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Tracing the Employability Competencies among BSE Graduates in Mid-Western Uganda

Richard Rwabuhinga¹, Christine Okurut Ibore¹, Charles Muweesi^{1,2*}, Mary Kagoire Ochieng¹,
Faith Mbabazi Musinguzi¹, Jessica Kabasiita³, Ahimbisibwe Osborn¹ & Edmond Kagambe³

¹ Uganda Christian University Mukono, P. O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda.

² Busitema University, P. O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda.

³ Mountains of the Moon University, P. O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda.

* Author for Correspondence ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5411-2505>; Email: cmuweesi@gmail.com

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Keywords:

Learners Competences,
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Graduate Students.

This study investigated the influence of competence acquired through the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) program on the development of employability skills among graduates in Midwestern Uganda. This research begets a core question- what are the relevant competencies for employability skills of graduate teachers in mid-western Uganda? To unveil the socially constructed realities shaping BSEd teachers' perceptions of competence and the development of employability skills, we applied qualitative methodologies particularly case study design with interviews. Hence the study found out that, well-mastered principles of the subject would render a university teacher graduate employable. Communication skill was also an antecedent for greater performance within the teaching trial. Several other skills were found to depict our study employability skills framework and cognizant of the nature of training that empowered the BSEd graduates in various employable skills. Withal, school administrators reported a lack of some of the 21st-century skills from the graduate teachers (for example problem-solving, and critical thinking skills). It's recommended that universities align BSE programs with the competence-based curriculum to ensure more employable and relevant citizens.

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INTRODUCTION

The role of universities is to ensure their graduates can adapt to the fast-changing world of work, for instance, the Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) program plays a pivotal role in preparing graduates for careers as educators in secondary schools Nganzi, C. A. (2017). However, beyond subject-matter expertise, the success of these graduates in the professional realm hinges on their possession and demonstration of a diverse set of employability skills. This study seeks to investigate the influence of competence acquired through the BSEd program on the development and manifestation of these crucial employability skills among graduates Anthony, W., Charles, M., Judith, N., et al., (2024). The BSEd program is designed not only to impart knowledge of specific subject areas but also to equip graduates with the pedagogical skills, classroom management techniques, and interpersonal abilities necessary for effective teaching. Understanding how competence acquired through this program translates into employability skills is essential for evaluating the program's efficacy in meeting its educational objectives Rahmat, M., Ahmad, K., Idris, S., & Zainal, N. F. A. (2012). The effectiveness of educators in secondary schools is not solely determined by their knowledge of academic content but also by their ability to engage students, foster a positive learning environment, and address individual learning needs. Competence acquired during the BSEd program may significantly influence graduates' capacity to demonstrate these teaching-related employability skills, thereby impacting their effectiveness as educators. This study is directed to contribute to evidence-based decision-making in educational policy and curriculum development. By understanding which competencies are most closely associated with employability skills among BSEd graduates, policymakers can advocate for enhancements in the BSEd curriculum, teacher training programs, and licensure requirements to better align with the demands of the teaching

profession in the 21st century Charles, M., Shizhou, L., Muwagga, A. M., et al., (2022).

World attempts and studies have been made by various scholars to address this gap for example a study conducted by Su, W., & Zhang, M. (2015) revealed that the employability concept was widely adopted by Western researchers in the middle of the 1950's. However, it became more pronounced in the 1990s emphasizing the intriguing attributes employees must exhibit at work. Since this period, employability skills have been developed across different kinds of employment organizations and institutions. Suleman, F. (2016) showed that employability skills feature more prominently on the agenda of higher education institutions. This was explained by the changing nature of the economy where many students, and families expect a degree to provide a career pathway to a successful life. However, these two accounts were not from the developing world context. Similarly, Jonck, P., & van der Walt, F. (2015) studied employability skills with a critical analysis of differences between the private and public sectors. Results revealed that there were statistically significant differences between the private and public sectors in terms of graduate employability skills self-responsibility and interpersonal skills.

Wild and Omingo (2020) showed that graduates in most African countries specifically in East Africa are still lacking critical and problem-solving skills. Course-level outcomes like lesson planning are still lacking in education graduates to be able to pull more granular skills, abilities and dispositions into class-level learning outcomes. Cheng, M., Adekola, O., Albia, J., & Cai, S. (2022) revealed that employability has been used as a performance indicator of higher education institutions and that it is the role of a higher education institution to supply suitably skilled graduates who fail in the workplace. However, there are scenarios where graduates fail to secure jobs in many developing countries and the question posed is why? Could it be because of competence issues?

This study explored the perceptions of teachers and school administrators on the influence of competence on the employability of graduate teachers in mid-western Uganda. Studies carried out on employability skills were scanty. However, a few studies identified including Ornellas, A., ETL (2019) investigated enhancing graduates' employability skills through authentic learning approaches. Results revealed that a competency-based approach to learning enhances the possibilities for graduates' employability by connecting the curricula with the real work world.

Literature Review

Theoretical Review

The Human Capital Theory

This study embraced the Human Capital Theory (HCT) that explains how competence contributes to individual employability and career success and the Employability Framework presents a conceptual framework that integrates competence as a key determinant of employability, including relevant factors such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, and personal attributes. The human capital idea has its roots in the neoclassical school of economics. This makes it crucial to comprehend the neoclassical economic model and its core presumptions regarding human behaviour. This method assumes that people's main goal is to maximize their financial well-being. Scottish economist Adam Smith, who lived in the 18th century, was the first to write about human capital. According to Teixeira, P. N. (2010), the exact term 'Human Capital' Theory was coined by Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz (1950) who also developed the theory specifically on this subject as Gillies, D. (2015) explained. The phrase "investing in people" was coined by Gary Becker as a result of his economics studies. The human capital hypothesis was created in the 1950s and early 1960s by Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz. Both capital equipment and personnel are production factors, and Becker saw that investing in people was no different. In both situations, we're referring to resources that have financial and other benefits, (Sweetland, S. R. 1996).

Due to their inability to efficiently manage their physical capital, nations with low levels of human capital are most likely to have economic growth restrictions, (Strober, M. H. (1990). Growth in both physical and human capital is necessary for the economy to expand. The foundation of employability is the idea that investing in human capital through the development of generic skills will secure graduates' employability and speed up their professional development according to Becker, G. S. (2002).

A poster presented at the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference noted that many Universities in Uganda have a significant responsibility to help students get ready for the workforce. Therefore, it's important to consider whether the existing higher education system gives graduates the skills and required competencies that employers want. Additionally, by tailoring their curricula to improve graduates' marketability and guarantee a seamless transition into the job, educational institutions can benefit from an awareness of the elements that affect employability.

Empirical review

Dacre Pool, L., & Sewell, P. (2007) defined employability as having a set of skills, knowledge, understanding and personal attributes that make an individual more likely to choose and secure an occupation in which they are satisfied and successful. They developed a theoretical and practical framework for employability called the Key to Employability model. The mnemonic, Career EDGE is for the five components on the lower tier of the model. The Career EDGE model identifies five essential components of employability: Career development learning, Experience (work and life), Degree subject knowledge, understanding and skills, Generic skills and Emotional intelligence. It is suggested that providing students with opportunities to access and develop the five components of the model would result in the development of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem, as they reflect on and evaluate their experiences (Dacre Pool, L., & Sewell, P. 2007). The Career EDGE model suggests that employability is achieved

through developing the social concepts of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy in addition to the five components (Sumanasiri, E et al., 2015).

Confronting work and life experiences increases the employability level of students. There is a need for students to be guided as to how their life experience and work-related experience can be used to enhance their levels of employability (Dacre Pool, L., & Sewell, P. 2007). Brooks, R., et al (2012) suggested the need to increase opportunities for students to acquire relevant work experience during their studies to enhance graduate skills levels and a smooth yet effective transition to the job market. Practical work experience is vital for graduate employability and employment prospects therefore experiential learning and interaction with employers should be incorporated in education to encourage students to gain insight into the professions (Jackson, T. 2016). Barnes, L. (2019) also asserts that students at any stage can benefit from their work and life experiences to improve their capabilities and skills and, in so doing their employability.

Interpersonal Skills, competence and employability

Dearing, R. (1997) linked employability to the acquisition of skills for life when he suggested that through higher education graduates develop key skills crucial to their future success whatever they intend to do in later life. However, Hillage, J., & Pollard, E. (1998) suggest employability should be considered in terms of knowledge and attitudes while Bowden, J, et al (2000) emphasized that employability should be more than preparing students to be successful in the labour market, rather than preparing them to contribute to society as citizens. One of the main goals of university education is the development of employability (Eimer, A., & Bohndick, C. 2023). This is because higher education institutions are often criticized for failing to prepare graduates for the realities of professional practice (Knight, P. T., & Yorke, M. (2003). Higher education enables students to develop confidence in their ability to thrive in diverse and changing situations (Knight, P. T., & Yorke, M. (2002).

Knight, P., & Yorke, M. (2004) emphasize the relevance of self-efficacy beliefs in strengthening the employability of graduates. Graduates possess personal qualities and perceptions that determine to what extent they can effectively apply their qualifications (Eimer, A., & Bohndick, C. 2023). The career EDGE model stresses that universities should provide students with opportunities to develop elements of their model through reflection and evaluation (Dacre Pool, L., & Sewell, P. 2007). The components form the basis on which students constantly reflect and evaluate themselves and develop self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem. The Career EDGE model champions the role of work and life experience in the development of graduate employability (Dacre Pool, L., & Sewell, P. 2007). Activities outside of formal learning are fertile ground for developing the employability capabilities of students (Cushing, D.F, et al 2019).

Students who engage in activities such as internships, volunteering, mentoring and leadership programs can gain life experience that contributes to their employment outcomes (Nghia, T. L. H. (2018). According to Hillage, J., & Pollard, E. (1998), the employability of individuals depends on their knowledge, skills and attitudes and argues that employability is linked to the way individuals mobilize, present and update their resources in the context of the job market. It is, therefore, crucial to identify and develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that contribute to performing effectively in a given job. Garavan, T. N., & McGuire, D. (2001) caution against focusing on only subject-specific competencies to remain employable; individuals should consider wider dimensions of employability such as developing networks, maintaining technical excellence and teamwork Justine, Y., Charles, M., Nassaka, O. B., Kagoire, M. O., et al., (2024).

Graduates are expected to possess soft or transferrable skills suitable for the job market beyond possessing technical competence (Samkin, G., & Stainbank, L. (2016). Rothwell, A., et al (2008) noted that these soft skills are the employability skills required to meet the evolving needs of the work environment. Employability skills refer to those attributes of employees, other than technical competence, which make them an asset to

the employer (Robinson, 2000). Rothwell, A., et al (2008) highlighted communication skills, decision-making, problem-solving and teamwork as the important employability skills graduates should have to enter and succeed in the workplace. Martina, R. D. (2014) found that the most sought-after skills in the job market are related to adaptability, interpersonal relationships and negotiation skills while Wickramasinghe, V., & Perera, L. (2010) highlighted self-confidence, teamwork and problem-solving as the most important employability skills.

Philosophical underpinning

The social constructivist approach shaped the researcher's view that learning takes place in a variety of methods and at a variety of degrees, Schwandt, T. A. (1994). This study investigates the intricate dynamics of competence and employability skills among Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) teachers, employing a social constructivist research paradigm. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of teaching, this research endeavours to understand how teachers' perceived competence and employability skills intersect and influence their professional practice, (Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Through qualitative methodologies, including interviews, observations, and document analysis, this study aims to unveil the socially constructed realities shaping BSEd teachers' perceptions of competence and the development of employability skills essential for their efficacy in the classroom. The study of phenomena in their natural environment is key to the interpretivist philosophy, together with the acknowledgement that scientists cannot avoid affecting those phenomena they study. They admit that there may be many interpretations of reality, but maintain that these interpretations are in themselves a part of the scientific knowledge they are pursuing. Interpretivism has a tradition that is no less glorious than that of positivism, nor is it shorter. The study explored the perceptions of teachers and school administrators on the influence of competencies and employability skills gained in the two institutions of learning.

METHODOLOGY

This study gathered results using the case study design with the view on how Bachelor of Secondary

Education graduates embrace the probable competence during their University training. A population from both Mountains of the Moon and Uganda Pentecostal University graduates and education were used and a sample of 14 head teachers was purposively selected to represent the portion of the section in the study. Data was collected using in-depth interviews, this was transcribed and organised according to the code, re-written in line with the theme and produced systematically.

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION FINDINGS

Relevant Competences for Employability Skills of Graduate Teachers in Mid-Western Uganda

Competence becomes a factor that affects an individual teacher's behaviour and will affect performance in the end. Sulaiman, W. S. W., et al (2013) stated that performance is determined by many factors but competence is one of the strongest factors in improving performance. Defining and communicating performance expectations for teachers can have important benefits for schools. Teacher performance is a benchmark for the quality of services of inclusive education organizers Fauziyah, L., et al (2022). In this study, several expectations were shared by the head teachers who were interviewed as the Key informants (KII). There are various indicators used to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers, these include developing schemes of work and lesson plans, academic performance, content covered, student performance, exhibiting management and professional ethics and guidance and counselling. Evidence has shown that when expectations between teachers and head teachers are shared it sets a direction that improves performance for both parties.

Academic performance has been recognized as an important indicator of a teacher's effectiveness and this was emphasized by several participants as shown by one of the participants who said that the first issue he considers before anything would be the papers of the candidate. He emphasized mainly high school performance, especially A-level. Despite his emphasis on academic performance, there were other factors considered important indicators of

performance, for example, the nature of skills teachers consider important like lesson planning, developing schemes of work, time management, teamwork and others. When asked about what some of the training competencies headteachers look out for when considering a Graduate teacher, Participant 10 explained that some of these skills are very important in enabling teachers to prepare for their lessons. He said that most teacher's performance is gauged right at that stage, to the point of even training those who come without this kind of skills.

"First of all I will first look at his academic performance, I consider his papers on how he performed at school especially when he was still in high school, like at A-level how he was performing then after that maybe I can consider the issues like how he thinks about himself as a good teacher and he can tell me some of the things that he considers that he would put forward as a good teacher, leave alone the academic part of it. Yes and maybe there are things that they train them to do as teachers along academics like making good lesson plans, having schemes of work, managing time very well, having teamwork, and working with other teachers very well because that one matters so much if they lack that then the work becomes very difficult you can't work in isolation you have to work with others" (KI-8 Male Head Teacher).

This participant expressed himself on the importance of the academic performance of teachers especially during high school. This is mainly because of the belief that if a teacher never grasped well the concepts s/he is to teach then most likely they will not be confident enough and therefore learning may not happen at all. This assertion resonates with one of the quotes by Mark Van Doren, (.....) which states "The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery" This statement implies that a good teacher should be able to create an environment where a lot of unknown concepts become clearer while they are teaching. And this can only happen when the instructor has well mastered the principles of the subject. The other skills this school administrator is interested in like the ability to make

good lesson plans, schemes of work and timekeeping.

Communication skills, the ability to communicate effectively is one of the commonly reported indicators of performance. It was regarded as one of those essential skills that can enhance the performance of teachers as one of the participants shared, that they can be able to measure a teacher's level of confidence based on how they communicate. She went ahead to emphasize that as administrators they consider other factors like the nature of qualifications, experience and others. When asked the same question of what the training competencies looked out for in Teachers by administrators, this participant had this to respond,

"You look at the physical appearance then you look at the communication confidence and communication how this person communicates and how confident that person is and of course you look at the qualification now. Yes, there is a saying which says the first impression matters. Then you look at the qualifications now look at the qualification you also look at experience yes. I think those are some of the competencies. That is before someone is given a job. The communication skills, the training that person went through, the experience the person has. No, now with qualification it doesn't necessarily mean that one who got first class performs better than the one who got third class they many other issues you only ask when someone is looking for a job at that time but when it comes to performance in class. I think it's more than that performance in class it's more than performance in school it's more than qualification, you can not only consider qualification" (KI-1 Female Headteacher_MMU)

This head teacher on the contrary with the previous participant considers the professional appearance, confidence and communication skills of the teacher. She emphasized that other factors like academic qualifications are important however how a person presents is a precursor to their performance along the teaching trajectory. That expression is echoed in a quote by Birmingham, C. (2009) Who stated that "A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the

imagination, and instil a love of learning." Therefore, the way a teacher is appreciated by learners can have a great impact on their learning both in the present and future. This head teacher clarified perception about qualifications by saying that the best teacher is not one who got a first class for their Bachelor's degree however it's a combination of many other factors.

Syllabus coverage, the ability to complete the planned content by teachers was also one of those key aspects raised by several head teachers. It's considered a measure of efficiency when learners can cover all the content planned for them at school. One of the head teachers had this to say;

"ABCD was not covered because there may be an MDD activity going on in a school or something happened so when you look at all of that you can understand you can know that here there is a problem because this person said is going to teach ten topics has taught only three so that one indicates that there is some inefficiency somewhere then may be at the end of the term the learner's achievements all of them are below standard what were the problem is that the teacher didn't teach or it is the learners are not following and if there are not following what is the cause you get so these are some of the indicators that we follow as far as performance is concerned". (KI-8 Male Head Teacher).

This head teacher implies that one characteristic of employable teachers is that of being committed to their duties and responsibilities. And more so being able to meet deadlines even amidst competing activities. He gives an example of a teacher who will give excuses for not completing a syllabus because of other activities like Music Dance and Drama. Participant 11 adds their voice to the same argument that efficient teachers are those who can follow the school timelines even despite any busy schedules taking place at school. Additionally, this head teacher emphasizes the need for the teacher to apply appropriate timely and frequent assessments to their learners, especially in the post-COVID era where many students come to classrooms with poor concentration levels.

Similarly, another head teacher had this to say;

"Performance even now, syllabus coverage is very key especially when it comes to national exams. They set from the first topic to the last. So under this one, how have you been teaching, are you teaching and ensuring that the schemed work is finished on time? This is the second term, are you still in the first term's work? So when the schemed work is fully covered and the lesson is done, tests etc. you know our learners now even after we are in post-COVID error ". (KI_11 PARTICIPANT)

Exhibiting management skills, one of the head teachers indicated that one of those aspects that makes teachers perform better is the ability to engage in extra-curricular activities. This is because some of these activities build the intellectual capability of students and the monotony of doing only academic work.

"Well, he teaches his lessons very well other than teaching he is involved in the discipline of learners' guidance and counselling is for all of us not only the teacher in charge of guidance and counselling meaning he is interested in the wellbeing of this learner even outside the classroom, he is also involved in co-curricular activities in the school is part of the school programs. Yes, that is the teacher I would wish to work with. A teacher who interacts with learners can identify their weaknesses, their problems, their issues and be able to deal with those issues" (KI-1 Female Headteacher" MMU).

Participant 1 explains that the best teacher is one who can employ management skills while teaching, including conducting guidance and counselling to their learners, and being involved in extra-curricular activities. A teacher who integrates into all the other school activities shows that they're committed compared to the ones who only engage in teaching. Similarly, another participant 11 re-echoes a similar argument that a teacher who goes beyond class work contributes to the building of the intellectual abilities of their learners. This aligns with Ellen G White's **quote** which states that "True education has to do with the whole being. It is the harmonious

development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers". This implies that a teacher who engages in a holistic approach to teaching brings more meaning to teaching and learning among learners.

Another Head Teacher had this to say

"Not necessarily those classroom preoccupations but the general life of the school means a lot, like managing the students, serving the students, mobilization of the students, guidance and counselling. Then a teacher with satisfactory performance must show that they are good at these things. Things like management of club activities, for example right now UNSA debating tournament here in Kabarole district. There must be a teacher to champion that cause. When he does that and does it satisfactorily, he is contributing a lot to the intellectual faculty of learners. That's a very good performing teacher. A teacher who manages his classroom work as I have already said, a teacher who understands his work beyond the classroom, says supervision. There must be teachers who are down to earth to manage these things". (KI-10 Head Teacher)

Lesson planning and scheme of work, tools guide teachers to turn the curriculum into engaging and meaningful activities. One of the aspects considered important for one to be a high performer was the ability to execute classes as planned.

"Now the person I would be comfortable with is a teacher who prepares for the lesson in what we call lesson preparation he has the schemes of work, he has the lesson plans, and content delivery is another thing the content well and appropriately, so apart from able to prepare the lessons well he teaches his lessons very well other than teaching he is involved in the discipline of learners guidance and counselling is for all of us not only the teacher in charge of guidance and counselling meaning he is interested in the wellbeing of this learner even outside classroom, he is also involved in co-curricular activities in the school is part of the school programs. Yes, that is the teacher I would wish to work with. A teacher who interacts with

learners can identify their weaknesses, their problems, their issues and be able to deal with those issues". (KI-1 Female Head Teacher).

The ability to adequately prepare for teaching through lesson planning and scheming is one of those emerging issues as an important aspect of the teaching and learning process. In the previous sections, several teachers associated themselves with this skill as one of those that demonstrates an experienced teacher. Similarly, participant 1 emphasizes she finds it easy to work with a teacher who can prepare well for their lessons.

Leadership qualities and the capacity to handle administrative activities in a school were considered indicators of performing teachers. Some head teachers emphasized that even if a teacher is so good if they are not able to run the activities of the school when the administrators are not available, such a teacher lacks vital leadership skills.

"If you are good in class but outside you cannot so I may see yes you are good in class but you're not to be extent that I want because for me I would be considering someone who can deliver very well and at the same time do other things. Someone I can delegate if I am not there like I am around and even my deputy is here so now who is in the school, so there must be someone who is acting as a head teacher at the same time as a deputy ensuring that the school is in order yes. All round has teachers' qualities have, leadership qualities have so when we combine all that it can give you some good performing teacher". (KI-8 Male Head Teacher).

This head teacher KI-8 is interested in teachers who have leadership skills and who can be delegated to when the school administrators are not around at school. She emphasizes that there is so much to know that among the teaching staff, there are those who can provide leadership when the top administration is not present at school.

Discipline of students, Headteachers also define teachers' performance based on their ability to discipline their students, therefore implying that those unable to guide learners through the rules and regulations of the classroom are rendered non-performers as one of them shared below,

"The performing indicators like after elaborating like discipline you have said, there is discipline in school, students are well disciplined, and it is an indicator that teachers are doing their work. Yes, you see as I said there is talent development and students are doing very well. Having a peaceful staff. You know sometimes staff members have issues, so if they are peaceful, working very well, they are cooperating in case there is an issue they handle it amicably it is an indicator that there is some skill in the vial, some is being done". (Female Head Teacher).

This head teacher emphasizes that teachers who can instil discipline among their learners are one key indicator of performance. This is important because discipline promotes positive learning environments and is a key to success in academics and this can only be possible if teachers are also disciplined and handle issues in the classrooms amicably.

Leads to change, a performing teacher was also perceived by head teachers as one who does not only teach but changes the students' lives through mentoring and positive interactions. In this way, they support students by instilling values and teaching them important life lessons to enable them to become successful beyond academic performance. When asked whom headteachers consider to be a performing teacher, one of them shared the following,

"A performing teacher can realise a change. If you find students at a certain level you must move them to another positive level. It must be something you have corrected. There might be a gap somewhere, have you closed that gap for good? This is considered a performing teacher. Not necessarily this teacher who gives students distinctions but one who moves students from a certain level to another". (KI -7 Male Head Teacher).

This head teacher describes an effective teacher as one who can bring change in the lives of the learners. And this implies various aspects including playing a crucial role in shaping their minds, values, and behaviors. He emphasized that a teacher needs to ensure that s/he covers all the various gaps in

learning, these could be learning or others. The Teacher as an agent of change means they have the power to influence students' academic, social, and emotional development, as well as their perspectives on various societal issues. This assertion is similar to what Ralph Waldo Emerson stated in this quote *"The great teacher is not the man who supplies the most facts, but the one in whose presence we become different people."* The head teacher 8 below had a similar view that the outputs of the teacher can be a key indicator of their performance.

Another head teacher had a similar view.

"I can start from the learning rather than teaching because I can see this teacher how has done his work if he has some amount of work to be done in a term has he completed it on that term, then what about the output from the learners if he has taught three topics and he has given tests what is the performance of the learners vs. the amount of work that has been done so when we compare these two you can say there is good performance or poor performance but at the same time you can look at personal conduct it has also a lot that it can tell you about the performance of a teacher because a teacher who is not organized you don't expect a lot in terms of performance yes if it happens it is just by lack"?(KI-8 Male Head Teacher).

Despite all the various skills that the head teachers mentioned, they expressed them about other skills they feel are not commonly found among many graduates. There are some skills that some administrators felt have not been given enough attention and yet they are critical in the teaching and learning process. Some of these include human resource skills which one of the participants explained that it enables teachers to maintain healthy relationships with their students. As one of the participants articulated:

"I would wish that all institutions that train teachers would train them in competencies such as human resources. Many of them, you know some of us who are supervisors you see teachers who don't know how to handle people. These children you are teaching, if handle them like other objects but not human beings, then you are

bound to fail as a teacher because you need to handle these as human beings”. (KI-10 Head Teacher).

This participant KI-10 observed that many teachers lack human resource skills, she discovered that several teachers don't know how to handle learners. And that is the reason why many of them fail to perform well.

Problem-solving skills to avert problems of strikes and all that. Someone should be very smart to fit in this era of I might say stubborn adolescents so should have problem-solving skills and also emotional intelligence. Yeah, those are very critical skills. (KI-5 Male Headteacher).

Problem-solving skills were another skill perceived as critical for teachers in managing discipline at school. Participant 5 shares how this skill is pertinent at a time when many students became undisciplined as a result of the COVID-19 school closures that made many school-going children remain at home.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Competences for Employability of Graduate Teachers in Mid-Western Uganda

Competence becomes a factor that affects an individual teacher's behaviour and will affect performance in the end. Sulaiman, W. S. W., et al (2013) stated that performance is determined by many factors but competence is one of the strongest factors in improving performance. Defining and communicating performance expectations for teachers can have important benefits for schools. Teacher performance is a benchmark for the quality of services of inclusive education organizers, (Fauziyah, L., (2022). In this study, several expectations were shared by the head teachers who were interviewed as the Key informants (KII). There are various indicators used to evaluate the effectiveness of teachers, these include developing schemes of work and lesson plans, academic performance, content covered, student performance, exhibiting management and professional ethics and guidance and counselling. Setting directions establishes a shared purpose in the team, and stimulates teachers' work (Leithwood, K., 2008).

Evidence has shown that when expectations between teachers and head teachers are shared it sets a direction that improves performance for both parties. In addition, they also benefit the teachers' perceptions of school leaders' effectiveness, teachers' trust in others, and focused instruction Charles, M., et al (2024).

Moreover, direction setting supports a positive working environment and culture, shared and aligned learning and teaching goals, collaborative knowledge sharing and creation, and shared decision-making (Price, H. (2012); Sun, J., & Leithwood, K. (2015). Through these positive outcomes, establishing goals and performance expectations for teachers benefits student learning (Hallinger, P. (2011); Robinson, J. S., & Carton, B. L. (2008). The ability to complete the planned content by teachers was also one of those key aspects raised by several head teachers (Charles, M., & Khan, B. M. 2022). It's considered a measure of efficiency when learners can cover all the content planned for them at school. Some head teachers indicated that one of those aspects that makes teachers perform better is the ability to engage in extra-curricular activities Nansubuga, O. K., (2019). This is because some of these activities build the intellectual capability of students and the monotony of doing only academic work. Lesson planning and scheme of work, tools guide teachers to turn the curriculum into engaging and meaningful activities. One of the aspects considered important for one to be a high performer was the ability to execute classes as planned.

The expectations of the head teachers in this study are similar to what Anderson, G. (2009) articulated that an effective teacher does things right. They plan their lesson, prepare the learning environment, conduct proper lesson introductions, ask questions, and use instructional media material. A performing teacher was also perceived by head teachers as one who does not only teach but changes the students' lives through mentoring and positive interactions. A similar view was emphasized by Anderson, G. (2009) that teaching is much more than just doing things right. The effective teacher touches the lives of students. Effective teaching is the result of three components: ability, personality and knowledge

Charles, M., George, K., et al., (2024). In addition, communication skills were regarded as one of those essential skills that can enhance the performance of teachers. This finding corroborates a study by Muste, D. (2016) which found that a group of teachers interviewed sustained that strong communication skills are a must in today's society because communication is the activity of the utmost importance.

In this study, problem-solving skills and emotional intelligence were rated as key skills that must be possessed by all teachers to deal with students who are faced with a lot of psychological dilemmas. A similar finding by Kalaw, M. T. B. (2019) revealed in her study on the impact of the degree program on competency development among graduates in which the top three skills with very high impact were critical thinking, ability to solve a complex problem, and ability to work with others. Similarly, problem-solving skills were found very relevant to the current work of teachers Daguplo, M. S., et al., (2019).

The ability to maintain discipline among students was also rated among the key indicators of performance among BSE graduates. This is important because teachers as role models can be one of the major factors in instilling discipline Kaweesi, M., et al., (2023). This is similar to another study which discovered that Educators observed that their self-discipline is the key to effective discipline in the school. Amongst others, this is because the educators are role models for the children. This is due to the well-known social-cognitive theory of learning (stressing the role of observational learning) of the distinguished Albert Bandura Dzivhani, M. D. (2000). These Educators also maintained that self-disciplined educators maintain discipline easily. Another study in South Africa found that learners' discipline was ranked as one of the major concerns in the education process expressed by all stakeholders about public schools and the education system (Mabeba, M. Z. & Prinsloo, S. 2000: Van Wyk, A.L. 2001: Thompson Dennis F. 2002)

CONCLUSION

Several skills were highlighted by the school administrators as those that make Teachers employable such as academic skills, management,

lesson planning and schemes of work, leadership, digital skills, teamwork and many others as expounded in the employability skills framework which has been one of the key guiding theories' in this study. However, there was a set of skills that have been discovered by the administrators that several BSE graduates don't exhibit and this implies that there are gaps in the BSE program in some universities these include innovative problem-solving and critical thinking. The role of the university in training BSE students in employable skills has been strongly affirmed by all the participants. It was established that the nature of training in the two universities empowered the BSE graduates in various employable skills. And all the participants expressed having been empowered by the BSE program. Both universities were complimented.

Likewise, education administrators need to continuously motivate teachers to practice their ethical code of conduct for teaching as they do in their daily practice. In this, it is important to ensure that teachers reflect the right moral conduct as they are key role models to the learners. Similarly, education administrators need to position teachers in roles they are passionate about so that they can leverage the enthusiasm and commitment that follow when people engage in tasks that excite them. Similarly, education administrators need to create conducive environments to use technology in learning as it is steadily turning into one of the crucial aspects of modern teaching as a result of the evolving learning environment. In addition, the administrators need to find methods to motivate teachers who actively participate in extra-curricular activities at school since these enhance a teacher's performance. These activities have been recognized to build the intellectual capability of students and break the monotony of doing only academic work.

The National Council for Higher Education should provide avenues to fast-track new curriculum changes. This study has established that secondary school teachers trained with the old curriculum are struggling to implement the competence-based curriculum. Therefore, the universities training BSE graduates need to align their curricula to the competence-based curriculum to ensure that their

graduates become more employable and relevant to the changes and trends in secondary teaching in the country.

Study New Knowledge and Policy Proposition.

The study will contribute to the existing knowledge whereby it was in support of the employability skills framework and human capital theory in that it was established in the current research that perceptions of teaching and learning competencies and school administrators' performance were in tandem with employability skills of graduates hence it was in favour of the human capital theory as with this relevant teaching and learning competencies delivered. Human capital with skills needed at work is guaranteed. This resonates well with the employability skills framework as the findings have proved that if skills are fronted in the teaching and learning of students, they acquire employability skills in the world of work. Furthermore, the findings of the study have verified that professional competencies are reflected in teacher tasks, thus matching well with the employability skills framework. Consequently, students have ended up mastering educational foundations and can apply them at work. Thus, the findings have produced relevant knowledge in favour of the interpretivism, and philosophic ideologies that students' skills change and students' competencies have been in tune with these needs. Finally, the study established that bachelor's secondary school teachers have been greatly involved with competencies relevant in the world of work thus in tandem with the skills demands necessary to propel Uganda forward from a low-income state to a middle-income state.

Also, as the country moves to the fourth year to implement the competence-based curriculum for lower secondary, the knowledge shared at universities to teach trainees must be aligned towards the implementation of this new curriculum universities should start preparing and aligning their courses to receive the

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