

The perceptions of learners and directors of
studies on the factors influencing academic
performance of students in mixed secondary
schools of Bukedea district in Uganda

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studies on the factors influencing academic
performance of students in mixed secondary
schools of Bukedea district in Uganda

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my dear family and in memory of my father (RIP) who rested while I was away from home and was unable to bid fare thee to him.

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Abbreviations

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DOS	Director of Studies.
FGD	Focus Group Discussion.
PTA	Parents Teacher Association.
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science.
UCE.	Uganda Certificate of Education.
UPE	Universal Primary Education.
USE	Universal Secondary Education.
UN	United Nations.
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
VUCA	volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.

ABSTRACT

**The perceptions of learners and directors of studies on the factors
influencing academic performance of students in mixed secondary
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The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of learners and directors of studies on the factors influencing academic performance of students in mixed secondary schools.

For purpose to be accomplished the study utilized qualitative approaches, writing down the perceptions and experiences of lower secondary school students through focus group discussions, and the views of the directors of studies through in-depth interviews. 51 participants in total were involved. 48 students and 3 directors of studies. Among the students 24 were girls and the other 24 boys. The views of the participants were put coded in to themes. The factors presented were categorized in to student factors, teacher factors, and support system (school-support system and home support). Student factor: self-efficacy, attitude, grit, and discipline. Teacher

factors; attitude, teaching methods and personality, for school support system: school environment, classroom environment, guidance and counselling, teaching - learning equipment, and compulsory subjects. For home support: parents' motivation and family economic background.

To enhance academic performance, students should become more motivated, interested, and be positive. Teachers, in particular, should adopt new teaching methods, pedagogical approaches, and personality changes in order to influence learners' behavior and relationships. The findings of the study demonstrated that a learner's lack of interest, bad attitude, behavior, poor morale, teacher's character and teaching methods, support system, parental motivation, and peer pressure were all factors that affected their academic performance.

The collected data from this study would help the secondary schools; administrators, staff, and the Ugandan Ministry of education and Sport in creating a better learning environment, re-evaluate the compulsory subjects at lower secondary level and come up with programs to help the teachers and students during the teaching - learning processing and within the school to improve performance in academics.

Key Words: Academic Performance, Director of Studies, ESSP, Factors, Mixed Secondary Schools, Ordinary Secondary School level, UCE, UNSCO ,USE

Chapter 1. Introduction

The UNESCO treaty against discrimination in education and the child's cultural, social, and economic rights were both written in 1960, and emphasized the importance of good education for every person worldwide. The United Nations' (UN) 191 members, including Uganda, sanctioned the agreement on the Children's Rights in 1989, making primary education to be fundamental and free. For Uganda, the government's Universal Primary Education (UPE) initiative began offering free primary education in 1997 to all primary age going children. Later, in 2007 Universal Secondary Education (USE) was introduced which enabled Ugandan children to access free ordinary level education (Secondary Education). The Strategic Plan for Secondary Education (2009) report states that enrollment at secondary level increased from 814,000 to 954,000 between 2007 and 2008 as a result of USE programs which improved education accessibility. Several strategies were introduced to handle the high enrolment that had resulted from the USE program. Among which included: Investing in USE grants, construction of Laboratories, libraries, classrooms and recruitment of teachers as well as establishing seed schools in sub counties that had no secondary schools in all districts. (Right to Education Project – May 2012).

Despite all the measures to make education accessible and relevant, the UCE results of some district are not satisfactory. Yet, in the VUCA world—volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous—where technological innovation has replaced traditional methods of assessing global concerns, knowledge is valued and respected in all spheres of society, regardless of gender, race or nation. In response to various knowledge systems, people are struggling hard to achieve the requirement to a productive and meaningful life which calls for developing competent and innovative human capital because underdeveloped human capital hinders the increase of productivity and restricts the efficient and optimal use of resources from an economic perspective. People with lesser levels of education often face greater risks of unemployment, less stable employment, and greater challenges in meeting the needs of the economy and technological changes. Even so, academic success is still used as a barometer for the knowledge and abilities needed to qualify for a formal profession and, in turn, a life of quality. Since academic achievement is the hub around which many important aspects of the educational system revolve, it has drawn the attention of scholars, parents, policymakers, and planners.

Academic performance may be determined by pass rates or failure rates of candidates in various grades associated with an examination system. In Uganda for instance, Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE)- the grades are classified as

division one, two, three, four, nine and X. Division one to three are considered as a **good pass**, division four is a **weak pass** and division nine is a failure. There are four classes at lower secondary (O'level) that is; form one to form four. And at the end of the 4th class, every learner sits for an examination called Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE). The possible best grade in this exam is 8 aggregates, while the possible worst grade or score is 72.

The Table below shows the aggregates needed in each division.

Table 1.

1: Academic grading system in Uganda (O' Level)

O' level:	8-32 = Division 1	33-44 = Division 2	45-51 = Division 3	52-59 = Division 4
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Grade	D1	D2	C3	C4	C5	C6	P7	P8	F9
Score range	80-100	75-79	70-74	65-69	60-64	55-59	45-54	35-44	0-34
Aggregate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Source: UNEB (2020).

While in ordinary level, learners have to decide if formal education is the path to the future that they want, for example; the choice between continuing on to Advanced School level (A' level) or pursuing a course in vocational skills training has to be determined by the time the form 4 results are released.

In Uganda, secondary education is one of the fundamental foundational levels of learning that develops students' knowledge and abilities further, supports their

morals and attitudes, and gets them ready for college and adolescence. At this level, there are far higher expectations placed on the students in terms of their cognitive, and social growth, as well as their capacity for academic success and self-directed learning. Therefore, one's academic performance matters a lot at this stage in shaping the route that they take.

Unfortunately, in Bukedea district the academic performance of students at UCE is very wanting. In fact, the district is considered to be among the least performing districts in the country. For example, for the previous five year the learners passing with a good pass – grade one to three are fewer than those in the grade 4 and worst still a reasonable number get division nine.

Table2

Summary of Bukedea District UCE results for (2016-2020)

Year	Division 1	Division 2	Division 3	Division 4	Division 9
2016	10	72	167	459	114
2017	27	130	276	528	91
2018	25	313	238	486	135
2019	12	74	258	545	102
2020	36	204	381	554	79

Source: Inspectorate of schools Bukedea district.

Though Studies have been conducted on academic performance of learners in general but no study has been conducted on the perceptions of learners and directors

of studies on factors influencing academic performance so as to get the insight on why the continued low academic performance at UCE. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of learner and the Directors of studies views in this regard in mixed secondary schools of Bukedea district.

1.2 Problem Statement.

The Ugandan government has committed resources (funds) to the growth of secondary education in Uganda in collaboration with development agencies such as International Monetary Fund, Japan International Cooperation Agency and World Bank. (SPSE, 2009). Along with other objectives, the funds are intended to support student teaching and learning by constructing facilities like libraries, offering educational equipment, regular inspections by the Directorate of Education Standards. Furthermore, the government of Uganda has teamed up with the government of Japan to fund the implementation of the SESEMAT program in order to significantly increase secondary school education and raise student achievement.

Additionally, the majority of the schools tend to allocate extra money in their annual school budgets specifically for educational resources. However, the academic performance in the Bukedea District, particularly at the ordinary level, does not appear to be any better despite the aforementioned provisions. The performance at

UCE is subpar, as per the reports from Department of Education at the district. as seen in the table above. (*Table 2*)

Yet, in many parts of the world academic achievement is seen as the primary criterion and yardstick for qualification into formal job employment and quality of life as well as a measure of the necessary knowledge and abilities. Numerous researches have determined the factors affecting students' academic performance, and suggestions have been made; but the problem persists. These studies have only relied on quantitative research method. Therefore, as a result this study will use qualitative method to explore the learners' perceptions, believes and experiences and the DOS views on factors influencing academic performance.

Therefore, it is vital to get learners' perception on what they believe to influence their academic performance and also get the director of studies' (DOS) views since they are directly in charge of studies. In this study, the focus will be on students' academic performance with keen interest in hearing the learners lived stories and life experiences such that these issues can be solved/ addressed.

1.3 General Objective.

- To explore the perception of students and the Director of studies on factors influencing academic performance of learners in mixed secondary schools of Bukedea district, in Uganda.

Specific objectives.

- To examine the extent to which the support system affects academic performance of the learners in mixed secondary schools.
- To assess how student- related factors influence academic performance of learners in mixed secondary schools.
- To examine the extent to which the class room environment influences students' academic performance in mixed secondary schools.

1.4 Research questions:

In regards to the objectives, the following research questions were raised:

- What are the factors influencing academic performance of learners in mixed secondary schools of Bukedea district?
- How do the students/ factors influence the academic performance of learners?
- How do teacher-related factors influence the academic performance of learners?

- How does the school system contribute to the academic performance of the learners?

1.5 Significancy of the Study:

The study's conclusions and recommendations are hoped to be important to these stakeholders: for upcoming scholars in this field and allied fields, the study's conclusions will serve as a valuable resource book for consultations and policymaking.

The proposals or recommendations may be used by the government, NGOs, and other aid agencies to strengthen the creation and application of ordinary secondary level education policies. Since areas of weakness have been discovered and recommendations have been made in line with them, this would be a good management tool for the administrations of the various schools to improve how well the schools are managed.

1.6 Justification of the Study.

Not many studies seemed to have been conducted on the perception of learners and DOS on factors influencing academic performance of students in mixed secondary schools of Bukedea district, yet there is continued low academic performance of learners at UCE. Thus, conducting this study has enabled the different stakeholders

to understand why there is poor performance in academics so that appropriate solutions or measures can be taken.

1.7 Scope of the Study:

Content scope:

The study focused on exploring the perception of students and the Director of studies on factors influencing academic performance of learners in mixed secondary schools of Bukedea district, in Uganda. It particularly examined the connection between academic achievement and factors related to teachers, students, and schools.

Geographical scopes:

This study was conducted in Bukedea district which is located in the Eastern region of Uganda, Teso sub-region within latitude 1015 N and 2.00N longitude 33045E. (Bukedea district Land board, 2012). The study targeted 3 schools in the district. 2 were picked from Bukedea county which has a total of 9 schools and 1 from Kachumbala county which has 5 schools

Time scope:

The study covered the period between 2016 to 2020 UCE results in order to provide a better time frame for analysis of the schools' performances. It was conceived that

the percentage pass for good grades that is: from Division one to three, in all these years was low as compared to the percentage pass in Division four plus the percentage failure of Division nine. (Refer to Table 1.1 above).

Chapter 2. Literature Review

In chapter 2, I have discussed the literatures related to the perceptions of learners and DOS' on factors influencing academic performance in general. But focused more on factors related to teachers, students, and schools/ support system which affect or influence performance in academics. The literature explored provided an overview of factors that impact on the performance of students and subtopics like the theoretical framework, school support system, the classroom environment, students and teacher related factors and the concept of academic performance.

Theories.

Abraham Maslow's theory of motivation served as one of the study's guiding theories (hierarchy of needs). The other theory that was used is the system theory of Bertalanffy (1920), which states that the human body consists of organs like the alimentary canal, heart, liver, and other bodily parts which have to be taken into account as a whole for the body to operate well. That theory is pertinent to this study since it contends that a variety of factors, including attitude of students, teachers, classroom environment and the environment of the school have an impact on students' achievement. The different components of academic achievement and how they relate with one another will therefore be assessed when looked at as a system.

Nevertheless, this theory focuses more on systems than it does on the individuals' components which affect academic achievement. What remained to be determined was if all the school elements, that the study determined to be true, are operating like a whole/ system at the ordinary secondary schools in the Bukedea district.

The study also used Abraham Maslow's theory of motivation (1954) which states that there are two categories of needs; the growth needs and deficiency need. learners are more likely to do well and engage in personal studying or the motivation to do so when their desires are met for deficiencies. In addition, the school atmosphere, location and its amenities, like the labs, library and texts all influence performance. The Staff must receive a salary that will allow them to adequately clothe, house, and take care of themselves plus their family. They also require a workplace that is safe, as teachers' self-esteem helps them perform better. In addition, people need to feel secure, which includes having a stable job, being free from compulsion, and receiving fair treatment under regulations that are well-defined.

However, in practice, the teachers in remote areas face difficulties due to financial challenges and inadequate support from parents, which makes it difficult for students as well as teachers to achieve the expected high performance. Although all the learners and the teachers may be intrinsically motivated to do well, the theory focuses so much on extrinsic motivation. The researcher wanted to find out

why, academic performance of O'level in Bukedea district was not improving in spite the excellent circumstances that support performance as in the theory.

Low academic performance Concept.

This refers to performance that is perceived by the examinee to be below an expected standard. According to Aremu (2000), the continuous cognitive ability of the performance assessor allows for a better understanding of the interpretation of this expected or desired standard. Therefore, based on a variety of variables, the evaluator or assessor may provide various interpretations. He emphasizes further that academic failure has serious implications on society, including a shortage of labor in all sectors of the politics and economy, in addition to being disappointing for students and parents. Which suggests that academic achievement matters greatly in one's educational path and has some bearing on the expansion or development of a country.

According to the National Policy on Education (2004), secondary education is a tool for national development that promotes individual development and societal development. It is expected to foster high quality educational opportunities for all Ugandan children, regardless of any real or negligible disabilities. As a result, secondary education is meant to be a key foundation for higher knowledge for insistence in tertiary institutions, which in the long run is an investment in the future.

However, these are possible when academic performance is good at practically all levels.

In the literature, I paid particular attention to the factors that affect students' academic performance in regards to teacher/student-related factors, classroom environment and the school support system. The researcher made an effort to find any gaps that other scholars had missed or left and also added her own opinions.

Student factors and Academic Performance:

Students attitude.

To begin with, the teacher is the primary factor in determining the attitude of the students; they must be able to persuade and encourage a good attitude in the student from home to school as soon as possible. According to Rao et al. (2000), a person's attitude is an inner state which is concentrated on things which may happen in their psychological environment, such as individuals and situations. The first philosophers- Aristotle and Plato possessed entire control and care over the students. Therefore, it can be seen that a student's mood greatly influences what they comprehend in the learning tasks.

Stephen & Crawley (2004) in their study, found that children obtain social, educational, and psychological outcomes from their teachers, which are ultimately demonstrated through strong academic performance. Meaningful teachers put their

best effort into class planning and support their pupils, which improves their performance.

These positive mentors or teachers inculcate a positive mind in their students which at the end will make them have a positive attitude. Equally parent's involvement in giving educational support to their children as Hoover et al (1995) recommends, helps to improve performance. In their study they state that a number of learners don't get academic requirements reason being they go to school with attitude of their communities to school. Their study portrays that through positive attitude of learners and support from parents' academic performance can be enhanced. In away my study agrees with theirs but however I think sometimes students' attitude may be self-generated irrespective of other factors surrounding them.

Personal efficacy.

Personal efficacy is student related factor that influence how they perform academically. According to Patterson & Kelleher (2005), personal efficacy refers to a person's confidence in his or her capacity to achieve difficult goals. While to Michael & Alsup (2016), a student's perception of his or her abilities might have a beneficial or negative impact on them. Therefore, those who have strong personal efficacy prosper academically while those who have low personal efficacy receive poor grades. In terms of academic accomplishment, having a strong feeling of

personal mastery and confidence in one's capacity to have an impact on the world requires good individual experience. It involves self-beliefs and a filtrate system which are utilized to assess the past and come up with decisions on what a person wants to do academically. These studies found out that student's attitude, motivation, interest, and will are all influenced by their level of self-efficacy.

In relation to the above study, the study was done out of Uganda, therefore different from the current study in Bukedea in Uganda, comprehensively focusing on overall academic performance of entire student population.

According to Ispas and Borman (2015), cognitive ability is an all-encompassing mental capability that involves abstract cognition, reasoning, problem-solving, planning, grasping difficult concepts, and learning from experience.

Students with stronger cognitive abilities do better academically and support their high performance, while those with lesser cognitive abilities correlate with lower performance, which results in reduced personal efficacy (Ispas, Borman, 2015). According to Patterson & Kelleher (2005) and Ispas & Borman, students' motivation, attitude, courage, interest, and strength to work hard or be complacent and to be low or high achievers are determined by their personal efficacy and cognitive capacity. Students with low personal efficacy and limited cognitive capacity often have negative attitudes, little motivation, and lack of interest

(Micheal & Alsup, 2016; Khana et. al, 2018; Skirbekk et. al, 2014; Larkin & Jorgensen, 2015).

Khana et al. (2018) found that psychological factors like motivation, study habits, emotional competence, and self-efficacy are factors that affect students' low performance in their study project titled "Multidimensional Analysis of Psychological Factors Affecting Students' Academic Performance" on Amity University students in India. Salim, Ahmad, Waini, and Miswan 2017 discovered a comparable result. Khana et al (2018). definition of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation refers to a person's needs, wants, or drives. Students perform better when they are more motivated, while students do worse when they are less motivated. Students' inspiration was a good indicator of their performances. Additionally, the study showed; learners that have strong skills in studies and an enthusiasm at learning yield good results in academic thus learners with high emotional competence and personal-efficacy, are able to get excellent results academics.

Regarding individual interest, motivation, and attitude, it might be difficult to identify and meet students' learning needs (Jones & Geerling, 2014). Negative and traumatic past learning experiences have an impact on current students' self-efficacy, confidence, beliefs, and learning attitudes, which have an impact on academic performance (Jones & Geerling, 2014).

The evaluated literature provided evidence in support of the students' academic success being influenced by personal efficacy and cognitive ability. The greater a learner's success in academics and experiences in education institutions, the higher their self-belief and cognitive capacity. The performance in academic and experiences of learners suffer the more self-belief and cognitive capacity they have.

Grit.

Grit is described as the drive and commitment to achieving significant, long-term goals (Baruch-Feldman, 2017). This contributes significantly to students' academic achievement. Passion and persistence are the drivers of achievement and success (Duckworth, 2016). There have been numerous studies recently on how much grit affects pupils' academic achievement. According to Harb et al. (2006), a learner's commitment to studying and preparation for exams determines how much grit they use.

Self-identification is another aspect of grit that affects pupils' academic achievement. Self-identification as a good student in the classroom is accompanied with self-assurance in one's capacity for learning as well as phobia or anxiety experiences (Ashcraft, 2002). Staribratov & Babakova (2019) discovered that a student's sense of competence for a specific activity increase when they have self-identification or self-determination, which allows learners to increase their inner

motivation. In addition to that, the study discovered learners who show high levels of self-determination and discipline interest also show high levels of confidence (Dweck, 2008). ***Demographic Factors:***

The demographic determinants have also been demonstrated to have substantial effect on learners' performance in academics. Academic success of learners is substantially influenced by demographic characteristics. This shows that pupils who are older are more mature perform better academically. Age, gender, ethnicity, economic level, nationality and school GPA are all considered to be possible predictors of academic achievement by Alasfour (2014).

Gender has an effect on academic success, according to empirical study. In accounting and auditing courses, female students outperformed male students, according to Gammie, Paver, Gammie, & Duncan (2003a). Age, gender, and ethnicity are the demographic factors in this study that have a strong correlation with academic success.

Socioeconomic status has led to segregation in other OECD nations, according to a study done with Turkish students (Aydn, Sarer, and Uysal, 2012). Literacy is significantly influenced by factors such as gender, time allotted for studying, and one's socioeconomic situation (Zberk et al (2017). According to Edington et al. (1987), university performance for rural students is comparable to that of urban

students. Students require education that will enable them to function well at the university level, and they need to recognize this and make every effort to do so.

According to Gamble, Kim (2012) study, Under-represented minority kids show high levels of self-conceptualization despite probable academic obstacles, The study, also examines the success of a middle school male academy in terms of students' academic achievement and attitudes toward learning. They include subpar academic results and a lack of resources for minority boys. This suggests that learners do not have the privilege of participating in school activities, which affected their academic achievement. Although they have the capacity, students lack the resources and are limited by their budgets.

Teacher-Factors.

According to Gang et al. (1998), pupils' accomplishments are determined by the teachers' quality of performance. The learners' performance in academics is influenced by a variety of variables, including interest, passion, as well as student-teacher connection as well as levels of training and education. Those aforementioned suggests that a number of elements may work in concert to improve performance in academics. Hellen (1998) noted; the school systems with definite educational standards plus rewards towards success have

objectives. The study intended to know if a similar circumstance existed at Bukedea District.

The competence of a teacher has significant impact on the effectiveness and quality of the education systems. Pisa (2002) emphasized that skilled teachers are one of the most essential assets a school can have, since teachers interact with students directly during the learning and teaching process, thus having an effect on performance, because they are the center of the school system. The teachers might, nevertheless, be dealing with serious challenges that are discouraging. Despite the fact that teachers may be highly trained, kids who lack passion to study will struggle to do well. According to Piaget (1971), factors that affect performance include learners' aptitude and mindset towards academic achievement, motivation of teachers, the presence of trained teachers, plus institutional resources. This indicates that, in accordance with Piaget, performance in academics is enhanced by a several factors combined.

The way a student is taught a subject, according to Maslow (1954), affects how well they will learn it. The teacher's contribution to this study relates to the teacher's professionalism, subject-matter delivery abilities, and expertise. To him, only highly motivated teachers can demonstrate these qualities in regards to base pay and non-financial perks. Nevertheless, pupils who might be taught by experience and qualified teachers typically do well as compared to ones handled by in-

experienced ones; as a result, improved performance is made possible mostly by experience and training of the teacher.

Therefore, it calls for employing the best personnel with the right skills and abilities to have or get good academic performance. The researcher agrees with Maslow's view that teachers should be appreciated and motivated, besides being self-driven so as to have good performance. According to Chaube & Chaube (1955), the teachers' status and the profession is declining. To him, teaching is now only for those that are unsuccessful because it is no longer desirable. Chaube claims that teachers have an inferior complex as a result of their poor salary, minimal career advancement, and insufficient benefits, which Craig and Craft obfuscate (1998). Even though teacher motivation might be weak, more individuals choose to become teachers, however it could be a last choice. To accomplish this admirable goal, teachers have to be inspired, given the tools they need through training, and given the motivation to learn new things. The researcher doesn't agree with this view since it is may not be correct that teachers have inferiority complex, rather it may be the belief of society and attitude teachers have low payments.

The fact is that teachers are the most important personnel in the educational system cannot be overstated. This is true since teachers understand the objectives of learning and make sure kids are being taught in line with these objectives. As good input leads to excellent outcome, the effectiveness and standard of any education

systems relies on the caliber of the teachers who contribute to it (Obadara, 2006). There are many different aspects to the idea of instructors' behavioral characteristics, teachers' effectiveness, and learners' academic performance. These entail the interaction of different components of the labor. There are different productivity ratios, each of which is influenced by a variety of pertinent factors, even though the output may be tied to various inputs and resources.

Numerous studies confirm that some teachers are more effective in helping their students advance academically than others. Nonetheless, studies have not been particularly effective in pinpointing the precise teacher characteristics and teaching methods that likely enhance learners' learning. Ironically, this is precisely the knowledge that decision-makers in the field of education policy require. This helps justify the urge to pave the way to expand the frontier of knowledge in so as improve the underwhelming, teachers' behaviors, productivity, and learners' learning achievements.

School Factors/ Support system and Academic Performance.

1.1 School Environment;

According to; Ssekamwa (2000), Musaazi (1982) some facilities, such as textbooks, furniture, classrooms, laboratory, well equipped library and adequate teaching staff are necessary in schools and are supplementary to instruction. Their study

came to the conclusion that one attribute of a successful educational institute is the availability of suitable facilities for teaching and learning. But what they neglected to mention, is the way in which the aforementioned resources might be used effectively to improve academic performance. According to Gibbon (1990) and Anderson (1991), the make-up of the school catchment region varies; parental support and attitude, and socioeconomic variable have an impact on children's academic success.

The family serves as a hub for socialization, teaching children the values, knowledge, and aptitude that society expects its members to possess. They contend that multiple interplays between the general makeup of children and their upbringing result in this. That suggests that both parents and the society at large contribute significant roles in the educational path/ success of the kids. This is accomplished by prompt payment of school fees, provision of meals, discussion of, and monitoring the kid's academic progress. Unfortunately, only wealthy parents place a high value on their children's education. The crucial fact is that it is difficult to close the socioeconomic divide that exists between families and communities.

World Bank report According to a 1995 publication, a learner's ability and willingness to study are influenced by the standard of the educational environments and homes, their nutritional and physical health, and their prior educational

backgrounds, particularly the level of the parents' involvement. According to Namaganza (2010), the environment for learning is made of many different elements, including classmates, family, teachers, rural setting or town setting, extra. Proscovia (2010), says that how well a student learns a subject relies on how well the teacher explains. It is also predicted that factors associated to learners, such as school environment, home and teachers, have an impact on how the student engages in the learning experiences that are provided to them and the setting in which the learning occurs.

The learners are from a wide range of environments; therefore, the opinions above don't adequately address the way in which the gap could be bridged. Orwinya (2000) also agrees that encouraging youngsters to finish their assignments while offering them constant support and useful advice encourages learning. Given all resources in place, the learning atmosphere in the classroom may be favorable, however other variables must also be at play.

1.2 School Support System;

The support networks provided by schools, parents, and peers also has substantial effect on performance of learners in academic. The student support system is defined by Cooper (n.d.) and tries to comprehend in what ways schools can possibly

give help outside and within the classroom to increase performance of all learners. This could be conducted by peers, teachers, and parents.

According to Staribratov & Babakova (2019), poor school support systems have a negative effect on learners' grades, whereas positive support systems foster excellent collaboration between learners and any supports in education system. One aspect that contributes to students' performance is schools that have created effective school support systems to the learners in tutorial and mentorship programs. The absence of peer, parental, and teacher support networks is one of the most significant factors that affects learners' performance negatively. Positive friends inspire students to do well, but negative friends push peers to engage in undesirable behaviors like skipping class and performing poorly. Harb et al. (2006)

Lisciandro, Jones, and Geerling (2014) found that a student's learning experiences, attitudes, and goals for their studies are all highly impacted by the quality of their teachers. Students' academic success is aided by teacher support and mentoring. Additionally, it fosters a culture of trust and close cooperation between students and teachers. Salam Sali et al (2017). This study reveals that curricula, teachers' instructing methods, and attitudes all have a role in student success. According to a study done on Bulgarian students, having supportive parents helps their children feel more confident and less anxious, which in turn improved their academic performance (Staribratov & Babakova, 2019). If the parent encourages his or her

kids to thrive academically, s/he act as agents for outside motivation for the school's support system. (Ma, 1997).

According to Sentamu (2003), schools determine learning process as in organization, and content as well as the teaching process and at the end the evaluation of it all. In addition, he agrees with the concept of schools strongly impacting on the performance of learners in academics and in their educational achievement. However, what this researcher did not observe is the way in which schools attain a degree that they offer the very best for learners. Pupil from the cream schools are supposed to do well since they study in these educational institutions. The major reason why it is so, is those schools are having adequate facilities and enough resources. In my research I want to look at support systems like guidance and counseling, Extra support to the girl child among others that may affect or influence their performance in academics.

In the reviewed literature, academic greatness requires not just the support of teachers and parents, but also the support of peers. The level of aid received has a direct correlation with students' academic success. Parents and instructors who encourage their children greatly influence their students' academic achievement.

1.3 Classroom-Atmosphere.

So as to determine how the availableness of teachers affects learners' performance in academics among the girl Children, evaluate the impact of school environmental factors on student performance in girl Children, and to assess the impact of adequate teaching equipment, Clare (2018) examined the impact of the environment at school on learners' performance in academics among the girl Children in high school learners of Mubende District in Uganda. They used quantitative methods, with the Questionnaire serving as the primary tool for data collection. Descriptive statistics were then used to examine the data.

According to the results of their study, pupils do better academically when physical amenities are adequate. They came to the conclusion that the presence of human resources and scholastic materials significantly influenced students' academic performance. They advised school administrators to properly and appropriately plan for human resources and scholastic materials in schools and emphasize the importance of respecting timetables. Additionally, they suggest that rewards should be more overt and well-publicized in order for students to understand them more fully, and that school schedules should include time for students to receive counseling and guidance in order to prevent offenses from occurring rather than only punishing those who commit them.

The teacher is the primary influence on pupils' attitudes because it is up to them to persuade and encourage learners to adopt a good outlook from home to school at

an early enough stage. People, events and objects that potentially are in one's psychic environment are the focus of their attitude, according to Rao et al. (2000). Adewale, (2021) investigated the impact of classroom environments on performance of architecture learners at Covenant University, Nigeria. Their study used of qualitative and quantitative research methods and a structured questionnaire was used for collecting data. Data was analyzed using SPSS while for information on the profile of respondents' profiles descriptive statistics was used. The findings of their study showed that the environment of the classroom impacts on learners' performance in academics in regards to their comfort and satisfaction in studying, and that comfort got from facilities and physical components of the classroom influences their performance. This study will borrow from the above studies, the concept of classroom learning environment but different in the research design and type of institution as this proposed study will be conducted at secondary school level and will use qualitative approaches.

Furthermore, in the above studies, the concept of classroom environment focused on attributes of physical environment, this study will look at more comprehensively the contextual classroom environment of socio-emotional, learner centered or inclusiveness, and see student perception on how these factors contribute to academic performance.

From Literature reviewed, there're numerous literatures on factors influencing academic performance generally. Nevertheless, it is mostly on developed countries thus it gives limited information on academic performance in regards to developing countries especially in Uganda's context. The literature further reveals that Several research studies on factors influencing low academic performance have been conducted without due diligence of the learners' perceptions and experience in this regard thought they are the ones directly affect. Yet the continued low academic performance among secondary school students needs to be explained and to devise means to avert the vice.

Literature gap

The majority of studies reviewed in academic performance of students used quantitative research methods. However, this study differed as it employed the qualitative research method to get deeper understanding of the phenomena. Some developed countries like the USA and Australia have previous studies under the qualitative method on factors influencing academic performance, However, there are not so many research conducted in the area of academic performance, using qualitative research method, especially finding out students' perspectives and DOS' views on factors influencing academic performances in the context of Uganda.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction.

This chapter presents the research process and the data collection procedures that were used, (focus group interviews, and in-depth interview.) This research employed the qualitative research approach, in order to explore the perspectives of learners and DOS on factors influencing academic performance in mixed secondary schools. In this research, I gathered the experience of learners through focus group discussion, and the perspectives of the administrator in charge academics through in-depth interviews.

3.2 Research Design.

So as to get a deeper understanding about the perspectives of learners on factors influencing academic achievements and the view of the DOS on the same, qualitative research method was used. Qualitative study gives abundant information, especially with regards to experiences, perspectives and beliefs.

Qualitative research is a method of on-the-ground investigation that aims to comprehend social phenomena in-depth within the context of individuals (University of Utah, n.d.). This approach centers on "why" rather than "what," so as to comprehend societal phenomena via the daily experience of people

(Creswell, 2014). Instead of employing logical and statistical methods, I used narrative technique to comprehend the social phenomenon by recording participants voices in focus groups discussion and writing down their opinions. To comprehend the significance of the participants' life, the viewpoints of the participants have been explained through narrations. (2000) (Weis, L., & Fine, M.).

Data for qualitative research is collected using methods like interviewing of individuals or focus group discussion and other emergent techniques like video clips, picture elicitation, drawings, observation, and dance. (Creswell, 2014). Participants talked about their life experiences, and based on their answers, themes were developed. In order to bring out a thorough insight of the experiences and realities of both the groups and people, the data gathered was used to convey their stories. The foundation of qualitative research is the conviction that somehow there exist unspoken impressions of people's experiences (Creswell, 2014). The study's use of several people and collection of their perspectives helped to create a comprehensive and vivid picture of these participants.

3.3 Qualitative Research Approaches.

The Purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of learners and the DOS on factors that influencing academic performance of students in mixed secondary schools of Bukedea. In order to achieve the purpose, the study employed a narrative

design to convey the narratives of the students' experiences and the views of the DOS for the aspects that usually impacted the academic achievement of the students. According to Creswell 2014, Narrative study refers to “spoken or written text offering an account of an event/action or set of events/actions, chronologically connected” I was especially interested in learning more about how students' experiences and circumstances related to education affect students' academic performance, how psychological and cognitive factors, grit elements, demographic factors, support factors, classroom environment, and teacher factors influence academic achievements. Different types of data were obtained, including narrative stories. Focus group discussions were conducted in this study to gather data on circumstances and events which the learners encounter that have an impact on their academic performance. Thematic analysis was subsequently used to analyze this narrative research. The learners' opinions on the events and circumstances that influenced their academic achievement was analyzed using a thematic approach, as well as the opinions of the directors of studies. The participants' perspectives were listened to and expressed chronologically. I developed the themes based on what participants said, and their perspectives were communicated through analogies, contrasts, and consistency.

3.5 Data Collection Methods.

So as to answer the research questions, 48 learners were be picked plus 03 directors of studies, making a total of 51 respondents. The 48 learners were from the third form. These students were semi- candidates getting ready to join the candidate class in which they would take their final national examinations (UCE) that determines their future path. These learners too had gone through the selection of additional subjects, knowing the repercussion it would have on their performance. Out of a population of 48 students, a half were boys and the other half girls. Focus group interviews was used for students' experience while in-depth interviews for administrator views. Each session took roughly 45minutes to 1 hour. For FGD, it had 8 members per group.

3.6 Focus Group Discussion.

Focus group discussion of 48 learners purposefully chosen from school and an in-depth interview of DOS was conducted to find out the perspectives of participants on the factors are affecting academic performance of learners. For the focus group interview, the students who were low performance were picked on with guidance from the class teachers of the director of studies.

Focus group interviews were used to get the perspectives of learners, and because of limited time. Learners discussed and shared their experiences in FGD for two reasons. First and foremost, it enabled the researcher to have a dialogue with

learners of different gender and from a broader range of demographic backgrounds. Secondly, I think that FGD gave learners a lot of confidence and enabled them to share their stories and experiences freely. In addition to that, I think the FGD was beneficial to a big number of participants (students) that even the shy or introverts were encouraged to share their perceptions on being prompted.

It was vital for the chosen learners to have their experiences, opinions and believes about academics shared. And the directors of studies to share their opinions and views in academics. Every participant view and input were considered important, mostly those with negative/ bad experiences in academic performance. Once the in-depth interviews were done and after the focus group discussions, the audio were transcribed and then thematical analyzed.

3.7 Recruitment Method.

Participants were recruited from three mixed secondary school. Two schools from Bukedea County because it has a total of nine (9) schools and one school form Kachumbala County which has a total of five (5) schools. I considered one school from the village and two schools from town. Letters were be sent to the school authority to seek for permission to allow the research to be conducted and to guide in the selection of learners.

Focus group interview schedule.

I had Focus group discussion and in-depth interviews conducted in late-September to mid-October 2022. All participants were told about the purpose of the study and the topic to be covered before the focus group discussion started. We obtained formal permission from each participant's parents for students and informed them that the discussion would both be recorded-audio and written down. Students were encouraged to express their thoughts openly and requested to respect one another's viewpoints.

In depth interviews mode of data collection was used for collecting information from the administrator in charge academics, it was a one-on-one session as this allowed the researcher to have a certain level of control that allowed flexibility of the order of question and did not restrict the interview to the researchers' prejudged understanding on the issue. (Thus, allowed vital but unpredicted issues to be talked about). Roughly 45 minutes was the time used for each of these interviews.

3.8 Method of Analysis.

The lead researcher transcribed audio files and organized them into themes. The analysis method was mainly based on the guidance given by Braun and Clarke (2006). I selected thematic analysis because it is a versatile and in-depth analytical method. The analysis was primarily realistic and semantically in character, with the

goal of capturing the perceived reality of experiences that the subject had openly indicated. The method was selected to discover participants' conscious beliefs and in what way those beliefs affected their behaviors and lives.

The themes were chosen and organized in accordance with a theoretical strategy, which means the coding was tackled with a particular set of queries in mind. By carefully examining each tape, the researcher was able to isolate the sub-themes. The transcript and coded items were examined to verify and enhance the thematic map validity once a preliminary theme map had been created.

3.9 Study Area.

This study was carried out in Bukedea district and it covered both government grant aided and private mixed secondary schools in urban and rural localities. This was because the issue of academic performance cut across in these secondary schools and there was need for determinants of academic performance among students.

Bukedea district is located in the Eastern region of Uganda, Teso sub-region within latitude 1015 N and 2.00N longitude 33045E. Neighboring Bukedea is Sironko district in the east, Kumi district in the north, Pallisa in the west then Mbale in the south (Bukedea district Land board, 2012).

The Map of Bukedea District.



Bukedea district has two counties of Bukedea and Kachumbala. Kachumbala County has four sub counties namely; Kachumbala, Aligoi, Akwarkwar and Kongunga subcounty, 2 government and 3 private secondary schools. Bukedea

County has six sub counties namely; Bukedea, Kolir, Malera, Kangole, Kamon, and Kabarwa; 5 government and 4 private secondary schools.

Chapter 4. Findings

Narratives of students' perceptions and experiences and the Views of Directors.

This Chapter presents the analysis of the experiences and perceptions of the learners and the views of the DOS on factors influencing the academic performance of students in mixed secondary schools of Bukedea district. Though the perceptions were varying, there were similarities in what the students had gone through in the classrooms, at schools, and in the factor which the participants perceived to influence performance academically. The data from the group focus discussion and in- depth interview was categorized in to; External factors, Internal factors and psychological factors created from the commonalities in the participants' responses. Then sub themes were based on the main concerns and perception in the responses for example student related, teacher related, Support system and others.

4.1 Learners perceptions and Experiences:

Learner-Related Factors.

Most learners generally believed they contributed to how they performance academically because their interest, self-efficacy, passion, and perseverance affect them negatively or positively.

Personal Efficacy:

In this context, it refers to students believing in their abilities or capabilities. When asked about whether they find difficulties in any subjects. Most of them expressed having serious hardships at sciences. For example, one of the learners said:

'Physics is difficult to me; I hardly understand anything in it. it is abstract. Though the teacher keeps on telling us that it is easy. I think he just wants to motive us.' But the reality is far from that. It is all complicated.'

While another student from one of the schools said:

"For English language, I don't like the fact that we are expected to use it here at school. I am unable to express myself well in English. They say you have to practice it. The teacher to, is strict as if she looks for mistakes while marking. I do not think I can ever be good at such. They talk of grammar, is it spellings too many rules"

From these students' expressions, it gives a picture of them not believing in their abilities in regards to the subjects that they talked of. They feel these subjects are hard for them and they are not capable of performing well in them thus revealing that to some extent they don't believe in their abilities especially in the mentioned subjects.

When Students were asked what would make a student not to get good grades in exams, they were able to list many factors like laziness, not focusing, not practicing, having no interest, and low ability to comprehend among others. Therefore,

personal efficacy like interest, attitude and motivation affects the students' academic performance positively or negatively.

Another learner said that:

“Sciences are not meant for me. I do not understand them. I have never been good at them since, I think I can't change.” This indicates that the student does not believe in herself.

In summary, self-efficacy like, interest, attitude and will, according to the experiences shared affect performance of learners positively or negatively. This is in line with the literature that was reviewed; Michael & Alsup (2016), according to the literature says; a student's perception of his or her abilities might have a beneficial or negative impact on them. Therefore, those who have strong personal efficacy prosper academically while those who have low personal efficacy receive poor grades.

Grit:

The other learner-related factor that was shared by the learners is grit, and this affect their academic performance. Grit refers to “an individual's perseverance of effort combined with the passion for a particular long-term and meaningful goals”. It is the ability to persist in something you feel passionate about and persevere when you face obstacle. Students were asked when the exams seem hard and they fail what do they do or where do they turn to? Majority of the students responded

positively that they consulted their teachers or revise harder for the forth coming exams.

“I always don’t give up when I fail. I try hard and revise more.”

Many learners had almost the same responses -after getting their exam results, though they have failed, they do not give up, they keep trying. These responses show that they have the perseverance to continue with studies despite not performing well. However, others expressed that in most cases, there is little support from peers and teachers. As expressed by a student from one of the schools.

“If I ask for support from our teacher, he will say; first do the work yourself before coming to me. Sometimes he says he is busy.”

Learners were asked, how passionate they are about their life goals and to what extent they would persevere for their goals, the majority responded that they have to work harder for everything they want in life. They expressed that they were willing to go an extra mile to better themselves and improve in their studies. However, others were just responding that they could persevere but were unable to explain, how they could do it.

In summary, based on the perceptions and experiences shared by the students, their grit somewhat affects performance in academic. In their views they can persevere. However, this does no grantee good academic performance. The desire and

aspiration in regards to achieving their dreams is what makes them to continuously study, hence there is need for a support system.

Demographic factors

Students' perception on whether girls and boys were equally good at academics did not vary much. A good number of them expressed that they had the same abilities and could compete equally. They expressed that both girls and boys were good in academics. The attitude and interest one has towards studies will determines how they perform. As expressed by one of the students from one of the schools.

“Boys and girls can all be good at academics since it is not about the gender but one's mind in studies and your knowledge.”

However, there were a hand full who thought otherwise, they expressed that there were differences in the girls' and boys' academic abilities. I quote one of the students;

“I don't agree that we are the same, naturally boys are good at sciences and math and for us the girls we beat them in English. So, I think we are not equal in academics.”

Family economic background.

The majority of the students believed that one's family played a big role in his or her academic life as they had to provide scholastic materials and pay other school dues. From their perceptions they expressed that this was one of the key factors that would enhance a student academic success.

“When your family is well off, they buy you everything you need at school, they pay your fees in time. Unlike some of us. My parents are not employed, they barely have what to give me. So, I have to struggle to get fees. At times I have to do some other peoples' garden work for a pay. I don't have privileges like other children. Other days you are off from school to look for money so you miss and your classmate's study.”

Thus, the family economic status of a student significantly influences his/her performance negatively or positively.

Support system and School Factors.

These are support- systems network offered by the teachers, school staffs, and peers such as tutorial programs, mentorship services, career guidance, counselling and Parental care and other learning activities that affect the learners academically. As learners shared their perspectives and experience through focus group interview,

the Information on support systems were collected which affected learners negatively to getting poor academic grades.

School support System

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This sub-theme was derived from answers got from questions about guidance counselling related issues. The girls in one of the schools felt that the menstrual management support was not enough as some of them expresses that they preferred not to seek for any help as it was not really given. For instance, one said:

‘I no longer go to ask for help when I am in my periods because all you will be told is to go home and change since sanitary towel are out of stock.’ ‘All the time out of stock. One wonders when they are really there.’

Thus, from this learners’ experience, every time she is in her monthly menstrual period; she is indirectly affected in her class attendance and school activities as in case of any emergence related to it, she will have to go home to wash up and change hence missing class.

On the other hand, several learners agreed that they had had career guidance in their schools. Though, there were a few who did not know what it meant and didn’t agree to have had any session of the kind. Even still, among those who accepted to know it, there were those who confused it for the general counselling form their explanation.

“Yes, we always have career guidance sessions every term, the boys are talked to as a group and the girls are equally gathered and talked to separately.” Agreed one of the students.

Another student also said:

“The senior women teacher is usually calling students and talking to them.”

So, from the learners' expressions they have been receiving guidance and counselling from their schools but it seems they do receive more of general counselling and guidance. Guidance is a very wide issue/ topic that has to be narrowed to one's intention, thus for schools there is need to usually have the students guided especially in accordance to career guidance as it is directly linked to performance hence it can help to improve on performance. Thus, the issue of school support is in line with Staribratov & Babakova (2019), who say that poor school support systems have a negative effect on learners' grades, whereas positive support systems foster excellent collaboration between learners and any supports in education system. One aspect that contributes to students' performance is schools that have created effective school support systems to the learners in tutorial and mentorship programs.

When students were asked if they had ever been discouraged from studying, some of students agreed that they had been and surprisingly among the people that discouraged them had been their teachers that are supposed to be their mentors.

“Some teachers are so rude; they just utter anything to you in class before your classmates, disgracing you, and sincerely this puts me off. When he is in class, you are afraid of what he will say to you”

From the shared expression of this student, the way the teachers or people around interact with them will either motivate or discourage them. What is said or told to them builds or destroys them. If learners are told encouraging words, they will be motivated to study and if they are told discouraging words, they end up discouraged. As for first aid services in the school, there were equally varying responses. Others accepted that they got first aid at their schools from the school nurse at the sick bay while a few were not content with the first aid services provided.

Teaching-Learning Materials

The materials used in the teaching -learning process significantly impacts on performance positively or negatively. One way of schools supporting their students is ensuring that they provide adequate learning materials such as text books and any other material that can enhance learning. For instance; some learners reported not having enough apparatus for practical; a student from one of the schools explained: *“When we go to the laboratory, we are made to share apparatus in small groups. All of you struggle for the same apparatus given. And the teacher will be talking, talking in the end you have not learnt anything.”*

Partly this explains why when asked which subject was hard for them, they mostly mentioned science subjects. A number of students too, expressed similar encounters where some teachers did not solve their challenges/concerns.

Parents Role in terms of Motivation.

Students believed that their parents too, had a significant impact on their academic performance positively or negatively. When your parents encourage you, it motivates you to work hard and vice versa. A Students shared view:

“My parents are peasants but they have always stressed the need for me to work extra hard at my studies in order to better our home in the future. This makes me to think a lot about improving my grades and I know I will, since they are there for me”

On the contrary when the parents don't support their children, they become discouraged. For example, when asked whether they have ever been discouraged, most of them agreed and among the people still that discouraged them were their parents.

“My father has threatened to stop paying my school fees if I do not work hard to improve my grades. He says I am wasting his money. This has amounted pressure on me. And it is really stressful.”

Parents are supposed to encourage their children to do better rather than threatening them. These learners need emotional, psychological and physical support from their parents/guardians. The parental support or care students get towards their academics significantly influences their academic performance negatively or positively.

Domestic chores.

My first question to the students after their introducing themselves was, what they did during the weekends, with the intention of finding out how they utilized their out of class time. Most of them reported being engaged in domestic chores like cooking, washing, garden work among others for those in day section, while those in boarding equally got involved in general cleanliness of their dormitories and sports activities rather than they did in self-revision though a few talked of having remedial lessons sometimes.

Therefore, with these responses from the learners it partly explains why late coming and absenteeism were mentioned as some of the factors influencing low performance in academics. While the parents' intention of giving their children domestic work may not be to stop them from revising, it hinders them to actively do personal revision as they are occupied. Thus, revealing that the home

environment or support got at home as well as school environment will positively or negatively impact on the student educational performance.

Peer influence.

When asked what factors were affecting their performance, influence from peers was among the mentioned factors by most students. Their shared perception revealed the influence that their peers have on them. The learners affirmed that the type of friends one has influence how they perform. If one has friends who are serious in academics, they will also be influenced to be serious and vice versa.

“I used to perform terribly in form two, because all we could do with my friend was talking and playing in class, but when I came to form three, we were put in different streams and somehow, we became distant. Interestingly my performance also changed. I am not good but at least from last term results there is an improvement as compared to before.”

Teacher -Related

Teaching and learning strategies.

From the perspectives of students, the way the teacher conducts the lesson matters a lot in influencing how the students will perform. Learner centered lessons make the students to be involved and thus understand what is taught. Several learners

lamented on the way their teachers taught them and express dissatisfaction in some of the classes.

“The way some teachers teach is really hard to understand. A teacher can send notes, you write them down and later when he comes to class just passes through the notes briefly and moves to the next topic. Personally, I am lazy reading such. I do not read a lot, so I would prefer to be explained to than telling me to copy notes that are being dictated by a fellow learner. I don’t even trust the ones reading out the notes, now how will I read and understand!”

Therefore, from the responses you really notice that the Pedagogical styles and teaching strategies employed really influences academic performance, as further expressed by other learners. Some learners expressed that some of their teachers were so fast while teaching. As explained by one student;

“Our math teacher calculates very fast; you cannot pick what he is teaching and before you know it, he has moved to the next number or topic’

In the students view, the teacher doesn’t measure if the lesson objective is met.

On the contrary some of the learners said that their teachers teach well and they enjoy the lessons. For example, one said:

“A good number of the teachers work hard. They involve us in the lessons and make us feel part of it. However, there are a handful that seem not devoted to their lessons because sometimes they miss or skip classes.”

Therefore, measures have to be sought to solve situations of teachers skipping classes.

Teachers' Attitude.

Majority of the learners think the teachers have a significant impact on their academic performance positively or negatively. The attitude of the teacher will determine the relationship he has with his or her learners, for instance if the teacher is compassionate, he is likely to attentively listen to his students' concerns which will encourage them while on the other hand if the teacher is rude the learners will not approach him because of fear, thus will affect their performance in academics. E.g., one of the learners said:

"The teacher of Chemistry has caused me to give up on the subject, my grades have been low since he started teaching us in form one third term, he says Chemistry is not for everyone." One of the students shared this experience. Thus, the attitude of the teacher seriously affects the learners as in this student's case, the learner is negatively affected. However, there were respondents who reported otherwise:

"Since the start of this year, I have really been encouraged by the biology teacher's way of teaching, though it is a hard subject but the teacher tries to explain slowly to us."

Therefore, the way the teacher teaches and his attitude towards the learners will significantly affect them positively or negatively.

Classroom atmosphere:

When asked if they were treated equally while in class, their responses varied. Some responded yes, they did while others felt they didn't.

“Some teachers care more about fast learners, for instance when he explains a concept and asks if the students have understood so long as a few choruses “yes” he will just move on to the next step irrespective of others saying no. To me I feel that is unfair because he should at least be considerate and repeat the explanation for all of us to understand”

This student's expression brings out the reality that learners are different in their learning ability. While others may be able to grasp what is taught faster, there are those that may take long. Then teachers should try to make the learners feel included, cared for and valued during the lesson by trying to attend to all their needs.

Compulsory subjects.

When asked how they select their optional subjects, most learners said they did choose depending how good they were performing in a given subject and also depending on what they intend to do in the future. However, some expressed facing

hardship in the compulsory subjects that they would have wished not to offer but had no choice.

‘We select additional subjects basing on how you perform. You pick your best to add on the compulsory ones’

The issue of compulsory subjects still came up when learners were listing factors that influenced low performance.

“Some subjects are compulsory, whether you are good at them or not you have to study them. You are forced to do things you do not understand.”

From the students’ perception, the compulsory subjects affect their performance negatively as they have to do these subjects irrespective against their will and capability.

Perceptions of the Directors of Studies;

With the Directors of Studies, an in-depth interview was conducted in which they shared their perspectives on factors influencing academic performance of learners among the shared views were the following:

Teacher-factors

Teaching and Learning Methods.

To director of studies, teaching and learning strategies employed, was one of the factors that they mentioned. They emphasized that the way a teacher handles his or her learners' matters a lot and significantly impacts on the performance of learners in academics. The methods they use in class or during the lesson will determine how much the students will grasp. As one of them explained;

“The teacher has to make the students part of the teaching-learning process, not spoon feeding the students all the time. For example, when they are given a task to search for a solution on their own and later have it explained to their friends, trust me they will not forget such a thing easily, that is what we try to emphasis as the office in charge academics but just know they are the implementers so whatever happens in class, its mostly the teacher in control”.

From their shared views, even if their office is directly in-charge of academics, but the teacher equally plays an important role in influence the performance of students academically as they are the ones who teach and thus the way in which they teach is key.

Teacher's attitude/personality.

According to the directors of studies that were interviewed, they believe that the personality of the teacher is likely to influence his or her student's performance. For instance, a teacher who is friendly will have many students freely consulting than the one who is rude.

"The way the teacher conducts himself before the learners will determine his relationship with them and how much they can share or interact with him." Said one of the directors.

From their expressions the teacher's personality is very vital in fostering his relation with the learners. Implying that if the teacher handles his students in a friendly way, it will encourage them to get closer and be free to consult. Thus, it is important that one of the key life skills that training institutes for teachers should look at is cultivating a positive attitude among the teacher trainee and mold them in to loving and positive persons.

Student-factors.

Discipline of the Students.

The discipline of learners was a key factor expressed by all the three respondents in the DOS category. They argued that discipline goes hand in and with academic performance. As expressed by one of the directors:

“Discipline is vital for performance. If a child is disciplined, she will not dodge lessons, will do all assignments while the indisciplined ones do the opposite.”

Therefore, instilling discipline in learners is a good thing. They have to continuously be guided and supported so as to remain on the right track.

Self-motivation.

The directors perceived that self-motivation of learner's influences how they perform. If a child is motivated, determined and has interest they are likely to perform highly and vice versa. They believed that students too should be self or personally motivated on top of the external motivation that they need. They should have their personal goals and targets but all these is possible when they are mentored.

“Besides the teacher's encouragement and parental motivation these learners too need to be self- driven and have an inner will to study and to get good grades. They

can always be talked to and encouraged to build that zeal in themselves but of course it is a continuous process.” Explained one of the directors of study.

Therefore, from this perception, it is important that learners have self-motivation to hold them in achieving their academic goal.

Class activity involvement.

Learners need to get involved so much in the class activities and school programs or activities as well. Students who participate in class activists like debate, drama, presentations gain more confidence in themselves thus in the long run perform well academically because these activities boost the students’ self-esteem.

“There are things that are ignored sometimes yet they are very good for students. Some class activities are really important in enhancing the performance of the students. Kids who get involved in extra curriculum activities in class like drama boast their self-esteem and confidence.”

Hence learners’ academic performance can be enhanced by the students’ involvement in the class activities.

Absenteeism.

Students' presence for school program and class is vital. Usually, when a student absent himself for long they miss out a lot that they hardly catch up which may affect their performance.

"Some concept taught are easier to understand when one is present than when one is absent or misses. Missing lessons or absenting yourself irrespective of the reason makes one to miss out a lot." One of the directors shared.

Thus, students' attendance of school and class significantly affects academic performance.

Peer influence.

Learners perform in class depending on the type of friend that they have. Their peers have much influence on their studies because they are always together and do things together as per the expressions of the category of directors of studies.

"Usually, the way a student performs is in most cases influenced by the type of friends she has. Good and serious students will have friends that are equally serious like them while playful ones will also have the same. So, you find that students always want to do what their friends do in order to fit in their circle."

Thus, according to the directors'; peer influence/pressure affects learners' performance as they try to keep up to the standards of their friends. Students have to continuously be talked to and also when it is noticed that one is a bad influence

to the other, they can be separated e.g. made to sit on different desks in order to have less or limited contact with each other.

School support system.

All the participants in the Category of DOS agreed that the support students get from the school, friends, peers and family help them academically. They expressed that the availability of school support system in terms of career guidance and any other form of possible needs that the school is able to meet would help the learners. Good physical infrastructures such as the class rooms, reading rooms or library, laboratory and even co-curriculum space like the playing ground enables the learners to relax and refresh their minds. They perceived this to be good for the students.

“A school with good physical infrastructures such as the class room, laboratory plus having co-curriculum space like the playing ground enables the learners to relax, refresh their minds and enjoy their studies.”

Besides the physically infrastructures in the schools, they added that learners need psychological and emotional support while at school.

“Students go through a lot therefore they need to be talked to, guided and listened to so that they feel less burden and be able to concentrate in studies.” Shared one of the directors.

Thus, from the views of the DOS a good school support system is important so as counselling. Guidance and mentorship of learners is done to enhance their concentration in studies.

When asked whether their schools spend any time or money on Continuous professional development of the teachers, they were varying responses. Although they all agree to it but their expressions revealed that it was not taken seriously and thus the CPD's were not regularly conducted.

“Yes, sometimes we have CPD's conducted for the staffs but that can be like once in a term”.

From their views they acknowledged CPD's being good for the Teachers to keep up to the date but lamented of schools not having enough fund to run these activities.

“CPD's require money, you have to hire experts or technical personnel to train the teachers which money may sometimes not be there in the school as there are many other things to do which all require money.”

Thus, from the perceptions of these administrators while they know the continuous Professional development for teachers is good but they seem not to really prioritize it so much to always fit in whatever funds that is available.

When asked if there were any government laws that they perceived as hampering the academic performance of learners there expressed that they were no direct government laws that hinder performance. However, with some kind of reservation two of them talked of the government advocating for automatic promotion of learners to another class which may make the students to relax instead of working harder. Though they added that it was not a law yet. But something that was encouraged some times.

The DOS' perceived that the location of the school may not so much affect the students' performance especially if the school has all the facilities. Nevertheless, one of them said that there were many things to look at when you consider location, and therefore what mattered was a quiet and conducive environment.

“When you talk of location it is not just being in town or village, they are many more things to it. For instance, the surrounding- is it a noisy neighborhood or a quiet one”

Thus, from the views, the DOS believe that what matters with the location of the schools is the quiet atmosphere and surrounding.

Family Economic Background.

According to the respondent from the DOS' category, the student's family background was equally cited as a factor influencing performance of the learners. They argued that the economic state of the parent will determine how much he provides for his child. For instance, a child may delay to report to school because of fees issues or will be a perpetual fees defaulter if the parents' economic state is not good.

“If the parent is poor a child may delay to report to school because of fees issues or will be a perpetual fees defaulter and so he will be sent for fees which will affect him.”

However, among the strategies employed by one of the schools to improve on the performance as mentioned by one of the DOS is that his school gave out Needy-bursaries to students who were extremely in need of help though he was quick to add that it came with conditions of performance.

“If a child is needy, he may be lucky to get a needy bursary however that child has to perform well in order to maintain it.”

The strategy used by this school is equally a good opportunity of encouraging students to work extra hard to perform well in studies as they target the bursaries.

Parental involvement.

The parent's involvement in their children's studies can enhance performance. The directors of studies argued that when the parents of a child are so much concerned

about their child's academics, the child is easily motivated to work hard. I quote one of the directors:

"Parents have a role to play in their children's academic lives. They should always support their children not only by paying fees and buying requirements. They have to check their kids' books, visit them at school, and talk to their teachers. In general, I would say they should closely monitor their children's studies."

As expressed by the DOS', it is necessary for the parents and guardians to indeed monitor their children's academics by getting involved in academic lives and supporting them accordingly, as providing scholastics material is not enough.

In summary most of the shared perspectives of the respondents don't vary so much. There are a lot of commonalities in what the students in different schools perceived and experienced as well as the views of the directors.

Chapter 5. Discussion

Several participants were concerned with the way the teachers delivered the lessons. The schools should always conduct continuous professional development to keep the teacher with updated teaching pedagogy. The Ministry of Education and Sports of Uganda needs to look into the issue of compulsory subjects at secondary education level and revise them-as most learners expressed having hardships in the science subjects which affect their academic performance seriously. However, it was noted that partly the reason for sciences being hard for some students in some schools was because of inadequate apparatus as students had to share in groups the few available ones.

The overwhelming messages that have risen from this study on the perception of learners and the DOS' views on factors that influence academics performance are students-related factors such as personal efficacy and psychological factors play an important role in the academic performance of learners.

Furthermore, the teacher-related factor like; pedagogical teaching and attitude have an important role on the students' performance in academics and besides that the school support system is needed to help these students academically.

In order to answer the research question; What factors influence academic performance of students in mixed secondary schools of Bukedea district, in Uganda?

What experiences contribute to low performance of learners in academics? Among the main remarkable conclusions got in the study were; interest, passion, motivation and attitude have a significant impact on the academic lives of each learner.

Learners that lack motivation, and positive attitude always suffer academically. While learners, on the other hand, with positive attitude, are very motivated, and possess strong courage elements succeed in their studies, despite what a few students claim. However, this is in line with the literature evaluated for this study (Edington, Everett & Koehler L., 1987; Elmassah, 2009; Harb, 2006), which found that learners' attitudes, motivation, and grit play a substantial role in how well they succeed academically. It is documented in previous literature that children who lack motivation, have a bad attitude, and have little grit always struggle academically. The current research does provide credence to the idea students- related factors have an impact on students' performance, whether it is a positive or negative one. Students' poor academic performance is greatly impacted by negative experiences.

Teacher-Related factors

Teachers' personalities, pedagogical approaches, and teaching methods have an impact on students' academic success in the subjects that they study. Teaching strategies are direct instruction, experimental learning and independent study in which teachers use to facilitate learning and to convey information. (Worldview.com, n.d.)

The majority of the students' shared experiences showed that some of the lessons were not learner centered. Students have to move at the pace of the teachers irrespective of their abilities, thus only the fast learner are able to comprehend with ease the material offered.

This creates a challenge for diverse group of learners because only fast learners will understand the information taught. (Banks, 2016). Most of the learners acknowledged to frequently experience difficulties as they could not catch up with the way they were taught.

The Pedagogy which is the art of teaching, involves managing the classroom and imparting skills and knowledge to learners in a way they can comprehend, retain, and use it. (wisegeek.com, n.d.) Most of the learners expressed that although teachers had knowledge, some lacked the art of instructing thus students are left behind.

Additionally, students shared that the practical lessons were among the things affecting them. Teachers were putting them in big groups not sufficient for the apparatus available in which students were affected as only the fast learners could understand. Some learners expressed feeling unmotivated and having a negative attitude because the teachers put them in large groups which they hardly benefited from.

As explained by Owlcation.com, a great teacher is good at communicating, has good listening skills, well informed and is knowledgeable and has passion for his or her work, is friendly and approachable, with strong work ethic and is optimistic about his/her learners. Thus, the teacher's way of teaching and his or her personality are very important.

Participants perceived factors that influence performance in academics were: some teachers were unfriendly, rude, not approachable or rather spared no time for consultation, and are not optimistic about every learner or all learners. Many teachers strive harder to cover the curriculum/ syllabus, but do not take in to consideration how much learners have grasped. From several expressions given by students, when they go for consultation, they were not attended to as the teachers seemed busy. In their shared experience the personality of teachers, styles of teaching and pedagogy have significant impact on performance of learners in academics. In addition, learners shared that some negative personality of teachers- rude, instruction pace -very fast significantly influences their performance in academics.

Therefore, all in all teachers discouraging learners, using non learner – centered teaching techniques are contributing factors to low academic performance.

The discipline of the students was another serious factor raised by the directors. It is perceived that the way students behave is likely to significantly impact on their

performance negatively or positively. Thus, it is very crucial for schools to have disciplinary measures that can help in shaping the discipline of the learners. For instance, frequently counsel and guide the students. The issue of discipline too is not only a school responsibility, it is equally a parent's obligation to ensure that the children are disciplined or they are on the right track. Therefore, it needs combined effort from all to instill good discipline among the children.

Conclusion:

First and foremost, this study adds to the body of literature by offering not only insights into the perspectives of students and the DOS on the factors influencing the poor academic performance of secondary school students in Bukedea, but also knowledge that can help educators and policy-makers create strategies that will raise the standard of secondary education in Uganda. However, the viewpoints of teachers on this need to be investigated in further research. It was not that there are various external and internal factors that contribute to low academic performance of students but this study only focused mostly on some of the factors in side school that influence the student's academic performance.

Secondly, the results got from this study I believe can be used to represent all the schools in Bukedea district as I was able to interview respondents from both counties of the district. Bukedea County which has 9 schools had participants from two different schools talked to and Kachumabala which has 5 schools had participants from one school involved. Though I used convenient sampling to select schools, but still I put in to consideration schools in rural and urban setting as well as schools both boarding and day schools. Therefore, with this I believe these results strongly represent the perspectives of the students in Bukedea district and directors of studies as well as other districts that have the same academic performance issues like Bukedea district, because the participants responses from various schools did not

vary so much. There were a lot of commonalities in their perspectives, views and experiences.

From the analysis, it is evident that the study appears to confirm students' beliefs and traits like self-efficacy and grit contribute to their performance in academics. Students with poor self-efficacy, for example, may lack enthusiasm in their studies and have a negative attitude toward learning, which negatively impacts their academic achievement.

The academic achievement of the students is also substantially influenced by teacher-related elements, such as the attitude of the teacher and instructional materials/approaches used according to the perceptions of students and the DOS' views. Teachers that are unkind to the learners and who don't want to be consulted significantly influence low academic achievement of learners. It is obvious that a student's enthusiasm and interest positively affect their academic performance. The study also found that not all demographic factors, like gender, had a significant impact on students' poor performance in academics, which is contrary to the claim made by other studies that demographic factors, like gender, supports academic performance. This implies that all learners, regardless of gender, should achieve well.

Compulsory subjects too, influence low performance according to learners' perception. As they have to do them irrespective of whether they are capable or not. These subjects are mandatory and the learners have no choice about it.

Lastly Support systems according to the study, does influence the learner's academic performance. The support learners get from the people around them like from parents, friends, administrators and the teachers will significantly influence their performance positively or negatively. Learners who have enough support both from home and school are likely to perform well and vice versa.

Recommendations and policy implication.

The following Recommendations have been made basing on the findings of the study.

A good relationship between the student and teacher is a key component of a conducive learning atmosphere, educators must take care to guide pupils and foster positive relationships with them so as to inspire learning. Therefore, teachers should always handle all learners in a positive way, listen to their challenges and guide them accordingly.

Schools should take the responsibility of assisting learners in changing their attitudes toward studying and making sure they develop a desire in it. Through

involving stakeholders in school activities, the objective of having good academic performance could be accomplished.

The academic success of the students has to receive extra support from parents as well. The Parents Teacher Association (PTA) and community authorities are responsible for holding parents accountable and including them in the children's education because this can be accomplished by helping them.

The Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports Should revise or look in to the issue of Compulsory Subjects at ordinary secondary school level. The administrators of Schools too, have to put extra support in regards to the compulsory subjects. The teaching materials such as apparatus, should be adequately availed to the students to enhance learning.

All school administrators and the government should encourage and support regular Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of the teachers so that they are equipped with up-to-date skills and techniques of managing an inclusive and interesting learning process.

Limitation of the Study:

Besides the DOS views, this study's findings primarily focused on low-achieving learners' perceptions and their experiences; as a result, they may not be used to reflect the perceptions of learners who perform highly in academics.

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Appendices

Appendix 1.

Introduction Letter.

Dear sir/madam,

To whom it may concern.

This is to introduce myself to you. I'm M/S Atima Christine who is a student pursuing a master's degree in Gender and Rural Community Development at Yonsei University -Mirae campus, South Korea.

I am doing the thesis research and wishes to collect data on the perceptions of learners and director of studies on factors influencing academic performance in mixed schools in Bukedea district.

I will appreciate any assistance that you can provide.

Thank you.

Atima Christine.

Appendix 2

1. Student Focus Group Discussion Guide.

Learners' perception on factors influencing the academic performance of students in mixed secondary schools of Bukedea district in Uganda.

Date:_____ School:_____ Location:

Thanks to all of you for accepting to participate. This research focuses on exploring the perception of learners and directors of studies on the factors influencing Academic Performance of Students in Mixed Secondary schools of Bukedea. All your responses will strictly be confidential. I am going to record the interview and transcribe it for my research purpose. After that, the interview recordings will be destroyed when the project is over.

Background information

1. Could each one of you tell me your name and class you are in?
2. What section are you in (Boarding or Day section)?
3. What activities do you do during the weekends? E.g. studying or do something else?

4. For me to know how things work in this school, can you take me through the process in which you select the alternative subjects at S.3?

Demographic Factors

- Do you believe boys and girls are equally good at academic? Why?
- What do you think would make students not to get good grades? Please list (school-based factor and home factors- especially the factors that apply to you)

General Perceptions:

1. From the factors that you have listed above, which one do you think is the most serious?
2. Out of all subjects that you are studying, which subjects do you think is the most difficult that affects your grades and why do you think so?
3. Do you base your thinking of hard subjects on anything? Eg peoples' opinions, the content or the teacher?
4. Do you think that there is any difference between the subjects you think are difficult and the subjects **your teachers** think are difficult?

5. Do you think that all students are equally valued and helped to build self-confidence at your school?

Influence of perception on academic performance

Do your thoughts about the **usefulness** of good grades change how you select your additional subjects at Upper ordinary level (S.3)? By usefulness I mean how useful you think good grades will be for your future education or career.

Support System.

1. Has anyone discouraged you from studying or schooling because they thought you are not performing well?
 - a. [E.g., teachers or parents think that you are not academically competent?]
 - b. Why do you think so?
2. On the contrary, has anyone motivated you towards working hard at your studies?
 - a. [e.g teachers, parents or peers give you psychological or emotional support?]
 - b. Why do you think so?
 - c. Where do you go or turn to, for help in improving your grades - parents, peers, or teachers?
 - d. Were they willing to help you when you sought for assistance?
3. In your opinion do you think that the boys and girls are supported equally in academics in your school. Support your answer.

4. Does your school offer career guidance sessions, if yes in your opinion how helpful is it towards improving your grades? If no, in your opinion how does this affect your performance?

5. In your opinion does your school give you enough support related to menstrual management and first aid, if yes specify the support. **(For girls only)**

Grit factors.

- a. What is your feeling about studying? Energetic, enthusiastic, passionate etc
- b. When examination seems difficult, when you do not perform well, what do you do to improve in the next sitting (examination)?
- c. How much perseverance and passion do you have for your goals (lifetime goals)?

Any other question

Is there any other issue that we might have left out yet you feel it is important to talk or share about it.

Appendix 3.

In-Depth interviews.

To the Director of studies or deputy academics.

My name is Atima Christine and I am a Master student of Gender and Community Development at Yonsei University, Mirae campus. I am conducting research on perceptions of learners and directors of studies views on factors influencing academic performance in secondary schools. The University has given me approval to approach schools for my research. I kindly request you to take part in this research.

Name: _____ Title: _____

School: _____ Government [☐]

Private [☐]

Date: _____ Time: _____

Questions:

1. Year of teaching?
2. Total number of teachers in the school?

3. How long have you been working in this school? How long in the current position?
4. What are your duties as the **Director of Studies** or **Deputy academics** of the school in terms of the daily operational activity?
5. How would you rate the academic Performance of your school?
6. In your opinion, what internal factors (school related) do you perceive to influence the academic performance of the students? (On boys, girls, then general)
7. In your opinion, what external factors do you perceive that influence the academic performance of learners? (For boys, girls, then general)
8. Do you have any strategies planned or already existing to tackle the issue you have raised, if yes could you please mention them?
9. In what ways does the school intend or is operationalizing these strategies?
10. In any case, have you received any support from government in regards to improving academic performances – what kind of support?
11. Does your school spend any time or money on Continuous professional development of the teachers?

- 12.** Where do you perceive your school position at the district level and country on academic performance of learners?
- 13.** Are there any governmental laws that you perceive as hampering the academic performance of learners?
- 14.** Do you think that the location of your school affects the students' performance in any way?
- 15.** Are there any other factors that are hindering the academic performance of students in your school that are gendered?
- 16.** Could you rank from the most 4 essential factors that influence the academic performance of learners?

Thank you for your response!

Abstract in Korean

우간다 부케데 지역 남녀 중등학교 학생의 학업성취도에 영향을 미치는 요인에 대한 학습자와 연구책임자의 인식

연세대학교 정경대학원

여성농촌지역개발 석사학위과정

Atima Christine

본 연구의 목적은 우간다 부케데 지역 남녀 중등학교 학생의 학업성취도에 영향을 미치는 요인에 대한 학습자와 연구책임자의 인식을 알아보는 것이다.

연구의 목적을 달성하기 위해 질적 접근을 활용하여 포커스 그룹 토론을 통해 중학교 학생들의 인식과 경험을 기록하고 심층 인터뷰를 통해 연구책임자의 견해를 기록하였다. 총 51 명의 참가자가 참여하였다. 48 명의 학생과 3 명의 스터디 디렉터. 학생 중 24 명은 여학생이었고 나머지 24 명은 남학생이었다. 참가자들의 의견을 테마로 코드 화하였다. 제시된 요인은 학생요인, 교사요인, 지원체계(학교지원체계, 가정지원)로 분류하였다. 학생 요인: 자기효능감, 태도, 투지 및 규율. 교사 요인; 태도, 교수법 및 성격,

학교 지원 시스템: 학교 환경, 교실 환경, 지도 및 상담, 교수-학습 장비 및 필수 과목. 가정 지원: 부모의 동기 및 가족 경제 배경.

학업 성취도를 향상시키기 위해 학생들은 더 동기 부여되고 관심을 갖고 긍정적이 되어야 한다.

특히 교사는 학습자의 행동과 관계에 영향을 미치기 위해 새로운 교육 방법, 교육학적 접근 방식 및 성격 변화를 채택해야 한다.

연구 결과 학습자의 관심 부족, 나쁜 태도, 행동, 사기 저하, 교사의 성격 및 교수법, 지원 시스템, 부모의 동기 및 동료 압력이 모두 학업 성과에 영향을 미치는 요인임을 보여주었다. 이 연구에서 수집된 데이터는 중등학교, 행정관, 직원, 우간다 교육체육부가 더 나은 학습 환경을 조성하고 중학교 필수 과목을 재평가하며 교사를 돕는 프로그램을 마련하는 데 도움이 될 것이다. 그리고 학교 내에서 교수-학습 과정 동안 학생들은 학업 성과를 향상시키는 데 도움이 될 것이다.

핵심 단어: 학업성취도, 학습자, 교수법, 우간다 교육