

# **ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP STYLES AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN UGANDA.**

**BY : <sup>1</sup>DR. YUSUF K. K NSUBUGA**

## **Abstract**

The study sought to analyze the leadership styles of head teachers and school performance of secondary schools in Uganda. It was a mixed study that used both the qualitative and quantitative methods. The study was conducted in Uganda to investigate the relationship between the leadership style of head teachers and performance in schools. It adopted a correlation survey research design that helped in establishing the relationship of leadership styles and school performance. In this regard, data for this study was collected on the independent variable, which was leadership styles, and that of the dependent variable, which was school performance. The relationship between the two variables was investigated in order to determine the strength of their relationship and the coefficients of determination existing between them.

Together with observations during school visits, interviews were also conducted with head teachers and teachers and focused group discussions were held with selected students and parents, to identify factors affecting school performance and the effectiveness and relationship between leadership styles and school performance.

The researcher discovered on the basis of an extensive literature review and the in-depth research undertaken that head teachers adopt a range of leadership styles. However, for the purposes of this investigation, the researcher examined the relationship between leadership styles in general and school performance, and later analyzed four leadership styles in relation to school performance.

While noting the many challenges and demands made on the head teachers during the execution of their tasks, the study underscored the need for the development of management and leadership skills amongst head teachers. The study established that unless head teachers are well equipped with knowledge and skills in management and leadership, they would not be able to improve

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<sup>1</sup> **Dr Yusuf K. Nsubuga is the Director, Basic and Secondary Education Ministry of Education and Sports**

school performance significantly. The study established that effective school performance requires visionary leadership, amongst others, and that there is a strong relationship between visionary leadership and transformational leadership, which is recommended for education leaders.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Globally, educating a nation remains the most vital strategy for the development of the society throughout the developing world (Aikaman & Unterhalter, 2005). Many studies on human capital development concur that it is the human resources of a nation and not its capital or natural resources that ultimately determine the pace of its economic and social development. The principal institutional mechanism for developing human capital is the formal education system of primary, secondary, and tertiary training (Nsubuga, 2003). Since education is an investment, there is a significant positive correlation between education and economic-social productivity. When people are educated, their standards of living are likely to improve, since they are empowered to access productive ventures, which will ultimately lead to an improvement in their livelihoods. The role of education therefore, is not just to impart knowledge and skills that enable the beneficiaries to function as economies and social change agents in society, but also to impart values, ideas, attitudes and aspirations important for natural development.

The straightforward linkage between education is through the improvement of labor skills, which in turn increases opportunities for well paid productive employment. This then might enable the citizens of any nation to fully exploit the potential positively.

In Uganda, formal education is based on seven years of primary and six years of secondary education. Vocational, technical and academic courses are offered through post primary education and training institutions. The education system, particularly secondary education, is still centrally managed by the Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES) whilst primary education is managed by local district administrations. Uganda has consistently developed its education system, since it returned to stable government. Gross enrollment rates in primary schools at present is over 100%, because both under age and over age pupils are enrolled as education is free. After the introduction of the policy of free Universal Primary Education (UPE), the

enrolment in primary schools increased substantially. The number of learners graduating from grade seven is set to more than double by 2010 and the selection of learners into secondary schools is becoming very competitive. The Government of Uganda developed a new policy on Post Primary Education and Training (PPET), which preceded the introduction of Universal Secondary Education (USE) to meet rising demand and increase access to secondary schools and beyond (MoES, 2006).

The goal is not only to increase equitable access, but also to improve quality and efficiency in the management of secondary schools. Mass participation will require new management approaches. Such policy reforms may need good leadership so that the government achieves its objective of access and quality education. The role and importance of secondary education in national development is of utmost importance. Failure to expand access at secondary education level will undermine efforts to sustain UPE, and the achievement of the education related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Transition rates into the lower secondary level may fall unless access to lower secondary schooling is expanded (World Bank Report, 1995).

In addition, the competitiveness, especially in high value added and knowledge based sectors of the economy, depends on knowledge, skills and competences associated with abstract reasoning, analysis, language and communication skills and application of science and technology which are most efficiently acquired through secondary education schooling (Lewin, 2001).

Mass education at secondary education level, however, may require new leadership approaches in order to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Improved efficiency is needed and can be achieved through management reforms; raising the learner teacher ratio, increasing teachers' time on task, reducing repetition and improving accountability (Nsubuga, 2003). Through inefficiency much learning time is lost in many Sub-Saharan African (SSA) education systems. Twenty five percent or more of school days may be lost each year in poorly managed schools (Lewin, 2001). Leadership at work in education institutions is thus a dynamic process where an individual is not only responsible for the group's tasks, but also actively seeks the collaboration and commitment of all the group members in achieving group goals in a particular context (Cole, 2002). Leadership in that context pursues effective performance in schools, because it does not only

examine tasks to be accomplished and who executes them, but also seeks to include greater reinforcement characteristics like recognition, conditions of service and morale building, coercion and remuneration (Balunywa, 2000).

Thus, leadership incorporates the accomplishment of the task, which is the organizational requirement and the satisfaction of employees, which is the human resource requirement (Okumbe, 1999). Maicibi (2005) contends that, without a proper leadership style, effective performance cannot be realized in schools. Even if the school has all the required instructional materials and financial resources, it will not be able to use them effectively, if the students are not directed in their use, or if the teachers who guide in their usage are not properly trained to implement them effectively. Armstrong (2004) defines leadership as influence, power and the legitimate authority acquired by a leader to be able to effectively transform the organization through the direction of the human resources that are the most important organizational asset, leading to the achievement of desired purpose. This can be done through the articulation of the vision and mission of the organization at every moment, and influence the staff to define their power to share this vision.

This is also described by Sashkin and Sashkin (2003) as visionary leadership. However, according to them, the concept of leadership that matters is not being limited to those at the top of the organization such as the chief executive officer or principal/head teacher, but depends on certain characteristics of the leader. It involves much more than the leader's personality in which leadership is seen as more of motivating followers to achieve goals (Shashkin, 2003:2). This is supported by Lav Tzu (as reported in Shashkin, 2003:7) that good leadership commits to doing less and being more. Good performance in any secondary school should not only be considered in terms of academic rigor, but should also focus on other domains of education like the affective and psychomotor domains. This should be the vision of every leader in such a school and the cherished philosophy, structures, and activities of the school could be geared towards the achievement of this shared vision. However, Cole (2002) defines leadership as inspiring people to perform. Even if an institution has all the financial resources to excel, it may fail dismally if the leadership does not motivate others to accomplish their tasks effectively.

What is performance then and how is it measured in the context of schools? Brumbach (1988), as quoted in Armstrong (2004), contends that performance refers to both behaviors and results, and adjusting organizational behaviors and actions of work to achieve results or outcomes. Behaviors are outcomes in their own right and reactions to the product of mental and physical effort applied to tasks. In school environments therefore, performance should not only be defined in terms of test scores, examination results, students' ability to socially apply what is learnt, and the rate at which students move on to higher institutions of learning, but should consider the achievements of the school in other areas like equipping the learners with the requisite skills for survival.

School performance in the Ugandan context mainly entails; teaching consistently with diligence, honesty and regularity orchestrated by increased good results from students; setting adequate written and practical exercises, ensuring effective marking, evaluating all exercises promptly and carefully and observing academic regulations and instructions (Uganda Teaching Service Commission Regulations, 1996). The feeling by many people, including the researcher, is that this is a shallow understanding of school performance. The researcher is of the view that performance of any school should not only be considered from the academic outcomes only, but should also focus on other education outcomes such as the affective domains and the psychomotor skills.

Contextually, in Uganda today, there is a desire to ensure that the best school head teachers lead secondary schools, because of the rapid growth in secondary school education orchestrated by the successful implementation of the UPE program, which has grown tremendously since its inception in 1997.

The introduction of UPE led to increased enrolment in government aided primary schools from 2.9 million in 1996 to 6.8 million in 2001, up to 7.3 million in 2006 (MoES, 2007). This influx led to the need to increase access opportunities at the next level of secondary education. However, the increase in secondary education necessitates instituting responsible leadership in secondary education institutions (MoES, 2007). In addition, government adopted a policy to

liberalize education services and since the late 1990s, many private secondary schools have mushroomed; most being run commercially for profit.

Since private schools have increased their intake levels, their school performance is of greater concern than ever before. This brings into perspective the prior thrust for an improvement in standards and performance, which the MoES (2007) is eager to attain.

The subsequent introduction of USE in 2007, aimed to ensure that this program does not only increase access, but also improves the schools' education outcomes on an ongoing basis. However, improvement in performance requires that schools are well led by competent school heads. In fact, the MoES is posting people of the highest education management qualifications to head schools in the hope that these can better employ the best leadership principles.

In addition, the MoES is frequently conducting workshops for head teachers and deputy head teachers on leadership, in order to help improve their leadership skills. However, despite the above, most schools' performance is still wanting. In some secondary schools there is increasing poor performance in mainly the science subjects. The poor performance in science subjects was attributed partly to poor leadership at the school level. Since teacher morale and welfare is so low at present many of them are forced to work at more than one school (Namirembe: 2005) . Indiscipline in secondary schools is also on the increase, which affects the quality of education outcomes in schools. (Namirembe: 2005) argues that many secondary schools still lack the necessary performance requirements, not only because of inadequate funds or even poor facilities, but as a result of poor leadership.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Although it is the Ugandan government's policy to ensure the delivery of quality education in secondary schools in Uganda, performance, particularly in Science subjects has remained poor, despite the various interventions by policy makers and implementers. Such a situation is alarming, bearing in mind that science subjects play a pivotal role in the development of any country. Equally important, are the overarching policies of Uganda's education, which strongly

emphasize the importance of science education in national development. For example, both the White Paper on Education and the Education Sector Strategic Development Plan focus on the promotion of science subjects as the way forward for the development of the country. Apart from poor performance in science subjects, performance in other areas of education is also poor. Schools do not perform well in other aspects of education as well. Scholars, policy makers and school managers have resolved to address the poor academic performance in secondary schools by conducting research on its would be antecedents such as a lack of instructional materials, ensuring quality teachers, admitting good students, remuneration and the motivation of teachers, improving discipline and community participation in schools.

Furthermore, although all the above studies have been conducted, no study on leadership and school performance in secondary schools was encountered at the time this study was undertaken. However, a number of studies have been conducted on school performance in schools in Uganda. For example, Odubuker (2007) conducted a study to investigate the influence of the head teachers' management competences on the management of primary schools in North Western Uganda in order to improve the teaching and learning process. The findings from the study revealed that the principals or head teachers' management training was critical to the performance of the school. Similarly, Mpierwe (2007) conducted a study to examine the effect of management of instruction materials on teacher performance in primary schools in the Kampala district. The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of coordination of instructional materials on teacher performance and to assess whether teacher involvement in the selection of instructional materials has an effect on teacher performance. The findings from the study revealed that there was a positive relationship between instructional materials and teachers' performance in schools.

However, at the time this study was conducted, not sufficient was known about the contribution of any single factor and indeed the relationship between leadership and school performance. Hence this study was intended to investigate the head teachers' leadership style and the performance of secondary schools in Uganda. It was also thought that an investigation in this area would shed light on the factors affecting performance and in particular the effect of leadership styles on school performance.

On the basis of this background, the study proposed to ask the question:

**To what extent do the leadership styles adopted by head teachers have an influence on the school's performance?** The study aimed to examine how leadership styles adopted by school head teachers influence the schools overall performance in secondary schools in Uganda. The objective was to investigate the relationship between leadership styles and school performance, and the specific objectives pursued were:

- To establish the relationship between the demographic characteristics of head teachers and teachers and school performance.
- To establish whether performance in secondary schools in Uganda is dependent on the autocratic leadership style of school head teachers.
- To establish whether performance in secondary schools in Uganda is dependent on the democratic leadership style of school head teachers.
- To investigate whether performance in secondary schools in Uganda is dependent on the situational or contingency leadership style of school head teachers.
- To elicit the viewpoints of head teachers, teachers and students on the preferred leadership styles.
- To make recommendations for the improvement of schools on the basis of an analysis of leadership styles.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

To examine and analyze leadership factors that affect performance in secondary education, a multi-pronged approach commonly referred to as triangulation (Cohen & Manion, 2001; Punch, 1998), combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods, was adopted. It was anticipated that the survey questionnaire would provide the breadth of coverage, which could be credibly applied, to a wider population from which the sample of the study was drawn (Brown & Dowling, 1998).

Whilst quantitative methods tend to be relatively low in cost and time requirements (Punch, 1998) since they enable a large quantity of relevant data to be amassed and subjected to statistical analysis in a short space of time, the interview and documentary analysis would offer the depth and useful insights regarding leadership styles in secondary school management in Uganda.

Whilst qualitative methods raise methodological and ethical issues pertaining to the influence of the researcher on the data collected and the informants, the quantitative approach is limited to highly structured data extraction techniques, which often, as suggested by Cresswell, in Ssesanga(2004), do not accommodate maneuverability during the problem investigation phase.

### **Population and sampling**

The study was conducted in three of the five traditional regions in Uganda. The sample of 625 included: 24 head teachers, 200 teachers, 351 students, 40 parents and 10 officials of the MoES. Purposive cluster sampling was used for the purposes of the study. Gay and Airasian (2003) define purposive sampling as one which involves selecting a sample based on experiences or knowledge of the group to be sampled.

Cluster sampling was used to select three regions from the whole Uganda. Geographical regions are natural groupings (Gall, 1989; Babbie, 1990;) which can be grouped into clusters. Then using stratified random sampling the three regions were divided into sub groups called strata. The strata's comprised districts from which two schools from each district were selected.

### **Data collection strategies**

Data collection strategies included interviews, documentary survey, questionnaires, focus group discussions and observational visits to selected schools. Semi structured interviews were conducted on headteachers, teachers while focused group interviews were used on students and parents. These enabled the researcher to elicit the opinions of the participants on the impact of the leadership style on school performance. In order to cover a large sample of respondents and to make the study more generalisable questionnaires were used. In addition, the researcher reviewed

various documents and policies on secondary school performance. Data were analyzed by using both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

In this study however, some limitations were met. In the first instance although it would have been useful to include more schools to attain a broader understanding of the relationship between leadership styles and school performance in secondary schools in Uganda, in this study it was not possible due to inadequate resources. Consequently, only 24 schools from 3 regions were sampled.

Another limitation was the scarcity of recent literature relating to the relationship between leadership and performance of schools in the Uganda context. Most of the recent literature that was accessible was from western countries, which was not always relevant to the local situation in Uganda.

The study was also limited to a representative sample due to the high expenses involved in terms of time and funds if a longitudinal study had to be conducted. Furthermore, the representative sample used was limited in scope to enable the generalization of the findings from the study on the effect of leadership styles on school performance in secondary schools. The findings of this study may consequently not be generalized to all schools in the country, since different geographical areas may have their own peculiar characteristics in terms of location, the socio-economic status of parents and the culture of schools.

### **Presentation and discussion of findings**

The study established that more than half of the teachers who participated in the study were below 40 years of age. It was revealed that the younger the teachers the more authoritarian the head teachers tended to be.

## **HEAD TEACHERS' TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

It was found by the researcher that head teachers were well trained as teachers, but not as school managers. The training given to head teachers when training as teachers is inadequate to prepare them for leadership roles. As observed by Mulkeen et al. in Kyeyune (2008), there is a gap in leadership training to prepare head teachers for their roles. Given the education reforms and the many challenges, which come with the reforms, educational leadership is increasingly becoming a big concern. Secondary schools today are faced with challenges that emphasize the demand for effective leadership.

Such head teachers do not just require training in general education administration, but specialized training which is capable of imparting the necessary management and leadership skills. It was clear from the study that the head teachers are not able to improve school performance unless they are equipped with certain knowledge, intellectual, social and psychological skills.

The discovered that head teachers do not receive induction on appointment. There is therefore a need for a continuous professional development program for the head teachers. Head teachers play many roles and for them to fit the profile of principals that Kowalski in Kyeyune, ( 2008), describes as change agents, they must not only manage but lead. For any reforms to succeed, head teachers, as gatekeepers, must be up to the task and hence the need for continuous professional development

## **DICHOTOMY OF BOARDING / DAY SCHOOL**

The study attempted to establish if there were significant differences between boarding and day secondary schools in terms leadership styles of head teachers and school performance. The study revealed no significant difference.

The study established that students in boarding schools are only advantaged in that they are in the controlled environment. Time for study is controlled, so they probably have a lot more time to read than the others. Students in day schools are affected by the environmental factors. The

environment for a boarding school is far better, so one finds a larger number of students in boarding schools doing well. Apart from the school environment, the day scholars are sometimes troubled by volatile home environment such as parents' misunderstandings sometimes ending up in divorce. Students in day schools but staying in hostels also face enormous challenges.

## **POLICY AND PLANNING**

Effective school performance requires visionary leadership. From the head teachers' interview responses, many of them did not have clearly articulated vision and mission statements. One of the core functions of a head teacher is to provide direction to his/her subordinates. The head teacher's greatest leadership responsibility is that of formulating and articulating the vision of the school. It is through shared vision and mission that the head teacher will be able to offer a sense of direction to his staff. All the staff should be able to have a shared understanding on where the school should be in the foreseeable future.

Strategic planning is a very important process in the life of every organization. While a few schools had strategic plans a majority did not. Although the effect of the strategic plans on the school's performance was not apparent, it says a lot about the type of leadership in the school. As a leader, when one fails to plan, then he/she has planned to fail. In this era of results oriented management, management and staff cannot perform well if the goals of the institution and the tasks of the different players are not clearly articulated.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

From the study, it has also emerged that the role of parents is instrumental both to the students learning achievement and to the well being and performance of the school. It is the desire of every parent to see his or her children in school; for most parents would wish to see their offspring exceed their education standards. Parents want to see their children successful in life, of course after succeeding in school. However, without the involvement of parents in the management of schools, secondary schools today can hardly expect to achieve good academic results much as they have effective leaders. This is in consonance with findings from Amason

and Sapienza (1997) that parents play a vital role in the school system. They encourage their children to read, as well as support and encourage the teachers to work towards improved student's academic achievement. Further still, Amburgey and Rao (1996) observe that school development is dependent on the parent input more than the leadership code.

Ballantine (1999:170) in Hornby (2000:1) posits "parents are critical to children's successes during the school years

In Uganda, the contribution of the parents particularly through the PTA has been very immense. They have contributed to the infrastructural development of the school, the teachers' welfare and together with teachers controlling students' discipline.

Small's experience as reported in Oyetunji (2006:132), as a teacher who loves to involve parents in children's school work indicate that parent-teacher partnership promotes learning and brings about growth in pupils. This is to say that when the school involves parents in the education of their children, it improves pupils' performance both in academic work and character, which otherwise may not be achieved by the school alone.

From the researcher's observations and experience, the leadership of the school plays a major role in this regard. If the school head teacher shows interest and commitment to involve them then they are likely to come on board. This is in tandem with Oyetunji's (2006) argument that the head teacher should be the individual to initiate and facilitate parental involvement in a school. Constantine (in Oyetunji, 2006:100) alludes to the assertion that school leaders do not encourage the parents in school and argues that even though the school leaders claim to delight in parental involvement in school, they limit the relationship by taking actions that do not encourage parental involvement in school, otherwise, parents would have been actively involved in the school activities, and realize their dream for their children. The head teachers' leadership style contributes to a larger extent to the parents' lack of interest in the affairs of the school. If the head teacher is not transparent and accountable to the parents, then they will distance themselves from the school.

## **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLES OF HEAD TEACHERS AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

In this study, the quantitative approach revealed that the Pearson Correlation Coefficient (R) was **0.615 or 61.5%**. This means that there was a strong relationship between leadership styles and school performance in secondary schools in Uganda. In other words, academic performance in secondary schools was explained by the prevailing style of leadership.

However, the extent to which leadership styles contribute to student academic performance was weak denoting a coefficient of determination of 0.328 or 32.8%. Leadership style may be a strong factor accounting for the academic performance of students in a school but its degree of influence may be limited if the school does not have good teachers, funds, the head teachers' lack experience and the culture of the school towards academic excellence is poor. The rest of the 67.2% is the extent to which extraneous variables like the quality of teachers, availability of school facilities, instructional materials and the experience of head teachers, school culture and nature of students contribute to school performance.

It is apparent that leadership plays a very critical role in galvanizing all the other factors in the school together. However, in spite of the importance of leadership, its contribution to improved school performance will not be maximized, unless leadership is distributed and shared with the significant others. The researcher agrees with the school of thought that the concept of leadership must change, as Grant (2006:512) argues that a different understanding of leadership is needed; a shift from leadership as headship to distributed form of leadership. :

### **THE AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

Results from the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient indicated that the relationship between the autocratic leadership style and school performance from the teachers' questionnaire as -0.65 or -65%. This was interpreted as a strong negative relationship. This simply means that the more autocratic one becomes, the poorer the performance of the school and the contrary is also true. School leaders who use the authoritarian leadership style lead to poor academic

performance, because they adopt harsh leadership styles, which are highly resented by their subordinates.

The greater the use of autocratic principles, the poorer the learners' academic performance. The coercive style leader often creates a reign of terror, bullying and demeaning his subordinates, roaring with displeasure at the slightest problem. Subordinates get intimidated and stop bringing bad news or any news in fear of getting bashed or blamed for it, and the morale of the workers plummets.

### **DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

From the study it was established that there is a positive moderate relationship between the democratic leadership style and student academic performance in secondary schools in Uganda (48%). The study revealed that most school managers used the democratic style of leadership. Schools are composed of intelligent people whose ideas are crucial in the day-to-day running of the same schools. Teachers, students and prefects, for example, have the capacity to advise effectively on academic matters in the school. Their ideas and contributions cannot be ignored.

This approach to management has led many school managers to rely on participatory governance mechanisms or the democratic leadership style. The leader in the school uses the democratic leadership style to build trust, respect and commitment because the style allows people to have a say in decisions that affect their goals and how they do their work. Students in schools need to be involved in the school's administration and in the implementation of decisions because these affect them directly.

School head teachers contended that democracy was the best leadership strategy for school environments because schools are systems with parts that are interrelated. The head teachers, for example, have to motivate the teachers to participate in decision-making because academic progress depends on the quality of teaching exhibited. Today there is a very strong school of thought that schools can no longer be managed by a lone figure at the top of the hierarchy.

This in my view is an example of good modeling and indeed this is the cost of leadership. But also in the process of working with them, the head teacher might set the direction and also articulate the vision of the school.

The study also discovered that leadership is critical to the performance of the school as a whole. In many of the schools that were studied, teachers had this to say

***“It is the role of leadership to mobilize the resources and putting them to proper use and again, it is the head teachers to set the direction. When this is in place, then the school has to perform”.***

This in agreement with the common sense view, that leaders are essential and have an impact on the performance of the organization (James & Connolly, 2000). In addition, departments were empowered to lay strategies in order to improve teaching and learning in the school. The study revealed that good leadership was associated with a caring environment in the school. In one of the schools studied, students had this to say

***“We are given good food and the teachers and the head teachers do care for us. The head teacher even tries to be around even during the night”.***

This kind of caring environment is sometimes associated with good leadership and may lead to improved education outcomes. It may also lead to a situation where students can develop a culture of confiding in their teachers. In such cases when and where the home environment worsens, the learners can always use the school as the last resort. This may improve the performance of the learners. This seems to be in agreement with Wing’s (2003) view that the feeling that no one cares is pervasive and corrosive. Real learning is difficult to sustain in an atmosphere rife with mistrust.

It was also discovered that leadership was responsible for forging good relationships with the community. And where this kind of relationship existed, the performance of the school was good. For example one of the teachers in this study pointed out

*“The relationship with the school and the community is amicable. We involve all the parents in school activities and we relate very well with the community. On our program this term, we shall be welcoming the new Parish Priest. The purpose of this is to give allegiance and reciprocate the Church for its good work in the school”.*

Similarly the students revealed

*“Normally we have academic weeks, and on such days our parents come and sit and attend with us lessons in the classrooms. After the lessons they reflect and discuss with the teachers and us on how the lessons has been. They also discuss the performance of their daughters. In addition, they are free to make any input in the teaching and learning process in the school”.*

From the voices of the teachers, it is perhaps important to conclude, that this kind of stakeholder involvement and community participation in the school is a sign of collaborative leadership. Such collaborative and participative kind of arrangement by all the stakeholders may only be achieved if there is good leadership that can develop and articulate the vision and envision all the stakeholders in the school. It was also discovered from this study that where there was collaboration and participation by all staff at the school level, there was a likelihood of having an improved overall school performance. It was discovered that schools that used dispersed or distributed leadership were associated with overall school improvement. Another feature of participative leadership in this study was discovered in the planning process. It was discovered that in schools where the planning process was collaborative, there was ownership and

sustainability of plans. This eventually had an effect on the overall school performance. So in this study, it was discovered that good leadership is associated with the school performance

### **LAISSEZ-FAIRE LEADERSHIP STYLE AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

The correlation coefficient indicated that there is a very negative correlation between the laissez-faire leadership style and the school performance in secondary schools. This study established that head teachers who use the laissez faire leadership style tend to fail to follow up on those they have delegated tasks to and consequently performance declines. They leave everything to the mercy of their subordinates, some of whom may lack the necessary skills and competence to execute the work. Others may simply not like to do the work unless they are supervised. Laissez-faire leadership is not the best leadership style to use in the school's organization because complete delegation without follow-up mechanisms may create performance problems, which are likely to affect the school's effectiveness. This is in agreement with MacDonald's (2007) study of laissez-faire leadership shows that it is associated with the highest rates of truancy and delinquency and with the slowest modifications in performance which lead to unproductive attitudes and disempowerment of subordinates.

### **SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

From the study, it was discovered that one of the most frequently used approaches to leadership was the situational leadership. School managers have, through experience, come to terms with the fact that the adoption of a particularly relevant style in a specific situation leads to school effectiveness, rather than relying on a single style of one's choice (Mullins, 2002). The participants revealed that leadership is dictated by environmental changes within and outside the school. At one time, students may be so unruly and militant that it requires the head of schools to use strict measures of discipline so as to improve their academic performance. However, in another development students may be so committed and focused that it may require being liberal minded to allow participative leadership to prevail. Of course, this depends on the changes in the situation of the school. This is also corroborated by Cheng (2002) who asserts that the relationship between school performance and leadership style is moderated by the situational factors.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Effective school research reveals that there is a very significant leadership effect not only on the student learning, but also on an array of school conditions as well. Leadership is a very strong predictor of school performance (Leithood, 2007). This study established that among the pillars on which education is anchored leadership is pivotal. However, if leadership is expected to have a pronounced effect on education, it must be visionary, transformational and shared. So in view the findings and discussions, the following recommendations and conclusions were made.

### **Head teachers' professional development**

Even after receiving adequate training, teachers remain lifelong learners. Due to the ever dynamic and changing nature of the professional demands, and the development of professional practices, training is a continuous process which lasts for the duration of the career of a committed professional teacher. Similarly, head teachers must also have continuous professional development. Head teachers are in charge of schools, which operate as professional learning communities. In support of this, Fullan (in Bass, 2007) alludes that the illiterates of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are not those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn and unlearn. Teaching is a lifelong learning profession and therefore head teachers should be at the forefront of learning.

Research indicates that an organization's ability to improve and sustain improvement largely depends upon its ability to foster and nurture learning communities (Hargreaves, 2002; Muijis & Harris, 2007). **It is therefore recommended that a Continuous Professionals Development (CPD) system for head teachers be established and institutionalized in the education system.**

### **Education leadership training institute**

The study has also established that there is a need for the country to build a constant supply of the needed manpower including leaders for the schools. Responses from both the teachers and head

teachers indicate that none of the schools had as part of their plans staff development and succession plans. Apart from addressing the supply and availability of the pool of resources for the head teachers and deputy head teachers, the issue of the quality of leadership is equally important and has to be addressed.

From the responses of head teachers and teachers, it also emerged that there is no relationship between the number of years one served as a teacher and as a head teacher and performance. **In view of that observation, the study recommends a policy shift. The number of years one has been in the service as a teacher or as a head teacher, should not be used as selection criteria for the appointment of head teachers and deputy head teachers to the disadvantage of those younger but brilliant teachers with fewer years of service.**

Use of aptitude tests and other academic achievements can be used to identify the talented young professionals with the potential of being very good and effective leaders.

### **Mentoring of school head teachers**

**In a bid to improve the performance of head teachers, a mentoring program is strongly recommended for newly appointed and underperforming serving head teachers.**

Anderson and Shannon (inTshali, 2000:14) defined mentoring as follows:

*“A nurturing process in which a more skilled and more experienced person serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels and befriends a less experienced for the purposes of promoting the latter’s professional and personal development”*

## **Curriculum for teacher training**

The study recommends a review of the curriculum for the training of teachers so that sufficient attention is given to management and leadership skills. The need to review the training curriculum is precipitated by the existing gap between theory and practice. Through practice and observation of schools the researcher established that some head teachers who made efforts to accumulate qualifications and certificates, had no significant improvement registered at the schools they were heading. This implies that either the knowledge acquired was not relevant to the situation on the ground or there was a failure to translate the theoretical knowledge into practice. All the teachers are potential leaders - future head teachers. Ministries of Education and the universities in liaison with the teacher training colleges should undertake the review of the said curricula.

## **The role of the universities and teacher training colleges**

It was observed that universities which train teachers and head teachers, for that matter are detached from the schools which is the point for delivery of the services by the products from the universities and training colleges. The training institutions cannot abrogate their responsibilities when their products are found wanting and cannot deliver quality work. For as Kajubi (1992) puts it “the quality of the education system cannot be better than the quality of its teachers”. **It is therefore recommended that universities and other teacher training institutions maintain a regular presence in the classrooms. An arrangement similar to what they do during school practice teaching.**

## **POLICY AND PLANNING**

**The importance of policy formulation and planning in the life of an institution cannot be over-emphasized.** This study established that a key variable in school performances is a visionary leader. A visionary leader is responsible for defining a clear vision to provide direction to the future of the school. As Naluwemba (2007) asserts, this vision would reflect their own personal understandings and perceptions of both the current situation and the future. However, as

quoted by Naluwemba (2007), one critical element in this strategic visioning is the leader's ability to assess the school's environment and take into account its major stakeholders (Greenfield, 1995; Huffman & Jacobson, 2003; Vera, 2004).

**It is therefore strongly recommended that every school undertake a strategic visioning process whereby the leaders and the stakeholders create a vision for the school.** It is through a shared vision and mission that the head teachers will be able to offer a sense of direction to his/her staff. All the staff should be able to have a shared understanding on where the school should be in the next few years.

With a succinct vision and mission, the school can and should then develop a strategic plan. The plan should be broadly shared and understood by all the stakeholders. If this is accomplished, it will help the school to deliver quality education and hence improve school performance. However, the process must be participatory to enable all stakeholders to buy into it.

A well thought out strategic planning process, which is broad based and consultative would foster teamwork and collaboration in the school. It will also enhance shared leadership. It is therefore recommended that the process of developing a school's vision and mission and later on the strategic plan be a very consultative process, and involve all stakeholders including the parents and other critical friends of the school.

## **LEADERSHIP STYLE AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

The study established that there is a strong positive relationship between the leadership style of head teachers in secondary schools and school performance, but that the contribution of the leadership style towards the overall school performance is low. However, from the study and also through the literature reviewed, it is clear that leadership is a very important component and a critical ingredient in the process of improving the school's performance **This study therefore submits that for leadership to remain important and useful towards the promotion of quality education, it MUST be distributed appropriately among the different levels of**

**administration in the school; to the school top management teams (distributed leadership) and also decentralized among the teachers, which is known as teacher leadership.**

Teachers have leadership capabilities waiting to be unlocked and engaged for the good of the schools. Sillins, Mulford and Harris (2002) conclude that students' outcomes are more likely to improve where leadership sources are distributed throughout the school and where teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them. By distributing powers, head teachers do not become weak; they instead become stronger as the institutions they head excel in performance.

### **AUTOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE OF HEAD TEACHERS AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

From the study's findings, the autocratic leadership style of the school's head teachers has a negative effect on school performance in secondary schools in Uganda . **It is therefore recommended that school head teachers avoid the use of the autocratic leadership styles in the management of schools.**

### **LAISSEZ-FAIRE LEADERSHIP STYLE AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

**This study has established that there is a very low correlation between the laissez-faire leadership style in secondary schools and school performance in secondary schools in Uganda. It is therefore recommended that school managers, avoid the laissez-faire leadership style which permits total delegation of responsibility to teachers and students.**

### **DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP STYLE AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

This study established that school performance in secondary schools in Uganda is positively related to the democratic leadership style employed by school head teachers and that the democratic leadership style is the most used style in schools. The study has also documented the gains and contributions accruing from the use of the democratic leadership style by head teachers.

The democratic leadership style encourages everybody to participate in the affairs of the school as a whole. The staff feels they are part of the school, and hence they are part of the leadership of the school. This study also established that there is a strong relationship between democratic leadership style of head teachers and teacher leadership

Most schools would improve their performance by becoming more collaborative and more democratic. This study therefore submits that the head teachers of secondary schools in particular be encouraged to use this style of leadership in the management of secondary schools.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study sought to analyze the leadership styles of head teachers and school performance of secondary schools in Uganda. The researcher recognized from literature and experiences from observations of leadership in schools that there are many leadership styles employed by school head teachers. However, for the purposes of this study, the researcher examined the relationship between leadership styles in general and school performance, and analyzed four leadership styles and school performance.

The study established that there was a relationship between the age of the head teachers and their leadership style. It was also noted that the young teachers, because of over ambition, tended to be more aggressive which led to the head teachers adopting a more autocratic leadership style.

Another interesting finding from the study was in respect of head teachers' training. It was established that the nature of head teacher's training contributed to either poor or good leadership and hence school performance. That the head teachers were well trained as teachers did not automatically make them good school leaders. That type of training did not prepare them for leadership roles. While noting the many challenges and demands on the head teachers' job, the study underscored the need for management and leadership skills on the part of the head teachers.

**The study established that unless head teachers are well equipped with knowledge and skills in management and leadership, they would not be able to improve school performance significantly.**

A majority of the head teachers interviewed indicated that they had neither attended any induction management training course upon being appointed as head teachers, nor undertaken any training during their tenure of service as head teachers

The study established that effective school performance requires visionary leadership among other things, and that there is a strong relationship between visionary leadership and transformational leadership.

The study established that most head teachers did not involve key stakeholders like teachers in formulating school vision, mission and strategic plans, and subsequently there was no ownership and shared understanding of the developed missions and plans. The failure by the stakeholders such as the teachers to buy into the plans means poor implementation of the school programs and hence poor performance. In successful schools, the school community shares values and goals and work as a team. Teamwork can enhance quality management in schools as teams can utilize resources more efficiently and effectively, increase organizational effectiveness, improve the quality of educational programs and create better learning and working environments. Thus, successful teamwork is considered an indispensable ingredient in the process of building successful schools (Steyn & Niekerk, 2002:113).

This study has also established that leadership that is instrumental towards school improvement is distributed leadership. Where leadership is shared, teamwork is valued and usually organizations in which teamwork flourishes are more effective than organizations dominated by a single individual. The traditional approach that only top managers had the competence to make decisions and staff had to carry out the decisions, is now outdated.

From the study's findings, the autocratic leadership style of school head teachers was found to have a negative effect on school performance in secondary schools in Uganda. It was accordingly recommended that school head teachers avoid the use of the autocratic leadership styles in the management of schools. Most recent conceptions of educational leadership indicate that there is a move away from autocratic leadership styles to a more democratic mode of

decision making in schools. This is in a bid to ensure that decision-making takes place at the lowest possible level.

This study has established that school performance and in particular students' academic excellence in secondary schools in Uganda is positively related to the democratic leadership style employed by school head teachers and that the democratic leadership style is the most used style in secondary schools. It was therefore recommended that the head teachers of secondary schools in particular be encouraged to use this style of leadership in the management of secondary schools.

The ongoing educational reforms require educational leaders who can work in democratic and participative ways in order to build successful relationships to ensure effective delivery of quality education.

It is thus apparent from this study that there is a significant relationship between leadership styles and school performance and that if schools hope to operate as successful entities; the leadership will have to adopt approaches that take cognizance of the diverse needs of all stakeholders that it purports to serve.

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