

The Relationship Between Parental Involvement and Learners' Academic Achievement in Competence Based Curriculum in Secondary Schools in Kazo County, Kazo District

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Abstract

The study examined the relationship between parental involvement and learners' academic achievement in a competency-based curriculum in secondary schools in Kazo District. It was guided by the following objectives: to establish the level of parental involvement, to assess learners' academic achievement in the competency-based curriculum, and to examine the relationship between parental involvement and learners' academic achievement in secondary schools. A cross-sectional design was adopted for this study. Ten secondary schools in Kazo District, with a total population of 254 respondents including one DEO, one Inspector of Schools, 32 Parent Representatives, 10 Head Teachers, 53 Student Leaders, 147 Teachers, and 10 SMC Chairpersons, were considered. Data were obtained through questionnaires, interviews, and direct observation. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21 software. Descriptive statistics were used for analysis. Qualitative data collected from interviews were sorted and organized into themes. The findings indicated a statistically significant relationship between parental involvement and learners' academic achievement in the competency-based curriculum in secondary schools in Kazo County, with a p-value of 0.005 ($p < 0.01$). It was concluded that there was strong commitment from parents in Kazo County to support their children's education. Parents actively participated in various aspects, from ensuring proper uniforms to contributing financially to school meals. The study identified a statistically significant link between parental involvement and student achievement. It was recommended that school administrators organize meetings and events at times convenient for working parents to maximize participation.

Key words: Relationship, parental involvement, learners, academic achievement, competence based curriculum, secondary schools

Introduction

In Uganda, the primary school curriculum underwent a significant transformation in 2007 with the integration of the competence-based curriculum (Wambiya & Ogula, 2023). This new approach, known as the thematic syllabus, organizes information around common themes for learners. The design of the thematic curriculum incorporated several key elements: the use of themes instead of departmental subjects as the medium of instruction, the use of the mother tongue or regional language for instruction, the implementation of the classroom teacher system, the provision of free or affordable teaching materials, and the incorporation of continuous assessment (Kinyunyu, 2020).

In February 2020, the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports introduced a new Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC), marking a significant milestone in the country's education system (Kidega et al., 2024). This move came after years of criticism and aimed to address the shortcomings of the previous system. The primary

objective of the CBC is to equip students with the necessary skills and competencies required in today's society. Additionally, the CBC aligns with the global goal of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all individuals.

Despite the numerous advantages of parental involvement in their children's education, parents face various obstacles when attempting to actively engage with schools. One challenge is the impersonal nature of school environments, which often involve unfriendly and hostile interactions with teachers. Parents with low socioeconomic status (SES) tend to have lower levels of academic socialization, making it harder to engage with them, and there is a perception that they do not value education (Sserunkuuma, 2023). Logistical constraints, such as lack of transportation to schools and the need for child care, further contribute to the challenges faced by parents with low SES (Donley et al., 2018).

Parental involvement has always been vital to the academic performance of learners in any educational institution (Goodall & Montgomery, 2023). Similarly, the Government of Uganda recognizes the central role that parental involvement plays in ensuring good academic performance through provision for their children's educational needs. Parents worldwide share the responsibility for educating the nation's children.

Despite government efforts to implement policies, the academic performance of students in secondary schools in Kazo District has consistently remained poor (UNEB, 2019, 2020, 2022). Evidence from the results of the past three years indicates that out of a total of 8,998 candidates who sat for the UCE exams in 2019, 2020, and 2022, only 213 (2.4%) passed with a grade I, compared to 1,666 (18.52%) who were ungraded and 558 (6.2%) who were in grade X (total failures) and therefore not eligible for high school (UNEB, 2019, 2020, 2022).

It also appears that the majority of parents in Kazo District have incorrectly perceived the responsibility of educating their children in secondary school as resting entirely on teachers and are less involved in providing the required support. Yet, teachers alone cannot meet all the educational needs of students without parental support (Kahamba, 2018). It is unclear how far parents in Kazo District have gone in their efforts to be fully involved in their children's education to achieve good academic performance. This study, therefore, aimed to examine the effects of parental involvement on learners' academic achievement in the competency-based curriculum in secondary schools in Kazo District.

Methodology

The researcher adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey design for the study. The focus was on 10 secondary schools in Kazo District, with a total population of 254 respondents, including one DEO, one Inspector of Schools, 32 Parent Representatives, 10 Head Teachers, 53 Student Leaders, 147 Teachers, and 10 SMC Chairpersons. Data were obtained through questionnaires, interviews, and direct observation. Data analysis involved both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Results

The Level of Parental Involvement in Secondary Schools in Kazo County, Kazo District

This section presents descriptive statistics for the independent variable: the Level of Parental Involvement in Secondary Schools in Kazo County, Kazo District. The results were based on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. In this study, 'strongly agree' and 'agree' were aggregated to represent 'agree,' while 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' were aggregated to represent 'disagree.' The mean score was also used in the analysis, calculated by summing all the frequencies and dividing by the total number of respondents. A mean score above 3 indicated that respondents agreed with the given statements. The findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for the level of parental involvement in secondary schools in Kazo County, Kazo District

Level Of Parental Involvement	5 f(%)	4 f(%)	3 f(%)	2 f(%)	1 f(%)	Mean scores
Parents ensure that their children come to school dressed in their school uniform	29 (22.0%)	92 (69.7%)	9 (6.8%)	2 (1.5%)	0	4.12
Parents always provide stationary like books, pens, pencils, to their children whenever they come to school.	27 (20.5%)	91 (68.9%)	12 (9.1%)	2 (1.5%)	0	4.08
Parents ensure their children come with packed lunch at school.	28 (21.2%)	89 (67.4%)	12 (9.1%)	2 (1.5%)	1 (0.8%)	4.07
Parents provide pocket money to their children to buy food items for lunch at school.	29 (22.0%)	88 (66.7%)	12 (9.1%)	3 (2.3%)	0	4.08
Parents contribute finances to the school to prepare lunch for their children while at school	30 (22.7%)	85 (64.4%)	14 (10.6%)	2 (1.5%)	1 (0.8%)	4.07
Parents believe it's the responsibility of government to provide scholastic requirements of their children not the parents.	31 (23.5%)	84 (63.6%)	14 (10.6%)	2 (1.5%)	1 (0.8%)	4.08
The school management ensures that parents are involved in the planning process and are consulted on key issues to be taken on especially regarding academic performance.	18 (13.6%)	93 (70.5%)	15 (11.4%)	4 (3.0%)	2 (1.5%)	3.92
Parents participate in school meetings like SMCs, PTAs and annual general meetings where major decisions are made.	22 (3.96%)	89 (67.4%)	16 (12.1%)	4 (3.0%)	1 (0.8%)	3.96
Parents participate in the selection and election of school Associations and management leaders like PTA , SMC chairmen who represents them democratically	28 (21.2%)	87 (65.9%)	13 (9.8%)	3 (2.3%)	1 (0.8%)	4.05
Students class absenteeism is usually high whenever there is planting, harvesting, and market days as students are asked to stay at home to assist their parents with work and this negatively affects students' academic performance.	29 (22.0%)	88 (66.7%)	10 (7.6%)	4 (3.0%)	1 (0.8%)	4.06
Parents check their pupil's homework books whenever they are home to assess class performance	20 (15.2%)	100 (75.8%)	9 (6.9%)	3 (2.3%)	0	4.04
Parents assist their students to do homework given by their teachers in class and usually sign their books	16 (12.1%)	106 (80.3%)	7 (5.3%)	2 (1.5%)	1 (0.8%)	4.02
Parents believe learning should only take place at school	32 (24.2%)	89 (67.4%)	8 (6.1%)	2 (1.5%)	1 (0.8%)	4.13
Parents usually encourage their children to work hard for good academic performance	22 (16.7%)	96 (72.7%)	9 (6.8%)	3 (2.3%)	2 (1.5%)	4.01
Overall mean score						4.05

The overall mean score of 4.05 suggests that, on average, there is a strong level of parental involvement in supporting their children's education in Kazo County, Kazo District. This score indicates that, across various aspects such as ensuring children are properly dressed for school, providing necessary stationery, contributing financially to school meals, participating in school meetings and decision-making processes, and encouraging their children academically, parents are actively engaged.

In line with above findings one of the District education officer said that; *“From our district-wide assessment, we've observed varying levels of parental involvement across secondary schools in Kazo County.’ While some*

schools demonstrate exemplary practices in engaging parents, others face challenges such as communication barriers and lack of awareness about the importance of parental involvement. 'As a district, we aim to provide support and resources to promote a culture of active parental engagement in all schools,' ultimately benefiting student outcomes and school community cohesion." (15th May, 2024).

Similarly, one of the PTA representative noted that *"While parental involvement is noticeable, 'we believe there's room for improvement.' We encourage parents to engage more actively in their child's education beyond occasional meetings. 'Establishing channels for regular communication and involvement in decision-making processes could enhance this further"*. (15th May, 2024).

In contrary to above findings City education officer reported that *"In our experience, 'parental involvement varies among different schools within Kazo County.' Some schools have robust parental engagement programs, including volunteering opportunities and parent-led initiatives, while others struggle to get consistent involvement. 'Identifying and sharing best practices could help elevate parental involvement across the district'"* (15th May, 2024).

Overall, the findings suggest that development of active parental involvement is essential for promoting student success and building a cohesive school community in Kazo County, Kazo District.

The level of learners` academic achievement in competence based curriculum in secondary schools in Kazo County, Kazo District

This section presents descriptive statistics for the dependent variable: the level of learners` academic achievement in the competency-based curriculum in secondary schools in Kazo County, Kazo District. The results were based on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. In this study, 'strongly agree' and 'agree' were aggregated to represent 'agree,' while 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' were aggregated to represent 'disagree.' The mean score was also used in the analysis, calculated by summing all the frequencies and dividing by the total number of respondents. A mean score above 3 indicated that respondents agreed with the given statements. The findings are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for the level of learners` academic achievement in competence based curriculum in secondary schools in Kazo County, Kazo District

The level of learners` academic achievement	5 f(%)	4 f(%)	3 f(%)	2 f(%)	1 f(%)	Mean scores
Learners apply mathematical concepts to solve real-life problems.	19 (14.4%)	101 (76.5%)	9 (6.8%)	2 (1.5%)	1 (0.8%)	4.02
Learners demonstrate proficiency in reading and comprehending complex texts.	25 (18.9%)	90 (68.2%)	10 (7.6%)	4 (3.0%)	3 (2.3%)	3.98
Learners design and conduct scientific experiments to test hypotheses.	26 (19.7%)	92 (69.7%)	9 (6.8%)	3 (2.3%)	2 (1.5%)	4.04
Learners demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills.	30 (22.7%)	87 (65.9%)	12 (9.1%)	2 (1.5%)	1 (0.8%)	4.08
Learners show understanding of cultural diversity and its importance.	32 (24.2%)	87 (65.9%)	11 (8.3%)	2 (1.5%)	0	4.13
Learners apply technological skills to enhance learning.	31 (23.5%)	83 (62.9%)	16 (12.1%)	2 (1.5%)	0	4.08

Learners demonstrate creativity and innovation in their work.	29 (22.0%)	81 (61.4%)	17 (12.9%)	3 (2.3%)	2 (1.5%)	4.00
Learners apply entrepreneurial skills to develop business ideas.		4 (3.0%)	10 (7.6%)	25 (18.9%)	93 (70.5%)	1.43
Overall mean score						3.72

The overall mean score of 3.72 suggests that, on average, there is a strong perception among respondents that various factors influence learners' academic achievement in Kazo County, Kazo District. Similarly the above study findings are consistent with findings from qualitative data. This is supported by the following responses from respondents. For example one of the PTA representative said that; *“The level of learners' academic achievement in competence-based curriculum in secondary schools in Kazo County is 'reflective of our efforts to align teaching strategies with the objectives of the curriculum.' We've seen improvements in critical thinking skills and practical application of knowledge among students”* (15th May, 2024).

Additionally the above findings are in line with responses from another PTA representative who revealed that *“While we've made strides in implementing the competence-based curriculum, 'challenges persist in fully transitioning from traditional teaching methods.' Some students may still struggle with the shift towards more hands-on learning and self-directed study. 'Continuous professional development for teachers and adequate resources are essential to address these hurdles.”* (15th May, 2024)

Similarly one of the headteachers said that *In our assessment, 'learners' academic achievement varies depending on the level of implementation of the competence-based curriculum.' Schools that have embraced innovative teaching methods and provided adequate support systems tend to witness higher levels of academic success among student”*.(16th May, 2024).

Similar responses were observed from inspector of schools who said that *“We've noted positive outcomes in learners' academic achievement,' particularly in subjects where the competence-based approach is fully integrated. 'However, there's a need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure consistent progress and address areas of weakness.”* 15th May, 2024).

The above findings are also in agreement with findings from district education officer who said that; *“The level of learners' academic achievement in the competence-based curriculum across secondary schools in Kazo County 'reflects a mixed picture.' While some schools demonstrate commendable progress, others face challenges in fully implementing the curriculum due to resource constraints and capacity issues. 'As a district, we're committed to providing support and fostering collaboration among schools to enhance academic outcomes for all learners”*. (15th May, 2024).

The above study findings underscore the factors influencing learners' academic achievement and emphasize the importance of collaborative efforts to enhance educational practices and outcomes in the district.

Parental involvement and learners` academic achievement in competence based curriculum in secondary schools in Kazo County, Kazo District

To determine the relationship between Parental involvement and learners` academic achievement in competence based curriculum in secondary schools in Kazo County, Kazo District, a Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was conducted, with a significance level set at 0.01.

Table 3: Relationship between Parental involvement and learners` academic achievement in competence based curriculum in secondary schools

Correlations			
		Parental involvement	Learners` academic achievement
Parental involvement	Pearson Correlation	1	.244**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005
	N	132	132
Learners` academic achievement	Pearson Correlation	.244**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	
	N	132	132

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

From Table 3, the correlation results indicate a significant positive relationship between parental involvement and learners' academic achievement in the competency-based curriculum in secondary schools in Kazo County, Kazo District. The Pearson correlation coefficient between parental involvement and learners' academic achievement is 0.244, suggesting a moderate positive correlation between the two variables. The p-value associated with this correlation coefficient is 0.005, which is less than the significance level of 0.01. Therefore, the correlation is considered statistically significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Overall, these results suggest that as parental involvement increases, learners' academic achievement tends to improve.

Similar findings were observed from responses from PTA representative who noted that *“The relationship between parental involvement and learners' academic achievement in competence-based curriculum in secondary schools is 'undeniable.' When parents actively engage in their child's education, 'we often see a positive impact on academic performance.' Supportive home environments, where parents reinforce learning objectives and provide additional resources, can significantly enhance students' understanding and application of concepts”*. (15th May, 2024).

Similarly another PTA was in support with above findings who noted that *“We've observed a correlation between 'the level of parental involvement and students' success' in competence-based curriculum. 'Parents who are actively involved tend to have a better understanding of their child's strengths and weaknesses,' allowing them to provide targeted support at home that complements classroom learning. This holistic approach contributes to improved academic outcomes”* (15th May, 2024).

Additionally the above findings are in line with responses from one of the headteachers who said that *“In my experience, 'parental involvement serves as a crucial catalyst for students' academic achievement' in the competence-based curriculum. When parents are engaged in their child's education, 'there's a sense of shared responsibility between home and school,' leading to enhanced motivation and commitment to learning. This collaborative effort positively influences students' academic performance”*(15th May, 2024).

Similar findings were observed from District Education officer who said that, *“As parent involved in my child's education, I've witnessed firsthand the impact of 'active parental engagement on academic achievement' in the competence-based curriculum. By staying informed about my child's progress, 'I'm better equipped to provide tailored support and encouragement at home,' which reinforces their learning and builds confidence. 'Collaboration between parents, teachers, and students is essential for maximizing the benefits of competence-based education.”* (16th May, 2024).

Discussion

The study findings revealed a strong level of parental involvement in supporting their children's education in Kazo County, Kazo District, with an overall mean score of 4.05. This score indicates that, across various aspects such as ensuring children are properly dressed for school, providing necessary stationery, contributing financially to school meals, participating in school meetings and decision-making processes, and encouraging their children academically, parents are actively engaged. This aligns with Zinteng (2023), who found that the provision of stationery—such as exercise books, pens, and pencils—shows a strong connection between literary resources at home and children's reading skills. The author agrees that children whose parents provide them with scholastic materials, like books, pens, and pencils, tend to score higher than those who lack these resources. However, there is a need for further investigation into how such provisions can improve academic performance, given that some parents who provide these materials still report poor performance by their children.

The study findings showed a strong perception among respondents that various factors influence learners' academic achievement in Kazo County, Kazo District, with an overall mean score of 4.05. This agrees with Epstein (2018), who contends that 'the effectiveness of parents, schools, and communities working together has been documented in several studies.' To promote these comprehensive partnerships, schools must provide opportunities for collaboration among schools, families, and the community. Similarly, Epstein (2019) notes that 'schools enhance their connection to families by encouraging them to volunteer in school activities and attend school events,' participate in planning, and make decisions that affect the school, such as attending PTA meetings and BOG meetings. It is argued that 'families who volunteer in school activities become more familiar and comfortable with their children's schools and teachers.'

The study findings indicated a statistically significant relationship between parental involvement and learners' academic achievement in the competency-based curriculum in secondary schools in Kazo County, Kazo District, with a p-value of 0.005, which is less than 0.01. This is in line with Dixon-Elliott (2019), who found that most parental participation in children's education occurs at home. Dixon-Elliott asserts that 'schools must capitalize on what parents are already doing by helping them assist and interact with their children in home learning activities that reinforce what is being taught in school.' Similarly, Hill et al. (2018) revealed that parents may start to view their children more as learners and develop confidence in their ability to teach and support the educational process. They are also more likely to engage in discussions about schoolwork with their children, which can help teachers develop better homework assignments. Teachers are expected to experience greater satisfaction with family involvement as they witness the diverse support that various types of families can provide to students.

Conclusion

There was strong commitment from parents in Kazo County to support their children's education. Parents actively participated in various aspects, from ensuring proper uniforms to contributing financially to school meals. This highlights their role as key stakeholders in the education system. The level of students' academic achievement was moderately high. Respondents acknowledged the impact of factors such as absenteeism and parental support on student outcomes. The study identified a statistically significant link between parental involvement and student achievement, suggesting that increased parental engagement leads to better academic performance.

Recommendations

The government should allocate resources to support programs that encourage and facilitate parental involvement in schools. This could include training for teachers and administrators on effective communication with parents, as well as funding for parent-teacher conferences and workshops.

School administrators should identify areas where parental involvement can have the greatest impact on student achievement (e.g., homework support, specific curriculum topics) and develop targeted programs and resources to empower parents in these areas.

Teachers need to collaborate with parents on effective homework strategies, providing clear instructions and resources to help parents assist their children with homework completion.

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