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The Management of Government Grant-Aided Primary Schools in Goma Sub-County, Mukono District, Uganda: Implications on School Performance and Stability

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Abstract. The study explored the management of the government grant-aided primary schools in Goma sub-county, Mukono District. It specifically focused on the administration of schools, management of voluntary contributions, and the relationship between the school administration and the stakeholders. The exploratory research design was adopted to select ten headteachers, ten members of the foundation bodies, ten School Management Committee (SMC) members, and two officials from the District Education office. Data was collected through face to face interviews, document review and observations. The findings reveal that: (i) the SMCs lack the necessary competences and commitment to play effectively their administrative roles; (ii) the teacher support supervision by both the district education inspectors and headteachers is insufficient; (iii) the voluntary contributions towards midday meals and other administrative costs are inadequate; (iv) parents in rural schools are not as supportive as expected; and (v) there is evidence of interference by foundation bodies in the administration of schools. Therefore, the study recommends that: (i) government should revise the Education Act of 2008 to include the minimum qualification of an Advance Level certificate for SMC members to ensure competence to perform effectively their administrative and supervisory roles; (ii) government should increase the capitation grant to cater for the mid-day meals and other administrative costs; (iii) the SMCs, the Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and the church should sensitize the communities on the importance of voluntary contributions; and (iv) the District Education authorities should organize training workshops for the headteachers and the members of the SMC on the roles of various stakeholders as stipulated in the Education Act of 2008 to minimize conflict.

Keywords: church-founded schools; government grant-aided primary schools; management; performance; stability

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1. Introduction

The Ugandan government has the obligation to ensure access to quality education by all her citizens as specified under Article 30 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995 (Government of Uganda [GoU], 1995). To fulfil this obligation, the government prioritized the provision of free and quality education, and welcomed the supplementary role of the non-state actors such as the Church in offering quality education under the regularization and monitoring of the Ministry of Education and Sports (GoU, 1992, 1995, 2008; Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001).

Formal education in Uganda was supported majorly by the Christian missions before 1925 (Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001). The Roman Catholic and the Protestant missionaries promoted formal education in the early 20th century by making the converts literate so that they could read the Bible and other religious books (Ssekamwa, 1997). To achieve this goal, the teaching focused more on reading and writing. Following the Phelps-Stokes Commission report of 1924, the government set up a Department of Education to regulate, supervise and finance the church-founded schools (Ssekamwa, 1997). Despite government's participation in education, the churches continued to significantly fund their schools until independence in 1962. After independence, the 1963 Education Act was passed; all denominational educational institutions were taken over by the government with the aim of neutralizing the discriminatory tendency that was evident in the religious denominational schools (Ssekamwa, 1997).

The church founded schools later became government grant-aided schools in 1976 after the government laid out its commitment to provide financial assistance to these schools in line with the principle of subsidiarity (Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001). The assistance was to cater for the teachers' welfare, recurrent and capital expenses. To expand opportunities to access to education, the Education Policy Review Commission of 1989 in its resultant White Paper on education recommended the universalisation of education (GoU, 1992). This aimed at providing free education to all children of the primary education age (6-14 years). In 1997, the government implemented the Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy; later on, in 2006, Universal Secondary Education (USE) was introduced. However, the co-management of both the primary and secondary schools aimed at having the foundation bodies at the helm. This included monitoring the working of the schools, preparing, and recommending school development plans. Therefore, foundation bodies are recognised as legal statutory organs that help in managing primary schools on behalf of the government (ISER, 2019).

According to the Education Act of 2008 (GoU, 2008), "*government grant-aided schools are schools that were not founded by government but receive statutory grants in form of aid from government and are jointly managed by the foundation body and government*" (p.6). The government grant-aided schools include church founded schools. Church-founded schools refer to both formal and non-formal learning schools that were founded by the church to impart knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and behaviours in line with the Christian doctrine (Kiryowa et al., 2021). In this paper, the focus is on government grant-aided primary schools that were

founded by the Church of Uganda in the Goma sub-county. These schools are jointly managed by the church and government.

The role of government in the management of church-founded primary schools includes: supervision, regulation, policy setting, provision of instructional materials, recruitment and promotion of teachers and non-teaching staff, structural development and catering for teachers' welfare (GoU, 2008). Currently, the government provides School Facility Grant (SFG) and Capitation Grant (CG) of Ugandan Shilling (UGX) 20,000 for each learner annually (MoES, 2023). The Church, on the other hand, ensures and safeguards the promotion of religious, cultural and moral values and attitudes; participates in policy formulation; mobilizes resources for education purposes; and participates in the review and monitoring of the curriculum. Thus, the Education Act of 2008 (GoU, 2008) stipulates:

"The responsibility of the foundation body shall, in accordance with the set policy, include; (a) participating in ensuring proper management of schools of their foundation; (b) ensuring the promotion of religious, cultural and moral values and attitudes in schools of their foundation; (c) participating in policy formulation; (d) participating in education advocacy; (e) mobilization of resources for education purposes." (p. 12)

The school management committees were empowered by the government to improve education by transferring significant decision-making authorities from the central government and district offices to individuals (Republic of Uganda, 2019). The purpose was to increase the autonomy of critical stakeholders to improve instructional processes. The ultimate aim of school-based management is to improve the standard of teaching and pupils' learning outcomes through the concerted efforts of the key stakeholders, the leadership, the commitment of frontline educators and the support of the government (MoES, 2017)

However, there is a growing concern about the management of the church-founded schools in the districts. Several studies have highlighted the following management gaps: inadequate inspection and monitoring by the district local governments and the school management committee members; inadequate instructional supervision and untimely feedback on teacher appraisals by the headteachers; insufficient funding by government; unsupportive stakeholders; limited land for expansion; and interference by members of the foundation bodies in the day-to-day administration of schools (Ayoko & Virginus, 2024; Kyambadde & Khumalo, 2022; MoES, 2023).

2. Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to explore the management of the government grant-aided primary schools under the Church of Uganda in Goma Sub-county, Mukono District.

3. Research Questions

Specifically, the study was guided by the following research questions:

- (i) How does the administration impact on the performance and stability of the government grant-aided primary schools in Goma Sub-county in Mukono District?
- (ii) How does the management of voluntary contributions influence the performance and stability of the government grant-aided primary schools in Goma Sub-county in Mukono District?
- (iii) How does the management of the stakeholders influence the performance and stability of the government grant-aided primary schools in Goma Sub-county in Mukono District?

4. Literature Review

This section presents reviewed literature in regard management of government grant-aided schools, and its implications on their performance and stability. Focus was specifically on; the administration of schools, management of voluntary contribution and their implications on the performance and stability of the schools.

4.1 Administration of the Government Grant-Aided Schools

The administration of schools entails all activities aimed at ensuring quality education with due regard to the available resources (Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001). The Education Act of 2008 spells out the administrative roles of the different stakeholders of the government grant-aided primary schools (MoES, 2017): (i) providing support supervision, (ii) playing an oversight role over the teachers, and (iii) monitoring and inspecting the provision of the education services in the schools through the education inspectorate unit with the aim of enhancing learning outcomes (GoU, 2008). In accordance with the Education Act (GoU, 2008), all government grant-aided primary schools have management committees whose responsibility relate to the day-to-day administration, proper and efficient running of schools (Asad, 2021).

The administrative roles of the SMCs include planning, financial control, maintaining discipline and implementing policies aimed at creating stability to enhance effective teaching and learning in primary schools (Serunjogi, 2022). The headteachers, in conjunction with the SMCs, ensure that the standards and policies guiding the management of government-aided schools are adhered to (GoU, 2008). They are also expected to provide support, supervision and guidance to teachers to enhance quality education (Mpaata et al., 2017). Ssekemwa and Lugumba (2001) emphasize the role of teachers in the daily administration of a school. For example, teachers are assigned responsibilities such as being in charge of a class, dormitory, entertainment, games or sports. While performing these roles, teachers solve the pupils' problems brought to their attention and ensure the wellbeing of the learners at school (Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001). However, several studies reveal inadequate teacher involvement in partaking in these responsibilities due to the shortage of teachers in UPE schools, especially to effectively meet the learning needs while teaching and doing administrative work (Kabuuka et al., 2024; Namuwaya & Kyokunda, 2024; Mujuni et al., 2022;

UNESCO, 2019). The Uwezo report attributes the shortage of teachers to the lack of pre-service training programs to raise the teacher qualification profile, attrition, certification, and government ban on recruitment and appointment of teachers (Uwezo Uganda, 2021).

Literature reveals gaps in the performance of their roles of stakeholders. These include lack of inspection and monitoring of schools by the local government (Republic of Uganda, 2019); and non-provision of support from parents in terms of scholastic materials, meals and working with the teachers to monitor the academic progress of the learners (GoU, 2008). These inadequacies have affected the performance and stability of the government grant-aided primary schools (Ditsuwan, & Sukkamart, 2022; Kyagulanyi et al., 2024; Kyambadde & Khumalo, 2022). For example, inspection and monitoring of schools by the Local Government is largely deficient, especially in rural schools. This is attributed to lack of motor vehicles and finances to execute the task (Aijuka, 2023; Kyambadde & Khumalo, 2022).

Members of the SMC specifically in the rural settings lack the academic qualifications and competence to effectively conduct their administrative roles such as planning, financial control, maintaining discipline and implementing policies (Serunjogi, 2022). In several cases, those with good academic qualifications do not take up responsibilities of SMCs because they are voluntary in nature (Serunjogi, 2022). Instructional supervision by the headteachers in government grant-aided schools is inadequate and feedback is untimely (MoES, 2017). Yet, as Malunda et al (2016) observe, it is through classroom observations, review of artefacts and administrative checks that teachers are supported, and their pedagogical practices enhanced. This leads to enhancing school stability in terms of teacher retention and increased professional interests that all lead to improved school performance.

4.2 Management of Voluntary Contributions

Although the government provides funds to all schools under the UPE program (UNESCO, 2019), the funding is insufficient to meet the basic needs of the learner (Kiryowa, 2021). Such funds cannot cater for the learners' midday meals, payment of school utility bills, and payment of allowances for the privately hired staff to supplement the few provided by government (Kiryowa et al., 2021). The inadequate funding has forced the government-aided primary schools to go against the UPE policy guidelines of not levying fees for education (Kyambadde & Khumalo, 2022). The UPE policy does not allow levying of fees for the education of pupils in government grant-aided primary schools. The Education Act of 2008 (GoU, 2008) prohibits any person or agency to levy charges in any government-aided school for the purposes of providing education. It also provides that management of the school implementing UPE programme should not be stopped from collecting and or receiving voluntary contributions from parents and well-wishers to contain any urgent matter concerning the school. This provision allows levying a charge for midday meals as established by the SMC in consultation with district councils.

The money collected as voluntary contributions is managed by the SMCs and the Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs) to construct classroom blocks so as to expand the teaching and learning space; repair of dilapidated infrastructure; buy scholastic materials, construct and repair of teachers' houses; pay teachers who are not on the government payroll; and cater for midday meals for both pupils and teachers (Kiryowa, 2021). This is all aimed at improving the performance and stability of the government grant-aided primary schools by ensuring that the needs of the learners and teachers are adequately catered for (Aijuka, 2023; Kiryowa et al., 2021)

4.3 Relationship between the School Management and Stakeholders

The success and sustainability of a school as an integral and inseparable component of the community is largely explained by the way it interacts with the various stakeholders within the community (Ayoko & Virginus, 2024; Kyambadde & Khumalo, 2022; Tibbit, 2017). The stakeholders include the foundation bodies, government, learners, parents and community members. Ayoko and Virginus (2024) emphasised the contribution of a synergic relationship between the school and the community to the unity and trust, understanding of and adhering to policy and regular consultations for the wellbeing of the school.

Following the government funding inadequacies, schools have sought the support of parents to contribute to the funding of education (Kiryowa et al., 2021). In several government-aided primary schools, parents have made invaluable contributions to infrastructural development and provision of scholastic materials (Aijuka, 2023). The founding bodies play a key role in decision making; however, they lack the funds to implement the decisions (Aijuka, 2023). This has led to school administrators having a stronger dependency relationship with government and parents than the church leaders. The church as a partner in the management of the schools is challenged in implementing decisions such as the appointment of teachers of their denomination to promote the church agenda (Kiryowa et al., 2021; Ssekamwa & Lugumba, 2001).

In some schools in the rural settings, parents/guardians are not co-operative as far as providing financial contributions for the smooth running of their schools is concerned (Aijuka, 2023). This negative response is attributed to the lack of economic capacity and laziness of some parents to facilitate the education of their children. In addition, some stakeholders think that education should be completely free under the UPE policy (Aijuka, 2023).

From the review of literature, previous studies do not clearly bring out the implications of; the interference of the foundation bodies in the administration of schools, the management of the voluntary contributions, and conflict over the usage of the foundation body land for school development projects. This study focused on exploring the influence of these factors on the performance and stability of the government aided-primary schools.

5. Methodology

The exploratory research design inclined to the qualitative research approach was used to explore and understand the management of government grant-aided primary schools in Goma sub-county, Mukono district. The design was relevant in unearthing the implications of management on the performance and stability of these schools in the sub-county. The target population included the District Education Officials (DEOs), the SMC members and headteachers.

Goma sub-county has 23 government-grant aided primary schools, 10 of which were founded by the Church of Uganda. The study focused on all ten schools. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants that were best suited to provide the required in-depth information with regard to the management, performance and stability of government grant-aided primary schools in the sub-county (Creswell, 2014). All headteachers of the ten selected schools, 10 SMC members and two District officials were purposively selected. Data was collected through: in-depth interviews with the district education officials, the SMC members and the headteachers; document reviews; and non-participant observations. The in-depth interview method was found appropriate because it enabled probing and seeking clarity about the administration, financial contributions/fees payment, and the relationship between the school administrators and the community (Cohen et al., 2018). Documents reviewed included: the staff lists, UNEB results, school budgets, lists of SMC members, lists of capitation grants received from government, receipts of money submitted to the church and minutes of meetings. The survey team also moved around the schools accompanied by the headteachers to observe the state of affairs in the schools. The areas of observation included the class size versus the available space, adequacy of furniture, and the state of the physical infrastructure such as the classroom blocks, the staff quarters and toilets.

The data was collected using a combination of methods (in-depth-interviews, non-participant observations and document review) to get a holistic understanding of the management and its implications on the performance and stability of the government-aided primary schools in the sub-county (Creswell, 2014).

To ensure data quality, the data collection team was trained on how to ask questions and capture responses. The experts from the Directorate of Education Standards (DES) checked for the suitability of the question items. Thereafter, the items were modified accordingly. The data collection tools were pretested in two church of Uganda-founded schools in Kasowo sub-county, Mukono District. No change was made in the tools since the results showed consistency in the generated responses. None of the questions was not clear or got skipped by respondents. Before data were collected, informed consent was sought from the key informants. Anonymity of the informants and confidentiality were assured. Collected data were analysed through the identification of patterns, creation of categories and themes. Interpretations and drawing inferences depended on the number of occurrences of each item. Direct excerpts are used in data presentation.

6. Findings

The study sought opinions and views of the respondents about (i) the administration of the government-aided primary schools in the district, (ii) the management of voluntary contributions, and (iii) the relationship between the school administrators and the various stakeholders. It also examined the implications of the above-three variables on to the performance and stability of schools. Information was also sought through document review and observation. The information collected was subjected to thematic analysis method and findings are presented below.

6.1 Administration and Performance

All the visited primary schools have functional SMCs, substantively appointed headteachers and teachers who conduct administrative roles in their respective schools. These are registered and deployed by the district local government. With regard to the conduct of administrative roles by the SMCs, information from the headteacher revealed that SMC members were not adequately playing their administrative roles as stipulated in the Education Act of 2008. Furthermore, a number of members on the SMCs are not well-educated and lacked the technical competences to make budgets and interpret policy documents. The headteachers further revealed that some members of the SMCs who are not financially strong expect to be paid for being members of the committee although their services are meant to be voluntary. This has affected their morale and commitment. According to the headteachers, many members of the SMCs hardly participate in the committee meetings. One headteacher explained thus:

“The members of the SMC are not very active. Many of the SMC members are dormant and don’t even appear when they are called for meetings. Some [of them] who attend the meetings seem not to clearly understand their roles. Therefore, they do not provide constructive ideas on how to make the school better.”

Despite the critical role of inspection and supervision in the administration of schools, the study findings also revealed that the district education inspectors, the SMCs and headteachers hardly inspect or provide supervision support to schools. According to the headteachers, on the few occasions that inspectors visit schools to monitor standards, they are in a hurry to cover as many schools as possible. Consequently, the guidance and support to enhance the smooth running of the school is insufficient. The headteachers affirmed that the supervision of teachers by either the inspectors from the district or the inspectors from Directorate of Education Standards (DES) for the continuous improvement of pedagogical practices was inadequate.

Findings further revealed that the headteachers were failing their administrative role of supervising the teachers. The headteachers rarely conducted classroom observations, hardly reviewed the teaching materials; only a few could provide documentary evidence that departmental meetings were being conducted at least once in a month. This contravenes the regulations in the Education Act of 2008. Such administrative roles include supervising and overseeing the teaching and learning processes to enhance learning outcomes (MoES, 2017). The failure by headteachers to effectively carry out their duties was attributed to scarcity of class

room teachers hence forcing the headteacher to carry on an extra load of teaching at the expense of the day to day administration and efficient running of the schools. Another factor was the inability of management committees to offer support in terms of hiring extra teachers who are not on the pay roll to support the teaching

The study established that understaffing, especially for rural schools was negatively impacting on the effective administration of these schools since the headteachers have to abandon their administrative roles to teach, thereby affecting their supervisory and planning roles. Unlike the urban and peri-urban schools where the PTAs have the financial capability to hire additional teachers on contractual terms, the rural schools have to work with five or less teachers deployed by the government. Yet, the minimum expected number of teachers for a primary school of seven classes (Primary One to Primary Seven) is eight. Therefore, some classes go without teachers. For example, it was observed that in some cases Primary One and Primary Two classes had been combined and taught by one teacher to manage because of the inadequacy of staff. Studies by Kabuuka et al. (2024), Namuwaya and Kyokunda, (2024), Mujuni et al. (2022) and UNESCO (2019) equally established that shortage of teachers was one factor responsible for the failure of UPE schools to effectively meet the learning needs of pupils.

Lack of sufficient teachers is exacerbated by the fact that most of the teachers in rural schools are approaching retirement and are sickly most of the time. They also exhibit low morale and commitment to work; they are always absent from school and quite insubordinate. According to the headteachers, such teachers pose a significant challenge to the effective administration of schools. The headteachers cannot send them back to the district because this action will create further shortages given that the district lacks the teachers for replacement.

The DEO attributes the shortage of teachers to high attrition during the Covid-19 lockdown. According to other district officials, a number of teachers started money-generating businesses and did not go back to class after the lockdown. The officials also attributed the short-fall to the new policy that demands that the grade-three teachers should upgrade to the diploma level. One DEO remarked:

“Many grade-three teachers above 45 years have left teaching to do other things because they find the process of upgrading a big inconvenience. We are finding it very difficult to replace the teachers.”

According to the headteachers, the attrition is largely explained by the export of labor to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The companies that export labor prefer teachers given that they have the minimum educational requirements.

The poor state of the learning environment poses another administrative challenge. Findings revealed that there is an inadequacy of classroom space, dilapidated classrooms and insufficient furniture for the large numbers of pupils. For example, in one of the schools, a fraction of a very crowded primary-five pupils was seated on the floor as the teacher taught. According to the teacher, sitting on a bench and desk depended on a first come, first served basis, which sometimes triggered fights that disrupted the normal teaching and learning

process. The congested classrooms made it hard for the teacher to reach every learner during the teaching process and this has an implication on managing discipline of the learners in the classroom.

In three schools, pupils were being taught under tree sheds. According to the teachers, many distractions in this teaching and learning environment occur. In two rural schools that were visited, it was observed that Primary Three and Primary Four classes shared the same classroom. Primary Three faced one direction and Primary Four the other as the teachers of the respective classes taught. This affected the concentration of the learners and the effective delivery of the teachers.

Generally, the learning environment in all the schools visited was not conducive for both the teachers and the learners, though some teachers showed enthusiasm and commitment to their work. It was observed that teachers wrote notes and gave exercises using blackboards that were in poor condition. A number of classrooms did not have the teachers' table. Teachers marked class exercises on the pupils' desks.

The above findings conform to the UNESCO (2019) and Uwezo (2021) reports on the shortage of teachers to effectively meet the learning needs of large numbers of learners. The inadequacy of learning space coupled with insufficient classroom furniture create a difficult teaching-learning environment. The headteachers decried the government's failure to lift the ban on recruitment and increase the budget for the construction of more classrooms to meet the growing number of pupils in the UPE schools. Despite these challenges, the performance of most schools in the previous UNEB examinations was rated fair; indeed, one school had one candidate in first grade. On average, schools had 12% of the registered candidates in the first grade and at least 50% in the second grade.

Interference in the administrative roles by the foundation bodies, especially the Church, impacted negatively the effective administration of the UPE schools. The headteachers revealed interference by specifically elected church leaders in the administration of some schools, which has grossly affected the performance of the schools. One headteacher said:

"My morale as headteacher has been bogged down [reduced] by the head of the laity who puts pressure on me to increase tuition fees by UGX 10,000/= to cater for church activities and to include certain members of the community on the School Management Committee. I have tried my best to explain to the church leadership about the risks of increasing tuition fees and endorsing a list of members supported by only the foundation body but all in vain. I feel threatened by such members of the governance body who keep reminding me that the school belongs to the church. Sometimes, they attempt to block government development initiatives."

Lastly, the review of documents established that poor recording keeping is a challenge to the administration of the schools. This does not only affect monitoring and evaluation, but also affects following up on decisions made and the progress of learners. Documents such as staff attendance registers; teachers'

personal files; lists of the updated enrolment; files of learners' continuous assessment results; learners' progress reports; minutes of staff, SMC and Parents' Teachers Association meeting; and UNEB results for the previous three years were hardly available. Most records were kept in hard copies; and only two schools of the ten had desktop computers. One school kept important documents in a plastic container to protect them from being destroyed by termites.

6.2 Management of the Voluntary Contribution and Performance

Interviews with the headteachers revealed that the schools were financially constrained. According to the headteachers, the survival of the government grant-aided schools depends majorly on the voluntary contributions by the parents and government grants. However, the SMC members revealed that the UGX 20,000, for capitation grant which is an equivalent of 5 USD for each learner annually is not adequate to meet the needs of the learners. One headteacher said, *"the UGX 20,000/= we receive for each pupil per year is too little to cater for the requirements of the learners."*

Findings revealed that the voluntary contributions from the parents ranged from UGX 70,000/= to UGX 200,000/=. According to the members of the SMC and district officials, these contributions are agreed upon, collected, and budgeted for by the PTA. The voluntary contributions cater for midday meals, payment of utility bills, payment of allowances for the privately hired staff and other staff allowances such as accommodation top-up allowance. From the same contributions, schools were able to repair some of the dilapidated physical infrastructure and construct pit latrines.

The amount of the voluntary contributions by each pupil varies from school to school. The study established that schools in the urban areas charge more fees compared to schools in the rural settings. Information from the school budgets revealed that the planning and budgeting for the voluntary contributions is better in the urban schools. Similarly, information from the SMC members revealed that fees collection was lower in the rural UPE schools as compared to the urban schools. Headteachers in the rural setting believe that the voluntary contributions are a burden to parents given the harsh economic environment. Regarding the hard economic situation in the rural setting, one headteacher had this to say:

"Quite a number of parents cannot even afford mid-day meals for their children. These children are usually less attentive during the afternoon classes because they are evidently hungry. The economy is tight [poor] here!"

It was observed in three rural primary schools that only a fraction of pupils who had paid for the mid-day meals were served lunch. The rest played through lunch time as they awaited the afternoon classes. Some disturbing incidences were witnessed when those who were not entitled to lunch begged for food from those who had been served. Such a situation creates divisions and lowers the esteem of those pupils whose parents cannot afford paying. This directly affects pupils' performance.

The study established that quite a number of classroom blocks, staff accommodation facilities and latrines had been constructed using the voluntary contributions. These structures supplement the infrastructure provided by the government. Though some headteachers believe that in addressing the issues of insufficient infrastructure that is provided by the government to reach out to the parents, the cost of primary education has been increased exorbitantly. Despite parents' effort to supplement the government's contribution to the infrastructure development, it was observed that more classroom blocks and staff quarters were still needed. For example, in most schools two or three teachers share a house meant for one teacher. Some of the teachers' houses were dilapidated and required immediate repairs. Overall, given the ban on the recruitment of teachers and financial constraints of the government, the voluntary contributions have helped to recruit additional teachers to reduce the teacher-pupil ratio. The contributions also aided in constructing some physical infrastructure.

6.3 The Relationship with the Foundation Bodies and Performance

Interviews with the headteachers revealed a good relationship between the District Local Government, the SMCs and the school administration. The headteachers in the Church-founded schools further revealed a cordial relationship with the church. According to the headteachers, the church provides school chaplains for the spiritual growth and counselling for both the teachers and the learners. These chaplains are considered to be part of the privately recruited staff; therefore, they are paid allowances from the voluntary contributions. The schools also make financial contributions to church activities such as pastoral work (chaplaincy) and construction works whenever called upon. However, information from the church representatives on the SMCs revealed that the church does not take schools into consideration in their budgets. One headteacher said, *"we get no financial support from the church. It is the school that financially supports the church."*

In regard to the relationship between the parents and the schools, information from the headteachers revealed that some parents are not supportive as expected. Some parents were not willing to make contributions towards the mid-day meals plus other emergency costs. One headteacher in had this to say;

"Many of our parents willingly or unwillingly refuse to pay the agreed-upon money for development of the school, for lunch of their children and paying teachers who handle the pupils during the extra lessons. Yet, these parents are always seen in bars drinking, and some marrying more wives. These parents have made our work very difficult."

The headteachers also raised a concern about the non-cooperative communities. According to some headteachers, members of the community, especially those who are well off, do not bring their children to the church-founded government grant-aided schools, instead they take them to the nearby private schools. One headteacher of a church-founded school expressed this concern:

"Many Christians talk negatively about their church-founded schools. They have a high negative attitude towards their own schools. The prominent members of the community take their children to schools in Kampala."

Despite the cordial relationship between the schools and the foundation bodies as revealed by the headteachers, the study established that there were land wrangles between the schools and the foundation bodies. The wrangles have caused a poor relationship between the school administrators and the foundation bodies. The foundation bodies have not clearly demarcated land for the schools. This was a common problem in the Church of Uganda founded schools. This posed a challenge of expansion. The foundation bodies were in some cases reclaiming the school land. One member of the church said, *“none of our schools has a clear boundary of the land, because the land belongs to the church just like the schools are ours. The school administrators should not tell us how to distribute our own church land.”*

To some church leaders, schools were regarded as a wasteful development and a non-ideal venture because they have no significant economic gain for the church. Some stakeholders think that if the government could withdraw its aid from these schools, the church could reap some profits when such schools are being operated privately.

With regard to the unclear demarcation of land for school development, the district local government officials expressed fears of the government losing billions of shillings in government-funded school projects given that most of the foundation bodies have not granted schools legal ownership of land. One headteacher illustrated:

“Something needs to be done fast to resolve the land issues. Recently, the Ministry of Education and Sports issued a circular that government-aided schools should present documented evidence of land ownership [such as the land] title or the agreement made between the foundation body and the school before any project can be [carried out] on the school [premises].”

This shows that although there have been efforts put in place to streamline the issue of land ownership, no gains have been generated so far; this constrains school administration, stability as well as performance.

The purpose of this study was to explore the management of the government grant-aided Church of Uganda primary schools in Goma Sub-county, Mukono District. The study findings revealed that there are existing functional management structures in all the visited schools. However, a number of SMCs, District Education Inspectors, headteachers and teachers are not playing their administrative roles as stipulated in the Education Act of 2008. The study established that the UPE schools collect voluntary contributions from parents to supplement the government grants of 20,000 UGX per pupil a year. The voluntary contributions, as Kiryowa (2021) observed, are used for midday meals, payment of utility bills and allowances for the privately recruited staff. They also cater for other staff allowances such as accommodation top-up allowances, repair of dilapidated infrastructure, purchase of scholastic materials, and construction of some facilities. However, the voluntary contributions are insufficient to cater for the wellbeing of learners. The findings also revealed a cordial relationship between the schools and the parents, which is a prerequisite for good performance and stability of the schools. Aijuka (2023) similarly established that the parent’s

cooperation was demonstrated through their invaluable contribution to infrastructural development, provision of scholastic materials and supporting the schools to pay teachers recruited on contract. However, in some cases the communities were unsupportive to the school programs.

7. Conclusion

This study concludes that the performance and stability of the government grant aided primary schools in Goma sub county is curtailed by a number of factors, including gaps in the administration of the schools, inadequate funding by government, and the uneasy relationship between the schools and the community. A number of SMC members (majorly in the rural areas) lack the necessary competencies and commitment to play their roles as stipulated in the Education Act of 2008. The government's ban on the recruitment of staff has negatively impacted the teachers' delivery of administrative roles since the few in service are over stretched by the teaching load. Some members of the foundation bodies seem not to be aware of their roles as stipulated in the Education Act of 2008. Their interference in the administrative roles has a negative impact on the performance and stability of the schools. This interference stifles the creativity of the headteachers, breeds conflict and hinders teamwork which in the end affects the performance of schools. Furthermore, the government capitation grants are not adequate to cater for the learners' needs at school. In cases where parents supplement the capitation grants with voluntary contributions, findings indicate that some parents especially in the rural settings cannot afford this contribution. Lastly, although the relationship between the schools and the foundation bodies is cordial, cases of land wrangles between the schools and the foundation bodies has made government hesitant to implement school projects on land with encumbrances.

8. Recommendations

The study recommends that the selection of members to the SMC should be informed by one's educational background. The Education Act of 2008 should be revised to include the minimum qualification of an advance level certificate. This may improve the effective management and supervisory roles given the competence of the members of the committee. Those currently in the system, together with the school administrators could be subjected to training in leadership and management skills to enhance their ability to effectively plan and provide technical management support required to effectively manage primary schools.

Furthermore, the District Education Inspectorate team, the SMCs and the school administrators should do timely support supervision to find out the challenges of the schools and devise means of addressing them. There is a need to support the school administrators by intervening in their challenges.

The local district authorities and the foundation bodies should organize awareness workshops to sensitize parents on the importance of making voluntary contributions. In addition, the education committees should volunteer to sensitize the parents on their obligation to educate their children; the need to feed their

children while at school; and the need to provide the basic school requirements among other areas of concern. The government should consider increasing the annual contribution from UGX 20,000 (US \$ 5) per pupil to at least UGX 100,000 (US \$ 25). This amount could be sufficient in providing basic needs for each pupil while at school, and improve on the welfare of the teachers.

Lastly, the district education authorities should organize training for the SMCs and the foundation bodies focusing on the roles of the different stakeholders as stipulated in the Education Act of 2008. The training would help the different stakeholders to know their roles and responsibilities; thus overcoming the uneasy relationship between the church and the school. The foundation bodies, especially the church should come-up with site plans and clearly demarcate the school land for proper planning, ownership and management.

9. Limitations of the Study

The study focused on government grant aided Primary schools. Future studies should take into consideration the implications of management on the performance and stability of the public, community, and private schools. In addition, the study adopted a qualitative exploratory design; future studies could consider employing quantitative designs to facilitate generalisation of results.

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Appendix 1

Interview Guide for the Headteachers

Dear respondent,

We are consultants in the School of Business Management of UMI. We are undertaking a study on the management of Church of Uganda government grant-aided primary schools in Goma Sub-country. The purpose of the study is to explore the management of the Government grant-aided Church of Uganda primary schools in Goma Sub-county. The data collected will inform stakeholders about the status and challenges of managing church-founded schools. The study is intended to provide insights into the formulation of policies on the management of government grant-aided schools.

You are kindly requested to answer the questions to the best of your knowledge. The information given will be treated with utmost confidence.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Netalisile Malunda, Juliet Atwebembeire & Anaclet Mutiba Namanya

Question items

1. Give us a brief on the status of the school management committee in relation to:
 - a) Their number
 - b) How long they have served in this school
 - c) How they are selected
 - d) Their contribution to the capital of the development of the school
 - e) Their involvement in the supervision of the teaching and learning process
2. Please tell us how you carry out the day-to-day administration of this school being a government-aided primary school in relation to:
 - a) The management of the teaching and learning process
 - b) The management of the welfare of the pupils
 - c) The management of the assets of the school
3. Give us a brief on the role that parents play in helping you manage the school.
4. Please comment on sources of funding for this school.
5. Briefly explain how you manage the funds allocated to the school by the government.
6. How are the voluntary contributions that you get from the parents and other well-wishers managed?
7. Since this is a church founded school, please tell us the relationship between the school and the following categories of people:
 - a) the church, b) the parents, c) the local government

8. Comment on the implications of the involvement of all these stakeholders on: (i) the performance of the school, (ii) the stability of the school.
9. Tell us what you would wish the stakeholders to do to help manage the school better.

Appendix 2

Interview Guide for the School Management Committee members

The purpose of the study is to explore the management of the Government grant-aided Church of Uganda primary schools in Goma Sub-county. You are kindly requested to answer the questions to the best of your knowledge. The information given will be treated with utmost confidence.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Netalisile Malunda, Juliet Atwebembeire & Anaclet Mutiba Namanya

Question items

1. What are the challenges affecting the administration of the school?
2. How are the voluntary contributions managed?
3. Comment on the relationship between the school her key stakeholders?

Appendix 3

Observation check list

1. The state of the physical infrastructure, including classroom blocks, staff quarters, latrines, etc.
2. The state of the learning environment: class size vs available classroom space, availability of the classroom furniture, the conduciveness of the learning environment, etc.

Appendix 4

Document review

1. Staff attendance register to ensure that teaching is done
2. Pupil register to assess the pupils' attendance
3. Teacher personnel files entailing the appointment letters and qualifications
4. Mark sheets for continuous assessment
5. Minutes of the School Management Committee meetings, staff meetings, and Parents and Teachers Association meetings.
6. Work Plans and budgets to ascertain the amount of fees collected (voluntary contributions)

Education Act (2008) to review the rules and responsibilities of the various stakeholders