

Parents' Attendance of School Meetings and Pupils' Academic Performance in Selected Primary Schools in Kyotera Town Council

Ibrahim Ssenkasi

Islamic University in Uganda

PhD Candidate, Department of Educational Management and Administration,
Faculty of Education

Email: ssenkasiibrahim22@gmail.com

Amina Hassan

Islamic University in Uganda

Senior Lecturer, Department of Foundations of Education,
Faculty of Education

Email: hamina.hassan229@gmail.com; a.hassan@iuiu.ac.ug

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between parents' attendance of school meetings and pupils' academic performance in selected primary schools in Kyotera Town Council. The researchers adopted a cross-sectional survey design where both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. Census and purposive sampling technique were used to select a sample of 71 teachers, 8 Members of the PTA, and 8 SMC members of the selected schools. The major instruments used in the study were a Likert scale type questionnaire which was filled by teachers as well as an interview guide for head teachers, PTA executives and SMC members. Validity of the research instruments was computed and results were found to be .86 while the reliability obtained was .948. The research utilized descriptive statistics to analyze data which was presented in form of tables with frequencies and percentages. Equally, a Pearson Product Moment correlation was used to establish the relationship between variables. From the findings, the correlation between attendance of meetings and academic performance was found to be moderate ($r = .433, p < 0.01$). Thus, the study recommends that the parents and teachers associations (PTA) should ensure that parents attend school meetings regularly, parents should also be sensitized about their role as guidance and counselling providers to their children and government should set in motion adequate measures and policies to enable the parents provide their children with basic school requirements.

Keywords: meetings, academic performance, parent, primary school

Academic performance of learners occupies virtually the largest and most critical place in academic institutions. Schools all over the world strive to make sure that their learners perform to the best of their abilities and potential. This is reflected in learners' practices like regular attendance of lessons, participation during teaching and learning processes and performance in assignments or tasks given. Indeed, the success of any educational institution in

the contemporary world depends on the quality of academic performance produced. In many African countries, learners' performance is used as a yardstick for effectiveness and efficiency of schools. Not being an exception, academic performance is the voice of school performance in Uganda and indeed, Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) results are the indicators of effective school performance (NAPE report, 2015).

Parental involvement in pupils' learning has been recognized as a crucial factor in the education systems of various countries like Latin America, Uganda, South Africa, and Ghana. According to the World Bank report (2007), collaborative efforts among parents, teachers and other stakeholders are needed for the improvement of quality of education. In the USA, evidence of parental involvement in education exists both at home and within the school. This is emphasized in The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Monte and Lifrieri (1973) assert that learners may have the desire to achieve academically and the ability to accomplish the tasks, but feel that the accomplishment has little or no value and feel doing it is not worth the effort or time and others may feel that they are not able to complete the required tasks. This means that children need a lot of support from the various stakeholders.

One of such key stakeholders, is the legal structure in a country. In most African countries, policies and by-laws that support parental involvement in education have been formulated and implemented though the magnitude of their success may vary. Notable among others, in South Africa, the schools Act 84 of 1996 requires all public schools to have elected school governing bodies comprising of the head teachers, teachers, parents, non-teaching staff and students (Dubbeldan, 2000). In Kenya, the basic education Act of Kenya (2013) requires the school boards of management to assess school needs with full participation of the parents (Manasi, Judah, Anthony & Epari, 2014).

In Uganda, free and mandatory Universal Primary Education Policy of 1997 stipulates the role of parents at home and school in support of children's learning. This can be reflected in the Education Act 13 for pre-primary and post primary Act 2008 which clearly define the roles of parents and guardians in promotion of education in the Ugandan child. This shows the relevance of parental involvement in children's learning. The Education Act (2008) stipulates that parents are supposed to be involved in school activities such as supervising and monitoring pupils' homework, discussing and providing guidance to children, attending school meetings, providing children with the basic needs among others.

Many related studies have been done on parental involvement in their children's education. Vanvoorhis and Simon (2001) revealed that regardless of children's family background, involving parents in various ways has a positive effect on achievement, attendance, behavior and tasks completed. Adeyeni (2005) stated that good parental involvement in school-related programs and conducive home environment is beneficial in boosting the intellectual ability of the child and the parents' failure to actively get involved in these activities

affects the child's learning negatively. Mbiti (2007) states that when parents attend school functions, they make suggestions give advice and performance plus support which can help the school to progress. The progress and academic performance of pupils depend largely on how much support the head teacher gets from the parents through their monitoring of their children because the success of any school administration as far as performance of pupils is concerned depends on the ability to lobby the support of parents.

Furthermore, Ahmad (2013) asserted that parental participation in education has positive effects upon the quality of education as it leads to students' better academic achievement and the overall success of the school. According to the European Union Monitoring Report (2013), parents influence standards in schools through providing scholastic materials to their children, scrutinizing their exercise books after school, providing them with the necessary guidance or even employing private teachers to attend to them after school.

Despite efforts like increased funding and supervision of schools toward improvement of the academic performance of pupils, including a call for parental involvement, there are still issues regarding grades posted by learners in final examinations. The situation in Kyotera Town Council is even more alarming as pupils barely pass their final exams.

Indeed, the National Assessment in Primary Education report (NAPE, 2006) revealed that whereas schools in Uganda had improved, the learners had not benefited academically because of the inadequate parental and community involvement in schools. It is thus not surprising that the performance of pupils at Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) often indicates poor performance while a few perform better but several just obtain pass to which primary schools in Kyotera Town Council have not been an exception.

The Education Act (2008) stipulates that parents are supposed to be seen in regular attendance of meetings. Indeed, many stakeholders like the district education officers, the inspector of schools as well as education officers have always emphasized the need for parents to be involved in the overall running of schools as well as their children's academic processes. Nevertheless, the effect of this highly craved parental involvement remains largely unknown. Baffled by such a state of affairs involving poor academic performance of pupils in primary schools and the serious call and trust in parental involvement, the study sought to establish the relationship between parent involvement and academic performance of primary school pupils in selected schools in Kyotera Town council.

Problem Statement

Ideally, primary schools are expected to put across a telling academic performance reflected within the grades or scores of learners. However, in Kyotera Town Council, the academic performance of pupils in the 3 years has been varying. This is evidenced by the grades achieved by schools in the town council. According to the Kyotera District Education Sector Report (2017), there are strong claims that the academic performance of pupils may not only

depend on the nature of the home, school community, government policy, school governance, home environment and teachers' attitude but rather the extent to which parental involvement is evident in the school system. Whether parental involvement ushers in a strong academic performance or not remains a matter of research, intrigued by the attention and focus directed toward parents' attendance of meetings in the wake of poor academic performance of primary school pupils, the researcher sought to conduct this study to establish the relationship between parents' attendance of meetings and academic performance of primary school pupils in Kyotera Town Council. This is intended to stop the rot which would otherwise affect the general education system, worsen the academic futures of learners and affect the town council's place in the district rankings based on performance. Kyotera being a Town Council with possibility of having better facilities and human resources. It is alarming and portraying the bad image compared to rural areas if parents continue to dodge school meetings the academic performance of their children is at risk to worsen in future if not addressed shortly.

Objective

To establish the relationship between parents' attendance of school meetings and pupils' academic performance in Kyotera Town Council.

Research Hypotheses

There is no statistically significant relationship between parent's attendance of school meetings and pupils' academic performance in Kyotera Town Council.

Literature Review

The concept of attendance of school meetings by parents forms a basis of parental involvement in their children's academic processes. Accordingly, many authors have paid attention to the nature of school meetings attended by parents, timing of the meetings and the intensity of parental involvement during meetings (Marshall, 2006; Mbiti, 2007; Nancy & Lorraine, 2004). The key views in relation to parents' attendance of meetings and academic performance of pupils are presented here below.

Parents are not actively participating in the education of their children. There is a need to sensitize parents about their roles in the education of their children through the provision of learning support both at home and school (Action Aid Uganda, 2009). In most instances, parents tend to visit schools when they are invited to attend and discuss specific issues. Much as several scholars (Marshall, 2006; Nancy & Lorraine, 2004) have cited and reviewed different literature on the parents' attendance of school meetings and academic performance of pupils, the problem has continued to affect the system of education to date and this is what provoked the researcher to investigate the relationship between parents' attendance of school meetings and pupils' academic performance.

In a study carried out by Marshall (2006) among Latino students in Chicago, it was discovered that parental school involvement increases parent skills and information which equip them to assist their children in school related activities when they come back home. Nancy and Lorraine (2004) show that parental school involvement consists of activities like volunteering at school, communicating with teachers and other school personnel, assisting in academic activities at home and attending school events.

Being stakeholders in education, parents qualify to be participants in policy making and implementers in schools. This is because they have direct responsibility over the learners that might be affected by those policies, meaning who they form part of the relevant public policy implementation in each system or institution (Owolabi, 2006). It is believed that when some stakeholders don't participate in implementation in each system or institution, those policies may fail (Birkland, 2001). The views of Owolabi (2006) are only theoretical and may lack credibility in a practical setting.

According to Sanders and Epstein (2000) families and schools have worked together in striving to give learners quality education since the beginning of formal schooling. Families were responsible for preparing their children with the necessary skills in the early years and schools took over from there with little input from families. However, today in the context of greater accountability and demands for children to achieve peak academic performance, schools and parents have formed partnerships and share responsibilities for children's education in more structured ways.

Lareau (1996) adds that when parents are involved in their children's schooling, they meet other parents who provide them with information on school policies, and practices. Besides that, when parents and teachers interact, teachers learn about the parents' expectations for their children and their children's teachers.

The Government white paper (1992) did not legalize parent participation in school management; it does not contradict it either but simply recommends parents' role in education. This suggests that parental participation in school management is desirable and could lead to improved academic performance among other benefits.

Furthermore, MOES (2004) stated that involvement of parents, communication with local leaders is crucial for children's academic performance. But supervision and monitoring by these stakeholders has been weak; parents tend to lack confidence and capacities to challenge the head teachers about the use of funds and performance of their children. The study sought to establish the status of parents regarding their involvement in the academic programs of their children.

Sekiwu and Kaggwa (2019) examined the relationship between parental involvement and academic performance in denominational secondary schools in Tororo District. The study used comparative design with a sample of 360 students. Eight denomination schools were considered for the study. The

findings revealed parental involvement positively influences academic performance of learners. Furthermore, the study revealed that there was difference in performance among the denomination schools. The Moslems were the last in performance with low parental involvement. The current study was on parents' attendance of meetings.

Gada and Hassan (2018) conducted a study on the influence of meetings on academic staff performance in Islamic University in Uganda. The study examined the influence of staff meetings on improving staff regularity and staff teamwork. The study was quantitative and used cross sectional survey design. The study found that meetings had weak influence on staff regularity and moderate significant influence on improving staff teamwork. Gada and Amina (2018) study was on influence meetings of meetings on staff performance and university level yet the current study is on influence of meeting on students' academic performance at primary level. Hence content and educational level.

Muhuro and Hungi (2016) studied the contribution of parents' involvement and parent's communication on improving learners' academic achievement in Mayuge-Iganga in Uganda. The study used cross sectional survey design. The study was guided by Epstein parental involvement framework. The study revealed that both parental participation and parental communication significantly improved learners' academic grades.

Arzika (2015) studied the influence of family background on students' academic performance in Government secondary schools in Sironko district in Uganda. The variables considered were parental income, family size, and parental education level and their influence on learners' academic performance. Whereas this study particularly looked at parents' attendance of meetings and academic performance of learners.

Mugumya (2014) examined the relation between parental involvement and student academic performance in Rwakasinga centre for higher education in Sheema District in Uganda. The variables considered were parenting, studying at home and volunteering and how they are related to academic performance. In contrast this study was on parent's attendance of meetings and academic performance.

Methodology

The researcher adopted a cross-sectional survey design where both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to obtain the data needed for the study. The population of study comprised of Head teachers, teachers, SMC and PTA executive members. The population included 71 teachers, 4 head teachers, 52 PTA Executive members and 44 SMC members in the four primary schools. Accordingly, 71 teachers, 4 head teachers, eight (8) Members of the PTA Executive and eight (8) SMC members were selected. Census inquiry technique was adopted because the population of teachers and head teachers were manageable. Members of the PTA Executive and members of the SMC were selected purposively. Questionnaires and interview guide were the main instruments for data collection and documentary analysis was also useful for

complementary information. Validity of instruments was established via expert judgment and a content validity index with a score of .86 while reliability was established through piloting and computation of a Cronbach alpha coefficient found to be .948. Data analysis was through use of a statistical package for social scientists to generate descriptive statistics while Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis was adopted to establish the relationship between parents' attendance of meetings and pupils' academic performance. Qualitative data was analyzed through thematic and content analysis. The study upheld confidentiality, anonymity, originality and rights of respondents.

Findings

The presentation of the findings to the research question was preceded by presentation of demographic information as obtained from the respondents. Equally, findings regarding academic performance of pupils follow suit. All questionnaires administered to 71 teachers were returned and all the targeted interviewees were accessed. Demographic information that was obtained from the study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Respondents

| ITEM | Description | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| Respondents | | | |
| Gender | Male | 28 | 39.4 |
| | Female | 43 | 60.6 |
| | Total | 71 | 100.0 |
| Age | 30-34 years | 35 | 49.3 |
| | 35-39 years | 15 | 21.1 |
| | 40-44 years | 12 | 16.9 |
| | 45 and above | 9 | 12.7 |
| | Total | 71 | 100.0 |
| Years of Service | 1-4 years | 19 | 26.8 |
| | 5-8 years | 11 | 15.5 |
| | 9-12 years | 18 | 25.4 |
| | 13 and above | 23 | 32.4 |
| | Total | 71 | 100.0 |
| Interviewees | | | |
| Gender | Male | 16 | 80 |
| | Female | 4 | 20 |
| Age | 30-34 years | 2 | 10 |
| | 35-39 years | 4 | 20 |
| | 40-44 years | 8 | 40 |
| | 45 and above | 6 | 30 |

Source: Field Data (2017)

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents 43 (60.6%) subjected to a questionnaire were female while 28 (39.4%) were male. Also, the highest number of respondents 35 (49.3%) subjected to a questionnaire were in the age bracket of 30-34 years of age while the lowest number 9 (12.7%) were in the

category of 45 and above years of age. Meanwhile, most of the respondents 23 (32.4%) subjected to a questionnaire had spent more than 13 years in service followed by 19 (26.8%) and 18 (25.4%) have spent from 1-4 years and 9-12 years respectively and the least being those who had spent 5-8 years. This showed that all respondents had experience of above five (5) years. According to Table 1 still, 16 (80%) of the respondents interviewed were male while 4 (20%) were female. Equally, 2 (10%) of the interviewed respondents were aged between 30 – 34 years, 4 (20%) between 35 – 39 years, 6 (40%) between 40 – 44 years and 4 (30%) between 45 years and above. The study sought to draw on perspectives of gender, age and years of service in terms of information regarding parents' attendance of meetings and pupils' academic performance.

Responses on Pupils' Academic Performance

The description of the dependent variable was premised on respondents' views on pupils' academic performance. Under this, the researcher sought to establish a number of aspects. The researcher sought to determine the extent of pupils' failure in the end of term examinations by asking the respondents to comment on the statement that students in my class have high failure rate in the end of term examinations and their responses are presented in Table 2 below;

Table 2

Responses on Pupils' Academic Performance

| ITEM | SA | | A | | UN | | SD | | D | |
|--|----|------|----|------|----|-----|----|------|----|------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Students in my class have a high failure rate in the end term examinations | 37 | 52.1 | 13 | 18.3 | | | 8 | 11.3 | 13 | 18.3 |
| Students get poor scores in class work | 36 | 50.7 | 12 | 16.9 | 1 | 1.4 | 5 | 7.0 | 17 | 23.9 |
| Students in my school pass PLE with low grades | 26 | 36.6 | 19 | 26.8 | 1 | 1.4 | 14 | 19.7 | 11 | 15.5 |

Source: Field Data (2017)

According to Table 2, the biggest percentage (52.1%) represented by 37 respondents strongly agreed with the statement that students in my class have high failure rate in the end of term examinations followed by 13 respondents (18.3 %) who also agreed with the statement as compared to 13 (18.3%) who disagreed and the 8 (11.3%) who strongly disagreed with it. The overall results indicated that there was high failure rate in the end of term examinations in the respondents' respective classes. As it can also be seen from Table 2 that majority of the respondents 36 (50.7%) strongly agreed with this while 12 (16.9%) were in agreement compared to 5 (7%) who strongly disagreed and only 17 (23.9%) who disagreed showing that most of the students in the study schools got poor scores in class work. Meanwhile, 1 respondent representing 1.4% was undecided on this particular item. Meanwhile, majority 26 respondents representing 36.6% strongly agreed that the students in their

schools passed PLE followed by 19 respondents reflecting 26.8% who also agreed as compared to 14 (19.7) who strongly disagreed and 11 (15.5) who disagreed with the statement. Notably, 1 respondent representing 1.4% was undecided on the issue.

This showed that majority of students in study schools passed PLE with low grades. This view is supported by responses from the interviews conducted to the following effect:

The performance is as it is expected, because teachers do their work but there are gaps in handling of pupils when they go back home, their parents leave them to watch movies, these days, pupils are given phones, cooking food, playing foot/net ball, listening to radios, mention but a few and yet teachers give them work to do while at home, a pupil comes to school without breakfast and such a child may find it hard to pass well.

The same respondent finally requested the parents to keep in touch with the teachers as this will reduce cases of mismanagement of time as far as home and school activities are concerned to create a conducive environment for the academic excellence of pupils.

Responses Regarding Parents' Attendance of Meetings

The researcher sought to establish whether the parents attend school meetings. To attain this, the researcher asked the respondents to tell whether the schools invited the parents to attend school meetings or not and their responses are presented in the table below:

Table 3

Responses Regarding Parents' Attendance of Meetings

| ITEM | SA | | A | | UN | | SD | | D | |
|--|----|------|----|------|----|-----|----|------|---|------|
| | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % | F | % |
| Schools invite parents to attend school meetings. | 44 | 62.0 | 26 | 36.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 00.0 | 1 | 1.4 |
| Parents discuss with teachers during school annual general meetings | 34 | 47.9 | 33 | 46.5 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 5.6 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Parents make suggestions for improvement during school meetings | 32 | 45.1 | 35 | 49.3 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 4.2 | 1 | 1.4 |
| Parents lack confidence to challenge the head teacher during school meetings | 20 | 28.2 | 23 | 32.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 13 | 18.3 | 1 | 18.5 |
| School meetings help parents to obtain information to assist their children in academic activities | 44 | 62.0 | 21 | 29.6 | | | 5 | 7.0 | 1 | 1.4 |

Source: Field Data (2017)

According to Table 3, more than a half of the respondents 44 (62.0%), strongly agreed that their schools invited the parents to attend school meetings

followed by 26 (36.6%) who also agreed, however only 1 (1.4%) disagreed which showed in that in most of the respondents' respective schools, parents were invited for school meetings. Majority of the respondents 34 (47.9%) strongly agreed that parents discussed with teachers during school annual general meetings compared to the 33 (46.5%) who agreed as well as the 4 (5.6%) who strongly disagreed with the view. Conversely, there were no responses to the category of disagree. As per Table 3, 32 respondents (45.1%) strongly agreed that parents do make suggestions for improvement during school meetings, 35 (49.3%) agreed with the view. Only 1 (1.4%) disagreed with the statement that parents make suggestions for improvement during school meetings while only 3 (4.2%) strongly disagreed. The research results also revealed that despite the parents' participation in meetings, they lacked confidence to challenge the head teachers during the meetings since majority of respondents 32.4% agreed with this statement followed by 28% strongly agreed compared to a few 18.8 and 21.1% who strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. Meanwhile, 44 (62%) of the respondents strongly agreed that meetings help parents obtain information to assist their children in academic activities while 21 (29.6%) also agreed. Meanwhile, 5 (7%) and 1 (1.4%) strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively.

One of the Head teachers recommended that the parents ought to be serious with their early childhood education through attending meetings organized by the school. He argued that;

Parents don't want to attend meetings, they don't even appear even when invited for other issues concerning their children's academics, most of them left teachers to struggle with children and leave them to decide on any matter concerning academics...

When the researcher reached one of the SMC representatives, she said that however much the teachers attribute this to the parents, it is the teachers' irresponsibility and greed for power. The parent lamented thus:

schools ignore parents on various matters concerning the school especially when the government has given them money for buildings, they decide alone with government officials without consulting parents, and they involve parents only when there are conflicts and theft, so parents also get tired of being called for only settling disputes...

Similarly, on the contrary, when the researcher interviewed one of the PTA executives on this issue, the respondent made the following statement;

The head teachers and their fellow teachers keep to themselves when it comes to decision making, and this renders the parents' suggestions useless in that they make suggestions on already decided on things hence parents' suggestions in meetings are found not effective since teachers ignore them.

It is upon this case that the researchers think that it would be very interesting and constructive if teachers respect the suggestions of PTA executives basing on the fact that most of them are even more experienced than some of the heads of schools. According to MOES (2004), involvement of parents, communication and local leaders is crucial for UPE, but supervision and monitoring by these stakeholders has been weak. Parents in particular tend to lack confidence and capacities to challenge the head teachers about the use of funds and performance of their children. In most cases when children perform poorly, parents just withdraw their children and transfer them to other schools.

A correlation analysis was also used to determine whether there is a relationship and the extent to which the relationship exists. In this case the researchers investigated the correlation between parent's attendance of school meetings and learners' academic performance and the results have been presented in the table below.

Table 4
Correlation Analysis between Parents' Attendance of Meetings and Learners' Academic Performance

| | | Attendance | Academic |
|------------|---------------------|------------|----------|
| Attendance | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .433** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 71 | 70 |
| Academic | Pearson Correlation | .433** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 70 | 70 |

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

From Table 4, the correlation between attendance of meetings and academic performance was ($r = .433$), ($p < 0.01$). This showed is 0.43 which is moderate positive correlation between these two variables denoting that parents' attendance of school meetings moderately contributed to academic performance of learners in the study area. Nyarko (2011) in his investigation on the effect of parental involvement in school on students' academic performance in Ghana found a positive and significant correlation between mothers' school involvement and academic performance of children. Mbiti (2007) stated that when parents attend school functions like meetings, they make; suggestions, give advice and performance plus support which can help the school to progress.

Conclusions

The investigation of the relationship between parents' attendance of meetings and academic performance of primary school pupils in Kyotera town council, Kyotera district revealed that a lot of parents are not serious with

attending school meetings. Based on records of meetings in schools visited, some of the parents do not attend school meetings. This has caused them to be unaware of their children's academic progress and thus results in poor academic performance. The few parents, who always attend the school meetings, have their views on children's learning submitted and can check on the performance of their children regularly. The study showed that a few of the parents who attend meetings also get a chance to supervise their children while at school. This gives them a clear picture and direction of their children's progress.

Recommendations

The parents should try as much as they can to attend meetings whenever invited and should also individually meet teachers to discuss their children's academics as this can keep them updated. Meanwhile, schools should utilize more than one mode of communication to invite and remind parents about meetings. The study recommends other studies with a bigger sample of schools as well as a comparative analysis between governments aided and privately funded schools in Kyotera Town Council.

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