

LEADERSHIP STATUS AND PUPILS' PERFORMANCE IN GOVERNMENT-AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN KAYUNGA DISTRICT, UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

The study explored leadership practices used by headteachers in Government-aided Primary Schools in Kayunga District, in Uganda and their influence on pupils' performance. Related literature was reviewed to facilitate a wider understanding of effective leadership practices that positively impact school performance. Data was collected through interviews with 76 headteachers and 76 teachers in charge of Prefects body. The study participants were selected using purposive sampling. Established was that democratic and participatory leadership styles were most applied in school administration to have better academic performance, whereas other headteachers who applied autocratic leadership style attested dismal academic performance; while the rest of headteachers that applied laissez-faire leadership style revealed poor performance of their pupils. The study findings further revealed other promising practices for developing in-school capacity to sustain high levels of pupils' learning with a critical mass of flexibility to give teachers the space to engage in collaborative activities. It was noted that such collaborative leadership practices contributed to creating a shared leadership work environment for a better motivated staff useful in today's work climate because it links human development and school resources to desired performance results. The study concludes that shared leadership has great potential to offer best instructional alternatives for improved performance outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Leadership status, Government-aided, primary schools, pupils' performance, Uganda

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, educational reform attempts to raise performance standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning opportunities for all learners have hastened and flourished. This has generated a state of constant change and relentless array of administrative initiatives that call for school performance improvement. In response to this, a great deal of attention has been given to evaluating how school leadership is effectively practiced to impact instructional change for increased performance (UNESCO, 2014). Besides, school leadership is being coupled with more accountability for pupils' performance outcomes, and a better use of the knowledge base of education and pedagogical processes. A key driving factor for this agenda is a combination of shifts in social and school structures. Consequently, there is need to redefine and broaden school leaders' roles and responsibilities in order to achieve positive performance. This requires changing the way school leadership is developed and supported in practice.

Contextually in Uganda, since 1963, school leadership has been largely traditional with a strong hierarchy centralised on the head teacher (Education Act, 1963). In 1963, the New Castle Commission created new structures in review of the education system. Such structures often tended to ignore the voice of teachers and full participation in school decision-making processes (MoES, 2013). Non-participative decision-making processes present powerful barriers that lead to teacher ineffectiveness, poor academic achievement levels and school ineffectiveness. This often results into high levels of attrition, reduced completion rates, and fewer entrants to secondary education. Although the Uganda government has tried to redress the issues that cause poor academic achievement in UPE schools, there is little evidence that the interventions used have helped to solve the problems (Uwezo, 2015). Through the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), the government established Education Standards Agency (ESA) to oversee performance standards in all education institutions.

The government also put in place School Management Committees (SMCs), District Education Officers (DEOs), District Inspectors of Schools (DISs) and Centre Coordinating Tutors (CCTs) to oversee in school management and monitor pupils' performance in schools. Despite these endeavors highlighted, pupils' academic performance of government-aided primary schools continues to be wanting (UNEB, 2015). Unfortunately, school leadership is still focused more on administration than teaching and learning in classes (Kyeyune, 2008). A combination of factors that weaken the learning and teaching of pupils in UPE schools is persistent. Thus, in the process, school leaders are challenged in their leadership and managerial roles. Failure to effectively lead and manage schools by most head teachers translates into failure by learners to achieve the desired learning outcomes. Recently, empirical studies are appearing more and more frequently in this field of educational leadership with the idea of enhancing teacher active participation to ensure good school performance outcomes. However, despite the efforts by various stakeholders to improve performance of learners in Kayunga district, many government-aided primary schools are falling short to raise desired learner achievement (NAPE, 2017).

The unintended consequence of education progress in closing learner achievement gaps has been linked to a lack of attention to strengthening school leadership and to the growing competitive demand for effective leadership skills. Apparently, strengthening school leadership requires the development of leadership frameworks that are driven by collaboration, innovation and creativity in management so as to attract a skilled mass of teachers in actively participating in school programmes. Such quality school leadership practices thrive on flatter management structures, decentralised decision making, and the use of task teams, cross-functional networking, and flexible work arrangements. Thus, improving school leadership explains why support for school leaders has become a key policy priority that make it imperative to take action. This requires schools to adopt an innovative and forward-looking leadership approach that would enhance full participation of all members of staff to enhance school performance outcomes in sustainable ways.

Statement of the Problem

Schools in Kayunga District are supplied with trained teachers and scholastic materials. The schools in the district have the basic infrastructure development and are regularly supervised to ensure effective teaching and learning. Despite that, poor performance of pupils in PLE continues to be a notable issue as evidenced by the high failure rates indicated by UNEB reports over the years. The reports indicate that pupils in government-aided primary schools in Kayunga have consistently performed poorly (UNEB, 2017; 2016; 2015). Thus, for the last five years, pupils' performance has been poor. For instance, in 2013, out of 4537 candidates from government-aided primary schools, 41% were ungraded. In 2014, out of 4132 candidates who sat for PLE, 34% were ungraded. In 2015 out of 5213 candidates, 39% were ungraded. In 2016, out of 4326 candidates, 33% were ungraded. In 2017 again, out of the 4370 candidates who sat for PLE, 35% failed (UNEB, 2017). On average, in the past five years, there has been a persistent failure rate of 38%. This is a very high failure rate which disqualifies many from further formal studies. Moreover, in the same period, 40% of those considered to have passed, were in division four which is perceived to be a weak grade and non-attractive in well performing secondary schools. The weak pass combined with the high failure rate presents more challenges that necessitate urgent attention. Therefore, this study explores leadership practices' influence on the performance of pupils in government-aided primary schools in Kayunga district in Uganda.

Theoretical Framework

The current leadership theories bridge the traditional divide between the generalisations of theories of leadership and the world of practice by setting practical examples of what is applicable and suitable to scale up outstanding performance. Thus, education practitioners can apply leadership theories to practice in order to break down the traditional hierarchical bureaucracies that inhibit effective participation and collaborative professional learning, which in turn impact on quality management for better performance (Junarso, 2009).

Leadership theories demand that governments, districts, and school governing bodies rethink their school leadership approach to educational reforms in order to facilitate wider shared leadership practices in schools that still operate a traditionally hierarchical organisational structure. The leadership theories advance that improving the school working conditions and staff performance outputs through the persistent use of good leadership practices is the most useful management action to move schools forward (Northouse, 2019). Also, it is argued that expansion of leadership roles and responsibilities need to be achieved by meaningful interactions between headteachers and teachers so as to achieve common values in pursuit of joint actions for the attainment of school performance outputs (Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010). Thus, the theoretical framework was useful for this study in providing proper guidance in the establishment of the influence of leadership on pupils' performance in primary schools of Kayunga district in Uganda.

The overall image of school performance is thus defined, to a large extent, by the leadership practices of the headteacher and other senior members of staff. The theories of leadership promote the idea that, a school, rather than the individual leader, is the most appropriate unit for thinking about the development of leadership for quality teaching and learning so as to improve school performance. Leadership practices that promote staff participation and involvement in school affairs as well as positive interpersonal relationship that exist between teachers and headteachers are suggested to be important in the achievement of school performance goals (Fullan, 2009a; Harris, 2008; 2013a; Muijs, 2011). This study affirms with such administrative leadership that would guide headteachers to effectively account school outputs to stakeholders following proper management actions and procedures. Headteachers are expected to engage staff in the management and achievement of the school's performance targets and curriculum development goals. Such instructional leadership would also help headteachers to lead actions that aim at improving teachers' instruction and supervise their instructional outcomes.

Literature Review

Previous researches on the influence of leadership styles on learner performance have left out the consideration of functional leadership climate that promote full participation and involvement of all members of staff in the school organisation. To enhance wider horizon of possibilities that escalate into credible school performance outputs such as learner achievement, current literature advocates for a deliberate collective envisioning to get schools transformed with relevant appropriation of human potentials to promote outstanding pupils' performance (Gu & Johansson, 2013). In their study, Mugizi, Tumuhaise, Samanya, and Ogaga, (2019) noted that laissez-fair leadership was mildly used in schools and it had a negative and insignificant relationship with staff performance which in turn affected learner achievement. The aforementioned authors advised that laissez-faire leadership is not a desirable leadership style and therefore headteachers should avoid using laissez-faire leadership in their school administration and management. Practitioners of such a leadership style react only after problems have become serious to take corrective measures, and often shun decision-making and communication; they communicate only when required as they are not frequent at the station.

On the contrary, democratic leadership style promotes positive discussions amongst staff, values their contributions and allows teacher participation in the running of school administration in a supportive manner (Hornackova, Halova & Nechanicka, 2015). Moreover, headteachers demonstrate a positive understanding of the instructional needs of teachers and works continuously to get teachers develop to their full potential (Wallace, 2011). Such a type of leadership practice is associated with pupils' learning outcomes as teachers are motivated, consulted and encouraged to participate in seeking new ways of working, identifying instructional challenges, generating ideas through consensus building. Furthermore, Srivastava, (2018) noted that democratic leadership is associated with managerial leadership approach in which the school leader promotes compliance of followers and role of supervision of school organisation and group performance. With such a school work environment

defines how activities such as task allocation, instructional coordination, evaluation and supervision of learning outcomes are directed toward the achievement of set performance goals.

Within a culture of democratic work climate, teachers are motivated to engage for new ways of doing things and resolving school problems while actively participating in leadership activities to firmly push education goals forward. Harris (2008) and Muijs (2011) advance that through democratic and participatory styles, staff participation and involvement in school matters and positive interpersonal relationship between school staff and headteachers result into good performance. Since the late 1990's there has been call to teachers to increasingly take responsibility for improving instruction by engaging in their work not just as teachers, but as leaders (Day & Harris, 2003). As such, there are a number of studies that investigate the teacher leadership style for improving schools (Greenlee, 2007). While Lambert (2000) describes teacher leadership style as the enrichment of the teacher profession, she emphasises the distributed leadership behaviors. As, Harris and Muijs (2004) notes that distributed forms of leadership improves teachers' morale and student outcomes and it eventually leads to school performance. More so, York-Barr and Duke (2004) posited that teacher leadership influences teachers, administrators and other stakeholders for improving teaching and learning with the aim of raising the student learning level and their performance outputs.

Today, rather than teachers perform the role of transmitting information; they have leadership soul for guiding pupils as well as being at the forefront in the attainment of both the academic and social development through sharing a vision of quality school improvement. It is argued that when teachers take part in school wide leadership decisions, they offer technical guidance in solving instructional problems so as to improve performance. This energy in schools brings about the teacher leadership model as a shared leadership approach in form of building an empowering learning community that steers performance within schools. Apparently, policy discussions suggest broad support for expanding teachers' participation in school leadership and decision-making tasks (Gronn, 2003). Other studies suggest that teachers' involvement in formal decision-making or leadership roles will have a greater impact on student achievement (Harris, 2008; Sibanda, 2017). Thus, the influence and involvement of teachers is a critical factor in determining essential learning needs and interests of pupils. As Greenlee, (2007) noted that when teachers take part in school wide decision making, they can mentor their colleagues, facilitate professional growth of other teachers, participate in joint curriculum activities, and can foster more collaborative working arrangements to influence a positive school change. *The study was guided by the ensuing question: What is the current status of leadership and its associated influence on pupils' performance in government-aided primary schools in Kayunga District?*

In this study, it was noted that in some participating schools where participatory and democratic leadership were applied, there was mutual respect and most staff participated in school administration to ensure collective action and accountability. Except, there were cases when pupils' performance outputs stagnated at average levels as similarly indicated in studies by Harris, (2008) and Bush, (2011) who noted that student performance is best achieved with the support of collective efforts by those in

the organisation but would stagnate if school administrators fail to attract the full participation of all members involved. Similarly, other searches go ahead to indicate that the standards to which schools must perform and the quality of school outputs required, raise expectations regarding school leadership to an extraordinary level. High performing managers recognise the significance of setting an organisational school climate that promotes inclusion of teachers in leadership activities in order to balance both views from the extreme positions of formal and informal leaders so as to be successful. This study noted that lack of consistency in school leadership approaches greatly affects school performance outcomes hence the need to introduce new flexible approaches with relevant appropriation of teacher potentials for organisational change so as to advance school effectiveness and attain outstanding pupils' performance outcomes. Therefore, the study noted that there was a gap that necessitated an examination into leadership status and pupils' performance that would enlist full participation and involvement of all members of the school in order to enhance excellent pupils' performance in Kayunga district in Uganda.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research design with the help of interviews to obtain qualitative data collections on the current status of leadership and its influence on pupils' performance in government-aided primary schools of Kayunga district. The qualitative approach was used to refine, elaborate and complement the quantitative data extensively (Creswell, 2003).

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study purposively selected headteachers (n=76) who had been in school for five years and these were the main informants of the study, and teachers in charge of Prefects body (n=76) in Kayunga District, Uganda.

Research Instruments

This study employed interviews to obtain richly-textured information, relevant to the problem under investigation. An audio recorder was used to record responses. Interviews enabled the researcher to conduct in-depth interview sessions with 76 headteachers and 76 teachers in charge of Prefects body in order to obtain enough data to sufficiently describe the research problem of interest and address the research question. This allowed for an exploration of ideas through hearing how participants make sense of their everyday experiences, school work values and relationships. Interviews created room to delve deep into individuals' experiences, and to understand the status quo of leadership practiced in schools. The interview guide consisted of questions that required responses on leadership styles practiced by headteachers in their school administration and how such leadership affects pupils' performance. The researchers asked more questions evolving from responses and used them to probe deeper on issues.

The collection of evidence from research participants brought forth the construction of reality, what it is and what it is not, how leadership is organised, and practiced in schools. Yin (2009), indicated that

one of the advantages of using interviews is that it allows flexibility in terms of context and timing. Thus, the researchers were able to probe following lead responses which enabled getting deeper meaning and information which sought members' views and this significantly scaled the credibility of the study. All participants were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the research process. The interviews enabled the researchers obtain in-depth data based on the pre-established leadership practices within the participants' natural setting and further probing to check for truthfulness (Kulbir, 2014). This enabled the researchers to get information that could not be obtained by using the questionnaires.

Data Collection Procedure

After the research project was ethically cleared by the research protocols, the researchers contacted the study participants especially headteachers by telephone and informed them of the intended study. On visiting the study schools, the researchers explained the purpose of the study and assured participants of confidentiality. After getting consent of the school headteachers and teachers in charge of Prefects body, the informed consent forms were distributed to selected participants. The signed-up consent forms were later collected and a copy left with each participant before start of conduct of interviews sessions. Interviews started in mid-November and ended in early December 2019. Interviews focused on common leadership styles headteachers used in schools and how each type of leadership practice influenced pupils' performance. The audio recorded interviews began with the researchers explaining the purpose of the study and the research questions. The researchers then asked the participants to respond with their thoughts and asked follow up questions to probe for a greater understanding of their knowledge of the problem.

Lead questions emanating from responses were used to ensure that in-depth views are exhausted. Interviews lasted as long as the participant was willing to continue discussing their understanding of the topic, but generally lasted thirty to forty minutes. Data obtained from audio interviews were recorded. Later, transcription of the audio recorded interviews started. Following separate interviews from the seventy-six study schools, the researcher transcribed, categorised and analysed collected thoughts, ideas and perceptions of each interview. As noted earlier, the researchers transcribed an audio recording of each interview following the codes of the schools. Each of the schools visited was coded using (S) to represent the school along with the digit number (S 14).

Data Analysis

Deductive content analysis technique was used to analyse the data. Data analysis process consisted of systemic steps; i.e. review of each individual transcript for common words and phrases, axial coding of common words and phrases across all transcripts; naming of all coded common words and phrases; and consideration of which participants did or did not proffer common themes. At this stage, the researcher reviewed each transcript for individual themes that emerged from each audio recorded interviews. These individual themes were compared across interview transcripts in an effort to prepare axial coding. From this axial coding, both common and dissimilar themes between the interview

subjects were deduced. Common themes were grouped together and presented as commonalities across the entire spectrum of interview subjects.

Results and Discussion

The study sought to establish the leadership styles practiced by headteachers in government-aided primary schools and how such leadership practices influence pupils' performance. The study found that most headteachers expressed ignorance of the meaning of the concept leadership styles. Majority of the headteachers defined leadership styles as those routine activities performed in schools while others mentioned of supervision of teaching and learning and others understood leadership styles from an organisational management perspective. Save for the few that had attained degrees in education administration and those who attended a short management course (CPD) organised by the Ministry of Education and Sports who understood well the four common types of leadership. These headteachers defined leadership styles as the specific approaches and techniques or ways of influencing and leading people through teamwork and sharing of responsibilities to achieve educational goals. Other participants defined leadership styles as the application of different leadership skills in different situations.

One of the participants during the interview zeroed leadership styles to methods of school administration; he mentioned that leadership links well with management whereby a school leader demonstrates his or her own abilities to effectively handle human resources to achieve organisational goals. The results suggest that whereas some headteachers expressed knowledge of leadership styles and how they applied such leadership styles in their schools to effect performance, others proved novice of the leadership styles that can effectively influence pupils' performance. They could not correctly indicate that school leadership sets the direction and the space in which teachers work productively. Failure to demonstrate a clear understanding of the meaning of leadership styles has had far reaching implications on the school management and school improvement in general. However, the study noted that performance was largely dependent on the leadership styles headteachers used to administer their schools which included autocratic, participatory and democratic styles.

The study results indicated that, pupils' performance varied from school context to another with emerging issues which largely and consistently rested on personal leadership practice. The most critical of the emerging issues in this study relate to the leadership capacity of some headteachers, which had significant impact and influence on core issues that contributed to school's success or failure. Through interviews the study noted that without identifying a shared focus for performance improvement, most headteachers could not guide their staff in developing and articulating a collective vision that would result into improved performance. This lack of clarity caused a big challenge for school administrators in modelling the vision of improvement through their leadership actions with teachers, pupils, and parents. Furthermore, the expectations of headteachers for their staff and pupils tended to be based on historical norms and relationships as a means to increase productivity.

Additionally, in some schools the absence of decision-making structures limited teachers from being involved in strategic planning which resulted in unilateral decisions made by the sole headteacher and a few individuals of his or her interests. And yet the requirements of performance improvement necessitate clear communicated agendas to all members of staff through their headteacher, who is always current on changes in policy and education reforms. Information obtained from interviews with some of the headteachers revealed that some schools lacked effective communication flows and performance systems in school planning especially in school staff meetings, and in routine professional work. It was also noted that functional school systems for communication among staff and between the school and parents were other leadership necessities reported in this study. All these left school performances a challenge in some geographical areas of the district, a situation that escalated into parents' neglect and minimal participation in school affairs leaving pupil's performance a menace.

Similarly, in some of the participating school contexts, it was noted that producing and maintaining high performance standards was a common problem; except the few schools that had well organised and supportive forms of administrative leadership systems where teachers actively participated and often took the responsibility to ensure effective and regular teaching and assessment of pupils. Interviews revealed that for schools that were led on participatory and democratic leadership principles, and the collective application of creativity characterised by shared academic values and a vision of purpose had outstanding performance of the pupils. While schools that practiced autocratic and non-participatory leadership without a clear direction toward pupils' performance consistently performed poorly, except a few that acted following standard operating procedures and rules that had a fairly good record of pupil's performance. Through interviews it was noted that in most of the low-performing schools there was lack of development of school improvement structures which strengthens the argument for embracing a distributed leadership approach in all schools of Kayunga district. Research shows that low-performing schools can overcome their performance challenges, and increase learner achievement, if teachers and schools operate in a culture of distributed leadership practice (Harris, 2013a; Sibanda, 2017).

Through interviews, the researchers noted that in some participating schools, the school vision depicted a total quality focus on pupils' performance outcomes especially at PLE while in others focus was on both academic and co-curricular activities such as music, dance and drama, athletics, and games and sports. It is suggested that one of the key fundamental characteristics of a strong performing school's vision lies in its purposive focus on pupils' learning and development. The shared values, as noted earlier in this study, were embedded in the work day-to-day actions of the school, teachers and pupils wherein the headteacher was obliged to engage and develop the commitment and talents of all members of staff effort so as to push for teaching and learning of high quality standards. These school values then created the norms of a self-awareness, self-criticism, self-efficacy, and reflection which in turn, increasingly effected teaching, and the commitment of staff to steer ongoing pupils' performance and school improvement generally.

Administratively, the organisational structures in some schools supported the vision of promoting the effectiveness and innovation of teaching at the classroom level. It was noted that creating participatory and supportive structures is the single most important factor for successful schools. Such supportive conditions set the pace for maintaining the leadership growth of staff and the development of a commonality of ideas that foster quality teaching for sound school performance outcomes. Besides, supportive structures set institutional frameworks that promote participatory school environments and good staff relationships for school success. Such a leadership practice often builds healthy, inspiring and supportive relationships that focus teachers and school administration on teaching and learning of pupils that maximise excellent performance outcomes.

Results showed that participatory leadership practices can pave way for collective teaching and application of common pathways within a supportive work environment. The study noted that in some good performing schools, teacher professional engagements created room for staff to work together as a team to reach and maintain high pupil scores while engaging in continuous inquiry to improve their instructional practice. Such professional interactions gave teachers opportunities to learn how to accommodate the learning needs of pupils and create a structure to address new learning situations as they predict possible instructional challenges. The practice enabled teachers in learning new ways of revising methods in preparation for performance improvement. Elmore, (2005) and Fullan, (2009b) argued that high expectations for all teachers and pupils require that the headteachers demonstrate set expectations daily in words and actions and support improvement plans put forward by staff. The scholars emphasise the idea of follow-ups by setting decision making structures to facilitate the involvement of teachers in decision responsibilities and accomplishments of instructional leadership tasks. The headteacher is thus, primarily responsible for setting supportive conditions for sound performance outcomes.

In contrast, the study noted that the connection between leadership styles and pupils' performance in Kayunga district is largely influenced by hierarchical systems of school administration whereby most headteachers follow operating procedures characterised by autocratic and non-participatory leadership. In hierarchical led schools, positions and responsibilities are clearly defined. The ministry of education and sports spells out administrative positions on the school structure and teachers are left with a described duty known to them as teachers on duty where they are normally in charge of operational activities of the day. It is those positions where leadership begins. However, headteachers are expected to relinquish some authority and allow teachers to be influential. As the formal positions are rewarded by policy, those in informal positions often become unwilling to perform their best for the learners and the school. The emergent range of leadership patterns is considerably fruitful in schools that seemingly practice democratic leadership compared with the autocratic schools that maintain traditional authoritative leadership with their strict boundaries especially in the rural school settings. Inevitably, it is argued that different kinds of leadership are appropriate to different areas, urban versus rural within different scopes of local school contexts and cultures.

It was also noted that pupils' performance varied from school to school depending on the unique problems and potentials of each school's own administration and contexts. Schools where headteachers participated in the teaching and learning processes, performance improved. Headteachers identify gaps and weaknesses and thereafter, together with staff correct mistakes for improvement. Such administrative structures create supportive mechanisms that enables members to participate in decision making processes for collective performance outcomes. Furthermore, in the contexts of the fewer good performing schools, pupils' performance was good; interviews revealed that leadership reflected more accurately on the learning of pupils, and how the application of learning occurs. It built on the collective creativity in school leadership processes where teachers collectively sought new knowledge from their colleagues and applied new ways of doing things that aligned curriculum knowledge to their professional work. The school structures allowed for cooperation of staff into meaningful interactions for best strategies and instructional practices so as to respond to pupils' diverse learning needs.

Although performance in a few schools was fairly good under such dominant technocracy leadership work environment, for most schools it was consistently poor. The study also found out that in schools where cooperative learning and group work activities were used routinely, the teachers worked in teams in preparing schemes of work and lesson plans. It was also observed that collaboration among the teachers supported learners in doing classwork activities and in conducting debates to increase English speaking abilities, communication, fluency and checking for understanding. As one of the participants reported that there are rules and guidelines observed by every person in the school. For instance, in every class, learners are encouraged to ask questions where they don't understand and the teachers clarify. It was noted that pupils participate in school debates to increase their English-speaking competences and teachers check for understanding.

In this study, other revelations were found in schools that employed expanded forms of democratic leadership and involved teachers in charge of Prefects body in their ways of school administration. Teachers in charge of Prefects body were empowered to link school prefects to school administration. It was reported that school prefects worked together as a single body with staff to promote cohesiveness and discipline in the school. They reinforced teachers on duty in the management of pupils' discipline, school assemblies and in running of school affairs such as ensuring that the general school sanitation and hygiene facilities such as urinals and latrines were kept clean as well as the school compound and classrooms.

In addition, it was revealed through interviews that prefects attended all school programmes and activities and this scaled up behavioral change among learners. Participants attested that they viewed school administration as collective. Teachers on duty were empowered to act as the headteacher of the week and performed administrative roles in consultation with the headteacher and other teachers from time to time. It was observed that the contributions of teachers and pupils were vested into joint planning, consultations, respecting suggestions of other members and reviewing suggestions together

before implementation. The approach helped many schools to identify priority areas connected with performance improvement plans that worked out within their budgets reviewed for action points guided by the school vision and mission as this was a collective approach leaving none behind.

The interview findings with the teacher in charge of Prefects body indicated that talk time was part of the school culture aiming to guide and provide room for pupils to express what was happening around their' lives and express pressing issues. It appears that school leadership responsibilities and tasks were clearly located in open discussions with pupils. Interview data from a teacher in charge of Prefects body confirmed that pupils' opinions and suggestions during the teaching and learning processes were respected especially when they needed clarity on abstract concepts. Thus, it was found that pupils' voices in school leadership enhanced teaching and learning as reported by the teachers in charge of Prefects body in some participating schools that their pupils were allowed to ask questions where they did not understand properly; especially when pupils are in class doing mathematics, some formulas are hard to understand quickly, it required teachers to go step by step to enable some of the pupils understand concepts where they found a lot of difficulty.

Similarly, it was noted through interviews with teachers in charge of Prefects body that some headteachers allowed innovation and creativity amongst staff and allocated the necessary time and resources to whole-school staff to engage in problem identification, problem solving, feedback giving and decision making for work efficiency and school effectiveness. It was reported that through such innovative leadership practices teachers were enabled to effectively address school challenges which, in turn contributed to the realisation of good performance. It was also noted that administrative structures supported teachers in improving their practice through learning new instructional strategies and the methods for interacting meaningfully and professionally for the benefit of the child. As Darling-Hammond (1998) cites that research reporting teachers who spend more time collectively applying teaching practices are more effective overall at developing higher-order thinking skills and meeting the needs of learners. The scholar further argued that creating multiple avenues of interaction among teachers and headteachers not only promote inquiry-oriented practices but also enables the academic staff continue to build mutual respect and trustworthiness for school performance improvement and increased commitment to their work which, in turn enhances pupils' performance outcomes.

Furthermore, Fullan (2009a) advanced that achieving outstanding learner performance requires a complete paradigm shift from traditional roles in educational leadership to embrace collaboration and shared personal practice closest to the classroom. Under such, a school climate requires dedicated and intentional effort on the part of the administrator and the staff that would develop a framework with a clear locus on a school change process. Effective school leadership literature and performance improvement efforts clearly recognise the influence of the role of school managers on school change. Leadership provided by individuals within the school setting is critical in guiding and supporting successful implementation of new policies and instruction practices.

Inevitably, within the new education leadership reforms, the traditional role of omnipotent headteachers has been replaced by a shared leadership structure (Spillane, 2006). In such administrative shared structures, school leaders along with teachers; question, investigate, and seek solutions for performance transformations. Thus, the study notes that Kayunga schools need to adopt an approach so as to improve performance whereby, all staff are facilitated to grow and learn to work together to reach pupils' education goals. The researchers identified that school administrators are required to set the necessary flexible administrative structural work climate that supports such work values amongst staff in order to foster steadfast and outstanding school performance. Hence, headteachers are expected to display willingness to participate in collective dialogue and share responsibilities of decision making with staff to ensure positive performance.

Conclusion

This study notes that headteachers' leadership styles if well used would positively influence pupils' performance. Administration need to shift away from the spelt out administrative school structure that leaves teachers with minimal participation in school administration. This will result into teachers' effectiveness to offer their best for the benefit of learners. This study concludes that there should be a shift from the traditional sole leadership to collective leadership. The study revealed that in some good performing schools, collaborative planning served as a distributed leadership strategy; it fostered active pupil engagements and sound staff collegial relationships which enlisted collective responsibility and shared values in undertaking emerging instructional roles in pursuit of curriculum activities. Thus, the study concludes that participatory decision making should be linked to quality teaching and learning practices for enhanced performance outputs through adoption of distributed leadership. Thus, the study concludes that implementation of shared leadership practices would be regarded a little more democratic way when taking joint decisions and actions regarding specific problems on improving pupils' performance.

In this study, information obtained from participants of fairly performing schools during interviews showed that school values had a link with the education reforms needed for improving teaching and learning, which emphasised the need for clear reasons for curriculum change and pedagogy and also for staff to be given a road map to achieve high standards. It was noted that these leadership practices motivated and prepared teachers to embrace the new early grading reading methodologies in their instructional structures and actions. Thus, when teachers are provided with the necessary support and development they need for their own teaching so as to improve their classroom practice, significant value is placed on the effect participation has on pupils' learning and school performance. It is stated that the development of an environment that nurtures and supports new innovation, capability, common goals, and high expectations for staff and pupils could address the issues that many school managers are currently struggling with. The researchers note that in successful schools, school leadership acknowledges teachers as a critical component of bringing quality teaching experiences to the classroom for the benefit of pupils.

Additionally, teachers design appropriate ways and means for accomplishing their instructional goals, and start to initiate the necessary performance actions for meaningful learning and improvement through shared personal practices. It is recognised that every high performing school supports and nurtures performance improvement efforts, characterised by ongoing teacher dialogues and collective decisions with a clear focus on increasing pupils' performance outcomes. This study suggests that schools cannot transform themselves into productive and successful places of learning without democratic and collective participation of headteachers, teachers and other stakeholders. This is reflected by Davies (2009) when he argued that school leaders can mediate democratic structures that allow participatory processes where school communities promote a culture of cooperative learning which results from the possibility that schooling patterns of teachers and pupils form habits of cooperation premised on shared values and collaboration. Through the existing structures and integrated links, the schools established a collaborative framework that enabled appropriate use of resources for monitoring and evaluating performance systematically and periodically in sustained ways.

Recommendation

The study recommends that shared leadership could be a more attractive school leadership approach for delivering government policies on school governance. Headteachers need to relinquish power and authority; that there is an inevitable shift away from leadership as position to leadership as interaction in order to pursue common goals. The study also proposes teacher leadership, which is closely associated with shared leadership, that would cement authority and hierarchy whereby headteachers monitor teachers and their work to ensure that a set of predetermined standards are met. Administration need to build a high degree of the ideals of shared leadership to make a difference to organisational change and school improvement in Kayunga district. The study recommends that schools work as cohesive units to pool teachers' cohesiveness to create and sustain positive performance. This creates the idea of effective collaborative school culture that ensures rigorous and sustainable performance pathways that effect change. When teachers understand the potentials that arise from them they become uniformly resourced and organised. Therefore, there is need for government to standardise school set up.

Limitations and suggestions for further research Conclusions

There was reluctance of some key informants to disclose their weak side. Some respondents did not have enough time to fill questionnaires and respond on time. There was also limited documentation on teacher leadership practices within the participating schools. The researchers suggest the following further research areas in the field of educational leadership and management: 'Teacher leadership and learner achievement in primary schools of Uganda' and 'Improving school performance from within - role of parents, learners, teachers and headteachers in Uganda'.

Conflict of Interest Conclusions

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments Conclusions

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