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### Building Bridges into the Future: An Evaluation of Stakeholders' Perceptions on the Actualisation of the Curriculum in Uganda's Seed Secondary Schools

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**Keywords:**  
*SEED Secondary Schools,  
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Skills.*

This study evaluates stakeholders' perceptions of the actualisation of the formal, non-formal, as well as guidance and counselling curriculum in Uganda's Seed secondary schools. Using a stratified four-stage cluster design, twelve Seed secondary schools, 630 students from senior three and four, and 93 teachers were randomly selected. Using purposive sampling, eight school administrators, four officials from the Directorate of Education Standards (DES), and 48 parents, were selected. Data collection was through administering interviews with school administrators and DES officials, conducting focus group discussions with teachers and parents, and self-administered questionnaires to students. A document review of institutional files and documents was done. Qualitative data was analysed using thematic coding and major themes emerged from the analysis; quantitative data was analysed using SPSS software. Findings on the actualisation of the formal curriculum show low levels of lesson preparations, teacher punctuality, parents' monitoring of students learning, formative assessments, full-time teaching, equipped science laboratories, and the presence of computer laboratories, digital resources, and ICT teachers. Concerning the implementation of the non-formal curriculum, findings reveal inadequate time, facilities and equipment for co-curricular activities, several stakeholders managing discipline among students including prefects, disciplinary committees, parents, and the disciplinary committee of the board of governors, and poor medical care for students since the posted nurses abscond from duty. Lastly, concerning the implementation of guidance and counselling curriculum, findings indicate that several mechanisms like guidance and counselling programs, the existence of a career's master/mistress, class visiting days are missing in most of the schools, and the psychosocial needs of students were not met. It is concluded that, to a large extent, a significant gap exists in the

implementation of the official curriculum in seed secondary schools of Uganda. The study recommends the recruitment of more teachers on the government payroll in all seed secondary schools in the country. This will make teachers available at the school for consultation with students at all times. Construction and equipping of both science laboratories and computer laboratories in all seed secondary schools. Regular monitoring and close supervision of seed secondary schools by the relevant organs of the Ministry of Education and Sports should be effectively carried out. There is a need for the construction of staff houses at seed schools to maintain teacher presence for the effective implementation of non-formal curricular activities.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education is the bridge upon which one can cross from one social class into the other. However, the set-up of the education system in Uganda is such that it maintains the status quo. For example, an analysis of university admissions into traditional dominant science-based programs shows secondary schools where students pay over \$1000 per year dominate the admission lists. In a country where most of the citizens survive on less than a dollar per day, such schools are a preserve for the few. Uganda is just a representative of many other Sub-Saharan countries in Africa. Therefore, if nothing is done, uprisings like those witnessed in South Africa

because of arresting His Excellence, Jacob Zuma, are more likely to be experienced in other parts of Africa (Mlaba, 2021). Whereby those who have been denied decent education because of their socio-economic status and therefore are unable to favourably compete for job opportunities with the ones considered the fortunate children of the politicians and middle working classes will rise against the latter. The consequences are most likely to be dire and bear a more lasting impact on communities.

According to the State of Education in Africa Report (2015), Africa is the world's most youthful continent. Today, nearly 50 per cent of Africans are

under the age of 15 years. Africa's young people are our future leaders and will be the driving force behind sustainable growth across the continent. In this direction, secondary education is essential in preparing them for higher education and important life skills. Such secondary school education must provide the skills and tools that help meet a country's growing demands for highly skilled and educated workers in a globalised world (Curriculum Review Report on Lower Secondary Education, 2016). Therefore, this has increased a growing recognition among African governments of the need to invest in and expand access to secondary education and training as essential aspects of building a skilled workforce.

Specifically, in Uganda, a commitment to build an educated and skilled workforce has a genesis in the introduction of universal primary education (UPE) as a presidential pledge during the presidential election campaigns of 1996 and effectively implemented in February 1997 (Bategeka & Okurut, 2005; Mwesigye, 2015). The strides in access to primary education achieved under the UPE program led to a rapid increase in students entering secondary education, primarily because of the rise in graduates completing primary school. To cater for this influx, the government of Uganda came up with a Universal Post Primary Education and Training (UPPET) policy which culminated in Universal Secondary Education (USE) whose implementation equally saw a surge in the number of Senior students enrolment from 160,000 in 2007 to 250,000 by 2013 (ISER, 2019). Apart from putting pressure on the existing secondary schools' infrastructure in the country, the UPPET policy faced challenges of access by learners, especially in sub-counties that had no secondary schools. Subsequently, the government established seed secondary schools (SEED secondary schools) in the affected sub-counties, the first of which started operation in February 2007. The establishment of seed student secondary schools greatly solved the challenges related to access to secondary education

in Uganda, a country where the highest proportion of its population is young (under 18) making up more than half of the population (55%) (UBOS, 2018).

However, despite improved access to secondary education through the establishment of SEED secondary schools, studies show that students are not gaining the skills and knowledge they need for the world of work or further studies (UBOS, 2018). Further, additional reports show that at the post-primary level, only a minority of students achieve what is expected, and many leave school without the knowledge and skills needed to participate as citizens and productive workers (MoES Strategic Report 2017/18 - 2019/20; Buluma et al., 2018). Studies further show that there is a discrepancy between what employers seek from potential employees and what school graduates possess (Lippman et al., 2015; The Open University, 2020). This is cognizant of the fact that secondary schools need to build bridges into the future of their learners' furtherance of education, attainment of work, citizenship, and general life competencies appropriate for the twenty-first century.

Whereas different bodies and organisations such as Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) have tried to assess students' learning achievements at the secondary school level, the recourse to quantified parameters has not given a full picture of learning achievement, especially in non-academic achievements necessary for preparing learners for the world of work, life skills, citizenship, and democratic leadership among others. Such assessments therefore do not strategically contribute towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals target 4. Hence, the study evaluated stakeholders' perceptions of the actualisation of the official curriculum in seed secondary schools in Uganda.

## METHODS

The study adopted a concurrent mixed approach. The quantitative approach involved a survey of 630 students in senior four and 93 teachers in the 13 selected Seed secondary schools, while the qualitative approach involved in-depth interviews with 08 school administrators, 04 officials from the Directorate of Education Standards (DES), and focus group discussions with 48 parents.

### Study Population

The study population comprised students in the fourth year (S.4) of lower secondary schools in Uganda by February 2020 and teachers of S.1–S.4 in all seed secondary schools. We selected four senior students for the study as the most suitable class within the lower secondary school since we expected them to have completed at least three years of the ordinary level cycle. Therefore, the actualised curriculum could have impacted their acquisition of learning achievements needed for further studies, the world of work, and survival in the twenty-first century. The link between learning achievement and school factors can be estimated when a student has stayed in a school for a relatively long time.

### Sampling

A stratified four-stage cluster design was used for secondary school students and teachers. The first stage involved selecting a random sample of 3 districts per region, stratified regionally by North, West, Central, and East. Districts in all four regions of Uganda were included in the sampling frame. Under the second stage, a random sample of one seed secondary school per district was selected from the chosen districts. In the third stage, a census of S.4 students was made from those present in the school on the day of the survey. In the last stage, all teachers present in the school on the day of the survey were selected. The 2017 Education Management Information System (EMIS) data drawn by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) made up the sampling frame. The sample

size constituted 630 students and 93 teachers. Schools kept in the sampling frame were those with S. 4 class and an enrolment rate of at least 30 students. This was to ensure that the number of pupils in S.4 met the minimum sample size.

### Data Collection

Data was collected from various sources through a combination of approaches: Key informant interviews with the four regional Directorates of Educational Standards officials. Interviews and FGDs were made with School administrators and parents, respectively. Self-administered questionnaires were administered to teachers and students. The data collection instruments had three major sections: formal and non-formal as well as guidance and counselling curriculum. Finally, computed data was further validated by participants in four validation joint participatory workshops. These were administered in Eastern, Western, Northern and Central Uganda. Participatory workshops comprised teachers, school administrators, students, parents, board of governors' representatives, Parents Teachers' Association executive committee representatives, support staff, and group employees at each of the schools where validation workshops were held.

### Data Analysis

The data was analysed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. For qualitative data analysis, the study identified initial themes and classified them according to the set objective and kept an open mind towards emerging themes. The data was then sorted by theme, synthesised, and presented as quotations so that key points from each piece of data were summarised, classified, and interpreted according to the study objectives. For quantitative data analysis, quasi-statistics was done where data was entered into the SPSS program and presented as frequencies, means and percentages.

## Ethical Considerations

Researchers explained the purpose of the survey to enable informed consent. Researchers sought permission to take notes or voice record discussions for quality assurance of the data collected. The data gathered during the survey was confidential and used solely for research. The respondents were advised to withdraw their participation or decline to answer any or all questions presented to them at will. All research personnel underwent training in interviewing skills and research ethics in order not to harm or disadvantage the respondents during data collection.

## Validity and Reliability

To ensure the credibility of the study findings, the self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) was developed by a team of four curriculum experts and was independently validated by a Professor of Education Curriculum Studies and English Language education. In addition, to the validation of the data collection instrument, the data collected was equally validated. Hence, one validation workshop per region was held as part of the member check on both quantitative and qualitative data. This activity enabled researchers to test the initial results with the participants and respondents.

## Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to formal and non-formal, as well as guidance and counselling as aspects of official education. Second, this study was limited to the perceptions of stakeholders. The specific stakeholders included in this study were officials at the Directorate of Education Standards, teachers, school administrators, students, and parents, board of governors' representatives, Parents Teachers' Association executive committee representatives, support staff and group employees only. Specifically, participants were selected based on their availability at the school on the day data was collected from a specific school. Last, data was only collected from seed secondary schools that had a

minimum enrolment of 30 students in their senior four.

## FINDINGS

### Introduction:

The findings of this study are presented based on the three specific research questions, namely: What are the stakeholders' perceptions about how formal curriculum is actualised in seed secondary schools? What are the stakeholders' perceptions about how non-formal curriculum is actualised in seed secondary schools? And what are the stakeholders' perceptions about how guidance and counselling curriculum is actualised in seed secondary schools?

### Stakeholders' Perceptions of Actualisation of the Formal Curriculum

Participants were asked to rate the extent to which school administrators and teachers implement the following aspects of the formal curriculum. Their responses are both quantitative and qualitatively presented.

#### *Availability, Access, and Use of the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) Syllabus*

The findings revealed that 91.3% of teachers that participated in the study had access to copies of the NCDC syllabus. 91.8% of teachers reported regularly using the NCDC syllabus in designing schemes of work and lesson plans. Even 8.7% who never had access to the NCDC syllabus at the time of data collection, their schools had acquired the same, as revealed by one administrator during the validation exercise.

*The year 2020 had not been a good year, especially because schools started when they were moving away from the traditional curriculum to the new curriculum, especially for the senior one. By the time you collected this data, the school had not yet secured copies of the new curriculum. However, we have been*



*printing and photocopying the soft copy versions on the NCDC website. We sometimes borrowed from neighbouring schools that had excess until when we got copies from NCDC. By now, we have secured syllabus books in almost all subjects except Kiswahili and Music (School Administrator Western Uganda).*

However, it should be noted that Uganda is transitioning from a subject-based curriculum to a competence-based one. Therefore, the discrepancy in teachers' and headteachers' perceptions about the availability and use of NCDC is attributed to the two different curricula currently offered in lower secondary schools. But overall, seed secondary schools, to a large extent, are well stocked with sufficient syllabus books.

#### ***Drafting of Lesson Plans for Lessons Taught***

The second aspect of formal curriculum examined was whether teachers in seed secondary schools draft lesson plans prior to their lessons. Findings from teachers revealed that 85.1% of teachers draft lesson plans for their lessons. However, teachers' responses were inconsistent with the administrators' opinions. For example, a school administrator noted, "if you ask me or the deputy, I will tell you it is almost practically impossible for these teachers to make lesson plans". He added, "the only thing that I would praise them for is the drawing of schemes of work." To support the administrators' latter opinion, findings revealed that 92.5% of the teachers agreed it was mandatory to draft the schemes of work in their schools. Hence, many lessons in seed secondary schools are not effectively planned for by teachers. This has negative consequences on the appropriateness of the teaching aids and activities used in the lessons.

#### ***Teachers' Adherence to the School Timetable***

The findings revealed that 98.8% of the teachers that participated in the study do religiously follow the school timetable. However, teachers' opinion on the same is slightly higher than students' opinion,

which is 84.2%. Further, qualitative data revealed inconsistencies in adherence to the timetable as revealed by one student from Easter Uganda that when some teachers do not come to school, other teachers available to take over the lessons of such teachers. Indeed, this agrees with one of the school administrators who noted that their school did not have staff quarters, and sometimes teachers that walked long distances to school failed to make it in time for their lessons. This therefore means that those available at school take over the lessons of the absentee. However, there were no proper mechanisms for covering up the untaught lessons and it is possible that syllabus coverage in several schools is inconsistent as catch-up lessons are rarely conducted. Where catch-up lessons are to be arranged after normal school hours, students do not have extra time to attend such lessons as they have to move long distances back home.

#### ***Punctuality of Teachers and Students***

On whether teachers and students are punctual at school, the findings revealed that only 36.5% of the teachers are punctual for the teaching and learning activities. The majority of the teachers (63.5%) reported not being punctual. In the validation workshops, most of the school administrators showed that; the lack of teachers' accommodation and the long distances to schools were the leading factors for teachers' late coming. The students' data revealed a high level of punctuality (90.2%) on their part for teaching and learning. In a similar direction, 88.8% of the teachers revealed that students were punctual for teaching and learning activities. Students' punctuality could partly be explained by the establishment of the schools within students' communities, and yet, teachers are at liberty to stay anywhere beyond the school communities. In addition, students strived to adhere to the school rules and regulations of clock-in and clock-out, as revealed by 96% of the teachers. Let alone some schools had improvised boarding sections to curb late coming and absenteeism.

### ***Students' Lesson Attendance***

Findings showed that 87.9% of the students regularly attend lessons. However, in some schools, lesson attendance varied depending on the time of the day. In some schools, for instance, one teacher noted, “with lessons after lunch, the attendance is so low because these students are hungry and they move out to look for what to eat”. Also, some students in these seed schools are their own parents and bear family responsibilities like taking care of their siblings, paying rent, and school dues, which affects their regular lesson attendance. In fact, another teacher highlighted that students' lesson attendance fluctuates because of local economic activities such as the market, planting, and harvesting period in farming.

### ***Mechanism to Monitor Classroom Work and Students' Notebooks***

Successful learning depends on stakeholders' monitoring of the classroom and students' notebooks. Researchers investigated whether educationists in seed secondary schools had mechanisms to monitor classroom work and learning progress in learners' notebooks. Findings revealed that 73.8% of the teachers were of the opinion that they monitor learning progress in the classroom. School administrators from both validation workshops and in-depth interviews corroborated this information;

*“...the mechanism in place is not formally known by the teachers. As school administrators, we always move around classes and get feedback from students without announcing the exercise to the teachers. When you announce such an exercise, you cannot get the correct impression. Sometimes, when we get bad reports about a teacher's failure to teach and assess learners, we have always talked to them in order to improve on the areas they are performing poorly.”*

The submission from the school administrator suggests that it is not just enough to monitor learners, but they go the extra mile to ensure that teachers are teaching. This practice is helpful in checking on the quality of learning in the seed schools. It ensures syllabus coverage and regular assessment of learners.

Besides the school-based stakeholders, we tasked parents to explain whether they are helpful in monitoring of learning of their children. Specifically, emphasis was put on whether parents checked their children's notebooks. Findings showed that most of the participants were not checking their children's notebooks. The majority of parents had low literacy levels (50% below Senior two) as shown from the bio-data levels, which partly accounted for their failure to check their children's notebooks. However, in the validation workshop held in Northern Uganda, it was reported that some parents were checking the notebooks. But due to low levels of education, they only checked to see if the notebooks had red markings and were not interested in the contents of the notebooks. Therefore, they cannot provide appropriate feedback and support in relation to the learning outcomes reflected in the marked books and examination scripts. One teacher from Western Uganda echoed the important role of parents by noting that;

*“... parents are very instrumental in ensuring effective learning among their children. Unless parents put pressure on their children through monitoring what they do at school, teachers can only do their part, but not the entire part”.*

Therefore, unlike in private schools where the majority of parents can offer the needed support and guidance to their children in and out of school, the majority of parents in seed secondary schools are not engaging in the practice of monitoring their children's learning both at school and home. Hence, the lack of or inadequate monitoring of children's

learning progress has a negative impact on their academic performance.

### ***Exercises Given at the End of the Lesson***

In order to examine teaching-learning processes in seed secondary schools, we asked stakeholders for their opinions about assessment practices. Specifically, we inquired about the extent to which teachers in seed secondary schools give assessment exercises at the end of the lessons taught. Findings reveal that 64% of the teachers agreed they gave assessment tasks. Unfortunately, this finding was refuted by students during validation workshops, especially from central and western Uganda, who noted that it was not true they were given exercises in arts subjects. They emphasised that exercises were mostly given for Mathematics and English subjects. Coincidentally, one teacher in the same validation workshop (central Uganda) agreed with the student's revelation when he stated that; "...in most cases, it is hard to give exercises at the end of each lesson because this would demand marking. Given the heavy workload and the long distances, one has to move back and from school, it is hard to get enough time to mark these exercises regularly". Hence, whereas in some private schools, learners are assessed regularly to establish their learning gains from individual lessons and topics taught, this is yet to be realised in seed secondary schools.

### ***Return Marked Exam Scripts before writing another set of Exams***

Another aspect that we examined of assessment practices in seed secondary schools dealt with how regular teachers returned marked scripts to students to identify their learning deficits. Findings showed that 79.3% of the teachers that participated were of the view that they return these scripts to students before they write the next set of exams. Unfortunately, when teachers' opinions were presented in the validation workshops, they were refuted by students and partly by school administrators. One student in eastern Uganda

stated, "...it is us (students) that are supposed to pick the examination scripts from the director of studies (DOS) office". Quickly, the DOS clarified it is in his office where all marked scripts are kept. He revealed some students could even spend a year without picking their scripts. Even when teachers pick them up and take them to class, there are students that are always absent and therefore do not get their scripts. Hence, most marked scripts do not reach the learners and are lying idle in the administrators' offices. Therefore, it is hard in such schools to have corrections conducted, and chances are mistakes from one assessment are carried forward to subsequent assessments. Consequently, seed schools are failing to build for the future if learners are always left in a state of dilemma about their academic performance.

### ***Holiday Packages for Learners***

Besides practice exercises and returning of marked exams, researchers further investigated the extent to which teachers in seed secondary schools issue holiday and take-home assignments. Out rightly, teachers reported that this is not a practical aspect with students in seed secondary schools in the countryside. One participant revealed that parents hardly support schools with stationary to operate assessment tasks of this nature. Parents assume that government caters for all these learning needs and yet it is not the case. In addition, we were also told that these schools have a high enrolment of students with few teachers on the ground. Last, the inexistence of holiday packages was attributed to a lack of motivation from the government to mark holiday packages. Hence, self-paced learning arising from holiday packages and take-home assignments is not promoted among learners. This promotes spoon-feeding and the prohibition of independent-minded learners.



### ***Availability of Teachers at School to be consulted by Students***

Participants were asked to give their views about the availability of teachers at the school to be consulted by students. Findings showed that an average of 75.2% of the teachers were always around the school for consultation. Unfortunately, students who participated in the validation workshops refuted this claim. For instance, a student from Western Uganda revealed, “this is not true since in most cases teachers just come to teach lessons and after they leave school. By the time you move out from class to consult them, you find when they have already left”. Her views ignited counterarguments in defence of the absence of teachers from schools at the time they have to be consulted. For example, one school administrator in Western Uganda revealed that;

*... it is true some teachers are not available to be consulted by students because on the days they are supposed to teach, they are fixed from morning to evening. Therefore, by the time it reaches evening, they are exhausted and just think about going back home.*

Similar sentiments were registered in Eastern Uganda, where another school administrator revealed;

*... this being a government school and especially a seed school, some teachers have a very poor attitude towards the school. Some take the school as a resting point after all the headteacher does not control your salary. Therefore, for most teachers, once their teaching business is done on a particular day, they move out of school. For private schools, it is a different story since these have strict control over teachers and what they do.*

Submissions from participants showed that there are several part-time teachers in seed secondary schools whose commitment to their students was minimal. Therefore, teacher-learner interactions outside

classes are very minimal. Hence, learners have to master most of the concepts from the ongoing lessons or from their fellow learners who might have more knowledge.

### ***Availability and Utilisation of Science Laboratory***

Science subjects (physics, chemistry, and biology) are compulsory in lower secondary education. It was important to find out how seed secondary schools are equipped to teach the practical sessions of these subjects as they prepare students for terminal assessments. Findings showed that 83.1% and 80% of students and teachers, respectively, were of the view that their schools had science laboratories. On probing the utilisation of the science laboratories, findings revealed that 71.3% and 81.3% of teachers and students, respectively, agreed that the science laboratory was used for practical science subjects. The finding on utilisation of the science laboratories for teaching practical science lessons, especially from the teachers' perspective, lacks credibility owing to the fact that of the entire teacher respondents, only 26% were science teachers. In addition, one school administrator in a validation workshop in Western Uganda revealed that his school had just improvised and that practical lessons were not done regularly in this school. He added, “We have a store where we keep science equipment and practical sessions are not done for seniors one to three, we only afford to do them in senior four”. Another administrator added “In most cases, the practical lessons are held in classrooms. In other schools, participants reported that the science laboratories were in place but poorly equipped. Hence, they could not serve the purpose for which they were constructed. For instance, a teacher in Eastern Uganda reported, “the science laboratory is there, but it is not equipped so it stands to be useless yet it is essential for practical subjects”. Submissions from teachers and students suggest a theoretical approach to the teaching of science-based disciplines. When attempts to conduct them are made, they are meant to prepare students for national terminal examinations but not

for learning. Actually, one parent during a focus group discussion revealed "... For instance, for sciences, we do not have laboratory facilities. Even when the students go ahead with their studies, they will meet challenges in offering science subjects at a higher level. Teachers are trying their best to do the theory part, but the practical part is missing". Consequently, this situation in seed schools makes it impossible to nurture highly needed scientists.

### ***Availability and Use of the Library***

Concerning the availability of library facilities, 70% and 79.7% of the teachers and students, respectively, showed that their schools had established libraries. A contrary opinion was, however, raised by some school administrators during interviews and validation workshops that the opinion of teachers and students concerning the availability of libraries in schools was not founded. Instead, the teachers and students mistook libraries for bookstores which indeed were available in most of the seed schools. In regards to the regular use of library facilities by students for private studies, 51.3% of teachers agreed. Related to this finding, 55.4% of the students showed that their schools had textbooks for all subjects in the library, verified by 70.8% of the teachers that showed their schools had relevant textbooks in their teaching subjects. The finding on the availability of textbooks, especially from the students' perspective rhymes well with validation data from teachers, which revealed that some subjects had adequate textbooks in the bookstores. For instance, Biology, Geography, and History. But other subjects like commerce, Fine Art, and Luganda were either understocked or completely not available. Even in the subjects with adequate textbooks, their quality was lacking. During the validation exercise, one teacher in Eastern Uganda revealed that some textbooks that were sent to his school were of poor quality. He added that the books were full of outlined points and notes, especially in History. Hence, despite having a starting point of bookstores and a supply of most textbooks in seed schools, the aspect of textbook

relevance and coverage across all subjects needs to be given special consideration if effective teaching and learning for the pursuit of appropriate 21<sup>st</sup>-century competencies is to be achieved.

Besides, the big majority of students failing to use textbooks for private study also arises from stringent restrictions in some schools as an attempt to ensure appropriate monitoring for the safety of these texts books as one student in central Uganda noted during the validation workshop;

*... because it is a requirement to have a school identification card (ID) for one to borrow a book from the bookstore and yet this ID must be paid for; most of us cannot afford to buy school IDs and therefore, we end up not using the textbooks. However, sometimes our friends with school IDs assist and share with us textbooks borrowed using their school IDs.*

Therefore, there are minimal references to textbooks in seed secondary schools. Teachers must therefore, prepare adequate, organised and well-researched notes for the learners in these schools.

### ***Availability and Use of Computer Laboratories***

ICT is one subject offered in the lower secondary school curriculum and it is a compulsory subsidiary subject at high schools in Uganda. Therefore, it was important to investigate the preparedness of seed secondary schools in the country to offer ICT to students. 42.3% and 56.3% of teachers and students, respectively, showed that their schools had computer laboratories. However, findings from interviews with most school administrators and revelations during the validation workshops revealed that most schools did not have computer laboratories. Actually, during an interview with one school administrator in eastern Uganda, it was noted that his school did not have computer laboratories and that the limited available internet was for administrative use and that students did not have access to this internet. Another administrator during a validation workshop in western Uganda noted that

computer studies were timetabled onto the school timetable, but all that was being taught was the theory parts. But even then, the majority of schools (97.5%) did not have a teacher of ICT at the time data was collected. In a few schools where ICT teachers had been posted, these lacked computer facilities, internet, and electricity. Therefore, in the absence of/inadequate computer laboratories, digital resources, and ICT teachers to facilitate teaching and learning, the development of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills in ICT among learners in seed secondary schools is jeopardised.

### **Stakeholders' Perceptions of Actualisation of the Non-Formal Curriculum**

Concerning the non-formal curricula, findings from the study revealed a variety of activities that seed secondary schools engaged their learners, such as games and sports, club activities and faith-based activities. Games and sports include football, netball, volleyball, and athletics. Club activities include Debating, Scripture Union, Patriotism Educate clubs, and organisation for community empowerment, HIV/AIDS, and Human Rights club. Further, findings revealed schools had schedules/timetables and teachers in charge of the various non-formal curricula activities as noted by one school administrator "we have schedules for co-curricular activities and these activities are done daily after the lessons. In line with this finding, Leithwood et al. (2004) note that co-curricular activities also appear to contribute to better academic grades, higher educational aspirations, greater feelings of control over one's life and reduced incidences of delinquency.

However, many seed secondary schools faced the challenge of inadequate time, facilities, and equipment for co-curricular activities. One school administrator emphasised this challenge during an interview that for the football ground, they used the one at the primary school and that they knew about indoor games but lacked facilities and equipment since funds could not permit it. In addition, one

parent during a focus group discussion revealed, "students play football, but we use the primary football field since here there is no football pitch". Also, despite scheduling co-curricular activities, like games and sports and club activities, some activities were not performed regularly because seed schools were Day only schools. It is hard to engage in such co-curricular activities after classes because most of the students and teachers have to leave school immediately to embark on the long distances back home. Despite the benefits accrued from active participation in non-formal curricula activities like the attainment of a holistic education, most [learners in seed secondary schools are missing such opportunities. Therefore, it is hard for unknown talents to be explored in the course of their secondary school education. Because the majority of students drop out of school before completing senior four (UBOS, 2018), chances are that they never discover their unknown selves throughout their lifetime.

### ***Students Discipline Management Mechanisms***

The study findings revealed that seed secondary schools have several stakeholders within the school that ensure the management of discipline among students. The stakeholders included the prefects, teachers on disciplinary committees, students' disciplinary committee members, parents, and the disciplinary committee of the Board of Governors. Key to the management of discipline is the students' respect of schools had rules and regulations that were put in place. To ensure that discipline is adequately managed, stakeholders like prefects and students' disciplinary committee members in some schools have been empowered to operate like local council courts. For instance, a case is reported and entered into the discipline book. After entering the case, the concerned prefects or members of the students' disciplinary committee call aggrieved parties to argue out their cases. One school administrator during an interview revealed;

*On being posted to this school, I introduced something like the LC 1 system where we can call students' leaders and introduce to them a discipline case reported by one of the students, and then ask them to assume the position of the administrator and suggest how to solve such cases. Here, student leaders contribute to the decisions and agree on the action and the punishment to be given to culprits. This practice has assisted school administration in improving discipline in school (School Administrator, Western Uganda).*

An arrangement of this nature is helpful in shaping character, discipline, and morals among students. In addition, arbitration and leadership competencies are nurtured among students and fairness and justice principles among students are developed and nurtured at an early stage in their life. However, despite the mechanisms in schools that manage discipline among students, it was revealed that it was hard to stamp out indiscipline cases in day schools. Most participants observed that most indiscipline happens at night and during the weekends when students are out of school. Therefore, this calls for a concerted effort by school authorities, parents, and communities where these schools are located. In one school in central Uganda, it was reported that students as young as 14 years of age are renting their own rooms in the nearby trading centre. The school administrator observed, "Some parents rent for their children's rooms around the school and since the school is a day school, teachers and administrators do not have authority to monitor what goes on in these rentals. He added...in this case, students are left to do whatever they want (School administrator, Central Uganda).

Therefore, once these students are out of school are neither under the guidance and supervision of school authorities nor their parents. Hence, the local council leadership and landlords must be helpful in nurturing students' discipline. Interestingly, however, despite students renting their own rooms

for accommodation after school, parents from this particular school were confident that these learners were highly disciplined. For instance, one parent stated, "...the children of this school do not scatter in trading centres after school, which is a sign that the teachers are grooming them very well".

### **Students' Health Care in Seed Secondary Schools**

Building for the future requires mentorship in health practices. The adage suggests that a healthy mind deserves a healthy body. On this basis, we investigated the availability of school nurses at the participating seed secondary schools. Over 74.9% and 52.6% of the students and teachers, respectively, disagreed with the availability of nurses in their schools. In the same direction, 79.1% of the students disagreed with having sick bays in their schools. However, during an interview with one key informant from the Directorate of Education Standards, he revealed;

*"As part of the staff establishment in all seed secondary schools is a qualified nurse. A school administrator from Eastern Uganda shared similar sentiments, "... in most seed schools, nurses are paid by the government, but we do not see them at school.... they find it hard working in the village schools since housing and other resources are not available".*

Whereas the government is paying for the services of qualified nurses at seed secondary schools, either they do not report or they abscond from workstations. Hence, this denies students an opportunity to access medical care services and learning best health practices from qualified health professionals.

### **Stakeholders' Perceptions of Actualisation of Guidance and Counselling Curriculum**

As we think about building bridges for the future, it is important to examine the extent to which seed secondary schools nurture adolescents into responsible adults through the provision of guidance



and counselling services. We therefore inquired about the mechanisms in place to ensure that guidance and counselling are offered in seed secondary schools. It was revealed that some teachers integrate guidance and counselling sessions in their lessons (teachers in Eastern Uganda). All schools reported having senior woman teachers, but the concept of senior man was an unknown phenomenon to the majority of the participants. Hence, whereas girls' needs are taken care of in these schools, the boys are neglected. What the future holds for these boys and the girls they might marry is a little bleak.

Most of the guidance and counselling mechanisms that the research team had highlighted, e.g., a well-laid program on guidance and counselling, availability of a career's master/ mistress, and class visitation days, were completely missing in the participating schools. Hence, the psychosocial needs of students in seed secondary schools are not met. This has further worsened the discipline levels of the learners within and outside the schools. If such indiscipline goes unchecked, these students from the countryside will grow into hooligans and unruly citizens of the country. Therefore, all efforts should be made to ensure that all stakeholders support school authorities in seed schools to arrest the situation in time.

## CONCLUSIONS

Building bridges into the future is a hard reality to be achieved in seed secondary schools. Stakeholders' perceptions about the day-to-day running of seed secondary schools show they are understaffed and lack necessary infrastructures like laboratories and libraries. Where libraries and laboratory blocks exist, they are not fully stocked to enhance students' private studies. In addition, the majority of staff members lack accommodation facilities nearby schools, hence leading to daily absenteeism and late coming among teachers. Teachers cannot attend all lessons as timetabled or even offer remedial lessons. Further, they do not get

time to offer guidance and counselling in both academic and non-academic to students. Equally, the lack of boarding facilities for students in seed secondary schools and yet they travel long distances to and from school, has contributed to the late coming of students and going into rentals at an early age. Hence classroom concentration is a big challenge, and no meaningful learning is taking place in these schools. Exposure to rentals without guidance and support supervision from either parents or school authorities has increased indiscipline among secondary learners and students hardly revise their books. Hence, continued poor performance in national terminal examinations among students studying from seed secondary schools. The resultant effect has been dropout from the education system after senior four and ended up joining the world of work as casual labourers. The education set up in seed secondary schools reproduce the social classes in the country. Unfortunately, this is a recipe for disaster soon.

## Recommendations

If the education system is the bridge upon which we are to build for the future as a country, the key stakeholders in the ecosystem should consider the implementation of the following recommendations;

Recruitment of more teachers on the government payroll in all seed secondary schools in the country. This will always make teachers available at the school for consultation with students. Construction of both science laboratories and computer laboratories in all seed secondary schools. In addition, these laboratories should be well-furnished with resources to facilitate student learning.

Need for the construction of teacher houses at seed schools to maintain teacher presence and facilitate the effective implementation of co-curricular activities. Regular monitoring and close supervision of seed secondary schools by the relevant organs of the Ministry of Education and Sports should be



effectively carried out. This will stamp out abscondment from duty and will equally make school administrators accountable for doing their duties and responsibilities with due diligence.

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## Conflicts of Interest

Authors register no conflict of interest.

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