Are School Management Committees Properly Instituted And Are They Functional? The Case of Mayuge District, Uganda

Kayindu Vincent, Nakiyingi Sarah and Nkwanga Alamanzani

Kampala International University, Uganda

Abstract: **This study was carried out to assess, among other things, the nature of School Management Committees in primary Schools in Mayuge District, Uganda. Specifically, it explored the extent to which School Management Committees are instituted as per the government policy, and the extent to which they are functional. Employing a cross-sectional survey design with qualitative and quantitative approaches, the researcher used a target population which constituted the headteachers, teachers and members of the school management committees of the primary schools in the district, from the three counties that make up the district, namely, Bunya East, Bunya West, and Bunya South. The respondents were got from 68 primary schools out of 173 primary schools in the district. A sample size of 469 respondents was selected. These included teachers, headteachers. Forty-three (43) members of the school management committees were subjected to oral interviews. The findings were that School management committees exist in all primary schools but they are poor in terms of their institution, meetings held and implementing what is decided upon in the meetings. The recommendations were that there is need for the government and civil leaders to hold refresher courses for parents to appreciate their role in participating in the management of primary schools in their localities and to make them properly understand and appreciate their roles as members of the school management committees in case they are elected or appointed.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The headteacher, under section 15 of the Education (School management committee) Regulations, 2008, is personally answerable to the Management Committee for the academic and domestic organization or conduct of the school. The members of the School management committee (SMC) are also supposed to supervise how the headteachers of particular schools manage the schools financially, ethically, morally and socially. This implies that school management committees have to supervise the manner in which primary schools are run in these aspects. They are supposed to supervise the academic and domestic organization of the schools to ensure that the headteachers of particular primary schools do it well. In the current study, School Management Committees (SMC) were conceptualized in terms of their institution, the meetings they hold and the decisions they make, as well as the extent to which the decisions they make are usually implemented.

Statement of the Problem

Primary schools by law, as stipulated in section 13 (1&2) of the Education (School Management Committee) Regulations, 2008 are supposed to be managed well by head teachers on behalf of the School Management Committees. Based on section 28 of the Education (Pre-Primary, Primary and Post Primary) Act, 2008, Primary Schools must have School Management Committees whose composition, terms of service and functions are clearly spelt out. Unfortunately, some research findings indicate that these management committees are poorly constituted, that headteachers and school founders usually influence the choice of the school management committee members by electing those who can dance on their tunes. It is also alleged that some schools' management committees hardly hold meetings. In some instances, meetings are held just to endorse the school founders' wishes and decisions (Ongwen, 2018). It was however considered necessary to carry out a study to find out the truth, hence, the current study.

Related Literature

Based on the laws of Uganda, parents have to be involved in the management of the schools their children are learning from. According to the Education (Management committee regulations), 2008, which apply to the management of primary schools whether Government or privately owned, there must be established a management committee for each School. It is thus stated in Section 13 that a school management committee shall consist of six members, including the chairperson, nominated by the foundation body, at least two of whom shall be women; one local government representative nominated by the district councils standing committee responsible for education; one representative of local council executive committee who shall be the Secretary in-charge of education at a parish council, or the sub county chief or his or her representative; one person elected by the sub-county or city division or municipal whichever is the case, and one representative of parents elected at the annual General Meeting of the school (Education-Management committee regulations, 2008).

Also, one representative of staff (both teaching and non-teaching), elected by the staff at a staff meeting, must be a member of SMC. Lastly, another member of the SMC is one representative of old boys or old girls (former students) of the school elected at a meeting of the association of former

students. A management committee is supposed to have a secretary, who has to be the headteacher of that particular school. The chairperson and members of the management committee have to hold office for three years, but they are eligible for re-appointment. The appointment of any member of a management committee is supposed to be approved by the district education officer in consultation with district council's standing committee responsible for education on behalf of the district council (Education-Management committee regulations, 2008).

These members of the management committee have to ensure that the headteacher who is an immediate supervisor of the teachers, fulfills the academic-related activities (Education, Management committee regulations, 2008). The existence of the policy however does not necessarily mean that what it stipulates is what the proposed study is on the ground, hence the current study.

School management committees operate under decentralization. Decentralization allows decision making to take on at a locally based level. This however always excludes participation of all people within defined spaces and places with those in the middle and upper classes usually more influential in decision making. Two versions of participation are looked at under his arguments; one as a system where people access participation through election cycles for policy implementation and the other where people can freely make decisions governing their lives usually with more local (Golooba- Mutebi, 2004).

Based on section 13 of the Education (School management committee) Regulations, 2008, a management committee shall manage the school for which it has been established in accordance with the Act and these Regulations, subject to any directions which may be given under the Act by the Minister on matters of general policy. The functions of a management committee shall, in so far as they relate to the day-to-day administration, proper and efficient conduct of the school, be performed by the headteacher of the school on behalf of the management committee.

Section 14 states that a school management committee shall appoint two subcommittees for the proper carrying out of its function: that is, Finance and development sub-committee; and General purpose sub-committee. A sub-management committee appointed under sub-regulation (1) of this regulation shall consist of not more than six members.

It has however been alleged and claimed that many parents are not fully aware of the existence of SMCs, school related information and their roles and responsibilities. In addition, many headteachers take advantage of the semi illiteracy of the committee members, or even bribes, to usurp their powers (of the school management committees). In some instances, meetings are not held and the headteachers forge minutes purporting to have arisen from the school management committee meetings (Ongwen, 2018). Greater effort is thus required to encourage headteachers to share information with

parents. School management committees have three-year tenure. This is challenging because three years is not sufficient time for the SMC to create lasting change.

Community participation in school management has great potentials for removing mistrust and distance between people and schools by nurturing transparency of information and a culture of mutual respect and by jointly pursuing improvement of school by sharing vision, process, and results. Individual and organizational behavioral changes are critical to increase the level of participation. In countries where the administrative structures are weak, the bottom-up approach to expanding educational opportunity and quality learning may be the only option (Kamal, 2013).

Nevertheless, when community participation is implemented with a top-down manner without wider consultation on its aims, processes, and expected results, the consequences are likely to be conflicts between actors, a strong sense of overwhelming obligation, fatigue, inertia, and disparity in the degree and results of community participation between communities. Political aspects of school management and socio-cultural difference among the population require caution, as they are likely to induce partial participation or nonparticipation of the community at large. Community participation in school management will result in a long-term impact only if it involves a wide range of actors who can discuss and practice the possibilities of revisiting the definition of community and the way it should be (James, 1995).

Khamal (2013) describes community participation as "the active involvement of local community residents, particularly persons identified as poor, under privileged and disadvantaged" so as to create an empowered community with the same sharing of power and benefits, checking on corruption and rent-seeking especially in development projects and social services. The implementation of UPE under decentralization in Uganda was aimed at promoting innovative standards, attitudes, knowledge and skills among the general public so they can put together their capacity as change agents and improve the quality and effectiveness of primary education in Uganda. This in line with the conceptual thinking of Golooba-Mutebi (2004) explains that the interaction of different tiers is obvious due to the fact that "as one moves down the tiers of planning, more and more open systems would be encountered with increasing external linkages, which are difficult to plan for in isolation neglecting the linkage.‖ The closer interlinking relationships of the different tiers in planning for rural growth needs in Uganda are well covered at the upper and middle tiers of the system, with less at the lower levels yet adequate and practical linkages are important tools towards development and improved service delivery in the contemporary world. Whereas this is relevant, it does not talk of Mayuge district.

School management committees are supposed to manage the Domestic activities in the school. These include what is done

within schools or what is obtaining there, such as the extent to which the learners are guided, are fed to ensure that there is order in the school. It is claimed that though there is order in some schools, it does not necessarily come as a result of the influence of school boards (Kitonsa (2018). In a related study by Acheampong (2015), carried out in Ghana on the functions of School Management Committees: A Comparative Case Study of Two Community-based Schools, specifically to find out how School Management Committee (SMC) has changed management of basic schools in many countries. This study has a goal to understand how SMCs of two community-based schools operate in an urban and a rural context of Ghana. The study used a multiple-embedded case study design in a qualitative approach to address how the SMCs function and how the parents and communities participate in these two schools through the SMCs. A semi-structured interview was used to gather data from members of the two SMCs. The study investigated five areas of functions of the SMCs and evaluated some of their practices based on stipulated directives of the GES. It also tried to understand how the parents and community in the two schools participate through the SMCs (accessed on http://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-50057).

By getting involved in the management of the schools, different aspects in the school, such as academics, pupils' discipline, as well as pupils' engagement in extracurricular activities are addressed. It is however one thing for the law to state something and it is another thing for what the law states to be implemented, hence this study.

In line with a study done by Byamugisha (2012), that many private secondary schools especially those founded by individuals and business partners, do not have functional Boards of Governors, that some purport to have them when they are actually not in place, so private schools are usually managed without the input of parents. Although head teachers and school founders are usually parents, their biological children tend to study from other schools, thus Byamugisha (2012)'s study affirms that parental involvement in the management of schools is lacking especially in Kampala district private schools save in the denominational schools. He gave examples of schools like Uganda Martyrs High school Rubaga, and Rubaga Girls Secondary school as having powerful, functional and efficient Boards of Governors with parents being involved. However, Byamugisha (2012) does not tell what is meant by the boards being powerful, functional and efficient, neither did he give the parameters of how he measured them; probably he based on his personal perception.

Foreign studies have reiterated the loopholes of school management committees. For example, a 2014 study by the Delhi based NGO 'JOSH' found that 94% of parents surveyed recorded that they were not informed about SMC formation, despite the fact that school administration had received official notification from the government to create an SMC. Similarly, research by Pratham Delhi in 2013 found that only

10% of the interviewed SMC parent members were aware of their membership. In addition, the 2012, 13 PAB minutes for Rajasthan indicate that the awareness level amongst SMC members was not up to par according to the monitoring agency. Only a few communities were aware of the grants they were entitled to spend.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a cross sectional survey design using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The target population constituted the headteachers, teachers and members of the school management committees of the primary schools in the district, from the three counties that make up the district, namely, Bunya East, Bunya West, and Bunya South. Bunya East is comprised of 69 primary schools, Bunya West is comprised of 63 primary schools, while Bunya South is comprised of 66 primary schools (Mayuge district local government, 2018). Since primary schools in the district are very many, totaling to 198, and since every primary schools, both government and private primary schools are required to have school management committees, both government and private primary schools were involved in the study. The schools were first clustered as per the county so that schools from each of the three counties could be represented in the study. After that, they were then clustered according to the status of being public or private, day or boarding, as well as age (old and new schools). After that, random sampling was used to select the schools which participated in the study. Headteachers from the sampled schools were chosen universally, while the teachers and the SMC members from the sampled schools were chosen randomly. Thus, a sample size of 469 respondents was selected (426 primary school teachers and headteachers and 43 members of the school management committees of various primary schools).

III. FINDINGS

This researcher objective was meant to find out the nature of school management committees in primary schools in Mayuge District, with reference to how they are instituted, the meetings they hold, as well as the implementation of decisions made in the meetings. The findings indicated that they are poor. This is presented in table 1.

Table 1 showing the nature of school management committees (SMC) in primary schools in Mayuge district

Item	Mean	Interpretation
Instituting school management committees		
i.). Head teacher appoints the representative of the staff (both teaching and non-teaching) to represent employees on the SMC	3.12	good
ii) Head teacher appoints members of SMC, or influences the appointment of particular members of SMC	3.11	good
iii). School founders appoint members of SMC	3.27	good
iv). Members of SMC are elected during school meetings between management and parents	1.88	poor
v). Level of education is considered in electing appointing them	1.85	poor

vi). honestly and integrity of a person is considered to be elected/appointed as member of SMC	2.21	poor
vii). Parents are given chance to accept, reject or drop a SMC member.	2.36	poor
viii) The district education officer inquires at the school how SMC members were elected/appointed before approving them.	1.31	Very poor
ix) Sometimes the district education officer, in consultation with the district councils standing committee responsible for education, remove some individuals from membership of SMC.	2.31	poor
x) Membership of SMC is by oath and is deemed to be primarily voluntarily service to the community	2.71	good
xi) The chairperson and vice-chairperson is elected by members of the management committee from among the members of the foundation body.	2.21	poor
Average mean	2.39	poor
Meetings of SMC		
i). They are held at least once per term	2.42	poor
ii). Members are informed in time about meetings (of SMC)	2.49	poor
iii). Meetings' agenda are made in advance and distributed to members	1.65	poor
iv). In meetings, previous meetings minutes are read	2.5	poor
v). Whenever there is any matter before a management committee in which a member is interested in whatever manner, he or she declares his or her interest and withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the discussion in relation to the subject matter in which he or she has interest	1.50	very poor
vi). Productive decisions are made, focusing on the agenda.	1.82	poor
vii). Members not used as rubber stages for decisions already made by headteacher	1.85	poor
viii). Chairperson uses persuasive style during meetings attempting to convince members to believe or accept the idea	3.23	good
ix). Minutes or records of meetings are prepared and circulated to members	2.6	good
x) A management committee usually co-opts any person as it may consider desirable for the transaction of its business at any meeting of the committee, but any person so co-opted does not vote.	1.23	Very poor
xi) Where a disciplinary action is likely to be taken against the head teacher, the head teacher is excluded from voting on any question for a decision by the SMC	1.95	poor
xii) Where a teacher or head teacher is excluded from the meeting of a SMC, he/she is accorded a hearing to give fairness to the outcome of the case	1.85	poor
xiii) The proceedings of the school management committee are conducted in the local language (Lusoga)	3.77	Very good
xiv) Other members of the staff of the school are usually invited to attend meetings of SMC, and where necessary offer technical advice, though they do not vote.	1.87	poor
xv) Any matter before a management committee is decided by a simple majority of members present, through voting.	2.12	poor

Average mean	2.19	Low
3. Implementation of decisions		
i). chairperson clearly spell out which action is to be taken and who is responsible for completing, the action/task.	1.91	poor
ii). Chairperson clearly spells out when the action will be completed.	1.87	poor
iii). Chairperson clearly spells out what resources are required to complete an action	2.66	good
iv). If action is not taken, the chairperson reminds the concerned people, provide help when he/she can or makes necessary adjustments to the plan.	2.03	poor
v). SMC makes follow up on funds allocated to items	1.79	poor
Average mean	2.05	poor
Grand mean	2.21	Poor nature of SMC

Source: Primary data, 2019.

Table 1 reveals that school management committee (SMC) in Mayuge district are instituted poorly (mean 2.39), meetings are on average, not held properly (mean 2.19), and there is poor implementation of the decisions made by the school management committees (mean 2.05).

On the issue of putting school management committees in place, it was revealed that school founders and head teachers have a lot of influence in deciding who must be a member of the management committee and who should not be (mean 3.11 and 3.27 respectively). This means that the school founders and head teachers either appoint or influence the election of the people they want. This was corroborated by an oral informant from Kikyerera Sub County who said,

"The government attaches a lot of importance to the school management committee especially in a government school, chairpersons of these committees can at times be good or bad, so if possible as a head teacher you have to influence parents to elect the chairperson you want, you can convince them to elect him or her".

Related views were relately one head teacher of a private primary school in Bunya West County, who said,

"For as in private schools, though the policy of government requires us to elect members of the school management committee, we do not do it that way, we usually appoint those we can work with. These are usually our friends who are a bit knowledgeable on education related issues''.

It electing or appointing members of school management committees, it is surprising that the education level of the members is less consider (mean 1.85). even the honesty and integrity of a person elected or appointed as a member of the management committee is less considered what matters most is one being friendly to the headteaher or the founders of the school (for the private schools).

Actually one member of the school management committee from Bukatube Sub County said, *"In UPE schools'*

chairpersons of school management committees "eat" with the head teachers…. if the money from the government is released and sent to school, the chairperson eat part of that money with the head teachers". This is in agreement with what on head teacher of a government school said that,*"We in UPE schools sometimes we find hard time from these semi-illiterate chairpersons of school management committees… once UPE funds are released by the government, they come to the head teachers and demand a potion on that money…and if you don't give them they can fail you".* This reveals that there is a rot in Uganda's education system; people at different levels mainly think of eating/cheating instead of serving the public".

Regarding the meetings of school management committees, they are generally held haphazardly (mean 2.23). This implies that many times there are no clear directions for the meetings. They are mainly held for formality since it is a requirement as per government policy. Otherwise it is absurd that members are not informed in time, the agenda of the meetings are not usually made in advance and are not usually distributed to members in advance, so people usually go to meetings when they do not know what they are going to discuss about. On this theme, one female member of a school management committee in Mpungwe Sub County said,*"When there is need for the meeting, sometimes the head teacher rings us and informs us on phone that we have a meeting……. if it is a rainy season when we are very busy in farming, many of us don't attend the meetings for which we are called …it seems some head teachers do it deliberately for us not to attend……. they do this by for example ringing some of us either a day or two days before, hence not having enough time to prepare ourselves".*

It is also surprising that the implementation of the decision made in the meetings of school management committees is poor (mean 2.05). This means that though sometimes the members sit and make decisions, these decisions are not always implemented. Accordingly, the members many times do not make a follow up on funds allocated to items (mean 1.79). Actually on this issue, head teacher said,

"In meetings we can make suggestions of the money which would be allocated to particular items or projects but at times we fail to get it, or we very little of the money". This implies that a member of school management committees leave much of the work to the head teacher to ensure that is discussed is implemented.

IV. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Discussion

The findings were that the school management committees in this district were poor in the sense that they are not properly instituted as per the government policy, their meetings are usually haphazard, and the implementation of their decisions is generally poor. Based on the data collected from the oral informants, this poor state of affairs was due to the district being rural with many illiterate and semi-illiterate people. Hence some members of the school management committees do not clearly understand their roles. In addition, some head teachers of public schools are cheats, so they influence the election of soft members of the school management committees who would dance on their tunes (tunes of head teachers). Thirdly, some private schools were founded by illiterate business men and women who take schools as an economic investment. Such people do not appreciate the value of school management committees, the school founders appoint those they want. Sometimes the meetings are not held; the minuets are forged

This may imply that the government has not done much to ensure that the local committees understand their roles in the management of their schools. This reminds us Fredrick Winslow Taylor's scientific management movement which held that, excellence or success in management resides in knowing exactly what you want men to do and then seeing that they do it in the best and cheapest way (Yamada, 2012).

As applied to school management committees there is need to give them refresher courses.

It was also found that some chairpersons of school management committees liaise with head teachers to get part of the money the government sends to schools to run the school activities. This money called capitation grants is meant to buy chalk, pens, and other important things at school such as Jerricans, hoes, slathers, water, water containers, for keeping the school neat, etc. surprisingly some chairpersons think it is for them to eat. This relates to Kigongo, Kayindu, Gwokyalya and Baba (2018)'s claims that modern education operates in an environment which is far removed from ethics.

Some head teachers were said to influence the election of soft members of school management committees who will not interfere with them. This shows that some head teachers have personal interests, this applying such fake management styles. This is in disagreement with that the most popular style of leadership among secondary school principals in the cross-rivers state of Nigeria was the transactional type. Another study by Nwankwo carried out in 1979 examined the effects of the various types of leadership in the secondary schools in the Imo state of Nigeria and their effects on staff performance, and found out that the transactional leadership style was not only the most popular, but also the style proved most effective in staff task performance, with transactional leadership the manager balances the needs of the organization and the needs and expectations of the people (workers) and integrate the two (Cited in Kayindu, Gwokyalya and Baba, 2018). These studies are however very old; this can account for the difference between the findings of those earlier studies and those of the current study. The current styles findings are thus in agreement with those of a study carried out in private universities in Uganda in which it was found that some managers use indifferent management whereby sometimes

they have personal interests they want to further (Kayindu, Gwokyalya and Baba (2018).

Conclusion

The study concludes that School management committees exist in all primary schools in Mayuge district as the policy of government stipulates. Despite this they and poor in terms of their institution, meetings and implementing what is decided you.

Recommendation

There is need for the government and civil leaders to hold refresher courses for parents to appreciate their role in participating in the management of primary schools in this location and to make them properly understand and appreciate their roles as members of the school management committees in case they are elected or appointed.

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