

Citation: Kasya, S, Momanyi, M & Ateka, F. (2019). Administrative Interventions on Retention of Economically Challenged Learners in Private and Government Secondary Schools in Kabale District, Uganda. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 3(7), 4 – 28.

Administrative Interventions on Retention of Economically Challenged Learners in Private and Government Secondary Schools in Kabale District, Uganda

By

¹ Sarah Kasya , ²Marcella Momanyi, ³ Ateka Florence

The purpose of the study was to establish administrative interventions adopted to retain economically challenged learners in both Private and Government Secondary Schools. Uganda. The study was guided by three research questions: How does School Administration influence parental involvement on retention of economically challenged learners in Secondary Schools? What challenges do school administrators in Kabale district face in retaining economically challenged learners in the system? What measures can be taken to improve for retention of economically challenged learners in Secondary Schools in Kabale District, Uganda. Kabale district was selected for study because of the highest rate of drop out. The theory of students' retention, developed by Beatty-Guenter in 1994, guided this study. The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed methods design. The target population was all Head Teachers, teachers, students, parents, District Education Officer and all District Inspectors of Schools in secondary schools in Kabale District. The sample size was 238 participants. Purposive, snowball, stratified and simple random sampling were used to select study participants. Data was collected using questionnaires and in-depth interview guides and were subjected to face and content validity by use of experts. Cronbach Alpha determined the reliability of Quantitative data. Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 21 analyzed quantitative data. Qualitative data was organized into themes and presented using narratives and direct quotes. Key findings show that school administrators involved parents in students' retention, community sensitization was weak, guidance and counselling was rare in most schools. The study concluded that effective measures are vital for the retention of learners in schools. The researcher recommended an establishment of a specific national strategy for increasing retention; a national policy for parental involvement and facilitation of guidance and counselling to enhance students' retention.

Key words: Uganda, Kabale District, Administration, Influence, Parental Involvement, Secondary Schools

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Introduction

Today, secondary school education plays a vital role in promoting economic growth, and it improves an individual's standard of living because literacy is the best indicator of a country's development (Draper, 2007). Available literature has shown that educating a child does not mean taking him or her to school only, but making sure that she or he stays in school up to completion of the intended level. Retention and provision of education is vital in the development of a country and society because education aims at preparing and transforming the whole person in all spheres of lifespan: intellectually, emotionally, economically, politically, socially and culturally. According to Odhiambo (2005), education is a priceless asset of fundamental importance to the individual and society; it is an essential process for the achievement of personal goals and individual aspirations. This is why for Monica (2017), student retention is student success or successful completion.

Globally, student retention rate is an important gauge of any educational institution's success. It indicates the percentage of students who remain at an educational institution after their enrolment. This is why Calhoun (2013) maintains that High schools, colleges and graduate institutes in any country in the world must care about improving the learners' retention rates which a worldwide phenomenon. For instance, in Europe some countries like Germany has 2.8% and Ireland has 4%, Norway 8.7%, Italy 15 %, Spain 26.7%, and Portugal 37.1% of dropout rates. Montecel, Cortez and Cortez (2004) opined that some countries like Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras have retention rates as low as 40% or even below. In Arab states, East Asia and the Pacific, the retention rate exceeds 70%, while in other countries like Cambodia and Lao, the retention rates can be as low as 40% or even below. Bokova (2011) notes that in south west Asia, the completion ratios are low especially in countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan have 40% and 35% respectively. In Nigeria, Ajaja (2012) says that dropout is one of the problems that have continued to cripple the Nigerian educational system since independence due to poor educational background of parents' inability to pay their children's school fees.

Studies have indicated that administrative interventions can be one of the strategies to improving retention in schools. Kibera and Kimokoti (2007) noted that if parents are involved in the education of their children such as attending education days and meetings and helping them in homework, especially those in rural communities then performance and retention in schools might be increased. They clarified that parental interest and aspiration for their child's education is very important. The children who are encouraged parents in their work seem to be at an advantage of both attaining high scores and staying in school than those who are not encouraged.

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Ekai (2009) agrees with Kibera and Kimokoti by affirming that parental involvement is positively correlated with academic achievement for most students. That the more the parents are involved in their children's education both at home and at school, the more likely do their children academically succeed through schooling up to completion. Thus, the administrative interventions for the economically challenged learners' retention in schools are very important, because, if head teachers mobilise parents and get them involved in the education of their children, then they may be retained in school.

Busingye (2010) express the worry that Uganda still has the lowest school retention rate in East Africa, as quoted in in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report (2010). The research shows that it is majorly due to hidden costs at school, looking for jobs for family survival, and others reasons like family responsibility, and early pregnancy that have driven thousands of students out of school. Oketch & Rolleston (2007), agree with Busingye and attributes poor school attendance to the poor economic standards of households and high education expenses. Therefore, this shows that high cost of education in Uganda is one of the major reasons why many learners fail to complete secondary school level although there may be other challenges.

Ziine (2011) conducted study on the causes of students' dropout in Universal Secondary Schools in Rubabo County in Rukungiri, a district neighbouring Kabale district-Uganda. The study highlighted that low retention rates are related to poor economic background of learners. The study denotes that most pupils from poor backgrounds are always threatened by high chances of failing to continue with their education. He further noted that it is hard for poor parents to get involved in the education of their children, and they are sometimes forced to pull out some children from school; to leave room for the ones they consider should remain in school, especially on gender basis.

Rukundo, Abaasa, Natukunda, Ashabahebwa and Allain (2015), carried out a study in South Western Uganda, and discovered that there was low retention in the secondary schools. This was attributed to factors such as, parental level of education, teenage pregnancies, poor financial background of households and school environment. Therefore, there is need to put in place some strategies such as parental involvement, guidance and counselling, community sensitization to enhance retention of learners in schools and possibly influence policy formulation in an attempt to reduce dropout levels in secondary school education.

Ahimbisibwe (2014) laments that 700,000 Ugandan children are out of school an observation shows that children in the country particularly in Kabale district are in danger of failing to meet the 2015 Millennium Development Goals on education for all. The study shows that considering latest statistics, thousands of children have no access to education. Ahimbisibwe continues to assert that the latest United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) report indicates that Uganda ranks 11th in the world, among countries with the highest number of children out of school, the indication that general retention of learners is very low.

To boost education, the Uganda government put strategies and interventions in place. These included the appointing of the Education Policy Review Commission and construction of

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several classrooms and staff houses. In addition, the government carried out licensing and registering of private schools, improvement of teacher remuneration and recruitment of more teachers (Asakha & Takashi, 2011). The government introduced Universal Secondary Education (USE) policy in selected secondary schools in 2007 (Huylebroeck, Titeca, 2015). A policy to support bright but needy students to access secondary education was introduced Education and Sports Sector Annual Performance Report Financial Year 2012/2013. Kahesi (2011) adds that the government also issued an order of automatic promotion for all students so that no child would be forced to repeat a class.

However, studies have shown that when administrative interventions are put in place, learners are retained in schools. For example, the Uganda government introduced Universal Secondary Education (USE) policy in selected secondary schools in 2007 where parents are asked only to buy scholastic materials, and the government takes care of other learners needs (Huylebroeck, Titeca, 2015). Moreover, given that many students drop out because of financial reasons, students' financial hardships could be reduced through the receipt of public benefits. When this was done, enrolment and retention of learners in Uganda increased, especially learners from economically disadvantaged families.

Despite the above interventions, reports demonstrate that many Secondary school learners in Kabale District are still dropping out of school. For example, Kahesi (2011) in a study of the factors affecting enrolment of learners in schools in Kabale municipality reveals that, many learners are out of school due to the economic challenges of parents. The study continues to show that dropout rates tend to be particularly high among the poorer members of society and especially those in rural areas. Therefore, it is from this background that the current study attempts to find whether the administrative parental involvement for the retention of economically challenged learners can bring positive results in secondary school education in Kabale District, Uganda

Statement of the Problem

Hidden costs in schools have driven thousands of learners out of secondary schools especially those from economically challenged families in Kabale district as reported by Tumusiime (2013), Bayise (2007), and Busingye (2010). Failure to retain learners in secondary schools in Kabale district is due to high school charges. The studies show that Kabale district has the highest dropout rates among secondary school learners in the region. It was observed that, the major factor that influences dropout from secondary schools in Kabale district is that the majority of parents in the district are economically poor (Tumusiime 2013). Many families do not have steady income. Bayise (2007) laments that the institutional educational costs are responsible for the failure to retain learners in secondary schools in Kabale district.

Mbabazi (2014) too, emphasized that failure to retain learners in schools is caused by lack of fees and scholastic materials. The researcher highlighted that, the retention rate of learners in secondary schools of Kabale district is much lower, compared to other districts in the western Regions of Uganda. Due to high fees demanded in private schools and hidden costs asked by administrators from USE schools, parents withdraw their children from schools before

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they complete. According to Kabale District Directorate of Education (2015), statistics demonstrate that government aided and privately-owned secondary schools in the district enrol students from primary schools with UPE programme. However, these schools have been experiencing low retention rates for last six years (2010-2015). It was due to the increasing rate of school dropouts in Kabale district that the researcher selected Kabale District as the area of study with the above-mentioned target group.

To address the situation, the Uganda Government put up interventions to try to salvage the situation. Among them were: cautioning schools administrators to stop raising school fees (Bayise, 2007), the appointment of the Education Policy Review Commission, construction of several classrooms and staff houses, improvement of teacher remuneration and recruitment of more teachers (Asakha& Takashi, 2011). In addition, the government introduced Universal Secondary Education (USE) policy in selected secondary schools in 2007 (Huylebroeck & Titeca, 2015).

Despite the above interventions, reports demonstrate that many Secondary school learners in Kabale District are still dropping out of school. For example, Kahesi (2011) study on factors affecting enrolment of learners in schools in Kabale municipality revealed that, many learners are out of school due to the economic challenges of parents. That dropout rates tend to be particularly high among the poorer members of society and especially those in rural areas. Kibera and Kimokoti (2007), in a study of fundamentals of sociology of education with reference to Africa highlighted that children, who are encouraged by their parents in their education, go to school early every day, do homework well, and perform well in class assignments. That when parents and administrators work together to discuss the issues affecting learners, there is a great achievement on both student retention and performance in schools at all levels.

However, these studies are different from the current study because methodologically they did not adopt a convergent-mixed method. The contexts too are different because they focussed on dropout of students from schools and retention in schools in different levels of academic ladder. Therefore, there was need to conduct the current study on the administrative interventions for the retention of economically challenged learners in Kabale District, Uganda.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of students' retention, developed by Patricia Beatty-Guenter in 1994, guided this study. She developed retention programme of five strategies, and these can be grouped and thus providing ground for institutions to evaluate actions taken. The theory states that; Students' success at college is affected by problems they encounter in their lives outside of school. Therefore, Beatty-Guenter identified five broad categories namely, sorting strategies, supporting strategies, connecting strategies, transforming the student strategies and transforming the institution strategies (Pérez, 1998).

Sorting mechanisms are those strategies that ensure that pre-entry students have the best opportunity to match their education background, aspirations and skill level with those of the institution. This process would ensure that student expectations and institutional expectations were made explicit at entry. Secondly, supporting mechanisms are developed by the institution to

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ensure that the student needs are understood and where possible addressed. The above two, sorting and supporting, are referred to as reactive because they refer to the responses by the college to the characteristics and backgrounds of students. Connecting is the process by which social and academic integration are promoted and enabled. Connecting strategies ensure that the frequency, duration, and significance of exchange between members of the college community are developed and promoted. These strategies are interactive since their aim is to create a bond among students and the institution. Transforming the student and the institution strategies are described as strategies intended to effect change in students, for instance, remedial action or career counselling or changes in institutional character (curriculum reform or changes to teaching style or process). Transforming the student and transforming the institution are proactive strategies since they are designed to effect changes to anticipate and eliminate causes of attrition. The five categories are equally important and tend to be interactive in school. Beatty's concern was not the causes of student dropout but an analysis of the actions that can be taken to remedy it.

Sorting strategy deals with grouping students into homogeneous subgroups according to their backgrounds, to identify their needs (Red River College, 2005). The main aim is to identify at-risk students, right from the beginning. Supporting strategies intend to support students in their lives inside and outside the school to help them continue with their studies. This may be in form of financial or health support. Connecting strategies deal with developing, fostering and promoting rapport between the students and the institution. Red River College, (2005) says that, some of the strategies that can be used at this level are personal tutors, peer support, faculty advisors and attendance monitoring. This in turn helps students' integration in school and become its active members.

Transforming students-strategies aim at helping learners to be transformed and getting experience and change. This exercise can involve transforming a student from a passive learner to an active learner; from being unmotivated to be a goal-oriented learner; from expecting failure to hoping for success; from poor study skills to learning improved skills; and academic counselling. Lastly, transforming the institution strategies target the improvement of all aspects of teaching and learning; together with the working environment. This may need the involvement of curriculum design, research programmes, policy review, staff development programmes and cultural change. Figure1 summarizes the strategies.

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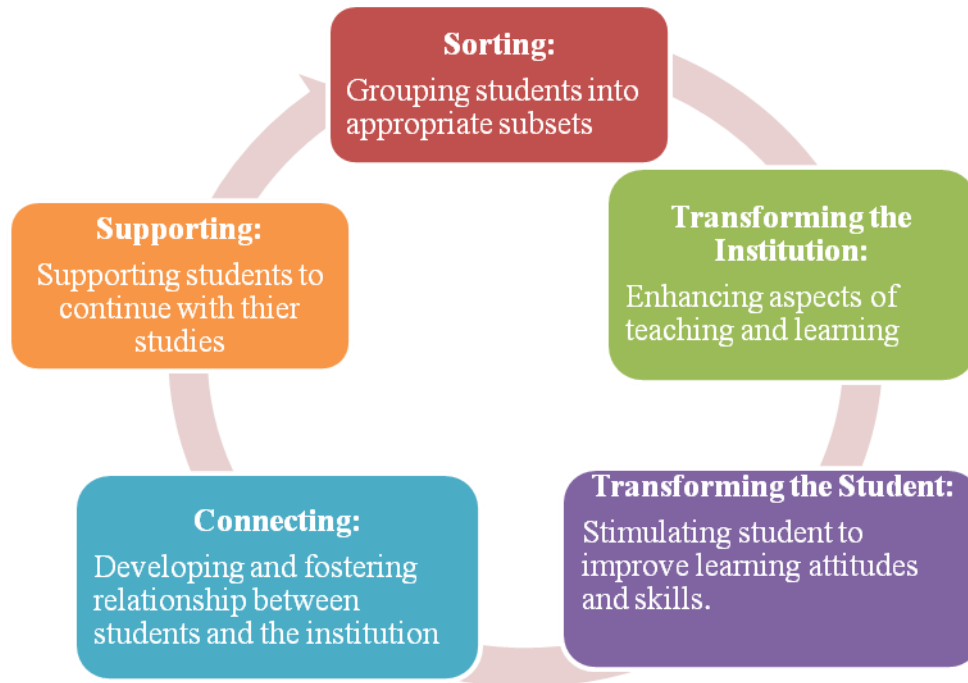


Figure 1: The Beatty-Guenter Retention strategy theory

Source: Adopted from Red River College (2005)

To improve programmes on learners’ retention, many educational institutions especially Universities and Colleges as well as schools have used, the Beatty-Guenter Retention Strategy theory its efforts to improve the retention students and for making sure that they address all areas that affect student retention and success.

The theory was appropriate for in this study because it is precise, clear and practical for retention of learners in school. The theory offers a holistic approach to students’ life, since it recognizes that students have physical, economic and social needs that according to Nzeyimana (2012), that must be addressed if they are to be retained in schools. In the light of administrative intervention, this is likely to be a remedy for increasing retention rates of students in secondary schools, since it addresses all the needs of learners, especially those economically challenged, which is the real problem of this study. The theory also considers other aspects of the school including staff development, which is very crucial for the stability of learners. When the administrators and teachers are well equipped, then the system and its programmes are easy to follow and to fulfil. Lastly, this theory also enhances collaboration and cultivates a teamwork spirit in an educational institution, as it requires everyone to participate in the activities geared towards students’ retention and success.

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Review of Related Literature

Available literature shows that a number of studies have been conducted world wide. Chugh (2011), using a case study method, did a research in India about dropout of secondary school children who live in slums of Delhi. The main purpose of the research was to derive detailed information about the specific reasons behind high dropout rates at secondary level, of youngsters living in slums of Delhi. Findings indicate that children belonging to the socially disadvantaged groups like those from lower class and rural tribes have higher dropout rates in comparison to general population. In order to reduce dropout rates and improve the efficiency of secondary education system, the educational planners needed to understand and identify the social groups that are more vulnerable to dropout and to discover the reasons for dropout. The study recommended that poor parents should be encouraged to be involved in the educations of their children by paying school fees, providing lunch, books, moral support and advice to their children. However, Chugh study is different from the current study in that the methodology used was a case study which is qualitative in nature which has limitations that were overcome by using a Convergent Mixed Parallel Methods Design in the current study.

Kambandya (2016) carried out a study in Salima District, Malawi. The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of administrative strategies on retention in community day secondary schools. Specifically, the study was to establish strategies that can be employed for the retention of learners in community secondary schools. The study was guided by Tinto's theory of retention. The study employed cross sectional survey design and phenomenology. Target population included five community secondary schools. Sampling technique was purposive and stratified, where 60 teachers, 180 students and 5 head teachers participated in the study. Data was collected using questionnaires, interview guides and document analysis. Key findings administrators used strategies such as school culture and motivation, but did not include parental involvement. The administrators suggested that schools should have more parent-teacher associations and meetings to enhance parental involvement in the school activities and education and retention of their children and to make bursaries available to all needy students. The research recommended that, education stakeholders like government and non-governmental organisations should consider making parents economically independent, through access to business loans.

Maina (2015) did a study on the strategies adopted by schools and community to improve student retention in secondary education in low-income areas: a case of Mathare Slums, Nairobi County, Kenya- using descriptive survey design. Findings show that strategies employed to improve retention include, getting bursaries and sponsors, allowing parents to pay in instalments, sensitizing parents on importance of education and guidance and counselling programmes. The research recommends that government should not only offer free secondary education, but also provide free boarding schools for the poor learners, and the community should be involved to support schools financially, so that the youth outside school may be aided. The current study is different from that of Maina (2015) because the latter was done in Kenya and not in Uganda. Despite being neighbours, Kenya and Uganda are politically, socially and economically different.

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Tibanyenda (2012) using qualitative research design, conducted a research on the factors affecting dropout of pupils in army schools; A case study of Bombo and Mbuya Barracks primary schools in Kampala Metropolitan City Uganda. The research findings show that low retention rates are a result of parent-teacher poor relationship. Parents fail to follow their children to school and thus some children do not reach school and end up leaving school.

The study recommended Parents should make frequent visits to schools and together with administrators should discuss issues that lead to dropout. The study also advocated that parents should be encouraged to contribute both ideas and finances to sustain children in school. The study also advises that administrators should involve parents on helping students to meet standards and increase parental and community involvement or reach out to help parents take part in educating their children. Tibanyenda study in primary school section in Kampala Municipality, the capital city of Uganda. The present study on the other hand was carried out in Kabale district, which is a small town and in secondary school section quite different in context.

Research Design and Methodology

This study was conducted in Kabale District is bordered by Rukungiri District in the north, Ntungamo District to the north east, the Republic of Rwanda to the east and south, Kisoro District to the west and Kanungu District to the northwest. The district lies approximately 420 kilometres (260 miles) by road, southwest of Kampala, the capital city of Uganda.

The study adopted a convergent parallel mixed methods design using a combination of cross-sectional survey for quantitative and Phenomenology design for quantitative and qualitative research. The study employed both cross-sectional survey and phenomenology research designs to assess the administrative interventions on retention of economically challenged learners in secondary school in Kabale District, Uganda. Cross sectional survey according to Babbie (2010) involves observations of sample or cross section study of a population or phenomenon that are made at one point in time. Cross sectional survey research involves asking a large group of people at one point, about a particular issue, while phenomenology which is inquiry is the study of the world as it appears to individuals, is straight forward procedure which is capable of detecting many aspects of experience that may prove to be important with no further analysis.

The target population included District Education Officer (DEO), District Inspector of Schools (DIS), Head teachers, Teachers, Parents and students in Secondary schools of Kabale District. The study sample was comprised of one DEO, two DIS, 5 Head teachers, 70 Teachers, 30 Parents and 130 Students. DEO, DIS and Head teachers were sampled using purposive sampling because of the offices they held. The study sample of teachers and students was selected using stratified sampling technique, while parents, sample was selected using snowball sampling. Descriptive statistics involving the use of frequencies and percentages summarized quantitative data. Qualitative data was organized into themes and presented in narrations and direct quotes.

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Discussions and Interpretation of Findings

Involvement of Parents in Children’s Retention in School

The study determined to find ways in which school administrators involved parents to retain students in school in order to complete their studies. Participants were requested to rate their responses in a 5- point scale. *Key: SA=strongly agree, A=agree, UN=Undecided, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree.* Their responses are presented in Table 1.

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Table 1: Teachers, parents and students’ responses on Administrative Influence on Parental Involvement for Retention of Students (n = 215)

<i>Statements</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>UD</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>SD</i>	Total
	<i>f(%)</i>	<i>f(%)</i>	<i>f(%)</i>	<i>f(%)</i>	<i>f(%)</i>	
School Administration invites parents to discuss with them on the matters of education of their children.	80 (37.2)	109 (50.7)	2 (0.9)	9 (4.2)	15 (7.0)	215
The school designs programmes to invite and motivate parents to take part in school activities.	66 (30.7)	98 (45.6)	18 (8.4)	18 (8.4)	15 (7.0)	215
Parents respond positively to administration demands like fees payment and provide lunch and other school necessities.	77 (35.8)	77 (35.8)	28 (13.0)	22 (10.2)	11 (5.1)	215
Parents and learners are encouraged by the school to be involved in Income Generating Activities (IGA).	40 (18.6)	72 (33.5)	51 (23.7)	30 (14.0)	22 (10.2)	215
The school provides employment opportunities to the people of this community especially parents.	67 (31.2)	96 (44.7)	23 (10.7)	16 (7.4)	13 (6.0)	215
The school encourages parents to provide necessary learning materials to their children as required.	108 (50.2)	76 (35.3)	18 (8.4)	9 (4.2)	4 (1.9)	215
The school conducts education days and involve parents to take part in academic discussion and the performance of their children.	66 (30.7)	78 (36.3)	19 (8.8)	16 (7.4)	36 (16.7)	215
Parents are encouraged by administration to help their children with homework and holiday work.	66 (30.7)	71 (33.0)	22 (10.2)	33 (15.3)	23 (10.7)	215
Generally, parents are encouraged by school to support their children’s involvement in co-curricular activities.	74 (34.4)	82 (38.1)	27 (12.6)	18 (8.4)	14 (6.0)	215
I feel confident and satisfied that the school has involved parents to participate in the education of their children in this school.	90 (41.9)	69 (32.1)	28 (13.0)	15 (7.0)	13 (6.0)	215
Total	734 (34.1)	828 (38.5)	236 (11.0)	186 (8.7)	166 (7.7)	2,150

Source: Primary data, 2019

Findings revealed that overall, of the 2,150 responses obtained regarding whether there was an effective administrative influence on parental involvement for retention of economically

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challenged learners in Kabale District, 72.6% of the total responses indicated that they agreed. In support, one head teacher had this to say in relation to the administrative influence on parental involvement for retention of economically challenged students in Kabale district:

Parents come for meetings in large numbers and even when one is invited specifically to talk to the head teacher on the discipline of their children. In some cases, few turn up for these meetings or come very late. “But most of the times, when we invite parents for academic days and PTA meetings, parents from economically challenged families fail to come for those meetings. Even when they come, these parents fear to approach the head teacher to discuss fees matters, unless they have someone to bring them to me(Interview with head teacher 1 4th July 2018).

Still in support of the above findings, another head teacher had this to say:

Actually, when we invite parents to come to school, many do not turn up, because they are poor and from long distances to school. The illiterate parents are also fearful even to reach school; they fear to advise their children as they look at them as people of high profile and who know more than they do... (Interview Head teacher 2,13th July 2018).

During interviews, the District Inspector of Schools supported head teachers when he said:

The district program to involve community is very active, and it is for both learners and parents, it collaborates with school management, parents, teachers and students. These are usually educated on roles of education and its importance to individuals or society, and it is major concern for the district (Interview, 4th July, 2019)

Interview with the DEO revealed views that were supportive of administrative influence on parental involvement for retention when he said:

Some school administrators do help parents and work with them to retain learners who excel. They allow parents to pay in instalments in almost all schools in the district. Previously, there were 50 sponsorships for poor children from government, but now, no bursaries from government to secondary schools; They try to mobilise stakeholders e.g. parents, Local councils, school management, and they explain to emphasize the parents’ roles and responsibilities” (Interview, 2018)

These findings revealed that there was an effective administrative influence on parental involvement for retention students in school. The findings concur with those of Buckley and

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Purdie (2010) that creative collaboration with the communities, builds bridges between public agencies and the community which enhance retention of students in their respective schools. Similarly, it is imperative to indicate that this research found out that parental involvement is a vital tool in retention of economically challenged students in Kabale district. The findings agree with that of Ekai (2009) study on retention of students from nomadic pastoral areas of Turkana in Kenya, that unless the school administration involves parents, the issue of low retention can never be resolved.

Kibera and Kimokoti (2007), in a study of fundamentals of sociology of education with reference to Africa highlighted that children, who are encouraged by their parents in their education, go to school early every day, do homework well, and perform well in class assignments. This agrees with the findings, which showed that the majority of participants agreed that when parents are involved in their children's education, they are retained in schools, shown by 72.6% of the total responses in agreement.

The Challenges School Administrators face in retaining economically challenged Learners in the System

The researcher inquired from the participants on whether there were challenges that were encountered by school administrators in retaining economically challenged learners in Kabale district. . Participants were requested to rate their responses in a 5- point scale. *Key: SA=strongly agree, A=agree, UN=Undecided, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree.* Their responses are presented in Table 2.

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Table 1: Teachers, parents and students’ responses on the Challenges School Administrators in Kabale District face in Retaining Economically Challenged Learners in the System (n=215)

Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total
	f(%)	f(%)	f(%)	f(%)	f(%)	
There is misuse of sponsorships and bursaries for children from families facing economic hardships	31 (14.4)	49 (22.8)	23 (10.7)	31 (14.4)	80 (37.2)	214
Learners who are economically challenged outnumber the bursaries provided by government and sponsorships from NGOs	49 (22.8)	63 (29.3)	23 (10.7)	43 (20.0)	36 (16.7)	214
Some Learners and parents dislike school, and therefore they end up leaving school, even if they have school necessities	33 (15.3)	61 (28.4)	38 (17.7)	46 (21.4)	37 (17.2)	215
There is rampant corruption among school administrators in most schools in this community	41 (19.1)	48 (22.3)	37 (17.2)	47 (21.9)	42 (19.5)	215
The school employs unqualified teachers, for example some teachers in this school unqualified	62 (28.8)	67 (31.2)	36 (16.7)	27 (12.6)	23 (10.7)	215
Lack of enough financial assistance available to help the economically challenged learners in my school	44 (20.5)	72 (33.5)	24 (11.2)	45 (20.9)	30 (14.0)	215
Poor policies formulated by the administration to help economically challenged learners	32 (14.9)	74 (34.4)	39 (18.1)	45 (20.9)	25 (11.6)	215
There is no proper and effective supervision of programmes that help economically challenged learners	44 (20.5)	71 (33.0)	37 (17.2)	41 (19.1)	22 (10.2)	215
Lack of proper procedure to select learners who are economically challenged	44 (20.5)	52 (24.2)	36 (16.7)	49 (22.8)	34 (15.8)	215
Total	497 (21.0)	694 (29.4)	348 (14.7)	442 (18.7)	382 (16.2)	2,363

Source: Primary data, 2018

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Table 12 shows that when participants were asked as to whether there was misuse of sponsorships and bursaries for children, from families facing economic hardship, 31 (14.4%) of the participants strongly agreed and 49 (22.8%) agreed, making it 80(37.2%) of those who agreed. Then, 31(14.4%) of them disagreed and 80 (37.2%) strongly disagreed making it 51.6% of the participants strongly disagreed.

In response to whether the learners who are economically challenged outnumber the bursaries provided by government and sponsorship from NGOs, 49(22.8%) of the participants strongly agreed, and 63(29.3%) of them agreed, while, 34(20.0%) of the participants disagreed and 36(16.7) strongly disagreed, totalling to 70(36.7) of those who disagreed.

Findings as to whether some learners and parents dislike school, and therefore they end up leaving before completion even if they have necessities, 33(15.3%) of the participants strongly agreed, and 61 (28.4%) agreed, and 46 (21.4%) of them disagreed, while 37(17.2%) of the participants strongly disagreed.

When participants were asked on to whether there is rampant corruption among schools in this community, 41(19.1%) of the participants strongly agreed, while 48(22.3%) of the agreed, and 47(21.9) disagreed while 42(19.5) of the participants strongly disagreed. Regarding on whether the school employs unqualified teachers, 62(28.8%) of the participants strongly agreed, 67(31.2%) of them agreed, whereas 27(12.6%) disagreed, and 23(10.7%) of them were participants who strongly disagreed.

Findings on whether there is lack of financial assistance available to help the economically challenged learners, 44(20.5%) of them strongly agreed, and 72(33.5%) agreed, while those who disagreed were 45(20.9%) and 30(14.0%) strongly disagreed.

In response to whether there were poor policies formulated by the administration to help economically challenged learners in school, 32(14.9%) strongly agreed, 74(34.4%) of them agreed, while 45(20.9%) disagreed, and 25(11.6%) strongly disagreed.

Where responses elicited whether there is no proper and effective supervision of programmes that help economically challenged learners, 44(20.5%) of them strongly agreed, 71(33.0%) of them agreed, whereas 41(19.1%) disagreed, and 22(10.2%) of the participants strongly disagreed.

Finally, participants were also asked whether there was lack of proper procedure to select learners who are economically challenged, 44(20.0%) of the strongly agreed, 52(24.2%) of them agreed, 49(22.8%) disagreed, and 34(15.8) of the participants strongly disagreed.

The descriptive findings show that there was high level of challenges encountered by school administrators in retaining economically challenged learners in Kabale district. Evidence was obtained from an overall response of 50.4% of the participants who agreed compared to 34.9% that disagreed.

One of the head teachers clarified:

At times in this school, fifty percent (50%) of parents fail to top up school fees if sponsors pay half and parents are required to complete, or even to buy books, pay boarding fee or transport school for day scholars. Many girls from poor families

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drop out to marry, as a solution to poverty at their homes (Interview with Head teacher 1, 4th July 2018).

In addition, another head teacher indicated a big challenge as he added that school fees payment is a big issue, the physical appearance of those children from poor families; their dress code is not update... they are shabby, they wear torn clothes... (Head teacher 4). Similarly, meagre resources for funding and lack of school budgets were evident in Kabale district as clarified by the District Inspector of Schools:

There is lack of funding, a lot of pressure put on administrators by foundation body or Proprietors, BOG, PTA... these [head teachers] sometimes maintain that they work on budget to cater for the needs of all. When some [students] fail to pay due to poverty, it becomes hard for administrators to explain how they can exempt some from fees payment and say that these others have to pay. It has come to our notes, that some girls get married as a way out of the problem (District Inspector of Schools, 4th July, 2019).

Inferiority complex leading to indiscipline among economically challenged students in Kabale district was evident. The District Education Officer revealed that inferiority complex of children caused by lack of necessities affected discipline, and some students run out of schools, to get jobs and get rich quickly (District Education Officer on 4th July, 2019).

Similarly, Quarterman (2008) in his study about the assessment of barriers and strategies for recruitment and retention of graduate student in the USA, revealed that students' feeling of alienation, isolation and loneliness and the perception of non-supportive environment were the most dominant barriers for the retention of a diverse student population. In the same line also, UNICEF (2012 research in china, found out that the school administrators faced challenges such as social factors, which hindered retention of learners. Some of these children from refugee groups were seen as different due to poverty, language, or gender, and thus were discriminated by others learners who were not affected. This affected their psychological and emotional growth and ended up leaving school.

Inadequate bursaries reported in this study were earlier reported by Wanjiku (2013) while carrying out a research on the effect of Secondary Education Bursary Fund on access and retention of Students in Secondary Schools in Kiambu County- Kenya, reported that the majority of students on bursary revealed that it was not enough to cater for all the educational needs. Besides, only 30% of the students indicated that the bursary money received was enough to cater for all the educational needs. Notwithstanding, an earlier study conducted by Tumusiime (2013) that agrees with the findings in this study regarding inadequate government bursaries and recommended extension of credit facilities like "Entandikwa" or funds for income generating projects to rural population so as increase their source of income.

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Measures to Improve Retention of Economically Challenged Learners in Secondary Schools

The study participants were requested to suggest ways in which school administrators can be supported to improve students' retention in school. . Participants were requested to rate their responses in a 5- point scale. *Key: SA=strongly agree, A=agree, UN=Undecided, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree.* Their responses measures to be taken are shown in Table 3.

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Table 3: Teachers, parents and students’ responses on the measures to Improve Retention of Economically Challenged Learners in Secondary Schools in Kabale District (n=215)

Statements	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total
	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	
The school administrators should involve parents in the academic matters of their children	119 (55.3)	64 (29.8)	9 (4.2)	8 (3.7)	13 (6.0)	213
The administrators should carry out mass community sensitization about the values of education in my school to keep learners in school	117 (54.4)	72 (33.5)	7 (3.5)	8 (3.7)	11 (5.1)	215
The administrators should provide bursaries and scholarships to learners who are economically challenged to remain in schools	97 (45.1)	68 (31.6)	18 (8.4)	11 (5.1)	21 (9.8)	215
School administrators should employ qualified counsellors and teachers and introduce guidance and counselling to help learners in schools, cope up with their differences	108 (50.2)	60 (27.9)	17 (7.9)	13 (6.0)	17 (7.9)	215
The school administrators should lobby for financial assistance from the government and Non-government organizations to help the economically challenged learners in school	106 (49.3)	59 (27.4)	18 (8.4)	19 (8.8)	13 (6.0)	215
The school administration should formulate better policies and designed a detailed criterion to select the right learners who are actually economically challenged	100 (46.5)	80 (37.2)	13 (6.0)	10 (4.7)	12 (5.6)	215
The school administrators should be transparent to all stake holders like parents, students and teachers while formulating policies and principles that govern the school	102 (47.4)	73 (34.0)	16 (7.4)	5 (2.3)	19 (8.8)	215
Total	749 (49.8)	476 (31.7)	98 (6.5)	74 (4.9)	106 (7.1)	1,503

Source: Field data, 2018

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Table 3 indicates that when it comes to whether the school administrators should involve parents in the academic matters of their children, 119(55.3%) of them strongly agreed, 64(29.8%) of them agreed, while 8(3.7%) disagreed, and 13(6.0%) of the participants strongly disagreed. When asked to respond on whether the administrators should carry out mass community sensitization about the values of education in school to keep learners in school, 117(54.4%) of them strongly agreed, 72(33.5%) agreed, 8(3.7%) disagreed, and 11(5.1%) of the participants strongly disagreed.

The participants were also asked on whether the administrator should provide bursaries and scholarships to retain learners in school, 97(45.1%) strongly agreed, 68(31.6%) of them agreed, while 11(5.1%) disagreed, and 21(9.8%) strongly disagreed. In response to whether the school administrator should employ qualified counsellors and teachers to help learners in schools cope up with their differences 108(50.2%) strongly agreed, 60(27.9%) of them agreed, 13(6.0%) disagreed, and 17(7.9%) strongly disagreed.

When participants were asked on to whether there the school administrators should lobby for financial assistance from the government and Non-government organizations to help the economically challenged learners in school, participants showed that 106(49.3%) strongly agreed, 59(27.4%) agreed, while 19(8.8%) disagreed and 13(6.0%) of the participants strongly disagreed. In agreement to this study is the act of probing for financial assistance, which was echoed by the Beatty Guenter's 1994 theory of students' retention. Both the theory and the findings of this study show that they recognize that students have physical, economic and social needs, and therefore, if school administrators are to retain learners in schools, they should lobby for financial assistance for learners as shown 76.7% in support.

The participants were requested to reveal whether the school administration should formulate better policies and design a detailed criterion to select the right learners who are actually economically challenged, 100 (46.5%) of them strongly agreed, 80(37.2%) agreed, 10(4.7%) disagreed, and 12(5.6%) participants strongly disagreed. Participants were also asked as to whether the school administrators should be transparent to all stakeholders like parents, students and teachers while formulating policies and principles that govern the school challenges, 102 (47.4%) strongly agreed, 73(34.0%) of them agreed, while 5(2.3%) disagreed, and 19(8.8%) strongly disagreed.

Findings show that more participants supported all items about the measures suggested to improve retention of economically challenged learners in secondary schools, (that is 81.5 % of items 1 to 7) compared to participants who opposed (12%). Descriptive analysis thus showed that there was strong need for measures to be put in place to improve retention of economically challenged learners in secondary schools in Kabale district. In addition, the District Education Officer revealed the following:

In schools, a measure that is very common is where an administrator asks parents to pay no fees for students in the 1st position, pay half for those in 2nd position , and then for the 3rd position reduce on the amount paid. This reduction of fees by the school only benefits learners who excel, because schools compete to have

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their learners do well in national examinations. Therefore, those who do not excel are not helped by the school (Interview July, 2019)

This strategy seems discriminatory as it favours higher achieving students' and leaves out low achievers and the economically challenged learners helpless. Further still, the DEO said that no government project or program in the district to help economically challenged learners. No government bursary availed to poor learners, apart from USE, which is education for all learners in government schools. Only some NGOs like Brac, Child Africa, and Compassion (Interview conducted on 5th July 2018). Academic performance was the criteria for providing bursaries in Kabale district as the head teachers explained:

Bursary given to learners by the school is given according to performance. Good grades earn the learners a bursary. In most cases, those who are from economically challenged families do not benefit because they do not study well. Some NGOs like Compassion Uganda pays school fees for such children, Brac pays fees and gives all requirements, others come to talk to learners and sensitize them on values of education (Head teacher 2, 4th July 2018).

Similarly, another head teacher said that the school gives work to learners, especially during holidays, not during study, because we have few workers, one gateman, one for security, one cleaner, one compound man, (Head teacher 5, on 4th July 2018).

In support during the interview, the DIS said:

The only intervention for retention that the government has put in place is USE, but it is not enough according experts. Only 41000 shillings given for the education for student per term cannot help them to have boarding facilities, meals or scholastic material (Interview, 3rd July 2018).

These findings concur with those of Bush and Glover (2016) who observed that if students are to maximize their potential from schooling, they need the full support of their parents. It was also recommended that attempts to enhance parental involvement in education occupy governments, administrators, educators and parents' organization. Also, findings from the systematic review show that the frequency of parent-teacher contact as influencing the involvement of learners in learning and thereby improve their retention in academic activities.

The findings in this study on measures taken to retain economically challenged students in secondary schools such as use of parent-teacher interactions was earlier reported by Wang and Sheikh-Khalil (2014). However, parental education itself was found to be positively related to parent-teacher contact. The more educated the parent, the greater was their involvement in their child's education. Parental involvement was also positively related to high school learners' academic achievement; time spent on homework, favourable attitudes towards school and reduced levels of high school dropout. Parents who attend parent-teacher conferences, meetings,

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open houses, or other school activities show how important their children are to them and this consequently leads to high student retention rates (Zeichner et al., 2016) . This support is especially vital to adolescents who are particularly at risk of disengaging from school and in support of parental involvement in the education of their children.

The issue of bursaries and other forms of scholarships revealed in this study had earlier been reported (Holla & Kremer, 2008). They revealed student Sponsorship and Kremer (2008) as a strategy to retain economically challenged learners in secondary schools. They further stressed that there was substantial evidence in the literature that the cost of education was sensitive when it comes to retention of economically challenged students in that fees remain a major barrier for many families.

In agreement to the findings in this study that bursaries were essential measure in the retention of economically challenged students, is Glennerster et al. (2011). The researcher observed that the increased availability of bursaries provides many families with financial assistance, to solve the pressing burden of secondary school fees that prevent many learners from attending secondary schools. These bursaries are important for assisting females and vulnerable groups such as orphans, and the poor to.

Finally, this study is in agreement with Onuko (2012) study which states that even if scholarships were available in schools, research findings indicated that Bursary Schemes were only supplementing students' fees and not generally paying school fees for poor learners wholesomely. The study shows that the government carried out allocation of more funds to constituencies, a significantly higher number of beneficiaries got bursary from other bursary providers, well-wishers and parents supplements. Hence with financial support, the economically challenged learners can be retained in schools up to completion.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it is established that there is an effective administrative influence on parental involvement for retention of economically challenged students in Kabale District. School administration invitation of parents to discuss matters of education of their children and provision of necessary learning materials encouraged student's retention in school. Corruption, parents and children's dislike of school, misuse of bursaries, inadequate funding were challenges encountered by school administrators in retaining students in school. Provision of adequate bursaries and scholarships, designing criteria of identifying needy students, continuous involvement of parents in their children's learning, and provision of professional counselling are some of the strategies administrators must utilize to retain students in school.

Recommendations

The Government of Uganda through the Education standards agency should enforce Parents Teachers Associations to fully utilize parental involvement for retention of economically challenged students in Kabale District. Parents who attend meetings in large numbers upon invitation especially on yearly basis when called to attend the annual PTA meetings should be encouraged to support economically challenged students in their respective areas.

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The Ministry of Education and Sports through school administrators should identify parents of economically challenged students in Kabale District and organize workshops for them. This can be done on termly basis to re-orient parents of economically challenged students in Kabale District to engage in economically viable projects such as SACCOs. Such SACCOs may attract government loans and grants.

The study recommends that new programmes and strategies for retention of economically challenged learners in Kabale district should be put in place. Such new programmes and strategies should focus on setting up monitoring and evaluation components, addressing causes of low attendance and retention issues, on termly or yearly basis. This study was by no means proficient of exhausting all significant areas regarding the Administrative interventions of retention of economically challenged Learners in Kabale District. The study recommends that interested educational scholars should assess the effect of parental involvement on retention of economically challenged students in Kabale District.

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