

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF PARENTS-TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS (PTAs) IN KASESE DISTRICT

By BABIIHA, Mpisi Sulayman Ramadhan; MA Ethics and Development Studies (UMU); BA (Hons), (Mak); PGDE (Mak): sbabiha@yahoo.com; sbmpisi541@gmail.com

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Introduction

The word “education” can be traced to its Latin root “educere” meaning “to lead a person out” (Omotoso S A 2010). In line with this, Plato (one of the classical philosophers of all time), maintained that the essence of education is to lead a person from the dark cave of ignorance into the limelight of knowledge by turning the eyes of the soul from darkness to light. This implies that education should emphasise the ability of the learner to recognise problems and attempt solutions to such problems with little or no assistance (Omotoso S A 2010). Wei Bo (2009) expounds on this by positing that on the one hand one needs to get into the world of civilization through learning knowledge, skills and social rules while on the other hand he/she needs to break out from its bias and ignorance, and that it is these two steps that make up a full circulation of education.

Like RS Peters (1970) and Paulo Freire (1977), Nyerere (1968) says that whether formal or informal, the purpose of education is the same: to transmit from one generation to the next the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the society, and to prepare the young people for active participation in its maintenance or development. This means that apart from transmitting the values of society (including its accumulated knowledge, skills and attitudes), education also consists of providing a suitable environment in which the individual's development (*educere*) can proceed.

Thus education is not only an academic phenomenon; it transcends the academic concerns to include the general growth and development of the human person in all respects. It is, thus a process through which the skills, the knowledge and the attitudes necessary for one to live in harmony with one's environment are acquired. That explains why Fayemi & Adeyelu (2009) describe it as a life-long process. Education being an interactive experience implies that the parties involved (learners, instructors, and members of the community at large) must act in a symbiotic relationship in which all stand to enrich each other's knowledge, perceptions and experiences.

Background to the study

Globally, education is offered in three formats: *formal*, *informal*, and *non-formal*. It is formal when teachers instruct students in courses of study in organised institutions with certification at the end of the programme; and informal when a learner is exposed to the general social process of obtaining the knowledge and skills needed to operate in a particular culture or society (Omotoso S A 2010). It is informal when it does not have a predetermined common curriculum and non-formal when it takes place outside of the formally organized school.

For purposes of this study the researcher has focused on formal education, which occurs in formal institutions called schools with administrative structures, physical infrastructure, and set achievement criteria, among other things. It is also planned and organised by a central authority with a stipulated and written curriculum catering for a wide range of human needs. Musaaazi (1993) points out that it involves "the co-operation of teachers, parents, children, and the community as a whole;" while Syed Abidi (1991) associates it with the process of acquiring knowledge gained by experience or learning to give the individual skills for productive employment and to assist him/her in endeavours of scientific and artistic uplift and spiritual well-being. This covers all the three tenets of education, i.e. knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

The above arguments put together clearly point out why education is considered crucial in the development process the world over. It not only creates a conducive atmosphere for enabling socialisation of new members of society into the socio-cultural setting with its value system (Paulo Freire 1977), but also provides for innovators who lead society to new heights (R S Peters 1970; Paulo Freire 1977).

The problems of education, like other universal issues, are perennial: the same questions keep on reappearing from generation to generation. For example, the question of, who should plan, or pay for education. These are questions which have been raised since Plato's days about twenty three centuries ago; they are still pertinent today (J.A. Akinpelu 1981). Obviously, modern society is much more sophisticated and more complex than the Greek; hence the answers given today may not be the same as those given in Plato's days, but the principle remains the same. This research tries to investigate the old problems in the modern context.

In ancient Greece people were only educated according to their expected functions in society. Thus, slaves, women, and the poor were excluded from the categories of beneficiaries. In the modern world this question has been settled by various United Nations Conventions which treat education, as a *human right* and not a privilege (UNICEF 1999). Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); calls on governments as duty bearers to take responsibility for children's education. The question would, therefore, be whether communities have any role to play.

In Uganda, community participation in the education sector dates back to the 1970s, when the central government that had hitherto firmly controlled the sector was overwhelmed by the myriad of challenges associated with the economic decline experienced during the military regime headed by Field Marshall, Iddi Amin.

Under the centralised system in place at the time, government-aided secondary schools in Uganda in relied primarily on government capitation grants which were only supplemented by small amounts of user fees paid by parents. Apparently, paying fees was the only form of community participation in the schools.

But as the economic decline persisted, the challenges of managing secondary schools deepened. There was acute scarcity of common necessities of life, including pedagogical needs in schools, which led to plummeting standards of education. As political uncertainties intensified, so did economic woes. Both agricultural and industrial production plummeted leading to the national currency losing value on daily basis. Most of the intellectual elite and experts fled into exile, making the bad situation worse. By the mid-1970s inflation had become so severe that school administrators

found it almost impossible to keep their schools open without external intervention.

Before long, head teachers found it inevitable to involve parents in raising more financial resources outside the government grants and gazetted user fees. However, there was no common policy on how to deal with the challenges in the schools. Each school individually forged an ad-hoc arrangement with parents as a stop gap in order to balance the school budget. The principle was that parents should sacrifice 'an extra buck' to facilitate teachers to enable them overcome the challenges of a deteriorating economy. The result was a bond between teachers and parents that culminated into the formation of voluntary informal organisations known as Parents-Teachers' Associations (PTAs). But just like each school had taken its own initiative, so the PTAs remained school-based. In the context of this study PTAs represent the communities.

By the early 1980s, the participation of PTAs in schools had expanded from merely contributing towards teachers' monthly allowances to include other roles. These include development of the infrastructure, human resources, and curriculum. Nevertheless, in spite of all their contribution to the development of education, some government officials still portrayed PTAs as money-hungry and exploitative organisations that deserved to be banned.

The problem

Taking the constructionist approach which views social problems from the perspective of definitional activities rather than the allegedly harmful conditions themselves (Malcolm Spector and John I. Kitsuse 1977), the researcher used the statement of the Commissioner for the , Inspectorate in the MoES, Fagil Mandy, who discredited PTAs in secondary schools in Uganda as "*money hungry cliques who often connive with head teachers to swindle school funds and thus retard rather than foster development in schools.*" (The remarks were made at the Annual Secondary School Head Teachers' Seminar held at Kyambogo University, 11-13 September, 1998.).

In view of the strong disapproval by such a high ranking government official, the researcher found it imperative to make a critical study of the officer's statement vis-à-vis the actual contribution of the PTA institution in the development of secondary education in Uganda between 1981 and 2001. This

is the period the researcher considers the golden age of the PTAs institution in Uganda.

The research objective

The main objective of the study was to establish whether the statement of the commissioner was backed by facts on the ground; whether PTAs were corrupt cliques that swindled school funds instead of developing the schools. This was investigated through three key areas of education standards: physical resources (infrastructural development), human resources (staff welfare and development), and non-physical resources to be represented by curriculum development. These were the three key areas in the Minimum Requirements and Standards set by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES 1998).

Significance of the study

The findings of this study will be presented to the government, policy makers, development agencies, and school managements so they can be used to improve on service delivery in the education sector in general and secondary education sub-sector in particular. It is my hope that Uganda's local communities will also be motivated by this documented acknowledgement of their immense contribution in the development of education.

Geographical and time scope of the study

The study was conducted in Kasese district, which is located on the extreme western border of Uganda, about 400 km from Uganda's capital city, Kampala. It borders with Kabarole and Bundibugyo districts to the north, Bushenyi district to the east, and Lake Edward to the south. The Democratic Republic of Congo is the western neighbour sharing the legendary Rwenzori 'Mountains of the Moon'. At the time of its creation in 1974 there was no single secondary school in the entire district. although the first secondary school in the district was established in 1976, all the schools under study were established in 1980s.

This study focuses on the period between 1981 and 2001, when PTAs were at their best in participating in the development of secondary education in Kasese district and Uganda as a whole.

Research methodology

Although both qualitative and quantitative data was collected, the researcher focused more on the qualitative methodology in line with the ethnographic design. Interviews; focus group discussions; personal observation; semi-structured questionnaires, and important records such as minutes of meetings were the key methods employed. Policy documents, circulars, journals, and newspaper reports, among others were also utilised.

Population and sampling

The researcher sampled five schools in the district – two general secondary schools were selected using simple random sampling from Bukonzo county; and another two from Busongora using the same style. The fifth was selected from the only two vocational institutions in the district at the time: Bwera Primary Teachers College (PTC) and Lake-Katwe Technical College. The selected traditional schools were Bwera S.S. and Karambi S.S. from Bukonzo county; and Kasese S.S. and Maliba S.S. from Busongora county. Bwera Primary Teachers College formed the fifth.

The sampling frame was restricted to teachers, parents, and education officials both at the district and national levels. This was deemed representative of the community because it caters for all segments of society. The actual sample size consisted of seventy two respondents. Of these, forty two were parents, fifteen teachers from the five selected schools in the study, and three officials of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES). The District Education Officer, (DEO), the District Inspector of Schools, (DIS) and head teachers and PTA chairpersons of the five schools were among those sampled. The selection of parents and teachers was irrespective of whether or not those sampled were on the PTA Executive Committees of those schools. The researcher assumed that all parents and all teachers of a school were full members of the PTA and, that they all participated in its programmes, therefore, ought to have enough information to enable them answer the questions satisfactorily. This was also meant to check levels of participation of the members in each specific school and in general terms.

The forty two parents we selected using class registers. The researcher assigned each student in the

class register a number. The numbers were each written on a piece of paper and thrown into a basin. Two papers were then picked at random from the basin. The students whose numbers were picked were asked to provide names of their parents. This was repeated for each year in each school, beginning from S I to S VI. A father or mother of each selected student was automatically added to the list of respondents. This provided eight parents for each of the two 'O' level schools; and twelve parents for each of the three 'A' level schools, giving the total of forty two. As for the teachers, the researcher based the selection on seniority: one from the senior teachers of the school, one from the junior staff, and one senior female teacher. This provided the fifteen teachers in the sample. Other respondents included five head teachers and five PTA chairpersons; the DEO; the DIS; the Assistant Commissioner for Secondary Education; the Deputy Commissioner for Teacher Education; and the Supervisor of Planning Department, MoES.

Data collection and analysis

The researcher used two research assistants to help in data collection. In accordance with the ethnographic research design, the data was collected along longitudinal framework for a period of six months in the last half of 2001 but covering the period between 1981 and 2001. The researchers visited each of the five schools twice per term during second term and third term: at the beginning and end of each school term. This enabled the researchers to take note of any changes and to cross check and corroborate the data received earlier, including any other data received from other sources.

Interview was the major technique of data collection. It was used on all categories of respondents except teachers. Observation was the next major source of data. The researcher and the two research assistants visited each school once every six weeks during the research period and recorded all the changes observed in the three key areas of the study, i.e. infrastructure, human resources, and instruction. The research team was able to attend two Annual PTA General Meetings in different schools during the research period and took note of the form and substance of the meetings. In other cases, the research team only took record of the minutes from the files, to note the issues discussed, and made follow up visits later to check the extent to which the resolutions made had been implemented. Four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were also conducted: two in each county; with one for male and one for female parents but spaced at reasonable intervals to cross-check the

information given by the previous one.

The team also read and analysed policy documents and commission reports published or issued by the ministry, and other materials authored or received by or on behalf of the PTA in the study schools. The data thus collected was coded according to themes that were identified; then triangulated, edited, and finally presented in form of descriptive narration, tables and charts. In line with ethnographic methodology, the researcher tried to limit himself to the views and information obtained from respondents. Only where it was highly necessary did I try to make comments, otherwise, the information was simply presented as received.

Limitations

Records were not readily available in the study schools to facilitate a deep analysis of the PTA's performance for the period under review. And where data existed it was sometimes quite scanty. Only two of the sampled schools had inventories. However, since all the schools submitted statistical forms annually to the MoES with details in all the three research areas, the researcher used the data submitted to the ministry as the official record. This was supplemented by personal observation at the individual schools and information obtained from interviewing parents and teachers. The observed quality of the facilities contributed by the PTAs was also rated to supplement the financial figures accessed by the research team. The combination of the above methods ensured the researcher was able to overcome the shortcomings.

Defining the concepts

Secondary education

The Government White Paper (GoU 1992) indicates that in Uganda, secondary education covers the level which comes after primary education and precedes tertiary or university levels. This includes: general secondary schools, primary teacher' colleges, technical schools, nursing schools, village polytechnics, as well as rural farm schools.

Community participation

Pearce and Stiefel quoted in Andrew Shepherd (1998) define participation as, "the organised effort

to increase control over resources and regulative institutions by ... those excluded from such control". The key factor is that those formerly excluded gain access to and participate in the decision-making processes, hence being empowered to make a contribution that ensures sustainability of the development process.

The contribution does not have to be confined to funds. According to UNESCO (2006), while communities are often called upon to contribute financially or in-kind to support schools, communities can contribute in a much broader range of functions. These can include administrative, managerial, and even pedagogical functions. Thus communities can be a critical resource in the provision of education. On their part, Sherry Arnstein (1969) and Roger Hart (1992) give eight different levels of community participation in a school along a continuum of decision-making power that starts with manipulation of the communities at the lowest level to a level where communities are not only consulted, but where they initiate and share all aspects of the decision-making process including planning, directing, and even implementing.

Musaazi (1993) acknowledges the importance of the community and stresses that since a school operates in a social context, the local community becomes an important element.

The case for participation

The researcher deliberately mainly reviewed literature of the period under study in order for the context to be fully appreciated.

Many governments in Africa took over the Christian missionary founded secondary schools in their countries shortly after independence in a bid to guarantee equal opportunities to all citizens without discrimination on the basis of one's race or religion (Nyerere 1968). Thus, the state took over all responsibility of planning, funding, implementing, supervising and evaluating the education sector.

A number of states did not allow the communities or the private sector to participate. The government controlled and directed every thing. However, statistics have shown that expansion of schools was greater in countries where education was seen as a joint enterprise between the central

government, local government, local communities, organisations and parents (Musaazi 1993). For example, in Tanzania where the government restricted the establishment of private and community schools, enrolment ratios were a mere 4% by 1988 (WDR 1998); whereas in Kenya where this was encouraged through 'Harambee Schools' the enrolment ratios were six times more. Harambee schools rose by about 15% per annum between 1965 and 1975 (WDR 1998). 'Harambee' is a cultural concept of mutual social responsibility in some tribes in Kenya where a community pools its resources for a common cause, usually a social service. The concept was adopted by the Kenyan post-independence government as a national philosophy in order to encourage self-help and to promote sustainable development. The Malawi experience also shows similar trends. A World Bank study (Education in Sub-Saharan Africa 1988) shows that the method of cost-sharing increased secondary school places in Malawi by between 20% and 50% in 1982. Thus, apart from Tanzania, the experience of most other countries in East Africa showed that increased community participation was instrumental in the promotion and development of education.

Research findings

PTAs in Kasese schools

School activities

The earliest secondary school in the district, Saad Memorial Secondary School opened in 1976 but by 2001 the number had risen to thirty seven plus the two colleges: Bwera Teachers College and Lake-Katwe Technical College.

In terms of foundation, four out of the five schools investigated started as through community initiatives rather than as government projects. According to the 'Statistical Abstract 1998', schools founded by communities at national level were 27%, followed by Church of Uganda with 24%, the Catholic Church with 18%, and Muslim Community with 05%. Apparently government-founded schools were a mere 11% (MoES 1998). But in all the schools, most of the development projects, both physical and non-physical, had been made possible largely through PTA support.

All the schools in the study had PTA committees well established. Even at Bwera Teachers College, where there was no PTA structure, parents had been incorporated in various ways, one of them being the end-of-year Parents Annual General Meeting. At the college, parents were made to carry out almost all the functions of the existing PTA such as contributing ideas during the budgeting process (planning), construction, and income-generating projects, among others. It is for this reason that I considered all parents with children in secondary school as members of the PTA in their school regardless of whether such a body existed in practice or whether such parents considered themselves members of PTA or not.

Reasons for supporting secondary education

Using interviews, observation as well as available records, the research team established that general secondary education was more popular compared to both teacher education and technical education. (see Table 1.0 below).

Table 1.0: Enrolment in secondary schools in Kasese district (1999)

Type of school	Number of students
General secondary schools	10,226
Teacher Training College	205
Technical College	59

(Source: Planning Department, MoES, Lake Katwe TC, Bwera PTC)

During the study, Lake-Katwe Technical College which was established by the government in 1984 to offer free technical education to the youth in the district was still largely under-utilised. Parents had not encouraged their children to opt for technical education in spite of the fact that it was free when the general secondary schools were charging exorbitant school fees. The admissions register for 1999 showed that at least seven of the twenty seven admitted that year had scored between aggregate 48 and 52 in the 1998 UCE examinations. The enrolment of a mere 59 in 1999 more than fifteen years after its opening was clear testimony that the college was only a choice of last resort. Some parents confirmed that they would hesitate to advise their children to offer technical courses after 'O' level because those trades could be mastered through apprenticeship instead of wasting time to learn them in formal education. This explained why there was very little PTA activity at the technical college.

The majority of parents said they considered secondary education as a transitory stage to higher education – 40 out of the 42 parents mentioned higher education as their preferred target for their children. Only two mentioned jobs as their target in sending their children for secondary education. The above statistics suggest that the majority of people were prepared to support secondary schools as an insurance policy. It was a means of ensuring that their children would be adequately prepared to pass university entrance examinations and thus enable them to aspire for bigger things in life. This was in line with the observation made by Graham-Brown (1993) that for most families in the Third World, educating their child provided hope for the future.

Development planning

When asked the question: who formulates the agenda for PTA General Meetings, responses from the four FGDs indicated that the PTA committees did; although some few dissenting voices thought the head teacher influenced the process significantly.

But on consensus regarding resolutions reached at general meetings, the majority indicated that members from all socio-economic strata discussed freely with no coercion or intimidation. They believed that members participated as equal partners. However, in the two meetings the researcher attended it was observed that some few prominent members dominated.

On what type of issues they discussed in their meetings, it emerged that these were varied but largely depended on the agenda presented. The most common were related to construction of classrooms, teachers' houses, and students' hostels. Teachers' allowances and staff lunch were also prominent subjects.

Many parents appeared uncertain about the contribution of the ministry in the school budget although they admitted that the annual budget proposal presented to them for discussion at the end of the school year always reflected all sources of funds.

Funding the school budget

All in all, the most significant participation of PTAs in the management and development of schools was reflected in planning, which culminated in passing the annual school budget. In all the schools in the study, including the PTC where there was no PTA structure in place, the school budget *had to* be discussed in the parents' meeting before it was presented to the Board of Governors for approval. The ministry, too, had endorsed this position by sanctioning that no school fees structure of any school would be approved by the ministry unless it had the blessing of the parents' meeting (MoES 1994).

Data obtained from the head teachers of the five schools under investigation indicated that only one school had 50% of its budget financed by the PTA. For the rest, it was either 75% or more. In fact, Maliba S.S. which was not yet government-aided at the time, its entire budget was attributed to the PTA. In other words, 80% of the schools had more than 75% of their budgets contributed by the PTA.

Infrastructural development

All the five schools under study were started through parents' initiative; and so they all started in the buildings of the nearest primary school. However, it was soon noted that the quality of education was deteriorating in both the primary and the newly established secondary schools; and construction of new class rooms for the new secondary schools became inevitable.

To begin with, local communities had to find land for the new schools. Communal land ownership not being common in the district meant that the land had either to be donated by individuals or bought for cash from willing sellers. Respondents revealed that among the schools under study, only Maliba S.S. had to buy land. The rest were offered free land of varying acreage.

Records, both at the schools and the ministry, indicated that more than 60% of the physical development: classrooms, offices, staff houses and students' hostels, etc. were only possible due to PTA involvement either directly or indirectly.

Education Statistical Abstract of 1993 showed that the nine government-aided secondary schools in the district by then had eighty (80) streams between them; but the seventy three (73) physical classrooms in permanent materials were largely funded by PTA efforts.

Table 2.0 Number of school structures in Kasese district in 1993 by type

Item	Complete	Incomplete	Remarks
Class rooms	73	30	Permanent materials
Teachers' houses	48	31	Permanent materials
Special rooms	05	02	Permanent materials
Workshops	01	05	Permanent materials
Store rooms	16	04	Permanent materials
Other (Lib. Office. Lab. etc)	28	11	Permanent materials

(Source: 1993 Education Statistical Abstract 1993)

This suggests that communities were very instrumental in the development of the physical infrastructure of secondary schools in the district.

Enrolment in Secondary Schools in Kasese

The infrastructural development of the schools noted above soon resulted into increased enrolment in the secondary sub-sector in the district. table 3.0 shows this very clearly.

Table 3.0 Enrolment in secondary schools in Kasese district

Year	1979	1986	1993	1999	2001
Enrolment	41	1,435	8,582	10,226	

(Source: Statistical Abstracts, Planning Unit, MoES)

However, the research team observed that although the study schools had fairly good facilities, most of them having opened during the initial period (1976-1985), the newly established ones had very poor facilities. Translated simply, it meant that the quality of education in the majority of schools in the district were nothing to be proud of. The expansion in quantity was thus being achieved at the expense of quality.

During the study it was observed that starting new schools in the district was demand-driven. Commenting on this, the chairperson, Kasese Post-Primary Head Teachers Association (KAPPHTA) Mr Gershom Mbabazi was concerned that local people were usually persuaded to start new schools under the illusion that they would be cheap to manage; or that the government would take them up in the first year of operation. The poor quality, therefore, simply illustrated the failure on the part of the communities to match the demand.

PTAs in the management of schools

In all the five schools under study, parents were involved in the management of the schools in various ways. Apart from PTA meetings, budgeting and funding, they also took part in establishing and managing school projects; and quite often linked with the rest of the local community to provide free labour in making bricks or performing related tasks during construction programmes.

School Projects

Land and cultivation

As a way of reducing the burden of fees on the parents some schools had established income-generating projects. In the five schools, all except one, had projects of various types – Bwera Teachers College, and Bwera S.S. had matooke plantations, while Karambi S.S. had established a woodlot of eucalyptus. Bwera S.S. had taken projects so seriously that they had even bought a tractor which they hired out to farmers in the viillage. Of the study schools, only Maliba S.S. did not indicate having any projects.

Staff and student's welfare

In terms of students' welfare, PTAs in all the study schools had started students' hostels managed directly or indirectly by the school authorities. In the FGDs it emerged that although the government was trying to phase out boarding schools, most parents and teachers had faith in them rather than in Day Schools; which the government was trying to promote in line with the Government White Paper on Education of 1992. Most parents said they were prepared to make sacrifices to maintain boarding facilities for their children with the hope that this would make them perform better in the final examinations.

Staff lunch was an important staff welfare programme in all the schools under study. Each student had to pay a specific fee to cater for it every term. The PTA chairperson, Kasese S.S. Mr Baluku Bonny explained that the staff lunch encouraged teachers to settle down in the school and to concentrate on educational activities. Staff houses or its equivalent in house rent and the monthly PTA allowances were also very important staff welfare initiatives of the PTA institution.

Transport

Another priority project in most schools was transport. Two of the schools under study had school vehicles, one of them entirely financed by parents while the other had been provided by the government but maintained by parents. Another two were already in advanced stages of acquiring their own school trucks entirely through parents' contributions. PTA committees of the schools concerned believed such vehicles would bring in some income into the school when hired out to the public; and also solve the problem of mobility both for administrative and academic pursuits.

Staff and students' discipline

Staff discipline was another area in which the PTA was very strongly involved. A general survey of minutes of PTA committee meetings in the five schools showed that no single meeting ever ended without discussing discipline cases of teachers or students. Students and staff problems were always handled by the PTA. Only the bigger cases reached Boards of Governors. For example, under minute 36/97 of the PTA Executive Committee meeting of 13 October, 1997, the PTA committee at Karambi S.S. discussed the case of a teacher who was alleged to have “gone around mudslinging the head teacher in the village”. The committee resolved that the teacher be advised ‘to apply for a transfer’. There was no reference to any higher authority in the case. By the time I was reading the minutes the teacher was no longer in the school.

However, PTA committees were sometimes a source of disharmony in the schools. They at times wanted to take over the powers of the head teacher, thus causing endless conflicts that more often than not, ended in strikes. A students’ strike at Maliba S.S. in November, 1998 was reportedly engineered by parents. The DIS, Mr Joshua Mupanda revealed to the research team that at the height of the Maliba S.S. crisis, some parents confessed to have instigated the students’ head prefect to lock the head teacher out of his office, accusing him of embezzling school funds. But on the whole, such incidents were exceptions rather than the rule in the study schools.

Teaching/learning materials

As already explained in the introduction, the PTA strategy initially involved merely offering the teacher a monthly token allowance to supplement government emoluments. However, as government-grants became more and more inadequate to run the schools, PTAs began to enter technical areas by contributing towards pedagogical requirements such as reference books, writing or printing materials, mathematical instruments, and tools for vocational instruction, among others. Table 4.0 indicates that in Kasese district in 1992 parents were responsible for about 38% of the total cost of the instructional materials for the entire district.

Table 4.0 Funds for School activities in Kasese District by Source

Item	Govt Contribn (millions)	PTA/other (millions)	PTA (%)
Instructional materials	12,670	7,717	37.9
Food	6,697	23,456	77.8
Development	6,602	55,065	89.2
Other	11,005	18,597	62.8
Total	36,974	104,835	73.9

(Source: Statistical Abstracts, MoES, 1993)

Staffing and development

Under the existing educational policy frame-work parents do not have powers to deploy teachers. It is the preserve of the Ministry of Education and Sports. However, in the study schools, PTAs sometimes influenced decisions as part of academic concern for their children. For example, the post of Director of Studies (DOS), which existed in all secondary schools in the study, was a creation of the PTA. They supported and facilitated it fully for steady improvement in academic standards of schools. In practice, all the ministry policy statements the researcher was able to see did not refer to the post in any way. Neither The 1992 Government White Paper on Education nor the 1998 Guidelines on Minimum Standards mention anything about the post of DOS; yet ministry officials were positive that it was one of the criteria for promoting teachers, especially, those who apply for the post of deputy head teacher. This went further to strengthen the role PTAs play in staff development regardless of whether they have the mandate or not. PTAs also encouraged teachers who did not have degrees to apply for admission at university and supported them to be granted study leave. In some cases, PTAs also recommended hard working teachers they had identified for promotion. This was most notable at Maliba S.S. which was not yet government grant-aided.

Conclusion

This study was stimulated by contradictory remarks about PTAs; where some authorities in Uganda saw them as selfish and exploitative organs that were trying to impose themselves on the official structures of the education sector while others did not believe that local villagers could contribute any thing useful to the highly specialised technical profession like education. Yet others viewed them as important stakeholders who had made a significant contribution in the development of education at a time when the government could not and, therefore, advocated for them to be integrated into the formal structures.

The data gathered during the six months of the study in Kasese district led the researcher to the conclusion the statement made by Commissioner, Fagil Mandy was an exaggeration; because the evidence from the records, from the people's responses, and the evidence observed physically showed that PTAs play a very vital role in the development of secondary education. Their contribution was not only important because of the government inability to fund the sector adequately; it was even more relevant in view of the fact that the school has become the most influential socialising agency of children in the modernising Ugandan political economy.

In all the three areas under investigation: infrastructure, human resources, and curriculum, there was overwhelming evidence of the contribution of PTAs in the development of secondary education:

PTAs were fully involved in planning, budgeting, constructing and supervising infrastructural development in all the schools under study. The buildings ranged from classrooms to specialised structures such as mini-laboratories in order to facilitate a conducive teaching/learning atmosphere in all subjects including the sciences. Although there were cases where some parents complained of not participating fully, the researchers found that most of these were parents that rarely attended meetings or they were new to the schools.

On staff welfare, PTAs in all the study schools made very significant contributions towards the welfare of both staff and students. They not only engaged in ensuring that staff were provided with lunch and break tea, but they were also very instrumental in putting up staff houses or housing allowances; and in some cases even paid such teachers transport allowances.

It is the area of curriculum development, PTAs were not directly involved. Nevertheless, they made significant contributions towards the procurement of pedagogical requirements such as library materials, writing and printing materials, and tools for vocational instruction, among others things. Their influence, in curriculum was also identified through the institutions they supported most. The low enrolment at the technical school was indicative of their rejection of the vocational curriculum.

Recommendations

As noted above, PTAs have made and continue to make significant contributions in the development of secondary education, but considering that their role continues to remain ad-hoc limits their capacity in official-legal terms. So in addition to responsibilities and tasks in which they are already involved, this researcher would wish to recommend as follows:

The government should amend the Education Act and related laws to cater for the PTA in the official structures of the education sector, even if it means merely requiring a PTA to register with the Registrar of Companies as a body corporate so that it operates with a legal mandate. When this is done it will be easier for the state to regulate their activities and control their excesses. At the moment, the state only refers to them when it is in its own interest to do so, which this researcher classifies as being unprincipled.

On the other hand, the legalisation of the PTA institution would also legalise some of the important changes it has introduced in the education system which the line ministry has so far chosen to ignore; one of them is the introduction of the post of Director of Studies (DOS) in schools. A brainchild of the PTA institution, the post of DOS has been embraced in all secondary schools in Uganda.

In the same way, parents or PTA committees who instigate students or teachers to strike against individual head teachers presumably because of lack of appropriate channels through which to address their grievances will have been offered a viable alternative that would be formal and sufficiently authoritative. The strike at Maliba S.S. was a case in point. The group of parents who allegedly sent the head prefect to lock the head teacher out of his office informed the DIS, Kasere that they lacked the official mandate to handle the crisis, hence their choice of mobilising the student leader.

All in all, if all the above recommendations are taken up by the relevant authorities it will strengthen harmonious community participation in the promotion and development of education, which will go a long way to solve the contradictions in the management and development of secondary education, and ultimately lead to community transformation.

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