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**IMPLICATION OF DEMOCRATIZATION OF EDUCATION ON LEARNERS'  
PARTICIPATION IN LANGO SUB REGION-UGANDA**

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**Abstract:** *Democratization of education was ushered into Uganda Primary Education as Reform in 1997 as government respond to the recommendation of Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC) of 1989. The reform aimed at creating opportunities for individual to access education provision through providing enabling policy, ensuring availability and equitable utilization of learning resources and provision of an enabling environment for participation in solving education problems. It was expected that such provisions would yield good learners' participation that in turn be an indicator of good quality of education. The period from which commencement of reform to date has though been marked with poor learners' participation. Therefore, aim of this study was to examine the implication of democratization of education on learners' participation. Pragmatists' orientations with application across sectional study design were employed in the process of data management. The population of 454 consisted of DEOs, CAOs, head teachers and teachers were considered for the study. A total of 307 people were sampled using both purposive and simple random sampling to participate in the study. Data was collected using specific methods such as questionnaire survey, interview, observation and document review. The finding of the study was that democratization of education has minimal implication on learners' participation. Increasing learners' participation would therefore means focusing beyond democratization practices.*

**Key Words;** *Equity, Enabling Policy, learning resources, Reforms and Primary Education*

## Introduction

The quest for quality of education has all along been seen as facet to quality of life for members in a given society. The role of education in society transformation is enormous that we cannot afford to lose track of efforts to ensure its sustained quality. Uganda presents disturbing trends to quality of education attainment even with huge of efforts to reform education practices and systems. The World Bank's analysis of cross-country data on human capital indicates that Uganda is underinvesting in the future productivity of its citizens. A child born in Uganda today will only be 38 percent as productive when she grows up as he or she could be if he or she enjoyed complete education and full health. A child born today in Uganda is expected to complete only 7 years of education by age 18, compared to a regional average of 8.1. Because of the low levels of learning achievement in Uganda, this is only equivalent to 4.5 years of learning, with 2.5 years considered as "lost" due to poor quality of education (Worldbank, 2019). The Government of Uganda cognisance of such discrepancies prior to the report of the WorldBank came up with strategy of democratisation of education as means to avert challenges to quality of primary education. Despite these efforts, quality of primary education in Uganda especially Lango Subregion remained poor., Primary Schools in Lango continue to register concerns of low learners' classroom participation. This is confirmed by various Ministry of Education Reports (Ministry of Education & Sports, 2017 & 2018) and Districts School Inspection Reports (2017 & 2018). Learners continuously exhibited lack of willingness to get involved in any class activity, delay in accomplishing tasks; have minimal peer academic interaction with poor teacher pupil relationship. In some cases, teacher practices promoted inadequate learners' participation. The assessment approaches and designs do not adequately provide room for developing the learner to meet the desired participation needs. The assessment outcomes equally show low level of attainment; literacy and numeracy

level in Lango sub-region is 42% and 44% respectively which is only better than Karamoja at 28% in literacy and 32% in numeracy. The sub-region accounts for 20% of Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) passrate and the lowest level of primary three competences nationwide (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2016). Learners' completion rate remains at 22%. Overall the situation is far worse in comparison to the national standard in which the completion rate is at 54%, literacy and numeracy rates at 60.2% and 53% respectively, (Ministry of Education and Sports 2016). The above situation required an in depth analysis of implication of democratization of education in Uganda on learners participation at primary school level in Lango Subregion. Two theories were used to guide this study; the social contract theory and Total Quality Management Theory (TQM). Social contract theory was advanced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) who lived in France during the period known as the Enlightenment. Rousseau's idea of social contract theory stemmed from Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Rousseau argued that all mankind is by nature equal and free and that the only way authority can be justified is when the authority is generated out of covenants or contracts to submit individual free will to the collective will. As self-interest is the focus of individual freedom so, general will, once established, is focused on the common good, understood and agreed upon collectively. Rousseau believed that young children could be taught generosity by caring, empathetic parents, there by altering the State of Nature. In Rousseau's social contract theory, there exists a reciprocal relationship between the sovereign, responsible for the good of the individuals, and individuals committed to the common good. In regard to Education processes, Rousseau's ideas of generosity is reflection of the overall education system that must present leverage to the learners based on the opportunities of access and freedom availed to them to make them learn. Further, Rousseau puts emphasis on freewill and expression of an education system that consists of or allows fairness, freedom, flexibility to its beneficiaries. The theory further brings clearly the idea of creating opportunities for individual to access education provision through providing enabling policy, ensuring availability and equitable

utilization of learning resources and provision of an enabling environment for participation in solving education problems in consideration of learners as individuals.

However, Rousseau's pure vision of the social contract could only exist in a strong direct democratic environment and not a representation of democracy like educational institutions which are full of social, economic and political dynamics thus can not fully be used to explain all aspects of quality of Education. Rousseau theory does not particularly consider the fact that, to ensure total quality of education there must be a balance between the social needs, economic empowerment and governance practices directed to individual learner. Rousseau particularly values the learners' plight to education attainment without focusing much on the means through which quality of education would be attained for the benefit of the learner. Thus, the application of Total Quality Management (TQM) Theory was used to bridge such gaps. TQM Theory was developed by an American Edwards Deming after Worldwar1, Deming begun to formulate his ideas in the 1930 while monitoring the Hawthorne and conducting his own research on the methods for removing variability and waste from industrial processes. TQM theory states that a deviation in the manufacturing process caused low and cheap quality products, if deviation is removed, the quality would improve. A sample of a product could be tested to check the quality. Deming further asserts that workers exhibit 85% performance through the system in which they work and 15% is determined by short skills; that workers are not bad and the system is not perfect. People work in the system and management creates the system. Deming's focus was on improving the production of quality goods and services. The argument against Deming theory is that, the theory in its original state focused mainly on the manufacturing industry. Education in this case differs from the manufacturing sector in four ways: objectives, processes, inputs and outputs. For manufacturing firms, profit is the commonly used indicator or form ensuring effectiveness which is not the case with education whose objectives are complex. The objective of every school should be to provide for each student opportunities to develop in four categories; these are knowledge which enables us

to understand; know-how which enables us to do; wisdom which enables us to set priorities; and character which enables us to cooperate, to persevere, to become respected and trusted members of society.

The mission of education is relatively long term and there is no single indicator, such as profit, which can reflect the effectiveness of achieving these objectives. Without precise and specific objectives, it is difficult, if not impossible, to measure effectiveness. Teaching and learning processes are not the same as assembly lines. They are interactive processes between teachers and students, and therefore the procedures in the processes cannot be pre-set in a step-by-step format as those for an assembly line. Both of the parties are human beings whose behaviours are subject to different motives and objectives, emotional fluctuations, as well as individual styles of interpersonal skills. Therefore, there cannot be any specification as regards the standardized codes of practice in learning and teaching. More complicating, the behaviour of one party is often responding to the act of the counterpart. Thus, there cannot be a step-wise instruction for the teaching process in classrooms. As far as inputs are concerned, those of educational settings are subject to enormous variability. Unlike factories, schools cannot control the quality of incoming materials (students), which adds to the difficulty of controlling the quality of outputs. Although some sort of entrance requirements can be imposed on the applicants, schools are confronted with increasing difficulties in getting the desired students because of the drastic increase in the number of school places in recent years.

Many educators believe that the Deming's concept of TQM provides guiding principles in defining quality of education dimensions. The essence of TQM in education is premised on the notion that knowledge revolution has brought about rapid advances in technology. It has changed the way people work, think, relate and learn. Quality of education in this case is based on Deming idea of measurement at factory level focused on the processes and outcomes. TQM theory in this study

presents the idea that quality of Education attainment is about striking a balance between conditons to access and practices geared towards quality of education attainment. Based on the above theories the study set out to examine the implication of democratisation of education on learners participation.

Learners' ability to participate actively in all learning programs have been associated to high quality of education. Scholars across the World agree that democratization of education affects learners' classroom participation. The right to education requires a commitment to ensuring universal access, including taking all necessary measures to reach the most marginalized children. But getting children into schools is not enough; it is no guarantee of an education that enables individuals to achieve their economic and social objectives and to acquire the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that bring about responsible and active citizenship (Kamya, 2018)In addition, students' active participation and engagement in their education has an elective affinity with neo-liberal trends, while being an important factor in quality measurements. Such trends can be connected to marketization, focusing on performance, individualization, competition and successful student achievements for future employability (Carey, 2013). Learner's participation is associated to his or her individual ability to timely accomplish any given learning tasks. The relevance for this endeavor is to prepare the learner for future value but this happen with strong support of a teacher.

Dipty (2014) thinks the teacher is the pivot to ensuring that democratization of Education yields to the expected learners' role in the learning processes. Besides knowledgeable information, a teacher imparts emotional and moral moorings, vitalization of approach, deep sense of understanding, student psyche, communication skill and interaction with students and above all the sense of humor to make the classroom lively. Essentially such endeavours would provide opportunities that allow

timely accomplishment of learning tasks. An ideal teacher should be fair, should motivate the students and should have a passion for teaching.

Graves (2011) asserts that, how young people experience classroom practice is directly linked to the teaching-learning experiences they encounter. Teacher education programs are considered as gatekeepers to the teaching profession. For instance a study by Baron & Corbin, (2012) concluded that, classroom practice in contemporary India is largely seen to be determined by what is taught and how it is taught. This position presupposes that effective learners' interaction whether by peers or the teacher is greatly influenced by nature and the method of delivering content which is further determined by other factors. In sub-Saharan African countries in which political practices are completely detached from the reality of what goes on in school, learning environments are not immune to the most pressing social issues of today this equally affects participation. For a few examples, we can simply look to the inequities faced in how schools are funded, how test scores and graduation rates are intrinsically tied to race, class and gender, and how grading, ranking, and competition in our schools have left students feeling worthless, stressed, depressed and isolated (Zepke, 2015).

UNICEF (2011) notes that the fact that school resources are determinant of quality of education they should be availed as required. However, UNESCO (2015) asserts that scarcity of learning materials in the classrooms is the most serious impediment to educational effectiveness in most African countries well evidenced by low learners' involvement. Similarly, UWEZO (2016) and Ministry of Education and Sports (2016) associate quality attainment challenge to poor conditions of infrastructure in primary schools that in most case force children not only to complete practicing learning tasks but largely yielding poor learning outcomes. Whereas those views could be true the authors have not taken into consideration uniqueness of the learners and the corresponding learning

environment that in a way influence timeliness of completing learning tasks. Moreover learners' uniqueness influence grouping and relationship this in a way affects learning outcome.

Birimana and Orodho (2014) write that school teaching and learning resources include building particularly classrooms with lockable doors for storage of materials, teaching aids like text books and visual aids though the availability pose a great challenge. Birimana and Orodho (2014) further note that at a bare minimum level schooling would require building, some provision for seating, drinking water and sanitation facilities, teaching materials and provision for teacher development initiatives. Atieno (2011) study on the challenges facing primary education under decentralization in Tanzania notes that; large classes, shortage of teachers, classroom congestion and lack of sitting facilities adversely affect the teaching and learning processes. Atieno (2011) further asserts teachers kept wondering whether they would be held accountable for the results of their teaching while there are no facilities to facilitate their work. The studies however did not bring out specific concerns on how increase enrolment would affect efforts of learners in timely completion of learning tasks. Whether desired peer and learners' teacher relationship would correspond to positive learners' achievement. The above authors' agree that, teacher personality is key in determining effectiveness of education quality. This further shows that positive outcomes regarding quality of education would be realised if teacher behaviour is supportive.

Atieno (2011) states that it is what teachers know, do and care about which is powerful in learning among pupils. Excellence in teaching is what is regarded as the single most powerful influence in pupils' academic achievement. Teacher absenteeism is noted to be a persistent problem in many countries (UNICEF, 2015). The degree of teacher caring and interacting with students reported by both parents and teachers has significant impact on performance (Faours, 2011). Atieno (2011) established that schools with common sense of purpose and strong communal organization involving collegial relations among staff and positive adult students' relationships are efficient in

promoting arrange of academic and social outcomes reflecting students' engagement and commitment. Faours (2011) calls for open discussion between students and tutors stressing that students need to receive a type of education that actively engages them as citizens in their schools and communities in order for them to be prepared to understand and implement democratization of education. The literature is in agreement with the notion that effective participation is only realized among learners if the school put in place mechanisms that would encourage such relationship.

The behavior of teachers within classrooms affects student's actual safety as well as their perceptions to security. Regardless of teachers' competence or instructional method, their attitude towards children can result to discriminatory practices and violations of children safety. The widespread use of corporal punishment poses a serious threat to the safety of children (UNICEF 2015). The arguments presented by the authors show that there is strong linkage between learners' relationship and classroom participation. However their views are general to conclude whether any form relationship would affect learners' participation in a specific Institution. Moreover the magnitude of the effect of such relationship required further examining. Active learners' participation would imply various Actors getting involved in supporting learning achievement.

USAID (2015) notes that parental involvement in education is widely recognized as a vital force in the effort to remove barriers to achieving quality education for all. World Bank (2019) similarly agrees that school-based management emphasizes collaborative efforts among teachers, parents and others stakeholders for effective learners' involvement. UNESCO (2015), point out that, successful school-parent, community partnerships are not stand alone projects or add on programme but are well integrated with schools over all mission goal. UNICEF (2015) equally cites poverty and lack of directed school feeding program as drivers to learners' lack of interest to learning.

Most school authorities' failure to provide mid-day meals have caused many children to abandon schools as they believe that essence of education is a major source of their suffering. The authors seem to be in agreement that in order to have access to quality education, it is imperative that different stakeholders must play some roles. However, it is not clear how different actors are involved to ensure learners access and participation in the classroom. Further argument is that even schools where duty bearers are fully involved the question of learners' participation in the class room remains unanswered. This is specifically in ensuring they complete learning tasks in time, increase their level of interactions with peers and teachers. UNESCO (2015) agrees that the bulk of change of learners' attitude on education is a responsibility that ought to be looked at beyond school factor. The transcendent of learners' participation in decision on what affects learning and learning out comes must be champion by learners.

Wachob (2009) proposed solutions to help tutors in the Middle East in empowering learners by changing the teaching materials and using a diversity of creative methods in the classroom. Corner (2012) suggested collaborative learning to add student creativity and interactivity to the face-to-face and OL environments. An example for a collaborative activity involves two or more students synchronously building and interactively deriving a joint solution to a problem. Faour (2011) explains that teaching is still, in most Arab countries, guided by the tutor and democratic education is not practiced as required. Faour further notes that, the result is a failure to encourage free analytical thinking in students and he recommends that tutors' guidance starts with open discussion and confirming active learning, since continuing with tutor-led guidance is unlikely to lead to student engagement.

A study by Ismail et'al (2017) on the influence of democratic education on students' performance concluded that democratic education encourages the exchanging of ideas through students' engagement and participation, critical thinking and problem solving. In this regard, a dialogic approach and promotion of tutor student interaction can help tutors to know about their learners to

support their engagement and participation. Ensuring democratization of education is based on placing students in the centre of their learning and empowering them. In this study, tutors perceived democratic education differently: positively recognising its benefits and negatively with concerns to losing students' control or students misusing the given freedom. Therefore, there is a tendency to view democratization of education by tutors in a narrow or thin way. Tutors need to empower students in learning to maintain the learner's voice through methods such as brainstorming, group discussion and listening to their concerns, interests and needs (Wacob, 2009), teachers need to change the teaching materials and using a diversity of creative methods in the classroom. Doyle (2011) suggests collaborative learning to add student creativity and interactivity to the face-to-face.

The agreed position by the authors in the literature is that democratization of education affects learners' classroom participation in various ways. The literature presents, teacher factor in terms of behavior, professionalism and the classroom climate as some of the factors influencing learners' participation. However the literature does not point out clearly whether such are similar factors would be responsible in directing learners' participation in any part of the globe and specifically Lango Sub Region. This unanswered question provided the basis for this study to objectively examine the effect of democratization on learners' participation with specific reference to Lango Sub region.

## **Materials and Methods**

The study adopted was guided by a mixed method involving utilization of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Pragmatists link choice of approach directly to purpose and the nature of the research question posed (Kassu, 2019). According to Creswell (2014), research is multipurpose and this work tactic will allow the researcher to address questions that do not sit comfortably within quantitative and qualitative approach to design and methodology. In addition, Alghamdi and Li (2013) note that pragmatism does not belong to any philosophical system and reality.

Researchers have freedom of choice. They are free to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures that best meet their needs and scientific research aims. Inaam (2016) asserts that, triangulation helps the researcher guard against the accusation that a study's findings are simply an artefact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator's bias. In this study across sectional survey design was used. Cross sectional survey provides details that are useful in identifying areas of intervention (Creswell, 2014). The choice of the design was based on the fact that it allowed wide range of information to be collected across respondents in a very short time.

The study population of four hundred thirty (430) consisted of staff from Officials District Local Governments in Lango Sub region. These were mainly staff from the Office of Chief Administrative Officers, Education officers, teaching staff and headteachers of primary schools. Simple random sampling technique as probability sampling technique was used to sample teachers and head teachers. Out of nine districts, four were selected through census. The schools that were used in the study were first identified as government aided primary schools based on confirmation from different District Education Officers of the four selected Districts. The Researcher considered the number of schools per district to arrive at proportionate number of schools and simple random sampling was then used to get the actual schools that were involved in the study. Purposive sampling as was used to select the following categories of respondents; CAOs, Education Officers and School Management Committee members because of their positions of responsibilities in execution of education programs that gave without which no one else could have provided the required information. To facilitate the process of data collection questionnaire survey was used to gather quantitative data while unstructured interview, observation and document review methods were used to gather qualitative data. The content Validity was calculated at 0.70 for all items used in the study while Cronbach's alpha measure of internal consistency was determined at above 0.70. Quantitative data were coded and entered using SPSS software into a computer then analysis was

done through application of descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and standard deviation.

### **The Result of the findings**

Democratization of education indicates those factors that provide opportunities to access education services, enabling policies, equitable resource availability and enabling environment. Learners' participation in the study referred to as ability to get involved in learning processes. The study used several statements on the questionnaire to which respondents were required to show their level of agreement or disagreement. Each of these questions was based on a five point Likert scale (Strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree).



**Table 1. 1: Implication of Democratization of Education on learners' participation**

<b>Democratization and learners' classroom participation</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Statistics</b>
Classroom environment is generally conducive to enable learners contribute to their own learning	58 (18.6%)	137 (43.9%)	14 (4.5%)	75 (24%)	28 (9%)	Mean: 3.39 SD: 1.278
Ensuring availability of learning materials in classrooms is the most critical issue affecting learners' participation	63 (20.2%)	99 (31.7%)	25 (8%)	72 (23.1%)	53 (17%)	Mean: 3.15 SD: 1.421
Teachers duty attendance is known to be persistent problem to effective learners' classroom participation	32 (10.3%)	143 (45.8%)	33 (10.6%)	65 (20.8%)	39 (12.5%)	Mean: 3.21 SD: 1.241
Teachers have always used learning methods that encourage adequate learners' participation	117 (37.5%)	97 (31.1%)	19 (6.1%)	63 (20.2%)	16 (5.1%)	Mean: 3.76 SD: 1.285
The number of learners enrolled in each class do not provide any challenge in delivery of lessons	138 (44.2%)	53 (17%)	12 (3.8%)	37 (11.9%)	72 (23.1)	Mean: 2.53 SD: 1.663
The good relationship that exists in the classroom have always encouraged active learners participation	125 (40.1%)	99 (31.7%)	15 (4.8%)	47 (15.1%)	26 (8.3%)	Mean: 3.80 SD: 1.329
Learners have always remained comfortable in accepting discipline measures not executed through corporal punishment	41 (13.1%)	149 (47.8%)	30 (9.6%)	62 (19.9%)	30 (9.6%)	Mean:3.35 SD: 1.212
The learning materials have been made adequate to support learners' interaction	32 (10.3%)	148 (47.4%)	18 (5.8%)	91 (29.2%)	23 (7.4%)	Mean: 3.24 SD: 1.191
Regular teacher classroom attendance has been observed to improve classroom practice	130 (41.7%)	86 (27.6%)	22 (7.1%)	51 (16.3%)	23 (7.4%)	Mean:3.80 SD: 1.330
Learners have always gained from their parents or	35 (11.2%)	146 (46.8%)	20 (6.4%)	70 (22.4%)	41 (13.1%)	Mean:3.21 SD: 1.277

guardians to ensure full attendance						
My school has measures in the classrooms to support learning of children with disabilities	104 (33.3%)	79 (25.3%)	19 (6.1%)	65 (20.3%)	45 (14.4%)	Mean:3.42 SD: 1.483
Learners' peer interaction have always promoted effective learning	2 (0.6%)	0 (0%)	30 (9.6%)	125 (40.1%)	155 (49.7%)	Mean: 1.62 SD: 0.712
Classroom spacing provides an enabling environment to learning	0 (0%)	4 (1.3%)	1 (0.3%)	125 (40.1%)	182 (58.3%)	Mean: 1.45 SD: 0.576

Source: Primary data 2020Mode:

Key: Interpretation of Mode: 1= Strongly disagree; 2= Disagree; 3=Neutral; 4= Agree and 5= Strongly agree.

Table 1.1 above shows the difference between the mode and the mean is marginal indicating that the distribution is near normal; and the standard deviation of 1.258 shows that individual responses, on average were a little over one point away from the mean. Hence it is evident that the selected sample is a representative of the population. Table 6 above, indicates responses from the participants (School teachers) regarding learners' participation.

It was clear from the findings that the relationship between the learners and teachers is most critical concern in providing desired quality of education in Lango Sub Region. In that when respondents were asked whether good relationship that exists in the classroom has always encouraged active learners' participation. Majority 185 (75.8%) of the respondents disagreed (mode=2). The above finding is confirmed with the views from Key informants during interview when respondents were asked to comment on opportunities that have been used in ensuring effective learners participation. The respondents noted that different measures have been adopted to improve relationship of learners and their teachers though this had not translated to the

expected quality of education. Particularly a key informant in the category of Inspector of had this to say;

*There have been continuous complaints in most schools regarding learners' behaviors even when teachers supported them through various measures like counselling. Our efforts as Inspectors of schools towards ensuring quality of education is attained in schools have been through supporting teachers on strategies to learners' behavior management. Our hope over time has been that teachers' ability to use friendly approaches to tame learners' behaviour would improve quality of education. It is unfortunate that in most schools learners' participation in learning programs have remained poor (KI, 4).*

Similarly, a key informant in a position of a District Education Officer commented that;

*The categories of teachers that we post to schools are well qualified and all along as a Department responsible to ensure good quality of education in the district we invested in ensuring that teachers cultivate good relationship with learners. This has specifically been done through offering support supervision, offering refresher training to teachers. Schools have been equally encouraged to organisation school open days to allow teachers discuss particularly conduct of individual learner with his or her parents. It is though sad to note that learners' attendance as well as their knowledge in class have remained below below the expected standard (KI, 7).*

This position was also confirmed during lesson observations in lower and upper classes which management of discipline by teachers or the general classroom management. The outcome of the observation pointed out that teachers were keen to maintain good relationship with the learners. This was particularly brought clearly when teachers in different classes applied methods that would allow free interactions among the learners. For instance in lower classes learners in most times were engaged using role play method that encouraged them to share roles on learning

themes. It was also observed that teachers in most cases applied friendly approaches and feedback. However, few learners could be seen dominating responses whenever required with limited teachers' concern regarding the dormant learners.

A further lesson observation in at least different class levels that included lower, middle and upper classes. The results showed that teachers planning generally showed high level of knowledge that would provide room for learners' participation. However, the actual teachers' presentations in most cases deviated from the plan. Teacher chalk and talk approaches mostly over dominated the planned child centred methods such as demonstration, group discussion and demonstration. This means the teaching methods used by teachers in most of the school may not provide freedom of interaction. It implies that learners must be compelled to only per take knowledge from their instructors or teachers without alteration. It is possible that the teacher may not be the only source of knowledge that must require involvement of learners to bridge such gaps. It is expected that such good methods must translate to positive reinforcement for quality learning. However responses from both interview and questionnaire showed that only good classroom relationship is not enough to bring out desired quality of education rather a combination of other factors.

Regarding duty attendance the results showed that to some extent a persistent problem to effective learners' classroom participation. A fair number 145 (59.4%) disagreed (mode=2). This means that on top of other factors teachers' duty attendance equally affect learners' classroom participation in Lango Sub region. The researcher under took a review of teachers' attendance registers and minutes of staff meetings for atleast ten schools under study to confirm the outcome of the quantitative results. In all these schools Administrators or Headteachers constantly expressed concerns as per the minute of staff meetings teacher irregular attendance both at

school and in the classrooms. This means that lack of teacher attendance is not just about the teacher not being available at school or classroom but failure to undertake their roles that would allow active learners' participation. Failure by teachers to attend to their duties may have adverse implications on quality of education attainment. Learners are seen to work perfectly well on their classroom assignments or tasks based on the guidance of a teacher. These inadequacies in quality of education may be further engineered by other factors that this study might have not established

The question about the implication of classroom environment conditions on quality of education. The study revealed that the nature of classroom environment in Lango Sub Region Schools did not appeal to desired quality of education. In that, a fair number of respondents 156 (64%) disagreed (mode=2). This means that key aspects of what constitutes conducive classroom environment are either insufficient or not available in most primary schools in Lango Subregion. This could imply that in schools where such inadequacies exist learners would find difficulties in coping up or gaining support towards quality learning. Such learners would get restrained from active participation hence poor learning outcomes.

The other factors like availability of learning materials, application of appropriate learning methods and number of learners enrolled equally do not singly by implication affect or determine quality of education in Lango Sub Region. For instance, when respondents were asked whether availability of learning materials in classrooms is the most critical issue affecting learners' participation, a fair number 128 (53%) disagreed (mode=2). The results from key informants brought out similar sentiments that determinants to learners' participation may not only be limited to quantity of learning materials. This response was particularly presented when respondents were asked to comment on the opportunities that could have been used in schools in

ensuring effective learners' participation. A key informant in the position of a District Education Officer particularly noted that;

*learning materials is one of the issues affecting learners' classroom participation. However other factors like utilisation of the materials availed by government is great hiccup to quality attainment. Government of Uganda has a clear policy of putting books in the hands of the learners but unfortunately this has never been observed as books have been kept under key and in head teachers' offices. Some head teachers have always complained of learners damaging or dirtying the books (KI,3).*

This position was equally confirmed during classroom observation session in at least four of upper primary classes from different from at two classrooms in ten schools. In those classes it was observed that lockable shelves were used to keep the books. However the outlook indicated that most of those books were not being used to propagate learning as they looked new and well kept.

If learners are barred from accessing books and other materials, their abilities to utilise those books or materials would be compromised. Books and othe materials are aid to learning keeping them under key and lock implies the learing activities meant to be availed to learners would be partially accessible. This would mean making learners redundant when they should be active participants in attaining quality learning outcomes. A critical observation of classroom practices during classroom observation in atleast ten classrooms in five different schools revealed teacher feelings of safeguarding the books against damages from the learners'. In some schools the internal policies of book safety equally threatens teacher professional abilities to encourage learners to utilise the books after classes. Persistence of such practices clearly shows limited opportunities to the attainment of quality of education in Lango Sub Region.

On the question regarding whether the number of learners enrolled in each class do not provide any challenge in delivery of lessons. A fair number 152 (62.3%) disagreed (Mode=2) that learners enrolled do not affect delivery of lessons. The above position was also supported by the outcomes of the interviews where respondents noted that there are series of challenges that are in classrooms arising from high enrolment. A key informant particularly had this to say;

*It may look like there is no problem with enrolment in most of our schools. This is because every time learners find difficulties to cope with high enrolment in their individual classrooms some of them would absent themselves or reduce attendance time for a given day. Such irregularities in attendance have compromised learners' abilities to participate in class activities. There is also situation when has caused negative follow up of learners' uptake of learning contents (KI,12).*

This means that high enrolment could be among very many factors posing challenges in ensuring effectiveness in quality of education. The implication of high classroom enrolment is adverse in that it reduces learners' opportunities in utilising limited resources including space as they attempt to participate in the classroom. Equally, the learners' as well would such opportunities of individual teacher support within that time required. The meaningful peer interactions purposely meant for quality learning outcomes as the classroom teachers undesired discipline practices among learners.

When participants were asked whether learners have always gained from their parents or guardians to ensure full attendance, a satisfactory number 149 (61.1%) disagreed (mode=2). The classroom observation results equally showed that sharp disparities among learners support from parents. This study further went a head and varied the results and particular revelation in the documents reviewed from atleast six schools of different parents' attendance and discussing

about how their children would attain quality education. The minutes of meetings mainly revealed that parents have always shown discontent about teachers' performance and the school not providing enough for their children. However in the same minutes, school headteachers communication to the meetings continued to lament on the irresponsive of the parents regarding their commitment to provide all that is required for their children quality learning. Parents are reluctant to contribute to their children's education. There existed evidences that failure by parents to be responsive in most cases caused reduced learners' attendance as revealed by registers as well as learners' exercise books. Furthermore, no evidence existed to show level of parents follow up of un called for absence.

The moderate negative responses also suggest that most parents or guardians have not fully supported learners with what or measures that would allow their full school attendance. Such support may range from availing scholastic materials, timely payment of school dues, provision of meals, psychosocial support; follow up class assignments or home work and health care among others. This was equally brought out during key informant interview where respondents confirmed the gaps that existed in ensuring stake holders' participation especially parents in ensuring quality of education. This was especially when the respondents were asked regarding their experiences on level of support by management availed to ensure learners' participation. Respondents provided information that there were different levels of support that primary schools received overtime from either District or Ministry of Education and ports. A key informant particularly commented that;

*Primary schools in Districts in this region have from time been supported in different ways to ensure that quality of education is realised. Government through the districts provided facilities like classrooms, teachers and*

*textbooks and other scholastic materials. All these support were meant facilitate learners' participation (KI,4).*

This means that equal provision of such support to all school should facilitate efforts to quality of education provision. However, the demands from schools are way beyond just government's contributions that would require open parent's participation in resource provision and other school development initiatives

The respondents were further asked whether schools have measures in the classrooms to support learning of children with disabilities. A fair number 62.3% disagreed (mode=2). This means that the efforts towards ensuring quality in education if at all made available then in Lango Sub region such initiatives do not cater for individual children with disabilities. The measures to support learning of children in this case should take the form of improving infrastructure, learning instructions and teaching pedagogies. Available records in schools that this study reviewed revealed that a part from the existing Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy, school management have not put efforts to support the needs for learners with disabilities. This would have stringent implications on Institutions to ensure quality of education arising from allowing education for all. This is much justified in that there are various forms of disabilities and failure by school management to support learners who fall in such categories would failure to fairly consider their rights to education. It would mean isolating them from benefiting or participating in any education program. Such situation may make those affected drop out or regularly absent themselves and academically perform poorly,

Overall, majority (mode=2) of the respondents disagreed that democratisation practices in terms of access, availing opportunities, fairness and freedom to learners by Actors do not necessarily translate to quality of primary education in Lango Sub region. The focus of democratisation of

education by implication arising from the findings should cultivate on good relationship among learners and learners; teachers and learners for improved quality of education. However, maintaining good classroom relationship is not enough to bring out desired quality of education. Continuous focus on combination several other factors is ideal specifically for increased learners' participation.

### **Discussion of the Results**

The study established that democratization practices in terms of access, availing opportunities, fairness and freedom to learners by Actors do not necessarily translate to quality of primary education in Lango Sub region. The issue of relationship as linked to participation is not the only concern in addressing challenges to quality of education in Lango Sub region. The concept of participation remains broad but it is about the degree of involvement of individual primary school learner in attainment desired learning outcomes. Participation in this study entailed timeliness in accomplishment of learning tasks, learners' peer interactions, teacher pupil classroom interaction and learner discipline management.

Effective learners' participation would be achieved if focus is made beyond just providing learning opportunities through ensuring classroom relationship. This position of study findings differ from various views in literature that presupposed that ensuring effective classroom relationship is good enough for increase learners' participation. For instance Atieno (2011) observes that schools with common sense of purpose and strong communal organization involving collegial relations among staff and positive adult students' relationships are efficient in promoting arrangement of academic and social outcomes reflecting students' engagement and

commitment. Accordingly, the behaviour of teachers within classrooms affects student's actual safety as well as their perceptions to security. Regardless of teachers' competence or instructional method, their attitude towards children can result to discriminatory practices and violations of children safety.

However other writers as cited in this study agreed with the study findings that various factors in combination form the elements that would foster quality of education. Faour's (2011) for example while supporting a strategy of open discussion between students and tutors stressing that students need to receive a type of education that actively engages them as citizens in their schools. This would require putting in place measures beyond relationship that exist inside and outside the classroom. The literature is in agreement with the notion that effective participation is only realized among learners if the school put in place other mechanisms that would encourage such relationship. How young people experience classroom practice is directly linked to the teaching-learning experiences they encounter (Graves, 2011). So the aspects of teacher experience rather than mere relationship in this case is vital in determining the quality of learners participation.

Quality classroom practice in contemporary India is largely seen to be determined by what is taught and how it is taught (Graves, 2011). Ssekamwa (1997) similarly presents a case of religious intolerance in Christian founded schools in Uganda that led to a section of Ugandan children of Muslim origin not only absenting themselves from schools but also abandoned classrooms activities. Dipty(2014) thinks the teacher is the pivot in the democratization of education basing of the roles he or she plays in ensuring that quality of education. Besides knowledgeable information a teacher imparts emotional and moral moorings, vitalization of approach, deep sense of understanding, student psyche, communication skill and interaction with

students and above all the sense of humour to make the classroom lively. The researcher in agreement with above assertion noting that different measures have been adopted to improve relationship of learners and their teachers; learners and learners in Lango Sub Region schools though this had not translated to the expected quality of education. Equally, other factors such as availability of learning materials, application of appropriate learning methods and providing equity in the number of learners enrolled would equally not improve quality of education in Lango Sub Region.

UWEZO (2016) and Ministry of Education and Sports (2016) associate quality attainment challenge to poor conditions of infrastructure in primary schools. Poor infrastructure in most cases force children not only to participate learning tasks but largely yields poor learning outcomes. Uganda and Lango Sub Region in particular implemented programs aimed at improving infrastructure in primary schools. The School facilities Grant (SFG) projects and Peace and Recovery and Development Program (PRDP) were implemented in Lango Sub Region in the earlier years of 2000. The classrooms, washrooms and teachers' accommodation were either rehabilitated new facilities constructed as means to facilitate quality of education. These efforts notwithstanding learners' participation in class activities remain poor. This confirms the view of Atieno (2011) that no single factor can define what facilitate quality of education. For instance, appropriateness of learning methods and class attendance like any other strategy provide to opportunities to increased learners' participation. Atieno (2011) further supports this position arguing that it is what teachers know, do and care about which is powerful in learning among pupils. Excellence in teaching is what is regarded as the single most powerful influence in pupils' academic achievement. Teacher absenteeism is noted to be a persistent problem in many countries and also has affected quality of education results in waste of resources and puts

additional pressure on leaders potential to reduce the vice (UNICEF, 2015). The degree of teacher caring and interacting with students reported by both parents and teachers has significant impact on performance (Lamb 2007).

Ipata (2011) in her study on cost saving measures on access, retention and performance in public secondary schools in KCSE examinations in Teso District in Kenya established serious staffing gaps in most schools as a factor to high cost of hiring teachers yet schools were found to seriously lack quality building as well as science equipment that affected efforts to quality students' assessment. UWEZO (2013) adds that among the major bottle necks to achieving the quality of education is the fact the teachers deployed are not fully utilizing time on task to adequately prepare learners. Level of teachers' preparation give learners the opportunity to participate in their own learning as the teacher choose and use the best methods or strategies.

The sub region has teachers who are well qualified in terms of teaching methodology that would allow them engage learners for better learning. This was demonstrated in the content of the scheme of work and lesson plans. However, smart content in the teaching document would not be for quality of education but how the contents are delivered and understood by the learners. The practice may not be different with what goes on in other parts of the world. In China, Guinea, India and Mexico a number of teachers observed to master neither the subject matter they taught nor the pedagogical skills required for good presentation of the material (Carron & Chau, 1996). This affects retention and quality of educational since student achievement, especially beyond the basic skills, depends largely on teacher's command of subject matter and their ability to use that knowledge to help students learn (Mullens, Murnane & Willet, 1996). Teacher attendance is closely linked to attitude which this study brought out specifically for teachers in Lango Sub region. In the Sub region attendance has been equated to mere signing attendance

registers in various schools without necessarily engaging in the actual teaching assignments. The broader idea is that, teachers and the learners are expected to adhere to the schedules. If there is lack of adherence what then can be done? Professional development can help overcome shortcomings that may have been part of teachers' pre-service education and keep teachers abreast of new knowledge and practices in the field (UNICEF, 2015). This on-going training for teachers can have a direct impact on student achievement. Dialogue and reflections with colleagues, peer and supervisor observations and keeping journals are all effective ways for teachers to advance their knowledge (UNICEF, 2015). A program in Kenya, the Mombasa School Improvement Project, built on this approach to professional development showed that teachers supported within-service as well as external workshop training improved significantly in their abilities to use child-centered teaching and learning behaviours (Atieno, 2011).

## **Conclusions**

Effective learners' classroom participation is a demonstration of good quality of education. Participation of learners increases their sense of belonging and provides meaning of learning to them. However, increased learners participation demand more than government availing policies and ensuring that they are implemented. Increase learners' participation is not only about ensuring fairness or equity; there are other factors that need to be incorporated to ensure effective learners' participation.

## **Recommendations**

Government of Uganda need to focus attention on policies that increase teacher engagement with the learners. Increased support supervision to teachers through strengthening internal school structures where by subject head is made accountable to the performance of teachers in their

cohort. This would mean developing the capacity of the subject heads in each of the schools. Government through Ministry of Education and Sports would use the structures of Core Primary Teachers' Colleges and District Inspectors' of Schools in strengthen pedagogy practices in schools. This will enhance teachers' abilities in preparation to teach, cause reduction in cumbersome roles of the head teachers and promote high level of professionalism and team work among teachers. The inspectors of schools need to look at this initiative as crucial in translating the trend of poor quality in education desirably and support the teachers in embracing it during their tenure of school inspection.

The socio economic costs effectiveness of education need to be focused on as big factor in ensuring quality in education in Lango Sub Region. The will of the parents need to be re-invented to increase their participation in funding and supporting the education of their children. This should be done through shunning a political statement that "no payment as education was made to be free by Government". As most parents depend on proceeds from agriculture they should be supported through local government structure to re invent this will through provision of market opportunities.

The Local authorities in Lango Sub region should exploit the existing social structure like the chiefdom, religious institutions in supporting parents to understand their valuable roles in Education of their children. The Agakan parent teacher model in the Districts of Dokolo and Amolatar where parents are organised in groups to support their children in an initiated community libraries should be revamped. This will also allow parents to interact among themselves and remain supportive with ideas of ensuring the cause for their children education is addressed. The District Education Officers through their forums should generate action plans for education quality improvement that would factor in this Library initiative