THE INFLUENCE OF DEMOCRATIZATION OF EDUCATION ON LEARNER S' ASSSESSMENT IN UGANDA : A CASE OF PRIMARYEDUCATION IN LANAGO SUB-REGION

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Abstract: *Assessment of learners is one of the key determinants for quality of education for any nation. Continuous pursuits for improvement in quality of assessment progressively led education practitioners at different levels to use varying strategies. In Uganda for instance efforts towards improving assessment has been done with emphasis on application non-discrimination of learners at different primary school class levels. The Government Uganda particularly increased opportunities for equal assessment through providing assessment materials to every learner and competent teachers deployed to support learners at various levels of assessment. Infrastructure development initiatives undertaken to reduce assessment imbalances arising from crowded classroom and lack of space. Changes in policies that encouraged skilled based and continuous assessment made and utilised. However, such efforts notwithstanding assessment outcomes in Ugandan primary schools especially Lango Sub Region. Therefore, examined the influence of democratization of education on learners' assessment in Uganda with specific reference to Lango Sub region.*

Key Words: *Continuous Assessment, Automatic promotion, Assessment outcomes and Primary Education*

Introduction

Learner assessment is a critical aspect of the teaching and learning process. Whether teaching at all levels of education, it is important for teachers to strategically evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching by measuring the extent to which learners in the classroom are learning the content of the subjects or discipline they are faced with. UNESCO (2015) points out that across the world, there had been a remarkable and unprecedented expansion in access to education at all levels. This has been attributed to efforts of democratisation of education exhibited amongst nations as several world education consented to provision of education packages that are inclusive at all levels. Evidently, at   global level, enrolment in pre-primary education increased by nearly two-thirds equated to 90% (net enrolment) by 2015. Improvements in net primary enrolments had reduced the number of out-of-school children and adolescents by almost half since 2000.Globally, illiteracy rates fell by close to 25 per cent, and progress particularly noted among the age cohort that benefited from increased access to schooling. Global enrolment in higher education had doubled by year 2000 with some 200 million students worldwide today, half of whom are women. Equally, there has been significant progress in narrowing the gender gap in education in the world since 2000, with a larger share of girls and women accessing different levels of formal education. Improvements in net primary enrolments reduced the number of out-of-school children and adolescents by almost half since 2000.Significant progress had been made in ensuring the right to basic education, driven in part by the EFA and MDG frameworks.

However, the assessment of progress and achievements since 2000 provided by National EFA Reviews and the Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2015 clearly indicates the large extent to which countries collectively failed to reach EFA goals or even the much narrower goal of universalizing primary education. Indeed, some 58 million children and 70 million adolescents

worldwide are out of school, and an estimated 100 million children, or one in six children in low-and middle-income countries, drop out before completing primary education. Millions of children still leave school without basic skills, it is estimated that 130 million children are still not able to read, write or count adequately, even after at least four years in school. Finally, some 757 million adults, nearly two-thirds of who are women, lack the literacy skills that would allow them to participate fully in twenty-first century society.

Uganda shares similar trends with the rest of other nations of the world and as such came up with measures to deal with challenges to quality of education. The Government through Agencies and Partners for over twenty years invested in providing opportunities to learners equally access and freedom to attend and learn in different schools. In 1997 government of Uganda openly demonstrated its willingness to support freedom, equity and fairness in quality of education through adopting UPE policy. The policy removed all barriers such as school dues, coaching, deferring progression to next class due to failure examinations and corporal punishment administered to those who could fail to perform well in assessment activities. The government at the same time introduced continuous assessment and emphasized application of alternative discipline management to support access, fairness and freedom to effective learners' assessment. However, UWEZO (2018) report on learning assessment regarding official goals for basic literacy and numeracy were achievement in Uganda by the end of 2018. Indicated a decline in literacy and numeracy levels of P3-6 pupils between 2015 and 2018.The problems of overcrowding, under-achievement and excessive grade repetition in the lower primary school persist. As in our previous Uwezo assessment in Uganda, the child is considered competent in reading at Primary Grade 2 level if he or she can read a short story and respond correctly to at least one of two comprehension questions based on the content. The five lower levels are: reading a story, but without demonstrating comprehension; reading a paragraph; word recognition; letter recognitiion; and non-reader status. These findings imply, as in previous Uwezo assessments,

that children are acquiring reading skills late. As before, nearly all of those who could read the story (at P2 level) showed evidence of comprehension but most children have not reached that level until they are in P6. Only 39% have reached that level by the time they are in P5. In comparison with the findings of 2015 (Uwezo 2016), the proportions of children with full competence in P3-6 are consistently lower: only P7 shows the same level of achievement. The proportion assessed as competent in P3-P7 overall was 33% in 2018 and 39% in 2015. While small minorities of children showed achieved full competence in basic skills at the age of 6 or 7, barely half of the children aged 14 have achieved full competence in P2 level numeracy and a smaller proportion had done so in English reading (40.2%). For the ages of 9 and 10, the skill ratings have bimodal distributions, both for English reading and for numeracy. Large groups are were at the stage of word or letter recognition and number-matching or non-numeracy, while other groups, of 10-25%, have full competence. For the first groups (those in the lower modes), very delayed learning of basic skills limits the benefits of other parts of the curriculum, such as science and social studies.

NAPE report (2018) equally noted that, Uganda in terms of urban-rural gap, the proportion of learners rated proficient in Numeracy (68.4%) in schools in urban areas was higher than that of learners in schools in rural areas (51.2%). Further, when schools were compared on the basis of ownership, a wider disparity in proportions of learners rated proficient in Literacy in English was noticed between privately owned schools (83.3%) and government schools (44.2%). Likewise, in Numeracy, the proportions of learners rated proficient in private schools (85.1%) was higher than that of learners in government schools (50.1%). At P 6, slightly more than half of the learners assessed were rated proficient in Numeracy. The proportion of boys (56.2%) rated proficient was higher than that of girls (45.9%). In terms of urban rural gap, the proportion of learners rated proficient in Numeracy (67.6%) in schools in urban areas was higher than that of learners in schools in rural areas (46.2%). Further, the proportion of learners rated proficient in

Numeracy (78.6%) in private schools was higher than that of learners in government schools (46.4%). This disparity was also witnessed in Literacy in English where, the proportion of learners rated proficient (83.6%) in private schools was higher than that of learners in government schools (48.2%).

The above trend of learners' assessment is reflective of entire country with Lango subregion having peculiar poor assessment out comes. The Sub region literacy level is as low 42% only better than Karamoja Sub region measured at 28% while the National average literacy is measured at 73% (UBOS, 2017). The above trend showed a very bad trend of learning achievement through assessment thus a desire for a study to establish the influence of democratisation of education on learnings' assessment outcomes.

Specific Objectives

1. To examine the influence of assessment methods on learners' achievement
2. To assess the influence of assessment environment on learners' achievement

Review of related literature

The influence of assessment methods on learners' achievement

Assessment has always been an integral part of teaching and learning. It is an important aspect of school life and of a number of stakeholders in education – notably education officials, parents, education institutions at different levels, professional bodies and most importantly, the learners / andstudents (Bennett, 2011). Evaluation and assessment are increasingly considered as potential levers of change that could assist with decision-making and continuous improvement at all levels of the education system (OECD, 2013). While evaluation and assessment traditionally focused on the assessment of students, performance data are increasingly complemented by a wide range

of other data including for instance data on student characteristics and school and instructional processes.

According to Baron & Corbin (2012) curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are intractably interlinked all play their unique role in the teaching and learning nexus. In most situations curriculum and accompanying assessment are designed by curriculum specialists and therefore do not allow the kind of flexibility that students are demanding. Besides, it is accepted that students are not in a position to know what they need to learn (Mobegi, et al 2010)).Assessment methods in most cases can be classified as traditional or alternative based on the realism and complexity of the assessment tasks and the amount of time needed for the assessment (Doyle, 2011). Traditional assessments such as multiple choice, true-false, and matching items are often lower in realism and complexities of the tasks assessed but require little time to administer and score (Yao, 2011). Alternative assessments such as portfolios, observations, and other performance-based assessments are higher in both realism and complexity of the tasks assessed but requires more time to use and score than traditional assessments (Faours, 2011).

There has been a movement toward the use of more alternative assessments than traditional assessments. The arguments in favor of alternative assessments over traditional ones are based on the notion that alternative assessments are more intrinsically motivating than traditional assessments (Doyle, 2011). The position is supported by OECD (2008) teachers in the case study schools look to these objective standards to set out learning goals for students, sometimes scaffolding these goals for weaker students. The teachers have also moved away from traditional systems of marking which tend to rely on "social comparison" of student performance (that is, comparison of each students' performance with that of their peers) toward methods that allowed them to track an individual student's progress toward the learning goals, as judged through established criteria.Unsuitable assessment methods impose overwhelming pressures on a student to take the wrong approach to learning tasks (Shihab,2011). It is often the assessment, not the

student that is the cause of the problem. Assessment is about several things at once. It is not about simple dualities such as grading versus diagnosis. It is about reporting on students' achievements and about teaching them better through expressing to them more clearly the goals of our curricula. It is about measuring student learning and diagnosing specific misunderstandings in order to help students to learn more effectively. It concerns the quality of teaching as well as the quality of learning.

Baron & Corbin (2012) in a study found that children are thought of as incompetent and immature to participate in their own learning. This view may not be different with what could be happening in primary schools in which classrooms are crammed with high number of learners. An atmosphere in a classroom where the teacher is flexible in teaching and organization and students discuss syllabus and progress, share in decision making and initiative during lessons is described as a democratic climate seemed lost (Mobegi e tal 2010). However, according to Doyle (2011) embracing the ideal of self-assessment training, the teacher operates in the capacity of facilitator rather than dispenser of knowledge. The atmosphere is cultivated to encourage discussion, critiquing, sharing, critical thinking, divergent thinking, co-operative learning and mutual understanding in arriving at consensus. Individual rights and responsibilities are embraced in a democratic climate. The current assessment practice is dominated to the contrary with chalk and talk with limited learners engagement. It is not certain whether what gains learners would realize from such assessment. Teachers have always developed time table to undertake formative and summative assessment with the ideal mind of making assessment meet the needs of those being assessed. It is however not certain that those endeavours have created assessment relevance. Continuous controversies have emerged with a portion of the population arguing that as learners access education opportunities assessment practices have remained theoretical with very little to offer learners. It is important to examine further whether it is the challenge of access or other factors promoting or demoting assessment outcomes.

Yao (2011) in a study on attitudes towards schooling and educational aspirations notes that democratization of secondary education within the ambit of a highly academic and examination-oriented education system has not served the needs of academically weak students. This study has also revealed the lack of alternative educational opportunities available to these students. OECD (2012) focuses its concerns on policy noting that, often there are lower academic expectations for disadvantaged schools and students, while there is evidence that certain pedagogical practices can make a difference for low performing students. To improve learning in classrooms, policies need to ensure and facilitate that disadvantaged schools promote the use of a balanced combination of student centred instruction with aligned curricular and assessment practices. Schools and teachers should use diagnostic tools as well as formative and summative assessments to monitor children's progress and ensure they are acquiring good understanding and knowledge. Ensuring that schools follow a curriculum promoting a culture of high expectations and success is highly relevant (OECD, 2012)

Poor teachers training in evaluation technique and the reality pose a great deal in the outcome of educational services (Ngando 2011).Many teachers and education systems continue to rely on almost exclusively traditional paper and pencil tests to factual knowledge that tend to promote more memorization rather than higher order thinking skills (Ngando, 2011;UNESCO,2014).

In South Africa for instance , although internationally accepted educational policies are practiced, the intensity and the skewness towards previously disadvantaged learners' gap. Often the educational system is standardized to accommodate all learners instead of all learners meeting the fixed educational targets (Baron & Corbin, 2012). Hence, lacking scientific knowledge-based economy via transformative pedagogy is becoming a growing societal concern (Baron & Corbin,2012).Consequently, the side effects of these policies are rendering sciences as 'invisibilized dirty subjects' and their teaching as an 'invisible dirty work when assessing learners' progress (Mupa,Tendeukai andChinooneka2015).

The above context is not different from the current practice in Uganda in which emphasis made on the teaching and learning of science with minimal emphasis on arts discipline. The learners whose competences are in arts have tended to bias their mind in the current context of assessment. Meanwhile the science biased learners as well as parents whose wish to have their children take to science have also found it very difficult to balance their thoughts for a mix curriculum desired to produce a whole learner. Anil andAcana (2013) assert that, Uganda inherited from its colonial past a well institutionalized school system. The structure of the school system in Uganda is seven years of primary education, four years of lower secondary (Ordinary level), and two years of upper secondary education (Advanced level). As of 2009, Uganda spent 3.2 percent of GDP on education, half of which was funded by foreign aid (Ward etal.2006). Great strides have been made in expanding access to education Uganda's pre independence primary enrolment rate of 50 percent in 1960 climbed to 91 percent by 2010. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) continues to struggle to improve the retention, quality, and equity of education. However with the so call strides Phil Elks (2016) notes that, some schools in Uganda focus more on those high-performing students who may contribute positively to their headline performance measure by achieving a Division 1. This can be at the expense of teaching at an appropriate level for lower ability students.

Furthermore, despite the impact of communities scrutinising exam results, monitoring of schools' academic achievement by government is limited (Phil Elks,2016). A system of district level oversight of schools is in place, which has the potential to be used to hold schools to account. District inspectors focus on primary education, which has a much more decentralised system than secondary education. Even at primary level, District Education Officers tend to focus their already restricted resources on analysing schools' use of finances and the availability of inputs, such as textbooks, rather than the quality of teaching and student outcomes. Openjuru (2010) affirms that an effort to improve quality of education, which is generally measured by

higher test scores in examinations, is a major policy concern, particularly for developing countries. The benefit of providing education to individuals and society is enhanced when the quality is higher. In this case better learning outcomes, as represented by students' test scores, are said to be closely related to higher earnings in the labor market (UNESCO,2015) thus, differences in the quality of education are likely to indicate differences in individual worker's productivity. Furthermore, substantial evidence shows that students who do better in school either in grades or standardized achievement tests, tend to have better school attendance (Bailey & Dynaiski, 2011).

UWEZO (2012) a study particularly points out that although learning and teaching resources are distributed and made available to teachers and learners, they have minimal influence on assessment outcomes of learners. UNESCO (2015) contends that for proper assessment outcomes stakeholders in primary education need to deeply engage with diverse nature of learning and teaching materials in poorly resourced schools. But these negative outcomes occurred even when Lango Sub region, primary schools continued to receive financial support from the central government to manage education quality issues. Government continues to support infrastructure development through programmes like Peace Recovery and Development Programme (PRDP) and School Facilities Grant (SFG).The communities play a role of supplementing government efforts through contributing to infrastructure development, scholastic materials and nutritional needs of their children(Ministry of Education and Sports,2015).The policy of government of decentralization of primary education services has made it possible for districts to recruit teachers that are deemed competent in assessment skills. But the initiatives notwithstanding the assessment methods have not reflected desired learning outcomes.

The influence of assessment environment on learners' achievement

A pleasant school environment presents learning as a lifelong enterprise and allows students to discover appropriate value systems that can be their compass for national consciousness and self-awareness (Afoma & Christy, 2014). Learning occurs in various settings; learning environments can either be Unstructured or Structured. In Structured environments, both Formal education and Non-formal education occur majorly in the form of institutions (community centres, schools and so on); in contrast, informal learning occurs in both Structured and Unstructured environments. Seat arrangement is argued to be a powerful means to control the physical attributes of the classroom diligently and efficiently to guarantee excellent student performance, as well as teachers.

The findings of Shamaki (2015) demonstrate that the state of sitting facilities, or the lack thereof and sitting arrangement in classrooms affects students' level of interest on the subject matter. clean, quiet and comfortable environment are important components of learning environment. Being comfortable should be a combination of several factors which include; temperature, lighting, and noise control (Murugan & Rajoo, 2013). According to Steve and Richard (2013), when a student first steps into a room they will make a judgment about the type of class they are going to be taking. They will look to see how desks are arranged. They will notice what is hanging on the walls. The way in which a teacher sets up their class allows them to communicate with their students nonverbally. By adding various learning centers or activity centers the students will know that this is a classroom that likes to do hands on experiments. It also conveys that they will not just sit and take notes, but they will act out what ever subject they are learning.

Students and teachers work well in a school culture where academic success and the motivation to learn, is expected, respected and rewarded. Such an atmosphere where students learn to love learning for learning's sake, results in better academic achievement. The school is a special social space where education, training and personality development of children who are a community's

future assets are founded and run by proper training methods, appropriate physical space and favorable psychological environment(Raccoon gang,2018).Students in the process of socialization require a healthy environment and models so as to increase their performance.(Gilavand,2016).Hence, a clean, quiet and comfortable environments are important components of learning environment. Furthermore, creating an ideal learning environment ought to be a priority of every concerned educationalist because being comfortable should be a combination of several factors which include temperature, lighting, and noise control etc (Murugan & Rajoo, 2013).

Lewinski (2015) contends that temperature assumes a compelling role in the likelihood that we are to feel agreeable and serene while carrying out a task. The ideal temperature is most likely one that is barely detectable – neither excessively chilly nor excessively warm. Classroom temperature is another vital contributing factor to the academic performance of students. A significant factor contributing to the academic performance of students is the temperature of classrooms. Earthman (2012) featured the presence of prime temperature ranges for ideal learning outcomes. Additionally, Earthman (2012), discovered a relative humidity of 50% to be sufficient value for classrooms. A relationship between acoustics and temperature is in existence. Poorly maintained air conditioning systems and evident issues with maintenance of the classroom temperature, may deliver significantly uncomfortable and disturbing noise. It is believed that a school with adequate learning environment contributes to stir up expected outcomes of learning that will facilitate good academic performance, by encouraging effective teaching and learning (Duruji et'al,2014).

Materials and Methods

In this study Across sectional study design and application of both quantitative and qualitative approaches was employed . The population of 4976 consisted of DEOs,DISs, CAOs, head

teachers and teachers were considered for the study. A total of 555 subjects 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. Cluster sampling technique was used to select four out nine districts in Lango Sub region which were used in this study. Specifically, Apac,Alebtong, Dokolo and Amolatar were the districts selected and used in the study. The same sampling strategy was also to determine the 370 out of 4,964 teachers as well while 173 headteachers were purposively sampled. The Chief Administrative Officers, District Education Officers and District Inspectors of Schools were selected using census method of sampling. Meaning that each of the four districts was represented by each of the subjects in the categories. The selection of the all the above categories of respondents emerged by fact the research needs and specifically the nature of research questions required responses that are factual in nature given the unique roles of each of the selected categories in issues related to democratisation of education and quality of education

The results of the findings

Democratization of education indicates the processes that allow individual learner have opportunities, access, equitable, fair and freedom to assessment. 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 disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree) whereby respondents were asked to rate democratization by indicating the extent to which they agree or disagree with each question.

GRAPH 1: Showing the influence of assessment methods on learners' achievement
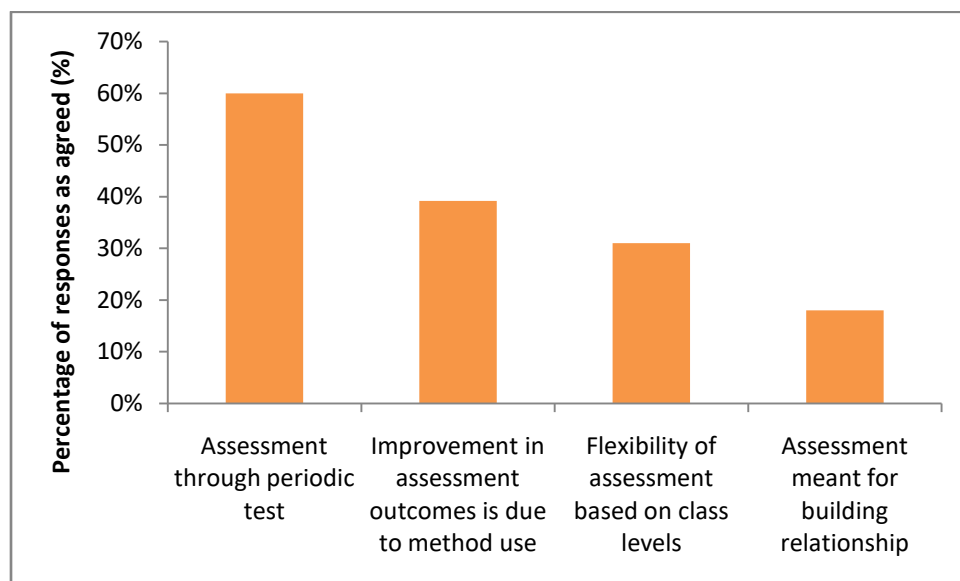
Source: Primary data 2020

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

Table 1 above shows the linkage between assessment methods and learners' learners' The difference between the mode and the mean is marginal indicating that the distribution is near normal; and the standard deviation of 1.191 shows that individual responses, on average were a little over 1 point away from the mean (3.401). Hence it is evident that the selected sample is a representative of the population. Four questions were set and asked to the respondents (primary school teachers and headteachers) to establish the influence of assessment methods on learners 'achievement to in different primary schools in Lango sub region.

 The study findings indicated that the learners are always assessed only by use of periodic tests. This is represented by the majority views of the respondents 331 (61% %) agreed while 168 (31%) of the respondents disagreed that learners in most cases are assessed using periodic tests. This position means that most times much as there are other assessment methods periodic

assessment is the most used. The implication is that learners who are not conversant with this assessment mode either finds it difficult to participate in the assessment activities. In case they are to participate the outcomes are not pleasant.

The above view was equally shared by key informant during an interview when asked about what they would consider as some of the practices that could have been adopted to ensure learners' participation in assessment. The respondents in this category affirmed that no discrimination in what constitutes assessment activities for the learners. Learners are subjected to similar assessment methods and assessment measurements determining quality of learning attainment. A key informant, one of the District Inspector of Schools particularly had this to say;

> *I have been an Inspector of Schools for fifteen years; I believe my experience is good enough to comment on the nature of assessment in primary schools. Activities are based on standard curriculum, methods and learning programs for every learner without any discrimination. Schools have always organised periodic tests based on uniform planned assessment programs. End of term exams and end of year exams are organised on similar content based on syllabus* (KI, 6).

The researcher through classroom observation of the actual teaching and learning processes in atleast ten schools in four sampled Districts confirmed the above findings. The learners are guided using similar standard tests within a standard period of time. The observation further revealed no special set side assessment approaches were meant for learners with special assessment needs.

The other interaction with District Education Officers during Key Informant Interview affirmed that assessment practices in schools do not provide aspects of exclusion by the nature of test items . However, one of the Education Officers note that occurrences of discrimination may arouse based on individual teacher capacity even when teachers could have attained similar training or support. Particularly this key informant had this to say;

> *I do not think there is any discrimination in executing assessment packages by the teachers in their application of methods .The training that our teachers went through is enough to make each one of them handle assessment properly. It could be individual weakness among teachers that makes assessment processes undesired. Teacher personality plays a significant role in ensuring successful assessment outcomes. You cannot expect good assessment endeavours from a teacher whose attitude is always negative about the learners. If learners are parallel with the teacher there would be no good assessment (KI,5).*

This means that such level of engagement based on the current assessment strategy through the use of periodic should translate to expected assessment outcomes in Lango sub region.

Similarly, when the respondents were asked whether there was tremendous improvement in assessment outcomes due to assessment methods used. The respondents 327 (60.2 %) disagreed while 179 (33%) agreed that tremendous improvement in learners' assessment outcome has been witnessed due the assessment methods used. This means that it is not only methods that may be responsible in ensuring improvement in assessment outcomes. Implying that some times poor assessment method is a result of poor assessment outcomes.

The responses from the interview with Key Informants affirmed the above position. The Headteachers interviewed in all the schools selected for this study affirmed that the selection of assessment methods for specific classes is guided by particular assessment activities for a class level. In this case one of the Headteacher specifically had this to say;

> *We based our assessment methods selection as guided by the activities for each of the classes. Learners' are exposed to assessment conditions from what they have learnt. However we are sometimes challenged by teacher ability to translate requirement of the syllabus to standard assessment activities affect choice of methods relevant for a class level (KI,3).*

The outcome of the review of teachers' schemes and plans confirmed that assessment methods used reflected activities as were in the individual teacher's lesson plan. However, the outcome of the review showed that in some cases the assessment methods did not conform to the standard of the class. This means that much as there are standardised assessment methods as guided by the activities for individual classes, the application of such methods remained un appealing to the desired assessment outcomes.

Regarding the question whether assessment methods used were flexible based on the nature of learning conditions for a given class level. The respondents numbering 375 (69%) disagreed while 109 (20%) agreed that assessment methods used were flexible based on the nature of learning conditions. This means that teachers used the methods of assessment based on what they individual consider fit their individual capabilities rather than the prevailing learning conditions. The implication is that learners who may not have interest in the mode of assessment are conditioned take up the assessment without choice.

 The above position was confirmed during classroom observation with an aim to ascertain whether the actual assessment delivery considered flexibility based on the nature of learning conditions. It found that out of ten classrooms visited and assessment sessions observed only two teachers exhibited competencies in causing flexibilities in assessment methods based on prevailing assessment conditions. This means that learners were compelled to adopt to assessment methods even when they are not comfortable with the method. Such learners may find it difficult to adopt to the conditions thus fail to attain desired assessment outcomes.

Learners' assessment methods have always been linked to relationship building. The respondents 445 (82%) disagreed and 28 (5.1%) agreed which means the methods of assessment are not effective in building desired teacher learner relationship. When learners are faced with challenge of relationship building between them and teachers or learner and learner, it leads to weak

collaboration during assessment. This negatively affects learner's assessment outcomes in all aspects.

The above position was confirmed during key informant interview when key informants were asked to comment on the nature of relationship that they ever experienced with their learners during assessment. A key informant particularly had this say;

> *I have always had problems arising from learners who claim that teachers have neverbeen fair when it comes to assessment. Teachers have never been innovative in using varieties of assessment methods that allow good relationship with learners. This in deed affected learners' interest in assessment practices.*

This means that assessment methods as applied by the teachers do not provide means to usher in good relationship between the teachers and the learners as well as learners and learners. The implication is that learners who feel uncomfortable with the assessment methods are bound not to participate fully in the assessment activities. If they were to participate in the assessment activities, they are not in a position to perform well in the assessment tasks due to low interest.

The influence of assessment environment on learners' achievement
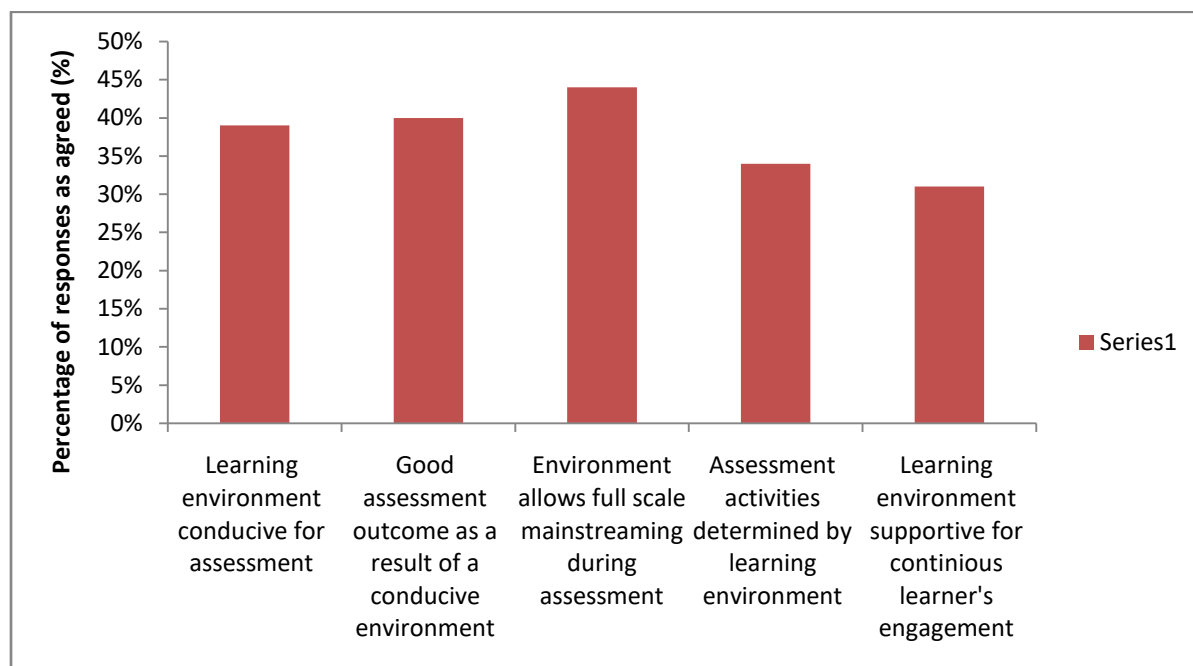
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Table 2 above shows the linkage between assessment methods and learners' learners' The difference between the mode and the mean is marginal indicating that the distribution is near normal; and the standard deviation of 1.191 shows that individual responses, on average were a little over 1 point away from the mean (3.401). Hence it is evident that the selected sample is a representative of the population. Four questions were set and asked to the respondents (primary school teachers and headteachers) to establish the influence of assessment environment on learners' achievement to in different primary schools in Lango sub region. Table 2 above shows the percentage response of all the respondents in this study.

When respondents were asked whether the existing learning environment allows full scale mainstreaming of disabled during assessment activities. a fair number 320 (59%) disagreed. The

above data was confirmed in an exclusive review of documents especially individual school budgets for financial years restricted to the periods of review. The outcome of the review showed no single school was committed to support inclusive education given that items that were reflected in the budgets would only support education of the "normal learners". In fact schools do not budget for items that would facilitate learning of the special needs in a formal school setting. The study made attempts to review the individual school annual plans for the few schools that had them but establish no deliberate efforts to specifically support assessment for the disadvantaged groups. The situation was different from to District to District upon review of District Annual Development Plans whose preamble recognises the need to embrace inclusive education but took minimal considerations.

It was equally observed that the aspects of infrastructure plans in terms of classrooms and toilets by standards do not favour the education of girls and the disabled in the sampled districts. Further review of the staff list for the sampled schools indicated that not more than 5% of schools had teachers specialised to support in teaching of learners with special ability needs. Moreover, the classroom observation results equally showed that where specialised teachers exist they were either deployed with no consideration of such specialisation that would warrant them to support such learners.

This means that not all the support expected from school management by teachers to conduct inclusive learners' assessment was being offered. This support may be in form of materials or non material that teachers would use to effectively undertake learners' assessment. This further means that partially integration of the disabled learners' program into school system including assessment has been done. This may also means that the school authorities either do not value such integration or are professionally not trained to handle the issues that promote learning of children with special needs. If school management are not in position to provide such critical

assessment requirement it would imply that teachers devise their own means or utilise what is made available and poorly facilitate assessment activities. This would have immediate implications on the assessment environment resulting to weak assessment processes expressed inform of poor assessment outcomes.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked whether the current learning environment is conducive to conduct inclusive learners' assessment. The respondents,331 (61%) disagreed against ,163 (30%) who agreed that the current learning environment is conducive to allow smooth conduct of inclusive learners' assessment. This means that the current learning environment is not wholly supportive to conduct inclusive learners' assessment. It implies that facilities required to facilitate are not adequate to provide inclusive learning.

The above position is supported by the outcome of classroom observation when learners with different impairment such as hearing were subjected to use of similar facilities during assessment. This was however devoid of their physical conditions. It was further observed that such learners were not able to complete assessment tasks as compared to the rest of the learners with "no disabilities". This means that such learners are at disadvantage arising from the environment which is not considerate of their statuses. The implication of such situation is that such learners fail to catch in assessment resulting to poor assessment outcomes.

On the question whether school management has always considered having good assessment environment. The respondents, 256 (60%) disagreed while,168 (31%) that school always considered having good assessment environment. This means that school management in most cases did not consider improving assessment environment. The implication is that learners are compelled to find their on means to fit in such undesired assessment environment which in turn compromises their individual interest to participate in the assessment activities.

Respondents were asked whether assessment activities have always been identified with full consideration of the nature of the learning environment. The respondents 360 (66.3%) disagreed and 142 (26.2%) agreed with the statement that, assessment activities have always been identified with full consideration of the nature of the learning environment. This means that the assessment activities are pre-determined without due consideration of the nature of the learning environment. This implies that a section of learners who may find such environment not conducive have options but to participate in assessment with reservation which in turn leads to poor assessment outcomes.

Finally, respondents were asked whether the existing learning environment is supportive to continuous engagement of learners during assessment. The respondents 375 (69%) disagreed and 109 (20%) agreed with the statement that the existing learning environment is supportive to continuous engagement of learners during assessment. This means the provisions in the learning environment partially support full learner's participation in assessment activities.This implies that learners are bound to attain poor assessment outcomes

Discussion of the results

The influence of assessment methods on learners' achievement

The results showed that assessment methods influence learners' assessment outcomes. Fundamentally the level of influence are determined by various aspects. For instance the study revealed that learners are always assessed only by use of periodic tests. That learners irrespective of their individual differences are subjected to end of month, term or year assessment through test or examinations. This finding is not different the held views the reviewed literature; Openjuru (2010) affirms that an effort to improve quality of education, which is generally measured by higher test scores in examinations, is a major policy concern, particularly for developing countries.

In some cases in Lango Sub region, especially in urban schools, management encouraged

display of assessment results for the learners and public to appreciate efforts to effective assessment. The intriguing scenario is that the existing school estimates whether quarterly or monthly for most schools showed that management are engaged strongly in solicitation for assessment activities from open market especially in Kampala. This practice presents a situation of financial gain for the head teachers and some few teachers who may not worry for the assessment outcomes. The learners on the other hand got exposed to situations or environment of unpleasant school systems based on the nature of assessment that always accounted for reasons to poor performance of learners. It brought fear of the assessment outcomes that threatened efforts to retention as learners dropped out or kept absenting themselves.

However, UNICEF (2015) thinks such challenges can be reverted through continuous professional engagement of teachers. Professional development can help overcome short comings 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 measure is said to have worked well in Kenya, under 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 (UNICEF,2015). Monitoring and evaluation of learning should be a continuous process to ensure schools meet their targets. Each district should have mechanisms for monitoring on a continuous basis the performance of both teachers and students for remedial action early when needed (Ngando,2011).

The above particularly is just a mirror of what the existing labour market demands the relate to academic results emanated from examinations and tests which is not measure of quality of education. The benefit of providing education to individuals and society is enhanced when the quality is higher. In this case better learning outcomes, as represented by students' test scores,

are said to be closely related to higher earnings in the labor market (UNESCO,2015) thus, differences in the quality of education are likely to indicate differences in individual worker's productivity. Furthermore, substantial evidence shows that students who do better in school either in grades or standardized achievement tests, tend to have better school attendance (Bailey & Dynaiski, 2011).

In most cases, assessment outcomes are influenced by methods or approaches that teacher use to deliver the assessment content. This has been revealed in this study that it is not only methods that are responsible for improving assessment outcomes. Implying that sometimes poor assessment method is a result of poor assessment outcomes. Assessment methods in most cases can be classified as traditional or alternative based on the realism and complexity of the assessment tasks and the amount of time needed for the assessment (Doyle, 2011). Traditional assessments such as multiple choice, true-false, and matching items are often lower in realism and complexities of the tasks assessed but require little time to administer and score (Yao, 2011). Alternative assessments such as portfolios, observations, and other performance-based assessments are higher in both realism and complexity of the tasks assessed but requires more time to use and score than traditional assessments (Faours, 2011).

It became clear from this study that there are limitations to flexibilities in that schools and teachers exhibit in assessment methods even where there are variations in learning conditions. Teachers or school administrators are on crossroads as in most times assessment programs are highly centralised and in most cases dictated by national assessment policies. Yao (2011) in a study on attitudes towards schooling and educational aspirations notes that democratization of secondary education within the ambit of a highly academic and examination-oriented education system has not served the needs of academically weak students. This study has also revealed the lack of alternative educational opportunities available to these students. OECD (2012) focuses its concerns on policy noting that, often there are lower academic expectations for

disadvantaged schools and students, while there is evidence that certain pedagogical practices can make a difference for low performing students. To improve learning in classrooms, policies need to ensure and facilitate that disadvantaged schools promote the use of a balanced combination of student centred instruction with aligned curricular and assessment practices. Schools and teachers should use diagnostic tools as well as formative and summative assessments to monitor children's progress and ensure they are acquiring good understanding and knowledge. Ensuring that schools follow a curriculum promoting a culture of high expectations and success is highly relevant (OECD, 2012).

The methods of assessment used to deliver assessment contents are not effective in building desired teacher learner relationship. The study particularly established that, when learners are faced with challenge of relationship building between them and teachers or learner and learner, it leads to weak collaboration during assessment. This negatively affects learner's assessment outcomes in all aspects. Unsuitable assessment methods impose overwhelming pressures on a student to take the wrong approach to learning tasks (Shihab,2011). It is often the assessment, not the student that is the cause of the problem. Assessment is about several things at once. It is not about simple dualities such as grading versus diagnosis. It is about reporting on students' achievements and about teaching them better through expressing to them more clearly the goals of our curricula. It is about measuring student learning and diagnosing specific misunderstandings in order to help students to learn more effectively. It concerns the quality of teaching as well as the quality of learning. This in its essence cause a big challenge of relationship between learners and teachers as well as learners and their pears.

Such position is not different from what OECD (2012) presents while arguing that, often there are lower academic expectations for disadvantaged schools and students amidst evidence that certain pedagogical practices can make a difference for low performing students while others may not. This is typical of the experiences of UPE schools in Lango sub region the current policy

of inclusive education among other policies encourage equity in access but to compromise effectiveness in assessment for such learners. Teacher deployment for instance do not take into consideration specialisation of teachers to match the unique needs of the learners.To improve learning in classrooms, policies need to ensure and facilitate that disadvantaged schools promote the use of a balanced combination of student-centred instruction with aligned curricular and assessment practices. The schools and teachers should use diagnostic tools as well as formative and summative assessments to monitor children's progress and ensure they are acquiring good understanding and knowledge. Ensuring that schools follow a curriculum promoting a culture of high expectations and success is highly relevant (OECD, 2012).

Primary schools in Lango sub region continued to value homework system of assessment as means of making parents take part in supporting their children. The introduction of community Libraries system by Agakhan Foundation under East Africa Quality Education and Learning (EAQEL) aimed at ensuring parental support to learners' especially in the Districts of Dokolo and Amolatar between 2010 and 2013 was a remarkable innovation towards effective assessment outcomes in the Region.

The influence of assessment environment on learners' achievement

According to Afoma & Christy, (2014) a pleasant school environment presents learning as a lifelong enterprise and allows students to discover appropriate value systems that can be their compass for national consciousness and self-awareness. The results from the study showed that in most cases the classroom assessment activities would measure expected assessment outcomes. . Particularly the study indicated learning environment in most cases do not allow full scale mainstreaming of disabled during assessment activitiesUWEZO (2013) however believes that among the major bottle necks to achieving the quality of education is the fact the teachers deployed and retained are not fully utilizing time on task to adequately prepare and assess

learners. This confirms the finding from this study that, informal schools scheduling of activities whether within the classroom or outside is done based on time not physical availability. The teachers and the learners are expected to adhere to the schedules or time for effective learners' assessment. In fact, failure to understand the conditions of individual learner or the teacher rather than focusing on schedules during assessment may be detrimental to successful assessment outcomes.

The learning environment in schools in terms of infrastructure were found not conducive to allow smooth conduct of inclusive learners' assessment. Focusing on single direction of inclusive assessment without proper supporting infrastructure may be a disappointing effort towards achieving quality assessment outcomes in schools. This is supported by the findings of Shamaki (2015) demonstrate that the state of sitting facilities, or the lack thereof and sitting arrangement in classrooms affects students' level of interest on the subject matter. clean, quiet and comfortable environment are important components of learning environment. Being comfortable should be a combination of several factors which include; temperature, lighting, and noise control (Murugan & Rajoo, 2013). According to Steve and Richard (2013), when a student first steps into a room they will make a judgment about the type of class they are going to be taking. They will look to see how desks are arranged. They will notice what is hanging on the walls. The way in which a teacher sets up their class allows them to communicate with their students nonverbally. By adding various learning centers or activity centers the students will know that this is a classroom that likes to do hands on experiments. It also conveys that they will not just sit and take notes, but they will act out what ever subject they are learning.

It is also known that school managers devoted limited efforts in supporting having good assessment environment. In Uganda series of efforts through different programs such as school facility grants have be initiated and utilised to support infrastructure development in a bid to improve assessment. However, the aspects of infrastructure plans in terms of classrooms and

toilets by standards do not favour the education of girls and the disabled in the sampled districts. Further review of the staff list for the sampled schools indicated that not more than 5% of schools had teachers specialised to support in teaching of learners with special ability needs.

The above view is supported by the views of Earthman (2012), that a relative humidity of 50% to be sufficient value for classrooms. A relationship between acoustics and temperature is in existence. Poorly maintained air conditioning systems and evident issues with maintenance of the classroom temperature, may deliver significantly uncomfortable and disturbing noise. It is believed that a school with adequate learning environment contributes to stir up expected outcomes of learning that will facilitate good academic performance, by encouraging effective teaching and learning (Duruji et'al,2014). Lango sub region provide answers to questions by UWEZO (2015 & 2016) regarding what makes quality assessment in education. Ministry of Education and Sports 2013 & UWEZO, 2012) particularly point out that although learning and teaching resources are distributed and made available to teachers and learners, they have minimal influence on learning outcomes of learners. UNESCO (2015) contends that for proper assessment of learning outcomes, stakeholders in primary education need to deeply engage with diverse nature of learning strategies and teaching materials in poorly resourced schools.

To this, Ngando (2011) agrees that even if other environmental factors were constant still majority of teachers and students do not report to school on the first day of opening, most teachers write their scheme of work when schools opened went to class without lesson plans assemble took longer and consumed classroom time. The situation has made the teaching in many places to remain traditional, teacher centred and fairly rigid or even authoritarian. This is obviously to ensure that children are afraid to learn by asking questions and instead must passively adapt to the teacher and what is taught.

Equally, Mobegi, Ondigi and Oburu (2010) note that headteachers should take up their roles as

quality assurance officers in their schools and ensure that there is adequate departmental supervision. They should introduce staff appraisal through locally designed forms to enhance standards and engage in evaluative class observation to ensure that a variety of teaching methods apart from class discussion is utilized.

The interventions highlighted above are not different from what was pursued by the government of Uganda with support from donors. The government used a great deal of resources over the years to improve teacher classroom practice and general administration. Government of Uganda for instance at the inception of UPE programme introduce Teacher Development Management System (TDMS) that showed many head teachers and teachers trained based on their individual professional roles.

Conclusions

Primary schools in Lango sub region continued to value homework system of assessment as means of making parents take part in supporting their children. The introduction of community Libraries system by Agakhan Foundation under East Africa Quality Education and Learning (EAQEL) aimed at ensuring parental support to learners' especially in the Districts of Dokolo andAmolatar between 2010 and 2013 was a remarkable innovation towards effective assessment outcomes in the Region. However, lack of support by the Districts in terms of funding and supervision by the relevant agencies like inspectors, tutors and head teachers rendered the practice worthless after the project got to its end. Lango Sub region school managers in most cases did not adopt and objectively act on outcomes of supervision to assessment practices. Such gaps provide room to continued mismatch between learners' attendance and quality in assessment.

Teacher Development Management System (TDMS) that showed many head teachers and

teachers trained based on their individual professional roles was a good gesture towards supporting qualitative assessment. The Centre Coordinating Tutors under this arrangement overwhelmingly supported head teachers and teachers in ensuring effective assessment. In Lango sub region tutors supported the teachers in developing assessment materials out of specific learning contents, strategies of monitoring learners' involvement in the assessment activities. The headteachers in this region continuously benefited from outreach training management training programs meant to empower them with skills to support teachers in the classroom during assessment periods.

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