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The Management of Project Work on Teachers' Performance in Government Aided Secondary Schools in Mbale City, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

The thrust of the study hinged on the Management of Project Work on Teachers' Performance in Government-Aided Secondary Schools in Mbale City, Uganda The study adopted a cross sectional survey design with both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. A sample of 231 respondents was selected using census and simple random sampling techniques. Data collection instruments used were questionnaires and interview guides. Qualitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics and content analysis while quantitative data was analysed using Regression analysis. The study discovered that, project work has a moderate significant influence on teachers' performance (β = .599, p = 0.000<.05). Project work was seen as the major contributing factor in the prediction of teachers' performance. The study concluded that, project work was necessary in enhancing teachers' performance. The study recommended the Ministry of Education and Sports together with school administrators to provide mentorship, sufficient resources and recognition in order to empower teachers in their roles in using project as a method of instruction to enhance teachers' performance.

Keywords: *Management, project work, teachers' performance, secondary schools, and Mbale City*

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher performance refers to the effectiveness and quality of a teacher's instructional practices, classroom management, and overall impact on student learning and development, (Sebastian, Herman, & Reinke, 2019; Yansyah, 2022). It encompasses various aspects such as lesson planning, delivery of instruction, assessment of student progress, communication with students and parents, professional development, and adherence to ethical and professional standards, (DiPaola, M., & Wagner, 2018; Mandinach, & Gummer, 2016). A number of factors may perhaps explain for the unacceptable levels of teachers' performance. This study focused on establishing the contribution of the class management of project work on teachers' performance in government-aided secondary schools in Mbale city, Uganda. The year 2020 saw the announcement of a new competency-based curriculum for lower secondary students by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) in collaboration with the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC). The findings of a survey that indicated Ugandan pupils lacked the values, attitudes, knowledge, and abilities needed to thrive in the workforce served as the foundation for this curriculum. The goal of the new curriculum was to enhance our teaching methods and create well-rounded students who could succeed in the post-school environment. The Covid-19 school closures caused an 18-month delay in the implementation of the new curriculum, impacting teacher training and engagement strategies as well as those of other stakeholders. After the schools reopened in 2022, the curriculum was implemented. There are still certain issues with the new curriculum. Parents and the larger community showed little interest in it at first, and neither instructors nor school administrators seemed to be in favour of it. The curriculum calls for a change in teaching strategies and a mentality from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered pedagogy, which can be difficult, particularly for more seasoned educators and leaders, thus pausing a challenge on teachers' performance, for the case of this study, in secondary schools teachers of Mbale City.

Historically, teacher performance has its roots in the early formalization of education systems, (Bauer, 2021). During this period, teachers' performance indictors based on their capacity to transfer knowledge and instil moral ideals in their students in ancient civilizations like Greece and Rome, (Gary, 2021). During middles ages, formal schools and universities were established, evaluating the performance of teachers became necessary. During this time, teacher performance was measured in terms of teaching proficiency and commitment to religious dogma, (Välimaa, 2019).

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw increased emphasis on teacher performance linked to the provision of high-quality teacher education programs, (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Also, the interest in the performance of teachers was stretched to the public domain in terms of promotion of quality instruction in nations such as the United Kingdom, Australia and United States of America, (Darling-Hammond, 2017). It was stressed that this would help to match individual requirements with organizational needs. The teacher performance was seen as inevitably leading to school effectiveness, (Forde & McMahon, 2019).

In the 21st century, the evaluation and enhancement of teacher performance have become increasingly important in the field of education, (González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2016). With advancements in technology, changes in teaching methodologies, and evolving student needs, the role of teachers has also evolved. Pedagogical expertise, technological proficiency, communication skills, professional development, and student engagement strategies are key indicators of teacher performance, (Kadir, Anindhyta, & Susanto, 2021). By continuously striving to enhance their teaching practices and adapt to changing educational trends, teachers can positively impact student learning outcomes and contribute to the advancement of education in the modern era.

In Uganda, there are specific requirements for teachers to fulfil in order to function well. According to the Education Act of 2008, the national government, acting through its appropriate authorities, is in charge of establishing the objectives and goals of education, creating and managing the national curriculum, and selecting the language and medium of teaching. The ministry recognizes that reaching its objective of providing quality education to all depends in part on the performance of teachers, (Education Act 2008). Guidelines for good teacher performance are provided by the Uganda Public Service Standing Orders. Such significant performance benchmarks and objectives include, for example: timely preparation of work schedules, preparation of instructional aids, preparation of lesson plans ahead of time, delivery of instruction at designated times, assurance of student satisfaction with instruction, timely feedback to students, and assessment of students, (Ministry of Public Service, 2007).

However, of recent, reports of an increase in exam malpractice, rote learning, student coaching, examination-oriented teaching, and half-baked graduates have greatly surfaced, (Katwesigye, Balunywa, Ojok & Irumba, 2023; MoES, 2015) these factors have been linked to poor teacher performance in secondary schools, (Fazal, et al., 2023). In order to alleviate some of the above challenges, the Ministry of Education and Sports through National Curriculum development Centre [NCDC] developed CBC for lower secondary classes and is being implemented in all secondary schools in the country. CBC calls for emphasis on an active learning and teaching approach, and therefore demands teachers to employ various teaching-learning styles.

Competence-based curriculum has its roots in the competency movement that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in United States of America, (Cuckler, 2016;

Winterton, 2017). The movement emerged in reaction to what was seen as the flaws in the conventional educational system, which was blamed for emphasizing standardized testing and rote memorization above practical skills and real-world application, (Winterton, 2017). The goal of the competency movement was to reorient education towards the acquisition of competencies, or skills that would be useful to students' future professional and personal growth. Consequently, The Education Professions Development Act of 1970 promoted the development of competence-based teacher education. For instance, in New York State, all teacher certification programmes were to be registered in competency-based format, (Cuckler, 2016).

In the 1980s and 1990s, Competency-based curricula gained popularity when educators and decision-makers saw that education needed to adapt to the needs of a global economy that was changing quickly, (Nyikadzino, 2023). During this time, competency frameworks and standards came into being, outlining the precise knowledge and abilities that students should have at every level of their schooling. These frameworks, which emphasized the significance of outcomes and performance indicators, offered a clear road map for curricular design and assessment. As a result, specific job-related competencies were emphasized in vocational and technical education programmes, incorporating the ideas of competency-based education (CBE). Nations like the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, the Netherlands, and Australia also embraced this approach to education. In particular, the competence-based curriculum strategy produced qualified graduates in the majority of European countries.

The 21st century has witnessed further advancements in CBC, driven by technological innovation and globalization, (Catacutan, 2023; Cheptoo, & Ramadas, 2019; Martini, Kusnadi, Darkam, & Santoso, 2019). Teachers may now provide instruction that is specifically tailored to each student's needs and skills because to the increased use of digital tools in the classroom. In an increasingly dynamic and linked world, competency-based approaches have also been accepted as a way to promote lifelong learning and flexibility, (Francisca et al., 2019). The emphasis on competencies such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy reflects a broader recognition of the multifaceted skills required for success in the 21st century is evident in the CBC. Due to this, number of African countries including Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Malawi, Ghana, Ethiopia, and Tanzania have adopted CBC (Cheptoo, & Ramadas, 2019). Today, CBC continues to evolve in response to ongoing societal changes, economic shifts, and advancements in educational research, (M'mboga, 2021).

Project-based learning is therefore, a crucial approach that gives students agency and develops critical abilities. PBL's demanding structure and real-world setting help students develop and apply 21st Century Competencies. Project-Based Learning (PBL) is described as "a student-driven, teacher-facilitated approach to learning" by Bell, (2010: 39). According to Laar et al, (2017), Project Based Learning is an instructional approach where students acquire information and skills by devoting a significant amount of time to researching and addressing a real-world, captivating, and intricate issue, problem, or challenge. An actual challenge, a driving topic, inquiry, teamwork, a public product, and reflective practices are the essential elements of Project-Based Learning (PBL). Students must effectively utilize 21st Century Skills in order to tackle the challenge posed by project based learning to work in their classes with their teachers with the intention to develop critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and innovation and communication. For Hutchinson (2015), curriculum integration of project-based learning is crucial, however, since 21st century abilities are less tangible than those found in a traditional curriculum, teachers today may find it challenging to help their learners develop them. Never the less, through "the development of collaboration skills, improvement of critical thinking and creative thinking, complex problem solving, transfer of learning, and positive attitudes towards tasks," project based learning and project work can assist educators in closing this gap, (Lee, Huh & Reigeluth, 2015).

Project work refers to a method of teaching and learning that involves students working on a specific task or project over an extended period of time, (Condliffe, 2017; Tan & Chapman, 2019). This approach emphasizes hands-on, experiential learning and encourages students to apply their knowledge and skills to real-world problems. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating project work, guiding students through the process, providing support and feedback, and assessing their performance (English, & Kitsantas, 2013). The relationship between project work and teachers' performance is a topic of significant interest in the field of education, (Özgenel, & Mert, 2019).

Project-based learning has gained attention as an effective instructional approach, and its impact on teachers' performance has been a subject of research and discussion, (Zhang, & Ma, 2023). It often requires educators to adopt a more facilitative role, encouraging student-centered learning and fostering critical thinking skills, (McTighe, Doubet, & Carbaugh, 2020). This shift in pedagogical approach can lead to improvements in teachers' instructional strategies, classroom management, and overall effectiveness. Additionally, project work provides opportunities for professional development as teachers engage in designing and implementing innovative projects, collaborating with colleagues, and integrating technology into their teaching practices, (McTighe, 2021).

Project-based learning has been associated with increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes, (Almulla, 2020; Carrabba, & Farmer, 2018). When students are actively involved in project work, they are more likely to be motivated and invested in their education. As a result, teachers may experience greater job satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment, which can

positively influence their overall performance. Engaging in project work often necessitates collaboration among educators. This collaborative environment can foster the exchange of ideas, best practices, and resources, leading to professional development opportunities for teachers, (Zepeda, 2019). By working together on interdisciplinary projects or participating in professional learning communities focused on project-based learning, educators can enhance their skills and knowledge, ultimately impacting their performance in the classroom.

Guo and Yang, (2012) carried out longitudinal study on project-based learning as an effective approach to link teacher professional development and students' learning in China. The study was done in resource-rich schools in urban areas and less developed school with both students and teachers participating in the study. The data were collected from focus groups and interviews with stakeholders, online surveys and paper-based questionnaires, computer proficiency tests, observations from site visits, and an analysis of the students' artificial product. Research findings showed that project-based collaborative inquiry activity provides the greatest support for teachers to develop their comprehensive capacity that increased their performance. Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the Management of Project Work on Teachers' Performance in Government-Aided Secondary Schools in Mbale City, Uganda with an aim of improving education through an education policy review in Mbale City.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross sectional survey design with both quantitative and qualitative approaches as Pella, (2015) recommends. Also, Pule (2020) states that this design when employed enables data collection, summarization, presentation, and interpretation of findings by the researchers in order to shed light on an ongoing occurrence. Therefore, the study target population consisted of 5 government aided secondary schools, with 5 Head teachers and 231 teachers selected using simple random and census inquiry sampling techniques. The study used questionnaires and interview guides to collect data and used descriptive, regression and content analysis techniques to analyses data.

RESULTS

The study sought to assess the influence of project work on teachers' performance in Government-aided Secondary Schools in Mbale City. Project work which was the main construct was measured using 7 items. The descriptive statistics results included frequencies, percentages and means as presented in (Table 1). Findings in (Table 1), shows that 6 (3.0%) of the respondents disagreed that they provided their students with clear guidelines and expectations for the project work, 10(4.9%) of the respondents were undecided, while a greater percentage of respondents 107 (92.2%) agreed. The finding for this item shows that majority of the teachers provided their students with clear guidelines and expectations for the project work, (*M=4.28)*. As to whether teachers created opportunities for students to work together, share ideas, and contribute to the project as a team, findings indicate that only 5 (2.5%) of the respondents disagreed that they created opportunities for students to work together, share ideas, and contribute to the project as a team, 12 (3.4%) of the respondents were undecided, and the majority of the respondents 188 (91.7%) agreed. The finding for this item shows that majority of the teachers created opportunities for students to work together, share ideas, and contribute to the project as a team (*M=4.25)*.

As to whether teachers were always available to answer questions, provided feedback, and offered assistance to students when needed, findings in (Table 1), also revealed that, 8 (3.9%) of the respondents disagreed that they were always available to answer questions, provided feedback, and offered assistance to students when needed, 12(5.9%) of the respondents were undecided, while 185 (90.2%) agreed. The study findings regarding on this item show that, majority of teachers were always available to answer questions, provided feedback, and offered assistance to students when needed (*M=4.16)*. Regarding whether teachers encouraged students to analyze information, evaluate different perspectives, and develop logical reasoning skills during the project work, findings revealed that only 7(3.5%) of the respondents disagreed that they encouraged students to analyze information, evaluate different perspectives, and develop logical reasoning skills during the project work, 11(5.4%) of the respondents were undecided, while 187(79.8%) agreed. The study finding on this item shows that majority of the teachers encouraged students to analyze information, evaluate different perspectives, and develop logical reasoning skills during the project work (*M=4.20)*.

Pertaining whether teachers encouraged students to reflect on their progress, identify areas for improvement, and consider how their learning had evolved throughout the project, findings in Table 1reveal that 7(3.5%) of the respondents disagreed that they encouraged students to reflect on their progress, identify areas for improvement, and consider how their learning had evolved throughout the project, 14 (6.8%) of the respondents were undecided, while 184 (72.3%) agreed. The study finding regarding on this item showed that majority of the teachers encouraged students to reflect on their progress, identify areas for improvement, and consider how their learning had evolved throughout the project (*M=4.15)*. As to whether teachers created opportunities for students to express their creativity through various mediums such as art, design, storytelling, or multimedia presentations, findings in Table 1reveal that 6 (3.0%) of the respondents disagreed that they created opportunities for students to express their creativity through various mediums such as art, design,

Table 1: Teachers' perceptions on project work in relation to their performance in secondary schools in Mbale city.

Items	SD	D	UD	A	SA	*Mean*
I provide my students with clear guidelines and expectations for the project work.	3 (1.5%)	3 (1.5%)	10 (4.9%)	107 (52.2%)	82 (40.0%)	*4.28*
I create opportunities for students to work together, share ideas, and contribute to the project as a team.	2 (1.0%)	3 (1.5%)	12 (5.9%)	112 (54.6%)	76 (37.1%)	*4.25*
I am always available to answer questions, provide feedback, and offer assistance to students when needed.	2 (1.0%)	6 (2.9%)	12 (5.9%)	123 (60.0%)	62 (30.2%)	*4.16*
I encourage students to analyze information, evaluate different perspectives, and develop logical reasoning skills during the project work.	3 (1.5%)	4 (2.0%)	11 (5.4%)	119 (58.0%)	68 (33.2%)	*4.20*
I encourage students to reflect on their progress, identify areas for improvement, and consider how their learning has evolved throughout the project.	4 (2.0%)	3 (1.5%)	14 (6.8%)	125 (61.0%)	59 (28.8%)	*4.13*
I create opportunities for students to express their creativity through various mediums such as art, design, storytelling, or multimedia presentations.	2 (1.0%)	4 (2.0%)	11 (5.4%)	115 (56.1%)	73 (35.6%)	*4.23*
I encourage students to connect the project work to real-world issues or scenarios that are relevant to their lives.	3 (1.5%)	4 (2.0%)	20 (9.8%)	112 (54.6%)	66 (32.2%)	*4.14*

Source: *Field Data (2025)*

Table 2: Regression Coefficient for Project Work and Teachers' Performance**.**

Model		Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	Project work	1.612	0.242		6.664	0.000
	Teachers' performance	0.610	0.057	0.599	10.658	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' Performance

storytelling, or multimedia presentations, 11(5.4%) of the respondents were undecided, while 188 (91.7%) agreed. The study finding regarding on this item showed that majority of teachers created opportunities for students to express their creativity through various mediums such as art, design, storytelling, or multimedia presentations (*M=4.23)*. Concerning whether teachers encouraged students connect the project work to real-world issues or scenarios that are relevant to their lives, findings in Table 1reveal that 3 (1.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that they encouraged students connect the project work to real-world issues or scenarios that are relevant to their lives, 4 (2.0%) disagreed, 20(9.8%) were undecided, majority 178 (86.8%) agreed. The study finding on this item showed that majority of the teachers encouraged students connect the project work to real-world issues or scenarios that are relevant to their lives (*M=4.14)*.

Linear Regression Analysis between Project Work and Teachers' Performance

To establish whether there is no statistically significant influence of project activities on teachers' performance in government-aided secondary schools in Mbale City, a linear regression analysis was done. The results are presented tables. The results in (Table 2) show the coefficient result of linear regression for project work and teachers' performance which explains the fitness of the model. Teachers' performance score = 1.612 + .610 (project work) revealed that for every unit increase in project work there is 0.610 increase in teachers' performance. Also (β = .599, p = 0.000<.05).

Results presented in (Table 3), explained how well the regression model fit the dataset. The results revealed how much variance in project work account for teachers' performance. The coefficient of determination (R^2 = .359) indicates that 35.9% of project work account for the variations in the teachers' performance in government-aided secondary schools in Mbale City. However, the R square percentage was moderate, implying project work does not greatly predict changes in teachers' performance. Results in (Table 4) explained the overall statistical significance of the regression model, ((F =1, 203) = 113.584, p = 0.000 < 0.05). This implies that the proposed model is statistically significant (fit) in predicting the dependent variable. The hypothesis that there is no statistically significant influence of project work on

Table 3: Regression Model for Project Work and Teachers' Performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.599[a]	0.359	0.356	0.41730

a. Predictors: (Constant), Project Work

Table 4: ANOVA for Project Work and Teachers' Performance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	19.780	1	19.780	113.584	0.000[b]
Residual	35.351	203	0.174		
Total	55.130	204			

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' Performance
b. Predictor: (Constant), Project Work

teachers performance in government-aided secondary schools in Mbale City, is therefore rejected. It means that project work as aspect of Competence Based Curriculum does significantly contribute to teachers' performance in government-aided secondary schools in Mbale City.

Qualitative Findings on project work and Teachers' Performance in Government-aided Secondary Schools in Mbale City

During interviews with the head teachers, it was revealed that teachers' utilization of project work pedagogy positively influences teachers' performance by increasing student engagement, improving time management and collaboration, and strengthening classroom culture. It was further revealed by the majority of the head teachers that through Teachers who effectively implement project work often report improved classroom management, as students are more engaged in meaningful tasks and take ownership of their learning. This positive classroom culture not only benefits students but also contributes to overall teacher satisfaction and performance. For instance, Participant B explained;

During use of project work, my teachers often observe increased motivation and enthusiasm among students. This heightened engagement has motivated my teachers to work hard during the teaching and learning process a positive. This has also had the direct impact on student learning outcomes. (Interviewed on 18/05/2025).

Similarly, participant A elaborated;

Implementing project work requires teachers to rethink how they use their time and collaborate with colleagues to design interdisciplinary projects. By reorganizing their instructional approach through project work, I have observed my teachers make more efficient use of their time, focusing on authentic learning experiences rather than traditional lecture-based methods and this has ultimately improved their performance. (Interviewed on 21/5/2025).

The views above imply that, the influence of project work on teachers in government-aided secondary schools in Mbale city is multifaceted. It influences teacher performance by increasing student engagement, improving time management by teachers and collaboration among teachers, and strengthening classroom culture.

Conclusion

From the above findings, the study concluded that, Project work is as an effective instructional approach partly influences teachers' performance in secondary schools in Mbale city as it partly affects teachers' instructional strategies, classroom management, and overall effectiveness. However, project work provides opportunities for professional development as teachers engage in designing and implementing innovative projects, collaborating with colleagues, and integrating technology into their teaching practices.

Recommendation

The study recommended the Ministry of Education to provide and encourage ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to help them stay current with best practices on project work and technology integration in project work so as to improve on instructional strategies that can enhance teacher performance in the secondary schools in Mbale City.

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