

The relationship between the role played by parents in planning for school activities and academic performance in Kumi district. A cross-sectional study.

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Abstract

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Background

The relationship between the role played by parents in planning school activities and academic performance is a significant area of interest in educational research and practice. The study aimed to establish the relationship between the role played by parents in the planning of school activities and academic performance in selected Universal Secondary Education Schools in Kumi District.

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and involved students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected, analyzed, interpreted, and presented.

Results

158 respondents participated in this study, 66 (41.8%) were males, 92 (58.2%) were females, staff was 74(46%) were staff, 34% (54) were students, 20(13%) were PTA and 10(7%) were administrators. The findings of the study were that parental involvement in school planning has not been fully realized, and parents have not been adequately involved in the financing of school activities, which has led to financial resource constraints and, consequently, impinged the student's academic performance. It was also established that parents' involvement in students' discipline has not affected academic performance in Kumi District.

Conclusion

It was, therefore, concluded that parental involvement in the management of school discipline should be complemented with participation in planning/management and financing of the school if good academic performance is to be realized.

Recommendations

The need for government to make a policy on the specific roles parents should play in school management, the government should increase funding for USE program managers of Kumi District devise non-tuition-related means of financing the school and the focus should not be on discipline alone but the also other variables like quality of students at the point of entry in senior one, quality of teaching, internal efficiency of the school and staff motivation.

Keywords: Role Played by Parents, Planning for School Activities, Academic Performance, Kumi District.

Submitted: March 12, 2025

Accepted: June 29, 2025

Published: October 19, 2025

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Background of the study

Historical background

Academic performance is the outcome of education; the extent to which a student, teacher, or institution has achieved their educational goals. It is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessment tests, but there is no general agreement on how it is best tested or which aspects are most important -procedural knowledge, such as skills, or declarative knowledge, such as facts (Martin T, 2007)

In the United States province of California, the Academic Performance Index (API) is a measurement of the performance and progress of individual schools in California. API scores range from a low of 200 to a high of 1000 according to the California legislature of 1999. The interim statewide API performance target for all schools is 800. A school's growth is measured by how well it is moving toward or past that goal (Martin T,

2007). An API score is calculated for all students in a school, as well as numerous API scores for each subgroup at the school (such as by race, English Learner Status, students with disabilities, and socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils). Each rank ranges from 1 to 10, with a score of 10 meaning that the school's API fell into the top 10%. A school's score or placement on the API is designed to be an indicator of a school's performance level and is calculated annually by the California Department of Education.

In Uganda, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), provides administration and management for the betterment of the national education system. Key policy decisions regarding education and other educational services have always been made by the state at least since the attainment of independence. The grading system has been done by the government body Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEb), since 1979, after

the breakup of the East African Community. UNEB mainly assesses declarative knowledge, i.e., facts, at the end of four years and six years ('O and 'A' levels)

Although the planning and management of education has largely been a role of the state, Adongo J.F. (2006) reports that, in the mid-1970s, leading economists in universities in Europe and donor agencies began to criticize governments' direct involvement in service delivery. The governments were criticized for mismanagement, inefficiency, corruption, lack of planning, and related problems. Consequently, in the 1980s, there was a shift to community involvement in service delivery.

At the secondary level, whether USE or private, USE or non-USE schools rely heavily on parents' financial and managerial contributions. It is also noted that schools running the Universal Secondary Education program have found a lot of setbacks in the achievement of academic standards due to a lack of adequate funds provided by the government. (The government pays UGX 41,000/term/student, whereas in non-USE schools, the minimum fee is about 450,000/term/student).

Unless all stakeholders are involved, school achievements, including students' academic performance, may be delayed.

Theoretical background

This study was underpinned by Epstein's theory of involvement. It recognizes that there are some practices that parents and schools conduct separately and some are conducted jointly towards their shared goal of maximizing children's outcomes (Epstein, 1992). While theorists and researchers have moved towards such a conceptualization of parent involvement, seeking children's education as the shared responsibility of families and schools, there is also evidence that, in practice, a deficit approach still pervades in some contexts. (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). Moore and Lasky (2001) argue that deficit approaches to parental involvement are still alive and well when it comes to the inclusion of minority, single-parent parent, and low socio-economic status families. Epstein & Sanders (2006) expressed concern that early work on parental involvement neglected to offer insights about what schools could do to promote more extensive parental involvement. Dietz (1997) argued that when a school limits parental involvement (e.g., fundraising, committee membership), then only a small proportion of parents become involved. As a result, the school neither involves parents nor reaps the potential benefits from parents' involvement. Instead, a more comprehensive model of parental involvement that elicits a wide variety of parental involvement is advocated (Epstein & Dauber, 1991). Epstein and colleagues (Epstein, 1992) thus developed a typology that aimed to comprehensively categorize the variety of involvement activities in which parents could potentially engage. The relevance of this theory is that it can explain ways through which parents are involved in the educational attainment and progress of their children. It is through this theory that parents are

expected to play their roles, and responsibilities in conjunction with the school to meet the educational attainment of their children.

Conceptual Background

Uganda is one of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that tries to improve not only primary but also secondary school education. The role of parents is rooted in the Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC 1989) report. Their responsibility revolves around discipline and monitoring the performance of the school. Parents are said to be partners, clients, consumers, and educational assistants insofar as the management of schools is concerned (Thomson, 2001). However, in Sub-Saharan Africa, due to extreme poverty and financial constraints, there have been challenges in the provision of education. Many countries reported difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, especially for teaching Mathematics and Sciences (Bregman, 2003). Due to poverty in the developing world and more so in rural areas, parents may not afford to provide school materials pay tuition fees, buy scholastic materials, or provide for the welfare of teachers and students in order to contribute towards the achievement of academic success. The importance of parental participation in school management should ultimately be vested in the improvement of the academic standards of their children. Unless the roles of parents in the provision of issues and other managerial areas are strengthened, there may be continued questions regarding satisfactory academic performance. Therefore, the study is intended to point out parents' roles and to show how they should carry out their responsibility in ensuring children's discipline, which is a prerequisite for better academic performance of their children.

Contextual background

This study was carried out in Kumi district, located in the Eastern Region of Uganda. The District is bordered by Katakwi District to the north, Nakapiripirit District to the northeast, Bukedea District to the east, Pallisa District to the south, and Ngora District to the west.

The government pays a tuition fee of UGX 41,000 per term per student, has provided textbooks of compulsory 'O' level subjects, i.e., English Language, Mathematics, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, History, and Geography, and also supplies basic science equipment and chemicals. The government has also constructed classrooms and science rooms. Furthermore, the government pays salaries to the duly appointed and posted teachers, plus support staff. The parents are supposed to provide lunch, uniform, stationery, housing, love, and guidance to their children. They are also supposed to support developmental projects to uplift the school standards and status.

It is expected that as a USE school, the government provides adequate staff, capitation grants, and infrastructure, as parents provide the rest and that the school follows the set curriculum by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) and all

candidates sit for UNEB examinations, and that there is continuous assessment of all students. Particularly notable, are the facts that: parents in the Kumi district are reluctant to participate in the management of their children's education since the school is under the USE program; the school's academic performance is consistently poor, the school is under USE program where tuition payment is by government and some parents still hold the fact that the school is still faith-based and so no activity should take place on Saturdays. The study aimed to establish the relationship between the role played by parents in the planning of school activities and academic performance in selected Universal Secondary Education Schools in Kumi District.

Methodology

Research Design

Paulin (2007) defines research design as a plan of what data to gather, from whom, how and when to collect data, and how to analyze the data obtained. To achieve the objectives of the study, a descriptive cross-section survey design based on a questionnaire and interviews was used because the study objectives are descriptive and may also require taking care of multiple realities likely to be found in the field (Amin, Social Science Research: Conception, Methodology and Analysis, 2005). This type of study utilizes different groups of people who differ in the

variable of interest and in this case, students, teachers, parents, and administrators were involved. Cross-sectional studies are observational and are known as descriptive research. According to (O.M & A.G, 2003) the method is easy to manage and administer. Quantitative methods were used in order to establish the extent and rate of the problem. Emphasis was put on collecting data from participants/stakeholders in school administration. Hence, questionnaires and interviews through which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected were used to obtain information from the head teacher, deputy head teacher, director of studies, parents, students, and teachers. This design enables a wide selection of the population in the study and enriches the research work at a given point in time (Amin 2005).

Study population

The target population was 364 respondents from the Selected USE schools, including student leaders, teaching staff, PTA members, headteachers, Deputy headteachers, and Director of Studies.

Sample selection and procedure

Given a population of 364 respondents, the sample size will be 186 respondents, determined using the Krejcie & Morgan table.

Table 1: Population and Sample selection

Category	Target Population	Sample size	Selection method
Students' leaders	105	54	Simple Random Sampling
Teaching staff	175	89	Simple Random Sampling
PTA members/BOG	63	32	Simple Random Sampling
Administrators	21	11	Purposive
Total	364	186	

Sampling Methods

A probability method, like simple random sampling, was used to select respondents among parents. The purposive selection method was used to select other respondents, including students, heads of departments, and administrators. According to Sekaran (2003), when desirable information is required from a specific target group, purposive sampling is appropriate. This method will help to get multiple realities relevant to be inquiry.

Data Collection Methods

Qualitative data obtained by a questionnaire survey with open-ended questions was used, and face-to-face interviews. According to Sekaran (2003) and O.M. & A.G. (2003), qualitative research is exploratory, and it is used when one does not know what to expect, to define the problem or develop an approach to the problem. It is also used to go deeper into issues of interest and explore nuances related to the problem at hand.

The quantitative data was obtained by the use of questionnaire surveys with closed-ended questions. Quantitative research is conclusive in its purpose as it tries to quantify the problem and understand how

prevalent it is by looking for projectable results for a larger population.

Documentary analysis will be used to get records about the school.

Data collection instruments

The instruments used in this study include a questionnaire, an interview, documentary analysis, and critical observation.

Questionnaire

A self-administered questionnaire was used to gather information from both teachers and students. The questions for the study were closed-ended, while those for the teachers were open-ended. Questionnaires are the most convenient way of collecting information from respondents because they are easy to fill. They ensure the confidentiality of respondents and are appropriate for a large number of respondents. Open-ended questions were used so that respondents gave their views independently and freely, and this is an instrument that reduced time wastage. Questionnaires enabled the researcher to obtain results within a considerably short

time. Amin (2005) and Sarantakos (1997) confirm the usefulness of questionnaires in terms of their simplicity, time used, and ease for a researcher to administer.

Interview

Interviews were conducted with parents and administrators on a face-to-face basis, and responses were recorded personally. This instrument enabled the in-depth collection of information and increased the accuracy of information. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) and Amin (2005) observe that interviews are useful since they fetch a variety of ideas needed for the study. Observations on the school's internal and external environment, the school activities, available teaching staff, instructional materials, and infrastructure were conducted in order to support logical information and interpretation.

Documentary sources

This instrument was used to get information about the school's records about parents' involvement, records of continuous assessment grades, and the UNEB results data bank of 2022-2023. Information about funding, staffing, and discipline will be obtained from the school's achievements. More information was obtained from the school's academic committee minutes concerning students' academic performance, communications from the MoES, BOG, and PTA meeting minutes, and the UNEB results of the school.

Validity and reliability

Validity of the instrument

As described by Amin (2005), validity is the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure. To ensure the validity of research instruments, pilot testing of copies of the questionnaire was carried out in one school in the district. This helped to assess the language clarity, ability to tap information from respondents, acceptability in terms of length, and ethical consideration for clients. The supervisor will be requested to rate the instruments in order to discover their validity. To establish content validity, results from the ratings were computed using the following formula.

$$CVI = \frac{\text{number of items rated as relevant}}{\text{Total number of items in the questionnaire}}$$

The qualitative validity of instruments was ensured by processing data into manageable proportions through editing, coding, and tabulation methods. The data collected was checked while still in the field to ensure that all questions were answered. By coding, answers to each item on the questionnaire are classified into meaningful categories.

Reliability

Reliability determines how consistently a measurement yields similar results under varying conditions. The reliability of the instruments was established using

Cronbach's alpha. The result was 0.733, which was >0.7, hence, the instrument was considered consistent, therefore reliable.

Data analysis

The term analysis (processing for some researchers) involves several closely related operations, which are performed to summarize the data and organize these in such a manner that they answer the research question(s) or hypotheses if they exist (Amin, 2005). Thus, in the process of analysis, relationships or differences supporting or conflicting with original or new hypotheses should be subjected to statistical tests of significance to determine if real differences exist.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using mean, Pearson Correlation product moment, and regression with the help of the SPSS computer package. Mean was used to show the level of agreement and disagreement among responses; Pearson Correlation product-moment was used to establish the relationship between two variables, and regression was used to ascertain the overall relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Qualitative Analysis

The researcher analyzed the work based on descriptions made by the respondents. Qualitative data analysis was presented in a narrative form on the different questions posed to the respondents. The data from interviews with key informants and open-ended questions were analyzed by listing down all respondents' views under each question or category. The tally mark method was then used to group similar views expressed by more than one respondent. Tables were constructed from the totals of tally marks. Then the researcher organized statements and responses to generate useful conclusions and interpretations of the research objectives (Sekaran, 2003).

Measurement of Variables

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (1999), the measurement of variables gives the researcher information regarding the extent of individual differences on a given variable. The variables were measured by operationally defining concepts. For instance, the questionnaire was designed to get perceptions and views about parents' involvement and student academic performance in selected USE schools in Kumi District. These were then channeled into scaled and measurable elements for the development of an index of the concept. A five-point Likert scale, namely: (5) for strongly agree, (4) for agree, (3) for neutral, (2) for disagree, and (1) for strongly disagree, was used to measure both the independent and dependent variables. The characteristics of the respondents were measured at both nominal and ordinal scales (Kotharin, 2004).

Ethical Consideration

A rapport was created as a building block for openness and respondents' participation. Ethical issues were taken into consideration, whereby respondents were assured of confidentiality, the permission to share with the respondents was first sought, community norms and values were respected, and every respondent was treated the way they came.

Results

Response Rate

Questionnaires were distributed to students and teaching staff, while interviews were conducted with the parents and administrators. From the sample size of 215, there was a response of 158 and a non-response of 57 thus giving a response rate of 73.5% and a non-response rate of 26.5%

Table 2: Response Rate for Respondents

Category	Sample size	Tool used	Responses	%
Students	54	Questionnaire	54	100
Teaching staff	89	Questionnaire	74	83
PTA members	32	Interview	20	63
Administrators	11	Interview	10	91

Source: Primary data

Background Information about the Respondents

Relevant background information about the respondents that participated in the study relates to their gender; jurisdiction; level of educational attainment; and duration of teaching service experience, since they could

influence the extent to which the respondents are knowledgeable about the variables that were involved in the study and the extent to which the data that they provided can be generalized to the population. Subsequently, information about these variables was elicited, and the findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents who participated in the study by Gender and Position

Variable	Categories	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	66	41.8
	Female	92	58.2
	Total	158	100
Position	academic staff (teachers)	74	46
	Students	54	34
	PTA	20	13
	administrators	10	7
	Total	158	100

Source: Primary data

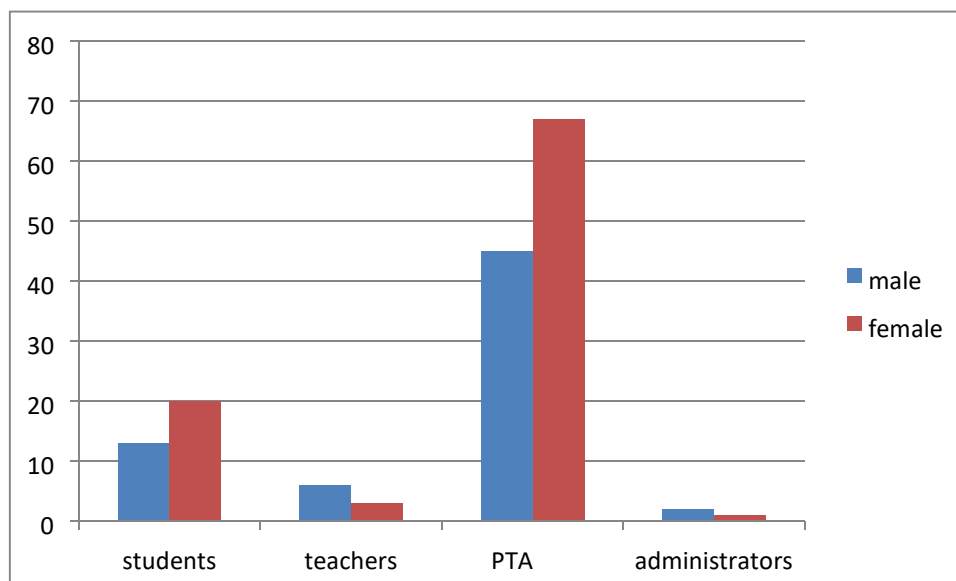


Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by gender and position

Table 4: Distribution of Teachers by Level of Education and Duration of Teaching Experience

Variable	Categories	Frequency	%
Level of educational attainment	Diploma	12	16
	Degree	62	84
	Total	74	100
Duration of education service experience	One to two years	8	10
	Two to three years	10	14
	Over three years	56	76
	Total	74	100
	One to two years	13	18
	Two to three years	18	24
	Over three years	43	58
	Total	74	100

Source: Primary data

The student questionnaire also elicited information on their class and age groups because these variables could influence the students' ability to supply credible information about the variables that were involved in the study.

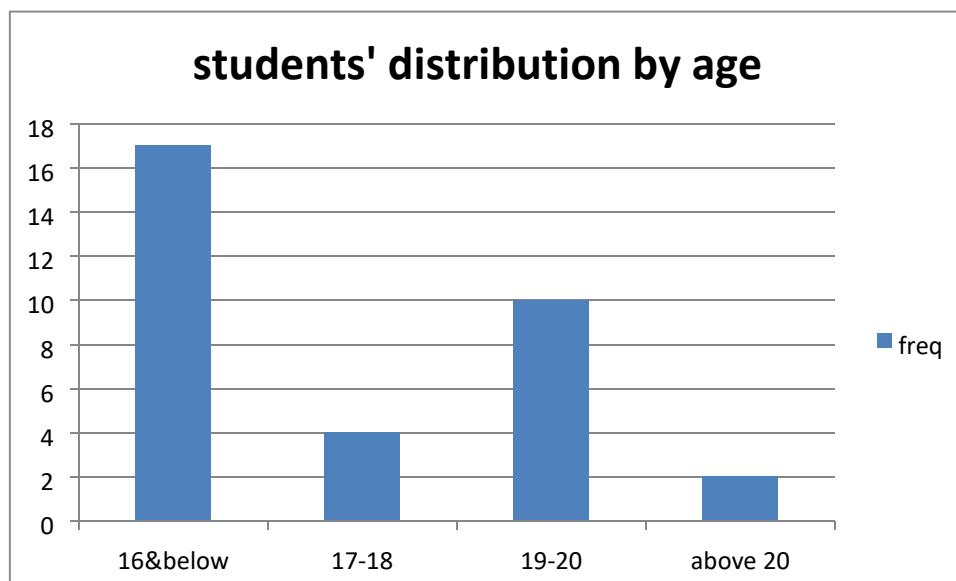


Figure 3: Distribution of Students by Age Group

The role parents play in the planning/management of activities in Kumi District. How does this affect students' academic performance?

The research question inquired into the role played by parents in the planning/management of school activities and how this affected students' academic performance. Under the question, therefore, the ways through which the parents of the students attending this school usually participate in the planning/management of the school were of interest. This is because it was necessary to investigate the ways through which the parents participate in the management of this school before investigating the relationship that has existed between this participation and the academic performance of students. Subsequently, the parents and the academic staff who were involved in the study were asked to specify the various ways through which parents participate in the planning/ management of the school activities. In the next subsections, the responses supplied are summarized according to the category of respondents. In the questionnaires that were administered to the parents, the latter were asked to specify the role that they (parents) play in the planning/management of their school. In response to the research question, one of the parents said,

"I pay school fees, which help in running the school"

However, this respondent was hesitant to show whether the contribution would be submitted in time. Another said that,

"Attending meetings where I discuss how the school will be."

It was also revealed by one of the staff members that the members of the Parents' Teachers'

Associations [PTAs] are not active, and still very few parents come to the Annual General Meeting [AGM], class meetings, and career day meetings. They come mostly to complain about why the students have been sent back home. However, a few come to genuinely contribute to the issues that arise during the meetings.

The foregoing transcriptions indicate that a dominant view among the staff was that the parents in

Kumi, the District generally doesn't participate in the planning/management of the school programs. Another striking finding arising out of the interviews is that, when asked to specify how parents participate in the planning of their school, the parents indicated the payment of fees and encouraging other parents to bring their children to the school, which, upon critical consideration, is about supporting the school activities rather than participation in school planning/management. As such, the results indicate that, generally speaking, parents do not actively participate in the planning/management of the school.

The students were asked to specify the extent to which they would agree that their parents participate in school meetings and cooperate with their teachers when they are called upon to do so. The results are summarized in Table 4.4

Table 5: Students' rating of their parent's participation in the planning of their school

Responses	Ratings									
	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
My parents/guardians cooperate with my teachers about my schooling requirements	16	30.8	9	21.4	5	25	1	9.1	2	33.3
My parents/guardians discuss with my teachers on which subjects I should offer	11	21.2	8	19	7	35	6	54.5	1	16.7
My parents/guardians participate in improving my academic performance by helping me with my home work	9	17.3	16	38.1	4	20	4	36.4	0	0
My parents/guardians attend school meetings whenever called upon	16	30.8	9	21.4	4	20	0	0	3	50

Source: Primary data

The results in Table 5 show that most of the students expressed the view that their parents cooperate with the teacher about school requirements (30.8%) and that they participate in improving academic performance by helping students with their homework (38.1%). The responses show that parents are involved in supporting their children's education, but do not participate in planning/management activities. We can also see that the vast majority said that their parents did not attend school meetings whenever called upon.

Discussion

Role played by parents in the school planning at USE schools

The findings of the study revealed that parents participate in supporting school-related activities through paying school fees, encouraging other parents to bring their children to school, and attending meetings. In this way, the study concurs with (Epstein & Sanders, 2002), (Marschall, 2006), and (Lariau, 1996) in their observations that parents complement the work of schools by providing their children (in schools) with the materials and support that they need to learn well.

Besides the issue of parents supporting their children in school per se, however, is the issue of parental participation in the planning of the school activities that their child attends. It is in this regard that the findings of the study depart from the findings of earlier researchers on parental participation in schools and its implications for school effectiveness. Specifically, critical consideration of the findings of the study indicates that although the parents are involved in participating in their children's school education in some ways, generally speaking, they are not involved in the management/planning of these schools. At the least, some of the data collected indicated that parents are represented in the school management committees like Parents' Teachers' Associations (PTA) and Boards of Governors but even then, the school managers prominently deemphasized the contribution of the parents that are appointed to these committees, which further brings to question the role of parents in the planning/management of their children's school activities.

As such, the study established that although parents in USE schools have participated in supporting the education of their children, they have not done so in ways that are similar to those enumerated by Nancy & Lorraine (2004). This emphasizes volunteering at school, communicating with teachers and other school personnel, assisting in academic activities at home, and attending school events, with which they associate reciprocal benefits for the schools and the parents, and, ultimately, good academic performance. This means that, in discussing parental involvement in the planning/management of USE schools and the student's academic performance, the focus should be shifted from asking whether parents have been participating in supporting school activities to asking how they have been involved and, ultimately, why they have not been participating in the planning/management of the school. Specifically, on top of affirming the relationship between the participation of parents in supporting USE Schools. The school's academic performance and the findings of the study are moving the foci of the discussion from sheer participation to giving attention to how parents are involved and why.

Looked at broadly, and in the context of the study, which was concerned with the effect of parental participation in the planning/management of USE schools and its relationship with the academic performance of USE schools, the findings of the study introduce a new dimension to the debate on parental involvement in USE Schools. Hitherto, the focus has been on the parents and why they don't fully participate in school planning/management despite the fact that such participation could enhance school effectiveness and, subsequently, academic performance (see, for example, Adongo, 2006; and Babirye, 2006). Nevertheless, the study has highlighted the need for school managers to also examine themselves, specifically looking at what they could do to enhance parental involvement in their planning and management.

Moreover, in settings where many parents may not have undergone formal education themselves, like in the Luweero district, the parents may need special encouragement to be able to take up explicit roles in school management. In particular, the finding that those parents in Kumi District, are playing some roles in

support of their children's education but are not as active in the planning/ management of the school points to the chance that they are willing but unable to participate when it comes to the planning and managing of the school. This means that rather than castigate parents for non-participation in the management of their children's school, it should be understood why the parents do not participate in school planning and management.

Conclusion

Although parents in USE schools have been participating in supporting their children's education in some ways, they have not necessarily been involved in school planning-related activities. Hence, the benefits of parental participation in school planning and management have not been realized in USE schools, which has been impinging on academic performance. The lack of parents in school planning and management has been due to the parent's incapacity to play active roles in school management.

Recommendation.

The government should make a policy directing parents to participate in the planning and management of schools (on top of supporting the children in the ways that they were found to be supporting them). On the other hand, school managers should make it possible for them (parents) to do so. This could be done by encouraging the parents to take up specific roles in school management at the classroom level. Each class should have parent representatives who will closely plan, monitor, and termly evaluate set programs with the guidance of the staff of the school. Administrators should indicate the values of the parent's involvement in school management and make it possible for them to participate in school managerial activities by conducting the managerial functions in which they are involved in ways and in modes of communication that the parents comfortably understand.

Acknowledgement

I am greatly indebted to all who consistently helped me come to the end of this study. Special thanks go to the following:

First of all, glory and honor be to God the Almighty for providing me with all that I needed, but most of all life, strength, and wisdom.

To my supervisor, Dr. Ssendagi Muhamad, thank you for the guidance, support, sacrifice, patience, and encouragement that have enabled me to achieve this award. I also appreciate Madame Milia for giving me courage and support.

Finally, to all the staff of Team University for the wonderful knowledge passed on to me.

Source of funding

The study was not funded.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Author contributions

Loyce Mary Ajalo was the principal investigator. Dr. Muhamad Ssendagi. Was the supervisor.

Data availability

Data is available upon request.

Informed consent

All the participants consented to the study.

Author Biography

Loyce Mary Ajalo holds a master's degree in Education Planning and Management from Team University. Dr. Muhamad Ssendagi, lecturer at Tean University.

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