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**The Role of School Management Committees and Head
teacher's Effectiveness in Government-Aided Primary
Schools in Luweero District– Uganda**

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Abstract

Purpose: The study focused on the role of School Management Committees (SMCs) and headteacher effectiveness in government-aided primary schools in Luweero district, Uganda. The objectives of the study were (i) To establish whether School Management Committees (SMCs) monitored headteachers' performance in the management of school academic programmes. (ii) To examine whether School Management Committees (SMCs) effectively monitored how headteachers utilized school funds. (iii) To assess whether School Management Committees (SMCs) monitored how headteachers managed discipline in their schools.

Methodology: The study employed a cross-sectional study design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis. A sample of 160 respondents comprising of head teachers and School Management Committee (SMC) members was selected using purposive and cluster sampling techniques. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guides.

Findings: The findings under the first objective revealed that SMC members did not effectively monitor head teachers' management of academic programmes as all the responses scored below average (below 50%). As such the head teachers did not commit much of their time in ensuring that school academic programmes were effectively managed. Findings under the second objective revealed that SMCs' performance in monitoring head teacher's utilization of school funds was above average in regard to the preparation of work plans, approval of budgets and cash withdrawals while a dismal performance was reported in the approval of school expenditures and monitoring of accountability of funds. Under the third objective, the findings revealed that the SMCs performed above average in working collaboratively with the head teachers in attending to disciplinary reports, sanctioning errant teachers /pupils and disseminating measures of managing discipline to stakeholders while the performance was below average in the area of formulating school rules and regulations. The dismal performance of SMCs in some areas was attributed to capacity gaps, low motivation and conflicts within the school community.

Recommendations: The study recommended that the district local government needed to organize workshops and seminars to equip SMC members with the requisite skills and knowledge in school monitoring and sensitizing them about their roles and responsibilities. It was also recommended that a minimum level of education and one's integrity and contribution to community welfare be tagged to selection of SMC members.

Keywords: *Management, committee, primary, schools, policy, performance.*

Introduction

After the attainment of Uganda's independence in 1962, a series of attempts were made to secularize and indigenize education to make it relevant to the people of Uganda. Subsequently, in the 1964 Education Act, the Government of Uganda (GoU) set up School Management Committees (SMCs) to consolidate full government control over the provision of basic education in the country (Passi, 1995). Due to the pressing need for reforms in the delivery of education services in the country, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government in 1987 set up the Uganda Education Review Commission chaired by Professor Senteza Kajubi to suggest a blueprint for the relevant reforms in Uganda's education system (Kamya, 2019). The Kajubi report of 1989 culminated in the commissioning of the Education White Paper of 1992 which recommended the implementation of the Universal Primary Education in Uganda (GoU, 1992; MoE, 2001). Later, the 2008 Education Act was enacted with provisions specifying the role of School Management Committees (SMCs) at the primary school level (GoU, 2008).

A School Management Committee (SMC) is a statutory organ which serves as a governing body of a primary school empowered by law to manage primary schools on behalf of the government (GoU, 2007). The Government of Uganda (GoU) set up the School Management Committees (SMCs) with a mandate to perform administrative, supervisory, monitoring and consultative roles in the management of primary schools (GoU, 2007). Administrative roles of SMCs include planning, financial control, maintaining discipline and implementing policies which are aimed at creating stability to enhance effective teaching and learning in primary schools. Similarly, the supervisory role of the SMC is hinged on monitoring and evaluation of school development plans and performance related targets within their mandate. A school Development Plan (SDP) is a practical document prepared by the school administrators and management with the aim of enhancing physical development and learning in a school for a specific period.

Conversely, the consultative role refers to the process through which management and staff jointly examine and discuss matters of concern. SMC members are mandated to hold regular meetings with relevant stakeholders to ensure that there is harmony and proper coordination in the implementation of school activities. The committee members are directly nominated by the communities where they are located and appointed by the Education Committee in their respective local governments to perform an oversight role on behalf of government (GoU, 2007). The appointment of SMCs is guided by the Education Act of 2008 which spells out their condition of appointment, tenure of office and their roles (GoU, 2008). Nonetheless, involving the School Management Committees (SMCs) in the management of schools does not mean undermining the role of the head teachers. It should be noted that head teachers need the support of SMCs to be able to perform their roles effectively so as to meet the expectations of stakeholders (GoU, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

The study employed the transformational leadership theory as advocated by Yukl and Riggio (2006). The concept of transformational leadership was first developed by Downton in 1973 and later adopted by James McGregor Burns in 1976 (Gomes, 2014). It became very popular in the 20th century because it was considered to be quite relevant in modern management. The theory emphasizes the process of influencing major changes in the attitudes, beliefs and values of followers to a point where goals of an organization and the vision of the leader are internalized

and followers achieve performance beyond expectation (Yulk, 1999; Gomes, 2024). In this concept, leaders and followers raise one another's levels of morality and motivation (Carlson & Perrewe, 1995). This implies that the aims and aspirations of the two parties (leader and follower) must be to develop one another in order to achieve organizational goals. This theory is indeed relevant to this study because it provides a framework in which members of the School Management Committee (SMC) and the head teacher agree to work together by empowering each other to come up with the best alternatives of developing their institution. They should always be willing to support one another through dialogue, training, benchmarking etc. As the SMC members monitor and supervise the activities of the head teacher, they should ensure that there is a working relationship where emphasis is focused on developing competences, capabilities and skills to improve the performance of the school.

Research Objectives

- i. To establish whether School Management Committee (SMC) members monitored head teachers' performance in the management of academic programmes
- ii. To examine whether School Management Committees(SMCs) monitored how the head teachers utilized school funds
- iii. To assess whether School Management Committees(SMCs) monitored head teachers' ability to manage discipline in schools

Methodology

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design with both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis. Cross-sectional studies analyze data from a population or representative sub-set at a specific point in time and are reasonably in-expensive and time-saving (Trochim, 2006).The target population comprised of 520 members of the SMCs from 40 schools in Luweero district in central Uganda. A sample of 160 participants was selected including four SMC members purposively selected from 40 schools (10 schools from each cluster) in Luweero district thus making a total of 160 participants. The four members including the chairperson, the treasurer, the head teacher (secretary) and the PTA representative were selected on the basis of the critical role they played in as far as the day to day activities of the School Management Committees were concerned.

A structured questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGDG) were employed in the collection of quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The questionnaire had two sections; section A had the background information about the participants and section B had information on the SMCs role in monitoring head teacher's effectiveness in supervising teaching learning, utilization of school finances and enhancement of discipline. The FGDG collected data from four focus groups of head teachers and SMCs – each comprising of 10 members from the four clusters. Quantitative data analysis was done using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages while qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis where raw data was initially organized by open-coding in order to make sense out it.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	Count	Percentage
Roles		
SMC chairpersons	40	25%
Treasurers	40	25%
PTA representatives	40	25%
Head teachers	40	25%
Gender		
Male	125	78.1%
Female	35	21.9%
Education Level		
Diploma	10	6.2%
Post O level certificate	35	21.9%
A level	20	12.5%
O level	40	25%
Primary	55	34.4%

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of participants in regard to their roles, gender and educational level. Results show that the four categories i.e SMC chairpersons, treasurers, PTA representatives and head teachers (secretaries) were equally distributed with each contributing 25% of the total number of participants. However, in terms of gender, 78.1% of the participants were male while 21.9% were female – implying that SMCs in Luweero were male dominated. Turning to the educational level of participants, majority (59.4%) were primary and O level graduates with O level representing 25% and primary (34.4%). The remaining 40.6% was distributed among those who had A level (12.5%), Post O level certificates (21.9%) and diploma (6.2%). It should be noted that in Uganda, there is no requirement for a specific academic qualification for one to be selected member of the School Management Committee (SMC). Nonetheless, there is no doubt that academic qualifications have a strong bearing on ones analytical ability in terms of ones contribution to quality debate, analysis of critical issues, taking informed decisions, conceptualization and interpretation of specific policy guidelines.

Table 2: Whether SMC Members Monitored Head teacher’s Effectiveness in the Management of Academic Programmes in Schools

Response	Counts	Percentage
SMC regularly monitored H/teacher’s daily attendance to duty	74	46.2%
SMC monitored H/teacher’s instructional leadership	78	48.5%
SMC discussed H/teachers’ academic performance reports	50	31.2%
SMC monitored H/teachers’ management of learning resources	65	40.6%
SMC monitored H/teachers’ relationship with teaching staff	45	28.1%

In table 2, the study sought to ascertain whether SMCs dutifully fulfilled their mandate of monitoring academic programmes in their respective schools in regard to head teachers' roles. As the results showed, 74(46.2%) of the SMCs regularly monitored head teachers' daily attendance to duty, 78(48.5%) of the SMCs monitored head teachers' instructional leadership, 50(31.2%) of the SMCs discussed head teachers' academic reports in their routine meetings, 65(40.6%) of the SMCs monitored head teachers' management of learning resources, and 45(28.1%) monitored head teachers' relationship with the teaching staff. The findings above reveal serious inadequacies in regard to the role of SMCs in monitoring academic progress in schools. It should be noted that all the areas assessed scored below 50% indicating that the SMCs' performance was below average. Whereas the results showed dismal performance by the SMCs in fulfilling their mandate of monitoring academic programmes in schools, there was need to investigate further why such a state of affairs had indefatigably subsisted in Luweero district. In a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with participants, it was reported that the low level of performance by the SMCs was due to a number of limitations at the school level – key among them included low level of education by some SMC members, lack of cooperation by some head teachers, SMCs' lack of knowledge about their roles and conflicts within the school community. Inadequate monitoring of academic programmes by the SMCs implied that the head teachers were not under any pressure to supervise, mentor and build the capacity of their staff to utilize the available resources to improve academic performance in their schools.

Table 3: Whether SMC Members Effectively Monitored how the Head teacher Utilized School Funds

Response	Counts	Percentage
SMC approved work plans presented by head teacher	81	50.6%
SMC approved school budget presented by head teacher	94	58.7%
SMC approved the withdrawal of funds from school account	83	51.8%
SMC approved school expenditure presented by the head teacher	78	48.7%
SMC made sure head teacher accounted for school funds	68	42.5%

In table 3, the study investigated whether the SMC monitored the utilization of school funds specifically by the head teacher because by virtue of their appointment, head teachers in Uganda's public schools are accounting officers of their respective cost centres. This implies that the head teacher is answerable in all matters regarding the safety of funds and other resources of the school. The results above indicate that 81(50.6%) of SMCs were involved in the formulation of school work plans, 94(58.7%) showed that they approved school budgets presented to them by the head teacher, 83(51.8%) reported that they approved the withdrawal of school funds from the bank, 78(48.7%) indicated that they approved the expenditures made by the head teacher and 68(42.5%) stated that they demanded for accountability of school funds expended by the head teacher. Ostensibly, the findings divulge the fact that overall, the SMCs had performed above average (above 50%) in the first three critical areas that were assessed except in the approval of expenditures (48.7%) and demanding accountability (42.5%). The implication of the above results is that even when the school annual work plans, budgets and withdrawals are approved by the SMCs, there could still be certain leakages of some sort if a keen eye is not focused on monitoring expenditures and demanding accountabilities from the head teacher. However, results from FGDs

indicated that most of the SMCs had capacity gaps in matters related to the management of finances. This explains why in certain cases, some SMCs are not able to detect and deter specific cases of financial fraud in their schools. In such circumstances, the headteachers did not strictly follow financial management guidelines and regulations as required by law. This comes at a time when budgetary allocations to the primary education sector have remained stagnant for over a decade –casting doubt as to whether the little that there is, if not efficiently utilized can lead to the realization of quality education in Uganda (GoU, 2018; National Planning Authority, 2019).

Table 4: Whether the SMC Members Monitored the Management of Discipline by the Head teacher

Response	Counts	Percentage
SMC and H/teacher formulated school rules/regulations	60	37%
SMC and H/teacher attended to reports from disciplinary committee	89	55%
SMC and H/teacher passed resolutions on cases of indiscipline	90	56.2%
SMC and H/teacher clarified to stakeholders ways of managing discipline	91	56.8%

Table 4 presents findings regarding whether SMCs monitored how the head teachers managed issues of discipline in their schools. Results show that 60(37%) of the SMCs worked with the head teacher to formulate school rules and regulations, 89(55%) reported that they discussed disciplinary committee reports, 90(56.2%) met with the head teacher and passed resolutions on disciplinary cases and 91(56.8%) took the initiative to brief stakeholders on measures of curbing indiscipline in their schools. As already noted in the introduction, SMCs have an inexorable role in ensuring that discipline is maintained in their schools. They back-up the head teacher to maintain the most desirable and acceptable level of discipline among learners and the staff. The above results reveal that SMCs had not done much to help the head teachers formulate school rules and regulations as only 37% of the respondent’s reported to have done so. Results of FGDs showed that there were serious discrepancies in the ability of most SMCs to handle complex issues that required relatively a fair level educational attainment. Yet in most cases, community members with better educational backgrounds were not always ready to take up such responsibilities that are voluntary in nature. It was noted that most people who were willing to be nominated on such committees especially in rural areas were those with low level of educational attainment. However, the management of discipline remains as one of the pillars in educational practice especially at a time when there is an increase in the reported cases of anti-social behaviours in schools (Blandford, 1998).

Recommendations

In light of the above findings, the following recommendations are suggested;

- i. There is need to build and strengthen the capacity of SMCs to be able to perform their roles effectively. The District Local Government should ensure that regular workshops and seminars are organized to equip SMC members with the requisite knowledge and skills in monitoring school programmes.
- ii. There should be minimum academic qualifications set for prospective members of School Management Committees (SMCs). This a considerable level of literacy is

- needed for one to be able to analyze, interpret, conceptualize and understand critical issues that should lead to informed decision-making, quality debate and synthesis of government policies.
- iii. To attract people of desirable quality on School Management Committees (SMCs), some kind of monetary allowance should be set aside to motivate members whenever there is a sitting.
 - iv. A clear criterion for vetting candidates on School Management Committees (SMCs) should be considered specifically on the attribute of one's moral and social status in the community. Selection of members to the committee should be carefully done in view of one's social integrity, moral standing and contribution to community welfare.

Conclusion

In conclusion therefore, it is important to note that School Management Committees (SMCs) play a central role in the day to day administration and management of primary schools. They anchor the school administration to effectively plan, coordinate, organize and communicate the school's overarching strategies to enhance quality learning/teaching. In view of that consideration, members of SMCs should be people of acceptable integrity with desirable level of education. To be able to fulfill their mandate, SMC members need to be facilitated to in order to dedicate their time to perform their roles to the desired expectations.

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