TOWARDS THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF UPE: THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at how stakeholder management can be used as a conduit for improving UPE (Universal Primary Education) in Uganda. The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research methods in data collection, analysis and presentation. Qualitative research methods were used in reviewing literature gathered from journals, the ministry of education Uganda and other internet sources. On the other hand, quantitative research methods involved the use of survey questionnaires in collecting data. Further quantitative data analysis methods were used that included descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and correlation and regression analysis methods. The study sample included 181 UPE schools operating in Wakiso district in central Uganda. Wakiso is an urban district located in Central Uganda. The district has a total of 342 UPE schools. Out of the 342 schools, 181 were selected using simple random sampling method. The 181 were determined based on Morgan and Krejcie (1970) sampling table. Descriptive statistics, including means, percentages and frequencies were used to analyze the data. Further, inferential statistics such as correlation and regression were used to analyze the relationship between study variables. Findings revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between stakeholder management and UPE success (r =.267, p<.01). This means that when stakeholders are well managed, UPE will succeed and also when they are poorly managed, UPE is likely to fail. The results also show that the Stakeholder management predicts UPE success (Beta = .481, Sig. <.01).This implies that in order to ensure that the UPE is successfully implemented; there is need for better management of stakeholders and high engagement levels among stakeholders.

Keywords: Project management, Stakeholder management, UPE, UPE success, Uganda

INTRODUCTION

Universal Primary Education is undoubtedly one of the significant measures that have been adopted by developing economies as a way of enhancing their well being. However, efforts aimed at ensuring successful implementation have not been conclusive. Also the need for empirical backing of decisions directed towards enhancing UPE are yet to be conclusive. In this regard, this study tests the role of stakeholder management in the successful implementation of UPE Projects in Uganda. It is based on the propositions of various scholars that stakeholder management leads to perceived project success (Jergeas *et al.* 2000; Smith *et al.* 2001; Takim, 2009; and Munene, 2009). Generally, the performance in Universal Primary Education Schools in Uganda is still poor as evidenced by the irregular class attendance, high drop- out rates, teacher absenteeism and the parents who do not value education (Ssemujju, 2009). Existent studies point to the fact that only 9% of the School Management Committees monitor the school budget performance, close to 0% parents have visited schools since the onset of the UPE, Formal supervision by the local community has severely reduced and late coming has become more rampant due to too much domestic work at 42% and increased indiscipline of the pupils also at 42% (Munene, 2009). Considering the PLE Exam Results of 2008, it is indicated that the number of pupils who passed in division

one reduced by half coming down to 3.7% from 7.6% in 2007. More so the number of PLE failures in 2008 increased from 419206 in 2007 to 463631 yet in 2007 the failures had shot up by 14221 from those in 2006 (Mambabule & Businge, 2009). Consequently, the Government of Uganda is to incur additional costs to pay for those pupils under UPE who fail to pass the PLE exams (Ssemujju, 2009). There is need for the Public sector in Uganda to embrace appropriate mechanisms that are vital for the successful implementation of projects. This can be achieved through proper stakeholder management. The current study looks at how stakeholder management can be used as a conduit for improving UPE in Uganda. The rest of this paper provides a brief literature review, Research design, findings, and discussion of findings, Conclusion and recommendations and the Limitations of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Bategeka and Okurut (2006) Universal Primary Education (UPE) is one of the Government of Uganda's main policy tools for achieving poverty reduction and human development. Its main objectives are to provide the facilities and resources to enable every child to enter and remain in school until the primary cycle of education is complete; make education equitable in order to eliminate disparities and inequalities; ensure that education is affordable by the majority of Ugandans and to reduce poverty by equipping every individual with basic skills (Ministry of Education and Sports, 1999). These objectives are indeed a clear indication that UPE in general is important to the development of the country. Therefore in relation to this research, management of stakeholders and their engagement should be the guidelines to successful implementation of UPE. Grogan (2006) noted that UPE is one of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals whose major aim is to reduce the number of uneducated African youth and 2015 was set as the target year for all children in the world to complete primary school and for boys and girls to have equal access to education. According to The Uganda Millennium Development Goal Report (2003), the textbook to pupil ratio in Ugandan schools was 1:4 and the report further indicates that although the sectoral budget allocation increased from 20.6 billion Ugandan shillings at the start of UPE to 46.7 in 2003, this increase has not resulted in a proportional improvement in the quality of education.

The assessment of the Primary education curriculum is done annually by the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB). The Board sets, administers the Primary Leaving Examinations and the examination consists of four papers. These are English Language, Science and Health Education, Mathematics, Social studies including Religious Education and each subject in the curriculum has set objectives. The scores on each paper range from 1 (the best) to 9 (the worst), therefore, the results in the whole Primary Leaving Examination range from aggregate 4 (the best) to aggregate, 36 (failure). The candidates are then graded into about five grades. For example, first grade ranges from aggregates 4 to 12. Candidates who manage to score first grade can hope to be selected by the good secondary schools and these form only about ten percent of the total candidates. But the largest number of such candidates comes from a few boarding or urban day schools.

Karlsen, Græe and Massaoud (2007) described stakeholder management as the degree to which the needs of individuals and institutions that have an interest in the project are reconciled while building good relations with those who are identified as being most influential in achieving the end result of the project. This study conceptualized stakeholder management as the process of forming, monitoring and maintaining constructive relationships with the various project stakeholders by influencing their expectations resulting from their particular stakes. Stakeholder management helps projects to move toward its

envisioned Objectives by ensuring that every stakeholder is satisfied and contributing as well as benefiting from the project undertaking. As such, stakeholder management aims at achieving balanced stakeholder benefits and actions

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research methods in data collection, analysis and presentation. Qualitative research methods were used in reviewing literature gathered from journals, the ministry of education Uganda and other internet sources. On the other hand, quantitative research methods involved the use of survey questionnaires in collecting data. Further, quantitative data analysis methods were used. These included descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and correlation and regression analysis methods. Data were presented in tables.

The study sample included 181 UPE schools operating in Wakiso district. Wakiso is an urban district located in Central Uganda. The district has a total of 342 UPE schools. Out of the 342 schools, 181 were selected using simple random sampling method. The 181 were determined based on Morgan and Krejcie (1970) sampling table. Data that was collected from the field was subjected to through cleaning for inconsistencies before it was further processed using SPSS Version 20. Normality tests were also performed as part of the preliminary steps before carrying out further analysis. The data was found to be normally distributed and thus fit to warrant further statistical processing. Descriptive statistics, including means, percentages and frequencies were used to analyze the data. Further, inferential statistics such as correlation and regression were used to analyze the relationship between study variables**.**

FINDINGS
This section presents the study findings:

Respondents' Job Positions
Data were gathered and analyzed to establish the job positions of respondents as seen in table 1:

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Status (Position)

Respondent status	Frequency	Valid %
PTA Executive	7	2.9
SMC Executive	15	6.1
Head teacher	27	11
Deputy head teacher	41	16.7
Teacher	155	63.3
Missing	2	0.8
Total	247	100

 Source: Primary data

Majority of the respondents (63.3%) were teachers followed by deputy teachers (16.7%) and head teachers (11%). PTA Executive and SMC executive had the lowest response rate at (2.9%) and (6.1%) respectively. This means that the teachers were more approachable compared to the other respondents.

School Founder

Data were gathered and analyzed to establish the founders of the schools that participated in the study. Table 2 presents the findings:

Table 2: Distribution by School Founder

School founder	Frequency	Valid %
Government	41	37.3
Religious founded	59	53.6
Parents	10	9.1
Missing	1	
Total	111	100

Source: Primary data

More than half of the UPE schools (53.6%) are religious founded followed by government (37.3%) and parents founded (9.1%). The implication is that government has put in less effort in establishing UPE schools as compared to religious groups.

School Age

Data were gathered and analyzed to analyze ages of the schools that participated in the study. Table 3 presents the findings:

Table 3: Distribution By School Age

School age	Frequency	Valid %
0-9 years	2	2
10-19 years	11	10.8
20-29 years	9	8.8
above 30 years	80	78.4
Missing	9	
Total	111	100

Source: Primary data

Majority of the UPE schools (78.4%) are above 30 years, followed by those between 10-19 years (10.8 %) then 20-29 years (8.8 %) and lastly those between 0-9 years of age (2 %). The implication is that less effort has been put in building new schools in the recent years.

The Age Group of Respondents with Study Variables

Data were also collected and analyzed to determine whether respondents' age groups affected their responses on study variables as seen in table 4:

Table 4: The Age Group of Respondents with Study Variables

		N	Mean	df	F	Sig.
Stake holder management	25-30 years	27	3.86	4	2.485	.045
	31-35 years	58	3.73	1	1.624	
	36-40 years	57	3.80	1	3.437	

	41-45 years	37	3.96	3	2.167	
	46 and above	19	3.89	193		
	Total	198	3.83	197		
UPE Success	25-30 years	26	3.88	4	1.261	.027
	31-35 years	51	3.80	1	2.871	
	36-40 years	58	3.71	1	2.114	
	41-45 years	35	3.92	3	1.001	
	46 and above	18	3.88	4	1.137	
	Total	188	3.78	187		

Research findings in table 4 show that the perceptions of respondents on stakeholder management vary significantly with age group (sig.045). The respondents between 41-45 years scored more on stakeholder management having the highest mean score of 3.96, followed by those between 46 and above with a mean score of 3.89, then followed by those between 25-30 years with a mean score of 3.86, then followed by those between 36-40 years with a mean score of 3.80 and lastly those with 31-35 years had a mean score of 3.73. This implies that respondents with 41-45 years of age are more concerned about managing the interests of project stakeholders because of their long term involvement in the project.

However, findings also reveal that the perceptions of the respondents on UPE success and perceived project success do not vary with their age group. There was no significant difference in the mean scores of the age groups in UPE success. The P value for UPE success was 0.027 which were both greater than 0.05. This implies that the respondents' age group did not affect the way they perceived UPE success.

School Founder and the Variables

Data were also collected and analyzed in order to understand the relationship between school founders and study variables as seen in table 5:

Table 5: School Founder and the Variables

		N	Mean	df	F	Sig.
Stake holder management	25-30 years	27	3.86	4	2.485	.045
	31-35 years	58	3.73	1	1.624	
	36-40 years	57	3.80	1	3.437	
	41-45 years	37	3.96	3	2.167	
	46 and above	19	3.89	193		
	Total	198	3.83	197		
UPE Success	25-30 years	26	3.88	4	1.261	.051
	31-35 years	51	3.80	1	2.871	
	36-40 years	58	3.71	1	2.114	
	41-45 years	35	3.92	3	1.001	
	46 and above	18	3.88	4	1.137	
	Total	188	3.78	187		

Source: Primary data

There was no significant difference in the mean scores of the school founder in stakeholder management, and UPE success. The P value for stakeholder management was 0.045, and

UPE success was 0.051, all above 0.05. This implies that the founder of the school did not affect the perceptions towards the study variables.

Table 5: Bivariate Correlation between Stakeholder Management, UPE success

	Stake holder management	UPE success
Stake holder management	1	.267**
UPE success	.267**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Primary data

Findings reveal that there is a significant positive relationship between stakeholder management and UPE success (r =.267, p<.01). This means that when stakeholders are well managed, UPE will succeed. The reverse is true.

Regression Analysis

Regression was used to examine the predicting power of the independent variable (Stakeholder management) on the dependent variable (UPE success). Table 6 shows the results:

Table 6: Regression Model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.054	.203		10.120	.000
Stakeholder management	.417	.055	.481	7.524	.000

a. Dependent Variable: UPE success

The results show that the Stakeholder management predicts UPE success (Beta = .481, Sig. <.01).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between stakeholder management and UPE success. This means that when stakeholders are well managed, UPE will succeed. The reverse is true. Overall, the findings showed significant relationships among the variables. Results also show that older respondents were more concerned about managing the interests and expectations of the stakeholders than the young ones. Furthermore, the respondents with a status of head teacher in the UPE schools valued managing of stakeholder interests more than the other respondents. This is due to the fact that they constitute the leadership of the school and it is their duty to ensure that all school stakeholders have their interests reconciled. The findings found out that there was no relationship between gender, level of education, years of service, school founder, school age and the study variables. That is to say, the gender of the respondents, their level of education, years of service, school founder and school age

did not affect the perceptions of the respondents regarding the variables under study. Lastly, the regression analysis showed that engagement had the highest beta coefficient which meant that more emphasis should be put on stakeholder engagement than stakeholder management.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that there was a significant strong positive relationship between stakeholder management and perceived project success and a significant positive relationship between stakeholder engagement and perceived project success. This implies that in order to ensure that the UPE is successfully implemented; there is need for better management of stakeholders and high engagement levels among stakeholders. However, further analysis revealed that engagement is the only variable under study that can independently impact on project success in relation to stakeholder management. It is recommended that in order to ensure that UPE success, the government should devote its efforts in creating an environment that allows stakeholders to exhibit engagement. This will enable them to put in discretionary effort beyond the required minimum, be psychologically present when performing school activities, portray a strong sense of psychological ownership for the outcomes of UPE thus improving service delivery and quality.

Limitations of the Study

The study adopted measurement tools used in previous studies and therefore any limitations that were encountered in such studies also affected this study. As a remedy, further refinement of the instrument would be necessary. Some of the respondents hesitated to give the relevant information for fear of the implications on their jobs. As a remedy, the researcher together with the research assistants pleaded with the respondents and provided more copies of the instrument in cases of misplacement.

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