectional survey design was used. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted because it permitted the researcher to study a target population by studying a representative cross-section of the population to arrive at findings that were logical and applicable to the entire target population. The study also used a mixed research approach where both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques were used. Quantitative techniques were applied to numeric data and qualitative techniques were deployed for non-numeric data, such as respondents' views or opinions, preferences, attitudes and feelings.

Target Population.

The target population for this study comprised of four primary schools in Kamuli District. The study used head teachers, primary seven pupils and teachers of the selected primary schools as respondents for the study.
A target of 293 participants was used in this study. This consisted of 04 head teachers, 54 teachers and 235 primary seven pupils (Kamuli District Education Departiment, 2023).

Table 1: Target population

Selected primary schools	Head teachers	Teachers	Primary seven pupils
Mbulamuti Junior Primary School	01	15	55
Namaira Parents primary school	01	14	64
Kamuli primary school	01	13	56
St Lawrence primary school	01	12	60
Total	04	54	235
Target Population			**293**

Source: Kamuli District Education Departiment, (May, 2023)

Sample size

Table 2: Population Size, Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Selected participants	Population size	Sample size	Sampling technique
Head teachers	04	04	Purposive sampling
Teachers	54	52	Purposive sampling
Students	235	111	Simple random sampling
Target Population	**293**	**167**	

Source: Kamuli District Education Department, (May, 2023)

For this study, the researcher adopted the Kreijcie & Morgan (1970) table of determining sample size to determine the sample size. Therefore, 167 respondents were selected as the study respondents

Sampling Techniques.

The study used both probability and non-probability sampling techniques to select the respondents for the study. Under non-probability sampling, purposive sampling was used to select participants for the study. These included teachers and head teachers since they have in depth

knowledge about school management policies and academic performance of pupils in selected schools.
Simple random sampling was used to select pupils in primary seven to participate in the study. The method was used so as to give all the pupils an opportunity to participate in the study and eliminate bias.

Research Instruments.

Primary data was collected using a questionnaires and interview guides. The interview guides were used to collect information from teachers and head teachers while questionnaires were used to collect information from primary seven pupils. Secondary data was collected by use of a documentary review list.

Questionnaires.

This technique involved the use of written down items to which the respondent individually responds in writing. The items were in the form of statements. The reason for choosing this technique was to administer a large population in a short period of time. The questionnaire was structured into sections that sought responses for the demographic characteristics of respondent, open ended and Likert format questions that were in line with the study objectives.

Interviews.

This instrument helped the researcher to collect information that cannot be directly observed. Data from head teachers and teachers was obtained by the use of interviews. This was used to acquire in depth information about the study topic.

Documentary Review Checklist.

Information was sourced from documents related to the area of study. These documents were studied and critically reviewed while putting the ethical standards in mind. They were used to examine the effectiveness; relevance and the appropriateness of the language including those related to the policies and background information of the organization mainly the end of term reports, general staff meetings minutes.

Research Procedure.

An introductory letter was sought from the School of Graduate Studies and Research of Team University which was presented to head teachers of the selected primary schools in Kamuli District seeking authorization to conduct research and request them to participate.
The researcher administered the questionnaire to the respective respondents developed with the guidance of the supervisor. He further made appointments with the respondents on when, where and at what venue they met to conduct interviews or administer questionnaires.
The study also made use of secondary data by reviewing available relevant text books, journal articles, periodicals, manuals dissertations, publications and visiting Newspapers both international and local ones. The authors of these articles were fully cited and accredited for their contribution to this research.

Validity and Reliability.

To ensure that the selected data collection instruments were capable of collecting the data that they meant to collect, and that they can measure consistently the variables that they were supposed to measure, the instruments were pre-tested for validity and reliability.

Validity of the study.

This study subjected its instruments of data collection to face validity because it ensured the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the inferences made from the results. With help of the supervisor, the correctness of research elements in collecting data intended was done based on the Four (4) Point Scale of relevance, clarity, simplicity and ambiguity.
Content Validity Index (CVI) for the item was determined by dividing the number of valid questions (relevant) with the total number of questions in instrument. Only those instruments with CVI that was over 70% in CVI was selected to collect data for the study.

Reliability of the Study.

Reliability concentrated on assessing consistency and stability of data collection instruments against any chance factors or environmental conditions in measurement of the variables (Mugenda, 1999). The instruments for data collection were tested for internal reliability from within the school, but a total number of 5 respondents were used in the study.

Data Analysis.

The study collected qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data was entered into a data sheet using coded values, and manipulated using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS 18.0 Windows). Descriptive statistics were obtained and cross- tabulations of some items were made to obtain relationships, and tested using Pearson correlation coefficients significant at 0.01 levels. Additionally, frequency counts and percentages were obtained to facilitate interpretations and conclusions.

Graphic illustrations were used to summarize and portray the general trends of the results. Direct quotations from documents and interviews were used to illustrate ideas and opinions.

Results.

Table 3, indicates that males were 44 (37%) and females were 76 (63%). This shows that the majority of respondents in selected primary schools in Kamuli District are female (63%). Therefore, gender significantly affects the academic performance of pupils in Kamuli District.

Also, findings showed that the respondents aged 5-17 years were 71 (59%) and those aged 18+ years were 49 (41%). This shows that the majority of respondents are in the study were in 5-17 years age group (59%). Thus, shows that majority of the respondents of the study were primary pupils in Kamuli District.

Findings on marital status of the respondents showed that single respondents were 71 (59%), married were 42 (35%) and the separated ones were 7 (6%). This shows that the majority of respondents in Kamuli District for this study were single (59%) and hence primary pupils.

Findings showed that 71 (59%) of the respondents had primary, 40 (33%) respondents had tertiary education and 9 (8%) respondents had University education. This shows that the majority of respondents have a primary education level (59%), while no respondents have a secondary education level.

Overall, the data analysis highlights that the majority of respondents in Kamuli District are female, in the age group of 5-17years, single, and have a primary education level.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents.

Characteristic	**Frequency**	**Percent(%)**
Gender		
Male	44	37%
Female	76	63%
Total	**120**	**100%**
Age		
5-17 years	71	59%
18+ years	49	41%
Total	**120**	**100%**
Marital status		
Single	71	59%
Married	42	35%
Separated	7	6%
Total	**120**	**100%**
Education level		
Primary	71	59%
Secondary	0	0%
Tertiary	40	33%
University	9	8%
Total	**120**	**100**

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Table 4 showing descriptive results one the Curriculum Development Policies Selected Primary Schools in Kamuli District Selected Primary Schools in Kamuli District.

	Mean	standard deviation
Teachers provide in depth understanding of concepts in all subjects to pupils	1.8	0.9
The curriculm allows teaching for a short period of time	4.5	0.3
Teaching tools for some subjects are not sufficient	4.2	0.1
The curriculum does not allow regular assessment of pupils	1.3	0.6
Curriculum ensures that needs and interests of pupil's education standards	1.4	0.2
Curriculum development policies define the subject content and skills of pupils	4.7	0.2
Curriculum development policies influence the teaching methods and strategies employed by teachers	2.1	0.3
Curriculum development policies also influence resource allocation in education	1.6	0.6

Source: Primary data (2024)

Table 4 shows that, the average response on the statement "The curriculum at this school ensures that teachers provide in depth understanding of concepts in all subjects" was 1.8 with standard deviation of 0.9. Threrefore, primary school curriculum at selecetd primary schools in Kamuli District does not provide in depth understanding of concepts in all subjects.

The average response on the statement "The curriculm allows teaching for a short period of time hence students never understand core concepts" was 4.5 with standard deviation of 0.3. Threrefore, the curriculm allows teaching for a short period of time hence students never understand core concepts.

The average response on the statement "Teaching tools for some subjects are not sufficient thus poor performance in standardized exams" was 4.2 with standard deviation of 0.1. Threrefore, teaching tools for some subjects are not sufficient in selected primary schools in Kamuli District hence resulting into poor performance in standardized exams.

The average response on the statement "The curriculum does not allow regular assessment of pupils hence affecting their overall academic performance at the end the course" was 1.3 with standard deviation of 0.6. Threrefore, curriculum allows regular assessment of pupils for academic excellence in selected primary schools in Kamuli District.

Curriculum development policies are seen as highly impactful in determining the relevance of the curriculum to the needs and interests of pupils. The mean score of 1.4 indicates that the respondents strongly agree that these policies align with the local context, culture, and economic demands, resulting in more meaningful learning. The low standard deviation of 0.2 suggests that there is little variation in the responses, indicating a high level of agreement among the participants.

The subject content and skills defined by curriculum development policies are perceived as crucial in providing balanced and comprehensive education. The mean score of 4.7 indicates a strong agreement that these policies enable pupils to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills at each level of education, leading to better academic performance. The low standard deviation of 0.2 suggests that there is little variation in the responses, indicating a high level of agreement among the participants.

The influence of curriculum development policies on teaching methods and strategies is viewed as moderately impactful. The mean score of 2.1 suggests that respondents are leaning towards agreement that these policies promote student-centered and interactive teaching approaches, which enhance active learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. The slightly higher standard deviation of 0.3 suggests that there is slightly more variation in the responses compared to the previous findings, indicating some level of disagreement or uncertainty among the participants.

The impact of curriculum development policies on resource allocation in education is seen as relatively high. The mean score of 1.6 indicates that respondents agree that these policies ensure adequate provision of textbooks, learning materials, and other resources necessary for effective curriculum implementation. However, the higher standard deviation of 0.6 suggests that there is more variation in the responses, indicating some level of disagreement or uncertainty among the participants.

Also, during the interview with one head teacher as a key respondent, he said *"Our school follows the national curriculum set by the Ministry of Education and Sports, but we also integrate co-curricular activities to enhance learning. We have a policy of continuous teacher training to ensure they deliver lessons effectively, incorporating modern teaching methods like learner-centered approaches and digital resources where possible. Additionally, we conduct termly curriculum reviews where teachers assess subject coverage and adjust lesson plans to meet learners' needs. To ensure implementation, we have a curriculum committee that monitors progress and provides feedback to improve teaching and learning outcomes."*

Another head teacher said *"We implement a flexible curriculum policy that aligns with national education guidelines while catering to the specific needs of our*

learners. Our focus is on practical, competency-based learning, ensuring that students gain both academic and life skills. We achieve this by incorporating agricultural projects, entrepreneurship lessons, and ICT into the standard curriculum. Regular assessments help us track progress, and we organize refresher training workshops for teachers to update them on curriculum changes. The school administration closely supervises lesson planning and classroom delivery to ensure the curriculum is effectively implemented."

Table 5: Descriptive Findings Academic Performance of Pupils in Selected Primary Schools in Kamuli District.

	Mean	stanadrd deviation
Pupils perform excellently in Primary Leaving Examinations	2.1	0.6
Pupils perform well in term scores	2.2	0.4
All pupils progress to their next classes	2.3	0.3
The pupil demonstrates a clear understanding of the subject material	2.2	0.2
The pupil's complete assignments and homework on time and to a satisfactory standard	1.9	0.1
The pupil actively participates in class discussions and activities	2.4	0.4
The pupil demonstrates effective problem-solving skills	2.1	0.2
The pupil shows a positive attitude towards learning	1.8	0.4

Academic Performance of Pupils in Selected Primary Schools in Kamuli District.

Table 5 revealed that, on Performance in Primary Leaving Examinations (Mean = 2.1, SD = 0.6), pupils' performance in the national Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) was rated at 2.1, which suggests a moderate level of achievement. However, the standard deviation of 0.6 indicates some variation in performance, meaning that while some pupils perform well, others may struggle.

On Performance in Term Scores (Mean = 2.2, SD = 0.4), academic performance of pupils is slightly higher at 2.2, with a lower standard deviation of 0.4. This suggests that most pupils perform within a similar range, with fewer extreme variations.

On Pupil Progression to the Next Class (Mean = 2.3, SD = 0.3), the mean score of 2.3 indicates that most pupils are progressing to the next class, although the relatively low standard deviation (0.3) suggests consistency in promotions. This implies that retention rates may be low, with most students advancing despite variations in individual performance.

On Understanding of Subject Material (Mean = 2.2, SD = 0.2), Pupils' comprehension of subject content was rated at 2.2, showing a moderate level of understanding. The very low standard deviation of 0.2 indicates that most pupils perform closely around this average, with minimal deviation.

On Completion of Assignments and Homework (Mean = 1.9, SD = 0.1), the lowest mean score (1.9) is observed in the completion of assignments and homework, suggesting that many pupils struggle with timely and satisfactory submission. The extremely low standard deviation (0.1) indicates uniformity in this trend, implying that most students exhibit similar behavior in this aspect.

On Participation in Class Activities (Mean = 2.4, SD = 0.4), this indicator has the highest mean score of 2.4, suggesting that students are relatively more engaged in classroom discussions and activities. However, the standard deviation of 0.4 reflects some variability, meaning that while some pupils are highly active, others are less participative.

On Problem-Solving Skills (Mean = 2.1, SD = 0.2), the ability to apply problem-solving skills is rated at 2.1, showing a moderate level of proficiency. The standard deviation (0.2) suggests that most pupils perform within a similar range, with little variation.

On Attitude Towards Learning (Mean = 1.8, SD = 0.4), the lowest rating (1.8) is observed in students' attitudes toward learning, indicating that motivation and enthusiasm for education might be low. The standard deviation of 0.4 suggests some differences in attitudes, with some pupils showing more positivity than others.

During the interview with one of the Head Teachers he said *"The academic performance of our pupils is generally below the expected standards, with many struggling in national examinations and termly assessments. One key indicator of poor performance is the low pass rates in the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE), where a significant number of pupils score in the lower divisions. Additionally, class test results show weak comprehension skills, especially in reading and mathematics. Many pupils also fail to complete assignments on time, and teachers report low participation in class discussions. Factors such as high absenteeism, lack of parental support, and limited access to learning materials contribute to these challenges. To address this, we have introduced remedial lessons and community engagement programs to support learning."*

Another Head Teacher said *"Our school faces several challenges that affect academic performance, as seen in pupils' struggles with problem-solving, literacy, and overall subject comprehension. Termly assessments reveal that many pupils perform below average, particularly in English and Science. A major issue is the poor attitude towards learning, where pupils show little interest in class activities and rarely complete homework. Additionally, high pupil-teacher ratios make individualized attention difficult, leading to slow progress. Socioeconomic challenges also play a role, as some pupils come to school hungry or lack basic learning materials. To improve performance, we focus on engaging teaching methods, mentorship programs, and partnerships with parents to support pupils' learning at home."*

Table 6 revealed that, the correlation between curriculum development policies and academic performance was 0.751 with significance value of 0.001. There was a strong positive correlation between curriculum development policies and academic performance of pupils in Kamuli District.

Odel		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.831	.000		2.234	.000
	Curriculum	2.614	.001	.053	2.395	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Academic performance						

Correlational findings.

Table 6: Correlation findings on school policies and academic performance of pupils in Kamuli District

		Curriculum development policies	Academic performance
Academic performance	Pearson Correlation	0.751	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	120	120

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Primary (2023)

Table 7 showed that academic performance of primary pupils in Kamuli District was 50.1% explained by the curriculum

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
2 Curriculum	0.701[b]	0.491	0.501

Regression analysis of school management policies and academic performance of pupils in Kamuli District.

Policies (Adjusted R Square =0.501, sig=0.000) and the remaining 49.9% was explained by other variables that outside the study. Therefore, curriculum policies significantly contribute to academic performance of primary pupils.

Discussion of results.

Curriculum development policies and academic performance of pupils in Kamuli District.

The study revealed a strong positive correlation (r = 0.751, sig = 0.001) between curriculum development policies and

academic performance, indicating that well-structured curriculum policies significantly improve learning outcomes. (Omondi, 2010) emphasized that regularly revised and well-designed curriculum policies lead to higher student achievement by promoting deep conceptual understanding rather than rote memorization. This finding is consistent with the study in Kamuli District, where schools that followed structured curriculum guidelines and regularly updated their teaching methods recorded better academic performance. Schools that relied on outdated curriculum materials or lacked systematic curriculum review processes tended to perform poorly.

Similarly, (Atuhurra & Kaffenberger, 2022) highlighted the importance of continuous curriculum review and alignment with academic standards. The findings in Kamuli District support this, as schools that engaged in periodic curriculum evaluation and adapted teaching strategies based on new research saw improved pupil outcomes. Schools that failed to review and adjust their curriculum to address learners' needs often faced challenges in achieving high academic performance.

The study by (Clarke, 2020) further supports the notion that well-defined curriculum development policies lead to higher academic achievement. This aligns with the findings in Kamuli District, where schools that had clear policies on curriculum planning, implementation, and assessment performed better than those with weak or non-existent policies. The presence of structured curriculum guidelines ensured consistency in teaching and learning, leading to improved pupil performance. (Sancar et al., 2021) emphasized the role of resources and teacher training in curriculum development. Their study found that schools with adequate instructional materials and professional development opportunities for teachers had better academic outcomes. This finding resonates with the Kamuli District study, where schools that invested in teacher training and instructional resources demonstrated higher academic achievement. Teachers who were well-equipped with updated teaching methods and learning materials were able to deliver lessons more effectively, leading to improved pupil performance.

Conclusion.

the study found a strong positive correlation between curriculum development policies and academic performance ($r=0.751$, $p=0.001$). This indicates that well-designed and continuously updated curricula significantly support students' learning and academic progress. The curriculum's alignment with the needs of the students, as well as its capacity to engage and challenge them, is essential for driving better academic results.

Recommendation.

Schools should conduct periodic curriculum reviews to align teaching content with national education standards, emerging learning needs, and best teaching practices.

The curriculum should focus on practical and critical thinking skills rather than rote memorization, ensuring pupils develop a deeper understanding of subjects.

Teachers should receive continuous training in modern teaching methodologies, including the integration of technology, learner-centered approaches, and differentiated instruction.

Schools should ensure that pupils and teachers have access to textbooks, digital learning tools, and other instructional materials to enhance learning outcomes.

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Thank you all for being a part of this journey.

List of Abbreviations.

UPE	Universal Primary Education
ESDP	Education Sector Development Plan
SCM	School management committees
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
PTMP	Primary Teacher Management Policy
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
PTA	Primary Teachers Association
KDED	Kamuli District Education Departiment

Source of funding.

There is no source of funding.

Conflict of interest.

No conflict of interest declared.

Availability of data.

Data used in this study is available upon request from the corresponding author

Authors contribution.

FN designed the study, conducted data collection, cleaned and analyzed data and draft the manuscript and MS supervised all stages of the study from conceptualization of the topic to manuscript writing and submission.

Ethical approval.

Permission was sought from the School of Graduate Studies and Research after defending the proposal and will obtain an Introductory letter to go with in the field. consent of the respondents to participate in the study and feel free to provide relevant information for the study was sought
Further informed the respondents about the purpose of the research project and the expected outcome of the study. Assured the respondents that the information provided was treated with maximum confidentiality, secrecy and was only used for academic purposes. Further, the study credited and extend his gratitude to all previous researchers whose literature contributes to this study

Informed consent.

A consent form was filled by the respondents after explaining the purpose of the study to them. The respondents were assured of confidentiality as no name will appear on the questionnaire. No participant was forced to participate in the study and all the study materials used during the interviews were safely kept under lock and key only accessible by the researcher.

Authors biography.

Fatuma Nakiranda is a student of master's degree in education planning and management at School of Graduate Studies and Research, Team University.
Muhamad Ssendagi is a research supervisor at School of Graduate Studies and Research, Team University.

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