

Full Length Research Paper

Management practices and academic performance of government-aided secondary schools in Uganda

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This paper presents findings from a study carried out to examine how management practices affected academic performance of public secondary schools in Yumbe District in Northern Uganda. The study was premised on the prevailing poor and declining academic performance of public secondary schools despite increased funding and capitation by the government. The primary objective of the study was to examine the effect of different management practices on academic performance of these schools. The specific objectives were to determine the effect of planning and organisation on academic performance as well as establishing the relationship between control and performance in public secondary schools based. A mixed cross sectional survey design was used where questionnaires and interviews were conducted on selected respondents. Findings indicated that planning was a critical managerial requirement for improved academic performance, most of the school organisational structures were dysfunctional and there was absence of internal policies to manage, monitor and supervise academic performances, finances, welfare, health and safety. The study concluded that there existed a strong positive relationship between planning, organizing, controlling, and academic performance in public secondary schools. The study recommends more stakeholder involvement, resources, and financial support to step up academic performance in public secondary schools.

Key words: Management practices, academic performance, public secondary schools, Uganda.

INTRODUCTION

Education is an important determinant of economic and social development of a nation for the quality of education in a country indicates the quality of its human resource (Iqbal, 2012). Educators have for long been interested in exploring the variables contributing effectively to quality of performance of learners (Farooq and Berhanu, 2011). Today, more than ever, schools are facing the need to work efficiently and improve their educational work. In this context, the role of school

administration is considered to be rather significant since the educational outcomes are strongly influenced by the specific organizational characteristics of each school leadership, school climate, and the organizational development plan which as a whole, arrange and define the process of school management (Argyriou and Iordanidis, 2014). Government-aided secondary schools in Yumbe District have for long grappled with the challenge of poor academic performance yet reports

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reveal that these schools enjoy quite a lot of government support in form of capitation grant, recruitment and deployment of staff, payment of staff salaries, construction of school facilities and provision of scholastic materials such as text books, science apparatus and laboratory chemicals (Yumbe District Education, 2015). Since no mention is made of the management practices and their effectiveness in these schools, researchers wondered whether this was the factor contributing to the poor Academic performance in the region prompting this study.

Expenditure on education is considered as an investment in the human resource enrichment (Iqbal, 2012). In Africa, the challenge for governments is not just to expand secondary education, but also to enhance the quality of education and hence; Africa has gradually increased public spending on education to address these challenges (Kajunju, 2015). Amidst this commitment to improve quality and access to education, there is a deeper learning crisis at play in Africa as compared to other continents as many students are not gaining basic skills while attending school. In fact, some students are not much better off than those who missed school in terms of skills. Consequently, the quality of education in Africa is in a perilous state (Kajunju, 2015). Since no mention is made of the management practices employed in the schools in Africa, one wonders whether this deep learning crisis is not attributed to the management practices in place and their effectiveness on academic performance.

In Uganda, one of the objectives of the education sector is to increase and improve equitable access to quality education (Government of Uganda, 1992). Over the years, government of Uganda has continuously invested in the secondary education sector (World Bank Report, 2015). Despite these efforts, the general performance of public schools in the country has not been impressive more especially the up-country secondary schools.

Uganda National Education Board -UNEB has implemented the National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) for secondary education since 2008 with the objective of monitoring effectiveness of the education process in the country. Hardly any improvement was observed in results for biology, English and Mathematics in the period between 2008 and 2010. Contrary, impressive results were observed in non-government aided secondary schools, wondering the causes of poor performances in government- aided schools.

Theoretically, the study was driven by the Systems Theory as was first postulated by Bertalanffy in 1960 and later developed by other theorists like Henderson, Scott, Katz, Kahn, Buckley and Thompson (Chand, 2015). According to the theory an organization is an organized whole, made up of sub- systems integrated into a unity or orderly totality or a system being

composed of related and dependent elements which when in interaction, form a unitary whole.

In this study, management was seen as a system with components which are interrelated, inter-dependent and must work together supporting each other for efficiency and effectiveness of an institution. This theory helps to understand the relationship between the different components of an organization for better management. Since secondary schools were seen as a systems composed of subsystems which present complex interdependence of relationships between people, tasks or responsibilities and its environment, their success may not come as easily as the theory tends to suggest. Instead, success depend on the better understanding and development of individual subsystem, the general environment and the coordination between the different subsystems in order to make a contribution to the entire whole.

This therefore implies that the collective contribution of management practices namely planning, organizing and controlling in the Yumbe District government aided Secondary Schools results in good Academic performance if each sub variable is well developed and all work together. None of them works alone. Failure in one results in failure of the school system and hence poor academic performance.

The study was conceptualized on the conviction that good management practices lead to improved academic performance in government aided secondary schools. Management itself is the process of attaining organisational goals by effectively leading and controlling the organization's human, physical, financial and informational resources (Ogunbameru, 2004). Management practices refer to the administrative activities executed in the school for the attainment of the school goals and objectives (Makuto, 2014). Educational management is the application of management principles in designing, developing and effecting resources towards achievement of educational goals, judged by the extent to which schools generally meet the expectations of the society (Nzoka and Orodho, 2014). Performance is the task or operation seen in terms of how successfully it is undertaken (Santos et al., 2014).

Problem

Government of the Republic of Uganda in its efforts to ensure quality secondary education in the country, put policy interventions to improve teaching and learning in public secondary schools by providing capitation grants, undertaking infrastructural development, recruitment and deployment of substantive head teachers and school staff, supply of scholastic materials. Besides, several other efforts were put in place by the schools' communities to facilitate improvement in academic

Table 1. Showing the correlation coefficients between planning and academic performance.

Variable		Planning	Academic performance
Planning	Pearson correlation	1	0.345*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.002
	N	75	75
Academic performance	Pearson correlation	0.345*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	
	N	75	75

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.51 level (2-tailed).
Source: Researcher (2018).

performance. Despite all these interventions, academic performance of public secondary schools in Yumbe District remained relatively low compared to private schools and to schools in other districts. In the recent examinations release by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) only nine students passed in Grade 1 in the entire district and the failure rates ranged between 50-54%. Consequently, completion rates remained incredibly low, causing doubts in the management practices adopted in these schools and loss of trust in the entire education system in the district prompting this study.

METHODOLOGY

This was a mixed cross-sectional study conducted in May 2018 in the selected secondary schools in Yumbe district Guided by GD (2013). Several respondents were interviewed and questionnaires administered to establish how management practices affected academic performance in selected schools. Two-hundred and two (202) questionnaires were randomly administered to teachers, and members of school boards of governors. Besides six (6) interviews were administered to purposively selected district based education sector administrators; four group discussions were held with student leaders; and district several education sector performance reports were reviewed. Data were analysed using statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) and qualitative data was theorized around propositions of the Systems Theory that guided this study.

FINDINGS

The study came up with the following findings aligned to the study objectives.

Planning and academic performance

The 1st objective of the study was to establish whether poor planning was responsible for the poor performance of students in secondary schools, 45% of the respondents agreed while 39% disagreed and 7% were undecided. A hypothesis was tested to establish whether planning affected performance of these schools using

Pearson's Product-Moment. The results are presented in the Table 1 showed a significant positive relationship between planning and academic performance.

The correlation coefficient of 0.345 implies that a significant positive relationship between planning and academic performance, given that Sig (P-value) is less than 0.050 (=0.002). Findings were in agreement with earlier studies of Ndegwah (2014); Kahavizakiriza et al. (2015) and who also urged that good planning provides a good starting point for financial management in public secondary schools. Basheka and Nabwire (2013) had also similar findings that there was a positive relationship between budget planning and the quality of educational services delivered at Kyambogo University. Indeed, planning was positively correlated to performance in public secondary schools, although it may not be the sole indicator of performance as Damary (2013) had also established. But in any case strategic planning in secondary schools provided significantly better performance than unplanned, opportunistic approach. Planning in public secondary school was facilitated mainly by income from school fees and government grants and as Burckbuchler (2009) earlier revealed performance based budgeting had a positive correlation to student performance resulting in better education quality to students. A participant in one of the group discussions commented that:

"...the performance of my school is not that interesting for the reason that the time table the way it is organized has a lot of free spaces for the candidates and the semi candidates. Lessons begin at 8:00am and yet in other schools' lessons begin at 6:00am and here lessons begin at 8:00am and end at 4:00pm. Students have a lot of free time to relax making them not to concentrate on their book leading to failure".

Since scholars such as Cobb-Clark and Jhay (2013); and Lee and Polachek (2014) are not in agreement that good planning and budgeting enhances academic performance in secondary schools. Indeed, they urge that it is not just increased budget that matters in improvement of students learning

Table 2. Showing the model summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	0.345 ^a	0.119	0.107

^aPredictors: (Constant), planning.
Source: Researcher (2018).

Table 3. Showing the correlation matrix for school organization and academic performance.

Variable		Organizing	Academic performance
Organizing	Pearson correlation	1	0.337*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.003
	N	75	75
Academic performance	Pearson correlation	0.337*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003	
	N	75	75

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: Researcher (2018).

achievements but the specific areas in which the expenditure is increased that may increase academic performance. To mitigate this intellectual disagreement, a regression analysis was conducted to establish the extent to which planning affected academic performance. The coefficient of determination (R Square) was used and the results presented in the Table 2.

The coefficient of determination (Adjusted R Square) is 0.107 implying that planning accounted for up to 10.7% of the variance in academic performance and the other percentages attributed to other factors. This implied a modest and positive between the two variables.

Organization and academic performance

The 2nd objective of the study was to invest how school organisation was a contributing factor to academic performance. Organizing was hypothesized as the process of arranging human and material elements appropriately to specific functions and positions (Fasasi, 2011). Organisation also implied identification of jobs within an educational organization, classification of jobs and assignment of employee to specific jobs. Neal and Mullarkey (2012), in their study, emphasized that organizational structures defined relationships, roles and the systems through which goals and priorities were established, decisions made, resources allocated, power wielded and plans accomplished. The study was limited to board of governors, school administration and school culture as sub variables of the school organization.

Findings indicated that 85% of the respondents were in strong agreement that good school organization improves

academic performance while 8% were in disagreement and 7% undecided. The 2nd hypothesis that there was significant relationship between school organization and academic performance was tested using Pearson's Product-Moment and results are presented in Table 3.

The correlation coefficient of 0.337 means that there was a significant positive relationship between school organization and academic performance, given that Sig. (P-value) is less than 0.050 (=0.003) implying that improvement in school organization is likely to result in improved academic performance.

The study further established that members of school boards of governors of secondary schools were appointed by the Minister responsible for education. It is these board members who closely monitor school performance, supervising non-academic staff and providing motivation incentives to academic staff as Kindiki (2009) also pointed out. The same board also helps in the effective implementation of the school curriculum and the general operations all of which impact improved academic performance.

However, Onderi and Makori (2012) were skeptical about exaggerating the role played by boards of governors. They were keen to point out that in some evidenced cases; boards of governors actually fail to execute their mandate due to accountability challenges and levels of commitment, skills, and knowledge gaps. Indeed, Mohiemang (2008) as cited in Onderi and Makori (2012) reported that the wide-ranging responsibilities transferred to members of school boards governors were burdensome and many times impossible to achieve since they are un-salaried volunteers, part-timers, lay, without interest and without relevant knowledge and governance skills in the

Table 4. Showing the regression analysis model summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	0.337 ^a	0.114	0.102

^aPredictors: (Constant), organizing
Source: Researcher (2018).

Table 5. Showing the analysis of variables (ANOVA).

Model	Df	F	Sig.
Regression	1	9.369	0.003 ^b

^aDependent variable: Academic performance; ^bPredictors: (Constant), Organizing
Source: Researcher (2018).

education system. Therefore, participation of board of governors in decision making in schools may not always achieve the anticipated academic success. Nadeem and Mudasir (2012) had similar sentiments that school boards of governors may fail to provide good performance more especially because they exclude teachers and non-teaching staff in decision making and just accept proposals from the head teachers rather than taking lead roles in shaping decisions. Actually, when asked about the effectiveness of school boards of governors in the district, the District Inspector of schools said;

“Most schools in the district have well constituted BOG, PTA. However, they are less functional in overseeing implementation of the measures for performance improvement. Most teachers do not embark on reflective practice to improve teaching and learning processes. Most teachers do not willingly accept to try new interventions to improve teaching and learning”.

To allay this fear, the study conducted a regression analysis was conducted to establish the extent to which school organization affected academic performance. The coefficient of determination (R Square) was used and the results are presented in the Table 4.

The coefficient of determination (Adjusted R Square) is 0.102 implying that school organization accounts for up to 10.2% of the variance in academic performance and the other percentage attributed to other factors. In order to assess the overall significance of the model, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was spawned and the results are presented in the Table 5.

The conventional rule in determining the significance of a regression model of the calculated p-value being less than or equal to 0.05 was followed. The calculated p-value was 0.003 and less than 0.05, showing that the regression model was statistically significant ($F=9.369$,

degree of freedom ($df = 1$, $p < 0.05 (=0.003)$). This further confirmed and also contradicted fears raised by Perry (2011), that school organization has significant effect on academic performance of students. Indeed, the District Education Officer (DEO) also noted that:

“Most schools have moderately good and accepted structures that are appropriate to administer schools well”.

School control and academic performance

Domnisoru et al. (2010) explained school control as a systematic effort made by school management to compare performance to predetermined standards and to undertake necessary corrective actions to see that human and other school resources are being used in the most effective and efficient way. Olum (2004) pointed out that school control ensures performance measures in place against goals and plans, and shows where negative deviations exist and puts in place actions to correct deviations as well as ensuring accomplishment of plans. This study looked at three elements of control namely medium of control, risk control and supervision but emphasized supervision as the primary control measure in public secondary schools.

Orenaiya et al. (2014) advised that school supervision should include the various activities engaged in by administration for the purpose of achievement of planned goals and objectives. Supervision focuses on providing guidance, support and continuous assessment to teachers and students for their professional development and improvement in teaching and learning process. Indeed, the study conducted by Habib (2015) discovered that supervision of schools had one of the strongest impacts on teacher attendance compared to other school inputs. Timilehin

Table 6. Showing the correlation coefficients between controlling and academic performance.

Variable		Controlling	Academic performance
Controlling	Pearson correlation	1	0.600*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	75	75
Academic performance	Pearson correlation	0.600*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	75	75

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Source: Researcher (2018).

Table 7. Showing the model summary.

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square
1	0.600 ^a	0.360	0.351

^aPredictors: (Constant), controlling.
Source: Researchers, (2018).

Table 8. Showing the Analysis of Variables (ANOVA).

Model	df	F	Sig.
Regression	1	41.100	0.000 ^b

^aDependent Variable: Academic performance. ^bPredictors: (Constant), controlling.
Source: Researcher (2018).

(2010); Dangara (2015); Okendu (2012); and Mohammed (2014), also urges that effective instructional delivery and maintenance of standards in schools is enhanced through regular supervision. It is no doubt that regular instructional supervision has a significant bearing on students' performance. School supervision includes checking students' notebooks, classroom inspections, checking teachers' lesson plans or notes and inspection of teachers' record keeping.

The 3rd objective of the study was to determine the effect of controlling as a management practice on academic performance in government aided secondary schools. Overall, 78% of the respondents were in agreement, 12% were undecided, while 10% in disagreement. The hypothesis 3 that *there is significant relationship between control as a management practice and academic performance* was tested still using Pearson's Correlation Moment at 95% level of significance (two-tailed) and findings are presented in Table 6.

The correlation coefficient of 0.600 implies that there is a significant positive relationship between controlling and academic performance, given that the significance P-value is less than 0.050 (=0.000) means that improved controlling in schools most likely results into improved

academic performance.

To further establish the extent to which controlling in schools affect academic performance, the coefficient of determination (R Square) was used and the results are presented in Table 7.

The coefficient of determination (Adjusted R Square) is 0.351 implying that controlling in schools account for up to 35.1% of the variance in academic performance and the other percentage attributed to other factors. To further assess the overall significance of the model, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was generated and the results are presented in the Table 8.

To determine the significance of the regression model, the conventional rule of the calculated p-value (level of significance) being be less than or equal to 0.05 was followed. The calculated p-value was 0.000 and less than 0.05, the regression model was statistically significant (F=41.100, degree of freedom (df) = 1, p<0.05 (=0.000)) meaning that controlling in schools had a significant effect academic performance.

Conclusion

The primary conclusion from the study is that management

styles, as analysed in the dimensions of planning, organising and controlling, positively affected academic performance of secondary schools in Yumbe District. The specific conclusions are that:

- i) Proper planning through participatory budgeting is important for improved academic performance of government-aided secondary schools.
- ii) Well-functioning school boards of governors are avenues of improving school organization by effectively managing school resources and activities.
- iii) Good control measures are prerequisite for better academic performance of students and vice versa. Control in public secondary schools should be effected by establishing and enforcing performance standards, strong internal policies and control measures in teaching and learning, welfare, safety and security, financial management, monitoring and supervision, providing feedback to staff among others.

Recommendation

The study makes the following recommendations:

- 1) The study recommends that public secondary schools should present their strategic plans, annual work plans, termly budgets and activity plans to the district sectoral committee responsible for education for scrutiny and approval.
- 2) Secondary school activities should be organised in time tables and work schedules which should be regularly submitted to the district sectoral committee responsible for education for scrutiny and approval.
- 3) For members of school boards of governors to be able to execute their functions, government through Ministry of Education and Sports should provide standard facilitation allowances as part of the capitation grants.
- 4) School boards of governors should establish strong internal policies to manage, control and direct resources towards improving academic performance.
- 5) Boards of governors should intensify monitoring and supervision in schools so as to improve academic performance in government-aided secondary schools.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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