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School Management Committee Monitoring Skills and Performance of Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools in Uganda: A Case of Bugisu Muslim District Council.

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The performance of Muslim Founded educational institutions has picked a lot of interest globally over the years. The Uganda Muslim Supreme Council established structures at different levels of administration to participate in the monitoring of Muslim-founded Schools. This study premised on Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) constructs of monitoring, aimed at investigating how monitoring skills of the foundation body representatives on the School Management Committees contribute to the performance of Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools in Uganda, taking a case of the BMDC. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted for this study, with quantitative and qualitative data approaches, while multivariable linear regression was used to obtain the magnitude of the contribution of SMC monitoring skills to the performance of the primary schools under BMDC. The study revealed that monitoring skills have a positive correlation with the performance of the Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools, though, the correlation is moderate. The moderate correlation is caused by insufficient monitoring skills exhibited by the foundation body representatives in areas such as the development of performance indicators, collection of relevant data during monitoring, designing of monitoring tools, and usage of appropriate methods during monitoring. The study, therefore, concluded that such insufficient monitoring skills have hindered them to adequately monitor which has partly affected the performance of the schools. It is as such recommended that BMDC needs to incorporate specific non-financial empowerment capacity-building components into school activities tailored to train

the members on the SMC in aspects of monitoring and evaluation, adult literacy, and financial literacy for improved skills, knowledge, and leadership.

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, Muslim educational institutions have faced performance challenges over the years. According to Musharraf and Nabeel (2015), the education of Muslim children is treated differently in different countries, which is also affected by both internal and external factors. Such factors include educational policies and systems, legislation, political factors, state-religion separation, among others. Performance challenges for Muslim founded schools may be attributed to the numbers of Muslims worldwide, but also marginalization in different countries as compared to those of other religious denominations (Musisi, 2018). In Uganda, this has not been any different since it has also been observed over the years that Muslims found difficulty in having their children access education. Musisi (2018) further observes that Muslims relied more on *Madarasa* or *Qu'ran* schools to give their children some level of education. The UMSC education policy (2014) as amended in (2019) guides its different structures on the tools, methods, and mechanism of reporting. However, these are not cascaded at BMDC schools, which hinders frequent updates on performance in a number of parameters.

Furthermore, the monitoring function is not well stipulated in the UMSC education policy (2019) but rather talked about, in the functions and roles of different organs and stakeholders.

In a bid to improve performance of Muslim founded schools in Uganda, the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council established structures at different levels of administration to also participate in the monitoring of Muslim founded schools around them, UMSC Companies Act (1972). The UMSC Education Policy (2014) as amended in (2019) guides its different structures on the tools to be used, methods and mechanism of reporting. However, these are not cascaded at BMDC schools, which may have hindered frequent updates on performance in a number of parameters. Furthermore, the monitoring function is not well stipulated in the UMSC education policy (2019) but rather talked about, in the functions and roles of different organs UMSC (2019).

In addition, the education Act (2008) spells out a list of the terms of reference (TORs) which should be followed by foundation body representatives to SMCs and BODs during monitoring of school

activities from time to time. However, the terms of reference do not stipulate the tools, methods and the mechanism of reporting yet it is spelled out in the UMSC Education Policy (2019). These loopholes could explain the continued reported poor performance in the Muslim Founded Schools as reported by Sserugo, (2010) who notes in a survey of Muslim schools that was conducted between January and April (2010) in Central, Eastern and Northern regions of Uganda, that there were recurring cases of poor management of schools, unqualified staff, poor students' academic performance, and dilapidated structures. Similarly, Hassan et al. (2020) assert that some of the causes of poor academic performance in Islamic University primary school included among others inadequate support from administration, poor school environment, and negative teachers' attitudes. This was re-echoed in the BMDC performance report (2018) which showed that the performance of Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools was wanting in terms of quality where the level of teacher's qualification was reported to be low, dilapidated structures i.e., classrooms, staff rooms, and toilets, among other teaching and learning facilities. In terms of target achievement, the selected schools were still facing challenges in registering good academic grades, being model schools, and having adequate infrastructure. And lastly, in terms of timeliness, there was reported late submission of school reports to the authorities, hiccups in the implementation of school work plans, teaching timetable, setting and marking exams, as well as response to school requirements. Also, to note is that, both the findings from the study of Hassan et al. (2020) and the BMDC performance report (2018) did not bring out a clear monitoring plan and did not report what was achieved as a result of monitoring by the foundation body, and lastly, the reports do not indicate a follow-up plan on the monitoring roles of the foundation body representatives. The above challenges can easily be tracked and corrected through monitoring but because the foundation representatives on SMC do not have adequate skills in monitoring, this has also hindered them to adhere to the monitoring practices and principles. The continued poor performance in the Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools has, therefore, led to public mistrust, misconception, accountability concerns, and low enrolment of pupils in the Government Aided

Muslim Founded Schools, which presents a very big setback in the Muslim community despite the campaign of increasing the number of Muslims attaining education. This, therefore, propelled the researchers to assess the contribution of SMC monitoring skills on the performance of Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools in Bugisu Muslim District Council in Mbale City.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

According to Kusek (2004), monitoring skills are key in ensuring an effective monitoring and evaluation system. Similarly, Naidoo, (2011) also notes that monitoring and evaluation officers should possess skills that help them come up with success factors that enable them to strengthen their credibility. In addition, Ross & P.H, (2012) states that monitoring and Evaluation officers should have adequate monitoring and evaluation skills to enable them adequately collect data. Kathongo, M, & Kamau, (2018) emphasize that there should be a balanced distribution of work to ensure that those who have skills are set aside to be accountable for monitoring and evaluation as a way of achieving quality results which lead to better performance.

Developing performance indicators is one of the most important skills that is desired of a monitoring officer, OECD (1990). The OECD continues to emphasize that, performance indicators enable the project managers to collect relevant data regarding the project and these indicators also help the project managers to track the progress of the performance. Boynton & Boynton (2005) states that developing monitoring skills is crucial and emphasize that the ability to effectively monitor students' behaviour is one of the most powerful discipline tools. They lastly note that monitoring skills enable officers to communicate that they are aware of what is ongoing and therefore, come up with appropriate corrective measures. UNDP (2013) on the other hand also notes that failure to design better performance indicators leads to the collection of wrong data which is due to a lack of skills and this affects decision making.

According to the USAID monitoring toolkit (2019), it is very important for project managers to be equipped with skills in designing monitoring tools

for data collection so as to measure the performance and the extent to which results have been achieved. They continue to emphasize that data collection and analysis is said to be important because it helps to ensure the actual collection of data is done smoothly. Therefore, monitoring without data collection and analysis is said to be a rewarding failure as stated by Osborn and Gaebler (1992) when they discuss the power of measuring results. They continue to emphasise that if you demonstrate results, you can win public support. This means that measuring results is so much important and results can only be measured using indicators and tools that facilitate the collection of data about the indicators.

The USAID Monitoring toolkit (2019) still highlights that during data collection, all data faces threats to quality in a way that Data can be destroyed, systematically biased, or erroneous due to errors in sampling design, poor implementation of methods, problems in recording, and lack of skilled M&E personnel. The toolkit further states that it is important to come up with a data management and analysis plan which documents the purpose of the data collection. Kissi, et al., (2019) resonate with the above when they conclude in their study “ impact of project monitoring and evaluation practices....” that it is important to design tools that facilitate the collection of data during monitoring because monitoring is a major management function that ensures that the objectives set for projects are successfully achieved in order to achieve the desired performance.

Lastly, Kihuha (2018) states that project managers should possess communication skills because they have a responsibility of developing a communication strategy to keep all stakeholders informed about the monitoring findings since effective communication ensures accessibility to quality products and services which in the long run leads to performance.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study was premised on Osborne and Gaebler (1992) constructs that show the power of measuring results, thus; (i) if you don't measure results, you can't tell success from failure; (ii) if you can't see success, you can't reward it; (iii) if you can't reward success, you are probably rewarding failure; (iv) if

you can't see success, you can't learn from it; (v) if you can't recognize failure, you can't correct it and finally; (vi) if you demonstrate results you can win public support. The theory supported getting meanings and understandings of the information that was collected and generated on the study. Specifically, this theory facilitated understanding the extent to which monitoring skills of the foundation body representatives on the School Management Committees contributed to the performance of Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools in BMDC. These statements help us to understand the fact that without measuring results, one can never tell whether they are achieving results (performance) or not.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was adopted for this study. It further involved triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative approaches for data collection, where shortcomings of one approach were covered by the other. The study was conducted in a period of 20 months and it focused on monitoring and performance of the Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools in Bugisu Muslim District Council in Mbale City. Specifically, the study concentrated in Mbale City because it had the biggest number of Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools and there was a high level of homogeneity between schools in Mbale City and those in other BMDC Districts thereby making findings in Mbale City generalizable to other BMDC Districts.

The study population consisted of headteachers, classroom teachers, and the chairpersons of the School Management Committees. The study randomly selected 20 schools out of 29 Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools to increase the generalizability of the results and to minimize biasness. The sample size of the study for quantitative data collection was 178 respondents who were randomly selected to fill the questionnaire whereby, 158 were classroom teachers and 20 were headteachers. From the 20 chairpersons of the SMC, only 12 respondents were interviewed as key informants because the researchers realized that the information given was similar and there was no new information added. The study used simple random

sampling to select 158 classroom teachers out of a total of 259. Purposive sampling was used to select 20 headteachers and the 20 chairpersons of the SMCs from the selected schools because of the knowledge and expertise they have in the area of study.

Validity of the findings was ensured through expert judgment where the Content Validity Index for the tools was found to be over the minimum recommended of 0.7 (Amin, 2005). On the other hand, consistency of findings was ensured through pilot testing the instruments, where Cronbach Alpha was also found to be over 0.7 as recommended by Amin (2005).

The researchers used self-administered questionnaires as a research tool to collect quantitative data. The respondents who were subjected to this instrument included the 158 classroom teachers and the 20 headteachers. This instrument was aimed at collecting and capturing enough information, Fisher (2004) and because the categories of respondents were quite many. The questionnaires had three sections: Section A had the respondents' demographic information; sections B and C had close-ended questions which were in line with the objectives of the study. A 5-point Likert scale of measurement was adopted for close-ended questions. Document review and an interview guide were used to collect qualitative data that could supplement findings from quantitative data collection. The researchers used a document review instrument to review existing secondary data which was obtained through reading monitoring field reports submitted to BMDC by the SMC members, school reports, and the BMDC education policy. Data collected from the documents was aimed at giving preliminary information about the area of study. Document review also aimed at helping the researchers to check for the parameters used by the SMC to monitor the school activities. The interview guide contained a set of questions on issues under

study and was put to respondents on a face-to-face basis (Saunders, et al., 2007). This instrument contained open-ended questions and was subjected to the Chairpersons of the SMCs because the area of study directly focused on their area of operation and there was a lot of information that needed to be extracted from them on a face-to-face basis and, such information could not be easily captured using a questionnaire. This category was referred to in this study as key informants.

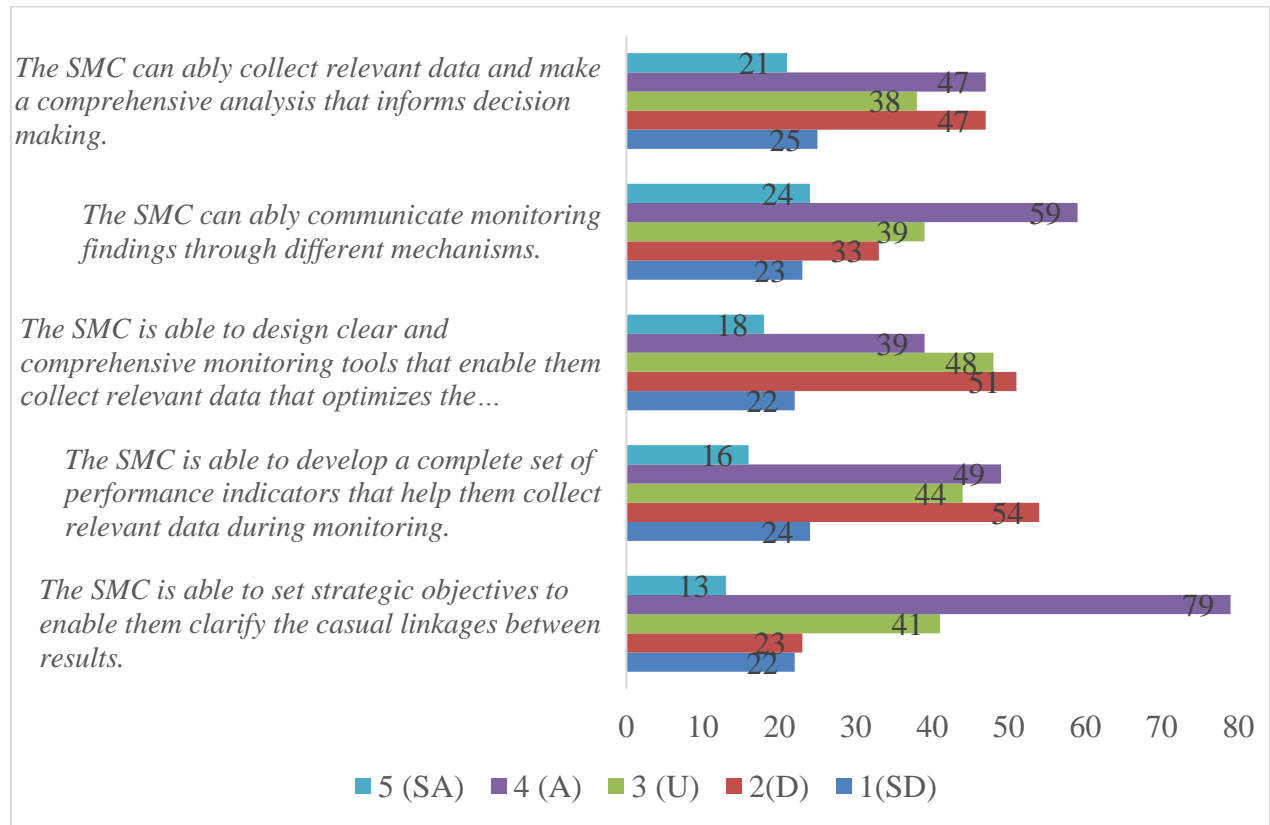
Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. For each objective, descriptive statistics were used to describe the distribution of data in terms of frequency of the items, the mean score to describe the average score, and standard deviation to describe how distant the scores were. This package also helped the researchers to test the relationship between the variables using regression analysis and correlation tests. The researchers were also able to test the contribution of monitoring skills of SMCs on schools' performance using linear regression.

Qualitative data was done through a thematic analysis where the content of data was transcribed, coded, and organized to identify key themes concerning the research area. Data management was done after data was collected from the field, graphical plots and univariable tabulations were used to check for outliers and missingness and the data was found fit for analysis.

FINDINGS

The contribution of the monitoring skills applied by the School Management Committees on the performance of Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools in BMDC. *Figure 1* shows the summary of responses on how the monitoring skills are exercised by the SMC in the management of their schools.

Figure 1: Contribution of SMC monitoring skills to school performance



The visual expression from the chart clearly shows that some of the respondents were in agreement that the foundation representatives on the SMCs applied some monitoring skills to enhance performance in Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary

Schools in BMDC despite the fact that a lot was lacking in some of the skills like designing of the monitoring tools, development of the performance indicators and collection of data.

Table 1: Guidelines on Interpretation of mean Scores on the five-point Likert scale.

Interval of mean score	Description
1.00 – 1.80	Strongly disagree
1.81 – 2.60	Disagree
2.61 – 3.40	Neutral (Un decided)
3.41 – 4.20	Agree
4.21 – 5.00	Strongly disagree

Table 2: Summary Statistics for Responses on how monitoring skills affect performance in Government Aided Muslim Founded P/S in Mbale City

Statements	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
The SMC is able to set strategic objectives to enable them to clarify the casual linkages between results	1	5	3.21	1.15
The SMC is able to develop a complete set of performance indicators that help them collect relevant data during monitoring	1	5	2.93	1.196
The SMC is able to design clear and comprehensive monitoring tools that enable them to collect relevant data that optimizes the performance of the school.	1	5	2.89	1.183
The SMC can ably communicate monitoring findings through different mechanisms	1	5	3.16	1.248
The SMC can ably collect relevant data and make a comprehensive analysis that informs decision-making.	1	5	2.96	1.252

Note: 1 - Strongly Disagree; 2 – Disagree; 3 – Neutral; 4 – Agree; 5 – Strongly Agree
Adopted from Benhima (2020)

DISCUSSIONS

The setting of Strategic Objectives

Those in agreement that the foundation body representatives on SMC can set strategic objectives to enable them to clarify the casual linkages between results constituted 92 (51.7%) obtained by combining agree on responses; 79 (44.4%) with the strongly agree responses; 13(7.3%). Additionally, the results point out that the foundation body representatives on the SMC can ably communicate monitoring findings through different mechanisms as reflected in the 83 (46.6%) after combining responses of those who agreed and strongly agreed to the assessment item 4. However, item one under monitoring skills assessment shows the mean score of 3.21 with a standard deviation of 1.15 which means that on average, the respondents were not decided in assessing the ability of the foundation body representatives on SMCs to set strategic objectives that enable them to clarify the casual linkages between results and likewise item 4 which intended to assess the ability of the foundation body representatives on SMCs' to communicate monitoring findings through different mechanisms. The mean score for this item was 3.16 with a standard deviation of 1.24, indicating that the participants remained neutral in the assessment.

Development of Performance Indicators

Over 54 (25.3%) and 24 (13.5%) of respondents did not support the opinion that the foundation body representatives on foundation body representatives on SMCs are able to develop a complete set of performance indicators that help them collect relevant data during monitoring. The combined percentage (38.8%) of the respondents not supporting this monitoring skill was slightly higher than those who agreed to it (36.5%), leaving a whole 24.7% of the respondents' undecided. This position suggests a deficiency in the foundation body representatives on SMCs' ability to develop a complete set of performance indicators that help them collect relevant data during monitoring and hence makes the whole monitoring process flawed. On whether the foundation body representatives on SMCs were able to develop a complete set of performance indicators that help them collect relevant data during monitoring, the mean score by the participants was 2.93 with a standard deviation of 1.196. This shows that the majority of the respondents remained undecided on assessing the ability of foundation body representatives on SMCs to develop a complete set of performance indicators that help them collect relevant data during monitoring.

Designing Monitoring Tools

The respondents who disagreed with the statement that the foundation body representatives on SMCs

can ably design clear monitoring tools to collect data were 73 (44.2%) while 48 respondents were undecided on the item. The mean score was 2.89, which also indicates that the majority of participants could not assess the ability of foundation body representatives on SMCs to design clear and comprehensive monitoring tools that enable them to collect relevant data that optimizes the performance of the schools.

Collection of Relevant Data

The chart further shows that the number of respondents who agreed to the assessment item No. 5, which sought to assess the foundation body representatives on SMC's ability to collect relevant data and make a comprehensive analysis that informs decision making, was equal to that of respondents who disagreed, all standing at 47 (26.4%). However, those who strongly disagreed (14%) slightly exceeded those who strongly agreed (11%) to the opinion and the mean score was 2.96 with a standard deviation of 1.25. This also meant that participants could not give a clear opinion on the foundation body representatives on SMCs' ability to collect relevant data and make a comprehensive analysis that informs decision making.

All the above quantitative data findings are in agreement with the findings from the qualitative data collection where Key respondents shared the following;

"I have not collected any data but one time we were tasked to do research on the school and we requested the school administration to avail us with some documents for review" (KR₁).

"We monitor but don't have so many activities to monitor but I personally talk to candidate classes and motivate them to perform and value education" (KR₇).

"We mostly do monitoring when we go to management committee meetings whereby, we tour the school, we discuss key issues with the administration. But I did not know that we needed to have a plan" (KR₃).

"The indicators we focus on are the attendance of teachers and pupils, sometimes I go to class and ask the learners some questions to see if they understand things in class and the challenges they face and those are the things we discuss in the meetings" (KR₁).

"Me...I...didn't know that we are supposed to design indicators for us to follow. Usually, we come to school to attend meetings and it is during that time that we tour the school. But sometimes if the headteacher calls me if there is any issue, I come, we discuss the issue and come up with recommendations" (KR₂).

"I ...don't have the monitoring tool but I go with my diary where I note everything during monitoring" (KR₆).

"Yes, we monitor but we don't have those tools for data collection. Actually, when we go to school, we usually discuss with the administration on the various issues in the school. You move around the school, check classes... that's all" (KR₁).

The above responses show that some of the foundation body representatives do not know what to monitor, when to monitor and how to monitor. Since they do not know what to monitor, they do not have the monitoring plan and since they do not have adequate monitoring skills, they cannot develop indicators that guide their monitoring. Hence, the collection of data becomes hard because they do not know which data to collect, how to collect such data, and how much data to collect. Apart from the appointment letters from the Ministry of education, the foundation body representatives do not receive a copy of the TOR from BMDC yet the TOR is aimed at reminding members about what is expected of them.

A spearman's correlation analysis was performed to assess the existence association at a 0.01 significance level between the three monitoring constructs and performance. *Table 4.11* gives the results of this analysis.

Table 3: Spearman’s Correlations

Variables	Performance	
	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level(2-tailed)
1 Monitoring Skills	0.314	0.000**

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

The constructs of monitoring skills were statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Monitoring skills had a positive correlation with performance, though, this correlation is moderate. This implies that the monitoring skills exhibited by the foundation body representatives on the SMC have a moderate positive association with the performance of Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools in the BMDC. However, if the foundation

body representatives on the SMC acquired more skills in monitoring, they will ably monitor the schools and hence improve on the performance.

To assess the contribution of monitoring skills of SMCs on the performance of Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools in Bugisu Muslim District Council in Mbale District, a linear regression was performed.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Performance	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	p-value	95% Confidence Interval for Beta	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)		0.000	9.682	14.636
Monitoring Skills	-.081	0.371	-.268	.101

The model aimed at assessing the unique effect of monitoring skills after controlling the confounder effect of the rest. The results in Table 6 show the p-value of 0.371 which is greater than 0.000 as it was set in the study at (p-value > 0.05). This meant that the monitoring skills exhibited by the foundation body representatives did not offer a unique contribution to improve the performance of the Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools in BMDC despite the fact that it has a positive correlation with performance.

Further still, not all foundation body representatives on the SMC participate in the monitoring of school activities. This role is mostly done by the chairpersons who also do not frequently visit the schools which leaves out a number of factors not monitored. Similarly, when it comes to monitoring day-to-day school activities like a continuous assessment of learners, adherence to the teaching timetable, and timely completion of the curriculum, the foundation body representatives on the SMCs are unable to do that frequently because they do not have facilitation for monitoring. This undermines the quality of their discussions in the meetings because monitoring is a continuous collection of data that is used for decision-making and corrective measures. This also means that, for the foundation body representatives on the SMC to come up with informed decisions on critical matters, they must gather data about the same regularly which was also missing.

CONCLUSIONS

Whereas monitoring skills was positively correlated with performance, it never uniquely contributed to the performance of the Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary Schools in BMDC. And this is because; the foundation body representatives on the SMC are given a responsibility of monitoring among others, the academic matters in which their focus is on quality of teaching-learning processes, infrastructure, etc. However, they are unable to achieve some targets especially improvement in the academic performance because their monitoring skills, experience, and level of qualification do not allow them to achieve such targets adequately.

As a result, several issues happen in the schools, and the foundation body representatives on the SMC get overwhelmed because they do not have adequate data to inform their decisions and also because they are not trained on how to collect relevant data during monitoring of the schools.

It was also noted during the document review that BMDC does not equip the foundation body representatives with information that facilitates their monitoring, for example, the type of monitoring they should conduct, how often monitoring should be done, the type of data they should collect, and how such data should be managed, what to monitor and how to monitor remains a question to be answered.

The issues of managing data and keeping monitoring reports as evidence that show that monitoring was done were also lacking, which makes it difficult for one to assess performance. Similarly, the failure to develop indicators makes the monitoring work very hard because there is nothing to base on, to measure results. Important to note is that even though some of the foundation body representatives monitor, the purpose of their monitoring is not clearly spelled out, that is to say; is the monitoring aimed at informing decisions, tracking progress, or following up on recommendations. This should be clearly spelled out to enable better measurement of results.

Recommendations

In a bid to improve on the performance of the Government Aided Muslim Founded Primary schools in BMDC, the following recommendations should be adopted by the following stakeholder;

Bugisu Muslim District Council should;

- Conduct orientation for new appointees and also organise annual capacity building workshops/training to enhance on the monitoring knowledge and skills of the foundation body representatives on SMCs. This can also create a platform for sharing achievements, challenges, and prospects of the subsequent year.
- Share the terms of reference with the foundation body representatives on the SMCs, and design monitoring tools, indicators and mechanism of reporting that should be used by the foundation body representatives while monitoring.
- Incorporate a specific non-financial empowerment capacity building component in to school activities tailored to train the members on

the SMC in aspects of monitoring and evaluation, adult literacy and financial literacy for improved skills, knowledge and leadership.

- Design a monitoring system to address all the monitoring components to be able to broaden the scope of change to all stakeholders in the Muslim community to actively participate in monitoring schools in a bid to achieve the desired performance.
- Design an M&E framework that should be integrated into the reporting system of the school administration to be able to track progress and also identify key target issues to be addressed collectively.

Islamic University in Uganda should;

- Organize and conduct nonpaid training workshops for the orientation of foundation body representatives on the role of School Management Committees (SMCs), and the expectations of the public from the SMC members,
- Provide inspirational lectures to the foundation body on the relevance of monitoring and the need to select people that would add value to the school administration and the school at large.
- Organising short courses on resource mobilization skills for both the foundation body and its representatives on SMCs to support the schools' meagre resources.

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